Chapter VI

Conclusion
People's participation is an essential pre-condition for the successful functioning of a democratic system. Political participation does not mean mere exercise of political rights by the people conferred by their constitution or any legal document. But, participation also demands active involvement of people at every level which influences the decision making of the government. It is important and inseparable element of a democratic system. Participation is a mean of reducing power differences and is, therefore, contributory to equalization and social justice. Participation in public life has many facets and involves a series of voluntary activities, which have a bearing on political process.

In modern age women are associated directly or indirectly to the operation of society and at the same time occupy an important position in democratic political system. Today, women are a significant variable, which affect the nature and scope of political participation and consequently the political system as a whole. Women's participation does not mean only mobilization of power to solve their problems but it is essential to apply the women's point of view in policy-making bodies.

Participation enables women by giving them a sense of their own dignity and value. Political participation is the involvement of individuals and groups in the political process of a political system at various levels. Political participation is of two types active and passive. This distinction is a necessary outcome of the most common fact that political participation in every society has a cost that involves time, energy and resources. All the people are not equally willing to bear the cost.

Political participation of women in politics involves:

1. Women as a voter
2. Women as a member of trade unions / pressure groups
4. Women as members of various voluntary organizations.

But, the participation of Muslim women in Political life of India is pitiable. In fact, they are victim of oppression that works in two ways – one as and two as members of a minority community. Muslim women have
remained from active political participation. Although, electoral participation of Muslim women has increased since independence, their participation in political assemblies and government is very limited.

Holy Quran provides equal right for women. Religion per se cannot be blamed for assigning an inferior position to women. In fact, it is not the religion, but male dominated patriarchal society which neglected the Muslim women to an inferior position. Male interpretation of Islamic teaching has served to discourage women for playing an active role in socio-political activities. Moreover any change in Muslim Personal Law is opposed by a section of a people mainly on the ground of Muslim identity. This community accepts changes in other spheres, which do not inflict a crushing blow to male domination, with a loud voice.

However, some Muslim women have been successful to break the stereotypical thinking and come out on the fore to participate in Politics. But this participation has been confined only to elite sections. Muslim women’s participation may be veined at two levels—one, acquisition and exercise of power and two, awareness and assertion for political rights. A majority of Muslim women have remained aloof from active politics except participation at the local level specifically, in Local- Self – government. But it has been possible due to reservation of women in local bodies. Because most of the Muslim women have not yet crossed the threshold of political activism; they are confined only to passive political participation. There is some valid reason behind the longer participation of Muslim women. Muslim women continue to be the victim of exploitation, discriminations and subjection in name as well as outside. According to the Human Development report, the women in many countries are facing gender inequalities is social, economic and political spheres. Simultaneously, it also reveals that 70% of the world’s poor and two-thirds of the world’s illiterates are women and their economic and political clout is virtually non-existent compared to that of men. The report says it is an unending conspiracy on global scale to undervalue women’s work and contributes to society. It is data of general women of whole world but the picture is more pitiful about women of South Asia and more specifically Muslim women in India. They have problems because most of them are illiterate ignorant and economically dependent. Moreover, the requisite qualification for active participation is reluctant to participate due to
criminilization and corruption in politics. However the society is not providing and environment, which is conducive for women’s participation in politics. How far a society can provide the framework within which the freedom to function, the opportunity to learn and the option to participate are made available to women is the test of its viability and its dynamism in the context of emerging female identity.

Muslim women in general have not been able to take full advantage of modernization. Moreover the women in Muslim community do not perform the multi-faceted roles, which are performed by women in the modern society. There are certain factors which affect the political participation of Muslim women such as lack of education, lack of employment, practice of seclusion, system of marriage and divorce, male dominance, religious tradition etc.

Education has been found to have an unlimited potential for raising the status of Muslim women. It is considered essential requirement for multi-faceted development of an individual. Lack of education deprives Muslim women of the capacity to engage in modern roles outside home. Education make them aware of their socio-political rights and also rectify the disabilities they suffer being women and being member of minority community in the Muslim community religious instructions is considered indispensable for women. Some religious leaders stress the importance of religious education and allure the uneducated masses note to send their grown up girls to schools and colleges. Further they strongly oppose not only acquiring modern education but also discourage the Muslims to send their girls outside after attaining puberty.

Apart from this the attitude of Muslims towards women’s education is getting changed, now they intend to educate their daughters not only to make them better housewives but also self reliant and employable. But, in spite that percentage of educated women is not up to the level of satisfaction. Therefore Muslim women are deprived from the opportunities to participate in public and political life. Further education serves to make a person conscious about their rights and to assert for them.

It may be stated that higher education does not necessarily induce higher degree of participation. The fact is that they are sometimes
reflected greater apathy towards political participation; in the present study data shows that the higher educated respondent participation is lower than that of less educated and illiterate respondents. Further their voting percentage in general elections is also lower in comparison to others. However it is not a serious matter if a woman out of her own will choose to restrict herself to her private matters. But, it is a serious matter if a woman is ignorant about her rights or is denied or deprived of her rights. If socio-psychological hindrances restrict her participation or the government organization do not provide her opportunities of participation, than these man made obstacles have to be overcome.

The practice of seclusion is an important impediment for all around development of Muslim women. Prophet Mohammad introduced the practice of purdah to protect Muslim women from a world of men who consider women as just sexual object. The purpose was not to restrict the liberty of women but, to protect them from the temptation of men aroused by their beauty. But, purdah has also acted as a stumbling block in the progress of Muslim women it deprives them of equal opportunity in most of the spheres of human activities. On account of purdah system, men curb women from participating in socio-political activities. Moreover Muslim women are discouraged from going out doors for the fear of violating purdah system. Hence, they are lagging behind in various fields due to the practice of seclusion. In the present study, almost 81% respondents have manifested purdah as a hindrance in the way of their participation in politics.

Now, there is neither logic nor need for keeping women indoors and not permitting them to mix freely with society as other women. They should be allowed to enjoy all extra family freedom as is enjoyed by women in other communities in the society.

Muslim women have many more constraints on their participation as members of a minority community based on religious identity. It is generally viewed that Muslim community is not responding to the progress of modernization due to minority complex. The Muslims have minority complex due to their pessimistic attitude and they perceive all their problems in light of Hindu-Muslim discrimination and conflict. This feeling is more visible among the elite and educated Muslims than among poor, illiterate and downtrodden community.
However the feeling of minority complex generally is an outcome of a feeling of insecurity, frustration and uncertainty. In long term, their feelings of minority have made them hesitant, half-hearted and non-cooperative. Consequently the Muslims remain under-represented in the educational institutions, legislations and services.

Moreover, religious regimentation, early marriage, divorce, polygamy and male dominance affect the participation of Muslim women in politics. In this regard to know the views of respondents, whether the role of religion is conducive for the participation of the Muslim women in politics. Nearly, 57% respondents have listed in their negative responses. Thus religious strict norms restrict women to come out of domestic life and to participate in political spheres. Further the fear of divorce and male dominance also restrict the Muslim women’s exposure to outside world, which leads to lower participation of Muslim women in politics.

In every country of the world, women work more hours than men, but share less in the economic rewards, in both the developing and developed world, most of women’s work remain unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. As far as economic position of Muslim women is concerned, Islam not only grants economic rights but also encourage women to be economically independent. From a financial point of view, women enjoy some benefits as men. Women 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. But all these provisions are not in practice. The right to inheritance of women is also observed more often in preach than in practice. In this way, Muslim women are not self reliant in economic fields because most of the Muslims do not likes working of women with men. However, the functions of women have become subsidiary, secondly at the best complimentary and only the functions of men are seen as crucial and dominating. Moreover, it is believed that man runs the house sustain it or it’s means or livelihood and it is again men who take all the decisions in family and society’s activities. Thus, generally in Muslim community the male dominate the female in all respects, which affect the participation in politics also.

Thus, due to illiteracy, social conservatism, dominant position of man, economic dependence on man and social values, a wide gap exists
between the formal constitutional equality and actual inequality, inferiority and subordination of Indian Muslim women. But, economic independence and education have certainly liberated many Muslim women from the shackles of religious conservatism, social orthodoxy and domestic bondage. Moreover, some Muslim women have been successful to break the stereotypical thinking and came out on the fore to participate in the political process.

In the present study, an effort has been made to find out the extent to which the Muslim women have been able to break the traditional norms regarding their political participation. More precisely an attempt has been made to study the attitude of the respondents towards Muslim women’s participation in politics.

In nutshell, a large number of respondents (Muslim women of Sambhal) have shown their interest in politics. They involve in political activities to some extent and cast their vote in good numbers. Further, a majority of respondent has manifested their dissatisfaction to governmental policies for upliftment of Muslim women. Moreover, most of the respondent have showed their inclination towards the policy of secularism in politics and expressed their anger for corruption and immoral conduct of political leaders, which discouraged them to participate actively in politics.

However, in spite of non-conducive environment for Muslim women to participate in today’s politics, they are trying to break the tradition and norms regarding their socialization and political participation. Now Muslim women are getting realized their existence as human being with equal status. They are getting education, which widens the horizon of their thinking and action, and coming out from their isolation. Muslim women need to make themselves politically visible and politically important in order to change the direction of development, empowerment and gender justice. Participation in electoral and institutional politics will not only make Muslim women conscious of their rights and identity as an important segment of political life but also associate them with decision-making process.

Now, it is imperative to make Muslim women conscious about their fundamental rights and constitutional safeguards enumerated in the
constitution, which have been denied to them in the name of religion and social ethos. Some measures need also be adopted to enhance the level of education and financial independence to ensure their participation in politics. Moreover, to increase Muslim women's participation a liberal social outlook and a substantial effort by political parties are necessary at every sphere of political action. Political education and awareness building is intended to promote women's representation in the electoral process. For that it is necessary to organize time to time a series of conferences, workshops and seminars all across the India to involve Muslim women in political debate and present their views.

Apart from these measures, an organized movement among the Muslim women is the need of the hour—a movement to establish and lobby for Muslim women's oriented issues. Here again, Muslim cultural organizations should take initiative. They should spearhead the movement for the reformation of traditional practices, which cannot stand, with test of time. They should mobilize public opinion and lend institutional and financial support for the initiatives taken for the raising of the status of Muslim women and their participation in politics.