

MUSLIM WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT: UNDERSTANDING MUSLIM WOMEN'S ROLE IN DECISION MAKING

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The development of men and women is equally emphasized in Islam for both men and women have come from the same essence and therefore both have merits and demerits, strengths and weaknesses. Islam announced that any discrimination between man and women was false and baseless. The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) was an extremely successful social reformer as well as spiritual and political leader, who championed the rights of the weak and oppressed. The Qur'anic verses referring to women had the effect of vastly improving the status and rights of women at the time they were revealed. Muslim women were granted the right to own, inherit and dispose of their own property as they saw fit; reject forced marriages; keep their own names and identities after marriage; initiate divorce; and obtain an education - back in the 7th century.

The status and role of Muslim women in our society remains one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented aspects of Islam and is undoubtedly the source of much of the prejudice against Islam that is current in the non-Muslim world today. Most of us probably believe that Islam is inherently hostile to women. The Muslim woman is usually seen as the victim of religion which maintains her in a state of ignorance and degrading segregation.

Women development includes assuring them of the tangible(real) dimension of human rights that is economic gains, education and health and ownership of asset and property and decision making power in different aspects. The current study is examining the Muslim women development through their participation in decision-making in the family and society.

The study is undertaken with following objectives:

- (i) The overall objective of the study is to assess decision-making power of women with in family and the society.

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- (ii) To know the status of decision making in relation to familiar matter.
- (iii) To examine their role in decision making pertaining to socio-economic-cultural matter.
- (iv) To observe the status of decision making pertaining to their personal lives themselves.

Insaf Nagar is the study area which comes in Lucknow city. Total Muslim population in Insaf Nagar is Thirty five percent comparatively twenty percent in Lucknow. Due to high percentage of Muslim population, this area was selected.

The study of 'Muslim women and development: Understanding Muslim Women's role in Decision Making,' has resembled Exploratory Research design as well as Descriptive research design. In this research data has been collected with the help of observation, interviews and interview schedule. The field work is completed in 2011 on 35 Muslim women in Insaf Nagar Lucknow. The study is based on primary and secondary data. Quota sampling method is used for the study.

In the present study preliminary, I analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The average age of the seventy two percent respondents in this study is above thirty five years. The present field study shows that more than seventy percent Muslim women are well educated. The number of children in the respondent's families, surveyed, has been reported to be much less. It is exciting to note that above seventy seven percent respondents have a maximum number of children that is three. In the context of family type, the majority of sixty five percent women belong to the nuclear family. It is appealing to note that seventy eight percent of women are house-wives while only twenty two percent women are professional. Almost ninety percent of them are engaged in teaching occupation. It is to be noted that there is very low women participation in employment.

Respondent's participation in different area of Decision-making

For the present purpose, I have taken respondent's participation in decision-making as giving indication of their status and role.

Decision making in the family is a critical element in the status of the family members, since it involves the allocation of resources and the different distribution of roles within the family.

To overcome the subjective bias, I also tried to make the respondents understand the distinction between empirical and normative decision-making. So the respondents are asked to give the actual situation about who decides the various matters in the family, also for the convenience of analysis, along with the customary decision-making areas such as food, clothes, entertainment, children's schooling, career and marriage, new areas of decision making in urban setting have also been included in the present study. In order to access, I have considered the women's influences on all the family decision and measure the role of women in decision making process and if any type of changes found in development of Muslim women .There are various factors which can be classify:-

It was found that the women in the field area, prefer education and not to adhere to the patriarchal nature of the society, Almost eighty percent respondents prefer Islamic and modern education both and only eleven percent respondents prefer only modern education. So the data shows Muslims are paying more attention to educational progress. They have also become quite conscious of female education and the data shows a significant association between education of the respondents and their power in decision making process.

It is generally argued that well organized and smart women can manage the family in a better way. Moreover, participation of women in various matters creates a sense of self-confidence among them. In the analysis of this study data show that decisions regarding the family matter women were supported by their whole family and majority of decisions are taken jointly i.e. 46 percent while decisions related to children, women shows a strong positive response i.e. 77 percent.

The field study enlightened that the majority of decisions regarding socio and cultural activities are taken by the respondents i.e. 70 percent while only 27 percent decisions were taken by the respondents in the matter of economic activities. These areas are still dominated by male members of the family.

In the matter of family type almost sixty five percent respondents belongs to the nuclear family. It has been emphasized here that the structure of nuclear family has direct impact on the decisions taken by the women. Women who got higher education and entered into professions generally lived in nuclear families.

The present study data reveals that decision regarding the respondent's personal life such as women's dietary practices, outfit, education, profession, health, visiting to their friend and relatives etc; women had a reasonable power about these matters, except the health related matter.

At the sum up of the present study these areas have been divided in three categories: Most important decisions include the women's fertility, children's schooling, career & marriage and sale & purchase of property .Normal decisions include expenditure on food, clothing, entertainment and related to women's personal life matters. Minor decisions include hospitality of guest, servant activities, giving presents, visiting friends etc.

It has been found that there is significant change in the area of decision making among respondents. If we compare the respondents' power decisions regarding major, normal and minor issues. It has found that there is a slight difference in percentage of women's decisions i.e. 25 percent of respondents are able to take most important decisions ,51 percent respondents have a power to take decision normal matters in, comparison to 39 percent decisions in minor matter.

But it is interesting to notice that majority of decisions regarding most important issues are taken by the husband & wife jointly and the percentage of joint decision has shown an upward trend. It is 52 per cent. These areas do not seem to be subjugated by male members of the family. Decisions regarding the normal and minor matter women have more power.

Thus the women under study have shown an encouraging development of mobility and change in different aspects of their lives. The women have achieved a certain amount of control in almost all the areas discussed above which has positively affected their status and expanded their role. This reflects their own awareness regarding the

changing socio-economic environment and their own responses to it.

To conclude, it can be said that the above analysis demonstrates that the Muslim women are in the process of transitional and making attempt of synthesis between tradition and modernity. The traditional values come to the conflict in the power of modernity and development among Muslim women

Table

Decision-maker	Self		Husband		Husband and wife		Whole family		Total	Percentage
SUBJECT	NO	(%)	NO	(%)	NO	(%)	NO	(%)		
MAJOR	35	25.0	28	20.0	71	50.72	06	.28	140	100.00
NORMAL	73	51.04	50	34.96	01	00.72	19	13.28	143	100.00
MINOR	68	39.00	44	25.14	57	32.41	06	3.45	175	100.00

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