



Colonial Rule and Muslim Women: Raising Consciousness of the Situation, Regarding their Islamic Legal Status Dr Naila Maqsood*

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ABSTRACT

Relevant to any attempt for amelioration of woman's conditions was the history of Muslim people in general and that of Muslims in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent in particular. This paper highlights Muslim women's struggle for their rights movements in British India. Their continuous struggle altered educational and political institutions, allowing them to emerge from seclusion and participate more actively in the nation's public life.

It is said that when women in the developed countries were agitating against their own male regarding their rights, a similar struggle had begun in the subcontinent where men started encouraging participation of women in education and politics, appreciated, and sometimes patronized it. The imperialists in India reversed the economic and social milieu. By strengthening system, British fortified the position of the feudal and tribal lords which not only contributed towards solidifying the struggle for Muslim Women's Rights in the British India but also resulted in lowering the status of women. The British, on the other hand, did not believe it was necessary to extend their politics into all aspects of life. As a result, local laws continued to apply in family and personal matters like as marriage, guardianship, and inheritance, and the status quo between men and women was maintained. After a prolonged protests and struggle for women's rights, the central legislature undertook legislation on issues relating to Muslim women such as child marriage, property rights, widow remarriage, divorce, etc. Muslim women had to resisted on the laws imposed by imperialists as most of it were the violation of their fundamental rights, and that they were mostly successful i.e., law of inheritance 1937. The paper shows that women's struggles for educational and political freedom had a significant impact in the British India Particularly in 1940s during Pakistan Movement. Everyone is aware of the social changes/developments that occurred at that time. However, few people acknowledge that women had a key role in bringing about these developments. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that women have achieved tremendous progress and have paved the way for more reforms in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Introduction

Muslim Historical Legacy

The history of Muslims in general, and Muslims in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent in particular, was relevant to any endeavour to improve women's conditions. The early Muslim history in Arabia provided the Islamic ideals, both for men and women. Such ideals could be studied in biographies of

early Muslim exemplars, both men and women. Of relevance was the biography of the Prophet who claimed to receive revelation from God which now forms the most sacred book for Muslims i.e., the Qur'an. The Qur'an has been interpreted from its inception first by the Prophet himself and then by other persons of knowledge. Muslims agree that no distortion has occurred in the language of the Qur'an, and it remains the most authentic revelation from God to man. Interpretations have differed over time (and space) and this can, and did, create problems with regard to the status of women. Interpretations have served as laws, and this has been a source of controversy affecting the status of women in modern times in society at large. One conspicuous example relates to whether an adult woman can contract a marriage, or there must be a wali (guardian) from the family without whose permission an adult female cannot contract a marriage. (Esposito,1976)

Legacy of Muslim History in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent

Muslims' history in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent is relevant because the variety of schools of jurisprudence had to live with the Indian Hindu religion and its practices. Such practices were particularly degrading for the status of women in society. (Shah, 1986) Added to this were the geographical conditions whereby people of certain clans/tribes were usually concentrated in certain areas, and, over time, they developed antipathies amongst one another. The Hindu caste system created social hierarchies, leading to seclusion, particularly that of women.

Legacy under Colonial Rule

An important factor for change is always education, both formal and informal. Formal education started by the British in the Subcontinent was not adopted by Muslims. Informal education was sporadic and concerned with status quo. Serious urge for English education began with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. His main concern was the need for Muslim people in the Subcontinent to attain western education. Although Sir Syed himself did not advocate women's education, several people inspired by him did. Women had to fight for their right to education in a radical departure from the traditions which formed an integral part of their culture. Initially, therefore, women's education had to be justified from within the framework of Islam. (Mumtaz & shaheed, 1987) In 1885, the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam (Rabbani, 2014) (Society for the Promotion of Islam) opened five elementary schools in Lahore. It did so for the purpose of 'preserving the Islamic values of life'. The Anjuman performed a significant role in the promotion of women's education in Lahore. Its efforts were more commendable since, unlike Madras, Bombay and the Central and United Provinces where Muslim women were ahead of Hindus in education, in Punjab and Bengal Muslim women's education lagged far behind that of other religious groups. The Anjuman's main concern, however, remained the preservation of Muslim culture. But whether it was for the preservation of Muslim culture or for other reasons, by the turn of the century, the realization to focus more attention on the education of women was becoming stronger among educated Muslims.

Loosening of Practice of Seclusion and Veiling among Muslim Women

In 1903, first time in the history of Muslim women in Subcontinent after the arrival of British, a woman from Muslim religion spoke about Muslim women, their general backwardness and illiteracy. The occasion was the Muhammadan Educational Conference (MEC) in Bombay, which for the first time that year included women participants. The voice was that of Chand Begum who wrote a paper for the conference. Chand Begum, who was from Madras, did not attend the meeting herself, and her article was presented by a woman having the Parsi religion. (Mumtaz & Shaheed,1987) In her paper, Chand Begum hailed the Reform Party (RP), a group of Muslims supporting female education, and threw bitter invectives on diehard maulvis. She anxiously advocated the need for reforms in educational system by focusing on the eradication of traditional and rigid school of thought. She also stressed to adopt modern education for the development of female. (Saigol, 2016)

It is interesting to note that even then (in 1903), Muslim women distinguished between Islam and what was being usurped or denied by religious orthodoxy in the name of Islam. The 1903 MEC also committed itself to open a school for the training of women teachers. (Mumtaz & Shaheed,1987). This proposal came into reality in 1913 in Aligarh. Responsibility for this venture was given to Sheikh Abdullah, who remained a prominent figure during the Women's Reform Movement (WRM). In coming years, an Urdu magazine known as Khatoon (Female), was published by Sheikh Abdullah.

The purpose of launching the journal was to advocate the cause of women's education. From 1904 onwards, the Women's Reform Movement gained momentum. The cause was espoused by newspapers and journals alike. It attracted the vocal support of an important poet of the day, Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali, (Saiyid,1995) and inspired a husband-and-wife team to devote their entire lives to promoting the cause of women's education. The couple, Maulvi Syed Mamtaz Ali and Muhammadi Begum, launched a paper known as Haqooq-e-Niswan (Women's Rights) in which they counselled the females of India to create exclusive societies to work on female education to make all women united on a single platform. In women's circles, this team and their newspaper came to be known as the (Rahber-e-Niswan) "beacon for all women." (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987)

The years 1904-1911 saw various Muslim girls' schools being opened. Both men and women contributed to this effort and schools sprang up in Bombay, Calcutta, Aligarh, Lahore, Karachi, Patna and other places. The growth of the schools was accompanied by a veritable mushrooming of women's newspapers and journals. In Lahore alone at least three newspapers emerged: Akhbhar-i-Niswan (Women's News), Sharif Bibi (Noble Lady) and Tahzib-i-Niswan (Women Civility). Most of the journals and newspapers were published by men; however, women helped run them and soon started contributing articles. For the first time, Muslim women in India were being treated and addressed as a group, and they were being encouraged to speak and write for themselves. (Saigol,2016)

In terms of actual numbers progress was slow. In 1911, out of every thousand Muslim women, only two were educated. (Ghadially,1994,) Although the figure doubled in the next ten years, the percentage remained a dismal 0.4%. By 1924 there were a total of 137,800 literate Muslim women of whom only 3,940, or just under 3%, had received modern education. Two families who were pioneers in Muslim women's education were the Faizi family of Bombay and the Suhrawardy family of Bengal. In 1922, the first Muslim woman to receive an MA (in Law) was a Bengali woman by the name of Sultan Begum, while the Faizi sisters (Attiya, Zuhra and Nazli) were the first Muslim women to go abroad for higher education. These sisters played an active role in promoting women's rights.

However, as the traditional role of women was being questioned, Muslim men all over India were also trying to reassess their own position in the society and to forge an identity for themselves and a role for Muslim communities. The debate on women's education and rights was minor in comparison to the larger debate on nationalism, independence, and Islam, but the two were closely linked. Where women's consciousness was raised on one issue, it would also be raised on another, so much so, that starting with the Khilafat Movement, a large-scale mobilization of women was to take place in the context of general politics and not on women's issues. Indeed, as exemplified by the activities of the Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam (Muslim Women's Association), for Muslim women the dividing line between women's rights, social welfare activities and politics remained blurred from the beginning. (Saigol,2016)

For the women's point of view, the Khilafat Movement was important because it was the first which pursued to enrol all Muslims in Subcontinent men, women, and youth. It was the first illustration of female participation in any practical struggle, and in this case, they participated in large quantity. (Rai,2000) In the 20th century politics of the Subcontinent, it is the first recorded instance of women becoming politically significant. Initially, separate gatherings were organised for women in Lucknow and Delhi. Bi Amma (mother of Ali brothers) addressed these meetings and women from families of famous Muslim leaders attended. The main objective was to raise funds for the movement. The outcome was that Muslim women got aware of the political circumstances and realities around them for the first time in India. The women from elite families responded whole-heartedly and several toured the length and breadth of India with Bi Amma to address gatherings of women. (Hamid, 1971) These Muslim women were often joined by Hindu females since the movement was not in contradiction with the nationalist struggle. During these meetings all the women who attended were extolled to urge their men to join the movement to not cooperate with British, to inculcate patriotism and religion in their children, and to raise funds for the movement.

In 1917 Bi Amma breaking with the tradition addressed the Annual gathering of the All-Male Muslim League in place of her son (Muhammad Ali Jouhar) who was under arrest by the British. At

this gathering, she addressed from behind her veil, but it was an historical moment as for the first time, a Muslim woman was addressing a political gathering of men. Bi Amma continued to address male and female gatherings at which she condemned the British and urged people to join Khilafat Movement. In 1921, three years before her death, Bi Amma lifted her veil for the first time when she addressed a mass assembly in Lahore. As Bi Amma was an elderly woman having grown up sons, she defended her lifting of veil to the crowd, saying that they were all her sons and brothers, so she did not have any reason to fear for her modesty. Bi Amma's act is important for two reasons. Firstly, the act itself was significant as a symbol of Muslim women doing away with the veil, which had restrained them for centuries, to go and join the political reality of their times. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the circumstances and reasons for doing so are note-worthy. Bi Amma lifted her veil simply because she found it hindering her in her work that was not feminist but political in nature. The fact that she was not asking for her rights as a woman but was speaking in place of her sons from a stage that was insisting justice for all Muslims, is probably why her action evoked such little negative response from among the more vocal Muslims. Had her act been seen as a defiance of male authority, it is probable that neither her age nor her reputation would have saved her from disparaging or hostile remarks. As it was, the first casting off the veil passed unremarked. (Mumtaz & Shaheen, 1987) During this period men started encouraging participation of women in politics, appreciated, and sometimes patronized it. (Willmer, 1996) Meanwhile several changes occurred in the laws relating to women.

Legislation Regarding Women

Before independence, the central legislature undertook legislation on issues relating to Muslim women such as child marriage, property rights, widow remarriage, divorce, etc. The Muslim women had most of these rights before the arrival of the British according to the Shariah, or the Islamic law, practice of which had not always been consistent. Due to close association of Muslims with the Hindus, they had assimilated many customs and practices of the Hindu majority. As a result, when the British took overpower, they mixed up Muslim law and the customs that the Muslims had adopted from the Hindus. Therefore, while making laws, the British were influenced by the Hindu religious law and assumed that the same position of customs was acceptable to the Muslims as well. This misperception led many provinces and, especially Sindh, Bombay, NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Kashmir and Punjab, to legislate new laws that kept Muslim women from their rights. (Patel, 1979) Initially, Muslim leaders did not realize the need to reformulate, and reintroduce, the Islamic law. Some of the Hindu leaders realized, during the nineteenth century, the evils of child marriage. When the Age of Consent Bill was brought for enactment in 1891, it covered only the Hindu community. In fact, the Muslims were equally affected by this evil practice. But they were not aware of its gravity. They did not participate in the debate on the Age of Consent Bill because at that time, they considered it problem of the Hindus. It was in the 1920s and 1930s that they struggled to reform the social condition of Muslim women. The Muslim members of the legislatures would move bills and resolutions on women issues and women members in the legislature would participate in the debates on them. Among the issues that were in focus, one was the issue of child marriage. When the issue of child marriage was raised in 1920s, the Muslims also involved themselves in its legislation. At their initiative, the Hindu Child Marriage Restraint Bill was transformed into the Child Marriage Restraint Bill, so that it could apply to all the religious communities of the Subcontinent. (Afzal, 1999)

The Child Marriage Restraint Bill proposed that girl who is going to be married must be above fourteen and boy above eighteen years. The Bill was sent to a committee that included two women, one British physician and another Hindu lady, to investigate its acceptability. The committee had two Muslim male members, Hammad Yaqub and Shahnawaz, but no Muslim female member. The committee found that the Muslims were divided into three groups on this issue: (i) those who did not consider early marriage as an evil, as it was permissible in Islam according to an interpretation; (ii) those who felt that the spread of education, the progress of social reform would automatically result in the raising of the age of marriage; and (iii) those who favoured legislation on the issue of child marriage. (Afzal, 1999). The committee also observed that the Muslims shared many customs with

other communities of their respective regions. For instance, in Madras, neither the Hindus nor the Muslims practiced early marriage; in Bengal both the communities followed this practice; in Bombay and United Provinces (UP), both the major religious communities followed this custom except the caste Hindus and upper-class Muslims. When Bill, based on the committee's report, came up for the consideration, some Muslim members opposed its contents, but other members including M. A. Jinnah and Shahnawaz not only supported the Bill but also advocated legislation to carry out social reforms. (Afzal,1999)

Another issue that came up for legislation was women's right to inherit property. The Muslim woman had this right according to Shariah. But she had been deprived of this right under the customary law or the Anglo-Muhammadan Law, as introduced under the British. She was made totally dependent first on her father, and then on her husband and son(s). If a woman was married outside the clan, caste, or tribe, she became an outsider. Therefore, any property given to her meant that the property would go out of the family. Thus, not only the female but her descendants were also deprived of property. The whole atmosphere was male oriented. If a woman had a son, she could not give the property that she might have become by her own labour to anyone else. This was purely a Hindu custom that the Muslims had adopted. (Patel,1979)

In 1930s, the Muslims became more active for the enforcement of Shariah. The Shariah Bill was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1937, as was demanded by the Muslims of the Punjab and other parts of the Subcontinent where there was customary law. While discussing Shariah Bill, all the male members from Muslim side showed keenness regarding the contemporary condition as well as due rights of all the Muslim women in India. They upheld that the low status of Muslim women in the Subcontinent was due to the influences of Hindu customs and culture although role of Islam in the emancipation of women had been revolutionary. The passage of the Shariah Act was a step forward in advancing the status of Muslim women in the Subcontinent.(Saiyid,1998)

Divorce was another problem that the Muslim women faced which needed legislation in accordance with Islamic principles. The right of divorce as practiced under the Anglo Muhammadan Law had given rise to some unhealthy and dangerous practices. Muslim women even resorted to apostasy to get divorce. Numerous such cases came up before the courts in the early twentieth century. There was a need for legislation. The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Bill, which was introduced and passed in 1939, made divorce for Muslim women much easier by legislating the concept of khula. When the Bill was discussed, members from both the major communities supported it. The Muslim members, pointing out the miserable condition of the Muslim women, argued that she was unable to dissolve marriage even if her husband totally neglected her or maltreated her. They advocated that Muslim woman should have full rights to exercise her choice in matrimonial matters. The 1939 law made divorce easier for Muslim women.(Patel, 1979) Now a District Judge could dissolve the marriage of Muslim woman on her application. A Muslim woman could divorce on various grounds. Firstly, if the husband failed to give maintenance for more than two years, secondly, if she had been set in marital status by any of her guardian including her father before fifteen years and she renounced it before reaching to eighteen years. However, if the age is not met to the established limit, the bases on which she could dissolve her marriage were even more liberal and included such issues as husband assaulting her habitually, disposing off her property, obstructing her religious practice and having more than one wife. Muslim legislators also demanded adjudication of such dissolution cases by the qazis. But this demand did not gather enough support in the Assembly. The Muslim legislators on female issues showed their keenness to bring about change in the status of Muslim women. Behind this Muslim interest lay the consciousness that education had brought about among the Muslim females of their rights. (Afzal,1999)

Mobilization of Muslim Women During Pakistan Movement

A mass mobilization of Muslim women took place during the Pakistan Movement. As the idea of Pakistan got its shape, Muslims, both men and women started writing articles, gathering support, holding meetings, and finally coming out onto the streets to struggle for a separate homeland. As more and more women became involved in the political movement for Pakistan, the Muslim League formed a women's section in 1938. In 1940 a historic meeting was held in Lahore where an

unprecedented number of women attended a public function. The same year for the first time a small group of Muslim left the safety of their homes and took out a procession. The demonstration in Lahore, on 23 April 1940, was to protest against the arrest/detention of the Muslim leaders and the banning of the Khaksars (Khaksars was a highly disciplined, anti-maulvi Muslim religious group that had joined the Pakistan Movement). It had nothing to do with women's rights, but it was the first time that Muslim women had engaged in street politics. All the women in the demonstration wore burqas. Despite this, the press condemned their action as shameless and the herald of the downfall of all women. Women had finally crossed that invisible line between what was acceptable and unacceptable even in exceptional circumstances. Street politics was where the line was drawn. It is a credit to those women and as sign of their self-confidence and level of participation that this public condemnation did not deter them. On 16 June, ten Khaksar women took out another procession under the leadership of an eleven-year-old, Saeeda Bano, who had come from Delhi, whose eloquent and bold speeches had gained her popularity. On 18 June, another demonstration was staged and this time both men and women participated. The procession was to march to the residence of the Punjab premier. The police tried to stop the demonstrators, and when they refused, arrested the men, and asked the women to return home. Far from being intimidated, the women refused to go home, and hence for the first-time women were arrested for a political act. (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987)

This activity was mostly urban and usually led by women from the upper classes. One of the major hurdles to open participation in political pressure politics though women power had been removed by them. This was the hurdle of purdah, veil of women's body. This hurdle was on the path of elimination, at least among those who were ready to take out processions and raised slogans. Some writers put 1938 as the year in which a far-reaching step was taken in removing the 'purdah hurdle.' In that year, Maulvi Muhammad Farooq spoke in favour of the resolution that demanded greater participation on the part of women in League's activities, and resolution condemned the custom of purdah, saying that it hindered progress. Such a view provoked uproar from the conservative portion of the meeting. It even made necessary intervention of the chair, i.e., Jinnah himself. He placated the conservatives who felt offended. He assured that actual resolution simply stated that women should be allowed "to organize themselves under the League in order to support it." The resolution was subsequently "carried by an overwhelming majority." Muslim Leaguers espousing liberal ideas, such as Jinnah had to pay at least lip service to what the conservatives' believed regarding gender question. There was a great need to cultivate their support for the long-term political programme. In this way, Jinnah played reconciliatory role. He balanced the conflicting social attitudes found among the several groups. Such was necessary to maintain a focus on the all-important political issue of self-determination of the Muslims.

At the same time Jinnah's approach to 'women's issues' indicated the important role women were assigned in the propaganda output of the Muslim League. This provided women a big space for public interaction and, thereby, confidence and freedom.

Many confident persons in the Pakistan movement favoured direct participation of women in political action. Director of the Muslim National Guards addressed the girls at Lahore's Islamia College for Women urging them to seek membership of Muslim Women National Guards. That, in his view, would strengthen male members of their community in the national struggle for Pakistan. A lady activist urged Muslim males to let their females 'come forward and help them in the struggle for existence.' Those in charge of Muslim National Guards often called on Muslim women 'to wake up from their age-old slumber and stand shoulder to shoulder with their men folk.' Thus, many persons in the Muslim League thought that their cause could best be served if they were able to bring women out of female quarters and onto the battlefield. Such challenge to the existing notions of sexual territory came to be justified by the hard times the community was experiencing. Defence of Muslim community was at stake, and this made the distinctions between male and female territory less rigid. A major point came to be that women could perform "roles outside of the customary spatial restrictions that had previously characterized the purdah system." (Willmer, 1996)

The entire country was swept into fervour of mounting political activity in which the educated women from upper class participated. In 1941, a decision to form a Muslim Girls' Student Federation

was taken (The Muslim Student Federation for boys had already been created). The girls' Federation was proposed and launched by Lady Abdul Qadir, Fatima Begum and Miss M. Qureshi. Miss Qureshi was particularly active and went from college to college to spread awareness and to muster support for the idea of Pakistan. The response was enthusiastic, and in a few months Jinnah Islamia College alone had enrolled 1,000 students for the cause. The Girls' Federation proved to be the vanguard of the Women's Sub-Committee subsequently formed in the Muslim League, which toured the countryside holding public meetings.

The extent to which women had become involved in the political process and their unwillingness to return to the confines of their home is demonstrated by the words of Lady Maratab Ali, who, on 13 January 1942 said:

“The days have gone when Punjab's Muslim women were considered fit only for cooking food and minding children. It is now essential for them to take an equal share of responsibility with their menfolk in the field of politics.”(Mumtaz & Shaheed,1987)

After the Lahore Resolution for a separate state, Muslim women were encouraged to participate more fully. In 1942, Jinnah took a direct interest in the women's committees and his tours addressed these women at large gatherings. By this time women were in the full swing of the Pakistan movement. They composed songs and took them into the rural areas and continued their work of pushing the movement forward. (Willmer,1996) But it is a credit to Jinnah, that in addition to recognizing the need for and accepting the support of the women in the political field, he was alive to the depressed condition of Muslim women in general. As a result, a sub-committee was formed from amongst the women of the Muslim League's Central Committee for the express purpose of drafting a programme for the economic, social, and cultural uplifting of women. The women's issue had at last received recognition as separate from the need for women's participation in the national struggle. This sub-committee passed resolutions concerning housewives' problems and food shortages, but at the same time brought up more fundamental issues such as women's inheritance. The Muslim women of India combined the issues of food shortages and their right to inherit under Islam. (Saigol, 2016)

In 1943, the Bengal famine devastated the Bengali population. Hundreds of thousands died, and even greater numbers were left destitute. In response to the situation, women organized relief committees to raise funds and provisions. They proved their organizational capacities and displayed considerable ingenuity. For the first time, all-female mushairas (poetry readings) were held and plays staged, at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) hall in Lahore. As in so many other instances, activities that would in 'normal' circumstances have been frowned upon or forbidden to women became acceptable in the context of the wider struggle. Through their activities, women were among the 5,000 participants in the All-India Muslim League annual session held in Karachi in 1943. (Mumtaz & Shaheed.1987) The newly formed Women's National Guards was also present at the session. Its presence signified the recognition of a totally new role for women, no longer restricted home in isolation and under heavy guard. The uniform of the Women's National Guard, white kurta, white pajamas, and green dupatta was later to become the uniform of the Pakistani Girls Guides. All women and girls were involved in collecting funds, selling badges, and propagating the idea of Pakistan. While appearing in public and interacting with strangers, they were violating the unwritten but centuries old rule of purdah and confinement for Muslim women. (Saigol, 2016)

In the 1946 elections two Muslim women stood as candidates, Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain and Begum Shahnawaz. (Yadev,1987) These elections were important, not just because there were two women candidates, but because this election was the test for the Muslim League's claim of being the sole representative of the Muslims mobilized to lend their support to the League. This was hardly a problem in the cities whereby this time the League was already well entrenched, but it was a serious in countryside relentlessly canvassing for the League. In the provincial elections the Muslim League emerged as the representative of the majority of Muslim Indians. When, despite winning 79 out of the 175 seats in the Punjab, the Muslim League was not allowed to form a Ministry, women in Lahore led a demonstration, in protest. This led to a chain reaction of escalating radicalism. When offices of Muslim League's Women National Guard were searched and Begum Shahnawaz arrested,

many Muslim women came out onto the streets. They were baton charged and tear gassed. As the government's violence increased, more and more women came out in processions and increasing numbers were arrested. The recently elected woman, Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain, was arrested and Section 144 imposed. As the protests increased it proved impossible to keep women in goal. They were consequently herded into vans, dropped off well outside the city limits and left to make their own way home. None of the tactics employed by the government did anything to abate the momentum of women's role in high politics.

Doing heroic acts during arrests and confinements, three young burqa-clad girls entered the gaol premises, climbed the building, and hoisted the League flag, shouting 'Allah-o-Akbar' (God is Great) and 'Islam Zindabad' (Long live Islam). Towards the end of February 1947, a large demonstration marched to Lahore Provincial Secretariat. A thirteen-year-old girl, Fatima Sughra, climbed the gate, removed the Union Jack, and replaced with her dupatta, which she had made into the Muslim League flag. It was the first time a League flag had been flown from a government office in place of British flag. (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987)

Most of the above activities were concentrated in Lahore and Karachi. Women in the other provinces were also active but were not visible in the political arena until relatively late. The civil dis-obedience movement launched in January 1947 was successful in mobilizing even the women of the Northwest Frontier Province (Now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), traditionally one of the most conservative areas of the Subcontinent. In 1947, Pathan women marched unveiled in public processions, demonstrated in defiance of Section 144. Pathan women also formed a secret organization called the 'War Council'. The War Council set up an underground radio station called Pakistan Broadcasting Station. The station operated without being traced right up to 14 August 1947, when Pakistan gained its independence. (Mumtaz & Shaheed)

Conclusion

In the short period of fifty years, Indian Muslim women had completely changed the parameters of their own life. From being veiled persons, restricted to their homes, many women emerged as vocal active individuals. The voice of Muslim women was heard, they were addressed, and more importantly addressed themselves, as a group. Muslim women got awareness about political movements, participated in them, and proved their ability to organize, demonstrate, mobilize, raise funds, and provide relief services in times of crisis. Their abilities were acknowledged by men, and used, while women themselves were recognized as a powerful potential source of political activity. (Willmer, 1996)

The debate on women's education and rights was minor in comparison to the larger debate on nationalism, independence, and Islam, but the two were closely linked. Where women's consciousness was raised on one issue, it would also be raised on another, so much so, that starting with the Khilafat Movement, a large-scale mobilization of women was to take place in the context of general politics and not on women's issues.

Due to the force of the political movements taking place around them, it seems in retrospect almost inevitable that while the question of women's rights was raised, it was subsumed in the larger struggle for a national identity and freedom from colonial oppression. But the two struggles waged simultaneously, were not antagonistic. Indeed, the nationalist struggle afforded an environment to many Muslim women who break through traditional rules and restrictions, removed their veils, came out of their homes, approached strangers, faced the police, and joined politics. It is possible that at subconscious level women might have realized through their experience that what was suitable for women in the nationalist struggle, would have been improper in an effort for their rights that caused a direct confrontation with men. As it was, they were fighting with their men and not believe in the national struggle of which they were an integral party. The enthusiasm, dedication and daring they displayed was proof of their ardent nature. (Wilmer, 1996)

The paper concludes Early Muslim attempts were motivated more by a desire to make long-term reforms to women's life. Even these little improvements, however, paved the way for more significant reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

History is replete with examples when women are called upon in times of crisis, when social

norms are forgotten and women take up arms, join the Red Cross (or Crescent), manufactories and communications, and participate whole heartedly in the national struggle at hand. But history also tells us that now the crisis is over, and the men return home, women are once again asked to take a back seat, to return to their kitchens and children. Motherhood is praised and women are told to revert to their earlier constricted roles. The real test of whether women have gained any rights is after the crisis and not during it. Women not only have to fight for them, but also must fight for their implementation and fight to retain them. Events following independence showed that while some of the leaders of the Pakistan Movement, notably Jinnah and his immediate companions, genuinely believed in the need to break the shackles of women's bondage, there were other elements for whom the participation of women in the movement had only been a matter of expediency stemming from a temporary urgent need. More significant were those elements who had vehemently opposed both the creation of Pakistan and the emancipation of women. Unable to reverse the former, they tried to reverse the latter.

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