

Abstract

My present research, 'The Future of Indian Muslim Women, Fatwas versus Feminism', attempts to examine the status of Indian Muslim women in the light of feminist ideas and fatwas.

The whole thesis is organized in six chapters to which an appendix is attached in the end. Chapter Zero is introductory and deals with preliminaries of the topic of the research. To begin with, a simple model of 'Indian Muslim women' is developed to emphasize its all three basic identities: 'Indian', 'Muslim' and 'Women'. Among all environmental factors imparting dynamism to this system, two factors: Fatwa and Feminism have been discussed in detail in order to clarify their relevance with the thesis. Next topics discussed in this chapter are: Research Objectives, Significance of the Research, Methodology and Methods, Scope and Locale and Review of Literature.

Chapter one, 'Role and Status of Women in Islam', starts with delineating Islamic framework of gender justice, which encompasses Complementarity of Genders, Equality of Genders, Women's Rights and Exalted Status of Women. After critical discussion of first two topics, light is shed on the rights Islam confers on women. This is further augmented with testimonies of Muslim history and Islamic texts attesting the fact that Islam does not confine women within the four walls but allows them assume rich roles conferring self-reliance and dignity on them.

'Fatwa and Its Impact' is third chapter numbered as Chapter 2. The chapter begins with the definition of Fatwa and its preliminaries. Next, some current experiments in the field of Ifta' like Muftias, Electronic Mufti, Online Fatwas, Modern Muslims' Fatwas come under discussion. Further discussion includes the process of Fatwa and the resulting power buttressing Ulema as a class. How do Ulema come to wield power? This process is explained by a model developed along the lines of the theory sketched by Muhammad Qasim Zaman in 'The Ulema in Contemporary Islam' (2002). Then it traces the history of Fatwas since the days of the Prophet of Islam till 1970s. Finally, 15 recent Fatwas that were seen as highly controversial and derogatory in feminist and

liberal circles are synoptically discussed and analyzed and the role of media is highlighted in this connection.

Fourth chapter (Chapter 3) is 'Feminism and Reconstruction of Female Identity'. It defines feminism and dwells on its theory, leading to history and typology of feminist movement. Special emphasis is placed on three strands of feminism: western feminism, Asian feminism and Islamic feminism. Besides a list of global leaders of Islamic feminism (women only), short introduction of leading Islamic feminists from India is also given. Issues and functions of feminism is next topic of the chapter that finally delves into the engrossing question: Patriarchy in Islam?

Chapter 4, 'Concluding Remarks' discusses comparative data on Indian Muslim women in a bid to update their image. Next, it reviews a few studies with regard to the perception and status and other related issues of Indian Muslim women in order to trace the time-path of changing attitudes of Indian Muslim women and men. One section of this chapter deals with significance of gender sensitive indicators. Finally, coming image of Indian Muslim women is sketched in the light of opinions expressed by various authors and the role of Fatwa and Feminism in improving her lot is discussed.

'Suggestions and recommendations' along with hints for further research are given topic wise in the sixth chapter (Chapter 5). Appendix contains data tables, all referenced in fifth chapter. The thesis also contains 6 explanatory figures and 67 tables.