Chapter- IV

Factors Responsible for Political Participation
It is widely recognized today that pre condition for any development effort, which is essential for harmonious environment, and which safeguards human rights is the participation and involvement of women in power. It is fact that for true equality, the sharing of power on equal terms with men must be major endeavor. The political condition of a nation has its own impact on the status of women. To participate in politics is most challenging role for women. How far a society can provide the framework within which the freedom to function, the opportunity to learn and the option to contribute are made available to women is the test of its viability and its dynamism; in the context of emerging female identity.

Participation is an instrument of reducing power differences and contributing to equalization and social justice. Participation of women in politics involves:

1. Women as a voter
2. Women as a member of political parties, trade unions/ pressure groups
3. Women as elected members of Parliament, state Assemblies and various Local bodies; state governments and taking part in decision-making, planning implementation and evaluation
4. Women as members of women’s organisation

Participation enables women conscious by giving a sense of their own dignity and value for women participation has three roles educative, interactive and empowering.
Today, women are connected directly or indirectly to the operation of society at every level and at the same time occupy the aggregate position of outsiders. No one can deny the fact that for women's development and empowerment participation at every level and in every field is essential.

Present century has brought a great change in the life of women all over the world, influencing their attitudes, values, inspirations ways of feeling standards of behavior and acting for effective participation in all walks of life. Women's quest for equality with men has become global phenomenon. It is particularly relevant in those societies, which have deep roots of patriarchy and subjugation of women.

Gender division is found in every walk of life and this division influences family class structures and nation-states. But at this time, women are throwing challenge to patriarchal society and involved in politics and development programs. Although women are participating in greater numbers in politics and public life all over the world, they still remain largely outside the realms of power and decision-making in government. The gap between men and women's participation in political life have narrowed somewhat but remain huge, as figures of women as head of governments, holders of ministerial positions and member of Parliaments show.

The process of political participation is multi-dimensional and it enables women to realize their position and in every spheres of society.

Political participation makes conscious about surroundings and she begins to think about her capabilities, potentials and rights. She becomes aware of how gender and socio-cultural and political forces affect her status.
For women's development, political participation, economic development and social upliftment is essential. After that she may become able to fight with myriad forms of male dominance and discrimination at every stage. Women's political participation is central to the achievement of the triple goals of equality, development and social justice. In a democratic system, women's participation may be viewed at two levels: first awareness and assertion of women's political rights and second acquisition and exercise of power.

The political condition of a nation has its own impact on the status of women. In the past, women were considered to be unsuitable to participate in any type of political activity and were not permitted to participate in political process in our society. It was believed that politics is exclusive domain for men folk and women are not supposed to get involve in it. But with the modernization of society it was felt that women should be allowed to enter in politics. People have realized now that for a proper development and modernization of nation women's participation in politics is must. If a nation wants to develop on the right lines to achieve something, its women must share the burden of planning and shaping its destiny side by side with men; women should share the rough side of the life as well as smooth.

The number of women in general who have entered in politics is very small and particularly in the case of Muslim women, it is microscopic. A few Muslim women who are in politics are drawn from elite background of those families, which have been in politics for generations. The
Muslim women are also not represented adequately in many women's organizations in India.  

Muslim women are victims of an oppression that works in two ways. One, as women and two, as members of an economically backward community. For Muslim women, participation in public activity like politics becomes a near impossibility. This is because religious orthodoxy, which has very cleverly demarcated the roles of men and women and point out the areas for women's learning as well as the occupations that they can take up. Now Muslim women are also trying to come out of their isolation but there is need to make themselves politically visible and politically important in order to change the direction of development empowerment and gender justice. Muslim community attempting to develop with out the full participation of women is like a bird trying to fly with only one wing. The meaning of political participation is not only to casting vote. To caste the vote is a type of political participation. But there are other kinds of political participation as gladiatorial and transitional participation. Most of the Muslim women cast their vote but often they seem to be aloof from others political activities.

It is felt that Muslim women continue to be the most exploited segment of the society. In spite of our remarkable advancement, Muslim women are still being treated as inferior to men and suffering from many socio-economic evils. Demands for dowry, molestation, family discords are very common. Every woman whether urban or rural has their own special problems related with environment in which they lived. The most unfortunate oppressed section of population is Muslim women and some of
them have been discarded like old shoes by their husbands.  In this way, not only socially but also politically, they are still left on periphery.

A variety of reasons account for women's diminished role in the political arena. They include tradition, psychology, lack of vertical mobility, and concern for home and family lack of patronage, particularly from senior women politicians. In other words, political participation of Muslim women is influenced by interrelated factors like the social status of Muslim women, their economic position, their regional outlook towards politics. Political participation of Muslim women is severely limited due to a nexus of traditional factors, these are the domination of Indian Muslim politics by consideration of class, family status, economic conditions, education level, patriarchal forces.

DETERMINANTS OF PARTICIPATION: SOME FACTORS

SOCIAL FACTORS

We are social creatures and thus society affects us. The social structure of Muslims is very different they have traditional and feudal society. Muslim women have to face many social problems in such type of society. The social conditions affect their political participation. There are some social factors, which determine Muslim women's political behavior.

Purdah

Sex differences and the relations between the two sexes have always been matters of universal human interest. They have given rise to a great variety of thought and ways of life eg. the purdah system. It is based on the belief that two sexes are so different that they can not perform the same functions and play the same roles in the society. Purdah ideologists believe
that sex is an antagonistic phenomenon, which necessitates the segregation and exclusion of women from public life and activities. Men and women are believed to be like fire and cotton and their meetings would necessarily destroy each other. The hallmark of Muslim women, if such a thing can be said to exist, is the burka.

It covers the body from head to foot. Purdah, literally curtain, has been an integral part of Muslim life since Islam came into India. This has led to a deeply cherished myth that the segregation of women was a direct result of the Muslim conquest. That’s why women were confined to the home to keep away from lustful eyes of people.

Allama Farid Vajadi and Maulana Abdul Ala Maududi propounded more sophisticated theory of purdah. They believe that a woman is inferior to man. And female inferiority is due to the body structure of woman, the physiological processes and reproductive functions of her sex as menstruation, pregnancy, suckling of the baby. Sex is a dichotomous phenomenon with absolute differences between the two sexes, found both in their anatomy, physiology and psychology, which makes them fundamentally unlike each other. Women are physically and psychologically weak, passive, and unstable for continuous and sustained work. On the contrary, men are not thus incapacitated both physically and psychologically so they are superior to women in mind, reason and intelligence. They are bodily stronger, more powerful active and aggressive than women and therefore fit for all kinds of work and tasks. This theory of purdah seems as jumble of facts and fictions, superstitions, myth and social beliefs. Allama Vajadi and Maulana Maududi have interpreted in such a way
as to extrapolate some facts of human biology into social values and relationships. The peoples who followed this theory, they worked out a device to aloof their women from social and political life. Muslim homes were divided into two portions - the Zanana and the Mardana, the women’s and men’s portions. In poorer homes there would be one room opening out on the street for the men’s use. Poor families could not able to construct the two portions. In still poorer ones the men would take their cot out on the pavement of the street or under trees and conduct business or receive friends there. The door of the Zanana opening out on the street was avoided either by a short wall erected in front of it on the inside of the house or by a curtain. The men went into sleep or eat or sometimes just to chat otherwise spent the day in the outer portions of the house. Male cousins came inside the house but after the age of puberty the girls did not appear before them. Even in more liberal households as soon as negotiations were started for a girl’s marriage with a cousin, she would observe purdah from him. There is no liberty to understand to each other. Thus, it was that when a girl got married she knew the female members of husband’s family but was a comparative stranger to her husband. And it was very surprising. There was no possibility to involve in politics. This is very difficult to acquire knowledge about political scenario because they lived behind the curtain, the whole life, they were busy in rearing the children.

The British rule in India brought the people into touch with a whole new set of ideas and entirely fresh value system. Intellectuals felt that the only way to deal with the foreign elements was to study their concept and ideas. As the liberation movement gained momentum it became clear to
thinking people that the freedom of the country could never be possible if half the population was kept confined in the interiors of homes. The removal of purdah was the first necessity to come out from home. For the Muslim naturally it was much more difficult rather than Hindu. The movement out of the homes began in the first decades of this century. The first Muslim women who ventured out of purdah, were all wives or relatives of those enjoying the high esteem of the rulers. In British India Lady Wazir Hasan, Lady Abdul Qadir, Lady Muhammad shafi, Begum Shahnawaz, Lady Imam, the Ladies of Tysabji discarded purdah and became active in the women’s movement. Many Muslim princely states encouraged high-ranking ladies to leave purdah and to acquire the knowledge about country. The Nizam of Hyderabad encouraged women to come out of purdah. In 1929 his younger daughter accompanied him to Calcutta where she went out publicly. Wives and daughters of Hyderabad nobles traveled freely in India and abroad unhampered by the veil. As the freedom movement progressed more and more congressmen brought their women out of purdah as a token of their participation in the national struggle and as a symbol of their own broadmindedness. A number of women observed what they considered to be real Islamic purdah, leaving only the face and hands open while covering the rest of the body. Purdah was very much present in the thickly populated parts of cities in villages and smaller towns. There were many homes in which the older women observed purdah while the younger ones moved about freely.

Since independence the number of Muslim women leaving purdah has been increasing every year. Like other communities many Muslim families
have been agreed to send their daughter out to work. In many families as has been noted earlier, the non-purdah observing women exist happily side by side with the purdah-nasir. Purdah continues to be a hurdle to the understanding of Muslim women even today. The fact that the women are kept shut behind walls seems to be discouraging anyone who interested seriously investigating their position. Change is coming but women are not seems to be eager for drastic change. In concrete terms, it is purdah, which make Muslim women so unsuitable for outside work. One can imagine who were living in such closed minded community, what possibilities were to perform political duties. Now this barrier is breaking slowly that’s why Muslim women’s participation in politics is increasing. As well as purdah discarded, women are coming out from home and taking part in social and political activities. However, thinking of Muslim community is changing but there is need for more change in attitude. The factors, which are responsible for political participation, are inter-linked and affect one factor to another.

Education

Education has been regarded as an important instrument for bringing about social and economic changes and development. It is essential for the total development - physical, mental and spiritual - of an individual as well as of a nation. Education brings the individual nearer to the perfection of his nature through the development of character. Education is the most important single factor in achieving rapid development and technological progress. Education helps an individual to develop distinct personality as well as rationality in attitude and thinking. Further, education acts as an
gneral of socialization, channel of social mobility and instrument of social change. No country will prosper if it fails to utilize the talents and abilities of women. Educated women can very easily share in decision making about social perspectives.

In modern world, formal education is considered as an important and powerful instrument of social change. But unfortunately, the participation of women in the field of education, particularly in developing countries, is not very satisfactory. The same is true for women of our country too. Muslims in India are lagging behind in achieving modern education, which perpetuates the economic and overall backwardness of society. The women of Muslim society in India are suffering from higher rate of illiteracy. It is considered that certain principles and norms of Islam are primarily responsible for educational backwardness of Muslim women. But there is no theoretical and empirical basis. Actually Islam does not stand against the acquisition of knowledge and education of its believers. Islam does not want to leave its believer to be inactive and imperfect. Prophet Muhammad declared that the pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim male and female. It is very unfortunate to say that Muslims have been generally found very conservative in their outlook towards their women’s education. A very shameful gap has been found between the Islamic ideals and the existing realities. During the ancient period, education was largely monopolized by the higher castes, which did not encourage education for common masses. The advent of Muslim rule opened the door for an egalitarian education. It was for the first time during the Sultanate period the women’s education was recognized. The women of noble families were educated with the help of
private tutors, where as the common masses were imparted education in madars or pathshals. The Lodí era was remarkable for the spread of education among the common people. During this time, emphasis was given more on women’s education. There was a successful development in the field of education in Mughal period. Education was not only confined to royal families but also spread to the middle class and commoners. Women education was recognized but considered less important by the people. Women’s education was mostly confined to religious education through madars and to training of craft production such as sewing, weaving, tailoring etc.

When the Britishers came, they introduced the modern English education for colonial interest. It had a great impact on Indian society. In colonial era— the general Muslim depression caused a serious setback for Muslim men and women’s education. The Muslim educational backwardness has attracted the attention of Sir Syed Ahmad khan and his followers. When Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College for boys, was facing insurmountable hurdles in persuading even Muslim boys to accept modern education. The maulvis had issued fatwa (religious decree) declaring him a Kefir (unbeliever). The struggle for formal education of Muslim women began only towards the closing years of the nineteenth century. Maulana Hali continued to speak up to support the education for Muslim women. He even started, around 1984, a small primary school for the daughters of his family and friends in Panipat. It was great difficulty that a semi-educated Muslim lady teacher from Delhi was engaged as a teacher. And it was very interesting that within a few
months; the students knew as much as the teacher. The school had to be closed down after a few years due to non-availability of a suitable teacher. 19 Sultana Jahan Begum of Bhopal, was the great supporter of education of Muslim women. She started the Sultana School for girls in 1903. Being the ruler of state her orders could not be flouted, however, her male subjects objected. Mrs. Baksh, an Indian christian, was appointed the principal and conveyance was provided by the state to transport the girls to and from the school.

There was complete arrangement for purdah. The Begum opened another ‘Kanya Pathshala’ because she believed that education should be divorced from religion. Her generosity in giving regular grants to the girls showed her deep commitment to the cause of education for women. Sheikh Abdullah had to fight a long battle to start a girl’s school in Aligarh. In the year 1896 a resolution was placed before its annual session by khwaja Gulam Musa Saylani to the effect that some attention may be paid to the education of Muslim women. Aftab Ahmad khan and Murtaza Ali supported it. Sheikh Abdullah became the secretary of the women’s branch at the annual session of Muslim Educational Conference in Delhi. At the annual session of the Muslim Conference, for the first time women were allowed to listen to the proceedings from behind a screen. 20 In 1904, Sheikh Abdullah succeeded in bringing out a monthly magazine ‘Khatoon’ to popularize the idea of a school for Muslim girls in Aligarh. Then the Begum of Bhopal promised to give annual grant of Rs. 1200/- for the school. The school was opened in 1906 with just six girls and teaching was conducted in the beginning by the wife of Sheikh Abdullah shaheb and her two sisters. I
Hyderabad state, Salarjung educated his daughters with the help of French governess in 1806. In Bengal, Rokeya Sakhwat Hussain was the founder of school in Calcutta in 1911.  

So many difficulties faced by these schools in the beginning. The prevalence clearly marriage did not allow more than two or three years of schooling. Many myths were in circulation as that brainwork was infurious for the delicate health of women. Male were not interested to send the girls to school because of Islamic traditions and those who were interested to send the school, they want to give religious education.

Some Urdu periodicals played a catalytic role in the social liberation of women. One of these was _Tehzib-e-Niswan_, founded in 1898 by Mumtaz Aziz of Lahore and his wife. It was weekly magazine. This magazine provides reading material for women to give world news. _Khatoon_ another monthly magazine, was brought out by Sheikh Abdullah of Aligarh in 1904. It was a journal of women’s section of all India Muslim Educational Conference. The journal’s purpose was to advocate the cause of education amongst Muslim women by founding local associations to raise funds for opening girl’s school. _Khatoon_, ‘Ismat’ were also important to promote women’s education. Ismat was primarily helpful to encourage creative writings by women. Begum Khedive Jung was the first women graduate of Hyderabad. She founded Hyderabad Ladies Association in 1902.  

Most of the magazine focused attention on the disabilities from which women suffered due to polygamy, ignorance, and unequal marriage. It was believed that the main aim of education for girls was to get well-placed bridegrooms for them and to develop such womanly virtues as self-sacrifice, devotion, kindness,
and patience. All these early efforts for providing education to Muslim women were generally directed towards the urban elite. In a feudal society where land was the basis of wealth, obviously, education did not have the same importance.

Ulma, an interpreter of God’s words was enjoining a superior position. And they were not dedicated to education. They considered that education is a threat to a girl’s innocence exposing her to possible mental pollution by bringing undesirable literature within her reach. Even in relatively enlightened families where girls were taught to read they were not taught to write in case they were tempted to write love letters.

But, during the British rule, the intellectuals were trying to change the attitude of people towards girl’s education and these attempts proved fruitful in turning people’s faces towards education. It is very fortunate that each generation being better educated than the last. Today, girls attend not only schools but also go on to colleges and even to the universities. There is no doubt that education would become more widespread but in rural areas and small towns, the condition is more pitiable. Apart from other problems, the reluctance of parents to send their girls to school. For poor family, it is necessary to spend whatever funds are available on a potential breadwinner and so it is the boys who go to school and the girls who stay at home.²³

After Independence, a lot of improvements have taken place in the educational status of women but in contemporary times the educational status of Muslim women is not at all satisfactory. The majority of Indian Muslim girls were taught the rudiments of religion. They usually receive primary education in maktabs after that they mostly confined within the
for walls of house. In spite of facilities provided by the government for free
education, the number of Muslim girls attending schools was very small.
There is no doubt that education and purdah both are main hindrances in the
way of political participation. And education is must for removal of purdah
and removal of purdah is must for education. Both are interlined. Today,
apart from the traditional hampers, Muslim women are to be found in the
fields of teaching, medicine, broadcasting, engineering, interior decoration,
modeling, acting on stage and screen. But number of these participants is
very less and Muslim community should be open minded to provide facility
to involve in social and political activities. Educated families are progressive
and they are interested to encourage their girls to participate in political
participation. But there is more need to reform in the field of education to
increase the political consciousness.

Divorce

Regarding the factors responsible for participation of women in
politics divorce is another one. The triple divorce in one sitting, this form of
divorce has indeed caused a lot of misery to a large number of Muslim
women in India. It is still in practice although it was disapproved of by the
prophet himself. The Quran does not mention it at all. 24

The Quran unambiguously stressed gender justice. It took care of the
rights of women. The Quranic divorce not only requires two arbiters, one
from the wife’s side and one from the husband’s side, but also two reliable
witness for pronouncing divorce. Thus, the Quran says, “And if you fear a
treaty between the two, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from her people. If both desire agreement, Allah will affect harmony between them. Surely Allah is ever knowing, Aware." 25 In fact, Quranic divorce depends on gender justice while Ulema and patriarchal society changed the form of divorce and made it arbitrary. The Muslim women's protection of rights on divorce) bill has aggravated their plight, as they cannot get any succor from the Wakf Board. In many cases even the parents, are unable to support them. The women really find it very difficult to maintain themselves as well as children. One can imagine that if women have to face this type of social problems, how can they think about involving in politics? In this situation, they hesitate to think about participation in social and political life.

Male dominance

Muslim women are living in male dominated community. Because of closed society the male are of conservative thinking. Social life requires a hierarchical organization. Without such organization no work would be performed. Most of the time economic power held in the hands of male partners in family. The division of work makes male dominant. It serves to make women socially and politically weak. Muslim women are confined to the home on account of lack of education and purdah. So they have a little space for economic independence. The capacity of self-judgement, and instinct of autonomy may not develop. And directly, indirectly men consider women as an inferior sex and they are not able to do such work as males do. In male dominating community, Muslim women are less in numbers in politics. They have no enough information and knowledge about political
framework. They think that children and family are on their priority rather than others. And this apathetic attitude made her inferior and passive.

Others

Early marriage of Muslim women also a hamper in their participation in politics. Marriage is an important event, which determines the nature of post-childhood behavior. And it is very difficult for a woman with young children to find time for politics. But, this factor is more important in determining participation. Sometimes, early marriage becomes a greater restraint for women because they have to leave their education and have a need the support of husband. Often, women are forced to choose between politics and their families would opt for families and thus greatly limiting the available supply of female political activists.  

Women are more affected by early marriage because a bundle of responsibilities are thrown on them before attaining physical as well as mental maturity.

Therefore all these aforesaid factors, which are very much social in their nature, are not playing a positive role in building a conducive aura for Muslim women’s political participation. Apart from these social factors, there are some economic variables, which play a major role in determining political life of Muslim women.

ECONOMIC FACTOR

Family is a concrete entity where production and reproduction of social life is carried out. Although, every member should have the right to family resources, yet family itself promotes gender subordination and sexual discrimination because of which women are more vulnerable in family
relationships. In sharing the economic responsibility in a family, men go to work outside home, whereas women contribute to domestic chores.

Under the Muslim Personal Law a daughter inherits half share of a son. Muslim woman is entitled to acquisition of resources in two ways, by inheritance and by mehr. Also whatever she earns will belong only to her. Nobody has a right over it where as it is incumbent upon a Muslim man to maintain the woman and children. The right to inheritance of a woman is also observed more often in principle than in practice. During feudal ages, agricultural property was avoided given to daughter because it would be divided. But it is clear in Quran that women can work for earning and man has not any right to discourage her.

It should be noted that the socio-economic influences, which have brought about many changes in the Indian society, did not filter down to the lower strata of society. Even in the middle strata the dispersion of economic boon remained uneven. The conflict between the forces of modernity and tradition got the upper hand. The mechanism of stability through change, once again reasserted itself with the desire to change on the one hand and the influence of age old traditions on the other, a working balance of countervailing forces has emerged without attiring fundamentals of male female relationships. It, for example, the call for higher education for women was the result of modernity, the tradition of being home bound prevented the Muslim women from entering into job market. As a result women in general and Muslim women in particular remained economically dependent.
Economic independence makes a person self-dependent. Some qualities as self-confidence, decision-making powers have been develop after getting a strong economic position. Higher level of economic participation of women not only contributes to accelerating the economic development but will also relieve social and economic problems. Therefore, it is very necessary to encourage Muslim women to realize their potentiality by involving them in productive activities. Their participation in economic activities not only enhances their own status but also helps to elevate the status of their families, community and society at large.

If one look at the employment position of Muslim women in India, it will find that they are under represented in both public and private sector. They have been given little opportunity to take up employment outside the home. In a male dominated society the contribution of women in development process has been underestimated. Man has regarded women as his tool because in the end he found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in the fall the descent is easy. It is find in Muslim community that women are excluded from certain economic and political activities and that their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men. It seems fair to say that all communities are to be somewhat male dominated and although the degree and expression of female subordination vary greatly, sexual asymmetry is presently a fact of human social life. Therefore, unless women are encouraged and permitted to take part along with men folk, any imbalance will emerge both in family and in society. Due to their
dependence on men, women continue to lead a life of subordination, subjugation and insecurity.

Although the representation of Muslim women in the field of employment or any economic work is low, slowly their number in participation is increasing. Today, they work in the field of teaching, administration, medicine, engineering etc. A realization about the need of women taking up jobs for improving their condition is emerging. The educated Muslim women want to come out from the taboos of male dominated society. They want to grow up not as stereotyped women but as individuals with full freedom and economic independence. There is a perception that women are not capable for leading role, but there is a change in societal values when Muslim men are also becoming increasingly broad minded and where women can break away from their traditional role. Parents also begin to realize the importance of employment because of economic independence of their daughters. The economic condition has not taken place uniformly in society. Women’s representation in economy may vary from one class to other and from one group to another. Muslim women’s representation in economy is lower rather than other communities. Majority of Muslim women are economically dependent as they have not independent income sources. Male dominated society, and religion are main reason for lower economic condition. Although Islam regards the home and domestic life as natural and most important sphere of a woman’s activity in society, it does not forbid women from seeking employment in times of need, particularly in the positions which suit their nature and in which society needs her services most. If women take proper
care of patrol and observe shariat instructions, they are not barred from engaging in any lawful activity outside their houses. But, Muslim males are hesitant to allow their women to work outside the family.

However, the influence of socio-cultural barriers preventing women to elevate economic position, but education, technological development, high cost of living are contributing to change in the attitude of the people towards women’s economic independence. Government’s programs for women’s economic progress are also playing a major role. Despite constitutional safeguards, programs of Five Year Plan and relevant labour laws, Muslim women are still lagging behind in their contribution to politics and socio-economic development because of lack of education, lack of interest, and gender bias in community with highly patriarchal attitude. Women’s economic and political position will not improve it. The feeling of insecurity cannot be finished so if there is need of political participation of women, their economic position must be improved.

RELIGIOUS FACTOR

The connection between religion and politics runs very deep. Religion influences political and non-political processes and affects the operation of the institutional framework of the state. The fundamental teachings of religion are recognized and respected by the laws of state because basic religious beliefs survive in different forms in moral assumptions and cultural norms and they continue to mould the attitude of peoples to such institutions as family, marriage, and education system. 29 “India is a religious and not a political continent”. 30 Religion is more pervasive in India than in west. Till the advent of the Britishers, the idea of secular civic society did not came
time being in India and consequently religion dominated both the state and society.

Islam has been one of the most powerful religions of the world. And the role of the Prophet as a ruler of a state distinguishes Islam from other religions. The Islamic fundamentalists all over the world by citing certain verses of sacred book, sometimes quite out of context, argue that the concept of democracy and socialism are thoroughly un-Islamic. 31

Under the British rule, the position of Muslim community underwent a change. The new rulers were bearers of modern culture. When a section of Muslim leadership decided to cooperate with British and accept the modern system of education, it felt the necessity of change in socio-political and religious outlook. The other communities had already started thinking along these lines but the case of Muslim community was different. The nature and ethos of Islam is different from that of Hinduism. Hinduism has been flexible and tolerant. There is absence of highly rigidity in Hindu religion. The basic principles of Islam have on the contrary a rigidity, which would not brook any such liberties of interpretation as Hinduism allowed. The Muslim intellectuals had not much freedom in matters of faith and belief, which enabled them to launch movements for religious reforms and start various organizations for the purpose to elevate the condition of women.

As far as concern with religious position of women in politics, Islam does not forbid them to take participation in political activities. Religion cannot be blamed for assigning secondary place to women. Religion itself is the end product of patriarchal society and so is male domination. So, unless patriarchal values and patriarchal structures are dispensed with, the male
attitude towards women will continue to be one of domination. The Quran had not been unfair to women and yet it seen that Islamic Sariat formulated by great Imams under the influence of patriarchal values and assigned women an inferior position in politics. The theologians and jurist are not ready to rethink women’s issue even today, while Islam and its Prophet have provided the Muslims with a dynamic and revolutionary principle of creative interpretation so that they can, in the true spirit of Islamic values, rethink many issues in view of changed context. It is unfortunate that in society even the question of socio-political change and women’s right are politicized from both sides i.e., from the side of Muslims as well as Hindu. The Shahbano movement is one example and the question of common civil code, another.

The religious leaders are also obstructing Muslim women from enjoying the fruits of political power. They are the ones who kept women in isolation and stagnation. Even today, they try to influence the masses in their religious sermons. Often, they pass adverse comments on the participation in political field of women. They discourage family on question of political participation and propagate wrong notions about women’s politics. Since, a majority of Muslim women cannot either read or understand the contents of the Holy Quran, they believe only the words of moulvis. They overemphasize the significance of wearing Burka. In this situation how can one imagine of Muslim women’s participation in politics. Due to their traditional mentality and lack of awareness about modern values the community, as a whole has been very slow in progress. The interpreters are misleading the Muslim women and discourage them from having a certain political attitude.
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR

Most of the able, educated women are apathetic about their political involvement, especially those from the middle class background. Our socialization processes make women dependent. Often women do not have interest themselves in politics because of home bounded mentally. After getting marriage they have to bear so many responsibilities as rearing children, daily routine work, care of husband and guests etc. Their social cultural responsibilities may not permit to have a particular political attitude.

Apart from home responsibilities the general attitude towards politics is another obstacle to women’s participation. In present time, politics is considered as ‘dirty game’ and it discourage women to take the stigma attached to politics. Today’s politics is based on money power, muscle power and criminal activities. And women either Hindu or Muslim have relatively less ability to use money, muscle power and other forms of influence in public sphere. Another important reason is that electoral politics in India today is increasingly relying on violence and crime and women find it much more difficult than their male counterparts. Moreover, men’s attitude towards women’s entry into politics also make women much more apathetic about political scenario. Men are not playing a positive role in this regard, so women are unable to go ahead to participate in political sphere. Men’s attitude, social taboos, communal riots, violence, crime, immoral conduct of leaders are such major factors which discourage women and make them apathetic towards their political responsibilities.
MUSLIM WOMEN IN POLITICS

In spite of unfavourable environment for Muslim women to participate in public life, some bold and Amazon women came on the fore. They came out with strength from all the clutches of traditions, orthodoxy and patriarchal society. They contributed to get the community progressive and participative.

As Islam never discourage women to participate in politics. Throughout the History of Islam, it finds that a Muslim woman is given full political rights. Women took part in serious discussions and argued. Through the reading of the following verse of the Holy Quran it would be possible to know how Islam gave her political rights.

“...Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the women who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah, and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you. For Allah hears and sees (all things). 58 : 1 31

It was only the teachings of Islam that gave her full rights as reasonable being.

The association of Indian Muslim women with politics goes back to the pre-independence days, when they participated in the various phases of freedom struggle as volunteer, leaders and commanders. 35 They suffered like men. Such participation could be made possible due to the spadework done by the social and religious reformers in the field of women’s education, emancipation and upliftment. Women’s participation increased manifold as the National Movement acquired a mass character under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.
However, unlike the Hindu women who participated in large number, the participation among the Muslim women was confined to an elite class. The reason for the limited participation could be attributed to the traditional factors like custom of purdah and segregation among the Muslims. The prominent Muslim women who shared the feminist platform provided by the Indian women in general and Muslim women in particular were Begum of Bhopal, Begum Rahmutullah, Mrs. Hamil Ali, Mrs Tayabji, Mrs Haroon and Masooma Begum. 36 This was the time when our society was still dominated by conservative social customs. Nevertheless leaving the hearths and home, they came forward and fought against foreign domination. Bi Amma, the mother of Ali brothers, was a fiery crusader against British rule and toured the whole country making speeches and collecting funds for the Non-Cooperation Movement. It was a measure of her forward approach that she involved her daughter-in-law Amjadi Begum also in the cause. The first Muslim women to come out of purdah were Begum Hasrat Mohani who opened a Swadeshi store in Aligarh along with her husband. 37 In the same period, there were some other women like Sadat Bano Kitchlu from Lahore, Begum Abdul Majeed Khwaja from Aligarh who became a member of the ‘All India Congress subject Committee’ in 1921, and Bibi Shafatun-Nisa from Ludhiana. Directly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi there were host of others who joined the national movement like Amina Tyabji, her daughter Relana Begum, Sakina Luqmani, Ameena Quereshi from Surat, Bibi Amatus Salam from Panjab was the first Muslim women to join Gandhi ji’s Ashram. Actively involved also were Fatima Ismail from Bombay, Zatun Kapasi and Heera A. Ahmed. 38 However, the Muslim women’s cause, championed by
these ladies, suffered with the country’s partition, the migration of Muslim women leaders, the passage of Hindu Code Bill (1956) and the community’s minority status in the independent India. 39

In the Independent democratic India, Muslim women’s participation in politics may be viewed at two levels one acquisition and exercise of power and two awareness and assertion for political rights.

Muslim women have refrained from active political participation ie. membership of political parties, election campaigning, contesting elections and holding high public political offices.

In spite of the liberal and an enlightened constitution, political participation of Muslim women in India is low. Although their electoral participation has increased over the years, yet voting is only one aspect of political participation. In fact, there is no co-relation between their population and voting percentage with their numbers in legislatures or government or other public/ political offices. There have been just twenty Muslim women legislators in the Indian Parliament, seven members of Lok Sabha and thirteen in Rajya Sabha. Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state and having a sizable population of Muslims has sent till now three Muslim women Begum Abida Ahamd, Mrs. Mohsina kidwai and Begum Noor Bano to Lok Sabha. And three, Begum Aizaz Rasool, Ania Kidwai and Hamida Habibullh to Rajya Sabha. 40 The situation in Bihar Assembly is still worse where there has not been even a single Muslim women MLA since independence though the Muslims constitute nearly 40% of the population in Bihar. Though there are quite a few highly educated Muslim women in
Bihar, their representation in the state and center level politics is nil. Even today, Muslim women’s participation as candidates has not increased as there is one member, Begum Noor Bano from Rampur in 13th Lok Sabha and two members, Dr. (smt.) Najma Heptulla and smt. Shabana Azmi, in Rajya Sabha.

Two types of factors general and special affect political participation of Muslim women. Former are these, which equally affect all Indian women, and later are those, which exclusively concern the Muslim women. In spite of a congenial political environment in the country it finds psychological obstacles, economic hurdles and socio-cultural barriers restricting women’s effective participation. The traditional outlook of our society and certain practical hurdles come in the way of Muslim women’s participation. A society, in which the birth of a girl child is not welcome and preference for sons, women are victim of sexist discrimination and subjected to inequality and disabilities. She is deemed a second-class citizen and her proper place is considered to be with in the four walls of her home. On the other hand, factors like poverty, household work, child bearing and child rearing make heavy demand of her time, energy and attention. Besides patriarchal family norms, low level of informal and formal education, weak socialization process during childhood, homebound life and weak exposure to the outside world adversely affect Muslim women participation.

Muslims are not an insecure community but also the most backward community in educational and socio-economic terms. The community’s weak political, social and economic position in society seriously affects the status of Muslim women. In fact, women’s participation in election depends
on mobilization of political parties, general awareness among the community and overall political culture. No serious effort has as yet been made to mobilize women as a political constituency by any political party. Political parties are still reluctant to field women candidates.

Lack of able role modal leadership among the Muslim women is another hurdle in the progress of Muslim women. Most of the existing women leaders do not make serious effort to encourage Muslim women to involve in politics. The male leaders also seem to have a vested interest in their backwardness so that they can create vote banks by whipping up religious sentiments or raising emotional issues. In fact, there is an acute dearth of enlightened leadership at all levels of the Muslim community.

Those women who have education, means and ability to actively participate in politics are reluctant due to corruption in politics, criminalization of politics, cost of elections and degenerating electoral practices. Due to social, religious economic and psychological factors, a wide gap exists between the formal constitutional equality and actual inequality. Although Muslim women have constitutional freedom but in the absence of impressive Muslim leader of any political party, the leadership of the community rests in the hands of Mullahs who oppose any reforms in the Muslim Personal Law. And these factors directly and indirectly affect Muslim women’s exposure to outside world.

**Mechanism to increase Muslim women’s participation:**

The methods of emancipation of women in any country lie in the mind of man and in the attitudes of their leadership. And both have affected women directly. There are some methods to increase the ratio of political
participation such as training is one of the most important mechanism for improving women’s participation in politics particularly for increasing women’s access to the higher levels in national decision-making bodies. 43

In some countries quotas have been successfully used to increase women’s participation in the leadership of political parties and in party lists for public election. For example, the Norwegian Labour Party stipulates that at least 40 percent of all candidates for election must be women. 44 Quota is the most efficient strategy if used to increase Muslim women’s political representation. The constitutions or legislation of only few countries provide quotas for women in Parliament including those of Angola, the former USSR and Nepal.

The under representation of women in political decision-making bodies is the key reason for the backwardness of Indian women. To ensure the women’s participation the 73rd and 74th amendments of the constitution mandated 1/3 reservation of seats of women in all local level elected bodies. Similarly, there is need of reservation of seats in Parliament and state Assemblies.

Reservation of seats in the legislative bodies for women will alter the very character of legislative body and will compel the political parties to change their strategies and tactics and induce them to give women their due. If the women enter these bodies in larger number, inhibitions that result from their minority position in these institutions may disappear fastly and give them greater freedom to articulate their views. A system of reservation may
also increase the women legislators’ sense of responsibility and concern for the problems affecting women.

Political education and awareness building is intended to promote women’s representation in the electoral process, to establish and lobby for women’s agenda and to sensitize both women and men to women’s issues and the role of women in politics. For that it is necessary to organize time to time a series of seminars, workshops and conferences all across the India to involve women in political debate and present their views. These workshops will reach a wide cross section of women.

Now, Muslim women are trying to come out of their isolation and making involvement in the public life, which is making the women rich in socio-political experience. They have backing of constitutional safeguards and social legislation, which leads them to participate socio-political life. Moreover, the various factors, which determine the political outlook and activities, are gradually making a multi-dimensional efforts for political participation of Muslim women.

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