

# THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE OF EDUCATED MUSLIM WOMEN A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN A RELIGIOUS TOWN

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## ABSTRACT

Valentine M. Moghadam (2003:33-36) has found that the position of women within the labor market is frequently studied as an empirical measure of women's status. For those who argue that women's economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantages status, the gender composition of the labor force and change in the structure of labor force towards are key targets. Major factor of change is that the employed women tend to have greater control over decision making within the family. Households also benefit when women control income and spending and the well being of children is increasingly linked to female education and income. Many feminist regard women's involvement in paid employment as a path way to social and gender consciousness, autonomy and empowerment. Investment in women's education and employment is increasingly understood is integral to building the national human resources base. Now we can say that women's employment pattern are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and the female employment patterns are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and the female employment has been constrained by overall limited industrialization. On the basis of the above and other select studies we may state that self-motivation is the most efficient factor to improve the condition of women in society. It is only due to secular education that women become aware of their rights and may give their major contribution in paid work and due to the participation of women in paid work; women are well positioned in the Society.

## 1.1. Rationale of the Problem

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

Valentine M. Moghadam (2003:33-36) has found that the position of women within the labor market is frequently studied as an empirical measure of women's status. For those who argue that women's economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantages status, the gender composition of the labor force and change in the structure of labor force towards are key targets. Major factor of change is that the employed women tend to have greater control over decision making within the family. Households also benefit when women control income and spending and the well being of children is increasingly linked to female education and income. Many feminist regard women's involvement in paid employment as a path way to social and gender consciousness, autonomy and empowerment. Investment in women's education and employment is increasingly understood is integral to building the national human resources base. Now we can say that women's employment pattern are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and the female employment patterns are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and the female employment has been constrained by overall limited industrialization.

On the basis of the above and other select studies we may state that selfmotivation is the most efficient factor to improve the condition of women in society. It is only due to secular education that women become aware of their rights and may give their major contribution in paid work and due to the participation of women in paid work; women are well positioned in the Society.

## 1.2 Research Questions/Objectives

In the light of the above brief background of understanding of changing scenario of Muslim women the proposed study focuses on the following specific questions.

1. What is the socio-economic background of educated Muslim Women?
2. How Muslim Women differentiate their public and private life?
3. What is the nature of the impact of religion on educated Muslim Women in their private and public life?
4. What is the perception of Muslim women of their rights in society and at home and how is that determined or influenced by religion?
5. How education is playing an important role in maintaining a noticeable position of Muslim women and how Muslim women are managing their public life under the influence of religion.

The first question means the study of socio-economic variables of the respondents namely age, education, occupation, social group (caste), family size, parent's education and occupation.

The second question means the study of the causes and conditions on which Muslim women differentiate their public and private life by their positive attitude, talent and will power. The role of Muslim women in public and private life having different types of contributions in different public sectors for example in education as household education for their family wards and in public their role in school and college education and as a school worker also (as in Primary and Higher education) has been studied.

The third question focuses on the life style of Muslim women. For example what is the reason that being highly educated they are used to put on veil in their public life and how they are modifying their public and private life.

The fourth question means the study of highly educated women's societal thinking on that basis we have observed that how far they are aware of their rights and being Muslims how far they have some restrictions like Pardah system. To understand the influence of religion in their way of working and thinking, their public and private lives at work place and at home have been studied.

The fifth question focuses on the impact of education. To know the essential role of education we studied a group of Muslim women who are maintaining a noticeable position in society and try to know that

if religion effects their private life and whether public life is also influenced by religion and what is the line of demarcation on the basis of which they are managing their public life under the influence of religion.

### 1.3 Area of Study

The study has been taken up in a town which is known as centre of Islamic religious education, namely Deoband in Sharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Deoband town is situated in north India on 29°58' latitude and 77°35' attitude. The Deoband railway station is 144 kilometers north of Delhi. Here is Asia's number one Islamic University, Dar-al-Uloom. The influence of Islamic university may be seen on life style of men and women, business and other aspects of the town. Deoband is famous for 'fatwa giving' and inclined the people to seek fatwas in legal (Shari'i) matters. Islam is the major religion observed by most of the residents of Deoband. Apart from Islam the other religions followed are Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. Communication system in Deoband is not very smooth and hassle free. The main business of the town is related to the publication work of religious books and literature work in Urdu and Arabic languages. These books are supplied throughout the world.

According to the survey held in 2002 the total population of Deoband town is 81,706. The number of total male is 45,416 and number of total female is 36,290. The number of total Hindu Women is 12,702 and the number of total Muslim Women is 23,588.

### 1.4 Methodology

#### (i) Universe/Sample

The number of educated Muslim women in the town is 11,667 out of total 23,588 approximately (i.e. about 65%). Highly educated women are 20% approximately. Thus, about 2,000 plus highly educated (graduate and above) woman constitute the universe of study. Of these, approximately 10% sample (in round figures 200) has been drawn by a combination of sampling methods. Web approach was also used in identification of educated Muslim women.

#### (ii) Methods of Data Collection/Techniques

Historical facts have been collected from the secondary sources. Case study method has been used for collecting primary data at the first stage to explore maximum possible aspects by using observation and interview. Later interview guide was prepared. After necessary modifications this was finalized.

Field work was conducted in Deoband town through interview guide. The interviews were mostly, conducted at the place of work and some at the residence of the respondents. Interviews were held in strict privacy. While preparing for interview, we explained the purpose of the study very clearly, and a near complete integrity of the interview was maintained.

#### (iii) Methods of Data Analysis

Case studies data collected with the technique of observation, interview (Muslim women) from respondents were analyzed quantitatively, simple statistical techniques like tabulation, percentages, comparative analysis are looked into to indicate the extent of relationship between background factors and the aspects of present attitudes of Muslim women and their patterns of adjustment.

## 2. Findings:

### 2.1 Socio Economic Background

1. Majority (51.5%) of the respondents belong to the youngest age group of 20-25 years.
2. Percentage of lower class respondents (Ansari 31%, Gade 23% Qureshi 24%) is more than upper caste (Siddiqui 14%, Pathan 8%) respondents.
3. Married respondents are in majority (69.5%) while unmarried and widow respondents are much lesser.
4. Nuclear families (67.5%) exist more than joint families.
5. More than half percentage(55%) of the respondents belong to the family of 2-5 member while only 15% respondents belong to the family of 10-13 members.
6. Minimum Percentage (1%) of the respondents is high Islamic educated.
7. Large majority (80%) of the respondents are graduate while post graduate and professional respondents are only 8% and 9% which is a minimum ratio in front of graduate category.
8. Large majority (91%) of the respondents belong to semiskilled category while only 9% respondents belong to skilled category of occupation.
9. Large segment (16%) of the respondents' fathers has professional education and 33% respondents' fathers are illiterate.
10. Large Majority (97.5%) of the respondents' mothers are basic Islamic educated and only 2.5% respondents' mothers have professional education.
11. Large Majority (65%) of the respondents' fathers belong to IV class occupation and only 5% respondents' fathers belong to skilled occupation.
12. Largest majority (96%) mothers of the respondents are house wives and only 1% mothers of the respondents have government job.

### 2.2. Public and Private Life of Muslim Women

1. Large majority (89%) of the respondents are maintaining a balance between their public and private life.
2. Large Majority (60%) of the respondents are easily handling their public life matters in a religious town.
3. Largest segment (16%) of the respondents is managing their private life matters in a religious town and majority (84%) of the respondents is not handling their private life matters easily in a religious town.
4. Large majority (80%) of the respondents' private life is much influenced by religious customs than public life which shows the influence of religious town.
5. Majority (79.5%) of the respondents accept the effect of more religious private life on their public life.
6. Large majority (81.5%) of the respondents' public life decisions are influenced by religious customs and family thinking.
7. Large majority (81.5%) of the respondents' private life influenced by religious customs and family thinking.

8. Large majority (96%) respondents are not maintaining a balance between their public and private life while only 4% respondents are easily maintaining a balance between their public and private life. So, majority of the respondents have problem due to the boundaries of religious town.

### 2.3 Impact of Religion on Public-Private Life

1. Large majority (97.5%) of the respondents never put on veil at their work place.
2. Only 1% of the respondents put on veil at their work place due to self decision and religious town pressure.
3. Large majority (98.5%) of the respondents do not feel comfortable behind the veil while only 1.5% respondents feel comfortable behind the veil.
4. Only 2.5% respondents put on veil at their work place and their colleagues have always confusion on their work efficiency.
5. Only 2.5% respondents put on veil at their work place and all of them are criticized by their colleagues.
6. Large majority (97%) of the respondents put off veil at their work place while only 2.5% respondents never put off the veil at their work place. It is the sign of change in life style of the respondents.
7. Large segment (38.5%) of the respondents put off veil at their work place because they do not feel comfortable behind the veil.
8. Large majority (97.5%) of the respondents feel comfortable to put off veil at their work places.
9. Large majority (93.5%) of the respondents have reserve behaviour with male colleagues at work place.
10. Large segment (44.5%) of the respondents does not feel comfortable to put on veil inside the work place.
11. Large majority (95%) of the respondents always feel tired to make a balance between their public and private life due to veil.
12. Large majority (90.5%) of the respondents differentiating their public and private life, while 9.5% respondents are not differentiating their public and private life.
13. Large Majority (73.5%) of the respondents meet an outsider gent according to their own will and social requirements.
14. Large majority (70%) of the respondents sometimes go to attend a function where gents are also present.
15. Majority (56.5%) of the respondents meet outsider gents according to their own will and social requirements of the occasion.
16. Large majority (71%) of the respondents put on veil when going to market and 29% of the respondents go to market without veil. It shows the pressure of religious town.
17. Majority (52%) of the respondents go to market with their parents or husband while only 3.5% respondents prefer to go market alone.
18. Large segment (30%) of the respondents talk to shopkeepers after removing their face veil while only 9% of the respondents do not communicate directly with shopkeepers and their any youngster or friend communicate with them.
19. Large majority (97.5%) of the respondents sometimes put on veil while only 2.5% of the respondents always put on the veil.
20. Large segment (35%) of the respondents did start to put on the veil since their professional life.

21. Large majority (93.5%) of the respondents said veil is not compulsory for every Muslim woman while only 6.5% respondents said that veil is compulsory for every Muslim woman.
22. Large majority (87.5%) of the respondents are highly educated but put on veil due to religious town pressure.
23. Large majority (66%) of the respondents put on veil due to religious town pressure.
24. Majority (70.5%) of the respondents sometimes feel safe behind the veil.
25. Majority (68%) of the respondents sometimes feel protected from the sexual harassment after putting on the veil.
26. Majority (64%) of the respondents never put on veil out of the town.
27. Majority (63.5%) of the respondents never put on veil when participate in family and social functions.
28. Large majority (97.5%) of the respondents sometimes do not put on the veil.
29. Majority (59.5%) of the respondents do not put on veil as per the social requirements but self decision of respondents also have a certain importance.
30. Large majority (94.5%) of the respondents feel pressure of religious town to put on the veil.
31. Large segment (43%) of the respondents do not feel comfortable to put on the veil.
32. Majority (56%) of the respondents think veil is not an obstacle in public life.
33. More than half (55%) of the respondents always face the criticism of relatives and neighbours whereas a good number (43%) of the respondents somewhat face the criticism of relatives and neighbours when they do not put on the veil.

#### **2.4 Awareness of Rights in Public-Private Life**

1. Majority (74%) of the respondents are not aware of their rights at work place.
2. (i) Large segment (46.5%) of the respondents have somewhat awareness about same treatment of employees while only 18% respondents have full awareness about same treatment of employees at work place.  
(ii) Half (50%) of the respondents have no knowledge of the limitations and freedom at their work place.  
(iii) Majority (57%) of the respondents have no knowledge of laws at their work place.  
(iv) Majority (57%) of the respondents are not aware to take benefits of laws at their work place.
3. Majority (68%) of the respondents are facing problems to get rights at their work place.
4. Large majority (84%) of the respondents agree that a clever person can easily get his/ her rights at every place.
5. Large majority (85%) of the respondents always realize that organizers of work place are only aware of their rights but not of the worker's rights.
6. Large majority (82.5%) of the respondents are aware of their rights at home.
7. (i) Large segment (13.5%) of the respondents have rights in their children's matters while all respondents have participation in paid work.  
(ii) Large segment (15.5%) of the respondents has rights in financial matters.  
(iii) Majority (65%) of the respondents have somewhat liberty to take decisions related to daily routine problems.

- (iv) Large segment (29.5%) of the respondents are free to take their decisions related with relatives' behaviour and majority (65.5%) of the respondents have no freedom to take their own decisions related with relatives' behaviour.
- 8. Large majority (81.5%) of the respondents' advises have no importance in their family matters.
- 9. (i) Majority (50.5%) of the respondents' advices have somewhat importance in their children's matters.
- (ii) Being financially independent, majority (51.5%) of the respondents advices have somewhat importance in private life financial matters.
- (iii) Majority (65%) of the respondents have somewhat liberty to take decisions related to daily routine problems.
- (iv) Large segment (29.5%) of the respondents has liberty to select type of behaviour with relatives according to the circumstances.
- 10. Large majority (81%) of the respondents have no control on their own salaries.
- 11. Large segment (15%) of the respondents always uses their salaries for their own needs.
- 12. Majority (51%) of the respondents have up to a large extent control over decision making in their families.

### **2.5(a) Secular Educational Status:**

- 1. Large majority (91.5%) of the respondents are satisfied with their secular educational status.
- 2. Large majority (95.5%) of the respondents accept that secular educational status is enough to maintain a position in local society.
- 3. Majority (62%) of the respondents sometimes feel ignorance of relatives due to the secular education.
- 4. Large majority (95%) of the respondents' earnings due to education effect their position in society.
- 5. Large majority (94.5%) of the respondents said that earnings are always more important than education.

### **2.5(b) Importance of Education:-**

- 1. Large majority (93.5%) of the respondents said that secular education is very important to get a noticeable position in society.
- 2. Majority (62%) of the respondents said that modern changes up to a large extent would replace the religious restrictions in society.
- 3. Majority (67%) of the respondents said that participation of educated women in paid work is giving better position in society.
- 4. Large majority (94%) of the respondents is highly educated and they are facing certain behavioural restrictions due to religion.
- 5. Largest majority (94.5%) of the respondents are facing restrictions in private life due to religion.
- 6. Large majority (94.5%) of the respondents are facing behavioural restrictions in private life.
- 7. Largest majority (96.5%) of the respondents are facing restrictions in public life due to religion.
- 8. Large majority (90.5%) of the respondents are facing behavioural restrictions in public life.

## 2.6. Age and impact of Religion on Public - Private Life

- (1) In all age groups (20-25, 25-30, and 30-35) majority (102 out of 103, 64 out of 65, and 29 out of 32) of the respondents never put on veil at their work place. But, it is also found, as age of the respondents increase the ratio to put on veil at their work place also increases.
- (2) In all age groups (20-25, 25-30, and 30-35) majority (67 out of 103, 52 out of 65, and 28 out of 32) of the respondents meet to outsider gents at home according to their own will and social requirements.
- (3) In all age groups (20-25, 25-30, and 30-35) majority (58 out of 103, 40 out of 65, and 15 out of 32) of the respondents meet to outsider gents in a function according to their own will and social requirements.
- (4) In all age groups (20-25, 25-30, and 30-35) majority (54 out of 103, 33 out of 65, and 30 out of 19) of the respondents go to market with any youngster or friend except to go alone.
- (5) In younger (20-25) age group majority (60 out of 103) of the respondents always face criticism by their relatives and neighbours).

## 2.7 Religious Education and Impact of Religion on Public-Private Life.

- (1) Majority (184 out of 188) of the respondents in basic Islamic education category never put on veil at their work place. Whereas, both the respondents who have got high Islamic education always put on veil. So, it indicates that higher the religious education greater is the traditional practice of putting on veil.
- (2) Majority (143 out of 188, 04 out of 10) of the respondents in both Islamic and medium Islamic education category meet to outsider gents at home according to their own will and social requirements while in high Islamic education category none of the respondent meet to outsider gents according to her own will and social requirements.
- (3) Majority (109 out 188, 04 out of 10) of the respondents in both basic Islamic and medium Islamic education category meet to outsider gents in functions according to their own will and social requirements, while in high Islamic education category none of the respondent meet to outsider gents in functions according to her own will and social requirements.
- (4) Majority (105 out of 188, 05 out of 10) of the respondents in both basic Islamic and medium Islamic education categories sometimes face criticism by their relatives and neighbours.
- (5) Majority (99 out of 188, 06 out of 10, and 01 out of 02) of the respondents in all categories of education (Basic Islamic, Medium Islamic, and High Islamic) go to marker with any other youngster or friend.

## 2.7 Secular Education and Impact of Religion on Public-Private Life

- (1) Majority (14 out of 18, 16 out of 14, and 164 out of 166) of the respondents in all categories (Professional/Training, Post Graduate, and Graduate) never put on veil at their work place.



- (2) Majority (16 out of 18, 08 out of 16, and 123 out of 166) of the respondents in all categories of education (Professional/Training, Post Graduate, and Graduate) meet to outsider gents at home according to their own will and social requirements.
- (3) Majority (16 out of 18, 08 out of 16, and 89 out of 166) of the respondents in all categories of education (Professional/Training, Post Graduate, and Graduate) meet to outsider gents in a function according to their own will and social requirements.
- (4) Majority (11 out of 18, 06 out of 16, and 89 out of 166) of the respondents in all categories of education (Professional/Training, Post Graduate, and Graduate) go to market with any other youngster or friend.
- (5) Majority (95 out of 166) of the respondents always face criticism by their relatives and neighbours.

### **2.8 Father's Occupation and Impact of Religion on Public- Private Life**

- (1) Majority (09 out of 10, 59 out of 60, and 124 out of 130) of the respondents in all categories of occupation (Skilled, Semi Skilled, IV<sup>th</sup> class and others) never put on veil at their work place.
- (2) Majority (05 out of 10, 41 out of 60, and 101 out of 130) of the respondents in all categories of occupation (Skilled, Semiskilled, IV<sup>th</sup> class and other) meet to outsider gents at home according to their own will and social requirements.
- (3) Majority (07 out of 10, 29 out of 60, and 77 out of 130) of the respondents in all categories of occupation (Skilled, Semi Skilled, IV<sup>th</sup> class and others) meet to outsider gents in functions according to their own will and social requirements.
- (4) Majority (06 out of 10, 32 out of 60, and 68 out of 130) of the respondents in all categories of occupation (Skilled, Semiskilled, IV<sup>th</sup> class and others) go to market with any other youngster or friend.
- (5) Majority (06 out of 10, 31 out of 60, and 73 out of 130) of the respondents in all categories of occupation (Skilled, Semiskilled, IV<sup>th</sup> class and others) always face criticism by their relatives and neighbours.

### **2.9 Mother's Occupation and Impact of Religion of Public-Private Life**

- (1) Majority (190 out of 193, 04 out of 05, and 01 out of 02) of the respondents in all categories (Housewife, Private Job, and Government Job) of mother's occupation never put on veil at their work place.
- (2) Majority (144 out of 193, out of 05, and 01 out of 02) of the respondents in all categories (Housewife, Private Job, Government Job) of mother's occupation meet to outsider gents at home according to their own will and social requirements.
- (3) Majority (110 out of 193, 02 out of 05, and 01 out of 02) of the respondents in all categories (Housewife, Private job, Government job) of mother's occupation meet to outsider gents in functions according to their own will and social requirements.

- (4) Majority (103 out of 193, 02 out of 05, and 02 out of 01) of the respondents in all categories (Housewife, Private Job, Government Job) of mother's occupation go to market with their parents or husband.
- (5) Majority (106 out of 193, 03 out of 05, and 01 out of 02) of the respondents in all categories (Housewife, Private job, and Government job) of mother's occupation always face criticism by their relatives and neighbours.

### 3 Bearing of Empirical Research on Earlier Studies

After farming the above questions and arriving at the above findings we may look in to the impact of religion in public and private life of educated Muslim women. From the earlier studies we observe the following trends and look at the similarities and variations.

Valentine M. Moghadam (2003:33-36) has found that the position of women within the labor market is frequently studied as an empirical measure of women's status. For those who argue that women's economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantageous status, the gender composition of the labor force and change in the structure of labor force towards are key targets. Major factor of change is that the employed women tend to have greater control over decision making within the family.

Findings of the present study also show that majority (51%) of the respondents have up to a large extent control over decision making in their families.

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

Findings of the present study also show that being financially independent a large number (8.25%) of the respondents are aware of their rights at home.

Nancy A. Hewitt (1993:131) discusses that a feminist conception of public life will have many dimensions, including enriched under standings of participation, equality and citizenship as well as a dynamic understanding of the links between public and private (domestic) life. The history of American women offers a clue to some of these dimensions by calling attention to the importance of civil society understood as the locus of the free spaces or democratic voluntary associations, where citizens draw on their private identities and practice the basic skill of public life.

Findings of the present study also show that large majority (89%) of the respondents are maintaining a balance

between their public and private life.

Satya Pal Ruehla (1998:37-38) has found that Muslim women, receiving higher education and then being able to achieve any significant mobility in their professional carrier is really a difficult task. A number of cultural, social, economic and psychological factors in variably put several hurdles before them. But even then quite a few of them are able to ride over these hurdles, as a result of their self motivation, parental encouragement or any of the supporting factor and may be, one's own excellent academic performance, and achieve significant vertical as well as horizontal social mobility in their lives. Family's economic, social, cultural and even political status, parents and relatives encouragement or discouragement and several other incidentals as well as other sensitive social psychological factors build up one's motivation for receiving education.

Findings of the present study also show that majority (93.5%) of the respondents think that secular education is very important to get a noticeable position in society.

#### 4 Experience of the Field work

Research is corporate activity in which co operation, encouragement, help and assistance is required from many sources which have been experienced during the field work. The field work was done in a religious town Deoband which is my native place. This background made it easy and helpful, it gave me a feeling that I am living and studying in my family. The only difficulty which I experienced was to get time from the respondents and to express them which I wanted to know from them. Therefore I visited them frequently at their work places. Mostly respondents were afraid to talk about their public and private life style and relationships. My positive point was of being a local body girl and I could explore more information about the respondents, because I can understand their attitudes, benefits and problems at their public and private life.

During my research work I have faced many emotional ups and downs at personal level, these personal factors have also influenced the research work.

#### 5 Limitations and suggestions for Further Research

This study has been limited to a religious town Deoband and only 200 respondents. Therefore, the findings can be generalized only for a smaller local universe.

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