

**CHAPTER II**

**HISTORICAL ORIENTATION**

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CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL ORIENTATION

THE FOLLOWERS OF ISLAM:

The Muslims are the followers of Islam. Islam means peace and the quest for a right way of life. The Muslims believe in one and the only God Allah. Secondly, jihad for the sake of religion is sanctioned. All over the world the Muslims pray at the same time with a stylized movement of body and arms, the prayer being conducted in a common language, Arabic. Before the prayers, ritual purification of hands, face and ankles with water or sand is compulsory. Every Muslim is enjoined to give alms or Zakat at least once in his lifetime, if he can afford it. Last of all, a Muslim after finishing all the duties towards his family goes for pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. These five essential features of the Islamic faith are shared by the entire Muslim population of the world. Though the religious behaviour of the Muslims is the same everywhere, they differ from one another culturally. The reason for this is that in 1300 years Islam spread from Morocco to Indonesia and the countries in this wide range have had their respective culture-historical backgrounds prior to the adoption of the Islamic faith. In each country Islam had to accommodate different types of customs and behaviour, resulting in the present cultural diversity amongst the followers of Islam. About one by seventh of the world's population is comprised with believers of Islam (Roy 1979) (102).

ORIGIN OF ISLAM:

Islam is a monotheistic religion which arose in the deserts of Arabia in 600 A.D. The founder of this religion was the Prophet Mohammed,
who is neither a mythological figure nor a demigod, but a man whose entire life, words and deeds are recorded by his followers and compiled in a book named Hadith. The message of God revealed to Muhammad is contained in the Holy book, Koran. The primary assumption of Islam is submission to the only God Allah and equality and brotherhood of the believers of Islam arose as a reaction against the polytheism of West Asia and first spread amongst the tribal groups of Arabia. Initially, the Prophet was violently opposed and ridiculed by the rich merchants and priests of Mecca. The hostility of the priests increased and the Prophet was obliged to quit his native town in search of an asylum elsewhere. He went to his maternal uncles in Ta'if, but was chased out by pelting stones by wicked people. The Prophet tried to persuade one tribe after another to afford him shelter and allow him to carry on his mission of reform. Some of the Medinese embraced Islam in their annual pilgrimage to Kabah and also invited Prophet and his Meccan companions to Madinah. Secretly and in small groups greater part of the Muslims emigrated to Madinah. The Prophet Muhammad entrusted all his deposits to Ali, a cousin of his and left the town secretly with his faithful friend Abu Bakr. After several adventures, he succeeded in reaching Madinah in safety in 622 A.D. He strictly forbade idolatry, sorcery, gambling and drinking and gave women the right to a share in their father's property. He simplified the approach to religion and his dictates regarding the daily conduct of a follower of Islam are rigid and they particularly emphasize a life of austerity. He urged his followers to wage a holy war against the unbelievers. The Prophet tried to reconcile the Meccans and proceeded to Mecca. There upon the two contracting parties promised the maintenance of peace. But
soon after the treaty was violated by the Meccans. Upon this
Prophet himself led an army. The war extended over a period of
ten years. During the ten years of disinterested struggle, all the
people of the Arabian peninsula and the southern regions of Iraq
and Palestine had voluntarily embraced Islam. In the year 10 H
when the prophet went to Mecca for Hajj he met 140,000 Muslims. He
addressed to them his celebrated Sermon, in which gave a resume
of his teachings. On his return to Medina, he fell ill and a few
weeks later, he breathed his last breath. (Centre Cultural Islamique,

The period immediately after the death of Prophet Mohammad was
one of confusion. The Khalifas took over the management of the state.
During the reign of the first Khalifa, Abu Bakar, a large number of
battles were fought in the name of God, resulting in the spread of
this religion in the west Asian countries. The rift among the
four Khalifas regarding the succession of the Prophet brought fourth
a new chapter in Islamic History. The fourth Khalifa Ali, who was
married to the Prophet's daughter Fathima, was the son-in-law as
well as cousin of the Prophet. The supporters of Ali constituted
themselves under the name of Ahlul-Bait in short Shia, the term
signifying party. This party was opposed by the followers of Abu Bakar,
Omar and Osman often referred to as Sunnis or the traditionalists.
These three Khalifas advocated a democratic procedure for the selection
of the Khalifas without the office being restricted to the Qureish
tribe that is the tribe from which Prophet came. The difference
between the two groups resulted in war and blood shed. The members
of the Prophet's house who claimed the spiritual and secular leadership
suffered great losses during the battles. They were compelled by
conditions in their native land or in search of adventure and opportunity for achievement. But this was not migration in any considerable numbers. It was a rather slow and spasmodic infiltration of families and individuals. From the tribal Territory of the North west frontier, however there were migrations of groups of clans, and it is for these reason that pathans form a substantial part of the upper strata of Indian Muslims is at all considerable. There were also migrations from one part of the country to another. The Arains of the Montgomery district claimed, according to the Gazetteer to be surajbansi Rajputs originally settled around Delhi, the Turkiya banjaras of Rampur in Uttar pradesh believed that they had come from Multan and the Rampur state Gazetteer (1911) mentions a group of the Shaikh families who first settled in Jalandhar and then made their way south-east wards to Sharanpur, Muzaffarnager, Mirath, Bejnor Muradabad and Badayun. These may be regarded as typical cases. After the establishment of Muslim rule in the Deccan there was both immigration from abroad and migration from the north. A small element of the Muslim population of Kerala consists of immigrants from the Deccan. Sometimes such migration and settlement has been under political pressure, as when Mohammed-bin-Tuqlaq attempted to send families of nobles and scholars to Daulatabad, mainly it has been due to a search for livelihood and opportunity. But, however significant such migration may have been culturally or economically, its numerical value was small (Roy, 1979) (102).

The vast majority of the Indian Muslims are converts. Their conversion may be assumed to have been due to one or more of several cause. Force was used on occasions, but the existing historical evidence does not enable us to estimate either the scale or the effectiveness of such conversions. Also, the risks involved in a policy of conversion by force should not be under-rated. Islam was
adopted by families or groups of families who were regarded as outcasts in Hindu society, because of their profession, or because they had lost caste through association with Muslims in some type of civil employment under the government service in the army was an attraction, specially for tribal groups with war-like traditions and this service would inevitably make them outcasts. Persuasion played its part also. The Khojas, the Bohras, and the Mammans are examples of the conversion of the whole communities by missionaries. Most of the Muslim communities who appear to have been only partly converted must have changed their religion because of belief in the miraculous powers of particular saints. The communities practising trades that made them outcasts in the Hindu social system would have adopted Islam because of the obvious advantages and because they were urban communities or depended on the towns for their livelihood their conversions was also more through (Mujeeb, 1965). The main agency for conversions seem to have taken place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Abdul Qadir Bedayuni-Muntakhab-al-Tawarih, Bibliotheca Indica) (79).

Southern India presents a curiously different picture. Here Islam came directly from Arabia through Arab traders and in matters of doctrine the Muslims remained very largely unaffected by the environment. On the other hand, in dress, food, in manners and customs and in the laws of inheritance their assimilation with the non-Muslims has been quite considerable, especially, among the seacoast. The south does not, of course form a homogeneous unit. The Muslims of Mysore and Bangalore being much closer culturally to those of Hyderabad than to the Noplahs and Nawayats of Kerala who are geographically much nearer (Mujeeb 1965).
RELIGIOUS SECT IN ISLAM:

1300 years ago Mohammad prophesied that Muslims will be divided into seventy three sects (Salve 1926) (102). In India there are two major groups of Muslims. They are the Shias and the Sunnis.

Immediately after the departure of the Prophet Mohammad to his heavenly abode, the fight between the followers of Islam started on the question of succession. Sunnis recognise Hazrat Abu-baker as the first caliph, who is said to have been elected to this office by the people after the Holy Prophet. Shias, on the other hand, hold the view and still conform to it that the successor to the Holy Prophet should be one like his, divinely appointed, free from sins and without any blemish or fallibility. He should be able to interpret the Quranic Law correctly and give sound opinion on questions connected with religion and that such a man after the Prophet’s death was only Hazrat Ali. He was accorded to them, the only right person to explain the meaning of the Quran and the teaching of Islam. They further hold that a Prophet or his successor could be appointed only by God through the Prophet by revelation. Therefore, Shias hold that the appointment of Caliph vests in God and not the people (Roy 1979) (102).

Sunny liteary means ‘one of the path’ a term generally applied to the large sect of Muslims. Though the Sunnis and Shias have originated from the same source, yet they have differences in their rites and customs. Some of these differences between them are expressed in the different motivations underlying the celebration of the Moharrum feast. This feast which falls on the tenth day (Ashra) of the month of Moharrum signifies for the Sunnis the completion of creation by the appearance of Adam and the Eve while for the Shias it is the day of
Jamae-Shahadat that is the day of martyrdom, when approximately 72 shias were massacred at Karbala. The outcome is that for the Sunnis it is a day of great rejoicing while the Shias, clad in black, mourn the death of their Imam and his followers.

The mode of ritual purification of Wazu before each prayer is different among the two sects. The Sunnis wash their arms from the wrist to the elbow while the Shias do it the other way round. In respect of fact, the Sunnis actually wash them, while Shias merely rub or wipe their feet prior to the prayers. In the performance of Haj, a Shia can call himself a Haji even if he finances the trip for another man that is, haj can be done by proxy. Amongst the Sunnis going to Mecca and Medina in person is a prerequisite to be called a Haji.

In respect of Taqsiyeh which means temporary conversion from one religion to another under threat or compulsion, the Shias and Sunnis offer differences. The Sunnis permit the renunciation of their religious convictions only on pain of death whereas the Shias view, Taqsiyeh in a wider sense involving situations of personal risk as also of religious interest. Thus in different degrees Taqsiyeh is a sanctioned behaviour for both Sunnis and Shias. Under threat they might ward off the danger by converting to a different religion and after the threat has diminished they can reconvert to Islam.

The Shias, on the whole are divided into three subsections—Ima-Amberias or Imanias, the Zaidias and the Ismaelias-Agha Khan Khojas and Bohars form small sets of Ismaelias (Mujeeb, 1985) (79).

The Sunnis on the whole are divided into four subsection—Janafis, Shafi, Malakis and Hanbalis (Rizvi and Roy 1984) (100).
circumstances to take refuge in Iran, where they settled permanently and made many followers amongst those people, who resented the supremacy of the Arabs. (Mujeeb, 1985) (78).

**ISLAM IN INDIA**

Like the Hindus, or in fact like the people of any other country, the presence of the Muslims in India can be traced to three different sources, conquest, immigration and conversion, with the mingling of different stocks taking place in a manner that was beyond social or political control (Mujeeb 1985) (78).

The earliest Muslim invasion of India dates back to 650 A.D. (Ansari, 1960). The repeated conquest by Muhammad bin Quasim (712 AD) in the Sindh valley, Muhammad of Ghazni's (1000 AD) plundering expeditions and his annexation of territory upto the Ravi, and the invasion of Shihabuddin of Ghor (1192 AD) which brought to India the first Muslims. The conquests of Prithviraj's kingdom in 1191 AD and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate was the beginning of the continuous Muslim rule in India until the coming of the British. The other avenues by which Muslims found their way to India was trade. (Mujeeb, 1985) (78).

The first Arab settlements on the eastern and western coasts of South India were the result of the development of trade and the traders did not, like the Europeans adventures of the early modern period, enjoy the support of a home government interested in promoting commercial activity. But settlements and immigration of Muslims did follow the conquests of Sindh and of the Northern India. The immigrants came from central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, West Asia, and eastern coast of Africa. They came because of unsettled
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF 'THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA'

Historically it could be traced that women during the Vedic period had a very high status when women participated fully in religious rituals, had freedom of movement, educated like boys, married late and also had a voice in the selection of their marriage partners. Widow re-marriage too was permitted. Whether in wedlock or not, women enjoyed a honoured position in family and society (Alteker 1963)(5). The Hindu Vedic Philosophy enunciated a liberal social attitude vis-à-vis women.

Even the pre-Vedic gynocentric period, in Indian history, according to scholars, was centred round the concept of Mother goddess cult which prevailed then. (Heimsath 1972) (45). Researchers have pointed out that the high status of women in Vedic era related only to the elite section and it was from the earlier Dravidian culture that the Aryan Civilization, in the course of its evolution, muted and absorbed the matriarchal power patterns, which resulted in the deification of male and female gods in the pantheon of Hindu Mythology. The Shakti-cult with women as the primal energy force finds expression even in the great epic like "Mahabharata" that exalts woman as a "light of the house, mother of the Universe and supporter of the earth and all its forests".

Subsequently in the early Christian era when Manu's 'Smriti's were composed, the patriarchal pattern dominated the social structure and laid down the outrageous dictum about women's changing position through her life cycle. "A woman, according to Manu in her childhood is subject to her father, in youth to her husband and in old age or when her husband dead, to her sons and she should never enjoy independence.
Thus was created a contradictory imagery of women — The Hindu lore made 'womanhood' the embodiment of purity and spiritual power and at the same time a weak and dependent creature needing constant protection of a male. The patriarchal social structure prescribed that marriage, motherhood and service to husband as the valuable attitudes of a Hindu womanhood, which perpetrated the negotiation of the woman's personality that culminated among the caste Hindus in the practice of 'Sati' on the death of her husband. (Report of the Committee on the status of women 1971)(35).

Far down in south, the Dravidian culture, the legitimacy of the women's claim for equal status was respected and there are documented information and evidence from the "Sangam literature that women in South enjoyed a special privilege and higher status, with no discrimination in any sphere. But when time passed a gradual erosion took place in women were dominated by the tenet of a patriarchal supremacy. However traces of female supremacy are still found in the Chera country (present Kerala State) where the social structure is based on a matriarchal (Marumakkathayam) society and women enjoy better status sisters in the other tracts (Pandyas and Cholas countries of the lore now comprising of Tamil Nadu). Incidentally the Shakti cult unique to Dravidian culture is prevalent and the mothergoddess in various forms such as Marumani, Kannagi/kumari, Durga, Draupadi and the like) are being worshipped.

The Golden period of Mauryan and Gupta of Indian history show a gradual erosion of women's right and during the turbulent times that followed the gruesome customs of child marriage, purdah and sati established themselves. The situation further deteriorated during the eight centuries of Muslim rule. The Muslim Shariat —law imposed
further restrictions on women and relegated them a lower and inferior status prescribing female seclusion, and unilateral right of the male to divorce. Yet it is stated that Islam, theoretically accorded woman a better status than her counter-part in the Hindu religion. (Report of the committee on the Status of women, 371) (35).

The Hindu Revivalist movement of the nineteenth century the Arya Samaj, the Brahma Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission – however hark back to restore and improve the lost position of women. A position of honour for women was the tenet of these revivalists and their major focus was education for women which aimed at making them better wives and mothers and reducing the incompatibility between educated males and uneducated females. In addition, they aimed at legislations on increasing the age of marriage, widow re-marriages, right of property to women, and abolition of purdah system. However these reforms remained elitist and limited in their scope in their approach to women’s problems.

In this century, the freedom movement and its architect, Gandhi placed the question of women’s emancipation as an integral part of a social transformation. The Gandhian philosophy made the issue of women’s rights a fundamental part of human rights. According to Gandhi "Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as man". (Gandhi 1942) (33).

When the British Government in 1930 turned down the demand of the adult franchise without sex-discrimination put forward by women’s organisation in 1930 it is the Indian National Congress which took its historic decision at its sessions in 1931 of committing itself to political equality of women regardless of their status and
qualifications and fulfilled their pledge when the country became a Republic in 1950. The Constitution of India further guaranteed to all citizens' equality of status and opportunity, assuring the dignity of the individual" (Constitution of India) (16).

Article 15 expressly 'prohibited any discrimination and also provided a clause that empowers the State to make any "special provision for women and children" even in violation of the fundamental obligation on non-discrimination among citizens inter alia of either sex.

Article 16 states explicit that "no citizen shall on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent of or place of birth be ineligible or discriminated against in respect of employment in any office under the state'. The most important aspect of this Article (16) is the conceptualization of the women's role and status by the constitution makers of modern India.

However the ideals embodied in the Constitution remained unfulfilled and a majority of women still far from enjoying the right and opportunities conferred on them by the Constitution. The concept of women's emancipation enunciated during the freedom movement has suffered a decline and growing incidence of practices such as 'dowry' indicate a further lowering of the status of women and indicate a process of regression from thenorms developed during freedom movement. A large mass of women in this country are ignorant of the social laws that sought to mitigate the problems of women in their family life and their legal rights.

The process of deterioration has accelerated in the three decades since Independence. The promise of equality seems to be found only in small section of women, mainly of theurban middle classes, for the vast majority of women, development has brought no benefits
REVIEW OF LITERATURE