CHAPTER-2

An Overview in
2. An overview of Selected Literature:

2.1. Classical Religious View of Islam about the Position of Women:

Jamal Badawi (1971: http://www.islam for today.com/women’s rights badawai.htm) states that the status of women in society is neither a new issue nor it is a fully settled one. The teachings of Islam are based essentially on the Quran (God’s revelation) and Hadees (elaboration by Prophet Mohammad) which assign responsibilities to both men and women. The Quran provides clear cut evidence that woman is completely equated with man in the sight of God in terms of her rights and responsibilities. The Quran states “Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds” (Quran 74:38). It also states, “So their Lord accepted their prayers (sayings): I will not suffer to be lost the work of any of you weather male or female. You proceed one from another” (Quran 3:195).

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and his faith, verily to him will we give a new life that is good and pure, and we will bestow on such reward according to their actions (Quran 16:97, see also 4:124). Women according to the Quran is not blamed for Adam’s first mistake. Both were jointly wrong in their disobedience to God, both repented and both were forgiven (Quran 2:36, 7:20-24). In one verse infect (20:121) Adam specifically, was blamed.

Is Hijaab compulsory to Muslim women and is there any difference between Niqaab and Hijaab. Ibrahim B.Syed (http://www.Islam for today.com/syed 06.htm) gives the answer of this question. “The Quran does not suggest that women should be veiled or they should be kept apart from the world of men. On the contrary, the Quran is insistent on the full participation of women in society and in the religious practices.”
One of the verses in the Quran protects a woman’s fundamental rights. Verse 59 of Surah-Al-Ahzaab reads: “O Prophet! Tell the wives and daughters and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when outside): so that they should be known (as such) and not molested.”

According to Quran the reason why Muslim women should wear an outer garment when going out of their homes is that they may be recognized as “Believing” women and differentiated from street walkers far from sexual harassment and occupational hazards. The purpose of this verse was not to confine women to their homes, but to make it safe for them to go about their daily business without attracting unsavory attention. Older Muslim women who are past the prospect of marriage are not required to wear “the outer garment” such as elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage, there is no blame on them if they lay outside their (outer) garments provided they make no want on display of their beauty, but it is best for them to be modest and Allah is one who sees and knows all things (24:60). The Quran does not suggest that women should be veiled or they should be kept apart from the world of men. On the contrary the Quran is insistent on the full participation of women in society and in the religious practices. Morality of the self and cleanliness of conscience are far better than the morality of the purdah. No goodness can come from pretence.

Hasan Al-Turabi (2001:http://www.islam for today.com/niqaab.htm) states, about the position of women in Islam that so far as the familiar Hijaab is concerned it refers to the special regulation pertaining to the Prophet’s wives due to their status and situations.

The Quran in chapter 33 verse 53, with respect to the Hijaab, applies to all Muslim women in general. No screen or Hijaab (Purdah) is mentioned in this verse. It prescribes only a veil to cover her bosom and modesty in dress. Hence the unlawfulness of the practice of the Indian style, system of purdah (full face veiling). Under this system, the Hijaab is not only imposed upon all Muslim women, but it is also quite often forced upon them in an obligatory and mandatory
fashion. Even the listeria reading (translation of the Quranic verse) does not support the assertion that the Hijab is recommended for all Muslim women. The Hijab/Screen was a special feature of honour for the Prophet’s wives and it was introduced about five or six years before his death.

Sekh Rahim Mondal (2005:18) examines that the world of Islam is derived from the Arabic root SLAM, which advocates for peace, submission, and obedience. In religious sense the word Islam means submission to the will of God (Allah) and the obedience to this law. The followers of Islam are commonly known as Muslims. Accordingly a Muslim is one who submits to the divine injunctions and does not deviate from them. Quran (words of God) and Hadit (things are Prophet said and did), are the two primary sources of Islamic laws and guide to the believers. The laws of Quran and Hadit are broadly called Shariat which determine the social life of Muslims. Islam envisaged comprehensive social roles of women and looks forward to her active participation in matters concerning the society and contributes greatly to almost all walks of life. Islam has taken all measures to safeguard the interest of women and allows them to perform religion as men without any restriction. During the days of Prophet, Muslim women did not confine them within the narrow periphery of their homes. At that time they participated in military services like bringing water for the thirsty warriors, creating the wounded nursing activities and also engaged in warfare. Apart from this, women were found to take active part in the process of election or consultation for appointment of the counselors and officers responsible for the Public affairs. Thus, it appears that in the notion of Islam Muslim women are enjoying and also have the right to work for them and for society.

Maria Jaschok (2000:239) has found that at least in the early sates of religious movement, women experienced themselves as individuals and their experience of conversion as affirming their uniqueness before God. Equality in access to the soteriology entailed by definition emancipation from and identify shaped by the traditions and customs of an overarching tribal group. It is important to recognize at least initially, that universalism
is seen as having mitigated male dominance through a radical stereological equality and an emphasis on personal, unmediated experience. Also, Islam in its founding stage was predicated on social reforms which had important consequences for women: abolition of female infanticide inheritance rights, right of control over dowry and polygynous nature of marriage, centrality of husband-wife relationship underpinned by emphasis on strict moral. The heart of Islamic religion is its book of divine revelations, the Koran, spoken through God’s messenger, Mohammed, in the language of the messenger, Arabic. The Koran testifies to the equality of women and men both are called upon to be witnesses to the oneness of God and the terror of the final Day of Judgment. Several passages give emphatic confirmation of the principle of equality; men and women are rewarded for their good deeds with no regard to sexual identity: we shall reward the steadfast according to their noblest deeds. By they men or women, those that embrace the faith and do what in right. We will surely grant a happy life.

Afsar Bano (2003:223) has studied in dealing with women’s education from the Islamic perspective it is recognize that wider issues pertaining to a modern Islamic curriculum have not been addressed. The latter is, indeed, a crucial issue, but our concern here has been one of the key questions of principle that should surely guide current attempts to formulate and authentically Islamic education system, namely the approach to women’s education in such a system. Long as the education system is governed by the spirit of Islam throughout, there will be a harmony between, these two modes of social activity, permitting women to express themselves in accordance with their natural dispositions and to be given the respect and honor which is so central to the real social message of Islam. Knowledge and education, highly emphasized in Islam. Both are integral parts of the Islamic religion. Islam encourages its followers to enlighten themselves with the knowledge of their religion as well as other branches of knowledge. It holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and has exalted his position. In reality, the entire aim of the divine revelation and the sending of Prophets to
humankind have been stressed in the Quran as the communication of knowledge. The Book says: ‘The Prophet recites unto people God’s revelation; causes them to grow and imparts to them knowledge, and wisdom. The divine desires every believer to be well educated in religion, to possess wisdom and broad intellectual knowledge. The purpose of raising a prophet in a nation is to teach and to impart knowledge. The Quran is full of verses which praise learned people, encourage original thinking and personal investigation and denounce unimaginative imitation.

Ibrahim B Syed (2001: http://www.islamfortoday.com/shed0.6htm) states that Literally, Hijab means "a veil", "curtain", "partition" or "separation." In a meta-physical sense, Hijab means illusion or refers to the illusory aspect of creation. Another, and most popular and common meaning of Hijab today, is the veil in dressing for women. It refers to a certain standard of modest dress for women. "The usual definition of modest dress according to the legal systems does not actually require covering everything except the face and hands in public; this, at least, is the practice which originated in the Middle East." The Qur'an advises the wives of the Prophet (SAS) to go veiled (33: 59). In Surah 24: 31(Ayah), the Qur'an advises women to cover their "adornments" from strangers outside the family. In the traditional and modern Arab societies women at home dress quite differently compared to what they wear in the streets. In this verse of the Qur'an, it refers to the institution of a new public modesty rather than veiling the face.

Zakia A. Siddiqui (1993:21-22) states that women's active participation in any field of activity be it education or public life, was perfectly legitimate and there is no evidence either in the Quran or Traditions of the Prophet to prove the contrary. The pilgrimage of Haj, which men and women perform as a community, bears witness to the fact. It cannot be denied that the secularism of women is the influence of Pre-Islamic tribal custom which crept in to the social pattern of Muslims at a later stage and which has had the tendency to stagnate the advancement by Muslim nations; the secularism of women, undoubtedly, possess many advantages in the social well being of uncultured and unsettled primitive communities. Seeing the widespread laxity of morals among all classes of people,
Prophet Mohammad strongly recommended modesty in appearance and dress. Further, the Quran itself affords no warrant for holding the secularism of women as presently practiced, it should be noted that the first verse of modesty or outlook is addressed to men, “Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them.” (H.Q. 24:30).

John L. Esposito (1998:30) examines that Muslim Quran interpretation and their interrelationship with contemporary Islamic paradigms on gender issues. From the beginning Muslims have interpreted their eternal and inimitable, mu’jaz scripture in the light of specific socioeconomic and political situations. The eternal text has thus served as both the foundational basis and as the point of convergence of many different, specific, human interpretations. “Classical Islam” produced a number of methodological approaches to the text (traditionalist, rationalist, or a combination of the two) as well as some variations in the paradigms of the status of women. These paradigms had been given shape in Islamic law (Sharia) well before the life time of the first great Quran interpreter whose exegesis (tafsir) has survived in it’s entirely. Thus medieval scholastics divergence in approaches on the Quranic text failed to find an “application” in equally divergent readings on question of women’s status. Change came with the modern age and its modernist and reformist scholars. While the nineteenth century produced new approaches to the Quran that were equally “applied” to social questions, the contemporary life has brought forth a whole new Islamic epistemology where scripture sanctioned gender paradigms play an important part. In what follows, the interrelationships of Muslims exegetic methodology and its application to gender issues is pursued by examining different readings of sura 4:34, a Quranic verse that puts men “in charge of or as “protectors of” women. When al-Ash’asri (d.935) declared the Quran “eternal in God”, and attribute of God’s essence” (and therefore uncreated) but its “expression in words created in time.” He formulated the orthodox scholastic doctrine of the nature of scripture. That the Quran is divine speech (Kalam Allah) is proclaimed by the Quran itself. (For example, in sura 9:6)
Paoloa Bacchetta (2002:251) has found that idealizing the Islamic golden age, the Islamist woman then acquires a unique self-hood drawing form the piety and obedience of the Prophet’s daughter, Fatimah and from the outspokenness of his favourite wife, Aisah. For the Islamist woman, the veil symbolizes the connection to early women of Islam rather than the submission to particularly or another form of human power. The Islamist woman identity is them complemented with a negation—what Islamist women are not. A prominent Islamist women writer, calls this unique other to veiled women the traditional women. The traditional woman is the one who “passively subjects herself to the requirements of common sense. She is so immature that she cannot recognize the difference between the traditions of her society and the divine ruler of Islam.” (1988, 81; Translation mine) The traditional woman does not know how to veil herself appropriately. She holds some religious beliefs, but she is not able to comprehend the world through the lenses of Islam (1988, 81-83). The religious traditionalism of the traditional woman does not prevent the infiltration of western amorality into the society. It is only aydne muslman Kadin (The enlightened Muslim woman) who can and does struggle for the well being of the Islamic Community (1988, 91-118). The enlightened Muslim woman represents “the intelligent, brave, chaste, productive and virtuous woman” who tries to lead her life through a complete submission to Islam, often challenging traditional inter-pretations of Islam that minimize women’s participation and instead presenting the “genuine” message of God which encourages women’s activism (121-155). The construct of the enlightened Muslim woman reinstates that not every veiled women is an Islamist woman. It helps differentiate between the modern and the traditional veiled women, promoting the enlightenment of the latter with modern Islamist values.

Zainab Rehman (2005:223-224) examines that Men and women are equal in their origin, their abode and their place of return, and are as such entitled to similar and equal rights. Islam gives her the right to life to honour and to properly like men. Zainab Rehman says there is specific sex individuality in man and woman which each must preserve and cherish, because it gives them honour and dignity
and enables them to fulfill in an effective manner their specific roles in society consistent with this specific individuality, both sexes have equal rights and are distinct legal personalities. The concept of Hijab or Purdah, if understood are practiced properly, does not restrict a Muslim woman from doing anything, she has been allowed to do by religion, like acquiring education doing business or working outside home. It impact protects her from evil eyes and designs. Of course this theoretical equality does not translate itself into practical reality in toto. In early days of Islam all the principles were upheld scrupulously by the faithful, but as Islam spread to different countries with different cultures, some changes and compromises were made and many local customs were adopted.

H.A. Jawad (1998:97) has highlighted that it has become apparent from this study that contrary to the general misconceptions, women in Islam- at least theoretically speaking are entitled to full rights at citizens. These rights were put into practice during the Prophet’s time and in the period of early Caliphate, during which women enjoyed the privilege of fulfilling their private as well as their public duties. Early Muslim society never embraced the concept of social division of labour between the two sexes. It entertained no such ideas as the differentiation between public and private roles, as far as women were concerned, or the subordination, as is the care today, of public life to the private one. Indeed both roles were equally valued, and women were expected to enjoy and excel in them. Whilst performing their public duties, women were not encouraged to be secluded, confined on constrain, nor were they forced to form a world of their own, separate, invisible and totally cut off from the so-called men’s world. Both sexes mixed and worked together within the rules of conduct laid down by Islam in order to build up their society. In the process, they encouraged and helped each other irrespective of their sex or status. In their relations with any other they transcended all evil thought currently prevailing in most Muslim societies: there was no ill-feelings temptation or lust. This atmosphere of peace, harmony and piety uplifted their spirits and transformed them in to creative and resourceful human beings respecting and respected by other. In other words, it was a healthy society,
primarily because women were highly revered and honoured for they realized that the spiritual, material and intellectual progress of a society is closely linked with the position of its women, and that no society which enslaves its women would ever prosper.

On the basis of the above select studies we may state that Quran provides for the equal position of both men and women in Islam in matters of public life with some precautions. The purpose of Hijab or Niqaab is not to confine women to their homes, but it was only to make them safe in their public life. It is also clear that Hijaab was not cornered to the ordinary women it was only for the Prophet’s wives to recognize them as special in order to pay them respect. Islam encourages its followers to enlighten themselves with the knowledge of their religion as well as other branches of knowledge. The concept of Hijab or Purdah does not restrict a Muslim woman from doing anything, she has been allowed to do by religions, like acquiring education doing business or working outside home.

2.2. Changing Scenario of Muslim women:

Madeline Bunting (2001:http//www.guardian.co.uk/archive/article/ 0,4273, 4314573, 00 html) speaks on the liberation of women in Islam. Of the modern western world, he narrates a situation. Six Muslim women are sitting in a stylish club in central London. This club is quite different from others, there is no alcohol on the menu and downstairs there is a prayer room, it is the Muslim identity. These six women are university graduates, all have chosen in the past few years to wear the Hijaab (a scarf wrapped tightly around their heads to conceal every wisp of hair). Most strikingly all are discussing about the position of women. This is the great change in the position of women that women are sitting in a well furnished modern club, talking about the empowerment of women but the effect of Islam is seen on their dress and also on the whole atmosphere where they are sitting.

Roksana Bahramitash(2004:33-46) examines the importance of women’s volunteer work prior to the move toward economic liberalization in setting the
stage for their entrance into the paid labor force is stressed, their mobilization as volunteers during the period of the Islamic welfare state provided them with confidence and solidarity. The case of Iran illustrates that in fact, religious fundamentalism did not limit women’s public role. The religious nature of the Islamic revolution is seen to have provided the impetus for women’s mobilization. Women found themselves well-positioned in the public sphere to demand paid work.

Barry Bearak (2000: http://www.library.cornell.edu/collectv/mideast/andrabi.htm) has highlighted the case of a conservative Muslim and radical feminist Asiyah Andrabi, believes that women should be heard and not seen, so she makes her demands for equal rights from behind the black curtain of all-enveloping burqa. She is a militant who opposes Indian rule here. For most of the last decade she has been living either in jail or on the lam, alternating her efforts between the liberation of women and that of Kashmir. It is a great change that behind the veil a women is aware of her rights. On polygamy she said that she had been nagging her husband to marry a few extra wives. She explained: “Allah says a man can marry one, two, three or four wives.” But he must have the means to do justice to them all. The Jihad against India has left so many widows and orphans; a man has a responsibility to look after them."

Ari Paul (2006: http://www.coveringreligion.org/2006/04/22 musli_women__look_ to_ change _ fa.html) has studied the bustling streets of Mumbai. Journalist and activist Sameera Khan is an ordinary face in the cosmopolitan landscape and a contributing member of the city’s globally competitive workforce. She is an Indian Muslim woman. She enjoys here. Khan believes, what marginalizes Muslim women in a state that is ostensibly a secular democracy. But she thinks that Muslim women can spark a change. According to her own social research in Mumbai, public space is built to the advantage of Indian men in general. While women of all religions in India have yet to make progress, she feels that she is in a position of double jeopardy. “It’s tough being a Muslim,” said Khan “It’s even tougher to be a Muslim woman.”
Asghar Ali Engineer (2008:12) has highlighted the question of women’s status has acquired great importance throughout the world and among all communities. The reason is obvious. For thousands of year women kept in total subjugation in all patriarchal societies, and it so happened that most societies were patriarchal. Thus, for centuries it was considered a natural law, that women were inferior to men and must submit to the latter’s authority for the smooth running of family life. It should be remembered that even religious scriptures could not altogether escape from adopting such attitudes though some did lay down a few norms which transcended them. However, social altitudes are so pervasive that even progressive scriptural norms become affected and are thus interpreted in a way that reflects the prevailing mental altitudes. Thus, the male dominated societies often harnessed even just and egalitarian norms laid down for women in divine scriptures to perpetuate their hold. The Quran, which is comparatively liberal in its treatment of women, also suffered the same fate. Today many of the old social structures are fast crumbling and new social orders, rational and liberal, are emerging on the scene. In the new social structures it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the old altitudes towards women. The scriptures are, therefore being re-read and reinterpreted, at least, among the progressive sections of these societies. The women’s question is, in a way, comparable to that of slavery. In feudal and pre-feudal societies slavery was considered quite justifiable. The slave themselves accepted it. However, this attitude towards slavery and freedom began to change rapidly in the emerging capitalist societies, leading ultimately to their total abolition.

Carole Boyse Davis (2008:990) states, about veil that it touches all religion as a sign of humility before God. Originally, the term “hijab” designated anything (clothes, screen or tree) that prevents seining, that is to say, marks the boundaries between public and private spaces. According to tradition, the Prophet had a revelation of the veil on the day of his wedding with beautiful Zainab on whom men cast lustful glances. His friend ‘Umar, the future Caliph, imposed it also on Medina’s female residents, a city with a laxer morality than Mecca. Hijab mark the
boundaries between public and private spaces, man and woman, this is a radical sexual separation, which is imposed normalized, and so internalized by mentalities that it suffers to explain the repulsion westerns women’s exhibition of their nudity provokes in many Muslim women. The will to modernize in Muslim societies as well as the centrality of women in any undertaking for development and human progress require control of the religious questions because they constitute the basis of collective psyches.

James Davison Hunter (1993:232) has found that education in Muslim countries is divided between modern (national) schools and traditional (Islamic) schools. Not only do these reflect different curricula, but they reflect different and competing world views as well. Yet where the pressure of privatization creates the greatest tension in the case of Islamism in the area of “family law”. As a body of legal doctrine, it requires the technical knowledge of legal experts and the sanctioning of the state. In its substance though, it impinge on the most personal areas of private life. Because family law bridges public and private realms, the tensions, are, indeed, great. Accommodation in this situation has meant a separation of traditional religious and political authority from the family. It’s most visible consequence has been the development of various ideologies and policies of reform surrounding family organization and women’s rights. The provision of legal grounds for divorce to women, the discouragement of hasty (male-initiated) divorces, the restrictions on polygamy and on child marriages, rights of inheritance for lineal descendants, the financial maintenance of divorced women, the formal encouragement of education and social participation for women and the redefinition of “man’s priority over women” are the most prominent policies being advocated. Although the public/private dichotomization and its attendant privatization have been an important source of reform in nineteenth and twentieth century Islam, they have also been a source of sectarian backlash as well.

Pearl Jephcott (1962:106) has highlighted the importance of women’s work as means of supplementing the income of the home, of raising standards and of achieving specific objectives such as holidays. At the surface level, these were the
principal motives and satisfactions. But it has always been acknowledged that women’s work brings its own satisfaction.

On the basis of these select studies quote illustratively we may state that major changes are taking place in the modern world. Women are managing both public and private life simultaneously we can see that they are balancing paid and unpaid works easily and due to the participation of women in paid work, women are well positioned in the society. It is clear from these studies that Muslim women are not active in their public and private life without veil or to leave their religion, but they are more active behind the veil and taking their decisions. It is true that woman is in a position of double jeopardy but it is just the beginning and one day she will get her own way as it appears from the emerging scenario.

2.3. Emerging Changes in Public and Private Life:

Anne Sofie Roald (2001:95-100) has found that in the Muslim world social change has altered traditional gender and family patterns. Muslims in the diaspora are faced with new social structures which are challenging the foundations of traditional faith and practices. To understand issue of gender and perceptions of women in Islam it is necessary to look in to the matter of Islamic legislation. What is the nature of Sharia and is there any potential for change in Islamic Law? Traditionally Sharia was a matter for small religious elite and ordinary Muslims were dependent on this elite’s interpretation of Islamic sources. Although this is still true, Sofia Roald says that the Islamic arena is opening up to modern ideas in the cultural encounter between Muslims and the Western world, in both western and Muslim countries. The impacts of change are processes which have developed over a period of more than two centuries. We can say that modern changes could also influence the further development of Shariat.
Cassandra Balchin (2004:679-683) discusses the organizational challenges of the transnational feminist network. Women Living under Muslim Law (WLUML) founded as a response to struggles of women, working from within the framework of religion. WLUML has an information network that has created linkages internationally. The importance of autonomy, among the groups and for individuals, as well as of the future of WLUML as a whole is asserted.

Afsaneh Najmabadi (1997:59) states that the past decade has witnessed an incredible flourishing of women’s intellectual and cultural productions in Iran. Almost two decades after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, against the deepest fears of many of secular feminist activists of that revolution not only have the women not disappeared from public life, but they have an unmistakably active presence in practically every field of artistic creation, professional achievement, educational and industrial institutions, and even in sports activities. It signifies one thing that is the Women’s determination and their enormous efforts to escape the prisons of the femininity and sex-roles, defined and guarded by the guardians of Shariat. The Islamic regime has not opened the gates but women are jumping over the fence.

Birgit Schaller (2004:185-186) has focused that Islam has traditionally always been understood as a universal religion. The salvation preached is a concern for all of humankind and consequently the concept of tevhid has always been a cornerstone in all form of theological discourse. Here globalization has been discussed as an effect rather than a cause. Above all it has focused on women as agents in response to the global impact on their religious lives in a male dominated context. The condition for women’s religious activism has changed rapidly over the last fifteen to twenty years. A proper female space for prayer meeting and social events of a similar kind is hard to accept with in a strict private/public dichotomy while still following the rules of spatial gender divism, tesettir and edibli behavior, women have nevertheless amazed (if not shocked) their local environment with their intense activism and their ability to conquer new arenas. The activism is to a large extent dependent on individual women’s skills
and powers of endurance. The potential for women’s groups to act in a more visible mode has been realized thanks to women with both secular and religious education inability them to deal with authorities and to formulated valid theological arguments. However, the ability to cope with the flow of information, propaganda and leisure from competing not to say combating, media conglomerates is not a question of education alone. There is a substantial difference between the generations. The younger women use the new media technologies with competence, and also show that their apprehension of the world is in turn thereby deeply affected. The technical competence of the younger generation is the means by which an older generation of women partaken in the global flow.
Sushila jain (1998: XI) has highlighted the problem of the status of women involves equality between men and women. The women, throughout the world have been considered the second sex- the inferior sex equality and status closely associated with power. Changing status involves the sharing of power on equal footing with men in decision making and it implementation at informal and formal sector. The sociological valve work plays an important role in determining the changing status of power equations, and hence, the status of women involves the distribution and redistribution of power. Religion deeply concerns with spiritual development of its followers and such a development cannot occur in a socially stagnant situation “Islam imbibes the spirit of change as it was the product of the process of change and transformation of for reaching consequences which was occurring in Arabia during its early period. He comments there is nothing in the Quran which asserts non-equality of sexes, nor there is any positive statement asserting the equality of sexes and adds that any positive statement asserting the equality of sexes and adds that “inference can be drawn either way depending upon ones point of view and social conditions.

Freda Hussain (1984:71) states that in most of the western world the phrase “Arab Islamic women’ conjures up a vision of heavily veiled, secluded women, whose lives consists of little more than their homes, their children and the other female in the harem or immediate kinship circle. As recently as fifty years ago, this kind of image had great deal of validity, at least in the urban centers, and in some areas it is still an accurate portrayal. Increasingly, however it no longer reflects reality. This essay surveys the change in the legal, political economic and social laws and norms governing the status and roles of women in the Arab world which have occurred in the past 50 years. This approach is somewhat controversial for clearly there is a great deal of diversity in the historical and contemporary experiences of women in various nations based on the socio economic class to which a woman belongs and whether she lives in an urban or rural area. These must be taken in to account whenever generalizations are made. Nonetheless there are reasons for considering Arab women as a unit. First is the underlying influence
of Islamic law which governs or at least affects the legal codes of personal status in virtually all Muslim countries. More generally, Arab societies share a common heritage, common culture and common traditions. From these come the societal expectations for women. Finally the policy concern of women themselves transnational population control, education, health care and so forth are almost always approached by women themselves on transnational basis. For these reasons, it is useful to look generally at the lives and roles of women who share both a culture and religions tradition.

Mustafa Ozbilign (2003:5) has found that starting from the early years of the empire women gradually became confined to the private domain, whereas men were allowed to roam freely in both the public and private domains, by the 15th century head and body covering was introduced for women, justified in term of modesty and prosperity, and women’s mobility in public spaces became restricted. Women were not permitted to travel alone without the company of male member of their family. By the second half of the 15th century, Women in the city centers of the Ottoman Empire faced stronger religious and social controls than pertained in rural areas. Polygamy became not only socially acceptable, but institutionalized by the introduction of the harem system. Mustafa Ozbilgin asserted that the erotic discourse of the ancient and modern Arabic world considers the female body to the sinful and provocative proposing that it should be kept out of the sight of men to whom women were not related by blood or marriage, who could be tempted by this sight. This discourse was widely used by the religious authorities all of whom were men, as justification for differentiating between public and private life, restricting women to the latter in the Ottoman Empire.

Cara Aitchsion (2007:22) has highlighted that challenges arise even between Sunni Muslims belonging to different communities in Marxloh, as various disputes play out in personal friendship as well as in particular spaces. Religious practice is not limited to belonging to a particular mosque community as the practices of going to the mosque or not. Instead, religious persuasion influences the spaces of everyday life beyond religious places and also shapes the lives of
those who are not immediate members of a particular community. Young Turkish women in particular felt that Muslim identities and expectations raised by Sunni Muslims communities significantly shape neighborhood space beyond the site of mosques, and affected their everyday lives in undesirable ways. The Turkish women in their twenties and early thirties that I interviewed, for example, noted they did not feel free to dress anyway they wanted to in Marxloh. One young woman said that she did not dare wear a mini-skirt or a tank top in Marxloh, even when she was accompanied by her husband. Others felt pressured to wear a head scarf in public although they would not wear one if they were free to choose how to dress and practice Islam. These women all found older Turkish Muslim women, and especially those wearing scarves, to be particularly adamant about the way they expected younger women to dress, hereby extending Islamic space in to neighborhood’s public space rather than confining it to their communal places and private homes.

Joseph Benjamin (2006:45-46) states that the representation of Muslims in public and private sector services is quite low, firstly because of discrimination and secondly because of low level of literacy besides being self-employed. The Muslim population, according to 1991 census (last census figures available) is 12.12% but Muslim representation in IAS is below 3% and is even less in IPS and IFS. This has been main grievance of Muslim elite. Muslims in India lack strong middle class due to various reasons over being its migration to Pakistan in 1947. In India it is taking a longtime for new middle class to emerge. Also the low caste poor Muslims have not much incentive to send their children to school particularly for higher education, beyond primary one. Thus, it is difficult to find suitable candidates of course there are also complaints of discrimination. But slowly Muslims are realizing the importance of joining higher civil services and even special training courses are been organized by some people to make them more suitable for these services. Today, importance of civil or other government services is comparatively going down as multi-nationals are becoming increasingly better avenues of employment. In traditional private sector also Muslims are one
percent, especially in higher managerial positions. And in post modern multinational companies they have even lesser chances as they cannot effectively complete for these jobs demanding very high qualifications. But in these multinationals there is not much chance of religious discrimination as high degree of merit alone can help. Though it is difficult to obtain data on all India level for Muslim minority but it is certain that they are far behind in all fields, especially in educational, economic and political field though the Muslims elite has made quite a worthwhile contribution in sports and film industry. Now Muslims are contributing in the field of education as well. If a balance sheet is drawn in all these fields Muslims is still appear to be losers.

Naseem Ahmed (2001:16-17) has found that educated Muslim woman has adopted such new ideas as a logical part of the modernization of Turkish life. Before the recent period of reform this educated minority was already progressive in religious thinking for as has already been mentioned in the discussion of Turkish education, the social religious revolution in Turkey was preceded by a gradual period of preparation. Today due to many forces there is said to be a decline in the formal practices of Islam. “Many people no longer play five times a day. Everyone is too busy, was the comment of a young Turkish business women". A young teacher explained why comparatively few young people go to the mosques. “We must make our worship more modern to suit our modern clothes and customs. Praying without shoes and with many genuflections was a good thing in the Prophet’s day but does not suit our present kind of life.” Although the private prayers of formal type are still continued by many Moslem women in the homes and to a lesser extent in the mosques as has always been the case among women, the turning away from the ritualistic worship by the younger generation is undoubtedly a marked present day tendency. However, this should not as has been said before, be interpreted merely as a trend toward irreligion, but perhaps it may indicate the genuine usage for a reform in worship, so that it may be something more than a prescribed ceremonial. “We are beginning to recognize the difference between essentials and non-essentials” a thoughtful Turkish woman said. “The
religion forms and social restrictions are not suitable today. These can be changed without destroying our fundamental belief.”

Nilufer Gole (1997:3-4) has highlighted that Islamic veiling is a political issue in both Muslim and Western European countries: It shows the tension within the care values of society, ranging from secularism of the public space, the place of religion in education, and individual rights to multiculturalism and multi-confessionalism. The veiling of Islamist students appears as a controversial issue because it is the most visible reminder of religiosity and traditional role of women in modern social contexts, such as university campuses, urban centers, political organizations and industrial workplaces. This veiling is commonly perceived as a force of “obscurantism” and is often identified with women’s subservience, as such, it is interpreted as blurring the clear-cut oppositions between religion and modernity and as an affront to contemporary notions of “gender emancipation” and “universal progress” Hence the revival of Islamist movements throughout the Muslim world is often interpreted as a challenge to western modernity, which is built upon a unidirectional notion of evolutionary progress conceived in terms of binary oppositions between religion and secularism, the public and private spheres, and particularism and universalism. Also Islamist veiling embodies the battleground for the two competing conceptions of self and society, Western and Islamist. Metaphorically women’s covered bodies revitalize contemporary Islamist movement and differentiate them from the secularist project. Nilufer Gole, therefore argue here not only that the question of veiling is not an auxiliary issue for Islamist movements but, on the contrary, highlights the centrality of gender issue to Islamist self definition and implied western criticism. Hence, veiling is a discursive symbol that is instrumental in conveying political meanings accordingly, the significance of contemporary Islamist movements can only be understood, I believe in terms of their problematic relation to Western modernity, a relation that takes shape and acquires sense through women’s bodies and women’s voices. Islamism, therefore is shaped by a selective reconstruction of identity rather than by unchanging that is, a historical and context free, or fixed identity.
Consequently, it can be said that the questions of women, modesty, and sexuality are discerned and problematized by the contemporary Islamist movements more as a result of critical dependence on modernity rather than of loyalty to Islamic Religion.

Robert W. Hefiner (2005:103) speaks about an interesting dilemma and occasioned a great deal of public debate in the media and in people’s homes about whether and under what circumstances religious symbols like the veil could appear in the public sphere and what exactly constituted the public sphere. Some suggested that a differentiation should be made between those who provide service on behalf of the state (like teachers and members of parliament) and those who receive services (like students and ordinary citizens), with only direct representatives of state service being required to adhere to the restrictions on religious symbolism. This debate has opened in hitherto closed door to redefining the meaning of the public arena by differentiating between society and the state. For many people however the public is irrevocably political. At present, kemalist opposition to contracting the parameters of the public sphere retains the upper hand. The kemalists are concerned to ensure the society remains secular, at least in its public face. The Muslim hood model provides both a challenge and an opportunity to rethink these policies. In so doing, it is useful to point out that the meaning of the concepts of public and private and veiling itself already are contested and have begun to change.

These studies suggest that in the position of women some changes are taking place in both Muslim and Western countries. These changes are not the result of a very short period but these changes have developed over a period of more than two centuries. Now the women are living according to the Muslim laws but they are also aware of their rights in this modern secular world. Women have an active presence in every field of life. It is true that till today not as much freedom in the laws of Islam is observable, as much a woman needs to assimilate her life with in the modern world, but it is also true the changes taking place are not negligible.
2.4. Factors of change in Public and Private Life:

Valentine M. Moghadam (2003:33-36) has found that the position of women within the labor market is frequently studied as an empirical measure of women’s status. For those who argue that women’s economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantageous status, the gender composition of the labor force and change in the structure of labor force rewards are key targets. 

**Major factor of change is that the employed women tend to have greater control over decision making within the family.** Households also benefit when women control income and spending and the well being of children is increasingly linked to female education and income. Many feminists regard women’s involvement in paid employment as a path way to social and gender consciousness, autonomy and empowerment. Investment in women’s education and employment is increasingly understood as integral to building the national human resource base. Now we can say that women’s employment patterns are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and the female employment has been constrained by overall limited industrialization.

Jeri Altneu Sechzer (2004:263-272) states that after Mohammad’s death conditions for women under Mohammad’s successors became worse. Attitudes and perceptions about women were even more negative. Women were essentially removed from most sectors of society. Women’s status declined rapidly and any freedom they had were essentially abolished but in the modern world women want the freedom and right to take place the well maintained status in society. So the current status of women in Islamic countries is described along with the intensified discussions and debate concerning women, presently taking place. In some states bills and laws were passed to improve conditions of women but some have already been revoked. In other countries, new restrictions have been proposed. Nevertheless, Islamic women and women’s groups are continuing the struggle for their rights. Thus the struggle continuing turmoil in the Middle East and the
increase in fundamentalist groups have unfortunately made the final outcome for women yet to be decided.

Qasim Amin (2000:11-12) states that woman is like a man. Her body and its functions, her feelings and her ability to think are the same as men. She has all the essential human traits, differing only in gender. In the opinion of Amin a woman cannot run her household well unless she attains a certain amount of intellectual and cultural knowledge. So this is the main factor which is responsible for the change in women’s condition. This would ensure her grasp of some introductory principles and allow her to make her own choices. She could master her principles and be involved whenever she wished.

Sushila Jain (1998:XV) studied Muslim women in Jaipur City, throws some light upon the perceptions of Muslim women themselves regarding such key issue as employment, education and control of household finances. Jain says “Muslim women in India today are potential catalyst. Their emancipation could be a special step in the modernization of the community. The trend among the Muslim women is also towards economic independence. “It was observed that 66.7% women were of the opinion that employment of the women is good in the present day situation. Jain also notes that education “seems to be an important tool for encouraging participation of women into politics and also in various roles of family economy.”

Malavika Karlekar (1984:362-382) has focused on women’s self perception. She suggests that most Indian women accept a world view constructed by men and often reinforced by women not because they are necessarily convinced of its validity but because the costs involved in attempting any changes are too great. The increasing involvement of Indian women in the domain of paid work brings with it a series of dilemmas and conflicts as due to certain deeply internalized stereotypes. They are evaluated according to an inflexible set of expectations, ambivalence towards one’s work, the implicit criticism of many and having to satisfy innumerable demands at home if one is to overcome these as well
as one’s own sense of inadequacy, put considerable strain on the working woman. However such behaviour or participation in separatist women’s organizations is unlikely to influence substantially the ideological tradition which assigns to men position of power and authority. It is time to try out an alternative based on the cooperation of the dominant group.

Margaret E. Crahan (2001:279-280) examines that western feminist theory locates and names “power as it defines the lives of women in the home and in the market (as mother, daughters, sisters, wives and lovers) and the ways they bring their gender along with them from the home to the market and back again. At its best feminist theory reinvents the way we think about power itself because it directs us to the politics of sex. It requires that we imagine the relationship between the personal and political realms of life; the public and the private; the family and the economy’ the domestic and the waged spheres of work. In its more limited scope it is a corrective to a “generalized” viewing of political theory and presumes the male standard as the referent. Feminist theory examines and critiques the relations of power that are defined in and through the sex/gender system the “unnaturally” differentiates women from men. The feminist viewing of this problematic system of power which privileges men while denying women legal and political equality and sexual freedom has shifted over time. Different theorists of feminism reflect the changing times, histories and varied conceptions of women’s power and oppression. Feminists focus on the problem of women’s lives in the ways they interact with the relations of power because system of power are always shifting and being reconstituted, feminist theory must continually redefine itself from the multiple sites of women’s oppression. Hopefully this creates the possibility of using feminist theory to change and reconstruct systems of power.

On the basis of these select studies we may state that mainly education is the most efficient factor to improve the condition of women in both public and private life. It is only due to education that women became aware of their rights and may give their major contribution in paid work. In some states bills and laws are passed to improve the condition of women. We may wish that one day she
could master her principles, this society and religion will allow her to make own choices.

2.5. Education and Change in Public and Private Life:

Humayun Ansari (2004:294-296) states that more young Muslim women are moving into higher level and better-paid employment. They may still face discrimination on religious as well as racial grounds, but they have become increasingly confident and able to challenge and combat it. In the public domain Muslim women are increasingly involved in local politics and voluntary work and holding public office. Their achievements cover a wide range of public arenas: politics, public service, the media culture and art. It is therefore arguable that despite access to better educational facilities Muslim women have not fared much better than those of the first generation. The cultural ties and family bounds have proved remarkably firm, and maintained a degree of control, despite the relative wealth and economic independence of the younger generation.

Rehana G Hadially (2007:345) has highlighted that major group purpose a comprehensive set of laws that would collapse the distinction between the public and the private domains, and de-link personal laws from religion. The major problem with this is that religion and personal laws are seen as occupying separate compartments, where as the interwining of religion, culture and personal law is complex and historically determined. Hence, the disentangling of these strand is a difficult task that cannot be effected by administrative or legal fiat, but would be possible only through a comprehensive social movement that engages politically and practically with these questions. Besides, religion is a way of life for the vast majority of men and women, comprising a world view that shapes people’s perceptions and influences their life choices. This is something that cannot simply be wished or legislated away. Moreover, there is more fundamental question before us: does a democratic society presuppose a space where in communities/groups of people can enter in to a dialogue with each other and
renegotiate the public/private dichotomy on their own terms i.e. keeping in mind their specific histories, cultures, social structures and specific oppressions.

Linda Wood Head (2002:333) says that advanced industrial/highly differentiated/ western societies” from at least the nineteenth century industrialization was generally accompanied by the drawing of a clear distinction between private and public life. Women’s proper sphere was the former the family and domestic life. Men dwell in both spheres, but their natural realm is the rationalized, impersonal, secular sphere of public life. Throughout the twentieth century and beyond women have increasingly won the right to move into the public sphere, but the latter remains masculinized and male dominated. Religion in the nineteenth century was itself pushed in to the private realm, and tended to reinforce women’s domesticization by becoming the guardian of private life and family values. Consequently, religion became a natural environment for the articulation of the lives and desire of women whose lives centered round, home, family, children and husband. Women, who move in to public life by (for example) entering one of the professions, however may experience tensions between traditional religious values and the values of their public/professional lives. This tension may be found to be creative or it may lead to an abandonment of traditional religion and/or the creation of new spiritualities.

Fatimah Ehtesham Siddiqui (1999:174-175) has highlighted that women are still mostly employed in traditional and informal sectors where there has been a lower level of technological and information support. This further compounds their education handicaps. However; women with education have entered many new areas of occupation where their participation was virtually non-existent before. This process of occupational diversification through education has been accelerated during the decade in many developing countries. To enable women to participate actively in all spheres of economic and social life, vocational and professional training must be further developed. In this respect, the training of trainers is of primary importance, as is the introduction of management training for women. Apart from the conventional types of training (seminars, workshops,
expert group meeting training through doing etc.) the non-conventional types are often suitable of special relevance are also the new participatory types of training which include leaner centered methods developed in the frame work of non-formal education in which trainers are facilitators to elicit productive response and interaction and local social and cultural forms that can be built upon for effectiveness training. These include decision- making patterns, social groupings and communication network.

Bani Banerjee (1997:115-116) has focused on the modernization of women is of great significance in any community. It is they in whose laps the coming generation learns the primary lessons of civic life. It is assumed that the Muslim women suffer from many disabilities under the patriarchal Islamic traditions. The polygamy, the institutions of veil and almost absolute right of a Muslim male to divorce his wife at will are considered as shackles of the Muslim women. It is however to be noted that the Prophet in fact ushered in a liberating movement for women. He played restrictions on four wives went an Arab could have kept as many wives as he liked during those days. In the same way, he granted the right of properly to women which was definitely a very revolutionary act in medieval times. Besides, he commanded the male Muslims to observe absolute equality while treating their wives. It would be really interesting to see how far the Muslim women have been affected by the forces of modernization. Some studies reveal that Muslim women are now attracted to modern education and gainful employment outside the home. Although they have shown preference for the teaching profession, they are entering in to other modern professions like medicines, engineering, law, beautician etc. Educated women have begun to exhibit a loosening of the observance of Purdah. They are also taking interest and active participation in politics. The above studies however point out towards the resistance they have to face from their conservative kith and kin and religious fundamentalists. But that resistance is being faced by women in general in any male dominated patriarchal social system. Muslim women are no exception to it. Our own observation based on the participant observation of the process of ‘girls’
education also confirm the fact that during the last two decades the number of Muslim women in higher education is steadily increasing. We have also found them progressive, ambitious, highly cultured and co-operative. Their parent also shows keen interests in the progress of their education.

Nancy A.Hewitt (1993:131) discusses that a feminist conception of public life will have many dimensions, including enriched understandings of participation, equality and citizenship as well as a dynamic understanding of the links between public and private (domestic) life. The history of American women offers a clue to some of these dimensions by calling attention to the importance of civil society understood as the locus of the free spaces or democratic voluntary associations, where citizens draw on their private identities and practice the basic skill of public life. Several contemporary community based citizen organizing experience that have drawn pay leadership from women have outlined a concept of public life as distinct from but intimately linked to private. Discussion, particularly with in groups like communities organized for public service in San Antonio and BUILD in Ballimare that are associated the industrial areas foundation (IAF), explore different norms of relationship for each arena, nothing that private life usually serves the source of one’s motivation for public participation. At the same time, the distinctiveness of each must be recognized and honared. For example, one expects similarity of ethnicity, race, religion, education and class in private life, while differences along precisely these lines are constitutive of public life, within private/familial life one gives and receives unconditional love within public life one operates out of self interest and has a right to demand respect but not love.

Suad Joseph, Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005:733) speaks that the individualization of religion can be based on the possibility of selecting one’s own way of religious life. For example, Muslims in Europe choose between different forms of Islamic associations- those concerning religion, ethnicity or other matters. Individualization of religion can also refer to the way and content of religious life. This form of individualization seems to be more characteristic of the better educated second generation Muslim women and men. Muslim generally expresses
the desire to experience Islam and Islamic belief in their life, although many Muslims disapprove of formal authorities like muftis. They often read the Qur’an on their own and interpret it in light of their own personal experiences. Some empirical studies have shown that certain practices of Muslims women, such as wearing a headscarf, automatically mean falling back into old traditional tracks. For many women however, it is very important to affirm that this behaviour is not based on a traditional understanding of relationships, personality and Islam. These women, who are mostly well educated, insist that they have chosen to wear the covering on their own initiative. They feel accountable to neither a man nor their parents in their decision, but affirm themselves personally bounded to Allah, who is the center of their religion. They interpret the religion of Islam from their own experience and their claim to freedom and independence in private and public spheres. Of course this interpretation is also connected to the respect that is there by accorded to them by other Muslims, both men and women. As they understand it, the decision to accept the headscarf, as an expression of their personal religiosity is made exclusively through this possibility of individual freedom of action.

Anna Joy (2007:383) has found that like the differences in own clothing from one region to another Muslim women are diverse. Stereotypical assumptions about Muslim women are as in accurate as the assumptions that all American women are personified by the bikini-clad cast of “Bay Watch.” Anyone who has spent time interacting with Muslim knows that, despite numerous obstacles, Muslim women are active, assertive and engaged in society. In Qatar, women make up the majority of graduate-school students. The Iranian parliament has more women members than the US senate. Throughout the world, many Muslim women are educated and professionally trained. They participate in public debates, are often catalysts for reforms and champion for their own rights. At the same time, there is no denying that in many Muslim countries, dress has been used as a tool to wield power over women. Anna Joy says that what doesn’t penetrate western consciousness, however, is that forced uncovering is also a tool of oppression.
During the reign of Shah Mohammad Raza Dahelvi in Iran, wearing the veil was prohibited. As an expression of opposition to his repressive regime, women who supported the 1979 Islamic revolution marched in the street clothed in chadors. Many of them did not expect to have this “dress code” institutionalized by those who led the revolution and then took power in the new government.

N. Jayapalan (2000:8-9) states that more than a hundred years ago, women took to the teaching profession and today; women constitute nearly 35 percent of teachers in country. Educated women are no longer confined to jobs such as those of schools teachers, nurses etc. They have invaded the precints of commercial establishment, airlines, banking, Government offices and institutions of local self governments. During the post independence period, women have been elevated to the most coveted posts of district offices, Governor’s ambassadors, judges and even police offices. For instance, Vijyalaxmi Pandit has acted as ambassador of India. She has worked as Governor and also as the president of U.N. General Assembly, Mrs. Indira Gandhi has had the distinction of being the first women Prime Minister of the largest democracy in the world. Moreover, women have a long way to go in order to emulate men in all fields of human endeavor. There is a conspicuous drift of educated women to westernization. The modern women may look westernized in form but in spirit, she is Indian. It is only when act as chaste wives, good mothers, responsible public servants and enlightened citizen of free India that success will kiss their feet.

These studies suggest that Muslim women are moving into higher level and better paid employment. Women with education are entering in many new areas of occupation while their participation was virtually non-existent before. Now a days due to education women are changing their life style and differentiating easily their public and private lives.

2.6. Impact of Education:
Naseem Ahmad (2001:93-94) examines that general situation of education for Muslim girls shows a very slow but steady advance, both in the number of schools for girls and of girls in schools. After 1920 the curve of elementary and secondary schools begins to ascend. This period marks, practically the beginning of higher education for Muslim girls, although the number of Muslim girls is still negligible. Isabell Thburn College in Lucknow, and Kinnaird College for women in Lahore, which may be taken as valid criteria, show a steady increase of Muslims as also of girls from other communities. The few Muslim women who are well educated often hold positions of unusual prominence. A widely known Muslim woman in Punjab, the first woman to take her doctorate, has an important part as an inspectress for girls’ schools. She has maintained strict purdah and thus proved that in spite of the purdah, advancement in education is possible. She has not sacrificed any opportunity to exert greater influence for social advancement, as the first highly educated Muslim woman in her part of India of the wide spread desire of Muslim parents for the education of their daughters there is no question today, even more evident is the eager response of Muslim girls themselves to their new opportunities. The renaissance in education is affecting not only the extent but also the character of the Government programme for girls’ schools.

Satya Pal Ruhela (1998:37-38) has found that Muslim women, receiving higher education and then being able to achieve any significant mobility in their professional career is really a difficult task. A number of cultural, social, economic and psychological factors in variably put several hurdles before them. But even then quite a few of them are able to ride over these hurdles, as a result of their self-motivation, parental encouragement or any of the supporting factor and may be, one’s own excellent academic performance, and achieve significant vertical as well as horizontal social mobility in their lives. Family’s economic, social, cultural and even political status, parents and relatives encouragement or discouragement and several other incidental as well as other sensitive socio-psychological factors build up one’s motivation for receiving education. In a society like ours where girls have traditionally been discriminated against boys by parents who have, by
and large, been treating their daughters as ‘liability’, the role of parental attitudes formed up as a result of tradition of custom, public opinion and personal fears, phobias and whims, in dictating the educability of their children, especially their daughters. It is widely believed and proclaimed these days that education, especially good higher education and that too in professional and technical fields, is the surest and most-effective instrument of social mobility. It helps people to have spatial as well as upward social mobility in their lives, since in the modern scientific and industrial society most of the career opportunities are available to only those who have excellent educational or any professional training backgrounds. Today ‘education’ and social change ‘Education and modernization’ and ‘Education and social mobility’ are the three most dominating themes in the modern cultural ethos of people in the world.

Surya Narain Singh (2003:111-113) states that with the spread of education and process of modernization, a change has occurred in the social position of Muslim women, However, the overall situation is not very satisfactory. It is also true that Muslim women are still among the most-backward section of the society. Education both secular and religious is the key word to the progress of Muslim women. The positive Impact of education on the lives and status of Muslim women has been highlighted in various studies. The media should also play a most constructive role. Instead of projecting the stereo-type image of Muslim women, they should focus on successful Muslim women working in different walks of life, who have risen above their situation, without giving up their traditional culture and values. The additional change is equally important among the Muslims men. However, more than a change in societal attitude towards women, what is desired is a change in self-perception of Muslim women. The capacity building of Muslim women is a must to escape the destiny of ‘a minority with in a minority’ and to emerge as an empowered being, with a well defined status and identity.

Andrew Lockyer (2003:96) examines that certainly the depiction of the Muslim Community as oppressive of its female members, whom it treats as unequal subordinates, may well display a mixture of prejudicial assumption and
misleading over simplification. Muslim women may willingly support supposedly patriarchal and enforced practices such as arranged marriages and the wearing of Islamic dress. It is also true that a belief in separate education for boys and girls need not be in consistent with a commitment to gender equality. These are reasons to support such an education that do not derive from a belief that girls are inferior to boys. Nevertheless Islam as proclaiming the absolute equality of worth of men and women at the same time as it would encourage separate treatment of the genders in recognition of their different natures. In particular it sanctions differentiated social roles, with women fulfilling the traditional junction of domestic cares. Now it is certainly true that Muslim women may choose to be just wives and mothers. In non Muslim households an unequal division of domestic labor can be willingly and deliberately practiced, with either adult partner assuming the major domestic role and with a view of maximizing overall familial income. This is an economic or pragmatic reason for a partition of domestic labors. However, many non-Muslims women also embrace a traditional understanding of their gender’s role as domestic helpmate to the male. Liberalism, at its core, insists that individuals should be as free as possible to pursue the good life as they understand and endorse it, within the overall structure of a just-society.

On the basis of these selected studies quoted illustratively we may state that Muslim women showing slow but steady advancement in their social position with the help of education. It is widely believed and proclaimed these days, that higher education is the surest and most effective instrument of upward social mobility in public and private arenas of Muslim women.