CHAPTER-V
LADIES PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES

a) Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam (AKI):

We find that the Secretary of Muhammadan Educational Conference, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah established a separate female education section in 1902 to discuss the problem of women’s education. However, it did not work properly due to the lack of participation of women’s representative in the proceedings of the Conference. The women of Sharif Muslim families would not be allowed to participate in the Conference and to address it openly. However, the women could discuss their problems freely if they provided a separate platform. Though the few women writers since 1905 advised the Muslim community to form a separate symposium for women to discuss their problems but this idea was opposed by Syed Mumtaz Ali who stated that ‘if the ladies Conference founded, the women wanted to follow the men, whereas ‘they need nothing except education, education and education’.

After overcoming lot of opposition, finally the Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam (AKI) founded in 1914 by Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal at the inauguration of a Girl’s School boarding house in Aligarh.

The AKI which formed in Aligarh passed the following resolutions which were as follows:

- To organize a Conference for the Muslim ladies of Hindustan.
- To make unity and agreement among the Indian women.
- To impart religious education to the girls.
- To improve house-keeping.

It also formulated:

- To organize a Conference every year in a different city and if failed to form there, the Conference was to meet at the Aligarh Girls’ School.

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• By the formation various branches of this anjuman in different cities, it planned to achieve its goals.

• It was also suggested to encourage those journals and newspapers and help in its circulations which would spread the message of women’s education.

• To recommend the member of Muslim community to contribute for the progress of Aligarh Girls' School.

• To include the students from various places in Aligarh Girls' School, its boarding house and extended its support throughout India.

• To promote the writing and publication of books which were mainly for women and contained the issue of householding affairs, health, child-care etc.

In the first meeting, Begum of Bhopal was appointed as the President. The Honorary Secretary was Nafees Dulhan Begum, wife of Nawab Habibur Rahman Sherwani.

To quote:

The Conference also resolved that Muslim girl should not be married before the age of sixteen because early marriage was the main obstacle in their way to receive education. The branches of local _anjuman_ formed in various cities and one girl from each city would be enrolled to _Aligarh Girls’ School_ by giving her _wazifa_ (scholarship). In this way an eligible teacher would be found.

It was decided that the main office of Conference would be at Aligarh and there were ten members from Aligarh. They are Mahmood Begum Saheba, Begum Aftab Ahmad khan, Bilquis Begum (sister of Aftab Ahmad khan), Begum Haji Musa Khan Sherwani, Begum Abdullah, Mrs. Khwaja, Abdul Majid, Nafees Dulhan Saheba, Sikandar Jahan Begum, Begum Nawab Muhammad Ishaq Khan and Khwaja Saeed Jahan. All of them were the members of _Muslim Educational Conference_ and related to the Aligarh College. The other members of this committee who belonged from outside Aligarh were Mrs. Sajjad Hyder from Dehra Dun, Syed Ehsan-ul-Haq Saheba from Jalandhar, Mrs. Zohra Faizi Saheba from Bombay, Mrs. Razaullah from Bahawalpur, Mrs. Shafi from Lahore, Iqtidar Dulhan Saheba from Bhopal, Begum

5 Ibid, p-63.
Raza Naushad Ali from Moradabad. Though there was dominance of ladies from Aligarh in this meeting as it was the main headquarters but the ladies from the other traditional centre such as Lahore also took participated in it enthusiastically. The Conference also decided that the meeting would be held in every month and it consisted of five members. The meeting of executive committee would be held six monthly which included a Secretary and seven Members.

To quote:

Thus, in 1914 Begum of Bhopal elected as the life time President of this Conference. She organized eleven meeting till 1929 at different places such as Aligarh, Meerut, Delhi, Lahore, Calcutta, Agra, Malkapur, Subah Berar, Pune and Hyderabad. The ladies who chaired the meeting of this Conference at various places were Begum Sarkar Alia of Bhopal, Begum Shah Din, Muhammad Shafi and Lady Sir Abdul Qadir from Lahore, Begum of Jangira, Mahmuda Begum from Aligarh, Abru Begum from Bhopal, Mrs. Khediv Jung, Begum Nawab Mumtaz Yarr-ud-Daulah, Lady Āsmān Jān from Hyderabad. There was three meeting convened at

Aligarh. In 1915, a resolution regarding Rs.25/ per month scholarship for the girls' students of Lady Harding was passed which gave an encouragement to the girls.

About the details of the first meeting of AKI we find that it was held at Aligarh and the Secretary of women education section, Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah with his wife Waheed Jahan Begum took all the responsibility to organize it. They invited all the prominent Muslim ladies for their participation in it and Begum of Bhopal presided this occasion with a remarkable speech. She advocated the reason behind the formation of AKI which exclusively intended for the promotion of women's education and their rights. She complained in her address that the Muhammadan Educational Conference had held its several meetings at various places to discuss the educational needs of the community but less concern was given to female education. She suggested the Muslim community to realize the importance of women's education without which progress of entire community was impossible. The Begum of Bhopal said the women should be active otherwise they would not succeed in their goal. Thus, they should co-operate with men and start their mission to propagate education. She suggested the women to start schools in their own localities for their families and extend it among their near and dear ones. Special attention was also paid towards health care.

The meeting of AKI was also held in Bhopal on 26th March, 1918. This gathering was unique in the sense that women from all parts of India representing different religions and cultures attended it. The Muslim women from this state also played the crucial role to unite all the Indian women without any religious bias. Ladies from all the communities attended this meeting. The prominent among them were Nafees Dulhan, Begum Sarbuland Jung and Begum Khawaja Majid belonged from Aligarh College trustees. The other were Zohra Fyzee and Mrs. Mohsin Badruddin Tayyebji from Bombay. Among the women from different communities included Begum Humayun Mirza, Begum Amir Hasan and Begum Khadiv Jung from Hyderabad, Mrs. Hemanta Kumari Chowdhury from Patiala, Begum of Janjira, Sarojini Naidu and Sarup Kumari Nehru. In this session, the Begum of Bhopal

7 Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol-34, no-12, (4 April, 1931),p-311.
9 Poet and nationalist leader.
10 Sister of nationalist leader Jawahar Lal Nehru.
mentioned the presence of various women's associations in India like *Muslim Ladies Conference, Bengal Conference, the Istri Mahamandal* and *Seva Sadan* of Bombay. She praised these associations through which the Indian women showed their ability. She also advocated that these organizations were confined to a particular place and controlled by a special community. However, the aim of AKI was to be a central body for the women of India without any caste and creeds and to represent the daughters of India under an especial tie.

Besides, the traditional centres, the AKI also spread its local branches in Lahore, Delhi, Meerut, Dehradun, Calcutta, Jalandhar, Hyderabad and worked for the foundations of Girls' School. However, the crowd at the annual meeting held at Aligarh in 1915, at Meerut in 1916 and at Delhi in 1917 diminished and finally the AKI received a new set up when the Mian Family of Lahore invited AKI to convene its meeting at Lahore.

Thus, the fifth annual meeting of *Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam* was held in Lahore on 3rd-5th March 1918 at the house of Maharaja of Faridkot who donated his entire building and ground for a week to organize the Conference. Two eminent ladies, Mrs. Muhammad Shafi and Mrs. Shah Din of Lahore who were the wives of leading Muslim barristers in Punjab took the whole responsibility to welcome the delegates. There were four hundreds ladies attended this Conference from various places such as Lahore, Aligarh, Allahabad, Lucknow, Bulandshahr, Delhi, Meerut, Bhopal, Peshawar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Jammu. Women from outside resided at Faridkot house where a strict arrangement of *purdah* was arranged and the other stayed with their relatives in the city. Thus, the women had the opportunity to meet the women from other places and discussed various important issues. There were fifteen young ladies who formed a committee of arrangement for this Conference. They wore very simple native dress with no heavy gold or silver ornament which showed their simplicity.

The first session of this meeting presided over by Abru Begum of Bhopal who gave her address in Urdu like all the proceedings of Conference. In her address, she drew a negative picture of western education and its results. The President was of the

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11 *Khātoon*, vol-7, no-3, (March, 1911), pp-143-144.
opinion that the education for Muslim women should provide them an understanding of their domestic duties as well as the knowledge of religion, national legends and history. In short, the ideal women should possess all these quality and to achieve this kind of education, it is necessary to have our own system and as a means to this end, she urged that a Muslim university be established at Aligarh and the women raised the money themselves. She said that the weak point of women was to follow the men in an attitude of indifference toward their religion.

During the Conference, many speeches were given on various themes like the need of reform the customs of living, necessity of education in domestic science and health, hygiene, child rearing and also the simplicity in dress and less extravagance at weddings and funerals. There was a discussion about the need of school for orphanages where the Muslim must be taught the lesson of Quran. There was also a provision for less educated women where good English books translated into Urdu were available. The grant was collected for educational and philanthropic purposes just like the Christian missionaries. Thus, all these reformist proposals were signed by the ladies.

One of the most interesting resolutions was proposed in this Conference by Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, the daughter of Mian Muhammad Shafi. She argued that the Conference should take a strong stand against the evil practices of polygamy. Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz asserted that the polygamy which is practiced by the certain section of Muslims is against the Quranic injunctions and it is unfavourable to the progress of Muslim community. The Muslim press was outraged against this resolution though the leading women’s journal of Mumtaz Ali entitled Tahzib-un-Niswan was in favour of this resolution but many Urdu journals opposed it. One of them was the journal Ismat edited by Rashidul Khairi. He was the great supporter of women’s rights who remarked this resolution as anti-Islamic and stated that the women of AKI were influenced by the Christian educated teachers which was unacceptable. Rashidul

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Khairi was also a great novelist who wrote many novels in which he exposed the evil practices of polygamy and pointed out that no men could do justice to more than one woman, only in certain cases the Quran permitted polygamy otherwise supports monogamy\textsuperscript{16}. Infact, Rashidul Khairi was the well-wisher who motivated the women to speak out about this social practice.

The other resolution of this Conference related to the dominance of Aligarh in the AKI and projected to move the headquarters of AKI in every five year to a different city. The members were voted down about this issue\textsuperscript{17}. However, an unfavourable moment arose about the issue of membership. During this year, the Vice-President Wahida Begum Yaqub died suddenly and the post was replaced by her sister-in-law, Asaf Jahan who had also replaced her as editor of \textit{Tahzib-un-Niswan}. This move was attacked by Fatima Begum\textsuperscript{18} who stated that she was the most active member of AKI from its establishment, thus she deserved the post of Vice-Presidentship more than Asaf Jahan. Fatima Begum also opposed the issue of anti-polygamy resolution which excluded her from this post\textsuperscript{19}.

The editor of \textit{Tahzib-un-Niswan}, Mumtaz Ali commented about the dominance of Aligarh in AKI. He stated the need to spread more branches of this organization apart from Aligarh. He protested that AKI was controlled by local trustees of Aligarh like the \textit{Muhammadan Educational Conference} where this group dominates the resolutions which passed in this Conference and allowed very few to speak against it\textsuperscript{20}.

The Honorary Secretary, Nafees Dulhan also reported about the eighth annual meeting of AKI which held at Aligarh on 27\textsuperscript{th} -29\textsuperscript{th} December, 1923. She observed that to hold the session at Aligarh proved well-located because at the same time a Conference for the men was also held there. This session was attended by a large number of educated ladies who came from Bombay, Hyderabad, Meerut, Agra, Badayun, Bulandshahr, Delhi and Firozpur. This session was chaired by Begum

\textsuperscript{16} Ismat, vol-20, no-3, (March 1918), p-8.
\textsuperscript{17} Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol-21, no- 27, (9 March, 1918), p-164.
\textsuperscript{18} Editor of journal Sharif Bibi (Lahore).
\textsuperscript{19} Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol-21, no- 27, (9 March, 1918), p-163.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, (11, May, 1918), pp-303-306.
Nawab Mumtaz-ud-daulah Bahadur from Hyderabad as Begum of Bhopal was busy in presiding the convocation of Aligarh Muslim University.

An important event of this meeting was exhibition of handicraft and Miss Amna Pope who was the Principal of Girls' Madrasah in Nampalli organized this exhibition. At this meeting the speakers read various papers and encouraged the participants to fight for their rights and to improve the conditions of Muslim women. It also urged that they should follow the Islamic fundamentals of equality and justice. At the end of this session, mentioned the letter of Ms. Rustumji Fardonjee which inviting AKI to join the All Asian Women’s Association.

The AKI continued to hold its meeting till 1920 but later on dispute started due to the differences of opinion among the co-ordinator. Mumtaz Ali pointed out the weaknesses of AKI which noticed at the annual session meeting of 1919 held in Calcutta. The gathering set at Ripon Street with sufficient arrangement which headed by Rokaiya Sakhavat Husain, the local organizer. More than six hundred ladies from different places came to attend this meeting. However, one of the hosts, Naziri Begum Arif raised objection that this site was not private enough for the purdah-observing women. She had the connection of Aligarh due to the friendship of her husband and his brother who were the close friend of Nafees Dulhan’s husband. Thus, Nafees Dulhan with the courtesy of friendship requested the local coordinator to change the place of the meeting which angered Rokaiya Sakhavat Husain. Thus, a clash started between the view of local committee and central officers.

Begum Rokaiya who was a self-independent woman argued surprisingly with Nafees Dulhan that how the decisions of local committee were not respected by the officers of centre and blamed that she herself did not look the location. She also asserted that if Nafees Dulhan demanded to change the venue at the last time of arrangements, it would be very difficult for AKI to hold it meetings as this was the national organization and many delegates from various places took participate in it. However, the decisions of local organizers were diminished due to the inclination of central committee. Lastly, the location was changed by the committee which composed of the Arif family and friends. Thus, Begum Rokaiya permanently estranged herself from AKI and naturally the attendance at Calcutta Conference was diminished. At the meeting, the Aligarh’s hold

22 Ibid, p-798.
over AKI was reaffirmed and the officers who were already serving various posts once again re-elected for a five year term\textsuperscript{24}.

However, after the Calcutta Conference, the enthusiasm of AKI became weaken and the proposed Conference in Madras did not happen fruitfully. Thus, the women of Aligarh hold a local meeting at Agra on 2-3 April, 1920 under the Chairperson of Begum Shafi but the meeting came to an end\textsuperscript{25}.

About the disorganization of AKI, a Punjabi woman wrote in \textit{Tahzib-un-Niswan} that why it was impossible for AKI to hold a meeting? She asserted that if members of AKI did not receive the invitation from elsewhere, it should have possible to hold the meeting at Aligarh. Though the members came forward for it but the plan failed. All this incidents showed that it was not an all India Ladies Conference but rather a ‘Nafees Dulhan Conference’.

To quote:

\begin{quote}
We find that a similar strife occurred in the ladies Conference of Madras in 1932 which made the people to think that it was simply a ‘Nafees Dulhan Conference’. The coordinator of Madras Conference, Rahmatunnissa Begum invited the AKI to hold an all-India level Conference in her city and made local arrangements for it. However, the Honorary Secretary of AKI, Nafees Dulhan criticized the local committee which allowed the men to attend particular sessions and they seated behind the curtains. She argued that though the men helped to organize the Conference and
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\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Tahzib-un-Niswan}, vol-22, no.- 28, (5 April,1919),pp-218-23 and (12 April,1919),pp-241-50.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, vol-26, no- 49, (8 December,1923), p-776.
donated money for it but the entry of men in this Conference would not allow because
the men might see the women and also hear them which were impermissible.²⁷

Thus, after a gap of five years, the eleventh session of AKI held at Hyderabad on
5-6th and 8thFebruary, 1929 under the presidency of Lady Āsmān Jān which continued for
three days. It was only all-India in name because only few women from outsides
Hyderabad attended this Conference. Among them one was Mrs. Hakam from Calcutta
who organized the meeting, Abru Begum of Bhopal who said about the accomplishment
of her family members in this meeting to increase the interest of audience²⁸.

In the meeting, Mrs. Hakam spoke in favour of purdah practice and informed
that by observing purdah, the ladies would protect their dignity and honour. The other
members did not approve her speech and spoke strongly against the purdah practiced
in India. Thus, Mrs. Hakam’s resolution in favour of purdah was not passed. In spite of
this, a new resolution which supported the practice of Islamic purdah was passed²⁹.

An important event of the session was Nafees Dulhan’s offer to resign for the
post of Secretary in which she re-elected for a third five year term in 1923 and
favoured anyone else who would take the post but the respectable lady Abru Begum
from Bhopal tried to deter from her decision. The other member, Mrs. Humayun
Mirza felt that Nafees Dulhan could continue her work. She also criticized the past
working of the Conference and stated that the Conference should not just in name but
it should be for work. Another resolution conferred upon Syed Mumtaz Ali who
honoured by the title of Rahbar-i-Niswan (Guide of women).

The Honorary Secretary of AKI, Nafees Dulhan gives a list of sixteen
resolutions passed at this Conference. Among these, some stressed the need of efforts
for the promotion of women’s education, established more schools for the purdah-
observing girls, reforms in the family courts which deals the matter of divorce (khulā)
and martial disagreement cases, also for the protection of Muslim women’s right to
inherit property³⁰. In this session, the disagreement between Nafees Dulhan and Mrs.
Humayun Mirza was noticeable. Lastly, Nafees Dulhan with dishearten reported the

Also cited, Ibid, vol-35, no-19, (12 November, 1932), pp-2002-3 and (10 December, 1932), pp-
2098-2100.
statements of Mrs. Humayun Mirza who spoke harshly on the issue of the negligence of Muslims towards education and said ‘if the Muslim do not acquire education, God willing, they should be perished, obliterated, be ruined and destroyed. Nafees Dulhan commenting on this statement and said it would be better if Mrs. Humayun Mirza had guided the Muslims and prayed for them that they sought the God’s help because the community’s destruction is indeed your own destruction’31.

During the later period AKI declined and the Begum of Bhopal, the President of AKI herself failed to attend any more meeting after the opening session in 1914. Although she continued her support with this association and generously gave the monthly grants for which she always remembered in every meeting. On the other hand, her educational deputy Abru Begum was regularly attended the various sessions of AKI. However, before the death of Begum of Bhopal in 1930, she expressed her dissatisfaction with this association and stopped her stipend to AKI32.

Thus, after the collapse of this all-India level association, some local branches of AKI continued to flourish under the leadership of Rahmatunnissa Begum in Madras and Begum Shah Nawaz in Punjab, but this organization became unable to expand into a larger body. However, the association of Punjab remained active under the efforts of Begum Shah Nawaz and in 1936 it converted into the women’s branch of Punjab Muslim League33. In fact, the AKI was an early forum for the purdah-observed women which united the women from different religion under a same platform and discussed their problems.

Besides this, the purdah-observed ladies in Jaunpur successfully organized a Ladies Conference on 10th May, 1931 under the Chairperson of Lady Fatima Sulaiman, wife of Justice Shah Muhammad Sulaiman. There were sixty eminent ladies took participate in it. Among which the most notables were Begum Muhammad Husain, Begum Mushtaq Ahmad, Allahabadi, Begum Muhammad Khalil, Begum Abdul Wahid etc. The wife of Shah Muhammad Sufiyan welcomed the delegates of this meeting and said about the education of children, health-care etc34.

The Presidential address of this meeting was delivered by Lady Fatima Sulaiman. She appreciated the purdah-observed ladies in Jaunpur to organize this Conference which was an important platform where the ladies gathered together and discussed various issues. She said about the education of women and gave the reference of Islam in which it is mentioned that education is compulsory for both men as well as women. She remarked that Jaunpur was an educational institute from the early period. Thus, it was important to establish a Madrasah for the children in Jaunpur through which the girls became educated. Lady Fatima Sulaiman also spoke against the early marriage of girls which hindered them to receive education and it was also affected them mentally and physically. She said that the Muslim should follow the Quranic jurisprudence in the matter of marriage.

The All India Muslim Ladies Conference was also held at Agra on 3rd January, 1932 which presided over by Khadija Begum, an eminent social reformer from Lahore. Another session of this meeting was convened on 5th January, 1933 in which Birjis Jahan Begum was appointed as Secretary and the welcome committee represented by Begum Manzoor Ahmad and Khatoon Jahan Begum. There were one fifty ladies took participate in it. The Honorable lady, Begum Jan Bahadur Mirza read the khutba (sermon) and the Secretary Birjis Jahan Begum presented the yearly report of this Conference which mentioned the following activities:

- To open a branch of ladies Industrial classes in the girls' school of Agra and gave scholarship to the girls' students.
- A branch of AIMLC also opened in Delhi.

To quote:


After that, a distinguished lady, Mrs. Naseer-ud-din Ahmad delivered an important speech in which mentioned the issue of women’s education, practice of purdah system which was not Islamic, need for the implementation of Sarda Act in which resolutions passed that the girls’ marriageable age fixed as 16 year inspite of 14 year, causes for the lack of women’s education. Begum Saeed-al-din, the sub-judge delivered lecture on the righteousness for Muslim women. Another lady, Khatoon Jahan Begum said about the opening of library and Zafar Umar Begum and Saeed-al-din promised to give the books for this library.

b) Anjuman-e-Khawateen-Hind ki Conference (AKH):

The participation of ladies in AKI (Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam) provided a favourable platform for Anjuman-e-Khawateen-Hind. On 7th February, 1928, the meeting of this organization was held at Delhi. There was huge gathering in this Conference. The women from various religions who were interested in the movement of female education and their progress participated. Many famous personalities also attended and nearly two hundred delegates from other provinces participated. There was proper arrangement of seating for the purdah-observing ladies. The Chairperson Mrs. S.R.Das welcomed two eminent personalities Lady Arun and Begum of Bhopal as the Chief guests of this meeting. Mrs. S.R.Das in her speech said that the lack of education among the Indian women is because of the negligence of parents towards education for their children. Thus, the parents must be made aware to impart education and it was also decided that which type of education would be helpful for them.

38 Ibid, p-145.
In this session, the General Secretary also read the letter of Maharani of Baroda and the Begum of Bhopal and appreciated their movement for women’s empowerment and education. It was mentioned that in Kashmir and Baroda, an act was passed in which the marriage age for girls was fixed at 15. Thus, it was expected that the other provinces of India would follow soon.

The other important issue for which this Conference actively started to take action was the early marriage of girls and passed the resolution for the support of which 10,000 signatures were received from the Subah of Gujarat. After that Rani Mandi delivered speeches in which she acknowledged the contribution of Lady Arun for Indian women and requested her to inaugurate this Conference.

Lady Arun in her speeches strongly advocated the need of women’s education for their empowerment in society. She pointed out the reason for which the girls’ education was stopped. In India, the girls were married at their early age or they became engaged in their household works due to which they could not receive education. There was also lack of books through which women could not gain knowledge. Thus, it was an urgent need to publish such type of knowledgeable books for the women as a mother played an important role to teach their children in India. She also stated that after a mother, the teacher was the prime source to impart knowledge to the children but in India there was lack of eligible teachers who were broad-minded and knew their duties well. Thus, Lady Arun said that the women would go ahead with patience and promised them for her co-operation whenever needed. After that, Sarojini Naidu thanked her.

The Begum of Bhopal also delivered a very impressive speech in this Conference. She requested all the women to participate in it without any religious bias and they should work with unity to improve the quality of women’s education and their rights. She particularly supported the Sarda Bill in legislature to raise the legal age of marriage for the girls. Apart from this, the Begum of Bhopal said about the matter of purdah which was practiced in India.

A sub-committee was also formed to inspect the following matters: i) for the girls' a suitable syllabus prepared, ii) provide useful books to the girls, iii) to enquire the reasons behind the marginalised condition of women\textsuperscript{42}.

Another Women's Conference meeting held at Delhi on 1930 was chaired by Mrs. B.L.Nehru. A large number of ladies from different religion participated and discussed the matter of women's education and their rights in this meeting. Besides this, two important resolutions were passed against the early marriage of child and Sarda Act\textsuperscript{43}.

On 12\textsuperscript{th} January, 1931, the meeting of Anjuman-e-Khawateen-Hind was held at the University hall in Lahore where women of all provinces participated. Among them, Malik Firoz Khan, the Minister of education, Dr. Gokul Chand Narayan, the Municipality Minister, Khan Bahadur Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Revenue Member, Justice Sir Abdul Qadir, Her Highness Maharani of Mandi, Justice Bait and his wife were important figures. There were many purdah-observing ladies who participated in this meeting due to the proper arrangement of purdah. Besides them some English ladies were also present. At first, Rani Rajwade read the yearly report of anjuman and also read the letters of other ladies who could not participate in this event. Then, Lady Abdul Qadir, the head of this Conference read the sermon (Kuthah) in Urdu from behind a curtain. The sermon was very impressive in which she mentioned the way of living and various matters of urbanization. Mrs. Hamid Ali and Srimati Laxmi Devi also delivered an interesting lecture on the purposes of this anjuman. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, the President of 5\textsuperscript{th} All-India Women's Conference (the deputy president of Madras Council) delivered an impressive speech in which she mentioned the achievements of earlier ladies and insisted women to uplift their social status through education. She gave the reference of late Begum Sultan Jahan of Bhopal who contributed a lot for the women's upliftment. Then, Malik Ferozuddin Khan gave a lecture in which he mentioned that women's education in Punjab was spreading very fast and the government of Punjab was also concerned for its promotion. He said that the Arya Samaj of Punjab worked to spread women's education and it proved that the province of Punjab was not less advanced as compared to Bombay and Madras in matter of education in India. After, Malik Ferozuddin, the ladies such as Mrs.Fardunji and Mrs. Cousin gave lectures and the session ended with vote of thanks to

\textsuperscript{42} Tahzib-un-Niswan, vol.31,no-6, (18 February,1928) p-173.
\textsuperscript{43} Khatun-i-Mashriq, vol-2,no-4,(January,1930),pp-7-9.
all the delegates. Lastly, it was announced that the next session of this Conference was special for the ladies and the men were not allowed in it.44

The Chairperson of *Anjuman-e-Khawateen-Hind*, Lady Abdul Qadir delivered the presidential Address in which she mentioned the importance of women’s associations. She advocated that the Conference of women was an important gathering through which the women of Hindustan could represent their condition. The women should raise their position in the field of education, politics and other social activities through their abilities. She said that in the Conference of women, a resolution passed repeatedly to increase the budget for educating girls but this project did not activate till now. Lady Abdul Qadir mentioned the support of government’s help apart from the public in this matter. Once their supports were received, the social reforms to educate the girls will become successful to an extent.

To quote:

> "Then, she said about the issue of *Purdah* in the light of Islamic fundamentals. In this Conference, the scheme was passed on the opposition of *purdah* as it was thought that *purdah* was a hinderence for the spread of women’s education and it affected the health of women. However, Lady Abdul Qadir gave the example of herself who observed the *purdah* from her childhood and she totally disagreed from this view. She said about Begum Sultan Jahan of Bhopal who spoke at the Conference of Delhi about Islamic *purdah* which is followed in outside world. Begum Sultan Jahan of Bhopal remarked that women in India followed strict *purdah* which is not mentioned in Islam. According to her, Islam mentioned the *Sharai’ Purdah* for women. Thus, reform was needed to change this practice. Lady Abdul Qadir requested all the ladies in this Conference to change their negative thought on the practice of *purdah* and proceed for reforms. She suggested the educated ladies of this meeting to guide the less educated women and motivated them towards education.

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The chairperson also remarked that a large number of ladies in this meeting were *purdah*-observing women but in spite of this they took participate in the *anjuman’s* meetings with full enthusiasm which indicated a positive sign of this movement.\(^{46}\)

About the social reform activities, it was discussed that in many *Subah* (provinces), there were no hospitals for the children. Thus, hospitals were established in every *subah* and an assistant doctor was appointed for the treatment of children.

Besides this, the following matters were discussed at this Conference:

- Implementation of *Sardha* Act.
- Abolished Polygamy.
- In Mysore and Baroda, act was passed for women in matters of inheritance. Such act should also pass in other places. In India, many irrelevant customs were followed in Marriage. Thus, reforms should need to change this practice.
- To stop the business of buying and selling of children.
- Protection of women worker and children who worked at factory.
- To stop the matter of caste discrimination.
- Ultimate prevention of wine.

To quote:

> "..."
The second session of this meeting was organized on 13th January, 1931. At first, the Secretary read the previous reports of *anjuman*’s meeting which were held in Calcutta, Patna, Ajmer, Maharastra, Awadh, Sindh, Baroda, Eastern Punjab, Madras, Hyderabad, Deccan and Mysore. The following resolutions were passed in this meeting\(^48\):

- The Academic Council of Bombay University was decided to change the syllabus of board examination. In the section of women’s education, the part of house hold matters was replaced by science.
- To extend the level of education, it was necessary to include the education of women in every scheme.
- To impart the initial education to all the boys and girls.
- This Conference was in against of the view where the girls were not included in scheme of compulsory education.
- It was decided to enforce compulsory education for girls and the girls up to twelve years old should come in the school.
- There was no proper arrangement of girl’s education in Government College. It was decided in this Conference to give concern to this matter.

Another aim of this Conference was to improve the system of women’s education in schools, training colleges, universities and the subjects such as arts and science, sociology, knowledge of house hold matter, fine arts, Indian civilization in which Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and other Indian languages were include in compulsory education.

Beside this, the other two important issues were also passed:

- The education was given to the girls who were at the age of puberty.
- In the school, the boys and girls were not given the corporal punishment.

To quote:

\[\text{(الف) توسیع تعلیم کمی در این میں لازم ہے کہ معاشرے کو فنیتی و فریتی دی جائے.}\]

\(^{48}\) *Tahzib-un-Niswan*, vol-34, no-3, (17 January, 1931), p-76.
Another meeting of this Conference was held on 15th January, 1931 where many important issues were passed⁴⁰.

- There should be a place for women’s representative in the council’s meeting and committee. In one scheme, it was requested to the members of council and assembly to amend the existing women’s right in Hindu laws and for the rights of Muslim women, the Quranic injunctions should be followed.

- One scheme was passed for the cleanliness of villages and cities and also for the betterment of their health.

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp-88-89.
After that, Mrs. Hamid Ali presented a proposal on marriage and purdah. She said that changes were made on the issue of purdah and Rani of Mandi supported her proposal. She also faced lots of difficulties in her own marriage due to irrelevant customs. Begum of Mamdot supported her and said that she left purdah though her near and dear ones opposed it.

Miss Khadija Ferozuddin delivered a speech in which she said that due to the irrelevant customs in marriages, many families were spoiled. On the issue of purdah, she advocated that she was against it that women led their lives within four walls in a house. She was also against the matter of friendship between a man and women. Mrs. Humayun Mirza, Mrs. Khan and Mrs. Kohli supported her view. The places like Travancore and Cochin were praised because in these places the Devdasi system was abolished.

One scheme was passed to give the education of labour classes in which especial arrangement was made for the education of girls who reached the age of puberty. It was also decided to enquire the condition of working women according to women’s right.

On the meeting of 16th January, many other schemes were passed. One plan was passed for the educational centre of women and it was decided to place it in Delhi. It was passed among all the ladies members and they signed to this agreement. It was passed by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Mrs. Swami Nathanan supported it and delivered a speech both in Urdu and English on this scheme. She advocated that one lakh rupees was collected for it and an especial committee was established in which many respectable women of different Subah were included. A report was presented on it51.

Miss Khadija Ferozuddin in her lecture said that in this institution English education was given much priority but no community will adopt it at first till they had the knowledge of their mother tongue. Then Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said that there were three hundred languages which spoke in India. Among these which languages was give priority? Mrs. Hamid Ali supported her and remarked that it was not enough to train all the Indian women for all Indian languages within two years. Thus, in the existing situation English language was given the main priority. Then, Mrs. Hakim delivered a lecture in which she suggested to train the girls for health-care and

household activities such as cooking, sewing, embroidery etc which were important for them. Miss Nawalkar asked about those lengthy schemes for implementation and what happened if the university was not supported by this institution. In reply to this, Mrs. Patwardhan said that if in this institution, the education was given in Hindi language, it was better for the people of Indian as they could easily understood it. Thus, it should make compulsory in school to give the primary level of education in Hindi language. Mrs. Khemchand expressed regret that due to the various opinions, this matter did not reach any conclusion. Then, Mrs. Segura requested to all the members that they should not argue on these schemes rather it should be passed it to special committee. In this institute, the girls of matriculate and graduate students were admitted who were expert in their mother tongue and received English Education. They also guided other girls in their mother tongue language to receive education. All ladies approved this scheme and passed it to the university committee. Miss Grasam remarked that if Hindi or Urdu was chosen as the source to impart education, many difficulties came related to the syllabus. Mrs. Menon supported this scheme and suggested to give priority to the English language rather than other. Mrs. Malzardong remarked that this institute would be one of the best colleges in India. Mrs. Khemchand said that she did not support English language to become the national language but in the existing situation English was choose as the medium to impart education. Miss Lakad Deshnapa supported this proposal and remarked at the initial level, education should be given in a regional language and then English was selected as a medium for education. Then Mrs. Curniz delivered a lecture in which she supported English language and said that if they found those eligible teachers who were experts in regional languages, education would be imparted in Urdu or Hindi. However, Miss Khadija Ferozuddin was against the views of Mrs. Curniz. She denied the fact that if in the initial level, the girls were given English education then at the later stage, they were able to receive education in Urdu. She opined that most of the girls who were expert in English spoke wrong Urdu. Thus, she was against the idea to make English universal language. Then, Mrs. Hamid delivered a lecture in favour of that. Lastly Dr. Reddy, the Chairperson of this Conference decided to took vote for it. Only seven votes were received against English. Thus, English language received the priority in the existing situation. Then, Mrs. Fardunji requested the members for grants. Then, the ladies who were selected for various post in the next session were
Rani Lakshmi Rajodi for Secretary, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for Chairman, Mrs. Manaklal Prem Chand for Treasurer, Dr. Mrs. Melsani Sikh Thankur for Social Secretary, Mrs. Lakshmi Kutimenon for educational Secretary and for the post of Vice-President the ladies such as Mrs. Sen, Mrs. Hamid Ali, Mrs. Fardunji, Mrs. Mayil Ardung, Mrs. Curniz, Hansa Mehta. After that, Mrs. Malzardong read the programme of the next meeting and requested the member for their opinions about it. Mrs. Curniz read the letter of Miss Chattopadhya in which she greeted the secretary and president of this Conference for their success. The Chairperson of this Conference passed a scheme in which she mentioned to send letter to the Viceroy for the implementation of *Sarda Act* and a separate bill passed for the Muslim women. Lastly, Dr. Reddy, Lady Abdul Qadir, Miss Ferozuddin, Mrs. Curniz, Mrs. Hamid Ali etc were thanked the other ladies and the session ended52.

C) *Khawateen Asia ki Conference (KAC):*

The *Khawateen Asia ki Conference (KAC)* was held on 20th January, 1931 in Lahore53. In this Conference the women representatives came from outsides India such as Iran, China, Japan, Afghanistan, Ceylon etc. The following ladies were choosen for the Chairmanship of different session of this meeting. Lady Binda Naik of Ceylon was choosing for the inaugural speech which was held on 29th January. The first meeting was held on 20th January chaired by Miss Miang from Burma, the second meeting was held on 21st January chaired by Madam Haush from Japan, the third meeting was held on 22nd January chaired by Miss Kamaluddin from Afghanistan, the fourth meeting was held on 23rd January chaired by Muthu Lakxmi Reddy from India and the 5th meeting was held on 24th January chaired by Mrs. Shireen Faujdar from Iran. The inaugural session was started by reading a poem of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. Then Rajkumari Amrit Kaur mentioned those ladies who did not participate in this Conference due to some reasons. She welcomed all the delegates and Mrs. Hamid Ali announced that all the delegates had choosen Mrs. Sarojini Naidu for the Chairmanship of this Conference. Mrs. Fardunji in her lecture inspired all the ladies to participate for the work of nation like the men. She congratulated one of the chairpersons of this Conference Lady Binda Naik that in her country all the young girls and boys were permitted to give their opinion.

Rani Laxmi Rajwade read the letters of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shrimati Sarla Devi, the anjuman of jewish ladies and their rights, Her Highness Maharani of Travancore, the women’s organization for their freedom and peace (Jeneva), Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Jamiat Aman Wa Azadi (Afghanistan), Anjuman-e-Khuddam-e-Hind, Jamiat-Talukat-Ben-Al-Milali (Japan), Anjuman-e-Khwateen (Iran), Anjuman-e-Himayat (Bombay) and Mrs. Swaswami and others. She thanked Mrs.Curniz who was the initiator to hold an All-Asian Women’s Conference. Lady Binda Naik in her speech congratulated to all the Indian ladies who started their

movement to unite whole world. Then the delegates delivered their speech in their mother tongue which was translated in English. Though many lectures were delivered in English but one of the Japanese lady said that she did not know English. She also remarked that in their country it was not compulsory to give the lecture in English. Then the others delegates gave their speech in their mother tongue. One of the eminent ladies, Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy gave her speech in Tamil. One of the representatives from Punjab, Sardar Yogindar Singh thanked all the delegates of this Conference and emphasized unity. Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy thanked the representatives of Punjab. Lastly, Dr. Binda Naik delivered a short speech and recited a poem. Thus, the inaugural function of this Conference ended.

The first meeting of this Conference was held on 20th January under the Chairmanship of Miss Miang. Miss Deota, one of the delegates from Burma introduced Miss Miang and said about this brave lady participated in women’s movement for their upliftment in society. Then, Miss Miang delivered a speech.

Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy in her speech said about the ancient era where the family value was very important. At that time, all the members of one family lived together and respected the elders but after the influence of English, this was not followed. Mrs. Hamid Ali in her speech talked about the rights of Muslim women. She disagreed about the statements that Muslim women were treated badly. In the Muslim families, the women were given the responsibilities of whole household. The other misconception which she pointed out was that the Quran permitted the custom of polygamy. She said that in the matter of Property rights, the Islamic laws were very clear. She remarked that the customs of different communities in Asia resembles each other’s which showed that the all Asian communities belonged to one family.55

Next Lady Abdul Qadir said about the three women’s rights in Islam. The one was right of inheritance, second right was given to choose their life partner and third was if the girl was married at a very young age, she had the right to break their relationship at the age of puberty. She expressed sadness that the women in India did not give such right. She advocated that the Muslim women in India should follow these rights.

Mrs. Swami Nathan from Malabar said in their place, the women was given the rights of inheritance and they had the freedom in every matter like men. The men and the children did not interfere in their works. She said about effect of western civilization which became prominent in Malabar. The men and women had the rights to be separate at anytime by their will and the children were identified by the hereditary title from mother's side. She remarked that the women of Malabar had all the rights for which the women of other countries struggled till now.

Miss Mamiasoe from Burma said that the women of Burma also had the right of inheritance. In Burma, the Islamic doctrines were not followed in marriage but the girl and boys who were below the age of puberty did not give the rights to marry at their own will. The right of divorce was also allowed.

Mrs. Langakaun from Ceylon said that due to the influence of European civilization, they followed the European life style and the matter of divorce was practiced frequently. She remarked the book of Miss Mao which was based on wrong propaganda. Then she read a poem and *nazm*.

Mrs. Godhrana from Ceylon said that their customs resembled to Indian customs. They respected their mother like the pious Budhha. They also had the opinion that marriage was an agreement.

Mrs. Shireen Faujdar from Iran said that in Iran the girls were married at their own will and their opinion was taken before their marriage. The Muslims, Zoroastrian and others followed it. In Iran, the girls married at the tender age. Now they were married after 18 years of age. The girls also had the rights of inheritance according to Islamic fundamentals. The women did all the household activities very sincerely.

Miss Kamaluddin from Afghanistan said that the practice to marry the girls at the tender age was very rare and now they were married at the age of 18-19 years old but fifty year back, they married at the age of 30. The women of Afghanistan were given all the rights according to Islamic laws.

Madam Hausi of Japan delivered a lecture in her mother tongue which summarized the fact that in Japan the girls choose their life partner according to their own will and sometimes the parents decided it. The girls married at the age of 13-20
year old. In the family, the elder son lived with their parents and the younger one lived separately.

Rani Laxmi Bai Rajwade mentioned the different customs which were followed in Indian marriage.

Miss Khadija Ferozuddin said that only in Islam, the women were given the respectable position. In the matter of inheritance, Islam gives important rights to women. Among the Muslim, the practice of marriage at the tender age was not practiced. The women also have the right to divorce

The second meeting of Khawateen Asia ki Conference was held on 31st January, 1931 under the Chairmanship of Madam Hausi. She was one of the respectable women in Japan who came to India for the purpose of education. She learned Sanskrit in the University of Shantineketan at Bolpur which was established by Rabindranath Tagore. Madam Hausi in her speech advocated that in Japan, the Sanskrit teachers were available but she travelled in India because she wanted to know about the Indian women. She said that the wine and opium which were prohibited in Burma but with the coming of European, these were practiced again. However, only the Chinese had the right to buy it but as it was easy for the Burmese peoples, they also bought it.

Miss Kaur from Ceylon said an attempt was made to stop the death of children in Columbo. Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy in her speech said about the condition of Indian children. There were seventeen lakh children affected by death mortality. The death rate of children was such that near about 50,000 children at a very young age lost their life due to various diseases.

Rani Laxmi Bai Rajwade said that the opium which grew India were in demand to others parts due to the use of Unani medicine. Thus, it was needed to make it legal. Lastly, Miss Mustafa Khan from Iran, Miss Sen Gupta, Miss Muthulaxmi Reddy and Maya Das delivered their speeches

The third meeting of this Conference was held on 22nd, January under the chairmanship of Miss Kamaluddin from Afghanistan. She in her inaugural speech

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mentioned the progress of European and said about the backwardness of Indian. Begum Maulana Bakhsh from Iran delivered a short speech in which she mentioned those rights which were given to the women in Islam. She mentioned that in Iran, the women did not observe purdah and they participate in meeting. They also gave their opinions. Miss Miang read the quotation of Burmese council which was passed in the Lahore commission. It was prescribed that in Burma, the women took the responsibility of all house holding activities. Mrs. Milu from Ceylon said that in India, there was large number of labours and the mutual co-operation of their labour and wages were necessary.

Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy said that there were thirty lakh women labour in India. She advocated that in India, there were no good arrangement for the meeting of labour class and their condition was very bad. They were given very low wages. Thus, it was necessary to form many organizations for the betterment of their conditions. Dr. Girzar Wilson said that the women who worked in factory were not treated well and ignorance was the main reason for their bad condition. Miss Cambell mentioned the pathetic condition of those children who worked in factory from morning to night. Mrs. Hakam requested all the delegates in this Conference to give their concern for those ladies and children. She also asked them to pay attention to their wages. Mrs. Curniz in her lecture praised the handicraft of Asian ladies and said that Asia was an agriculturist region. Lastly, Hamid Ali thanked all the delegates.

The fourth meeting was held on 22nd, January under the chairmanship Mrs. Hamid Ali. The theme of this meeting was ‘women and the regime’. Lady Binda Naik from Ceylon delivered a lecture in which she said that the ancient Asian civilization was replaced by European civilization. The women were awakened and they came forward for their rights. The Ceylonese women had the rights to give their opinions in any matters but the women of villages and remote areas were not awakened to give their opinions.

Mrs. Gunasekar said that when women were married to men from other countries, it affected their rights. Thus, it was very important to have the similarity of the community rights of men as well as women. Miss Deota addressed that in Burma, there were many women who worked in municipality and in school and colleges, they

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appointed as teacher. There were many women who worked as inspectress in Madrasah and there were other ladies who were appointed as Honorary Magistrate, Register and members of educational board. It was also decided that women would choose for the majlis of Khatun Saaz. However, the women were not appointed for the post of judge or jury. Thus, it was important that women solved their own cases. The women police was also not formed. Thus, they started agitation for this right.

Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy said that in Madras, women were given the right of expression which was not given in other parts of country. In Madras, women were appointed at many posts. She supported Miss Deota in the matter that the women were also gave the post of judge and jury. In the constitution, the men as well as women were given the same rights. Thus, the men did not have right to underestimate women. She advocated that the Muslim women were much better in the rights of inheritance as compare to the Hindu women. Thus, she requested all the delegates of this Conference to think about these matters.

Miss Engakon spoke about the rights of Ceylonese women and Miss Faujdar said that the Muslim women were in ignorance. They followed the rigid and useless customs in marriages and women did not get the right in property. After divorce, the women had no right on their children. The government of Iran made special arrangement for boys of their higher education and send them to other countries but there was no arrangement for the education of girls. Mrs. Fardunji also said the property was given to their husband and thus they did not have whole right on it. Mrs. Cousin said in her lecture that there were 95,000 educated students in Japan but two years back they had no right of freedom of expression. Miss Sanchi supported Mrs. Cousin’s view. After that Mrs. Muthulaxmi delivered a speech and Mrs. Cousin gave the jute bag to the delegates in which there was a picture of charkha. She said in details about it and thanked them.

The fifth meeting organized on 24th January which was chaired by Mrs. Shireen Faujdar. Miss Khemchand presented a plan in which she suggested all the Asian people to request the government for the enforcement of education which existed in Japan. This plan was supported by Mrs Rafi, Miss Meoang and Mrs. Hamid Ali. Lady Binda Naik delivered a speech in which she mentioned that religion played

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an important role in society. There were different religions which have different fundamentals. Thus, the syllabus of fundamental rights of different religions should be included in Madrasah education. Miss Deota, Miss Engakon, Miss Khemchand and Miss Ganpat Rao delivered their speeches in which they mentioned the prohibition of intoxicants. Rani laxmi Bai Rajwade and Miss Cambell delivered speeches in the support of this matter. Finally, this proposal was passed in this Conference. Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy said the plan for the Asian countries except in Japan in which she requested all the members of Asian countries to spend a big amount for the care of health as the death rate of men, women and children were more in their countries. Thus, she suggested enquiring the treatment process of eastern countries. Mrs. Hamid Ali and Bholanath supported it. This Conference suggested the women in Asian countries to avoid the cinema and theatres and led a simple life. Miss Khemchand said about the fundamentals of religions. Miss Khadija Ferozuddin said that if all were followed their religion strictly, all the problems were solved. Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy mentioned the following proposals such as to avoid the useless customs in marriage, the children were given the right of guardianship, the women were given property rights, they also given right in the matter of divorce, for the safety of children a law was passed, prohibited the marriage at tender age, married the women at the age of 18, law was also passed for the safety of women and punished those who misbehave with them. A scheme was passed for improving health of the labour class. All the delegates were requested that they conveyed these points among the women of villages and cities. Lastly, the place and members were decided for the next Conference. 