

An Analytical Study Of The Role Of Significant Muslim Women In Socio-Religious Reforms With Special Reference To The Related Issues Of Pakistani Society

Abdul Muhaimin¹, Anila Mustafa², Muhammad Hayat Khan³

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, The University of Haripur.

² Lecturer, Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, The University of Haripur.

³ Lecturer, Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, The University of Haripur.

Abstract

This study elaborates the role of a few prominent Muslim women in socio-religious reforms in Muslims history and the means and measures they adopted to comprehend various social issues related to religion and the way they addressed them. The current paper brings into surface the contemporary social issues which women have to face and the challenges to deal with them. What role can women play in addressing these issues in Pakistani society? Undoubtedly, things have improved for women in the recent past regarding education and employment. On the one hand, women have reached higher posts, but on the other hand, women have to face even more complex socio-religious issues. The study primarily focuses on Pakistani society, where social issues are mostly tinted in religious expressions, and the women in our society have to face most of the consequences. The study highlights women's role in socio-religious reforms in the past and how a modern-day woman can benefit from their model.

Keywords: socio-religious, contemporary challenges, Pakistani society.

Women before the Advent of Islam

At one point, men were the only ones who mattered, and women were viewed as inferior beings unworthy of being called humans. Before the advent of Islam, women weren't even worth preserving. If she did survive, it would be a life without any claim to life—a death that was still happening. She was treated like a commodity, and widows got the worst treatment. She had no authority over the men at all. ¹ She was a sign of sadness, as the Qur'an says, "When if one of them

received tidings of the birth of a female, his face remained darkened".

This situation changed when the Islamic prophet Muhammad (PBUH) manifested kindness and light for people. "Respect for women" ² was one of the core principles of Islam, which the prophet upheld. Islam was introduced as a source of direction for all people, but particularly as a motivator in the lives of women. Overnight, her standing shifted, and she started to provide dignity. Islamic doctrine holds that believers of either gender are equally valuable. Women

achieved great heights and left a distinctive historical imprint.³

The Qur'an speaks generally and specifically about women; it does not view them as an extension of men but rather as unique creatures, each addressed individually, just as men are,⁴ i.e; Qur'an says that "And they (women) have rights similar over them (as regards obedience and respect, etc.) to what is reasonable".⁵

Among many other purposes, Allah sent the Prophet to uplift and protect the honor of women. As a result, Muslim women contributed to Islam's history as scholars, monarchs, soldiers, jurists, businesswomen, and legal professionals.

Women of Early Islam

In Islamic History, there were great women with great socio-religious reforms; a few of them are listed below.

Khadija b. Khuwaylid (555 AD)

Being a prosperous businesswoman and a prominent member of Makkah's elite even before her marriage to the Prophet Muhammad made her a significant figure in her own right. She was the first Muslim woman and significantly influenced the development and spread of Islam. She was commended by the Prophet Muhammad, who declared that she was the best person Allah Almighty had ever given him in this life. God only gave me children via her, as she accepted me when others did not, trusted in me when others did not, shared her money with me when others did not, and did not deprive me.⁶

Ayesha b. Abu Bakr (614 CE)

She was a strong woman who was also a teacher, a scholar, a fighter, and a lawyer. She was remarkably brilliant, brave, devoted, and faithful, which allowed her to influence Islam's advancement significantly. Scholars of her era couldn't have kept up with her. Forty-four years after the prophet's passing, she continued to assist the Muslim community while promoting Islam. She is a role model for women who believe it is men's responsibility to be knowledgeable about and interested in religion.⁷

Contemporary Women in Islam

Umme Dardā' Sughra Damishqiyah (652CE)

She practiced law and studied Islam in Jerusalem and Damascus. She was an orphan living under Abu al-Dard's care. She used to pray in men's rows and read the Qur'an with male experts when she was a little girl. She started lecturing in the men's area and teaching Hadith and Fiqh. The caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan was among her pupils. Ilyas ibn Mu'awiyah, a significant traditionist of the time and a judge of undeniable talent and quality, believed that Umm al-Dard' was superior to all other traditionists of the time, including the renowned hadith masters Hasan Al-Basri and ibn-i-Sirīn.⁸

Hafsa bint-i-Sirin (719 CE)

She was a female early Islamic scholar. One of the "pioneers in the history of female asceticism in the Arab world" is how others have described her. She was noted for her devotion and expertise in Islamic traditions' practical and legal facets, lived in Basra,

educated many students, and is credited with creating seventeen traditions. She was Muhammad ibn-i-Sirn's sister, who was renowned for his ability to read dreams.⁹

Sayyidah Nafisah bint I-Hasan (762 CE)

She was an Islamic scholar and teacher who belonged to the prophet's family. Due to what she accomplished and learned from the Holy Prophet's Family, she is called the "rare lady of knowledge and gnosis." She entertained most of the academics of her era, including authorities in law, hadith, and Qur'anic interpretation; among them is Imam al-Shafi, who had relocated to Egypt from Baghdad in 109 H, five years after Sayyida Nafisa arrived in Cairo.¹⁰

Zubaydah bint Ja'far ibn al-Manswr (773 CE)

She was a well-known princess of the Abbasids. She is well known for the network of artificial pools, reservoirs, and wells that supplied water for Muslim pilgrims traveling from Baghdad to Makkah and Madinah. This path was nicknamed the Darb-i-Zubaydah in her honor.¹¹

Rabia Basri al-Qaysiyya (717 CE)

She was a Sufi saint who practiced Islam. When famine struck Basra, she was separated from her sisters after her father's death. Rabia ventured into the desert to pray and later became a desert saint and ascetic. She is frequently mentioned as the epitome of a pious and holy women. She was well-known for her unwavering dedication to Allah, which she expressed as "pure love of God." She served as a role model for others who

were devoted to God and exemplified how God and His creatures may love one another. Women were given the same respect as men when it came to sainthood.¹²

Malika Sabiyha (1894 CE)

She was one of the Spanish princes. A wonderful, generous, sage, fantastic, and amazing woman, She showed a strong interest in social welfare and supporting the underprivileged.¹³

Safiya bint e 'Abd al-Malik

She was the daughter of prodigious medical expert Abu Marwan 'Abd al-Malik. She was a skilled medical professional focusing on gynecology.¹⁴

Zifah Khatoon (583CE)

She was Salah Uddin Ayyubi's niece. She was Aleppo's ruler and a very giving, smart, and sage woman. Some of the mosques and madrasas she erected for the benefit of people still stand in Aleppo.¹⁵

Taman Agha Baygam

a noblewoman who is generous, extravagant, kind, sympathetic, and sympathetic In Samarkand, Uzbekistan, she built a significant medical facility and provided funding for the underprivileged and a large impoverished house that she had started in Samarkand. She had committed herself to the welfare of the underprivileged and helpless.

Nilofer Khatoon (1362 CE)

Sultan Murad-I, the Ottoman Empire's caliph, was born to her. She was a kind-hearted, patrician, brave, and honorable

woman. She paid particular attention to the welfare of individuals in society. During her reign, she built a significant number of bridges, buildings, and waterways for the benefit of the community.¹⁶

Giti Ara Bygam (780 CE)

She was the daughter of Ali Mardan Khan, the king of Zabulistan. She was a shrewd and alert woman. She was passionate about living the warrior and velvet lives. She had ascended to the position of ruler of Zabulistan at an early age and had shown tremendous intelligence in managing the region. She had implemented Islamic law throughout the nation and spearheaded several community efforts, such as establishing schools, hospitals, overpasses, roads, poorhouses, and efforts to stop female education in the state.

¹⁷

Gohar Shad Baygam (1378 CE)

She was the wife of Shah Rukh, the king of Herat. She had a keen interest in art and belittled the developing arts. She and her husband helped spark a cultural renaissance by lavishly supporting the arts. They attracted architects, court artists, poets, and philosophers who are now counted among the most renowned, admired, and prominent people worldwide, including the poet Nur al-Din Abd al-Rahman Jami. She put up numerous mosques and educational facilities.

¹⁸

Jahan Ara Begam (1614 CE)

She was a princess and the eldest child of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahn. The task of overseeing Jahan Ara's early education was given to Sati al-Nisa Khanam, who was well-

versed in Persian literature and the Qur'an as well as etiquette, housekeeping, and medicine. Jahan Ara was well-off and well-known for her active involvement in helping the underprivileged and providing funding for the construction of mosques. She has mandated that fifty koni of rice be shipped annually to Makkah's poor, destitute, and needy. She has provided significant financial support for education and the arts. She financed a number of Islamic mysticism-related publications, including commentaries on Rumi's Mathnawi, a well-known mystical text in Mughal India.¹⁹

Maryam Jameela (1934–2012)

Maryam Jameelah (Margaret Marcus), born into a Jewish-American family, after converting to Islam, emigrated to Lahore in 1962 to start a new life as an immigrant and never left Pakistan again. Her fifty-year residence in Pakistan was more fruitful in terms of her writing output. She was an American-Pakistani author who wrote over thirty books on Islamic history and culture. She was also a well-known female advocate for traditional, orthodox, and fundamentalist Islam. She was well-known for her negative writings about the West, a well-known author who provided a conservative defense of conventional Islamic culture and beliefs. She had strong opinions against materialism, secularism, and modernization in both Western culture and Islam. She believed that habits like polygamy, veiling, and gender segregation were mandated by the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and moves to abolish them represented a betrayal of Islamic beliefs. She had strong opinions against materialism, secularism, and

modernization in both Western culture and Islam. She believed that habits like polygamy, veiling, and gender segregation were mandated by the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and moves to abolish them represented a betrayal of Islamic beliefs.²⁰

Women in Pakistan

Farhat Hāshmi (1957)

Dr. Farhat Hashmi is one of the well-known female Islamic scholars of the twentieth century. She is now regarded as an iconic character and is responsible for assisting Muslim generations in forging a close bond with the Qur'an. She is currently regarded as one of the most significant modern Muslim thinkers (Ulema). She lectures on Islam and speaks with authority as an orator, drawing on real information. Her heartfelt speeches have had a profound impact on millions of people. She prefers to be referred to as a "Muallim" (teacher) and describes herself as an "eternal student and servant of the Qur'an" rather than as an icon, orator, or scholar.²¹

She is well-known for the "Al-Huda" International Welfare Foundation, which was established in September 2010 in Islamabad based on Islamic principles and the vision of Dr. Farhat Hashmi, as she says: "Since a long time, I felt a dire need for a school that would help connect children with Allah right from their early years, nurturing them into adulthood with a true understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah".²² The "Al-Huda" International Welfare Foundation is a brand name for high-quality Islamic education. There, courses of various lengths are offered, including "Talim al Qur'an," "Nazrah,"

"Tahfiz al-Qur'an," "Ta'lim al-Hadith," "Manar al-Islam," "Faham al-Qur'an," summer courses, and courses for men.

With a network of branches on every continent, Al-Huda International has many students who have "opted to become Muslims." Dr. Farhat Hashmi is renowned for his knowledge of Islam and his role in reviving the humanitarian spirit of Islam.²³ As a result, "Al-Huda" is now recognized as a reliable welfare organization that aids the less fortunate and weaker members of society.²⁴

Nighat Hashmi (1960)

Islamic scholar Nighat Hashmi bint 'Abd al-Rahman is a well-known and respected female figure, a Muslim televangelist, and a preacher in Pakistan. She was educated in Qur'an by her father. She has become a well-known feminist scholar both in Pakistan and abroad, as indicated by the large crowds that attend her religious lectures, or "Dars," which can number up to 10,000 people.²⁵ She is renowned for her in-depth understanding of Islamic studies, seerah, contemporary women's issues, and Qur'anic and Hadithic teachings. In 1996, she founded "Al-Noor International" with the intention of fostering character development in Muslim adolescents in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. She has been working tirelessly and with dedication for almost 20 years.²⁶

Socio-Religious Reforms and Women

Problems of women In Pakistani Society

The nation's development depends heavily on women, who contribute more than their male counterparts. Women still have to deal with a number of concerns and problems in today's society. Sometimes, they experience unequal treatment at work and are rated as less competent than their male coworkers. Their main problems at work are sexual harassment, inadequate maternity leave, inadequate security, and unequal compensation. The world was significantly different fifty years ago from the one we live in now. Women cannot freely participate in the workforce due to social and spiritual norms. These restrictions are progressively returning to normal, which is assisting in empowering women.²⁷

Teething troubles of working women in Pakistan.

We live in a society where men rule. Women encounter issues throughout various life domains in all Asian nations, particularly Pakistan. Their decision-making and original and creative ideas are not valued because they are viewed as weak. When a woman commutes to work, she frequently encounters sexist remarks and weird looks, especially in urban areas. Women in the middle class in Pakistan feel that it is vital to contribute to their family's well-being in this era of inflation and rising prices, which is creating pressure from poverty. Since working women don't necessarily make bad decisions all the time, society also has an unfavorable perception of them.²⁸ It is a fact that women must deal with issues just because they are women. And if they do, the issues are greatly exacerbated.²⁹

Child marriage

A unique and wonderful link between two souls is marriage. It is a vow to live together and matrimony of love and respect between two spirits. However, sometimes things don't go as planned. The ambition to lead a fulfilling, enjoyable, and prosperous life is wrecked and destroyed. When a woman marries young, this becomes a reality. Child marriage primarily affects females and is a relationship before the age of 18. The majority of child brides faced partner violence. It is regarded as a kind of violence against girls and a violation of human rights. 50% of Pakistani women between the ages of 20 and 24 who had been married before turning 18 and reported experiencing marital abuse and abusive conduct from their husbands in 2007 did so. Married women are expected to carry out a lot of household chores, exhibit fertility features, and raise kids while still in their childhood.³⁰

Honor killing

Women are perceived as inferior to men and beneath them. A woman is viewed as a burden from the moment of her birth, yet it is also a very important idea that women hold men's honor. The term "honor crimes" is frequently used to describe acts of violence committed against someone, primarily women, to preserve the honor of the perpetrator. Karo-Kari is the term used in Pakistan for honor killings. A family member has been murdered by other family members. Honor killing, not murder, is the term used when a man kills a woman and says he did it because she had engaged in immoral sexual behavior.³¹

Gender biases

There is no disputing the reality that men are granted unfair advantages over women in situations where they are plainly not warranted, as the headline makes apparent. Women and men do not have to be treated equally in the name of gender equality. They are in opposition to one another and occasionally have separate rights. It is not equal treatment that is needed, but equitable treatment, which recognizes that people have various levels of competence and that treating them equally is not always possible.

³² In our society, women do not have the same need for external validation of their accomplishments as men do. Men only get high-paying positions. Women are left to perform domestic tasks due to the common and stereotypical belief that "a woman's place is in the home" because women are perceived as being weaker than men and unable to perform work that takes effort and development on both a physical and intellectual level. ³³

Marriage with the Quran

Women are expected to dedicate themselves to memorizing the Qur'an. Such a marriage has some particular justifications. The Haq Bakhish, which literally translates as "renouncing the right to marry," is the name of this custom. It is an outdated, evil custom. In some regions of Punjab and Sindh, it is still practiced. Because they are descended from the prophet Mohammed, Sayyid caste women are not permitted to marry members of other castes to maintain the purity of their family's blood. Despite the fact that this practice is against Islamic law, reportedly 10,000 women still endure it. Instead of marrying a man, Pakistani girls whose

families have mortgaged their lives must "marry" the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam. They must learn its contents by heart and then hang the text around their waists with a cord. ³⁴ They are called "wives of the Qur'an" after getting married to the Qur'an, which is blatantly against Islamic law. Islam is not involved in any of this. Property protection under the guise of caste or religion has occasionally been the cause.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a frequent everyday practice that is both inappropriate and unjustifiable in many workplaces. Women regard sexual harassment as a frightening or offensive form of action. Men still perceive working women as "public property" and frequently try to exploit this. In Pakistan, unsafe and unhealthy conditions are too common, contributing to men's attitudes toward vulnerable, weak women as potential targets. ³⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historical treatment of women in many societies, including pre-Islamic times, was marked by discrimination, oppression, and disregard for their rights and dignity. However, with the advent of Islam and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), a significant shift occurred, leading to the recognition and empowerment of women. Islamic doctrine emphasized the respect and equality of both genders, granting women newfound rights and opportunities. Throughout Islamic history, numerous remarkable women emerged, contributing significantly to various fields, such as education, law, governance, and spirituality.

Figures like Khadija b. Khuwaylid, ‘Āysha b. Abī Bakr, and others left a distinctive historical imprint, proving that women can excel and be influential in society.

Nevertheless, even in contemporary times, women in Pakistan continue to face various challenges, including gender bias, child marriage, honor killings, and sexual harassment. Despite strides made toward gender equality, societal norms and cultural practices still hinder women's progress in

certain areas. However, the stories of exceptional women scholars and activists like Dr. Farhat Hashmi and Nighat Hashmi serve as a beacon of hope, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for women's rights and empowerment in Pakistan and beyond. The journey toward gender equality remains constant, and it requires collective efforts to build a more just and inclusive society for all.

References

¹ Raja Aqeel, Change and Muslim women,” International Journal of Humanities and Social Science 1(2011)21-30.

² Syed Ameer Ali, The Spirit of Islām, (Lahore: Peace Publication), p: 228.

³ Hāfiẓ Nāṣir Mahmood, Haḍrat Rābi‘a Baṣri, (Lahore: Book Corner), p: 44.

⁴ Mohammed Ākram Nadwi, Āl-Mohadhāt: The women Scholars in Islam, (London: Interface Publications, 2007), pp: 7-8.

⁵ Al-Qur’an, 2:228

⁶ Suriyā Nawāb, A study of Selected Autobiographical and Bibliographical Literature, (Rand Afrikaans University, 1997)

⁷ Syed Salman Nadwi, Seerat-e-‘Ā’isha, (Lahore: Dār-āl-Ishā’at), p: 15.

⁸ Ibn Saad, Muhammad bin Saad, Tabqāt Ibn Sa’ad, (Dār-āl-Ishā’at), vol. 4, p: 490.

⁹ Ibid., p: 380.

¹⁰ Talib Hashmi, Tārikh Islām ki 400 Bā Kamāl Khawātin, (Lahore: Islamic Publisher), p: 122.

¹¹ Urdu Da’irah Ma’arif Islamiyah, (Punjab University Press) vol. 10, p: 448.

¹² Syed Irtiza Ali, Haḍrat Rābi‘a Baṣry, (Lahore: Azim Sons), p: 36.

¹³ Talib Hashmi, Tārikh Islām ki 400 Bā Kamāl Khawātin, p: 189.

¹⁴ Ibid., p: 192.

¹⁵ Urdu Da’irah Ma’arif Islamiyah, vol 12, p581

¹⁶ Talib Hashmi, Tārikh Islām ki 400 Bā Kamāl Khawātin, p: 309.

¹⁷ Ibid., p 348.

¹⁸ Urdu Da’irah Ma’arif Islamiyah, vol, 15, p: 596

¹⁹ Introduction, Asian and African Princes,

<http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2013/02/princess-jahanaras-biography-of-a-sufi-saint.html>,

<http://madhukidiary.com/shahzadi-jahanara-begum-sahib-facets-of-her-life/>

²⁰ The life of Maryam Jameelah, Dawn, <https://www.dawn.com/news/694747>

²¹ Farhat Hashmi, Quran for all, <https://www.farhathashmi.com/profile-section/dr-farhat-hashmi-at-a-glance/>

²² Al Huda International, History,

<http://aispk.org/about-us/>

²³ <file:///C:/Users/DE/Downloads/samaj-3030.pdf>

²⁴ Introduction, Al-Huda,

<http://www.alhudapk.com/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/174-about-al-huda-international.html>

²⁵ Introduction, Ustaza Nighat Hashmi, <http://www.alnoorpk.com/ceo.php>

²⁶ Introduction, Āl-Nwr International Institute, <http://www.alnoorpk.com/whatisalnoor.php>

²⁷ Prof. (Dr.) Prabhat Srivastava, “Challenges faced by working women at workplace, family and society-its major issues, impact and remedial

measures”, International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities 5 (2015), pp: 64-77.

²⁸ Muhammad Atif Nawaz, “Problems of formally employed women: a case study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan”, Asian Journal of Empirical Research, 3 (2013), pp: 1291-1299

²⁹ Varsha Kumari, “problems and challenges faced by urban working women in India”, (National Institute Of Technology, 2014).

³⁰ Women life, child marriage,
<file:///C:/Users/DE/Downloads/EARLYMARRIAGEOFGIRLSINPAKISTAN.pdf>

³¹ Rabia Ali, The Dark Side Of ‘Honour, Shirkat Gah, p 8.

³² The Conversation, Gender Equality,
<http://theconversation.com/to-achieve-gender-equality-we-must-first-tackle-our-unconscious-biases-92848>

³³ Ifat Hassan, Problems of Working Women in Karachi, Pakistan, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing), p: 16

³⁴ Haq Bakhsi, Vatican insider world news,
<http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/30/vaticaninsider/eng/world-news/the-life-of-slavery-of-pakistani-women-who-are-forced-to-marry-the-quran-JY6MeCe4Oy2Fbhgie4UYKK/pagina.html>

³⁵ Women Problems, daily Pakistan,
<https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/lifestyle/7-biggest-problems-women-still-face-in-pakistan>