Challenges of Contemporary Thought to Muslim Women and Remedies from *Fiqh Al-Sīrah*:
A case study of Pakistan

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR PARTIAL FULFILMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
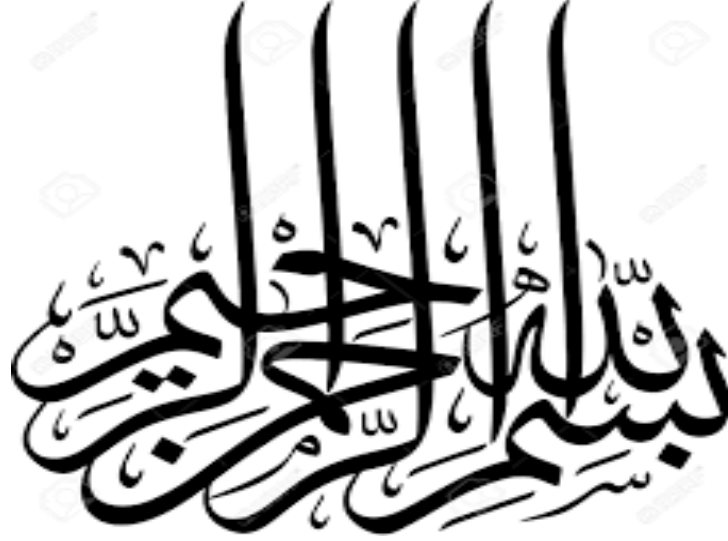DOCTORAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAMIC STUDIES

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بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

لِلرِّجَالِ ۖ بَعْضٍ عَلٰى بَعْضِكُمْ بِهِ اللهُ فَضَّلَ مَا تَتَمَنَّوْا وَلَا اكْتَسَبْنَ مِمَّا نَصِيْبٌ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ ۖ اكْتَسَبُوْا مِمَّا نَصِيْبٌ شَيْءٍ بِكُلِّ كَانَ اللهَ اِنَّ ۗ فَضْلِهٖ مِنْ اللهَ وَسْئَلُوا 4:32 عَلِيْمًا

"And wish not for the things (gender equality) in which Allah has preferred some of you to excel others. *Men shall have a share according to what they have earned, and women shall have a share according to what they have earned. Do ask of Allah his bounty. Allah has full knowledge of everything*"

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Thesis and Defence Approval Form

It is certified that this research thesis has been evaluated and is recommended for approval after successful viva voice examination and on the basis of satisfactory performance of the author of this research.

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do hereby declare that the thesis "Challenges of Contemporary Thought to Muslim Women and Remedies from *Fiqh Al-Sīrah*: A case study of Pakistan" submitted by me in partial fulfillment for the degree of Ph.D. Islamic Studies is my original work except those acknowledged in the text and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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Salma Razzaq

Abstract

Challenges of Contemporary Thought to Muslim Women and Remedies from
***Fiqh Al-Sīrah*: A case study of Pakistan**

The debate over women's rights instigated the contemporary feminist discourses in the West, and globalisation enabled this contemporary thought to permeate into Pakistani society, impacting Muslim women. Thus, Muslim scholars are obliged to respond to this situation in light of core Islamic values and principles. The research aims to identify the challenges posed to Pakistani Muslim women because of contemporary thought and propose guidelines based on *Fiqh al Sīrah*. The thesis investigates the genesis and the outreach of contemporary thought that shapes the notion of women's emancipation within the social milieu afforded to Muslim women in Pakistan. The research, using the triangulation method, analyses emerging challenges for Pakistani Muslim women because of contemporary thought and offers a response from *Fiqh al Sīrah*. The analysis of available literature uncovered evidence of contemporary thought's influence on Muslim women, manifested in a number of ways and by a variety of means. Later, these perceptions were tested by a closed-ended survey, with the data analysed using SPSS. The findings suggested that contemporary thought has a noticeable influence on Pakistani females, implying a long-term threat to society in psychological, socioeconomic, socio-religious, and cultural contexts. The interviews with selected experts, through a semi-structured questionnaire, validated the findings of the survey and demonstrated support for indigenous solutions. Finally, contextual examination of *Sīrah* of the Prophet ﷺ in relation to women and the examples of *Ummahāt ul Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن (Prophet's ﷺ wives) led to establishing guidelines to encounter contemporary challenges. The research provides guidance in all spheres of life considering the Prophet's ﷺ *Sīrah*, therefore bridging gaps in women's comprehension of Islam and eliminating its margins. This research would benefit Muslims and non-Muslims alike, particularly the social scientists.

Keywords: *Muslim women, thought, Islamic thought, Fiqh al Sīrah, contemporary thought, feminism.*

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<u>Dedication</u>

Dedicated to Ummahāt ul Mominín رضى الله عنهن *, and my beloved Maa and Baa*

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1
Overview

1.1. Introduction

In the globalized world of today, we see growing interaction between peoples from different regions and religions, leading to exchange of contemporary ideas impacting their social lives. Contemporary thought on women has evolved in the West, moving away from the religion, elevating individualism, and gender equality to the centre, while faith was pushed to the periphery. 'Freedom' gained a central position in thought, as it first appeared in the eighteenth century, when the European intelligentsia raised their voices in defence of individual rights and liberty. The slogan led to securing individual freedom with men and women gaining social rights. The Industrial Revolution enabled women to leave their homes in a quest for economic empowerment. Their initial concerns about discrimination in wages and the working environment, rather than the right to vote or property, were followed by the most popular slogan of 'gender equality'. Western women's desire for liberty has led to feminist ideology, termed 'feminism', which is perceived as an unrestrained women's liberation movement posing a challenge to the social order. In the last few decades, contemporary women's roles, status, and ideas about sensuality have changed dramatically. The feminist caravan has hit the traditional family structure in the West and is now seen making its way around the Muslim world, including Pakistan.

Western critics frequently draw attention to the issue of female's rights in Islam to disparage religion or to promote secular and liberal thought and values. These perceptions may be shaped by their ignorance of Islam, as well as their prejudices against Islam. The Prophet ﷺ guided by divine revelation, realised that the reformation of the society was only possible, if men and women both had equal rights and clear roles and responsibilities. However, it may not be forgotten that the inconsistencies in the application of Islamic teachings in Muslim societies provide compelling evidence for forming this image of Islam instead of Muslims. A materialistic environment dominated by Western supremacy in science, technology, economics, politics, and knowledge is bound to influence the minds of Muslim women, who are denied their rightful position in many households. As 'feminism' has a non-religious connotation and is focused on women's freedom, female Muslim intellectuals, though mostly avoiding the label of feminists, are found raising voices for a reinterpretation of the *Qur'ānic* injunctions on women's status. The emerging thought, without much scrutiny, has led to three discourses: outright rejection of

contemporary thought on religious grounds, legitimization of feminism through Islam or finding Islamic support for secular rights, and offering space for response through indigenous solutions, as these are seen penetrating into Muslim women's minds, posing serious challenges.

In the globalized environment, Pakistani women in particular are vulnerable to the theme of living in an oppressive and abusive society, in spite of the legal and religious provisions about women's rights and status. Unfortunately, the Islamic principles and code of conduct are not followed in many pockets of our society in letter and spirit, being under the influence of Hindu culture and tribal norms, paving the way for alien thought. Therefore, the encounter with contemporary thought on women has initiated a "dialogue within" the minds of our women folk, some of whom have welcomed it without hesitation, while others do realise the nature of the transformation, which is causing sociocultural challenges.

So, it's important to know where contemporary thought about women came from and how their goals have changed over time. An understanding of the manifestations of contemporary thought impacting Muslim women is essential to identify the challenges with a view to exploring an indigenous solution. Moreover, it is also important to carry out a critical analysis of our sociocultural environment in relation to women to identify the gaps that enable the penetration of contemporary thought into Muslim women's minds, which must be closely examined to measure the impact. In response to the sociocultural challenges, most Muslim scholars, instead of addressing the inadequacies in the application of Islamic teachings, which ensure the protection of the rights of women, are generally found on the defensive in underlining the rights of women in Islam. Others, in turn, criticize Western norms and practices without understanding the evolution of those thought and the environment conducive to such a rapid degeneration of social systems. Those Muslim scholars, attempting to address modern-day challenges, respond to the challenges from the point of *Fiqh* instead of identifying their ideological impact and formulating their response.

Sīrah books carry limited accounts of women's interaction with Prophet ﷺ, however, some authors have written about the revered ladies of the Prophet's ﷺ era, focusing on their personalities, and extolling them as role models in various contexts. To benefit from the study of the Prophet's ﷺ *Sīrah*, in the context of women, who face a plethora of contemporary challenges, we need to look beyond his social life as a male member of society. *Sīrah* writers have depicted the Prophet's ﷺ life from a variety of perspectives. However, the accounts are dominated by masculinity, with fewer narrations

describing how the Prophet ﷺ interacted with women. In the absence of any established precedence, the study of contemporary thought and its challenges to Muslim women and the search for guidelines in light of *Fiqh al Sīrah* is viewed as a challenging project and merits a deeper study and comprehension of the life of the Prophet ﷺ, the *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن and other noble companions رضی الله عنهم. It demands deeper historical research of *Sīrah*, the studies of the theological aspects of *Sīrah*, the comprehension of the literal and social aspects of *Sīrah*, the analysis, and expression of different women-related events or incidents, drawing inference of *Sīrah* guidelines.[1] It includes aspects of women's lives with reference to the *Sīrah* of the Prophet ﷺ in the social, political, economic and psychological context through which we can propose or derive precise guidelines for different contemporary issues and emerging challenges faced by Muslim.

  Fiqh al Sīrah establishes the contextual relationship between an incident quoted in *Sīrah* or *Hadith* and the contemporary environment to draw lessons. This research extends beyond the historical and theological contexts of *Sīrah* to foster an understanding of the social face of *Sīrah* concerning women, inferring direction from *Sīrah* to address contemporary challenges. It would examine the Prophet's ﷺ interactions in social, cultural, psychosocial, and socioeconomic contexts with contemporary females to propose or derive precise guidelines for contemporary challenges confronting Muslim women. This research aims to identify the challenges posed by contemporary thought, and offers guidelines to meet the challenges, underlining the compatibility of Islam with a changing environment. The research will be beneficial to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

1.2 Literature Review

  The research has been undertaken in recent decades by young scholars, especially females, in analysing women's social issues in the contemporary environment, where globalization of ideas tends to encroach into Muslim societies. The most relevant research papers are as follows:

  Saiyma Aslam, in her Ph.D. thesis on "Study of the Status and Role of Arab Muslim Women with special reference to Fatima Mernissi and Nawal el Saadawi", has established that feminism is a traveling concept with no borders and is posing challenges to Muslim women across the globe, especially in Arab societies, where, according to her, there is a

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[1] Al-Buti, *Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography*, 70.

conflict between ideology and practice. She has highlighted the need for *Ijtihād* as advocated by both these feminists and earlier by Iqbal.[1]

Farhat Naz Rehman, in her Ph.D. thesis "Women and Social Laws of *Qur'ān*", concluded that women's intellect has not made any contribution towards religious thought as most of the religious books are written by male scholars. She has pointed out that educated women have started challenging male interpretations of issues related to women due to their taste, cultural biases, and traditions. She has supported the concern of Muslim feminists, who are critical of *Ḥadīth* books containing *Aḥādith (collection of traditions of the Prophet ﷺ)* projecting an appalling picture of a woman. She has highlighted that these things provide a chance for Western critics of Islam to use the theme 'Muslim women are oppressed'. She has pointed out the absence of realization by the male Muslim leadership about the penetration of contemporary thought, in the context of women, because of bigger politico-economic issues at hand, or their apologetic view in front of Western criticism of the current situation of Muslim women.[2]

Samia Raheel Qazi in her Ph.D. thesis on 'The Islamic Family System and Contemporary Challenges', concluded that the family is the basic unit of any social system and women play a pivotal role in that equation, which is governed by the institution of *Nikāḥ.* She has highlighted the challenges to the family system through contemporary modern thought on women's affairs and the erosion of family values is leading to a psychologically depressing environment that may ultimately impact at the national level. She is highly disturbed by the evolving role of women with a desire to quit domestic responsibilities, which has exposed her to threats to her honour and dignity. She has identified the ingress of secular thought in Muslim societies, which is taking the younger generation away from Islam, and confusion is being caused by modernists in this regard. She has pointed out that the tribal mindset denying women's rights to express their willingness to marry leads to eloping couples and often the murder of girls in the name of honour. She has analysed the women's liberation movements in detail and concluded that the reason for the Western women's asking for rights was the denial of human status to women in the West, while Islam provided for many more rights for women. Hence, the

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[1] Aslam, Saiyma, *Study of status and role of Arab Muslim women with special reference to Fatima Mernissi and Nawal El Saadawi*, (PhD Thesis, NUML Islamabad, 2002)
[2] Rehman, Farhat Naz, *Women and Social Laws of Qur'ān*, (PhD Thesis, University of Karachi, 2002)

reasons for the disillusionment of Muslim women are local and the solution should also be home grown, instead of blind following of contemporary thought.[1]

Cengiz KOC, Ph.D. Student-English Language & Literature at Istanbul Aydın University, Istanbul, Turkey has carried out an in-depth study of the thought of "Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud: Patriarchal Dominance and Misinterpretation of Sacred Texts in Islamic Countries." The author has identified two modern Muslim female thinkers who carry the argument that men have deliberately misinterpreted the sacred texts and they try to exclude women from Muslim societies. He has concluded from their thought that the Qur'ān needed to be reinterpreted by female scholars and women should handle all these texts according to their experience. He has observed that Mernissi and Wadud do not criticize the religion but assert that the interpretations have been done according to the culture and traditions of the society. He has observed that Western feminists are against the family, while Muslim feminists take the family as one of the central social institutions. According to him, Muslim feminists have not in general joined demands such as sexual freedom and abortion, the central points in Western feminist discourse about the female body. He concluded that, from Islamic perspective, it is not possible to distinguish between male and female, because both genders are complementary to each other.[2]

Ayesha Madni, in her Ph.D. thesis "Reinterpretation of Women's Rights in Twentieth-Century," has pointed out the challenges that Muslim female scholars, under the influence of contemporary thought, ignore the interpretations of *Qur'ān* and tend to interpret various verses of *Qur'ān* to align themselves with feminist thought on gender equality. This is a good piece of research on contemporary thought and Muslim women, trying to bridge the gap between traditionalists and modernists through a reinterpretation of *Qur'ānic* verses regarding women's rights and responsibilities.[3]

Naima Saeed, in her Ph.D. thesis on "Discrimination Against Women", has concluded that preferential treatment is given to the education of the male child in most families in the middle class, where resource constraints come into play. Researcher has established that the impact of the socioeconomic environment is prominent in shaping the thought of women. She is of the view that female children are more protected by the family

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[1] Qazi, Samia Raheel, *Islam ka muasharti Nizam aur asr e Hazir Ke Tehdeedat*, (Department of Islamic Studies, University of Punjab, 2009).

[2] Cengiz, KOC , *Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud: Patriarchal Dominance and Misinterpretation of Sacred Texts in Islamic Countries (*PhD Student-English Language & Literature at Istanbul Aydın University Istanbul, Turkey).

[3] Madni, Hafiza Ayesha, *Haqooq e Niswan ki Taabeer e Nau*, (Department of Arabic, AIOU, 2004).

as compared to boys, and after marriage, most women enjoy better liberties than earlier. However, in an extended family system, more control may be exercised.[1]

Munazza Sultana, in her Ph.D. thesis on the "Impact of Western Enlightenment on Contemporary Pakistani Society: An Analytical Study in the Light of Islamic Teachings," highlights that Western enlightenment is well-matched with Islamic teachings, as both emphasize equality, tolerance, social justice, and an objective perspective on critical thinking. She has asserted that there is disagreement about lifestyles, indicating that the influence of western enlightenment on family structure, attire, parents' authoritative roles, and religious privacy is marginal and unsupported. She has identified the role of the media as critical in promoting cultural values and fostering interfaith discourse between civilizations. She has concluded from her research that the western enlightenment was founded on the concepts of rationality, thinking freedom, liberation from traditions and superstitions, and a scientific approach that was identified by Islam thousands of years ago. The research provides a perspective on the positive influence of Western thought on enlightenment and freedom, however, has also highlighted that Western enlightenment has brought in secularism at the centre followed by humanism and individualism.[2]

Shahzadi Zammurad Awan, in her Ph.D. thesis, "Punjabi Women in the Changing Socio-cultural Environment of Pakistan," has asserted that civil society organizations and the media have played a meaningful role in the reorientation of women's thought and position in Pakistani society. She has established the distinctive composition of the sociocultural environment, based on patriarchy and an orthodox view of religion, which sees women as subservient to men and believes in confining them to a specific function, devoid of individual will and freedom. She is of the view that gender inequality remains in vogue due to the socio-cultural environment with patriarchal mind-set, bolstered by religious orthodoxy.[3]

Fatima Farooq highlighted in her Ph.D. thesis, "Participation of Women in Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation," the reason why women face workplace harassment and discrimination. She has highlighted the social challenges posed by traditions of *Vani* (paying females to settle feuds), honour murders, daughters marrying

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[1] Saeed, Naeema, *Discrimination against women a case of study turban women with special reference to Karachi* (Department of sociology Faculty of Arts University of Karachi, 2013).

[2] Sultana, Munazza, *Impact of Western Enlightenment on Contemporary Pakistani Society: An Analytical Study in the Light of Islamic Teachings*, (AIOU Islamabad, 2013)

[3] Awan, Shahzadi Zammurad, *Punjabi Women in the Changing Socio-cultural Environment of Pakistan*, (University of Punjab PhD Thesis, 2015).

into the Qur'an to avoid inheriting, and Jirga demanding commitment to gang rape in parts of Pakistan's tribal regions. According to her research self-actualization, economic empowerment, and women's emancipation have impacted Pakistani women in recent decades via NGOs, films, satellite television, social media, and the Internet, resulting in an increased desire to earn in the name of self-development and to contribute to national development.[1]

Tabassum, in her work on Pakistani women has asserted that Pakistan is a patriarchal society, in which males outnumber women in all spheres of life. According to her, the vicious cycle begins with cultural ethos of social institutions, which assign different status to male and female within these, which results in lopsided distribution of political power, which results in promulgation of discriminatory laws, thus preserving and fostering a culture that treats men and women differently in society. Her perspective on social environment offered fundamental support to me in identifying the gaps through which contemporary thought are likely to infiltrate into Muslim society.[2]

Abdullah, in his Ph.D. dissertation on "Postfeminist and Islamic Feminist Discourse: An Analysis of Discursive Practices of Muslim Feminists", has established that contemporary feminist activities with home-grown sociocultural perceptions to contest the challenges confronted by women are evolving around the globe, in line with their socio-cultural environment. He has identified that "Islamic feminism" is a similar development in the Muslim societies, as Muslim women are trying to salvage their rights through a reinterpretation of Islam and the *Qur'ān.*[3]

Bushra Jabeen concludes that a lack of social justice, economic hardship, and social inequality are the driving forces behind women's rights movements. According to her, feminists have identified 'economic empowerment and social rebellion' as critical components of women's emancipation. She asserts that feminist groups began with women's rights but veered off course to legitimize other societal problems such as homosexuality, weakening the institution of marriage, illegitimate offspring, and an imbalance of rights and duties, thus endangering the family structure. The study is

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[1]Farooq, Fatima, *Women Work Participation, Empowerment and Poverty Alleviation In Pakistan: Empirical Evidence From Southern Punjab*, (School of Economics, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, 2016).

[2] Tabassum, Naima, *Women in Pakistan; Status in Socio-Cultural and Politico-Legal Domains*, (HEC Pakistan, 2016).

[3] Abdullah, Muhammad, *Postfeminist and Islamic Feminist Discourse: An Analysis Of Discursive Practices Of Muslim Feminists,* (Department of English NUUML, 2018).

theoretically connected to my work on contemporary conceptions of women and the Islamic viewpoint.[1]

Muhammad Roman in his Ph.D. thesis titled "Implications of domesticated Modern Media Technologies on family cohesion in Punjab" (2018) has stated that it is negatively changing the nature of human relationships, especially within the family. He has asserted that media is causing social distancing between the people in proximity while connecting to strangers leading to several social evils.[2]

Muhammad Rasheed Arshad, in his research paper on Islamic Modernism published in *Al-Ḥikmat* 2019, stated that the current challenge from Western civilization is not the first exposure of Muslims to such a threat in history, as movements that defied Islamic principles have been witnessed at intervals. These challenges that threatened the very survival of Islamic civilization, sometimes turned out to be the guardians of Islam.[3]

To understand the impact of contemporary thought with feminism being at its core, it is considered vital to study the genesis of feminist thought, its origin, and philosophical foundations. Deana Goodman considered two avenues of thought about humans: first, those inspired by Plato, the father of Greek philosophy, and who are of the view that both genders are complementary to each other. The second group is the followers of Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy, who oppose the idea of complementarity, and consider that the human mind controls actions and emotions, while the human body has little significance in shaping individuals. Both groups are of belief that women are highly oppressed.[4]

As per Maryin Perry, feminism happened to be one of the thoughts that challenged the power disparity between men and women. Feminist concerns revolved around equality in all spheres of public life, economic empowerment, marital choices, and sharing of household duties. The success in attaining the objectives varied according to local situations in different parts of the globe.[5]

Stephaine Hodgson identified that throughout history, the manifestations of feminism have varied, and the underlying spirit of all such endeavours is to confront

[1] Jabeen, Bushra, *Women Rights; A comparative study of Islamic teachings and Western Thought*، (Department of Islamic Studies, NUML, Islamabad, 2019).

[2] Roman, Muhammad, *Implications of domesticated Modern Media Technologies on family cohesion in Punjab*, (PhD Thesis Agriculture University Faisalabad, 2018).

[3] Arshad, M. Rashid, "Islamic Modernism", *Al-Hikmat* Volume 37 (2017) pp. 95-110

[4] Goodman, D., Women and the Enlightenment, in R. Bridenthal, S. M. Stuard, & M. E. Wiesner (Eds.), *Becoming visible: Women in European history* (3rd ed.), (Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1998).

[5] Perry, M., *Western civilization: Ideas, politics and society*, (Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 2000)

patriarchy. Feminism found itself strong in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The earlier thought, though explicitly not labelled as feminism, were feminist in objectives. It is asserted by her that though feminism has demonstrated the ability to engage a wide segment of women in general, many females have kept themselves away from the movement.[1]

Sarah Gamble sees feminism as commonly symbolizing women's struggle to combat male-inflicted oppression. She has viewed feminism as the most effective movement in the twentieth century that has impacted social, cultural, economic, and political domains in a variety of ways. She has termed it as one of the most influential cultural and philosophical thoughts. Feminism, by her, is termed as fighting against attitudes that discriminate against women while linking all social or cultural positivity to men only.[2]

According to Sanders, in the late nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill and John Ruskin had diametrically opposed views on love and its essence, asserting that sexuality is a reality. Mill was adamantly opposed to the notion of males being superior to women owing to their physical power. He chastised legal traditions for perpetuating this inequity by favoring males.[3]

Carol L. Anway highlighted religion's diminishing significance in their lives and Christianity's failure to address the issues they presented. The book discussed the harmful consequences of contemporary thinking and the remedies offered by Islam.[4]

Taha Jabir al-Alwani in his work on "Islamic Thought; an Approach to Reforms" asserted that the Ummah's ongoing frustration, failure, and the consequent sense of humiliation and disorientation serve to highlight an unavoidable question. He writes that Muslims need to understand that, while the need for reforms would incorporate elements of universal discourse, it must retain a high degree of intellectual and cultural uniqueness.[5]

Moghissi in her book is of the view that Muslim women are at the losing end due to social conservatism and fundamentalist movements. Islamic societies, from Afghanistan

[1] Hodgson, S., *Early feminism*, in S. Gamble (Ed.), The Routledge companion to feminism and postfeminism, Routledge London, 2006) 3-14.
[2] Gamble, S., *Post feminism*, in S. Gamble (Ed.), The Routledge companion to feminism and post feminism (Routledge London, 2006), 36-44.
[3] Sanders, V., *First Wave Feminism,* in S. Gamble (Ed.), The Routledge companion to feminism and postfeminism, (Routledge London, 2006), 15-24.
[4] Anway, Carol L, *'Daughters of Another Path'* (Yawana Publications, 1995).
[5] Al-Alwani, Taha Jabir, *Islamic Thought; an Approach to Reforms*, translated from Arabic by Nancy Roberts, (The International Institute of Islamic Thought London, 2006).

to Algeria to Sudan, Iran, and Pakistan are witness to systematic brutalization of women, caught in a crossfire between the secularists and fundamentalists.[1]

According to Mariam Cooke, Muslim women, in the 1920s, were found seeking support of religion on equal participation of men alongside women in daily life. The wave of Islamization in the 1970s was embraced mostly by the lower middle class, while the rhetoric on gender-based social justice gained popularity among women of all economic classes and professions. She has noted that both housewives and working women are showing an interest in Islam, as shown by the increasing trend of formal Islamic education at Islamic institutions and the formation of weekly study groups in this respect. Additionally, technology has aided in connection.[2] Parallel to this movement, the term According to Badran, the term 'Islamic feminism' was invented in the 1990s by academics and activists in Iran, Turkey, South Africa, and eventually across the Muslim Ummah. Arab Muslim feminism was founded by secular women influenced by contemporary thinking, who advocated an accommodating attitude toward religion, culminating in an advanced manifesto of religious changes.[3]

According to Mir-Hosseini, there is an indigenous feminist thought to demonstrate challenges faced by women in different Muslim countries to suit their local socio-cultural environment are understandable, as the Islamic teaching continues to be neglected. Therefore, Muslim women are asserting to reclaim their rights through the reinterpretation of Islam and Qur'ān, however, in actual effect, such thought is viewed as liberating Islam and Muslim women from patriarchy. Feminism, to her, broadly has two aspects, ideology, and activism. According to Hosseini, the feminists on the ideological front, are developing female-friendly scholarship and epistemology, while works by feminist activists advocate applying the ideological agenda of feminism for changing the lives of women. Many indigenous feminist movements emerged with ethnic and religious variations, especially Muslims that relied on religion in support of the feminist agenda.[4]

According to Badran, there is no consensus on its definition, however, its fundamental agenda inspired by global feminism is to discredit patriarchy in Islam under the garb of improvement in the lives of Muslim women. There have been scholarly

[1] Moghissi, H., *Feminism and Islamic fundamentalism: The limits of postmodern analysis*, London: Zed, 1999).
[2] Cooke, Mariam, *Women claim Islam: Creating Islamic feminism through literature*, (London: Routledge, 2009).
[3] Badran, Margot. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and religious convergences*, (One Word Publications, Oxford, 2009)
[4] Mir-Hosseni, Zeba, *Beyond 'Islam' vs. 'Feminism'*, IDS Bulletin, 42(1), 2011, 1-13.

contributions in the development of thought about Islamic feminism; therefore, they are divided upon the terminology for the concept. Some of the scholars do not want to be identified as 'Islamic feminists' or even 'feminists'. To them, Islamic feminism is an "antiracist, non-discriminatory, timeless version of global feminism that seeks human equality both in public and private spheres."[1]

Wadud, criticizes some aspects of the Islamic epistemology of women. She views the Qur'ān as gender-just, and a victim of patriarchal interpretations. She also deemed *Ḥadīth as* a weak source of religion in certain cases, for it is employed by men to maintain their patriarchal supremacy. Islamic *Shari'ah* has been considered by her to be dominantly male-centered, thus the *fiqh* derived out of it is patriarchal mindset. She also question classical Islamic jurisprudence of the ninth century (*fiqh*) in the prevalent times. She underscores the need for *Ijtihād* and religious interpretation to be gender-inclusive to challenges the cultural patriarchy in the name of Islam. Wadud argues for the importance of the female perspective in understanding the *Qur'an* (*tafsir*) on women's problems.[2]

Asma Barlas and Margot Badran are two key scholars in developing the discussions concerning nomenclature. Young Muslims have started using the term Islamic feminism as the identity of women's rights endeavors and the term is fast expanding over the Internet without much understanding. However, the women working on Qur'ānic reinterpretation were not using 'Islamic feminism' as a title for their work, rather would like to be viewed as theologians working on female-cantered discourses of the Qur'ān.[3]

Muslim women are confronted with the confusion around the terminology of Islamic feminism as a result of misunderstandings, distortions, and nuisances, as Islam, in actual effect catered for women's rights much more than the demands of contemporary feminists, while the socio-cultural denial of these rights is being linked with Islam.[4] It is visible from the studies that the scholars engaged in hermeneutics avoid the label 'Islamic feminism' while the modern activists under the influence of contemporary thought own the tag with comfort. Some Muslim women are also making efforts for alternative expression for the connection of feminism with Islam; Amina Wadud calls it 'gender jihad'

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[1] Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and religious convergences.*

[2] Wadud, Amina, *Qur'an and woman: Rereading the sacred text from woman's perspective*, (Oxford University Press New York, 1999).

[3] Ibid

[4] Sanders, V. *First Wave Feminism*, in S. Gamble (Ed.), The Routledge companion to feminism and post feminism, (Routledge London, 2006), 15-24.

to reinvestigate treatment of gender categories in Islam.[1] Fatima Seedat views the term Islamic feminism as following Western constructs and 'sex equality, according to her, does not address the concerns of Muslim women, which are different from the Western women and the term Islamic feminism is a denial of this diversity. Fatima Seedat criticizes third-wave feminism for imposing feminism on all women in the world.[2]

Mariam Cooke justifies the use of the term "Islamic feminism" and considers it universal, and all who are fighting for gender equality may claim ownership. According to Margot Badran, Islamic feminism is helping Muslim women joining the global cause by 're-envisioning of Islam' for the constitution of a new modernity.[3] Kishwar Naheed has compiled articles authored by women scholars, most of them have contested the patriarchal supremacy, asserting it to be against the basic principles of the spirit of equality. They are of the view that Muslim men are afraid of losing their supremacy, hence take the cover of historical narrations eulogizing the status of women in Islam, while in real life, there is a visible gap in the implementation of Islamic principles. The authors have also expressed their grudge against the men historians and scholars, whose interpretations are male-oriented, denying importance to the female.[4]

According to Arifa Farid, the modern age, on the one hand, consists of astounding advancements in science and technology, and, on the other hand, mental anguish and emotional dissatisfaction are emerging in a psychological context. She believes that material advances have not provided the means of spiritual satisfaction, but rather caused new distractions in life in the global village, where human relationships are disappearing and being replaced by mere material interests. Thus, she highlighted that it is a moment of reflection for all human beings in general and Muslims in particular.[5]

Surya Batool Alvi has focused on the Women's Freedom Movement in the West and Islam. She has asserted in her book that a woman's honour and dignity can be preserved, by staying away from the company of strangers and veiling from non-*maḥrams* (outside close relations). Islam strictly forbids the exposure of adornment, obscenity,

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[1] Wadud, Amina, *Inside the gender jihad: Women's reform in Islam*, (One world Publications London, 2006).

[2] Seedat, Fatima, "Islam, feminism, and Islamic feminism: Between inadequacy and inevitability", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 29(2), (2013), 22-45.

[3] Mariam Cooke, *Women claim Islam: Creating Islamic feminism through literature,* Rutledge London, 2006).

[4] Naheed, Kishwar, Buri Auart ki Katha, Translated by Durdana Soomro, *A story of bad women*, (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[5] Farid, Arifa, *Tahzib ke Us Par: Asre-Hazer kay Masayal Aur Islami Fikr Maghrabi Fikr ke Tanazar Main,* (Urdu) *(*BCC&T Press, University of Karachi, 2000).

nudity, and indecency. She has highlighted that Islam has blocked all the doors of immorality and indecency through the veil. She thinks that the standard Islamic teachings have been labelled as conservatism and outdated phenomenon by the advocates of women's liberation. She has asserted that the campaign to evict women from their homes under the guise of attractive and colourful slogans of empowerment, to trample them in mixed gatherings under the guise of equality, is leading to degrading the women in search of ideals. She has extensively quoted texts from the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* in support of her approach to protecting Muslim women from the challenges of the Women's Freedom Movement.[1] This is one of the best pieces of relevant literature, found in Urdu Islamic literature focused on Muslim women through well researched *Quranic* and hadith texts and the Freedom Movement; closer to my research, however, it leaves much space to identifying challenges and response through contextual analysis.

According to Shaykh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Jalali, women face humiliation in modern times, because of the lure of freedom. He called the modern era the modern '*Jahilīyyah*' (ignorance) that encouraged her to wander in every field of life and took her out of the four walls of the house, which made her an object of play and insulted her in the worst manner, and oppressed her to an extreme level. The modern woman has lost her dignity and become a slave in the name of freedom. He has responded to the scepticism spread about women's rights in Islam, including polygamy, the right to divorce, evidence, inheritance, traveling alone, and women's education. He has advocated that the domestic role is best for the women in the interest of family and children.[2]

Ishaq Bhatti a famous Islamic historian, is cognizant of contemporary challenges, as Western civilization and culture, through the media, is permeating our homes, and Muslim women and girls under the influence of Western civilization are drifting away from the path of the distinguished and chosen ladies of Islam.[3]

In his Urdu book "*Islam, Aurat aur Europe*" Iḥsān al Ḥaq Shabāz has explored the high status of women granted by Allah Almighty and determines their place, status, rights, and duties in the light of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*. According to him, she suffered from humiliation in the ancient Arab times' *Jahilīyyah* and the modern *Jahilīyyah* (contemporary thought on women) by giving her freedom, encouraging her to wander in

[1] Alvi, Suraya Batool, *Jadeed Tehreek e Niswan aur Islam*, (Urdu) (Manshooraat Lahore, 1998)

[2] Al-Jalali ‹*Huqooq'e Nuswa'an k baaray ashkalaat oar Qura'an o Sunnat ki roshni main unka Jaeeza*, (Urdu) (Jamia Ullom'e Asaria Jhelum, 2017).

[3] Bhaṭṭī, Muḥammad Isḥāq, *Islam ki betyan'Edition Jadīd iẓāfah shudah aiḍīshan*, (Ma'ū Nāth Bhanjan : Maktabah al-Fahīm, 2012).

every field of life, and oppressing her to the other extreme, having lost her dignity in the name of freedom. He has highlighted how Islam protected women, emphasized their rights, while also explaining their duties as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, and elevated them to the highest position of honour and respect. He has explained in detail the *Sha'rīah* rules for men and women. He is of the view that in Western civilization, unfettered freedom is manifested in the form of adultery and obscenity. He mentions the great benevolence of Islam to women and exposes the laws of the West. Accordingly, Islam sanctifies her as a mother, sister, daughter, and wife, while Europe transcends all boundaries of morality and is leading to the destruction of society because of adultery and fornication. Europe, according to Shahbaz, has inflicted a humiliating influence on Muslim societies through the media, co-education, and free mixing of genders. He has also highlighted that Europe has misused the natural nuances of women against Islam and spread propaganda as if Islam is against women's rights.[1]

Ẓafīr ul-Dīn has given a comprehensive comparison of the perspective of Islam on modesty and piety in response to the lowering concept of morality in the West. He has highlighted that the "system of modesty" of Islam provides a concept of protection for women. He has provided an unbiased comparative analysis of the Islamic law of chastity and the West, where morality has been redefined, violating the age-old aversion to immorality. He has observed that this haven of Islam is now under attack by contemporary thought through the media, which has enslaved Muslims themselves to the West's mental slavery and intellectual captivity. The concept of *Nikāḥ* and attire in Islam has been presented in an appealing beautiful and wise manner, and comparison has exposed with statistics the moral depravity of Europe in this regard. He has endeavoured to highlight aspects of the fear of intimidation from the West and the supremacy of Islam.[2]

Abul Hassan Nadvi had given a real insight into the permeation of contemporary thought and the way it is impacting Muslim women, and is of the view that it is hard to fathom the same. He has asserted that the Muslim leadership only pays lip service to Islam and is implementing contemporary thought on women. He has challenged the contemporary concept of the liberation of women on intellectual grounds and highlighted

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[1] Shahbaz, Ihsan-ul-Haq, *Islam aurat oar maghrib*, (Dar ul Undalas Lahore, 2017).

[2] Dīn, Ẓafīr al, *Islam ka Nizaam e Iffat*, (Matbua Al-Jamiyyat Press, New Dehli, 2008).

Islamic principles and guidance for the protection of women and families when followed in letter and spirit.[1]

According to Syed Abu al-Ḥassan Alī Nadwī, (in another book) contemporary thought and civilization are posing a serious threat to Muslim societies. The future of Islam will depend on the attitude and response of the Muslim countries to tackle these challenges, by moulding their societies in time with the contemporary environment in keeping with Islamic values and teachings.[2]

Syed Tanwīr Bukhārī in his Urdu book '*Islam aur Jadeed Nazriat*' asserted that "Islam is a complete code of life" and its global popularity is testimony to its relevance to all times, equality, guidance on all social and moral issues, and social and economic principles that shield the weaker ones against exploitation.[3] The contemporary thought of Islam have been discussed in the context of Islam and secularism. Yousaf al-Qarḍāwī of Egypt, translated into Urdu, in response to the secularist thought propagated there by various Egyptian authors has negated secularism and highlighted the outline of the Islamic political system in response to contemporary challenges.[4]

According to 'Amerā Eḥsān, Allah Almighty has placed women in a high place. They suffered humiliation in ancient times due to denial of freedom and in modern times by being given freedom to the limits and, in the process, oppressed them to the extreme. In her book, she analyses the complex challenges of contemporary thought faced by women in modern times. She has clarified the natural position and role of women in the light of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* and presented true guidance to the new generation of Muslim women to enable them to play their role as an individual and as a member of the family.[5]

Jalāl Uddīn Anṣār 'Umairī, is of the view that modern thought has not been able to establish a new social order between male and female, as it has dragged women into the area of men's responsibilities, while the vacuum created in the family because of the absence of women cannot be filled. He believed that Islamic principles based on the Qur'ān

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[1] Nadvi, Syed Abul Hassan Ali, *Nizam'e Taleem Maghribi rujhanaat oar us main tabdeeli ki zurort*, (Urdu) (Syed Ahmed Shaheed Academy Rai Bareli, India,1996).

[2] Nadvi, Syed Abu Hassan , "*Islam aur Maghrab*", (Urdu) (Majlis Tehqeeqaat o nashriyat'e Islam Lukhnow, 1983).

[3] Bukhari, Tanwir, *Islam Oar Jadeed Afkaar,* (Al Noor Publications, 2015).

[4] Qarzavi, Yousuf, *Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism*, (International Institute of Islamic Thought American Trust Publications Herndon Virginia 1407 AH/1987).

[5] Ehsan Amira, *Ikeesween Saddi aur Muslman Aurat*, (Urdu) (Idara'e Iffat Rawalpindi, 2017).

and Hadith provide guaranteed social stability and order.[1] Anis has suggested developing an Islamic paradigm on women's rights instead of taking the East or West as a model, and it should be inspired by Qur'ān and Sunnah, in the light of the realities of contemporary Muslim societies.[2]

Norma Kassim, an Indonesian writer, has discussed the challenges and issues faced by Muslim women in her work titled "A Walkthrough Life" and asserts that women are more severely impacted psychologically and physically by the calamities than men, due to their delicate nature. She is of the view that women have been continuously struggling for their rights in a male-dominated world. Women, according to her, must reflect on their role in life and challenges faced and treat themselves with respect and keep an eye on the purpose of life as ordained by Allah Almighty.[3]

Khurshid has elucidated the contemporary function of religion in light of scientific rejection of religion. She stated that contemporary civilization is founded on materialism, secularism, democracy, and nationalism, and his rejection of religion encouraged the idea of animal marriage, thus undermining society's fundamental social fabric.[4]

Sayyed Hossein Nasr wrote that he is not persuaded that the inverse repercussions of innovation in the Occident will result in unique insufficiencies among Western people alone, or that comparable effects can be avoided in the East. Nor is it intended to bring the Islamic world into geopolitical or even social concord with the Western world. Rather than that, it is about the Truth as revealed in al-din (comprehensive way of life given by the Creator) and as the standard for all human action in the East or West throughout history, present, and future; it is about Islam. It is the ultimate earthly embodiment of this Truth and as a living reality capable of supplying the essential standards for judgement, based on eternal and unchanging archetypes transcending time and space; and it is about Islam as the final terrestrial manifestation of this Truth. He felt compelled to assert that the time had come for modernized elements within the Islamic world to recognize the true nature of the forces that had swayed them and to fortify their resolve to defend Islamic traditions against the forces now threatening them from within the Islamic world's borders.[5]

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[1] Umeri, Jalal Uddin Ansar, *Khawateen aur Muaashra,* (Urdu), (Islamic Publications Lahore 2011).

[2] Ahmed, Anis, *Women and social justice: An Islamic Paradigm,* (IPS & Islamic Foundation Islamabad, 1991).

[3] Kassim, Norma, *A walk through life, Issues and challenges through the eyes of a Muslim women*, (NK & Associates Kuala Lumpur, 2007).

[4] Khursheed, Ahmed, , *Islami Nizam'e Hayat*, (IPS press Islamabad, 2016).

[5] Noor, Hussein, , *Islam and the Plight of Modem Man*, (ABC International Group, Inc. 2001).

Abdul Ḥalīm Abū Shiqah has compiled the *Ḥadīth* related to women, affording space for men in social, intellectual, and politico-economic aspects of life, while equipping the Muslim women against threats of the contemporary thought. He has established through the study of *Ḥadīth* that women of the Prophet's ﷺ time were fully conscious of their capabilities and participated in various fields of life, in the presence of men. He has concluded that there is no specific dress for women, but it should cover her body structure. *Abū Shiqah* has highlighted the importance of family as a social unit, where men and women have more specific and few overlapping responsibilities.[1]

Maryam *Jamīlah*, with her Western background and grooming, has authored various books highlighting the influence of contemporary thought on Muslim societies. She has traced the ingress of Western thought into various Muslim societies and recommended that the education system be restructured to revive and preserve its own culture, which will form the basis of political sovereignty. She has highlighted the need for the renaissance of Islam to guard against contemporary thought.[2]

According to. Muhammad Yāsīn Maẓhar Ṣiddiqī, the authors of *Sīrah* have not adequately covered the interaction of Muslim women with the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, the inclination to confine women to the home and away from men has been strengthened. He in his Urdu book '*Aurat Ehd'e Risaalat main*', through the study of *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth*, has established the routine interaction of women with the Prophet ﷺ and his companions in a social, educational, and commercial context.[3]

Muhammad Iqbal, the leading Muslim philosopher of the twentieth century, in his book "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam", identified the situation in Muslim societies, which was no different even after the turn of the century. He suggested reconstruction of the social lives based on principles of Islam. He called for *Ijtihād* and *'Ijmā'*, which to him is the major plan to reset the course of Muslim societies on the path of reconstruction. Iqbal has been a great source of inspiration for modern thinkers who advocate *Ijtihād* for social, political, and religious reforms. Iqbal is not for restricting the social role of women but rejects the idea of imitating the West.[4]

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[1] Abushiqa, Haleem, *Aurat Ehd'e Risaalat main'* Translated by Faheem Akhter Nadvi, (Nashriyat Lahore, 2007).

[2] Jamila, Maryam, *Islam Versus the West*, (Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, Delhi, 2015).

[3] Siddiqi, Mazhar Yaseen, *Nabi Akram S.A.W Aur Khawateen –Aik smaji mutalia*, (Metro Printers Lahore, 2011).

[4] Iqbal, Muhammad, *The reconstruction of Islamic Thought,* (Dodo Press, 1930).

Muhammad Al Ghazali in his book *Fiqh al-Sīrah has* dedicated a chapter to the life of *Ummahāt al-Mominīn* (Wives of the Prophet ﷺ) and brought out important lessons. He has pointed out that polygamy is not a choice of an individual based on whims or indulgence in pleasure and gratification of lust but is backed by a social consideration. He has asserted that all the marriages of the Prophet ﷺ except Hazrat Khadija عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِيَ were motivated by a social compulsion to protect some, while the others were based on political considerations. He has highlighted that some of the noble ladies, despite having rich family backgrounds, adapted to a simple but balanced life within the available resources. Ghazali has also underscored the complexities of the social system and the environment in a family with many co-wives. *Muhammad Al Ghazalī* covers faith, behaviour, character, and various issues. He has related *Sīrah* to contemporary issues, discussed good and basic aspects of these, supporting the good through the support of *Sīrah*, *Ḥadīth*, and *Qur'ān*, while rejecting the bad on similar principles. He has discussed women in the times of the Prophet ﷺ, where they even took part in battles.[1]

Muhammad *Sa'īd Ramaḍān Albūti*, in his famous book "Fiqh al-Sīrah" has compiled the Sīrah of the Prophet ﷺ differently. Instead of covering various periods or events, he has undertaken the compilation in various contexts, drawing lessons for contemporary Muslim societies. He has discussed the issue through analysis of an event involving the maltreatment of a Muslim woman by a Jew. The Muslim woman, according to the author, needed to cover her face. He has highlighted the advisory role of women in the context of the Treaty of *Ḥudaibīayah.* Al Buti has justified the participation of women in various social activities while highlighting the justification for not shaking hands with strangers. The rest of the lessons drawn from the study of Fiqh are generally common for both men and women. The peripheral treatment of women's interaction with the Prophet yraropmetnoc eht ot esnopser no sucof ,.e.i ,hcraeser ym rof ecaps hcum dereffo ﷺ challenges to Muslim women from the study of Sīrah. Albūti draws lessons and guidelines from the *Sīrah*. His book is free of any sectarian inclination and rather related to contemporary issues and challenges. His objective is to develop an understanding of the lessons, principles, and real meaning of the happenings and narrations by the reader. He has based the *Sīrah* on *Ḥadīth* and adjudged the narrations based on logic and practicality.

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[1] Ghazali, Muhammad, *Fiqh as Sīrah - Understanding the life of Prophet Muhammad*ﷺ , (International Islamic Federation of Students Organization (IIFSO), 1999).

The most important aspect is the conclusions, commandments, principles, and guidelines based on the narratives. [1]

The review of recent research works on challenges faced by Pakistani women identified that these are related to social, economic, and psychological contexts and are mostly undertaken by scholars from faculties other than Islamic Studies. It is established from the research on contemporary thought that the female Muslim intellectuals, mostly avoided the label of feminism, but are found raising voices for a reinterpretation of Qur'ānic injunctions on women's status. While some researchers, in general, have attempted comparisons of contemporary and Islamic thought, it leaves much to be desired concerning women, offering adequate space for my research. Some researchers have looked at the problems Pakistani women face in a piecemeal way, with little mention of how modern ideas affect them. This fits with the research goals, which are to look at the problems Muslim women face because of modern ideas.

The survey of the literature regarding women revealed that most books in the West were written by both genders, while the literature on Muslim women was dominated by male authors, including orientalists, modernists, moderates, and orthodox. Moreover, the orthodox and moderate segment of literature is in *Urdu* (original and translations from Arabic) with very few exceptions. It is identified that contemporary thought on women has been focused on by Western writers for over a century, while the plight of Muslim women came under discussion in the post 9/11 scenario. Muslim women have also joined the group of writers about Muslim women's rights in the last few decades. The titles like the status of women in Islam, women in *Shari'ah*, Islam and Muslim women, women's rights in Islam and *Qur'ān*, the ideals of Muslim women, etc., are so rampant, while women's issues in the psychological, socioeconomic, and social fields have been generally ignored till very recent years. It is established from research

on contemporary thought that the concept of 'feminism' has a non-religious connotation and is focused on women's freedom. The emerging thought propagating emancipation of women, without much scrutiny, leads to three discourses by Muslim scholars: rejecting contemporary thought with annoyance, legitimization of feminism through Islam, or finding Islamic support for secular rights. The literature thus provides reasonable space to explore the guidelines to encounter the contemporary challenges from

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[1] Al Booti, Muhammad Saeed Ramadhan *Fiqh Us-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah*, translated "*Daroos Sirah*" into Urdu by Razi Ul Islam Nadvi (*Dar al-Fikr*, Damascus, Syria, 2008)

Islamic traditions, through review of lives of Prophet ﷺ and the revered ladies in his social circle.

The books on women's status, rights, and responsibilities as enunciated in Islam are mostly generic, setting do's and don'ts for women, without considering contemporary challenges and the contemporary sociocultural environment. The *Sīrah* books carry very few incidents narrating women's interaction with the Prophet ﷺ and his companions. Modern challenges have generally been viewed from a *Fiqh* perspective, citing textual direction in various situations, providing with an opportunity to explore the guidelines for contemporary challenges from *Fiqh al Sīrah* as an important goal of this research, through contextual appraisal of Sīrah and Prophet's ﷺ traditions.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

There is need to work on *Sīrah* beyond a source of inspiration and motivation, establishing its applied form in relation to the challenges of contemporary thought that shape the minds of Muslim women and sociocultural environment in Pakistan.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The Pakistani Muslim women are inclined to contemporary thought impacting their minds and the society as a whole, posing sociocultural challenges, thus necessitated identification of these challenges and seeking guidance in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah* to counter the potential threat to our social system.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Pakistani Muslim women, being oblivious of the rights provided by Islam, are likely to be impacted by contemporary thought that leads to a demand for unchecked freedom from social norms and values. Therefore, it is important to identify the challenges thus posed. The research responds to challenges to Muslim women in the light of Sīrah by bridging the gaps left by *Sīrah* writers, whose accounts are dominated by masculinity, with fewer narrations about the Prophet's interaction with women. It provides guidance to Muslim women in all spheres of life, which so far have been classified by Fiqh lens only.

This work will provide the light necessary to illuminate the path of Muslim women's lives and provide them with the spiritual weapon necessary to defend against the negative influence of contemporary thought on Muslim women. This research would benefit Muslims and non-Muslims alike, particularly social scientists.

1.6   Research Objectives

- To explore the evolution of contemporary thought on women.
- To study Pakistan's sociocultural environment with respect to women in order to identify gaps and margins for infusion of contemporary thought.
- To determine the influence of contemporary thought on Muslim women in Pakistan and emanating challenges.
- To suggest guidelines in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah'* in response to the contemporary challenges faced by Muslim women in Pakistan.

1.7   Research Questions

- How did contemporary thought evolve into current discourses that influences Muslim women?
- How do the sociocultural environment in Pakistan support contemporary thought that affects Muslim women?
- What is the nature and extent of influence of contemporary thought on Pakistani Muslim women?
- How does *Fiqh al Sīrah* help Muslim women to face the challenges of contemporary discourses?

1.8   Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited in terms of the breadth of topic (contemporary thought) on two fronts: first, it is confined and related to the women only and second, it identifies challenges of contemporary thought to Muslim women in given Pakistani sociocultural milieu in line with the research objectives. Conducting a countrywide survey was a complex task, therefore, it is limited to sample of twin cities (Islamabad and Rawalpindi) for measuring the impact on Pakistani Muslim women.

1.9   Research Methodology

This study uses a hybrid approach involving mixed methodology. The first two chapters examine and analyze current literature on the topic and provide a conceptual foundation for subsequent chapters. This section summarizes the technique used; it describes the research methodology in depth, its aim, and how it was developed and executed. The research paradigm and inquiry traditions are described, followed by a description of the pilot study. Additionally, this section contains a description of the subject and a review of the research questions, as well as a sampling strategy, data collection and analysis methods, a verification process, and a discussion of ethical concerns.

Due to the subject's social sensitivity, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used, a process known as methodological triangulation, also known as mixed methods and syncretism.[1] An initial literature review was conducted and identified the research topic considering the research problem. It was determined that no prior studies had been conducted on the subject, and the research problem remained unresolved. The research focuses on the research problem by conducting research through multiple methods to answer the research questions. The researcher embarked upon the research by conducting a descriptive investigation in which she collected, evaluated, and integrated pertinent data. Using an exploratory sequential approach, quantitative, qualitative, and interpretive methods were used to do research. This was done to create synergy in the research results that went beyond what was not possible with single-method studies.[2] Selecting an inquiry strategy that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design' is necessary after determining the main approach. Case studies and surveys are two kinds of such strategies. Among the methods and strategies, the case study explores deeply a system that is limited "in terms of time, place, or some physical limitations."[3] The case study research is focused on an object to be understood "as a whole."[4] Since this research is conducted in a conceptual framework, along with the case study of Pakistan, the survey method is utilized for the confirmation of the facts identified during the literature review in a conceptual framework enabling the construction of the foundation of the research. Here, a case study is used to get a deep look at how contemporary thought affect Muslim women in Pakistan. A sample is taken from Rawalpindi and Islamabad, which have typical demographics and more exposure to the flow of contemporary thought.

1.9.1. Research Process

Designing an appropriate research process can help investigate relevant elements which are essential to the conception and accomplishment of the study. Overviews of steps undertaken during the conduct of the study are illustrated in the table followed by an explanation as follows in Table 01:

Table: 1

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[1] Happ, M.B, DeVito Dabbas,Tate, J.,Hricik,A, and Earlen,J. Exemplars of mixed methods. Data combination and analysis .*Nurse Researcher*, (2006)

[2] Nastasi, B.K. and Hitchcock, J.H. *Mixed methods research and culture-specific interventions: Program design and evaluation,* (*The New Mixed Methods Research Series*), (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016).

[3] Ibid

[4] De Vaus, David A, *Research design in Social research*, (SAGE Publications London, 2001)

Phase	Procedure	Protocol
1.Conceptual Framework	Already Existing Data	*Literature Review*
2.Survey & Tool Development	Devising Questionnaire, comprising 25 statements; Cross-sectional study of Four Parameters, Pilot Study, Sampling, Survey form Distribution	Likert scale (Measuring Impact)
3. Interview	Semi-structured Questionnaire Selection of participants through random sampling	*Qualitative data Analysis*
4. Data Presentation and analysis	Use of descriptive statistics (SPSS), Bar Graphs, Pie charts, Percentage, mean, and frequency.	*Quantitative data analysis, Graphical presentation/ Discussion*
5. Establishing Guideline from *Fiqh al Sīrah*	Primary and Secondary sources	*Discussions*
6. Findings and Recommendations	Significant outcomes of the investigation	*Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis*

1.9.1.1 Phase-I: **Conceptual Framework**: An extensive review of the literature was conducted as a pre-study phase in this research to collect and interpret the available data to ascertain the factors that contributed to the evolution of thought in the West and Muslim world as identified in the literature. Utilizing the literature review method to trace the evolution of contemporary thought on women, the qualitative research phase relied heavily on online libraries. Analysis of available data by juxtaposing both thoughts, which led to conclusions concerning the impact. An interpretive approach was used as the first step in examining the work of various authors to establish the conceptual framework for the evolution and development of Muslim thought, with a particular emphasis on Muslim women in Pakistan, concluding the impact of contemporary thought on Muslim women as stated in the problem statement. Lastly, guidelines from *Fiqh al Sīrah* were established for contemporary Pakistani Muslim women.

1.9.1.2. Phase -II: Survey: The second phase of research included the survey, collection of data in the first step through a closed-ended questionnaire, which, as Crotty says, reflects objectivism[1] has provided a valuable survey tool to collect and analyse the impact of the prevalent thought on the social disposition of selected population groups and the efficacy of interventions. The purpose of the study was to substantiate the conclusions of the qualitative study done through literature review in the first phase through a survey conducted in this phase, measuring the impact of contemporary thought on Pakistani society in general and Muslim women in particular, sampling Islamabad/Rawalpindi. The survey evaluated the conclusions drawn from the textual data using survey form to quantify the impact of contemporary thought in a relative sense. We had no specific hypothesis for second phase because we wanted to investigate the impact of contemporary thought through (ICT) survey. The ICT inventory was established using a Likert five-point rating scale by the researcher herself. SPSS was subsequently utilized to quantify the impact.

The second step of the survey, strengthened by constructivism,[2] examined inputs in the form of opinions and suggestions from experts providing their perspectives on thought formation in Pakistani Muslim women.

Improvement of the Instruments: The development and improvement of an instrument is a critical component of any research project. The instruments were enhanced using two methods: judgmental validity and pilot testing. The dexterity of the subject expert and the pilot study were utilized to determine the order of closed ended questions besides their input to make them more comprehensible and easier to respond to. All instruments were delivered to subject experts in exchange for their helpful feedback. Most of the things were determined to be relevant and accurate. The questionnaire took a couple of weeks to be finalized, including a pilot study and minor revisions, followed by approval and the go-ahead by the supervisor.

Pilot Study: The statements were modified based on data gathered from a focus group during a pilot project involving several research fellows and colleagues. In the absence of a comparative study, most of the entries were created from scratch in the form of statements. The ICT (Impact of Contemporary Thought) inventory was formulated to measure the impact on Muslim women (**Annexure A**). Thereafter, a survey was conducted

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[1] Crotty, Michael, *The foundations of social research, Meaning and perspective in the research process*, (National library of Australia, 1998).
[2] ibid

through a selected group to gauge the results. The second step began with exchanging ideas within an intellectual circle, followed by a pilot study, which led to the formulation of a questionnaire for interviews/discussion. The interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. Each session, including the social conversation, stayed within the recommended time. The pilot study's objective was to determine the appropriateness of the questions and to provide the researcher with some early indications of the research's feasibility. Additionally, it provided expertise to the researcher in conducting in-depth, structured interviews and developing familiarity with the informants. Notably, the pilot study aided the researcher in developing interviewing and conversational abilities. This small-scale pilot study was done to see if the interview questions used to find out about the background of the topic being studied were appropriate and to get people ready for the bigger study.

Reliability and Validity:

While any instrument may be reliable without being valid, it cannot be valid if it is unreliable.[1] In other words, a legal instrument must be reliable. Furthermore, establishing an instrument's validity is more challenging than establishing its reliability, since validity is concerned with quantifying data associated with knowledge, while reliability is concerned with score consistency. The degree to which the questionnaire's results matched reality influenced the survey's dependability. Before sending out the survey, the core group checked the survey's validity, and then experts in the relevant fields checked the questionnaire's consistency.

Initially, for the first step, all entries (statements) were collected in a single sequence, with no division or sequencing. Thereafter, numerous revisions were made, under the guidance of a subject expert, who assisted in grouping the challenges shown in the statements into four broad categories: sociocultural, socioeconomic, ideological/religious, and psychological. Ten statements were deleted and six were revised. For the second step, two changes were made because of the pilot report. To begin, the researcher determined that the participant selection criteria needed to be changed. Second, the pilot study assisted the researcher in developing a more refined interview guide. Additionally, some questions were rephrased and reordered chronologically, and topical probes were added in response to problems identified during the pilot project. As a result, the interview format was revised, and three new core questions were included to

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[1] Jackson, S. L., *Research Methods and Statistics, A Critical Thinking Approach*, (Thomson Wadsworth USA, 2003).

ensure the accuracy of the results and that participants had more detailed answers. As a result, ten questions were finalized for the main analysis to maximize the utility of the interview questions in eliciting information about the participants' living experiences. The questionnaire was developed in English (**Annexure B)** and then translated into Urdu to collaborate with the first language speaking preference, followed by subsequent back-translation and correction based on discussion.

Population: According to the census held in 2017, women represented 48.76% (101.3 million) and 2.36 million women lived in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, representing the mix of the total population. 2000 women and 1000 male members from the total population living in the twin cities were taken as a sample to measure the impact of contemporary thought.

Sampling: As mentioned earlier, Muslim women of Rawalpindi/Islamabad have been taken as a sample, along with some male strata of society, for the first step of the survey through a closed-ended questionnaire. Demographic information comprising gender, marital status, and occupation was added to help in ascertaining the trends in different categories. The twin cities were chosen with the assumption that their exposure to contemporary thought is much more than simply being in the capital and close to the global community, NGOs, and other interest groups.

See below Table 2:

Table: 2

Sample	Sample size	Turn out
Male	1000	670
Female	2000	1512
Total	3000	2182

A focus group of individuals from both genders from various walks of life was chosen to elicit feedback on the closed-ended survey and its conclusions and the findings to solicit perspectives on the central issues and responses. The experts included in the group were heads of institutions, policymakers, academics, and members of civil society, as well as religious scholars, and art and media personnel.

See Table: 3

Table: 3 Sampling for interviews

Sample	Sample size	Turn out
Academia	36	28
Media / Arts	6	2
Religious Scholars	10	6
Policy makers	12	5
Institutional Heads	3	3
Civil Society	4	3
Total	71	47

Ethical Considerations: Since mixed methods research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods; ethical considerations were kept in mind for research involving common ethical issues that surfaced in both modes of inquiry. The quantitative component of the research involved sensitive sociocultural, psychological, and religious issues. All the sources have been duly acknowledged. The survey forms and interview questionnaire were distributed among participants after taking ethical consent. In both cases, it necessitated obtaining approval for expression, concealing respondents' identities, and communicating the study's purpose, while avoiding pointing out deceptive practices, respecting cultural sensitivities, and being aware of potential power issues (religious and intellectual).

1.9.1.3. Phase-III: Data Collection: Data was collected through multiple techniques. Struggles were made to ensure an excessive response rate. Firstly, survey forms in hard form were distributed among different people. This method took a long, hectic time of 5 months. Since physical access to people was restricted during the COVID-19 environment, collecting data tangibly was difficult, and thus, a web-generated survey form was considered an appropriate source of data collection. Luckily, it turned out to be quite effective and took only 15 days to gather data. Due to the pandemic, it was extremely challenging to contact and get responses for interviews. It took almost three and a half-month to gather data for this step. Some of the participants cancelled appointments at the

last minute, while others didn't want to answer because they didn't think they were smart enough for this intellectual activity.

Data Analysis: SPSS was subsequently utilized to quantify the data collected through ICTI**.** The mean score, frequency, and percentage were also calculated. Reliability of the tools was also ensured in the light of remarks received from the experts.

1.9.1.4. Phase IV: Guidelines: In the fourth phase, investigating the teachings and guidelines from *Fiqh al Sīrah*, was a significant undertaking, as previous studies on *Sīrah* had largely ignored women due to the scarcity of narrations. As the *Ḥadīth* is also used textually only for responding to challenges of modern times through Fiqh, this study addressed the knowledge gap through the interpretive method by establishing guidelines for encounter with contemporary challenges using an integrated exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach. *Fiqh al Sīrah* remained a critical component in developing an appropriate response to the challenges posed by contemporary thought, and thus the second phase of literature review of numerous books, journals, and dissertations aided in substantiating the hypothesis. Most of the data gathered during this phase came from Sīrah books, journals, and hadith books. The difficulty in locating books in English is deemed critical to emphasize, as most authors tried the subject in Urdu. This is viewed as an opportunity for this research to be the first of its kind in English on the subject.

Challenges During Research Work: COVID remained the biggest challenge hampering research activity, i.e., restrictions on visiting libraries and meeting the supervisor at the campus. However, she was just a call away 24/7. Nonetheless, the challenge was converted into an opportunity because of the relief provided in academic activities as a teacher, thereby dedicating more time to research work.

Chapter 2

Contemporary Thought and Muslim Women

Modern philosophy has emphasised secularism and individualism in response to the Church's political dominance, while industrialisation has resulted in significant progress toward liberalism and materialism. The thought reflected the course of history at a certain time. As the paper explores the impact of contemporary thought, it is important to set the stage for further research by developing an understanding of the concept and its evolution within contemporary thought. This chapter analyses the development of modern concepts that led to the establishment of the current women's liberation movement, defining the major trends in contemporary thought that form the building blocks of feminist thought. The research will further examine its interactions with Muslim women in order to identify the extent to which it influenced feminist discourse among Muslim female intellectuals. Effort shall be made to establish a link between feminist ideology and the broader battle for liberty, impacting social norms and family structures and eventually culminating in gender equality and increasing awareness in the West about the suffering caused by women's liberation movements.

To address the impact of contemporary thought on Muslim women, it is necessary to investigate how feminist ideology is perceived by contemporary Muslim women intellectuals. It must be established about the voices that criticise patriarchy and emphasise unfairness, which is likely to collide with the social fabric of Muslim communities.

2.1   Understanding the Term 'Thought'

The rise and fall of nations depend upon their thought and pursuit of knowledge, because thought governs actions. In our contemporary world, the word "thought" or "philosophy" is viewed as a bizarre phenomenon. There are different and conflicting attitudes towards the term, and in many minds, it is seen as a form of a mystery. Laymen with average intellect and knowledge consider philosophy to be a rather complicated subject. Hence, presenting it in a contemporary context with an interesting flavour is a challenge in and of itself. This idea also gives the erroneous impression that anything unique and strange is perhaps a philosophy. The ideas that germinate on the basis of a certain philosophy are not only a tradition but also have a huge influence on societies with low literacy and knowledge. Therefore, it is important to understand the place of 'thought' in relation to 'philosophy'.

Firstly, to understand philosophy, let us look at the Western definitions. The word philosophy is like the Arabic form of the Greek word "philo-sofia." Philosophy is a combination of two Greek words, "philein Sophia", meaning lover of wisdom[1]. This term was first used by the famous ancient philosopher Fiscia Ghorath. There were many stages of wisdom according to Fiscia Ghorath, "the highest of which was the wisdom that made the discussion a means of reaching the truth"[2]. The term "wisdom" for Aristotle is "only the wisdom to reach to God."[3]

Muslim thought has its own perspective, which is distinct from philosophy, as described by Ali Raza Tahir, "Muslim thought means an approach, an understanding, and a pearl of wisdom, which emerges under the guidance of revelation and nourishes itself with the help of all sources of knowledge, such as religious experience, intuition, reason, and sense perception, etc.."[4] Qur'ān used the word " *Ḥikmat*" at many places, such as *"He brings (the) Wisdom to whomever He decides; and whoever is brought (the) Wisdom, then he has been brought much charity (i.e., benefit); and in no way does anyone constantly remember except the ones endowed with intellects*."[5] Qur'ān has been referred to *Ḥikmat* (wisdom) and *Ḥakīm* (who possesses *Ḥikmat*) at many places declaring Qur'ān as the book of *Ḥikmat*, the Prophet ﷺ assigned the duty of teaching *Ḥikmat* (Wisdom) to mankind.[6]

In the Cambridge Dictionary, Philosophy is defined as "the use of reason in understanding such things as the nature of the real world and existence, the use and limits of knowledge, and the principles of moral judgment."[7]

Oxford Language Dictionary defined Philosophy as "the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline."[8]

In the book 'Principles of Philosophy' Descartes writes,

"I take the word 'thought' to cover everything that we are aware of as happening within us, and it counts as 'thought' because we are aware of it. That includes not only 'understanding', and 'imagining', but also sensory awareness."[9]

[1] *Roark, Dallas M, Introduction to Philosophy, (*Dalmor Publications, 1982)

[2] *ibid*

[3] *ibid*

[4] Tahir, Ali Raza*, An Introduction to Muslim Thought, Al-Hikmat*, Vol 37 (2017), 96

[5] Qur'ān 2:269

[6] *Qur'an* 16:64

[7] *Cambridge International Dictionary of English,* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995).

[8] *The Oxford English Dictionary.* (Clarendon Press Oxford, 1989).

[9] *Descartes,* René, *Principles of Philosophy,* (1644), (C. H. Beck Munich: 1901).

It can be understood from the above definitions that man loves wisdom, and this love is not only verbal, but every action of man reflects his knowledge of the universe and the creation of this universe. Thus, the man himself can be seen as a tiny universe. This is philosophy.

The word "thought" in the Oxford Dictionary is defined as "an idea or opinion produced by thinking, or occurring suddenly in the mind.*"[1] Cambridge Dictionary that defined thought as "the act of thinking about or considering something, an idea or opinion, or a set of ideas about a particular subject"[2] The mass noun has little deeper meaning; "the formation of opinions, especially as a philosophy or system of ideas, or the opinions so formed."[3]

From the above discussion, it can be established that though the two terms seem to resemble each other in "form" and "connotation", the former is dynamic in nature, while the latter is believed to be enduring. This chapter aims to study the development of contemporary thought on women and its encounter with Muslim women to identify its impact on feminist discourse in the Muslim world. The timeframe of the discussion on thought is restricted to the present era. However, the evolution of thought will be examined to understand the undercurrents that led to the present discourse on women's issues.

2.2 Ideological Trends in Contemporary Thought

Modern society in the West is based on various pleasant and unpleasant changes that have occurred since the birth of Europe.[4] It was a seventeenth-century philosophy in which both godliness and morality ran together. Regardless of the divine point of view, it was the seed of godlessness and naturalism that later emerged from modern thought.[5] However, the turn of the century and its many developments, particularly industrialization, provided opportunities for a lot of women to work outside the house, thus promoting materialism. With time, a gradual change happened, and 'the new woman' emerged between the two world wars. Economic and financial independence were major goals for this modern woman.

Philosophy, science, and Western thought have been nurtured for more than five hundred years and have been moving towards atheism and materialism, distancing themselves from religion. From the day it was born, its fight with religion began. It would

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[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary,* (Clarendon Press Oxford, 1989).
[2] *Cambridge international dictionary of English,* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[3] *ibid*
[4] Ancient History Encyclopaedia, The Medieval Church
[5] Russal, Bertrand, "*The History of Western Philosophy*," 1945, Simon & Schuster, New York, 31-40

be more precise to say that the battle of intellect and wisdom against religion created this civilization. By the time of the Renaissance, the new European intellectual movement took place. This movement was confronted by Christian priests.[1]

Enlightenment[2] was based on a reason other than scripture[3], and the establishment of modern society. It was created on the foundations of anti-religious thought like Modernism[4] and Secularism[5], followed by the liberal ideas of Atheism, Humanism,[6] and Liberalism[7], promoted by the immediate slogan of humanity's freedom and equality. Thus, an ideological war was waged against misogyny across many facets of life, encompassing social, economic, religious, and cultural subjugation. These ideological trends, emerging from various movements and philosophies, continue to influence contemporary thought, and therefore are briefly described hereunder.

2.2.1. Secularism

Throughout modern history, secularism has advanced and has often been portrayed as anti-Christian and anti-religious. Several theologians, however, argued for secular Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century. They contended that Christianity should not be restricted to the sacred and otherworldly, but rather seek chances to promote Christian ideas across the world. According to these theologians, the full meaning of Jesus' teaching may be found and fulfilled in secular everyday life. Contemporary thought in the West is based on the denial of religious norms and values. Hence, feminism, being an extension of secular thought focused on women, also draws its strength from secularism. George Holyoake's 1896 publication English Secularism describes:

"Secularism is a code of duty about this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate,

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[1] Keeny, Anthony, "*An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy"*, Blackwell UK, USA, Australia, 1988, 36-45.

[2] *European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and humanity were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent in the West and that instigated revolutionary developments in art, philosophy, and politics.* Encyclopaedia Britannica (European History).

[3] Hanafi, Hasan, *New direction In Islamic thought,* 2010 Centre for International and Regional Studies Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 3

[4] In literature, visual art, architecture, dance, and music, Modernism was a break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression. Modernism fostered a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I. (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

[5] Any movement in society directed away from otherworldliness to life on earth. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

[6] Term applied to a variety of Western beliefs, methods, and philosophies that place central emphasis on the human realm. (Encyclopaedia Britannica) (Art and Science)

[7] Political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics. (Encyclopaedia Britannica) (Politics)

unreliable, or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) The improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other goods or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good."[1]

Western thought has secularism at the top of its most important attributes, along with others like liberalism, humanism, and individualism.

All these well-known and reliable sources in the English Lexicon point to the same thing: that secularism separates state, social, and cultural issues, as well as education, from religion.

In a book 'Keywords for American Cultural Studies' wrote,

"Secularism is a late coinage in English, dating from the 1850s, when it was adopted by reformers who regarded the church and capital as the joint enemies of the worker (Holyoake 1854). But because cultural critics in many antithetical senses use the word, it causes great confusion. The United States is sometimes held to be the model of secular democracy, and sometimes the most religious of all major modern democracies."[2]

Hence, it is important to understand that the state and politics are the domains that affect all spheres of life due to the unlimited power and authority of the state. The type of laws permitting social norms against religious teachings leading to social destruction is the plant grown through the seed of secularism. Secular voices are already present in our intelligentsia, part of which supports the ingress of contemporary thought into all spheres of life in Pakistan. So, the lack of religious oversight in relationships between men and women is likely to destroy a society that is based on religion.

2.2.2. Humanism

Humanism is a theoretical philosophy that emphasizes the potential and action of human beings on an individual and social level. It starts with the serious moral and intellectual examination of human beings. Throughout history, the term "humanism" has taken on a range of connotations, depending on the intellectual organizations affiliated with it. The term refers to a philosophy that places a premium on human well-being and advocates for human liberty, autonomy, and growth. It holds mankind responsible for the advancement and development of individuals, recognizes the inherent equality and

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[1] Holyoake, George, "*English Secularism*," E Book,1896, last accessed on 20 April 2022, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/38104/3810, 37

[2] Papagianni, Chrysavgi, "Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. Keywords for American Cultural Studies", European journal of American studies [Online], Reviews 2016-1, document 13, Online since 17 February 2016, connection on 08 July 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/12950, 209.

dignity of all human beings, and emphasizes the importance of humans in relation to the rest of the globe.

Since the early twentieth century, the majority of humanist organizations have been nonreligious and associated with secularism. Humanism is a term that is often used to refer to a nontheistic philosophy that emphasizes human activity and relies on science and reason to explain the universe, rather than divine revelation. Humanists are often ardent supporters of human rights, free speech, progressive politics, and democracy. Humanists claim that religion is not required for morality and reject excessive religious participation in education and government. Humanists believe that people are capable of defining their own values and leading meaningful lives.

Gender equality occupies the center of contemporary thought in the West, is found rejecting all traditional and ideological traditions, demanding supremacy of human nature. Mankind is a central concept of modern atheism and the different ideas emerging from critical thinking. These ideas include liberalism, socialism, nationalism, etc.[1]
Karren Armstrong wrote,

"The denial of God led to a lack of moral oversight by traditional ethical values that originated from various religions."[2]

Thus, ideas based on immoral fantasies have fundamental importance in the shaping of Western society. Women as humans have generally been translated as' human beings, be they in the East or the West'. But it is not so simple, rather a little complicated, because every society has its own unique concept. The term "individualism," and its equivalents in other languages, has been considered a legitimate expression of humanity throughout human history. This person asserts the negation and integrity of worship; in other words, the person is a rebel against God.It was a modern form of atheism.

In the presence of secular thought in Pakistani society demanding greater tolerance and justice, particularly for women, humanism is likely to influence the thought, as it has in the modern Western world.

2.2.3. Individualism

The break with tradition gave rise to the modern world, which opposes the traditional vision and rejects tradition, which means individualism. In this way, whatever is worthy of being called a tradition is immediately destroyed. The modern view, therefore,

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[1] Papagianni, Keywords for American Cultural Studies, 2016.
[2] Armstrong, Karren, Think Again: God, *Foreign Policy*, November 2009.

required the negation of true spiritual authority, a power based on the transcendent, and of any traditional organisation that must base its authority on that power, no matter what it was. So that is what happened. In this way, Protestantism denies the authority of an organisation that has a legitimate right to interpret the Western religious tradition and instead raises the slogan of free criticism, that is, interpreting based on personal judgment, in other words, individual opinion, even if it is ignorant and incompetent, which consists of the efforts of purely human thought.

Contemporary thought advocates individualism, emphasising personal autonomy, choice, consent, and freedom from state and society sanctioned discrimination based on sex or gender, and legal equality are all hallmarks of the feminist tradition. Oxford Dictionary defines the term as, "a social theory favouring freedom of action for individuals over collective or state control."[1]

Muslim societies, such as Pakistan, are based on Islamic values, with minor variations due to customs and traditions inherited from Indian and tribal culture, but they remain inclusive of all genders, regardless of caste, creed, language, religion, or ethnicity. Modern thought that is distorted and has a limited view of God may lead to a decline in morals and values, which is what Islamic society is known for, and the revolt against the traditional view, if it is not stopped, may cause society to fall apart.

2.2.4 Liberalism

Liberalism, as a political and moral philosophy, has led to conflicts within Western society and between the West and Muslims. The word 'freedom' is so charming that today, it captivates humanity at large. According to the Western idea of freedom, the only way to get rid of religious authority is to create a welfare state where people can choose whether or not to follow religious teachings and rules.

After religion, society and the family are seen to impose many restrictions on the new generation. In this context, one of the Western philosophers says that the greatest colonisers are the family and the parents who hold the child in bondage from birth, that is, from childhood, they are forced to learn the language, culture, traditions, and attitudes.

We, therefore, find that in Western society, the achievement of 'independence' has accelerated the fragmentation of the family system. U.S. law stipulates that marriage between a male and a female is a barrier to freedom, and the legal obstacles have been removed by amending the definition of marriage in the United States. Instead of 'men and

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[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary,* Clarendon Press Oxford, 1989

women', a person has been changed to a 'person', which means that now a person can marry another person even if they have the same sex. Thus, legally, the freedom of homosexuality has also been given to the individual. France has also changed the definition of marriage in its legislation and has legalized gay marriage since 2013.[1] Such unchecked freedom may turn out to be a sure recipe for social and familial disaster with relativity in morality. Feminism has taken birth in the liberal environment of the West, accepting sexual freedom as a norm. Therefore, the promotion of liberalism in the name of freedom and human rights is likely to creep into the minds of women with an emphasis on women's emancipation.

2.2.5. Sexual Freedom

Liberal contemporary thought has led to societal objectification through which a woman is reduced to a 'thing'. Similarly, it has resulted in a woman's sexual objectification, or sexualization, transforming her into a sexual object. In both instances, the 'thing' is described as being one-dimensional and incapable of autonomous thinking, decision-making, or self-sufficiency. Such unchecked liberal thought draws strength from secularism, which has led to a West courageous enough to defy with impunity all the natural laws of God.

Summarizing humanism, the novelist Dean Koontz in his famous book 'Intensity Novel' writes:

"The sole purpose of our existence is to open oneself to sensation and to satisfy all appetites as they arise and no values can be attached to pure sensation with no consideration of good or bad, right or wrong with no fear but the only fortitude."[2] Especially Marx and Inglis's manifesto, says that law, morality, and religion are all ruses of economic prosperity, under whose guise its many interests are hidden ."[3]

The sexuality and curiosity of young people in the West have led to a wide range of terms, such as straight, gay, bisexual, and other. Today in the West, homosexuality is being promoted as an ideology, asserting the natural sexual attraction between men and men and women and women. If we don't treat these evils with contempt in our society, which is based on individual rights and freedoms, morality may be lost in conservative societies as well.

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[1] https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-22270363
[2] Koontz, Dan, "*Intensity* "Novel, (Headline UK, 1995), 142.
[3] Marx and Inglis's Manifesto, selected works, 667.

2.2.6. Modernism and Modernity

While modernity and modernism seem to be similar, there are subtle contrasts between the two. Modernism sometimes demonstrates its antipathy to modernity, as it is a reflexive reaction of society to all of modernity's movements. Modernity is a historical epoch marked by three distinct phases: the rise of capitalism, industrialization, and finally the labour-divided modern world. Modernism is characterised by the development and use of new technologies capable of improving people's quality of life. Modernity is a chronological epoch, while modernism is a term that refers to the artistic, cultural, and social advancements linked to the emergence of the modern world.

Modernism embraced class, gender, and the quest for knowledge, as well as the era's senselessness and alienation. The movement addressed the apparent shift in human nature, and it welcomed disruption and rejection to transcend the simple. Since gender problems have always been a subject of discussion in society and literature, gender has inevitably become a significant emphasis of the modernist movement. Women, their intellect, and their judgement have traditionally been looked down upon in a male-dominated culture. Females had been viewed and treated as secondary to males in their lives, rather than as distinct people or spiritual beings; in literature, they were portrayed as womanly, weak, and obedient. However, modernity did not bring about a viable moral system and was followed by postmodernism, which is believed to have begun in 1980. These are the conditions and crises resulting from the social, economic, moral, and mental transformation of modern society on a very weak and unstable basis.[1]

Modernism reflects the aspiration to liberate humanity from the bonds of religion. The modern man is considered self-sufficient in direction, indifferent to external means, and genuinely capable of making his own decisions without any external source of knowledge, guidance, or direction from external sources. Modernity recognises the birth of real man after the philosophy of the Enlightenment. A modern man is considered a truly knowledgeable person, who is enlightened by his light because he has denied the age of ignorance and rebelled against religion. The Renaissance is the way of life for oneself, illuminated by their own light, their own guidance for decision-making. "Enlightenment" and "modernity" are the perfect names for a person's self-sufficiency, perfectionism, self-reliance, independence, and freedom. Modern man says that rationality is universal and

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[1] David, Lyon, *Postmodernity,* (Open University Press, Buckingham, 1994), 7.

that morality, which is also universal, can be used as a model for universal values based on rationality.

Feminism is postmodernism's most vibrant face. Postmodernism has constituted a society in which all kinds of ideas and concepts are equally important, and no one needs to deny the views of others. Post-modernism unanimously believes that concepts and values are equally important, so they believe in each other.

In the absence of understanding of the real concept of modernism, women are turning away from religion, in their quest for modernization. To stimulate these volatile ideas, feminist movements are bent upon eliminating the remnants of humanity and morality from society, with severe consequences for the destruction and devastation of social systems, sexual lawlessness, and various other forms of crime. We, in Pakistan, are victims of the confusion between modernism and modernity, therefore falling into the trap of modernity, drifting away from our own traditions and values in the quest for modernism.

2.2.7 Islamophobia

According to American author Nathan Lane, "Islamophobia has emerged in the United States as a multi-million-dollar industry with the political and economic interests of the United States, Britain, and Israel." Islamophobia is a combination of the word "Islam" and the Greek word "phobia." This, according to Cambridge Dictionary, means

"Unreasonable dislike or fear of, and prejudice against, Muslims or Islam."[1] The definition used by Gallup in their survey of Islamophobia in the United States mentions,

"An exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life."[2]

The German government also tried to create laws that would disallow any religious symbols, contrary to their claims that the minorities of this country had complete freedom because the Muslims were prohibited from following their traditions or values.

'Wearing less' is synonymous with modernity, and 'wearing more' is considered backward in the West. The Westerners frequently objected to the dress of Muslim woman, especially her veil and *ḥijāb*. France is among the leading Western nations, who are the biggest opponents of the right to wear proper hijab by a Muslim woman because their present culture has no room for it and their way of living does not accept it. They insist

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[1] *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press.
[2] https://news.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx

the world follow and as they deemed appropriate. They wanted the woman of every society to resemble a European woman. The logic behind the ban has utterly failed in the context of COVID-19, as reported by a newspaper:

"In 2010, France passed a law prohibiting people from wearing clothing in public that covers their faces. And although many blasted the law as Islamophobic, the "burqa ban" remains in place today, punishable by a fine and a citizenship course. But as the country begins to emerge from a lockdown, wearing masks is mandatory in public places such as schools and on public transport."[1]

The above attitudes reflected the duplicity as banning *niqāb* (covering the face) or *ḥijāb* (covering the head) was to encourage women, to be fashionable, fully client-oriented, equipped to attract the eyes of all men, in an environment of free mixing of genders. The trend of wearing less and criticizing those wearing *niqāb* (covering the face) or *ḥijāb* (covering the head) is visible in commercial and corporate sectors in Pakistan as well with obvious connotations.

2.2.8 Revivalism

Modern Muslim thought developed with the colonial expansion of Europe. Starting in the eighteenth century and increasing in the nineteenth century, the Muslim world suffered the brunt of this expansion. The Ottoman Caliphate and the Iranian Qajar dynasty both lost territory and were forced to sign humiliating "capitulation" treaties that granted European extraterritoriality and monopolistic powers. Other Muslim countries have been entirely overrun, extending from West Africa to Southeast Asia. Europe had almost absorbed the whole Muslim world by the early twentieth century.[2]

The modernist intellectuals emerged in this period, and saw themselves as genuine bearers of Muslim tradition. Modern Muslim thinking drew inspiration from elements of the past that it saw as predecessors to modernity. Modern groups, in particular, portrayed their goals as the restoration of the lost dignity and grandeur of Islam.

The revival theme—alternatively referred to as rebirth, renewal, and reform—pervades much of contemporary Islamic thinking. "There is no doubt that in the present age distress, misfortunate, and weakness besiege all classes of Muslims from every side,[3]" wrote Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Iran, 1838–1897), arguably the most prominent

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[1] https://www.npr.org/2020/04/28/847433454/from-niqab-to-n95.

[2] Encyclopedias almanacs transcripts and maps

[3] Afghani, Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani.* Translated by Nikki R. Keddie. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

modernist Muslim activist. The Muslim world is anticipating a "sage and renewer" to "reform the Muslims' minds and souls, resist the unforeseeable corruption, and re-educate them in virtue. Perhaps with that proper instruction, they will revert to their previous happy state. This happy state occurred throughout the early years of Islam, according to Muhammad Abduh (Egypt, 1849–1905), Afghani's famous pupil and collaborator. According to Abduh, confusion may be resolved only by reverting to Islam's "fundamental essence, as interpreted according to the understanding of those among whom it was sent down [from heaven] and to the way they put it into practice"[1]. "Truly, we are in desperate need of renewal and renewers"[2] said Rashid Rida, Abduh's most famous pupil and collaborator."[3]

For many years, the idea of ijtihad, which comes from an Arabic word that means "effort" or "struggle," was limited to a very technical definition: it was the intellectual effort of educated Islamic scholars to come to legal decisions on issues that were not covered in the holy texts. The nineteenth-century modernist Muslim movement took the phrase as a rallying cry, expanding its meaning to include the more broad duty of "rational interpretation," which they said was obligatory on all educated Muslims. Such examples were universalized by modern Islamic rationality. Unlike premodern thinking, which restricted the use of ijtihad to trained experts, modernists believe that all Muslims—or, in some theories, all educated Muslims—are capable of logical interpretation. This theme has been taken up by contemporary Muslim female scholars, as discussed in the subsequent section.[4]

Contemporary revivalism has positioned itself as an ideology on a level with other modern ideologies (though preferable to them, according to its supporters) in a manner that premodern revivalism did not. The revivalist slogans such as "Neither East (that is, communism) nor West" and "Islam is the Best" positioned Islamic revival in the arena of global ideological disputes. Many revivalists embraced various strands of contemporary thought, including those described in the following sections. The urge for Muslim identity has been revived in Muslim women, who in the face of Islamophobia are eager to dress up in a traditional manner. Similarly, the Muslim women in Pakistan, wearing Western

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[1] Abduh, Muhammad. *The Theology of Unity (Risalat al-tawhid).* Translated by Ishaq Masaᵓad and Kenneth Cragg, (Allen & Unwin, London) 1966.
[2] Kurzman, Charles, et al., eds. *Modernist Islam, circa 1840–1940: A Source-Book.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
[3] ibid
[4] Encyclopedias, Almanacs Transcripts and Maps.

dresses, are maintaining their Muslim women's outlook in universities, workplaces, and social gatherings.

2.3   Feminism as the Predominant Contemporary Thought

Feminism emerged in the western environment where the above discussed trends drove thought. Therefore, these trends form the building blocks for feminism and are reflected through the objectives of the movement being influenced by these trends. The following diagram depicts the feminism pyramid, in which secularism, humanism, individualism, liberalism, materialism, and modernity served as the foundation for feminism as the dominant thought on women, while revivalism and Islamophobia aided in the development of a narrative resembling feminism in the Muslim world as well.

Figure :1
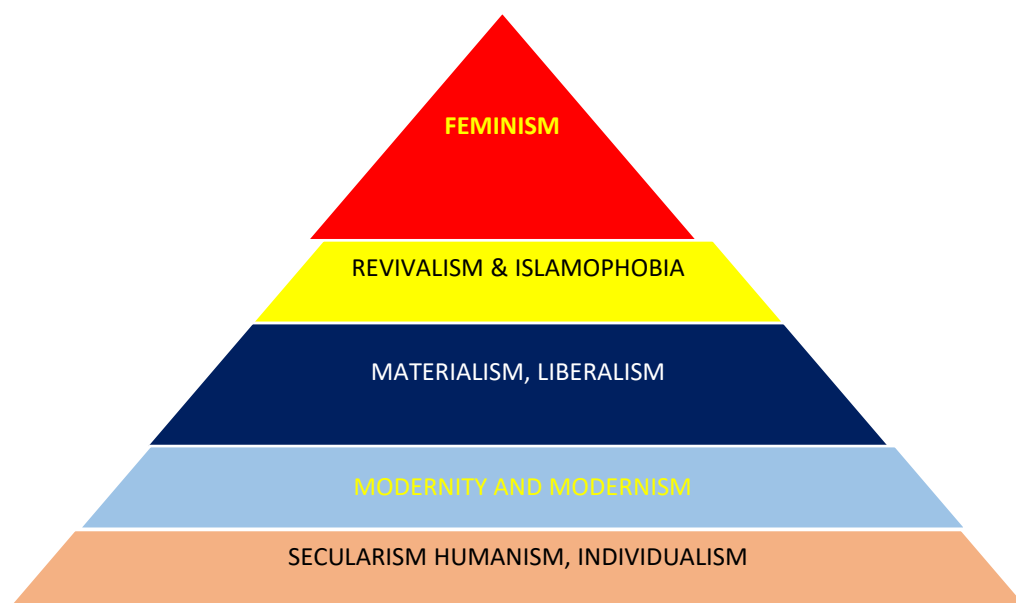
As discussed in an earlier section, the trends in the thinking of the West shaped their thoughts in the 14th and early 15th centuries. The first French feminist philosopher, Christine de Pisan, dared to challenge the usual attitudes towards women with a courageous call for the education of women. Until the sixteenth century, Western women were considered subservient to men in all relationships. It was men who were giving their opinions about women. They could not retain the property on their behalf. A wife brought

a dowry to her husband to compensate for her food and housing. Women had no legal right to claim their children.

The baton was passed on to *Laura Cereta*, in the 15th century, who published "*Epistolae familiars,*" a collection of correspondence dealing with an array of women's grievances, from denial of the rights of education and marital tyranny to women's clothing.[1] At the beginning of the 17th century, Mary Ward founded the 'Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary', and its devotees played a role in providing free education to girls. In the mid-17th century, women preachers also had little space in the religious milieu as well. Female writers began to highlight and draw inspiration from strong women from classical mythology, history, religion, and politics. In particular, women started to compete professionally with males in the late 17th century, particularly in the literary field. The early modern period may be termed as a period of women's social, cultural, and literary progression.[2]

The term 'freedom' came into use in the eighteenth century, when European intelligentsia raised their voices against society's rights of individuals and chanted for the liberty of an individual. The architects of the slogan objected to the system of oppression entering a new system. These ideas led to the revolution in France, where the individual won freedom and men and women got social rights. In the Industrial Revolution, when women had to leave their homes in the eighteenth century, 'beautiful' slogans were needed to justify the migration from villages to cities. In that background, 'gender equality' proved to be the most popular slogan. But the Enlightenment movement and humanism also gave women a secondary place and did not let them go up. Working-class women were more concerned with lower wages, working hours, and protection legislation than with the right to vote or women's property rights, so they preferred to join the trade union movement rather than the feminists' ranks. Before the "Enlightenment" movement, women were not recognised as 'useful' people in the West. Both Hegel and Fried did not comment on the woman with a great deal of positive disposition. Some have clearly described the woman as a simple, silly, flawed person. In their view, a woman cannot be called a complete human being. On this basis, women did not even have the right to vote, and thus they were asking for too much liberty, equality, and natural rights to be applied to both genders. In the light of the modernist philosophy of the Enlightenment movement, the second major

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[1] *Encyclopaedia of Britannica* (1488; "Personal Letters"; Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist)
[2] Howalter, Elaine, *The Female Tradition In A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing,* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1977), 3-36

'gift' given to Western society is in the realm of gender equality. It would be interesting to note that this movement was initiated not by women but by men.[1]

Britain's Jeremy Bentham is probably one of the first thinkers to have given the slogan of equality. One of the brightest and most beloved slogans of enlightenment was,

"Men [all men and women] are born and remain free, and equal in respect of rights."[2]

This means that he can adopt all sorts of thoughts and actions, and there can be no supernatural entity to bind him. Before giving the slogan of complete freedom to the women's movement, it was considered appropriate to give another slogan in the first phase that women and men are equal.[3]

When women were forced to go out to work because of a shortage of male labor in the factories; a new order was introduced to the new world. It caused her to fight for her rights. The first woman, who spoke for women's rights in her book was Mary Wollstonecraft, who is mentioned in the Encyclopedia of Britannica as:

"The first Feminist manifesto was Mary Wollstonecraft's vindication of the rights of women."[4]

This book was unable to make any remarkable impression on society. However, the next book that found a place in the British academic curriculum, was John Stuart Mill's book. According to the Encyclopedia of Britannica:

"The book that became as it were the official text of the feminist movement in England was John Stuart Mill's subjection of Women, published two generations later in 1869."[5]

Thus, the first two periods were related to the struggle for women's basic rights, but the third phase, which reached the contemporary, has turned this movement of feminism into a feminist movement. While women got the right to vote in the early 20th century in most European countries, it was not granted until 1979 in Switzerland.[6] The

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[1] Berges, S., "Revolutionary Mothers, or Virtue in the Age of Enlightenment", *A Feminist Perspective on Virtue Ethics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Last accessed on 20 April 2022, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137026644_5

[2] Bentham, Jeremy*, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, (Oxford University Press, 1998).

[3] Commission for European Communities, 1991, "*The Women in French Revolution"*, 10

[4] *Encyclopaedia of Britannica,* (1768) V:30, 912

[5] ibid

[6] Toke, S. Aidt and Bianca Dallal*, "Female Voting Power: The Contribution of Women's Suffrage to the Growth of Social Spending in Western Europe (1869-1960), Public Choice Vol. 134, No. 3/4 (Mar., 2008), 391-417

expression of the struggle for women's rights has attained the hatred against men and can be traced to the agenda of the world conferences that are organized on behalf of women's rights movements in the fourth wave associated with social media.

In 1985, a book by Weitzman was published under the title The Divorce Revolution. The book's title is enough to suggest that divorce is not a bad thing, but rather a revolutionary step. It was argued that the ex-husband's income increased by 42% after the divorce.[1] Gloria Stein quotes "The family is the basic cell of government: it is where we are trained to believe that we are human beings or that we are chattel, it is where we are trained to see the sex and race divisions and become callous to injustice even if it is done to ourselves, to accept as biological a full system of authoritarian government."[2] To give complete liberty to women, the thought was shaped that women own their bodies, and to control men, it is necessary to use their bodies. Gloria, who was herself involved in the feminist caravan, eventually concluded that the attacks on the traditional structure of the American family were a horrible evil face of the movement, and instead of independence, we needed to work for interdependence now. [3]

A radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson wrote in her foundational piece 'Radical Feminism:

"The first dichotomous division of this mass [mankind] is said to have been on the grounds of sex: male and female … it was because half the human race bears the burden of the reproductive process and because man, the 'rational' animal, had the wit to take advantage of that, that the child bearers, or the 'beasts of burden,' were corralled into a political class: equivocating the biologically contingent burden into a political (or necessary) penalty, thereby modifying these individuals' definition from the human to the functional, or animal."[4]

Others argue that this dissent was misused to justify the unequal treatment of women. So, we must put an end to the conflict both theoretically and practically to secure

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[1] Weitzman, Lenore J., The Divorce Revolution, (The Free Press N. Y. 1985)
[2] Selected Gloria Steinem Quotations, available at https://www.thoughtco.com/gloria-steinem-quotes-3525390, last accessed on 03 March 2022.
[3] A Speech by Gloria Steinem, *"Leaps of Consciousness"*, available at https://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/genwom/leaps.html, Last accessed on 08 August 2021.
[4] Atkinson, Ti-Grace, *"Radical Feminism" In Crow*, Barbara A. (ed.). *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader, (*New York: New York University Press, 2000), 82-89

a legitimate place in society and humanism. An objective understanding of Western society makes it possible to put an end to natural differences such as optics and practice. [1]

The West had to take a few 'practical' steps to overcome these differences, but they needed a philosophy or theory to justify these actions. Consequently, Queer Theory was introduced in the 1990s, to show that the sexual inclination to the opposite sex is not a natural emotion, but merely the natural sensation and appetite of a human being that is being produced by machines to evoke these senses in the human body.

"Queer theory's origin is hard to clearly define, since it came from multiple critical and cultural contexts, including feminism, post-structuralism theory, radical movements of people of color, the gay and lesbian movements, AIDS activism, many sexual subcultural practices such as sadomasochism, and post colonialism. The theory questioned the convention of nature, to satisfy the desire by the opposite sex, suggesting that homosexuality may be adopted for that purpose."[2]

While legislation is being made in most of the countries in the Western world to establish an ideologically pragmatic society, the third wave of feminism experienced significant revolutionary changes in women's roles, status, and sexual attitudes. Family status is not the same as it was a decade ago, because the status quo could not be maintained. The response and protest against discrimination against women has been widespread. The question of morality was no longer a question; it was a new narrative under the liberal ideology of postmodernism, where everything seemed just. The greatest gifts of the postmodern movement are subjectivity and relativity, in which each theory and perspective is deemed to be valid. As one postmodern thinker says, we can believe anything; that is, we believe in nothing. So, the women raised their voices against the institution of marriage as a tool to enslave women. It is through marriage, birth, and the education of children that women become "slaves" to men. This has encouraged the birth and nurturing of illegitimate children. Dean Koontz addresses an illegitimate offspring, saying that you should be happy that you are an illegitimate child because that means that you are free. He wrote,

"Illicit children do not have enough relatives that suck their spirits like lice."[3]

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[1] Parker, Imogen, "*Western Ideals of Gender Equality: Contemporary Middle Eastern Women*" E-International Relations Available at: file:///Users/EDFMPAC/Desktop/Western-Ideals-of-Gender-Equality-Contemporary-Middle-Eastern-Women.pdf
[2] Jagose, A., "*Queer theory: An introduction*". (New York: NYU Press, 1996).
[3] Koontz, *Intensity*, 382.

This could have been something in the first phase, leading to thinking about strategies concerning getting rid of the children. Firestone wrote in his book 'The Dialectics of Sex' that feminists find the idea that unequal attitudes toward women are born because of their ability to produce a child. This forces her to live under male control. The only way to obtain gender equality is to use a test tube baby so that science and technology can create "equality" between female and male. In her opinion, the institution of marriage and family was a "masculine conspiracy" aimed at subjugating a woman.[1]

The war against this conspiracy could have been won, if the woman could have completely rejected marital boundaries to become a wife and mother and raise a slogan, as Margaret Sanger said,

"No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother. It was a matter of satisfaction for men. Both men and women became happy and satisfied with their assumptions of the concept."[2]

The above confusion among feminism and feminist thought is so aptly described by Imelda,

"On one hand, calls for liberation from sexual repression seemed perfectly compatible with women's liberation and the demand that women should have control over their own reproductive capacities. However, women soon discovered that participating in the heretofore forbidden fruits of sexual freedom revealed many conceptual problems with sexuality itself. Female sexual desire had been defined and categorized by men; the terms themselves required redefinition to cleanse them of patriarchal connotations."[3]

The marriage became first casualty as a celebrated feminist author Cronin was cited for Women's Day 2017,

"Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking this institution," Cronin said. "Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage."[4]

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[1] Firestone, Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution,* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, (2003) [1970].

[2] Engelman, Peter C., and Margaret Sanger, *Encyclopaedia of Leadership*, Volume 4, George R. Goethals, et al (eds), SAGE, (2004) 1382.

[3] Whelehan, Imelda, "Sites of Fissure: Putting the Politics of the Personal to the Test" In *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to "Post-Feminism,"*. Edinburgh University Press, 1995) 147–76 last accessed on 03 May 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrnp0.11.

[4] McGhee, Kaylee, *New wave feminists' empowerment alienates women,* (Collegian, March 30, 2017).

Beti Freudian, the founder of the National Organization for Women, calls the "institution of marriage a comfortable concentration camp that women should get rid of."[1]

As a result, 'big philosophies' emerged to encourage married women to seek divorce. In his famous book, Mel Crant Zeller wrote, using heart-warming literary sentences, that divorced parents have a better chance at a relatively more liberal and confident life, so saying goodbye to getting married may be the best thing in your life.[2] Similarly, economic thinkers have researched and proven how the income of the parties has increased even after divorce and they live a relatively better life.[3]

The fourth wave of feminism, which began around 2012 in the era of technology and social media, refers to a resurgence of interest in feminism. According to feminist historian Prudence Chamberlain, the fourth wave is focused on women's rights and the fight against sexual harassment and violence against women. Its essence, she writes, "is incredulity that certain attitudes can still exist."[4]

It is established from the above discourse that feminism is an intellectual obligation as well as a political movement committed to attaining gender equality and the eradication of all forms of sexism. The objectives of the fourth wave of feminism are indicative of the negative fallout of the earlier quest of liberal feminist thought, exposing women to all kinds of social ills.

Summing up it can be concluded that a wide range of feminist theories exist in the West. All examine the experiences of gender-based oppression, the causes of this oppression, and the possible solutions to the perceived problem of gender inequality. Liberal feminism claims that women's oppression stems from their inability to access legal, social, political, and economic institutions. Women's equal legal rights and involvement in public education, politics, and jobs are at the heart of their solution. Fundamental feminism holds that the subjugation of women begins with their sexuality. They claim that women's bodies are controlled by violence, objectification, and societal institutions like medicine and religion. Conservative feminists consider sexism the oldest and most persistent form of oppression and believe it must be ended by abolishing patriarchy and heterosexual marriage as a social need. To achieve this, women would have

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[1] Chapin, Bernard, *Women: Theory and Practice*, (iuniverse, 2007), 161.

[2] Krantzler, Mel, *Creative Divorce,* (e-Reads.com, 2002).

[3] Arendell, Terry J. "Women and the Economics of Divorce in the Contemporary United States." *Signs* 13, no. 1 (1987): 121–35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174030.

[4] Chamberlain, Prudence, *The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality* (Cham: Springer, 2017) 115. ISBN 978-3-319-53682-8.

more autonomy over their bodies, including the ability to have children, modify their sexuality, and become mothers. Marxist and Socialist Feminists argue that capitalism is to blame for gender inequality. They claim that capitalists and individual males exploit women's unpaid reproductive work inside the home. Female workers are frequently exploited as low-wage labour reserves. Marxist feminists argue that patriarchy is a product of capitalism and will be abolished as soon as capitalism ceases to exist. Anti-feminists argue that the two systems of oppression, capitalism, and patriarchy, are distinct. They ask for a reorganisation of family relationships via the redistribution of obligations and adjustments to the allocation of educational, medical, economic, and political resources. Psychoanalytic feminism uses Freudian ideas to address gender injustice. Psychoanalysis has a male-bias problem, and this movement aims to remedy that by developing ideas that examine how women relate to their emotions, bodies, and sexuality. Women's psyches are shaped by their early childhood experiences, according to theories. Male dominance is symbolised by phallus in Western society, according to the critics. We need an androgynous society as a solution, which may be achieved via the practice of dual parenting. The feminist ideologies, say women of colour, ignore other types of oppression that occur side by side with white supremacy. Black, Chicana, multiracial, and third-world feminisms are all represented in this viewpoint. They combine studies of gender oppression with studies of racial, economic, and sexual inequalities. They demonstrate how a matrix of dominance is constructed and intersects to generate distinct types of oppression. They argue for cures that concentrate on the long-term survival of whole populations, rather than just women's health. Western colonialism is highlighted in postcolonial feminism as an example of interconnectedness. Modernization and economic restructuring have resulted in sexism, which involves the exploitation of women as employees and sexual beings. As mothers in their communities, they may utilise their position to fight for the rights of young girls to education, good healthcare, and a healthy environment. Instead of looking for a single explanation or solution to the problem of gender inequality, postmodern feminists choose to look for ways to reduce it. Heteronormativity (the belief that heterosexuality is "natural") and the undifferentiated category of "woman" are among the many things they question as inevitable and permanent aspects of gender. Gender inequity is said to be perpetuated via performativity, the repetition of gendered identity and presentation. As a response to gender inequity, they propose queering, combining gendered features, and challenging what is considered "normal" in terms of gender and sexuality. Three types of feminism, with specific concepts

and standards for ensuring women's rights, are briefly described below before evaluating their impact on women in the West:

Liberal feminism: It is an approach to achieving gender equality between males and females. It emphasizes an individual's capacity to alter prejudiced practices and discriminatory behaviors directed towards women. It is often considered the most influential subset of feminism. It operates inside the social structure to integrate women. The main focus is on women's equal rights before the law, their education and career options, changes to marriage rules, property rights, unfair divorce, equal pay for equal work, protection from rape and domestic violence, and freedom from all things that make people less human.[1]

Radical Feminism: Radical feminism is a movement that argues that to eliminate sexism from society, the idea of gender must be abolished. It was established in the late 1960s. It refutes liberal assertions that women's subjugation is the result of a lack of political and civic rights. It is a feminist viewpoint that stresses patriarchy as the foundation of the power structure and asserts that a society dominated by male dominance oppresses women. By challenging traditional gender norms and women's subjugation, radical feminism seeks to destabilize and destroy patriarchy. Additionally, it promotes a fundamental reorganization of society.[2]

Socialist Feminism: Socialist feminism, often known as Marxist or Materialist feminism, is a major school of feminist thought. It argues for capitalism's elimination via socialist economic reformation. Socialist feminists see gender inequalities as intrinsic to capitalism, which reaps huge advantages from women's unpaid household labour and underpaid employment in the workforce. According to socialist feminism, capitalism promotes and perpetuates sexism, since men now control power and money. They are more willing to share their power and money with other men, which results in women having fewer opportunities and resources.[3]

Such feminist thoughts seem to prepare young women to have sexual experiences and to develop such abilities as to make them feel that they are regaining control over their previously lost bodies, thus 'regaining control'. Thus, the goals of the feminist movement have gone beyond rights and responsibilities, through the blessings of liberalism, to the

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[1] http :// www.sociology.org.uk 2005.

[2] Ghorfati, Amina, *Feminism and its Impact On woman in the Modern Society,* (University of Tlemcen Faculty of Letters And Languages, 2014/15).

[3] Armstrong, Elisabeth, "Marxist and Socialist Feminism" (Study of Women and Gender: Faculty Publications, Smith College, Northampton, MA, 2020). https://scholarworks.smith.edu/swg_facpubs/15

logical conclusion that there are no enduring values. The role of women in this process leads to the thought of the enslavement of women, where the concept of slavery will come to the forefront.

It has been established that after the separation from men, children, and families in the name of feminism, the next step is seen as complete freedom from men, so the concept of marriage with a woman was highlighted as slavery. The woman desired to be freed by artificial insemination for sexual gratification, to save someone from the hassle of marriage and childbearing etc. In the West, the first step was taken with great care, but then it accelerated the process of degradation of the social system in society, thus destroying family values. The objective of feminism is to combat the injustices encountered by women in everyday life, hence it strives towards the equality of women in all parts of life.

2.4. Encounter of Muslim Women with Contemporary Thought

Islamic and Western perspectives are dominant in modern world culture. One claims historical grandeur and divinity, while the other proclaims itself to be the world's greatest civilization. Each has a distinct position based on their contributions, with one serving as the social and technological side of mankind and the other as the religious and moral side. The critical point is that both ideas have divergent perspectives because of their disparate fundamental resources. Resultantly, one is said to be divine, while the other is referred to as secular. Though each made unique contributions, these sometimes contradicted each other on specific topics. Women's rights, independence, and feminism are all flashpoints in the contemporary world. Women are unquestionably the most vital component of human society and have the most essential and significant position in both Muslim and Western thinking. However, both thoughts approach things in completely different ways. For instance, Islam regards women as the most important members of society and gives them special responsibilities, but also recognises males as having distinct areas of work and contributions towards their security. In modern thinking, on the other hand, women are free to pursue any endeavour in any field without limits or restrictions. In other words, they want full liberty and equal opportunity in all spheres of life, which may be impossible to achieve even in the modern West. While this way of life seems to be more beautiful and glamorous for women, it is detrimental to them from an Islamic perspective. Complete gender equality and sexual radicalism are causing significant problems and damage to both sexes, but particularly to women. Mankind is finding it

taxing to tolerate this extreme version of feminist thought. As a result, contemporary society bears the weight of the negative impact of feminist thought. After establishing itself in the West, feminist thought is now expanding across the globe. It influences a woman's position and significance. Not only does Western thought promote such movements, but it also reflects an image of mankind based on secularism and materialism, further undermining human beings' divine objectives in life. In recent years, feminist thought in Pakistan has gotten a lot of attention. In this developing situation, it is critical to analyse the effect of radical feminist thought on society's socio-religious norms. Here in this section, the genesis of feminist thought in Muslim societies in general and in Pakistan in particular will be explored to set the stage for further probe into the challenges posed by contemporary feminist thought to Muslim women in Pakistan.

2.4.1. Development of Contemporary Thought in Muslim Societies

Even though anti-Islamic voices recognise the harm feminist ideology has done to society, they exploit the subject of women's rights in Islam to discredit the religion or to promote liberal, atheistic ideologies and worldviews at its expense. This anti-woman accusation levelled against Islam, especially in the post 9/11 period, has aided in the deepening and intensification of the rising wave of Islamophobia, particularly in Western Muslim-majority nations. However, for scholars who are familiar with the situation of women in Islam, this incident leaves them puzzled and perplexed, owing to the peculiarity of the accusation levelled against Islam regarding gender issues. As a result, Muslim intellectuals have portrayed Islam as a religion of justice that promotes full gender equality. The West has emphasised the suffering of women in Islam to portray a picture of a downtrodden individual. The opportunity is provided by the deficiencies of Muslim cultures, where discussions about women's rights in Islam do not translate into a genuine Muslim society as envisioned and implemented fourteen centuries ago. As a result, the dispute continues as described by a Muslim writer,

"Islam is detrimental to women. Women's dress, forced marriage, polygamy, beating, female genital mutilation, and inheritance are just some of the topics used as 'proof'. From the mirror perspective, wife-beating, sexually transmitted diseases, juvenile delinquency, divorce/illegitimacy/abortion rates, teenage pregnancy, the sexualization of

women and children, nudity, and size zero are just some of the topics used to 'prove' that western liberalism and modernity are intrinsically detrimental to Islam and women.*"[1]*

Muslim scholars use the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* to justify their views, as well as the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ kind and exemplary treatment of women. As a result, there has been a surge in Islamic literature addressing diverse gender issues from an Islamic perspective. Muslim women, on the other hand, have been sidelined and under-represented in this intellectual pursuit compared to their secular counterparts. In the vast majority of cases, Muslim men speak for Muslim women, denying them their right to self-representation and rendering the intellectual effort of presenting Islam's position on the women's issue pointless. As a result, Muslim female intellectuals have gained fame, launching a conversation on women's rights in Islam and participating in the debate on feminism and women's rights. This discussion continues in the Muslim world.

Badran Margot, a historian, and scholar, asserted that Muslim feminist techniques are rooted in the third wave of feminism's history of inclusiveness, in which they are accepted under the banner of 'feminism'. Feminism and colonialism coexisted in the Middle East throughout the nineteenth century. Islamic feminism developed in large part because of modernism and modernity, with women gaining access to literacy and disseminating their work through the newly developing press.[2]

In the same context, Jennifer S. King in her book 'Islamic Feminism Vs. Secular Feminism' elaborates that the wave of feminism came to Muslim women with improved literacy and acquisition of knowledge of religion and her awakening to the original message of Islam and its interpretive process.[3] The concept came in fact in the wake of globalization but leading to the realization that Islam had already embraced feminism. Muslim feminists are taking a cue from it and emphasizing the reinterpretation of *Qur'ān*, not to sound anti-Islamic to avoid criticism of the stigma associated with feminism i.e., rejection of traditional values. They are also mindful of the blame for importing Western values into Muslim societies. Qasim Amin (1865-1908) in the early 20th century had raised the slogan of 'new woman' laying the foundations of Muslim feminism.[4] He proposed that veiling, polygamy, and divorce were major issues of Muslim women. He

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[1] Yafai, Faisal al, *Women, Islam and Western Liberalism* , (Institute for the Study of Civil Society London, 2010).

[2] Badran, Margot, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and religious convergences*.

[3] King, Jennifer S., *Islamic Feminism Vs. Western Feminism: Analyzing a Conceptual Conflict*, (Central Connecticut State University, 2003).

[4] Ellen, McLarney, 'Reviving Qasim Amin, Redeeming Women's Liberation' *Part III- From Neo-Liberalism to the "Arab Spring" and Beyond,* (Duke University, 2018).

expressed this thought being intellectually overwhelmed by western superiority in these words,

"Europe is ahead of us in every way, and although it is comforting to think that while they are materially superior to us, we are morally better but that is not true. The Europeans are morally more advanced, and all classes possess the social virtues…. It is useless to hope to adopt the science of Europe without its morals; the two things are indissolubly connected, and we must therefore be prepared for the change in every aspect of our life."[1]

He, in his book "The New Woman" portrayed a Muslim woman in the worst form,

"Man is the absolute master and woman the slave. She is the object of his sensual pleasures, a toy as it were with which he plays whenever and however he pleases. Knowledge is his, ignorance hers. The firmament and the light are his; darkness and the dungeon are hers. His is to command and hers is to blindly obey. His is everything that is, and she is an insignificant part of that everything."[2]

Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Margot Badran are some of the famous names being projected in the context of Muslim feminism, however, the latter does not use the term as described by a Muslim writer:

"Epistemologically, Islamic feminism can be classified according to two main categories that are well delineated and developed, and two that are less systematic. The first consists of works that focus on the Qur'ān and its exegetical tradition, by Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and others. The second category of work focuses on critical engagements with Islamic fiqh or jurisprudence and is spearheaded by Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Kecia Ali."[3]

Asma Barlas, a Pakistani by origin, has been very vocal in her book about the traditional interpretation of the Qur'ān. She is critical of those, who, according to her, read patriarchy and inequality in the Qur'ān to justify prevalent religious and sociocultural structures in Muslim societies. She professes to reread the Qur'ān to understand its position on several issues and rejects the teachings in support of patriarchy. Moreover, Barlas has asserted that the Qur'ān asserts complete equality of the genders, which advances her

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[1] Hourani, Albert, *Arabic Thoughts in the Liberal Age,* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 168.

[2] Jameelah, Maryam, *Islam and the Muslim Women Today*, (Nashryat Lahore, 1976).

[3] Al-Sharmani, Mulki, Islamic Feminism Transnational and national reflections, *Approaching Religion •* Vol. 4, No. 2 December 2014.

theory of gender equality from the Qur'ānic teachings.[1] She expressed her aversion to the term 'Islamic Feminism' in these words:

"I am uncomfortable with the term 'Islamic feminism' because she rejects feminism as an intellectual tradition that is inescapably entangled with the history of colonialism and the othering of non-western Muslim women."[2]

Another feminist scholar highlighted Barlas's desire to apply ijtihad in women's context,

"Barlas joins other modern Muslim women scholars and does not support what is done by the traditionally known scholars. Barlas emphasized the importance of applying ijtihad (independent thinking) but reject the notion that this role in the Islamic tradition is confined to religious scholars who meet very specific criteria in religious knowledge and interpretive skills."[3]

Asma Barlas, takes an unconventional view of various issues, e.g., on veil and modesty, thus, she wrote,

"Qur'ān describes modesty of dress rather sparingly as the covering of private parts. The only difference is that whereas it does not refer to men's apparel and ''adornments,'' it does to women. However, it is important to be clear, third, that the function of the *khumūr* (shawl) is to cover the bosom, not the face; this is evident not only from the nature of the garment itself but also from the *Āyah* which, in so many words, refers to the bosom and private parts. Yet, Muslim commentators overlook that fact and focus instead on words like ''adornment,'' which the Qur'ān does not define but which they define so broadly as to include even the face and hair."[4]

Barlas takes an aggressive stance against *Sharī'ah*'s advocates, thus writes,

"There is no reason for Muslims to ''concede authority . . . to the ulama and the proponents of Sharia. In fact, by doing so, secularist intellectuals are conceding defeat without a fight. What we need is to confront the *Sharī'ah*'s advocates on their own ground and not to assume that the *Sharī'ah* is Islam."[5]

She expresses her opposition to patriarchy in these words,

"I argue that descriptions of Islam as a religious patriarchy that allegedly has ''God on its side'' confuse the Qur'ān with a specific reading of it, ignoring that all texts,

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[1] Barlas, Asma, *Believing Women in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān* (Austin, TX, University of Texas Press 2002).
[2] Al-Sharmani, *Islamic Feminism Transnational and national reflections, Approaching Religion.*
[3] Barlas, Asma, *Believing Women in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān*
[4] Ibid, 158
[5] Ibid, 75

including the Qur'ān, can be read in multiple modes, including egalitarian ones."[1] "I also define patriarchy more broadly, as a politics of sexual differentiation that privileges males by ''transforming biological sex into politicized gender, which prioritizes the male while making the woman different (unequal), less than."[2]

On gender equality, Barlas' views are similar to western thought,

"I end by discussing the Qur'ān's attitude to sexuality and show that it does not distinguish between men and women based on their sexual identities. In fact, I argue that the Qur'ān assumes that men and women have similar sexual natures and needs and that its precepts about sexual modesty and morality apply equally to both."[3] Further writes, "Not only does the Qur'ān not employ the concept of sexual differences (or sameness) to discriminate against women, but it affirms the principle of the ontic equality of the sexes. This is why, I believe that we can theorize radical sexual equality from the Qur'ān's teachings."[4]

Muslim feminism, according to its critics, was politically unimportant and even harmful. Valentine Moghadam, for example, believes that the fight for gender equality cannot be achieved via religious arguments, but rather through an examination of socioeconomic and political reality. However, Moghadam overlooks the links between the many institutions that govern and influence gender relations and rights in Muslim cultures (e.g. codified laws, cultural norms, prevalent religious discourses as well as socioeconomic policies and conditions). Others oppose Muslim feminism on the grounds that it is founded on fundamental and absolute ideas of religious truth and teachings.[5] However, such critics believe that the purpose of interpretative feminist initiatives that are religious in nature is to seek an accurate interpretation and a consistent religious truth. However, Muslim feminism stresses the significance of textual context and the multidimensionality of the interpretative process, concepts that are inherent in Islamic religious sciences and are represented in the variety of traditional exegetical and juristic interpretations.

It is highlighted that the problems of Muslim women in various regions are different because of the different socio-cultural and economic environments. Hence, the desire to attain the position as granted by religion is natural and fully justified. However,

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[1] Ibid, 5

[2] Ibid, 12

[3] Barlas, Asma, *Believing Women in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān*,25

[4] Ibid, 204

[5] Moghissi, H. (1999). Feminism and Islamic fundamentalism: The limits of postmodern analysis. Iranian Studies , Volume 33 , Issue 3-4 , Summer Fall (2000), 434 – 437.

'feminism' has a secular fragrance and is naturally aversed by religious scholars, who exercise reasonable influence but fail to recognise the divine rights of women.

Amina Wadud, a scholar cum activist came to fame, as she led prayers in USA. Her slogan 'Jihad for Justice' has inspired Muslim women to the limits, as contributed by Kecia Ali,

"I became increasingly convinced that the struggles of women and the struggles of LGBTI people, in Islam and globally, were linked. That in fact, they were flip sides of the same coin, and that patriarchy was the common enemy for defining what is normative as male and heterosexual and everything which is not is somehow lesser."[1]

According to Amina Wadud, religion promotes and develops faith, which in general refers to blind belief. However, this religious stance does not imply that religion lacks a logical basis. *Ijtihad* is the term used in Islam to refer to the application of reason to issues affecting human existence and the development of a religiously inspired consensus interpretation. The core of God's message and will should prevail—practices should develop in response to the sociocultural-historical requirements of the people who live it. If we examine the circumstances fifteen centuries ago, complete gender equality may have been impossible. It was a period when morals and ethics were non-existent in general. Not only did males control women, but also other men, and power triumphed. Islam's core is submission to God's will and upholding high moral standards. In terms of morals and rights, Islam eliminated a large number of pre-Islamic traditions that disadvantaged women. Gender-conscious reading of religious texts, based on historical context and logic, would assist us in enacting the essence of Islam in accordance with contemporary needs.[2]

Wadud wrote on her understanding of gender equality in these words:

"The more research I did into the Qur'ān, unfettered by centuries of historical androcentric reading and Arabo-Islamic cultural predilections, the more affirmed I was that in Islam a female person was intended to be primordially, cosmologically, eschatologically, spiritually, and morally a full human being, equal to all who accepted Allah as Lord, Muhammad ﷺ as a prophet, and Islam as din."[3]

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[1] Ali, Kecia, Juliane Hammer, Laury Silvers, *A jihad for justice honoring the work and life of Amina Wadud*, (Boston University, 2012).

[2] Wadud, Amina, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 1999).

[3] Wadud, Amina, *Qur'ān and Woma*n: *Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press New York, 1999), ix-x.

In Mariam Cooke's words, Islamic feminism, "is not a coherent identity, but rather a contingent, contextually determined strategic self-positioning. Actions, behaviors, pieces of writing that bridge religious and gender issues to create conditions in which justice and freedom may prevail do not translate into a seamless identity." Cooke describes further that "Islamic feminism works in ways that may be emblematic of postcolonial women's jockeying for space and power through the construction and manipulation of apparently incompatible, contradictory identities and positions."[1]

The term Islamic feminism has been used alternative to Muslim feminism. Abdullah in his thesis on Feminism wrote:

"Amina Wadud, a feminist theologian, in her book 'Inside the Gender Jihad' takes her bold thinking forward beyond the boundaries of classical fiqh and *tafsīr* and advocates a new way of understanding the religion with a secular mind. Such writers called themselves Islamic feminists with clear secular undertones."[2]

Contemporary Islamic modernists are generally apologetic about non-Muslim criticism of Islam, particularly about the status of women in Islam; therefore, they support the idea of Muslim feminism as a response to secular thought. Margot Badran expressed her opposition to such an approach and said,

"I see Islamic feminism as quite distinct from Islamic apologetics. Islamic feminism confronts ideas and practices of gender inequality and injustice promoted in the name of Islam, demonstrating from religious sources, foremost, the Qur'ān, that these are not only un-Islamic but anti-Islamic as well. Islamic feminism thus brings into the sharp light of day negative notions and behaviors found in Muslim quarters, or shall we say the 'bad news'. Islamic feminism also brings the 'good news' of demonstrable gender equality and justice within an Islamic framework. Thus, Islamic feminism brings to attention the bad news with the good."[3]

The discussion on women's rights in the West began in the nineteenth century, while the *Qur'ān* has been discussing women's rights since the seventh century. But even after fourteen centuries, unfortunately, the orders of the *Qur'ān* continue to be neglected

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[1] Cooke, Mariam, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature*, (Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2001), 59.
[2] Abdullah, Muhammad, *Postfeminist and Islamic Feminist Discourse: An Analysis of Discursive Practices of Muslim Feminists*, (PhD Thesis NUML, 2012).
[3] ibid

in Muslim societies, thus Western scholars have termed the Muslim women as oppressed folk. The *Qur'ānic* verse of *Sura Nisā*.

ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَآ أَنفَقُواْ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُ[1]

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard."

Women in various Muslim cultures confront a variety of problems, and their attempts to improve their circumstances are widely covered by Muslim feminism. However, their feminist goals and expressions differ according to regional circumstances. As a result, limiting the Muslim feminist movement to a defined list of agenda items would be reductionist. Muslim feminism is both personal and communal. It changes and grows to fit a wide range of experiences and concerns.

Each Muslim country has a unique history. In some nations, the majority of people are rich; in others, they are impoverished. Being a member of a certain social class or religious group compels us to make certain choices. Before labelling individuals oppressed and coming to their rescue, we must comprehend their social and political circumstances. Freedom should be rooted in people's daily lives. In America, a Muslim woman is seen as a person who suffers at the hands of male cruelty because of the Quran's harsh teachings. Muslim feminists, on the other hand, claim that the Quran has no such traditions and that Muslim women are only concerned with men's harsh behaviour toward them. Thus, it is more important to understand and appreciate the variety of dressing options than it is to restrict them. The split over veil acceptability is not limited to Muslims and non-Muslims; even within Muslim circles, there are organisations with divergent views on veiling and its many forms. The veil is more than just a piece of fabric; it has many different symbols that go with it.

To sum up, Muslim feminism relies on *ijtihad*, women-centered Quranic exegeses, gender-egalitarian Islamic principles, and complete equality in all public and private spheres. Muslim feminism is an effort to gender-egalitarian Islam where Islamic modernists, driven by progressive ideology, rely on *ijtihad* and take into consideration

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[1] Qur'ān 4:34

women's perspective in Quranic exegeses to advocate complete equality in the public and private spheres. It is established from the above discourse that Muslim feminism criticises Islamic patriarchy via the historicization and reinterpretation of scriptural sources of authority. On the other hand, secular feminists rule out the idea of feminism and Islam coexisting. Muslim feminism is a relatively young school of thought being developed by a worldwide network of activists working in markedly disparate socio-political contexts. Muslim feminists are interested in a rereading of Islam's founding texts, the Qur'an and Sunnah, to arrive at a type of theological exegesis that supports their feminist perspective. Thus, to female scholars, it is acceptable to talk about the creation of a new Islamic discourse and, more broadly, about religious appropriation. Muslim feminist activists are analysing traditional comments on Islamic texts and coming up with new ways to understand them so that men and women can have the same rights in politics and the economy.

Muslim feminism has not yet received explicit support from contemporary Muslim female scholars, as it may be viewed as a disguised form of Western feminism because of its line of thought. The proponents of re-reading the *Qur'nic* text do not wish to be associated with feminism, as they are well aware that their narrative will be rejected if it is founded on feminism, which is a Western concept. Despite their opposition to Muslim feminism, their efforts may be regarded with contempt as an attempt to legitimise feminist thought through an Islamic interpretation of women's rights or by imbuing secular rights with a religious flavour. In Pakistan's context, the next section discussed the subject in detail.

2.4.2   Evolution of Feminist Thought in Pakistan

The slogan of feminism may be new to Pakistan, but it is not a new thought. The evolution of Indian Muslim women's thought is reflected through an article "School Girls" written by Zafar Jahan Begum, which was published in the first women's Urdu newspaper "*TehzĪb e Niswān*" in 1898 which dilated upon the doubts raised on female education and its contents.[1] In 1954, Begum Raana Liaqat Ali Khan established APWA (All Pakistan Women Association) intending to protect women's rights in health, education, and social and economic contexts. APWA was instrumental in the organisation of the National Women's Guards and the Women's Naval Reserves. They faced opposition from religious circles. They played an important role in the promulgation of family laws in Pakistan,

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[1] Arya, Diwia, *What did Muslim Women want to say 100 years ago*, (BBC New, June 20, 2016).

which made it compulsory for men to seek the permission of the first wife in the case of a second marriage. [2] In 1980, the Women's Action Forum (WAF) was organised by women from the elite class and middle-class educated women.[1] In Zia's military regime, the dress code for working women and the law of evidence had been opposed by liberals and women's organizations. Now, the goals were aimed at giving women more space in the political and economic worlds.[2] Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riaz were the key figures in the organization. It received significant coverage in the international media. Benazir Bhutto advanced on a liberalisation agenda and actions such as women's police stations were taken. Nawaz Sharif, as Prime Minister, advanced Zia's Islamization agenda.[3] Civil society has emerged as a prominent force as part of the international agenda of global governance. They worked on women's empowerment and emancipation. Musharraf's regime played an important role in advancing the women's empowerment agenda with the induction of females into the armed forces in various branches, including fighter pilots. This was followed by his inexplicable concept of 'enlightened moderation', which helped modernists and NGOs to eulogise Western values.

In Pakistan's context, Islamic identity remains central to Muslim women and has been kept alive through the inculcation of the ideology of Pakistan, despite its varying understanding, as explained by a researcher,

"Additionally, religious affiliations are a key factor in formulating Pakistani women's feminist scholarship and activism. There are Pakistani women associated with *Al-Huda* and *Jamat-e-Islami*."[4]

While the other side of the stage is pro-Malala, young Pakistani educated humanist and activist women.[5] Feminist thinking opposes stereotypes of Muslim women as miserable, loveless, and silent victims. Both are classified as female Islamist organizations.

This part of the study attempts to integrate feminist and Islamic thinking in a Pakistani setting. Along with establishing this fusion of secular and Islamic thinking

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[1] Khan, Leena Z., *Women Action Forum (WAF),* Institute of Current World Affairs, (ICWA),The Crane Rogers Foundation, Hanover, New Hapshire, USA.

[2] Shah, Ali Shan Waris, Muhammad, Abdul Basit, *Islamization in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of Zia's Regime,* Vol. I, No. I (2016), 260 – 270, DOI: 10.31703/grr.2016(I-I).20

[3] Weiss, Anita M., *Benazir Bhutto and the Future of Women in Pakistan* : Asian Survey , May, 1990, Vol. 30, No. 5 (May1995), University of California Press, 433-445.

[4] Haagensen, Laena, *Women, Islam, and the state in Pakistan*, Senior Capstone Projects. (2018), 759. https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/759

[5] Sinaga, Mentari Putri Pramanenda, *The ideology of women empowerment in Malala Yousafzai's Speeches: A critical discourse analysis,* The graduate program of English language studies Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, 2018.

philosophically, it substantiates the thesis via depictions of feminist female characters and discursive constructions in the works of Pakistani female authors. Additionally, it analyses the manner in which young women re-orient their femininity in current Anglophone literature, decontextualizing post-feminism in the Pakistani setting as defined by Abdullah:

"Having said that, there is no denying that the social identity of Pakistani female writers cannot be detached from their religious identity, that is, Islamic identity. So, it is important then to observe what values and traditions they inherit and how they are reflected in their works."[1]

Feminist thought, prima fascia, must do something about women's rights, thus finding space in Pakistani society because of the negligence of the Divine laws. The realisation comes as the threat is now knocking at the doors of Pakistani society, where religious scholars, as a reaction, profess the idea of restricting the social activities of women to the obedience of husbands at home and looking after the children. This is in sheer contrast to the teachings of Islam (discussed later). Similarly, in some regions, where tribal and local customs and traditions cause oppression of women, such voices by so-called feminists are bound to be raised, allowing more space for alien thoughts to creep into contemporary Pakistani society. Sexism[2] is the new term that reflects gender-biased and discrimination against women.

The exposure of Pakistani society in general and women to alien thought and knowledge and the flawed application of Islamic values and thought in Pakistan are juxtaposed to identify the space for alien thought to creep into it. If women are aware of their rights in Islam and men respect the principles of Islam, feminist thought has no room to grow. However, if one of the two conditions is missing, the wave cannot be checked. The debate in Pakistan on the eve of the 'woman march' is testimony to the fact that many women with westernised education joined the march without understanding the cause. So, a confused model of so-called Islamic feminists is emerging in countries like Pakistan, where large amounts of funding are targeted at women's emancipation and empowerment by Western-funded NGOs. In her research paper, "Between Islamic Law and Feminism," Ziba Mir-Hosseini found that it is easy for Western ideas to spread into Muslim societies when there are gaps in enforcement.[3]

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[1] Abdullah, Muhammad, *Postfeminist and Islamic Feminist Discourse,* 119-20.

[2] Oxford Dictionary, *Sexism in language is an offensive reminder of the way the culture sees women.*

[3] Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, *Muslim Women's quest for equality; Between Islamic Law and Feminism'* Critical Inquiry, Volume 32, Number 4, Summer 2006.

In Pakistan, we can see opposition to patriarchy and dependent roles. Modern female scholars have put forward the idea of a fresh interpretation of the *Qur'an*. The modernists, identifying the strong emotional attachment of Muslims to their religion, have adopted the approach through the realignment of Islamic thought to the feminist thought coming from the West through the media and civil society. Feminist voices are further strengthened by the news that a certain lady has begun leading the Friday prayers for men and women combined. The debate here started to seek leadership in prayers, such as the equal representation of women throughout society, be it civil or military affairs. Questions are being raised not talking to liberals but to Muslim women in their homes, who are being instigated to lead on the front lines, not for their rights but to support the concept of gender equality that has led to the miseries of women in the West.

The emergence of feminist thought in Pakistan has led to the phenomenon of the revival of Islamic identity through informal religious education in various localities, at homes and other platforms. Social media is also being used as a vehicle for religious education. Farhat Hashmi has been seen transforming Muslim women into Muslim identities based on *hijab* (head cover) and '*Abaya* (long gown covering the whole body of a women) identity.[1] Western dresses with all kinds of revealing designs are also increasingly popular, reflecting the westernisation of women, who oppose any dictation in terms of dress codes. In the same way, the headscarf and 'Abaya are becoming more popular among young people. This shows a desire to get women's rights recognised in Islam by bridging the gap between words and actions.

The way Pakistani women activists observe and portray their thoughts, gender roles, and connections with religion and nationalism needs to be investigated. Young women have recently taken "*sexuality politics to the streets,"* with the disastrous consequences of starting a confrontation between both genders that led to TV debates. Pakistani women during the *"Aurat* March" observed in Pakistan in 2020 on International Women's Day, have recently come out to seek emancipation through the display of placards, which were considered highly unpresentable as they went against social norms and reflected the perverted mentality of the authors. The *'Aurat* March' movement refers to a series of initiatives aimed at bringing about change. This led to a change of focus from real issues for women like domestic violence, fair pay in the workplace, maternity leave,

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[1] Mushtaq, Faiza, A Controversial Role Model for Pakistani Women, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], 4 | 2010, Online since 05 April 2018, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3030 ; DOI : 10.4000/samaj.3030

and sexual harassment, dragging the debate to violations of modesty and Islamic values as acknowledged by older women activists:

"There are real generational differences in the concepts, visions, and praxis of activism, however, older activists believe that younger women engage in agenda-based activism, unmindful of broader political dynamics, long-term goals, and impact; they consider most to be keener on joining international movements than building a national movement, and they view some of their concerns and online activism as elitist. These women want to support the March, they claim, but they are wary of the kind of feminism that has no qualms exiting the sphere of respectability."[1]

According to a researcher, feminist thinking is a roving idea that adapts to the geographical, theological, and cultural terrains in which it finds itself. Pakistani feminist thinking is multi-layered in complexity as a result of the complex network of connections and influences. This complexity starts with the division between secular and religious feminist ideas. While the secular majority clings to Western concepts of gender equality and female liberty, the religious group offers an indigenous and religious interpretation of female liberty. Muslim feminists are reimagining independence and equality within an Islamic/*Qur'anic* framework that includes Muslim women's participation in religious affairs (and spaces), advocacy for the acceptance of culturally/religiously defined female perspectives, and reinterpreting Islamic scholarship to liberate it from male-dominated, patriarchy-promoting, anti-women versions of Islam. Feminist thinking, or the fight for women's rights, is essentially a class-based concept in Pakistan. The economic class from which a woman comes determines her subversion of patriarchy's goals, interests, and ways of showing it. This is a clear indication of the ingress of contemporary thought in Pakistani Muslim society, especially in the educated classes of women. Understanding on the impact of alien thought finding a way into society will be discussed in a later chapter.

2.5   Ways and Means for Advancement of Contemporary Thought

The advocates of modernism calling for women's emancipation and equality in the Islamic world are influenced by contemporary thought in the West and are demanding that Muslim women should also walk alongside Western women in all walks of life. These agents of change are unwittingly working to push Muslim women out of the folds of Islam, which offers them grace and love and holds men responsible for taking care of their

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[1] Khushbakht, Syeda Memoona & Munazza Sultana, The Women Activism in Pakistan: An Analysis of 'Aurat March, *Al-Milal: Journal of Religion and Thought (AMJRT) Volume 2, Issue 2, 2020.*

dignity, peace, and subsistence till the grave. It has been established that the goal of Western character-building movements appears to be to hunt down two preys with one arrow. On one hand, they are working to erase the basic identity difference between Islam and the West, virtually engulfing Islamic values. On the other hand, through the difference of opinion, so infused, it seems to weaken the bond of brotherhood between the Muslims themselves, which brings them together on one platform. Against this backdrop, the discussion on the challenges emerging from contemporary thought to Muslim women warrants identification of ways and means of ingress of western thought, as it is important to pinpoint the areas to address to save society from its ill effects.

2.5.1. Desire to Dominate

Samuel Huntington in his famous book "Clash of Civilizations" wrote, "To be successful you must be like us, our way is the only way. The argument is that the religious values, moral assumptions, and social structures of these (non-western) societies are at the best alien and sometimes hostile to the values and practices of industrialism."[1]

This may seem like a suggestion, but it shows the western ambition for worldwide dominance. There are two kinds of dominance and supremacy: psychological and moral domination and political and material control, which will be explored in more detail later. Maryam Jameelah writes about cultural domination in such words,

"…cultural slavery on principle is indeed far more harmful than mere foreign political domination, yet in practice, cultural slavery is not only intimately linked to political slavery but, to all intents and purposes, they are virtually inseparable."[2]

The first kind of dominance is to elevate a nation's intellectual capabilities to the point where other countries believe in its ideas; its ideologies are capable of brainwashing and shaping the minds of others. It would cause people to adopt the alien culture's knowledge, research, and ideals while dismissing everything else in their indigenous civilization as wrong. The second kind of dominance is for one country to be so powerful in terms of material resources that the others are unable to preserve their political and economic autonomy against it, and so it takes over the resources and overrides their government, either whole or in part.

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[1] Huntington, Samuel P, *Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, (Simon & Schutzer, 1996), 73.
[2] Jameelah, Maryam, *Westernization Versus Muslims*, (Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons Lahore, 1976),

2.5.2. Intellectual Domination

Western ideas, practices, and institutions entered Muslim cultures via colonialism, and therefore, the first modernization of Muslim civilizations occurred under circumstances of defeat, subjugation, and cultural dominance. Western imperialists used education to establish intellectual dominance. *Jameelah* narrates it in these words, "The first champions of the movement for women's 'emancipation' were no one else than Marx and Engels, the founders of Communism who preached in their Communist Manifesto (1848) that marriage, home and family were nothing but a curse which kept women in perpetual slavery. Therefore, they insisted that the woman must be "liberated" from domestic servitude and achieve full economic independence through whole-time employment in industry. The subsequent champions of feminism insisted that women must be granted as much freedom to indulge in illicit sex as the men through co-education, employment outside the home alongside men, mixed social functions and courtship before marriage in semi-nude fashions, mixed social functions which include drinking, drug taking and dancing with contraceptives, sterilization and abortion to prevent unwanted pregnancies and state controlled nurseries and public boarding schools assuming the responsibility for the rearing of the children, many of whom would be illegitimate. This is in essence what the modern concept of 'women's rights' amounts to."[1]

Simply put, the 'desire for Westernization' in Muslims is viewed as synonymous with defeat and slavery, and interference with the intellectual activity of Muslims comes from a passive mind. The main issue in subjugated Muslim societies was the issue of 'Westernization' being accepted in the face of oppression, not through the understanding of the West.

From this, the demand for contemporary religious interpretations (revivalism) emerged. As a result, the issue of the religious validity of this desire arose. In both ancient and contemporary interpretations of our faith, political oppression has played a significant role. Every action has religious validity due to the rule of necessity, which has supplanted truth and untruth. In these conditions, the theological validity of the western way of life is also willingly brought to the fore. This process of westernisation is almost entirely devoid of any justification since the tyranny of the state of affairs has de-legitimized religion. With the preoccupation with livelihood, power, and culture, the desire for

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[1] Jameelah, Maryam, *Western Imperialism Menaces Muslims,* Lahore: (Muhammad Yusuf Khan & Sons Lahore, 1984), 33.

"Westernization" has gained validity outside of religion, if the necessity exists, which has mostly ceased to exist. Because of this, religion's core ideas have slowly been lost to history. The most important of these are the religious and cultural ideas of truth and falsehood.

While Muslim youths (both male and female) are drawn to Western educational institutions, their indigenous educational system is also embracing western thought under the guise of modernization. As a result, it is critical to comprehend the impact of current thinking on academics. Two realities, it is felt, should be emphasised further: first, despite the obvious faults in Western thinking, no alternative idea has yet arisen to exert influence on the worldwide academic landscape. This influence is not limited to the social realm; it also influences religious beliefs, infusing false doubts into young minds about the lack of well-structured religious material in our academic curriculum.

2.5.3. Materialistic Power

Unfortunately, throughout the twentieth century, when this new culture reached its peak of materialism and atheism, all Muslim nations, from Morocco to the Far East, suffered from Western governmental domination. Even today, Muslims face attacks from both the sword and the pen of the West. Those minds overwhelmed and frightened by the Western nations' economic growth, scientific advancement, and political dominance found it impossible to avoid the influence of Western thinking and culture. The situation is considerably more precarious for these Muslim countries, which have a history of colonialism. Western knowledge is not limited to higher education; it also affects the brains of younger generations, who are psychologically overwhelmed by Western thought's superiority. Their brains have been shaped in the West, and their hearts have accepted the impact of Western culture; therefore, they are incapable of developing a critical perspective on Western civilization. They evaluated good and wrong from a western viewpoint and accepted just what the western mentality said was right.

Maryam Jameelah elucidates the rationale for women's involvement in materialistic races in these terms:

"The propaganda campaign for female emancipation waged by the press, radio, and cinema belittles the role of woman as wife and mother and describes those who stay in their homes raising their children as an unpardonable economic loss of half of the nation's man-power! The rapid spread of co-education in Muslim lands, officially encouraged, which has spawned the pernicious growth of the promiscuous intermingling of the sexes

has been responsible for many social evils as well as ruining the young lives of countless individuals concerned."[1]

Abul Hasan Nadwi so eloquently describes this mentality. To him, the materialist social order is the oldest and most prevalent. No other social structure is more fulfilling. No other is as simple to develop. And no other is as easily accepted by the majority of men in all environments and eras. It has such a strong appeal to the people that it does not need deep roots in the soil, nor does it necessitate raising human intellect or making any sacrifices for its cause. One does not need altruism or endurance. One just has to go with the times. No social system has ever gained such influence over mankind as this one has.[2]

A paper, published in Psychological Science, found that "in a controlled experiment, participants exposed repeatedly to images of luxury goods, messages portraying them as consumers rather than citizens, and words associated with materialism (such as buy, status, asset, and expensive) experienced immediate but transient increases in material aspirations, anxiety, and depression. They were found more competitive and self-centered, lacked a sense of social duty, and were less likely to engage in challenging social activities."[3] They are unable to think freely and develop opinions with a clean conscience, endangering the very foundations of Islamic communities by deforming the mould of mindsets founded on the Islamic method of thinking and knowing. The constitution of a mind that thinks in a Western manner is destined to believe in Western ideals. Thus, different Muslim scholars, inspired by Islamic teachings, have done their best to respond to the dominating Western manners and culture, especially the Western influence on Muslim women.

2.5.4. Colonial Mindset

One extraordinary thing that human history is incapable of illustrating is Islamic society's response to Western dominance. The experience of Western dominance is not exclusive to Muslims, but is universal and has been so eloquently articulated by A Rehman:

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[1] Jameelah, Maryam, *Islam and the Muslim women Today*, Muhammad Yousuf Khan, Lahore, 1976).

[2] Nadwi, Abul Hasan Ali*, Religion and Civilization*, (Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow, 1970), 45.

[3] Monbiot, George, *Materialism: a system that eats us from the inside out*, 9Guardian, December 09, 2013).

"It is unfathomable to assess the extent of social, cultural, political and economic damage that colonial mindset has inflicted over the years upon the land of artisans and poets."[1]

Based on abstract humanitarianism, every defeated culture has tried to comprehend Western dominance and the broader civilization that supports it to determine its methods of survival and resistance. Numerous African, Latin American, and Asian cultures with no major scientific heritage have created exceptional literature to comprehend Western civilization and to provide context for its domination. For Muslims, history and social experience demonstrate the failure of action and purpose. *Syed Abdul Rahman* gave his perspective in these words:

"Colonial mentality represents the attitude of ethnic and cultural inferiority with the belief that the cultural values of the colonizer are inherently superior to one's own. It is a matter of fact that Pakistan has been under the influence of the colonial mindset since its independence."[2]

It is impossible to establish the extent of social, political, cultural, and economic loss inflicted by colonial mindset over the years upon this land of artisans and poets. At the individual level, a preoccupation with foreign products, culture, and the western economic model is another repercussion of colonialism.[3] However, the mind's total and universal defeat by a magnificent and lengthy academic tradition is astounding. The most pervasive idea to emerge from Muslims is that the contemporary West is a product of their history. This idea mirrored the West's opponents' complacency and served as the foundation for modernists' embrace of Western thinking in support of westernization. One of the most prominent views at the time was that of those Muslims who were horrified by modernity and saw no possibility of rebirth for Muslims unless they adhered to modernization's ideals. Thus, there is a tension that develops in Muslim minds in a colonial environment. They wanted to retain their Muslim identities, while men adopt a Western lifestyle in terms of dress, language, living, architecture, etc., while women are also found copying the same. A synthesis of Islam with contemporary concepts and values is considered essential by modernists to resolve this impasse. This stance is viewed as a subliminal recognition of colonial superiority, which helped the promotion of contemporary thought coming from the West in the name of modernization.

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[1] Rahman, Syed Abdul, *The Shadow of Colonial Mentality*, Daily Times, June 03, 2020.
[2] ibid
[3] ibid

2.5.5. Internal Fissures in Muslim Societies

The urge for 'Westernization' is engendered in a coercive atmosphere by defeat, colonial control, subjection, and enslavement, and our social sciences have usually taken a negative stance against the West, resulting in an internally divided climate inside Muslim communities. This approach has dissolved our basic differences from Western culture and strengthened and reinforced mutual ethnic and sectarian identities. We have been unable to retain our fundamental cultural distinction in knowledge because we have concentrated our efforts on establishing internal sectarian divisions fuelled by the British policy of 'divide and rule' in the colonial subcontinent. As a result, we have found ourselves in the current situation. With the West's increasing dominance, the differences upon which religious sectarianism was founded seem to be utterly irrelevant to our historical and psychological circumstances. At the moment, it is necessary to engage in real academic work rather than unquestioningly defending everything in the West. Surprisingly, Muslim religious scholars remain stuck in their emotional reactions to this circumstance. They are unaware of the methods and resources available for the development of current knowledge in modern times, as well as their interaction with culture and education. After a time, the chants for social change are heard, and then we fall asleep and issue this proclamation as a holy duty to which the whole Western world is so pleased to belong. There is no longer any interest in the issue of what happened to Muslims, how it occurred, or who did what and how it happened. Because of this inferiority complex and repentant behaviour, we only see the parts of Westernization that can be said to have been "taken from us." We are blind to the very existence of Western culture and society's fundamental and existential ideas, which knock on the doors of Muslim societies.

2.5.6. Modern Muslim Apologetics

The modernists contribute to the growing deviance of Muslim women's minds, which are regrettably drifting away from Islam because of Western ideas and culture. Muslim modernists do not present the Islamic perspective to remove the perception of Western thought's supremacy. Rather than that, they are engaged in the interpretation of Islam in search of the enigmatic concept of enlightened moderation. Syed Abdur Rehman commenting on Muslim scholars, wrote, "modernists seek to reform and adapt it to

contemporary life, while conservatives along to the traditional Islamic precepts and reject Western and other influences."[1]

It must be noted that in taking the modern line of thinking, the Islamic perspective is not to be swayed, as explained in the study performed by an *Ismāilī* Muslim:

"What is noteworthy about this period is the scarcity, in Muslim literature of the time, of definitions or reminders of, and references or appeals to 'Islam'. Why should this be so? The reason would be obvious if one were to set aside the assumption of Islam as an entire system handed down from its inception from one generation to another and to substitute instead of a historically formed outlook. Many a historical account, however competent in detail, however original in dating, placing, and discovering new or disputed materials, is rendered lame by failing to question and analyze the unit of its study. Thus, there are histories of Islam that take the term 'Islam' simply for granted, and which are thus oblivious, for instance, to shifts in the use of the term over time and space."[2]

The modernists emphasised the necessity of resurrecting the Muslim community via reinterpretation or reformulation of their Islamic history in light of current realities. It is a fact that the West's academic and intellectual influence has filled the whole world's mental space, altering the viewer's perspective to the point that it becomes impossible to see and think Islamically. This trend will persist until Muslims do not produce intellectuals via a contemporary intellectual renaissance. Traditional Islamic philosophers and researchers can no longer compete in the modern world. It is no longer feasible to return to the position held centuries ago by Islamic thinking, which was universal, moderate, logical, tolerant, integrated, and balanced. There is no recognition of the reality that Muslim cultures will continue their downward spiral toward westernization.

2.5.7. Recreational Allure

According to Western thought, the goal of human existence is to maximise riches by using the world's resources and to enjoy wealth and life. Apart from these two things, if the Western world is persuaded of anything, it is connected to both. For instance, knowledge acquisition and capacity development are aimed at optimising resource use or physical activity to preserve health and fitness and allow the body to enjoy leisure. Morality has been discussed in the context of recreational activities, although on a different

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[1] Rasheed, Arshad Muhammad, *Islamic Modernism*, *Al-Hikmat: A Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 39 (2019), 63.
[2] Institute of Ismaili Studies, *Islam and Modernity*: Intellectual Horizons.

scale. This excerpt from a study analysing the thinker's position on the subject of morality in leisure is testimony to the impact on morality:

"Pam Sailors, Sarah Teetzel and Charlene Weaving (Cheating, lying, and trying in recreational sports and leisure practices) ask what may be morally wrong about cheating, lying and not trying one's best during recreational sports and leisure practices. They discuss why cheating, lying, and sandbagging are tolerated in some leisure activities while disdained in others. It is tentatively suggested that opposition to such behaviors decreases as the consequences of these actions fail to matter morally."[1]

This clearly shows no linkage with values like modesty (*Ḥayā*) and purity of chastity, which have a fundamental place in the Islamic frame of reference. It is to be noted that the common perception of '*Ḥayā*' is related to clothes and the body. Nonetheless, it is much more related to our attitude, behaviour, and dealings. Ironically, in Western culture, there is no vocabulary or place for '*Ḥayā*'. Hence, the value of chastity and purity, or '*Ḥayā*', is absent in the West, as described by one of the articles in these words,

"Persons are not puppets of their social circumstances, nor are they smothered by moral duties owed to others. Rather, they are agents who have a broad right to decide for themselves how to live their lives."[2]

As a result, many of the entertainment activities, influenced by liberty and pleasure, indulge in indecency and hit the very social fibre of society. It has been noticed that some Muslims, particularly those living in the West, engage in these activities to avoid being branded as "stereotyped" or "uncultured." There is an extreme mentality among Muslims as well, that seeks to keep children and adolescents away from lawful entertainment. As a result, this approach attracts criticism and serves to distract young minds from Islamic teachings.

2.5.8. Media

The revolution in information technology is the most important development that has taken place in the recent past. While certain modes of mass communication are more suited to pleasure than others, some make more sense as a means of disseminating information. In terms of print media, books are durable and capable of containing a large amount of information, but they are somewhat slow and costly to manufacture. In

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[1] Pam, Sailors L., Sarah J. Teetzel & Charlene Weaving, The Complexities of Sport, Gender, and Drug Testing, *The American Journal of Bioethics*, (2012) 12:7, 23-25, DOI: 10.1080/15265161.2012.680541
[2] Nicole, Alicia – Marie Hult, Jonathan Rosenørn Schmedes, Gitte, Højgaard Johansen, Julie Emilie Stokholm Kragh, Kathrine Munch, Group 14, Supervisor Finn Guldmann, 'The Ethics of Pornography and its Impact on the Individual', *International Basic Studies in the Humanities 3.1.2 Spring Semester, 2011.*

comparison, newspapers are very inexpensive and fast to produce, making them a superior medium for the rapid turnover of daily news. Television conveys a great deal more visual information than radio and is far more dynamic than a static written page. It may also be used to broadcast live events to a national audience. By contrast, the Internet promotes open debate about problems and allows for both good and bad influences on culture. Therefore, the new media may have a similar effect on our norms and characteristics. However, the Internet is mainly irresponsible. Users may have to sort through hundreds of comments that aren't relevant or are made by people who don't know what they're talking about in order to find accurate information.

Due to the Internet's accessibility and low cost, the media has developed into a strong medium of worldwide connection in our time. Apart from amusement and the dissemination of information and knowledge, modern technology has developed the capability to spark a cultural and civilizational war through electronic, print, or social media. The attack could be aimed at the sociocultural, religious, and artistic values of the target country, putting the integrity and dignity of society at risk.

Under the guise of free speech, the worldwide media demonises Islam, associating it with extremism and fanaticism, and describing Islamic principles as backward and incompatible with contemporary times. However, it is noted with worry that the Pakistani media does not take a strong moral stance in defence of national identity, but rather promotes modern Western thinking. According to a study, the media has a detrimental influence on promoting foreign culture. Every young Muslim lady is reported to be pursuing new styles and trends at the expense of Islam's precepts. This is due to Pakistani-owned media outlets, morning shows, and programmes that promote foreign culture and encourage Muslim women to engage in social ills and crimes.[1]

While young kids are viewing cartoons and ladies are using their cell phones at home, they are glued to the morning shows, which are busy propagating strange ideas and inculcating a sense of deprivation among the bulk of the female population by screening fashion and make-up models who have no relationship to our society. The programmes build up an image of an oppressed woman alongside the glamour. According to a study on the media's impact on Pakistani society, the media is consuming youngsters' brains. The

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[1] Bhattia, Muhammad, Muhammad Gondal, Muhammad Sheikh, Ahmad Hammad, Fareeha Zafar, 'Negative Effects of Mass Media and the Dominance of Foreign Culture in the City of Lahore, Pakistan', *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS) (2016) Volume 26, No 3,* 244-253.

young people in Lahore don't have a common goal, so they follow after media-influencing businesses that have their own goals and incentives. Western media, "think tanks," and other groups have introduced a variety of negative elements into contemporary Muslim societies. Islamic Eastern culture is in danger of losing its historic significance; consequently, it is essential to constantly refer to the "fundamentals", most notably the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Religious ideas that are half-baked and disseminated through social media are more harmful since the younger generation has less regard for them. A little video clip may throw doubt on Islamic life philosophy, demonstrating the superiority of Western thinking. Rather than promoting our national, social, and religious goals, our plays and television shows promote Western and Hindu cultures via productions from other countries and adjacent nations that air on our networks. On the other hand, they may be seen parodying marriage and divorce and promoting extramarital affairs in our play. Pornography and nakedness are increasing in both electronic and print media, and the situation is certain to deteriorate further. It has devolved into a breeding ground for civil conflict and instability. This is substantiated by a survey report, which stated that the media is the best vehicle for spreading falsehoods these days, since there are many methods for delivering fabricated messages through social media, but the same thing needs money or high command instructions to send fabricated information via electronic and print media.[1] The unchecked accessibility to the socially demeaning websites is highly damaging to the national image as reflected by the report.

"Pakistan tops the list of most porn-searching countries and leads the way in porn searches for animals like pigs, donkeys, dogs, cats, and snakes. The data was released by Google. Also, six of the top eight porn-searching countries were Muslim states. Egypt stood second while Iran, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey came in at numbers four, five, seven and eight, respectively."[2]

Due to its ease of access and reach, social media is regarded as the most effective mode of communication, and its negative influence on society is considerably greater than that of other modes. Liberal and feminist activists make significant use of social media, establishing vlogs, YouTube channels, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts to disseminate obscene material based on socially repugnant ideas and topics through satires, lectures, talk shows, interviews, and skits. The content's easy and frequent accessibility

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[1] ibid
[2] Express Tribune, January 18, 2015.

through smartphones and tablets broadens its appeal to people of all genders and ages. Apart from undermining the moral and social fabric, it serves as a vehicle for the propagation of western thought, resulting in religious discord, mutual anarchy, and disruption of national life.

2.5.9. Modernization vs. Westernization

The most damaging school of thought is one that conflates modernization with westernization, thereby requiring a holistic adaptation of Western ideals and practises at the expense of one's own beliefs and values. This is actually the concept of modernity that was an important rationale for European imperialism, and colonization. Thus, westernisation has become an automatic process in Muslim societies, going beyond the reach of our will and mind, and only subject to necessity. In the Shah's regime, Iran went down the path of westernization, as reflected in the speech given by Vice Chancellor of Tehran University, Muhammad Muqqadam, at a symposium on "Female Emancipation in the Two Decades of Pakistan's Existence" in Lahore in August 1967, where he stated:

"No country can be modernized unless its women gain complete emancipation. He said that in the Orient where modernization had come late, the people were still reluctant to liberate themselves from outdated and traditional modes of thought. 'Unless we are willing to go along with the rest of the world, we will not survive as living nations,' he said. The role of women in the developing countries of Asia and Africa, he said, was clear. They must participate in the social, cultural, and political life of the country. The evils attendant upon modernization, he insisted, were less than some people were inclined to imagine."[1]

Regrettably, there is no genuinely autonomous Islamic state in modern Islam. They are not free from mental slavery when they enjoy political stability and self-determination. Their schools, workplaces, bazaars, organizations, and even their bodies bear witness to the reality that they are dominated by western thinking, culture, science, and the arts. Muslim rulers use Western brains, see with Western eyes, and follow Western paths. Whether they are aware of it or not, this notion that the criterion of truth and untrue resides in western values and standards is ingrained in their brains. Concepts of right and wrong, culture, morality, humanism, manners, and quality, to name a few, are all understood just as the West has defined them. Esposito's current view on modernity is thus simply stated:

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[1] *The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, October 19,1967.

"Many Europeans believed that modernity was not only the result of the conditions producing the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution, but also due to the inherent superiority of Christianity as a religion and a culture."[1]

The above discussion testifies that the confused Muslim in quest of modernization is swayed by westernization. Therefore, it is a serious dilemma about denying Muslim women the right to adopt a Western outlook and attire, when Western dresses for men are taken as a status symbol.

2.5.10. Non-State Actors

As a part of westernization, feminist thought came to Pakistan through literature, the media, and NGOs in the garb of women's development, duly supported by local modernists and secularists. While the former may be seen as a passive means, NGOs are viewed as active catalysts for the change of minds and culture. It is visibly proclaimed by one of the lead programs in Pakistan,

"USAID in Pakistan is working to narrow the gaps between men and women to promote a more prosperous, stable, and inclusive society in Pakistan."[2]

The stated objectives of some of the NGOs include women's empowerment and social development, through the following means identified by Samia Raheel Qazi:[3]

- To strengthen ties with individuals who wield significant influence and position in society to eliminate impediments to their goal.

- Obtaining public support via advertising and the publication of publications.

- Project instances of couples marrying via the courts under the guise of 'women's sexual freedom' for this practice to gain widespread acceptance at the national level.

- Promote the development of co-educational institutions to foster an enabling atmosphere for sexual misbehaviour.

- Creating a working atmosphere that is inclusive of men and women.

- Through monetary incentives, they promote working away from home and late hours.

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[1] Lapidus, I.M., 'Islam and Modernity." Patterns of Modernity, (S.N. Eisenstadt (London: Pinter, 1987), 89-115.
[2] USAID Pakistan, Official Website, https://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/cross-cutting-themes-good-governance-and-gender-equity Accessed 27th February 2021.
[3] Qazi, Samia Raheel, Threat to the Muslim Family System, (PhD Thesis, Punjab University).

- News, articles, and reporting on mixed events are being brought to light in a glamorous manner through social media.

- Women's oppression incidents, no matter how small, are given media attention to portray the culture as oppressed and backward.

The uncomfortable appearance of family planning advertisements in electronic media in the name of restoration and protection of women's rights, the methods and tactics being used by non-state actors in the garb of NGOs are busy turning innocent Muslim women away from the religion. Hence, their impact on society needs to be understood. These NGOs are seen as agents of westernization, which has used all methods possible to demean Muslim women in general, and working women in particular, since they are committed to producing results acceptable and recognisable to the donors. The impact of contemporary thought on Pakistani women is evident from their rapidly changing outlook, attitude, and way of life.

Conclusion

The research has explored the evolution of contemporary thought, leading to the evolution of the contemporary women's freedom movement, identifying its principal features. Here, research examined its encounter with Muslim women to find its impact on feminist discourse by Muslim female scholars. It has been discovered that contemporary thought has witnessed an increasing emphasis on secularism and individualism in response to the Church's governmental dominance, and industrialization has resulted in significant advances towards liberalism and materialism. The research established that contemporary thought is related to the larger battle for emancipation, impacting conventional norms and the family structure and leading to the exploitation of females. Research also shows that the West seems to be becoming more aware of the pain that the women's liberation movements have caused.

It has been discovered that contemporary thought has progressed over the decades, placing more and more emphasis on secularity rather than religion. However, significant changes in the modern world occurred in tandem with industrialization, which resulted in individualism as a reaction to the political supremacy of the Church. As a result, freedom became the driving force behind the new ideals, which placed humanism at the core and religion on the periphery, fostering secularism and atheism, and contributing to the application of reason to ethics and morality, which suffers from a relativistic aspect. The feminist agenda is an extension of the larger struggle for liberty. It is found that, under the

banner of postmodern liberalism, the new Western culture and ideals have severely undermined social values and the family structure, as collective cultural virtues have lost ground. It is also discovered that, in the pursuit of equality, women have become more vulnerable to exploitation, and are losing their dignity, esteem, and peace of mind.

In a quest to find an answer to the impact of contemporary thought on Muslim women, it is established that feminist thought, although still finding overt support from modern Muslim women scholars, may be considered as a disguised form of secular feminism. Among Muslim female scholars, there are proponents of re-reading the *Qur'ānic* text. However, they do not desire to be associated with feminism, as they are aware of the fact that their narrative will not be accepted if it is based on feminism, which is a secular concept. Despite their opposition to Islamic feminism, their efforts are seen with contempt as an effort to legitimise feminism through Islamic interpretation of women's rights or to seek religious flavour for secular rights. However, the demand for a reinterpretation of *Qur'ānic* verses by some of these scholars, challenging the patriarchy and highlighting inequality, is likely to have conflicted with the social fibre of Muslim societies. It is believed that they are asking for fresh interpretations of Islamic injunctions regarding women and, in that garb, reforming family laws. This movement could make Muslim women less safe and less cared for in the family, making them just as vulnerable as Western women who are open to all kinds of bad things.

The susceptibility of Muslims to contemporary thought is compounded, as they are subjected to westernisation in their search for modernization, thus posing a threat to Muslim youth in general and women in particular. At this point in history, the West is becoming more aware of how women's liberation movements have hurt both individuals and groups, while female Muslim scholars are pushing the feminist agenda in Muslim societies.

Chapter 3

Challenges of Contemporary Thought to Pakistani Muslim Women

Thought governs the lifestyle, which leads to creating a culture, as discussed in previous chapters. In the contemporary global village, hundreds of cultures coexist in this world simultaneously. Each culture may have certain characteristics, and it is also possible for more than one feature of civilization to be present in others as well, subsequently. Because culture is driven by the thoughts of a group, and it is the commonality of thought that provides space for co-existence. The discussion of contemporary thought in the previous chapter revealed that religion has always been a major factor in building the values of any civilization. Therefore, it is very important to look at the distinguishing features of the environment in which Pakistani women live, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the social system, to see how much it conforms to Islamic values and where it differs to allow ingress to contemporary thought.

The discussion on the division of rights and duties and equality between males and females, as well as a never-ending debate on women's role in the development of society, is something we all often hear and read about. Besides, in the case of men and women, the arguments between the two groups echo from time to time, one of which believes that men and women are two sides of the same coin, while the other group believes in the absolute superiority of men over women. Both sides present their arguments to support their case. Some people think that they have inflicted immense oppression on women under the guise of employment and work. They are the people who use women as a means of advertisement to promote their products, and they are the ones who use them to satisfy their brutal lust just in the name of freedom. Unfortunately, religion has unfortunately lost its relevance in the whole debate, as discussed earlier.

It can certainly be contended that when Islam determines the status of a male and female, it considers them to be mutually complementary to a unit, as if both parts of the unit play their respective roles and form a complete setup. If someone changes or distorts the character of one or exchanges with the other, then things are not right at all. Muslim women who study Islam will undoubtedly realise the elevated status that Islam has bestowed upon women. However, the gaps in the application of Islamic thought enable the West's claim to women's freedom and equality to find appeal in Muslim women, thus impacting them in social, cultural, socioeconomic, and psychological aspects of life

through their deceptive propaganda, thus snatching their femininity and completely erasing their gender identity. Here, in the following section, the internal dynamics of Pakistani society in relation to women are discussed to identify the gaps that lead to the ingress of alien thought.

3.1 Women and Internal Dynamics of Pakistani Society

Pakistan has a historical and geographical heritage in the pro-independence Subcontinent; thus, Pakistani culture derives from Hinduism (dating back to the pre-Islamic era) and Islam. To understand Pakistani culture and women's place and status within it, it is necessary to realise that Pakistan has a broader national culture that is acceptable and widespread across the country's regional or provincial divisions. Each of Pakistan's regional and provincial divisions has contributed unique features to national Pakistani culture, which is now difficult to differentiate from the culture of the country's other regions and provinces. Pakistani culture is based on the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, tribal and feudal social structures, class and caste differences, and the fact that most people live in the countryside and work in agriculture.[1]

The studies on women in Pakistan provide statistics and information regarding the status of women in Pakistan and highlight the issues experienced by Pakistani women with differing perspectives. Most of the studies are sponsored by external donors; hence, the objectives and agenda of the donors govern the data. Nonetheless, an effort will be made here to explore the challenges faced by the whole female population of Pakistan without prejudice. Men and women alike are victims of substandard living circumstances, inadequate opportunities, and exploitative situations. Women's position can be raised solely as a result of society's overall growth and national development. Here, an attempt has been made to show the real situation of women in Pakistan in terms of their social, cultural, religious, economic, and mental lives.

3.1.1. Social Environment for Women

Nuclear families, semi-nuclear families, joint families, and extended families are the most common family forms in Pakistan. Families are often large in rural areas of the country. A nuclear family consists of a married couple and their unmarried dependent children. In contrast to rural regions, this family structure is more common in metropolitan areas, where rapid urbanisation, industry, commercialization, and excessive rural-urban

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[1] Tabassum, Naima, *"Women in Pakistan: Status in Socio-Cultural and Politico-Legal Domains*, (Area Study Centre, Far East & Southeast Asia, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, 2012).

movement have resulted in rapid modernization. As a result of the urban social structure, this kind of family offers women more power, autonomy, and mobility. In some urban areas and most rural areas throughout the country, the joint family structure continues to predominate. This kind of family often consists of three to four generations of blood relatives who share a home (sometimes shared, sometimes partially divided) and rely on the same kitchen and economic resources. In terms of decision-making and family administration, she is second in command to the male leader of the family as a wife. The Pakistani people, on the other hand, are fiercely attached to their traditional values. They are worried about their parents and see assisting their older parents as a privilege. Thus, the Western ideal of the urban nuclear family has been significantly altered to include the elderly parents of the patrilocal nuclear family's male patriarch. This imposes additional duties on women, who must demonstrate greater respect and tolerance. Failure to do so may result in family conflict and instability, which will disproportionately affect women.[1]

As a largely Muslim society, Pakistan is defined by the universality of marriage. Marriage is seen as a social and religious obligation and responsibility for every man and woman in Pakistan. It is established as a religious obligation as an act that has been frequently advised in the Holy Quran or as Sunnah that every Muslim man and woman are required to follow. It is when a man and a woman get married through Nikah, which is seen as a religiously and legally recognised union contract that spells out the rights and responsibilities of each person.

Although, in religious teachings, several marriages are permitted for the purpose of safeguarding and protecting widows, vulnerable, or orphan women. While divorce is allowed spiritually and socially, it is not seen favourably in Pakistani society. It is seen as an error, serious violation, or mistake made by a person, particularly a woman, in Pakistani culture. Women bear a disproportionate amount of the social humiliation connected with divorce in Pakistani society. They are continuously portrayed as the guilty party, with investigators searching for the mistake that led to the divorce and condemning them for the misdeed.[2]

In the context of media, males and females are represented differently both in print and visual forms. Generally, males are shown as active agents endowed with power and full authority in an honourable manner. While females are often portrayed as sex objects,

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[1] Tabassum, Women in Pakistan,52.
[2] Tabassum, Women in Pakistan.

they are also portrayed as irrational, sensitive, emotional, and as beautiful items capable of aiding in the sale of goods by captivating the public. Apart from creating gender-based images, and the media also addresses men and women as distinct segments of the audience with distinct interests.[1]

Male involvement is greatest in the rural sector, indicating a patriarchal culture with strong roots in the Pakistani country. Male offspring are preferred since they are expected to carry the family name and contribute significantly to the household income. On the other hand, a female child is seen as a burden on the family, leading to gender prejudice at the infancy stage. In the urban society, the men are found under a clear influence of contemporary thought in their lifestyle, education, attire, language, corporate culture etc. However, there is a mixed attitude towards the women in these very sociocultural contexts.

The urge to give preference to a male child over a female is rampant in Pakistani society. It is dominated by the desire to ensure continuity of the family name. Discrimination between sons and daughters begins at birth and continues throughout their lives. Boys' education is prioritized above girls' education.

Pakistani society is lumped as' patriarchal being governed by a father, who strives throughout his life to give a better standard of living to his kith and kin. Feminists have criticised this conventional definition of patriarchy for seeing it as a relationship between males, universal in virtually every society on the planet. As a result, feminist academics reinterpreted patriarchy as a system of gender inequality, the dominance of males over women, rather than as mere feudal ties between men. Women's liberation activists recognised patriarchy as the true source of women's subjugation to males. Feminists believe that patriarchal society is structured around the concept of male dominance, with particular emphasis on the senior male position, thus challenging it through the concept of gender equality.

3.1.2. Cultural Taboos and the Women

Within the household, there is a clear division of work between women and men. This division also entails segregating women in the private sphere of the house and relegating males to the public arena outside the home. Women are assigned the private domain of their house in which to reside while doing unpaid domestic chores. They wash,

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[1] Raeesi, M., 'Joining or Not Joining to the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, *the Electric Journal of Nedaye Sadiq,* No. 29 (2008).

clean, cook, sew, knit, weave, process and store food and other commodities, care for children and the elderly, and, in rural areas, care for cattle, make fuel from cow dung, and help with family agriculture as well. Additionally, they are tasked with the duty of maintaining social networks by sometimes attending marriages, births, and funeral ceremonies.[1]

Pakistani women's dress code also functions as an unambiguous statement of social, religious, and, most significantly, cultural discussion. The majority of Pakistani women determine whether a dress is suitable based on its ability to meet the religious requirement of covering the entire body (*Sattar*), the environmental requirement of enduring hot weather (as the majority of clothing for daily use is made of cotton), and the social requirement of being culturally acceptable in terms of colour and design; for example, the use of dupatta (headscarf) or chaddar (*shawl*).

In a patriarchal household, men's competence to manage resources and people provides little room for women to achieve sufficient empowerment to acquire the position of family head via effective control over resources and people inside the family. However, departures from traditionally accepted household arrangements may result in a small percentage of women being given the role of family head in Pakistan for a variety of reasons. Families may undergo structural changes as a consequence of migration, divorce, widowhood, or separation. In such circumstances, especially as a consequence of males departing for economic reasons, women are left behind to undertake all of the responsibilities associated with the male head of the family, in addition to their own responsibilities as a housewife.[2]

Vani and Swara are two additional traditions that are observed in certain rural regions of tribal and feudal cultures in Pakistan. They may be considered a kind of forced marriage since they often involve minors (particularly females). According to Abbas and Riaz, these traditions are geared toward giving women, often young girls or children, the opportunity to mediate conflicts between men and tribes over human life, honour, and money. Occasionally, new-born females are also pledged to be given in marriage after birth; this is referred to as *'pait'*. While the practise is referred to differently in various parts of the nation, similar incidents occur across the country. *Swara* is the name given to

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[1] Jafar, Afshan, 'Women, Islam, and the State in Pakistan' *Gender Issues 22 (1): 35–55* (2005).
[2] Ibid, 63.

it in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, *Irjaee* is given to it in Balochistan, *Sung-Chatti* is given to it in Sindh, and Vani is given to it in Punjab.[1]

The other practises related to women's abuse include social practice. *Walwar* is being practised in Baluchistan and involves the selling/buying of girls in marriage. The girl who is married to a man is considered a good thing rather than a human being throughout their lives. Another kind of compelled marriage is *'Marriage to the Quran'*. Additionally, it is referred to as *Haq Bakshwān*.[2] This heinous societal practice involves forced ceremony of marriage to the Quran, forfeiting the right to marry. There is no theological or legal basis for this practice of women's marriage in accordance with the Quran. This traditional ritual is seldom observed in feudal households to preserve family property that may be handed away as a portion of the right of a female in the event of her marriage to a man.[3] In Sindh, the practice of murdering male or female or both for the sake of honor is often referred to as *Karo Kari, Siyah Kari* in Balochistan, Tor Tora in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, and *Kala Kali* in Southern Punjab. Women are seldom identified as perpetrators of honor murders. Women are seldom identified as perpetrators of honour murders. Women who elope with another male are considered to have harmed their family members' honour by violating restrictions on their movement and social contacts with men of the opposing gender and are thus punished by the family.

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are both terms that refer to acts used to exercise control over another person in a relationship. Looking at the incidents of domestic violence, which do not reflect the true picture, as all such cases may not be reported, because of our conservative social system and corrupt executive and cumbersome justice system.

"Violence against women has been consistently on the rise in Pakistan. According to a survey conducted in 2018 by Thomson Reuters Foundation, Pakistan was ranked as the sixth most dangerous country for women after coming third in the 2011 poll. Pakistan was named as the fourth worst nation when it came to discrimination in the workplace, access to economic resources such as land, and risks to their safety owing to cultural,

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[1] Abbas, M. Z. and S Riaz, 'Legal protections provided under Pakistani law against anti women practices: implication gaps between theory and practice*" The Dailogue, Vol 8 issue 2 (2013) 172-185.*

[2] Jilani, H. & E.M. Ahmed, 'Violence against women: The legal system and institutional responses in Pakistan'. In S. Goonesekere (Ed.), *Violence law & women's rights in south Asia (2004),* 148-206). New Delhi: Sage Publication.

[3] Ibid, 365.

religious, and traditional practices including so-called honour killings. Pakistan ranked fifth when it came to non-sexual violence including domestic abuse."[1]

Apart from the above damaging marital customs and domestic abuse in the private realm of the home, Pakistani women also face violence in the public sphere and at work. Sexual harassment of women is a kind of this sort of violence that occurs regularly in a variety of settings, from the private realm of the home to the public sphere of the workplace. This will be discussed in greater details in next subsection.

3.1.3. Socioreligious Impediments to Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is an integral part of fundamental principles and legitimate practises, despite the fact that it is not always followed in many interpretations throughout history, disempowering women as a result of pre-Islamic cultural traditions and politics. Women in Pakistan suffer on the ideological front at the hands of orthodox religious scholars who have injected discrimination against women into our society by quoting various religious references as a weapon against women playing any role in society in the contemporary era. In this regard, the fatwas of various scholars are quoted to deny women the right to education opportunities. The *fatāwa* are not being quoted here to avoid any sectarian prejudice, as they deny females the right to learn writing to avoid going morally astray and are a tradition of infidels. The ability of women to be judges is also objected to on the basis of poor judgment.[2] Moreover, strict textual interpretations in the light of earlier verdicts by orthodox scholars raise serious questions about the compatibility of Islam with contemporary times.

The social justice and equitable economic opportunity are the fundamental principles for seeking gender equality, hence feminist thought is finding a place in Islamic societies, where women's rights are not valued in accordance with Islamic teachings. Islam protects women's rights through its principle of fundamental social justice, which fits with feminism's core objective. However, it rejects feminism's resulting norms, such as gender mixing and sexual deviance.[3] The convergence of thought on human rights and the violation of the same in Muslim societies is used as a psychological tool by modernists to propagate the supremacy of contemporary thought.

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[1]Shehryar, Warraich, "*Locked down and vulnerable,* TNS, June 28, 2020.

[2] Ihsan, Yilmaz 'Pakistan Federal Shariat Court's Collective Ijtihād on Gender Equality, Women's Rights and the Right to Family Life'*, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 25:2 (2014), 181-192, DOI: 10.1080/09596410.2014.883200.

[3] Hanaf, Hassan, *New Directions in Islamic Thought,* Centre for International and Regional Studies 2010), 3-5.

3.1.4. Economic Empowerment of Women

In Pakistani culture, women are believed to be mistreated both emotionally and physically. When she is at her parents' house, she will certainly obey any orders her family gives her. When she gets married, her new husband becomes her new guardian. His orders become the rules of her life, and she is not allowed to speak up or agree, because her advice or opinions are not considered important enough to be heard.

Fatima concluded her Ph.D. thesis, on motivation for working women,

"Married women's work participation is influenced by age of respondent, the square of age, education of respondent, decision to work, the distance of health unit, distance of workplace, residence, family setup, and husband's job. In these factors, age of respondent, education of respondent, the decision to work, the distance of workplace and family setup are concluded as motivating factors for married women's work participation while the square of age, distance of health unit, residence and husband's job are confirmed as de-motivating factors for married women's work participation in economic activities."[1]

Notwithstanding the above perception, by and large, women have control over how their own money is spent, and their independence in making expenditures regardless of whether they are employed or not demonstrates their economic empowerment. Many women possess a bank account, own an asset, and have access to loans and microfinance, with a greater proportion of working women owning a bank account, owning an asset, and having access to loans/microfinance than non-working women.[2] Women are being played down in Pakistan's labour market compared to males. The available female labour force in Pakistan accounted for 59.8 percent of the entire population, with 28.9 percent of women and 30.8 percent of males. Women are also regarded as being less prevalent in the working-age segment of the population, resulting in a much smaller pool of individuals potentially available to provide labour for the country's economic development (Government of Pakistan, 2014: 13). While religion and tradition have firmly established and recognised women's economic status, contemporary society has created new issues that must be handled in this respect. The female population's share of economic activity, on the other hand, is not proportionate to its size. Women are entering the economic arena in

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[1] Farooq, *Women Work Participation.*
[2] Farooq, *Women Work Participation.*

unprecedented numbers because of tough economic conditions and other societal reasons, with limited knowledge of areas that may prove more profitable for them.[1]

3.1.5. Psychosocial Attitudes Towards Women

While Pakistan professes to be an Islamic state run according to Islamic rules and traditions, much is to be done in terms of application in the context of the fundamental concept of equality. As a result, education is emphasised for males over girls, since boys are expected to be the family's only breadwinners, while girls are expected to supervise domestic skills at home. As a result, in some areas, education is not seen as critically essential for girls as it is for boys. As a consequence, women are forced to remain at home and remain illiterate.[2]

Due to the rural Pakistani situation, persistent absenteeism among females is more severe in rural Pakistan than in metropolitan areas. Society's uneducated mentality has not recognized the critical role of female's education in the growth of a country, as per UNESCO Report 2010.[3]

Gender disparities exist not only in educational access, but also in teaching management and academia, as indicated by the predominance of women in early childhood education jobs such as preschool, Montessori, and primary education, and males in secondary or higher education teaching positions. Male preponderance in leadership roles has been seen in almost all educational institutions, particularly in the public sector, and has developed into a social issue. Men dominate leadership positions, particularly in academia, and outnumber women in the majority of higher academic positions. Women may earn training and professional credentials, but their abilities are not always used, since some choose to forego them in favour of family obligations. Female/male ratios in decision-making processes, particularly in the educational sector, are skewed significantly against women, and women suffer unfavourable enrolment rates in secondary and higher education. While the government emphasises its commitment to gender equality and uses terms like "equal career opportunities," the reality seems to be very different.[4]

This gender-based ban or restriction invalidates any accomplishment, pleasure, or other activity carried out by women, regardless of whether they are upper-middle-class or

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[1] Tabassum, *Women in Pakistan,* 63.

[2] Pervez, Sara, *Gender Inequality in Education- A Study with Special Reference to Pakistan,* (Ph.D thesis, Department of Public Administration UBIT)

[3] UNESCO Report 2010, Published in 2010 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, France. 340-42.

[4] Sara, *Gender Inequality in Education*.

lower class. As a result of the preceding explanation, it is clear that various social and cultural rituals practiced in Pakistan in the name of Islam do restrict women's access to education and employment.[1] These practices directly contradict Islamic teachings, and Islam forbids men from discriminating against women in any form.[2]

Islam, as a religion, has a significant effect on Pakistan's socio-cultural corridor, impacting many facets of social life. For example, Islamic views on law, the origins of laws, and the kinds of penalties are critical for comprehending Pakistan's legislative history, processes, and laws. Islamic sources of law govern key items of legislation enacted in the name of Islam in Pakistan. The laws in terms of their possible impact on women's lives in the nation are viewed with mixed responses.

The religious education of women is even more neglected. Asia Shabbir in her article, writes about the need for religious education. She stated that it is a well-known fact that *madaris* play an important role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and academic production. Certain colleges and *madaris* in the Islamic world have an illustrious history and an illustrious legacy of teaching the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. Additionally, *madaris* underwent revisions on a periodic basis. These institutions have come under fire on a broad scale as a consequence of genuine worry, but more often as a result of propaganda and stereotypes. Women *madaris*, according to her, needed significant changes to face the contemporary and globalisation *problems*. To alter women's roles, the curriculum, teaching techniques, and training methodologies must undergo a paradigm change. In the same way, there is no education for women that focuses on their roles and responsibilities in the home, the education of their children, and health issues.

The above-discussed attitudes towards women are attributed to prevailing patriarchal culture and anti-women social practices, lack of empowerment and education, the adverse attitudes of police and law enforcement agencies, insufficient laws, and an inefficient justice system. No matter if the numbers are reported or not, the way women are described above distorts the image of Pakistani society and is used by those with a vested interest to promote the liberal agenda of women's emancipation in line with modern ideas. This has a psychological effect on Pakistani women.

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[1] Jafar, Afshan, 'Women, Islam, and the State in Pakistan' *Gender Issues* 22 (1) (2005), 35–55.
[2] Balto, Sarah, 'Harassment, Seclusion and the Status of Women in the Workplace: An Islamic and International Human Rights Perspective' *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 17, No. 1 (2020): 65-88. https://doi.org/10.1515/mwjhr-2020-0004.

While the women are singing lullabies to their young children on one hand, on the other hand, they are concerned with household chores and cooking. Neglecting the importance and delicacy of domestic affairs, on which the well-being of a family depends, women involved in the household are considered to be less useful in national development, injecting a sense of deprivation.

Summing up

To sum up the discussion on the life of women in Pakistani society, it is noted that Pakistani society desires to see such women who should be nurturing children at home, providing comfort and peace for their husbands, and acquiring comfort from their husband's existence while protecting their sanctity and chastity in the outdoor environment during their presence in academic, social, and other spectrums. In Islamic society and mainstream Muslim life, the woman has a special sanctity, and anyone wearing *hijab* is especially respected. Unfortunately, this all translates into the Western concept of the superiority and domination of men, which is called women's oppression. Amartya Sen advocated five types of gender inequality common in South Asia (including Pakistan). These are "facility, education, professional, ownership, and household inequalities." [1]

The above gender inequalities may be contested to be ascertained by Western standards. These are related to the birth and death of a female; preference for a male child over a daughter; unfavourable female-male ratios in employment; access to basic opportunities for education; health; employment; nutrition; inheritance; and unequal sharing of the burden of housework and childcare. Therefore, it can be established that those women who are in the shadow of Islam may be incited by alien thought to take their form of freedom because of the non-application of Islamic rights in letter and spirit. Thus, it is strongly believed that contemporary thought on women can find ingress into Muslim societies due to a discrepancy in the understanding of the difference between Westernization ("adoption of the practises and culture of Western Europe by societies and countries in other parts of the world") and modernization ("the process of social change whereby less developed societies acquire characteristics common to more developed societies, i.e., transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society."[2]

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[1]Sen, Amartya, 'Many Faces of Gender inequality' *Frontline, India's National Magazine,* Vol.18 Issue 22,22nd Oct 27, Nov 09, 2001.

[2] Encyclopedia.com & Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Considering the above, the theory of feminists finds space in Pakistani society, which relates to political beliefs and positions that women have traditionally been subservient to males. Additionally, this school of thought stresses action for women's independence and empowerment in all spheres of life. It propagates the belief that women are in disadvantaged circumstances and that these circumstances should not be maintained but should be altered for the greater good of society. The challenges emerging under the influence of contemporary thought are discussed in the succeeding section, to help in measuring the impact on Pakistani Muslim women in the next chapter.

3.2. Challenges of Contemporary Thought to the Pakistani Muslim Women

In this chapter, the sociocultural environment pertaining to Pakistani women has been discussed in detail to identify the gaps that permit the effect of contemporary thought on Muslim women. Therein, the issues pertaining to women in social, cultural, ideological/religious, and psychological settings were identified. In addition, research established that the application of Islamic principles in the context of women's rights in Pakistan lags behind, creating an opening for modern thought to acquire traction among Muslim women. It is evident from the preceding discussion that the wave of westernisation tends to threaten Muslim societies like Pakistan, where the gaps in understanding Islam allow contemporary thought to creep into the minds of Muslim women, and where reluctance to follow the Islamic principles of justice and social responsibilities concerning women nurtures the thought in the minds of innocent minds with the allure of women's empowerment, gender equality, and freedom, thereby undermining the Islamic principles of justice and social responsibilities concerning women. This enables us to identify the challenges posed by contemporary thought in the following areas:

3.2.1 Social

It has been established in the detailed discussion carried out in the preceding chapters that freedom and gender equality are central to contemporary thoughts on women. Feminist thought now knocks at our doors or has already penetrated the household through the minds of Muslim women, which has led to destructive ideas like "my body, my choice" and are threatening the foundations of Islamic values and the Muslim social system. To this end, secular and missionary schools are contributing to the downfall of Islamic ideology by impacting on upbringing, social discipline, values, and habits in the name of education and culture. The seeds of doubt are being sown in young minds from an early age, leading to the distortion of Islamic ideology.[1]

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[1] Khushbakht and Munazza Sultana , *The Women Activism in Pakistan.*

The impact of contemporary thought on social context can be ascertained from the increasing divorce rate and the delay in marriages of young people for materialistic reasons. This is the ultimate result of opportunities available for free association of women and men, and working in the masculine spheres, in obedience to the prophets of "Westernism" and women's liberation. The Nation reported that the trend of *Khul'a*[1] is increasing. According to data from Pakistan's Punjab Province, 13,299 *Khul'a* cases were recorded in 2012. In 2013, it increased to 14,243, and in 2014, it reached 16,942. In 2016, there were 18,901 recorded cases. It demonstrated that Pakistan's divorce rate is increasing.[2] "The divorce rate is on the rise in Pakistani society and the reason is attributed to the attitude of the West. The inculcation of Western values and trends is straining the relationships of conjugal partners and, ultimately, divorces are happening."[3] Today's Muslim women, in general, have gone so far in their quest for Western values that if they study *Qasim Amin's* 'The New Woman'[4] they will go along with the "leave the veil" movement. Now there are so many magazines out there with obscenity to seduce men. The semi-nude pictures of women are constantly being published in newspapers, on the cover pages of magazines and fashion shows, and the vulgarity in morning shows is evidence of the ideological battle on the women's platform, vigorously focused on poisoning and promoting such undesired ideas by which both genders seduce each other and push themselves to humiliation and disgrace.

A person's appearance and attitude are a reflection of their culture. In Pakistani society, there is no separation between culture and religion, since the two are inextricably linked. According to Singhal and Shaista Ikramullah, the Pakistani people's culture and traditions are a result of their unwavering dedication to Hindu beliefs and practises. On the other hand, the Islamic ideas and traditions transmitted by migrants and conquerors have had a profound influence on people's customs and traditions. The Hindu culture's male-dominated practises have obliterated the Islamic tradition of treating women with adequate respect in inheritance, marriage licence, the right to divorce (*Khul'a*), and the ability to

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[1] A right granted to women by Islam to seek divorce if they are unhappy in their marriage.

[2] Ramzan, Shazia, Saira Akhtar, Shabbir Ahmad, Muhammad Umar Zafar, Haroon Yousaf, *Rising Divorce Rates*. Quoted in *Sociology and Anthropology "Divorce Status and Its Major Reasons in Pakistan"* The Nation. 2016 June 27, 2016.

[3] Haider, M., *The US is making Pakistani wives divorce their husbands*. Dawn. 2015 August 26, 2015. Quoted in Sociology and Anthropology "*Divorce Status and Its Major Reasons in Pakistan*" by Shazia Ramzan, Saira Akhtar, Shabbir Ahmad, Muhammad Umar Zafar, Haroon Yousaf.

[4] Amin, Qasim (1863-1908), an Egyptian lawyer, is best known for his advocacy of women's emancipation in Egypt, through a number of works including 'the new woman' triggering debate on status of women in Egypt in 1899.

conduct an independent business. While Pakistani orthodoxy purports to emphasise religious injunctions, the culture usually prefers practises acquired from centuries-old non-Muslim traditions, regardless of whether they violate Islamic prohibitions.[1]

The basic identity of the Muslim woman is likely to be erased, as she has begun to imitate alien women and culture in every sphere of life, from hairstyle to wearing a bathing suit, whatever style Western civilization imposed on their women. She is prone to adopting it. It is due to her misunderstanding of the Prophet's ﷺ words, who permitted grey hair dyeing but asked that she not imitate the Jews in trying to look blonde.[2] The West has become an ideal for young ones, especially Muslim women, who look at it with great admiration and increasingly imitate it. The women's rights activists are against the traditional social setup thus can be seen criticizing Islamic values for gender discrimination, emphasizing absolute gender equality, irrespective of the physical incompatibilities. The West has become an ideal for young people, especially Muslim women, who look at it with great admiration and are increasingly imitating it. Women's rights activists are against the traditional social setup and thus can be seen criticising Islamic values for gender discrimination and emphasising absolute gender equality, irrespective of physical incompatibilities. The West has become an ideal for young people, especially Muslim women, who look at it with great admiration and are increasingly imitating it. Women's rights activists are against the traditional social setup, and thus can be seen criticising Islamic values for gender discrimination, emphasising absolute gender equality, irrespective of physical incompatibilities. The Muslim women of our materialistic age and beyond are going to be much different from the women of earlier generations, who were known for their values, principles, and sincerity. Feminists' ideas have a lot of educated women's attention. They encourage women to be different, independent, and individual.

It is worth noting that the local dress designers have helped in promoting western dresses among Muslim women. If we glance around, we can see that our *'shalwar'* has evolved into trousers, then into tights, with the length of the trousers reducing and revealing legs via 'Capris' and 'tulips.' Similarly, shirts with exposed patterns such as "cold shoulder" are promoted to women. The westernised look and attitude come from the fact that Muslim women want to look modern and more like women in the West.

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[1] Ikramullah, Begam Shaista, *From Pardah to Parliament* (London, The Cresset Press, 1963), 160; see also, Damodar Singhal, *Pakistan* (New Jersey, Prentice Hill, 1972), 11-12.
[2] Sunan e Nisei, The Book Of Adornment, Hadith No 5076.

Based on the above discussions, following sociocultural attitudes are noticed in Pakistani Muslim women, which can be attributed to the impact of contemporary thought:

- Irrational behavior and individualistic approach towards life.
- Concept of good and bad based on individual whims (intellect).
- Deterioration of family values, uundermining the institution of marriage and family in the quest for gender equality.
- Disrespect of authority or elders.
- Materialism is the main driver of desire and aspiration.
- Social isolation leading to anxiety and psychological disorders.
- Evading marriage bond and responsibilities.
- Violation of social norms based on Divine guidance and historical experiences.
- Eulogizing the Western ideals in a larger context.
- Lowering standards of modesty and rationality.
- Preference for personal pleasure and irrationality.
- Projecting themes of repression for those not aligned to contemporary thought.
- Misplaced concept of enlightenment.
- Desire for economic empowerment and accumulation of wealth.
- Participation of working women side by side with men in business events (late night parties) and greater liberty for women traveling without a *maḥram* in connection with employment and business.

3.2.2. Ideological/ Religious

It is generally believed that Western thought and Christian civilization are one and the same. This is not correct, as Western civilization is factually as far from Islam as it is from Christianity and Judaism. Not only that, but it is also far from other world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Like Islam, Christianity and Judaism universally believe in protecting the social unit of the family. All three religions disapprove of sensual intimacy outside of legal marriage. According to these three religions, modesty is a basic human value. Similarly, man is not free in totality but is bound by some basic rules called values.[1] All three divine religions prohibit alcohol, gambling, and the intimate mixing of men and women. On the contrary, the most fundamental value of the West is liberalism, which has no boundaries. The West takes the value of freedom to the point,

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[1] Bilgin, F., *Political Liberalism in Muslim Societies*, (Routledge: Taylor & Francis, 2011).

where modesty or obscenity, alcoholism or abstinence, avoidance of accountability, and keeping or not having a family system consisting of spouses, become values based on an individual's personal preferences. According to Western civilization, these are not basic values but are subject to liberalism. Everyone has the right to choose, whether they like it or not. All religions have a common teaching that the elderly of other religions should be respected, and no sarcastic or insulting words should be used against them. There is a growing tendency in the West to disrespect the elders of other religions, and this attitude has led to several conflicts between Muslims and the West.[1]

Just as Western thought and Christianity are inseparable, so are Islamic civilization and modern civilization, but with differences in the application of Islamic values and principles. There are certain things in the culture and customs of various areas and regions that have nothing to do with Islam. However, people follow these. The problem is exacerbated when the distinction between religion and culture is forgotten, and every aspect of culture is believed to be a part of religion. The same is true for all other civilizations and their adopted religions.[2]

In the absence of adequate religious education and awareness about the rights and privileges granted by Islam, the agents of contemporary thought find it easy to lead to ideological displacement through the glitter of universal values of "justice" and "equality" being part of the Western heritage. Thus, some of the challenges emerging in the context of alien beliefs, values, customs, and traditions impacting Muslim women are identified as follows:

- The supremacy of contemporary thought.
- Renunciation of the commandments of Allah, reflecting a non-serious attitude to religion; promoting godlessness.
- Emergence of secular mindset.
- Demand for gender equality
- Encouraging mixed gatherings of men and women in public places.
- Celebrations of Western-concocted events like Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, etc.
- Rebellious attitudes against established social norms; encouraging love marriages through social protection by NGOs and projection by the media.

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[1] Louch, A. R, 'Sins and Crimes' *Philosophy* 43, No. 163 (1968): 38-50. Accessed February 27, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3749021.
[2] Croucher, Stephen M., Heng Zeng, Diyako Rahmani and Mélodine Sommier *'Religion, Culture Communication'*, Accessed February 27, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.166

- Undermining the status of women by unchecked tribal customs like honour killings, *Wānnī,* and *sawara* (giving women compensation to settle feuds).

- Denial of right to property through various practices.

- Undermining the status of a female due to the preference of a male baby over a female baby.

Apart from the above, there are many other new rituals and traditions which reflect the profound effects of alien thought among Muslim women in particular. All these rituals have nothing to do with Islam and Muslims.

3.2.3. Psychological

In the modern age, despite the best comforts and facilities, a person suffers from depression or mental illness due to some problem. Pakistan ranked thirteenth among the top countries in terms of mental illness.[1] A report published in The News states:

"Psychological problems in Pakistan are widespread. According to one estimate, around 50 million people in Pakistan suffer from mental disorders. A range of psychiatric disorders have been reported, such as depression, substance and alcohol misuse, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. According to one estimate, 36 percent of Pakistanis suffer from anxiety and depression, which is often caused by strained family and friend relations, the feeling of not fitting in the society, the unstable economic and political conditions of the country giving rise to unemployment and poverty."[2]

Constant anxiety and depression, talking despair, feeling helpless and anxious, not participating in various social activities, inclination towards sex, lack of intimacy, fatigue, lack of interest, and inattention at work, poor memory, making wrong decisions, getting up early or sleeping too much, losing, or gaining weight are all symptoms of depression, stress, or mental illness. One of the many reasons for the increase in mental illnesses is social and societal injustice, the search for the "best" without hard work, the neglect of religion and religious values. The other factors that cause mental illness are depression or mental illness, which are more common in women than in men and children. Some Pakistani women suffer from inequality and social and customary oppression and are forced to live in unwelcome social and cultural environments. While preference given to male issues over females continues to haunt women with a sense of inferiority, as men

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[1] WHO Mental Health Atlas 2017.

[2] Din, Rafi Amir-Ud, 'Dispelling myths about mental health', *The News, Political Economy*, February 16, 2020.

consider women to be born inferior. Forced marriages in the garb of arranged marriages are yet another source of trauma for women.[1]

It is observed that there are women who want autonomy, and its unavailability leads them to extremism, which mostly affects their children. The kind of autonomy they desire stems from contemporary thought, and in the Pakistani socio-cultural environment, it is neither available before marriage nor afterward. The nonfulfillment of such desires increases anxiety, and they consider the spouse relationship as a chain of the feet and the children as a burden. The portrait of an 'independent woman' by feminists has subjected these 'new women' to many dangers and risks, resulting in further socio-cultural complications. If we imagine the life pattern emerging for the modern or new woman influenced by feminist thought, it will include elements like extreme brand consciousness in the race of fashion, insecurity about future, lack of belief in Allah as well as her own capacity, beautifying herself to look attractive in public for others' pleasure, jealousy of other females as well as males feeling a sense of competition with them. Following psychological challenges are perceived for the women in the wake contemporary thought:

- Pursuit of jobs of all kinds in a quest for equality and economic independence.
- Individualism: leading to the urge to escape from the traditional housekeeping role.
- Gender equality; seeking the participation of men in the household; leading to domestic conflicts, hence trend of staying single or seeking a divorce.
- Pleasure: the emergence of the tendency to experience the horrible experience of extramarital relationships.

It can be concluded that economic independence, social liberty, equality at work and in jobs, all lead to a form of relationship where men and women are seen as rivals, even enemies. The possible result is the promotion of lesbian tendencies. These give birth to male expectations of working women in jobs and at work; they should look slim, pretty, and well-groomed in their appearance, attire, toilette, makeup, hairstyle, etc. It is a virtual "beauty trap" at work. She must look like Brooke. In the quest for independence, the bondage from home weakens, with new promises of assured freedom and terrifying consequences of loneliness, thus falling prey to the wildest fantasies of the male psyche.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the research examined the sociocultural environment related to Pakistani women, highlighting the gaps that allow the influence of contemporary thought

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[1] WHO Mental Health Atlas 2017.

on Muslim women through available ways and means discussed in detail. That led to the identification of the resultant challenges in social, cultural, ideological/religious, and psychological contexts. Comparing contemporary feminist thought to Islamic teachings about women's rights, the research concluded that the former is rebellious, and it promotes unlimited liberty, and is the source of gender imbalance. It has been identified that Islam saw both genders as having equal abilities but distinct roles and responsibilities. Additionally, research indicates that the manifestation of Islamic principles lags in the context of women's rights in Pakistan, providing an opportunity for contemporary thought to gain popularity among Muslim women.

It is evident from the above discussion that the wave of westernization tends to threaten Muslim societies like Pakistan, where the gaps in understanding Islam open the door for contemporary thought to slip into the minds of Muslim women, where reluctance to follow the Islamic principles of justice and social responsibilities concerning women nurtures the thought in the minds of innocent minds with the allure of women's empowerment, gender equality, and freedom, thereby threatening our social system. The inventory of challenges identified through a conceptual framework formed based on various studies. These will be put to test through a survey of the Pakistani environment and interaction with intelligentsia to establish the efficacy and severity of these challenges.

Chapter 4

Data Collection, Presentation, Analysis, and Discussions

The qualitative part of the research identified that Muslim thought is being influenced by Western materialistic, individualistic, liberal, and secular trends. It has been established that, under the umbrella of democracy in the postmodern era, Western ethos and ideologies are causing significant damage to traditional norms and the family system. The analysis of the sociocultural environment demonstrated that women have become more vulnerable to exploitation as a result of the promotion of gender equality, and they have sacrificed prestige, respect, and peace of mind in the quest for emancipation and empowerment. The study found that, since feminism is aided by economic equality, it cannot be understood as a fundamental concept governing woman's right.

The study, through qualitative research, established that the muddled perception of westernisation and modernization exacerbates the effect of contemporary thought on Muslims. It is also noted that those who propagate western ideals in the name of democracy and human rights often overlook the freedom and rights guaranteed to women by Islam. In Pakistan, the line between faith and society is blurred and any element of culture is religious. The research established that there is a discernible influence of contemporary Muslim women in Pakistan in all spheres of life. Muslim women's persistent desire to have a Muslim identity reflects the scope of application of Islamic teachings and the need for formal religious education. These conclusions of qualitative research were put to test through the survey to confirm their applicability to Pakistani women. This chapter presents the data, analysis, and discussions to measure the impact of contemporary thought, as perceived during the qualitative part of the study.

4.1. Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, Muslim women of Rawalpindi and Islamabad have been taken as a sample, along with some male strata of society, for the first stage of quantitative study in the form of a closed-ended survey. Demographic information comprising age, gender, education, marital status, and occupation was added to help in ascertaining the trends in different categories. The reason for selecting Rawalpindi and Islamabad is that these cities have a mixed population, representing almost all the major provinces of Pakistan as well as overseas populations. Moreover, a diverse population that is highly educated, multicultural, socially diverse, and corporate culture; a mix of affluent and

middle-and lower-middle-class individuals; and exposed to civil society, foreigners, and diplomats. These were mediums of influence on the socio-cultural milieu and could act as an active ingredient in altering the community's thought patterns. The emerging trend of women adopting the slogan "My Body, My Choice" as a women's rights slogan has triggered the minds of impressionable young people. Thus, it was necessary to research these areas to ascertain the impact of emerging trends under the influence of contemporary thought.

Two questionnaires were formulated with first one for the survey containing 25 statements to investigate four major parameters on the Likert scale as under:

- Sociocultural

- Socioreligious

- Socioeconomic

- Psychological

The Likert scale illustrates the following 5 points:

1. Strongly Agree (SA)
2. Agree (AG)
3. Neutral (N)
4. Disagree (DA)
5. Strongly Disagree (SD)

The second questionnaire was used for interviews and discussions with prominent personalities from different intellectual and professional backgrounds. The response to the first questionnaire was analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The interpretation of the data is described in the following section. Considering the above, an online and traditional survey were conducted on a targeted population involving male and female samples from Rawalpindi and Islamabad, with demographic variety. Gender representation by men was deemed necessary to assess the social impact of contemporary thought on women and men in proximity. The profile of respondents is given below:

Category	Number
Muslim Women (Total) : Age Group 20 and above	1,512
Muslim Women (Married)	874
Muslim Women (Single)	638
Muslim Women (Working)	983
Muslim Men: Age group 25-50 Years	670

The results have been analysed as follows in line with the objective of each statement, thereby highlighting the findings listed at the end of the analysis of each statement.

4.2: Data Presentation & Analysis

Item-wise analysis of Impact of Contemporary Thought on Muslim Women in Pakistan inventory, through Frequency, percentage, and mean.
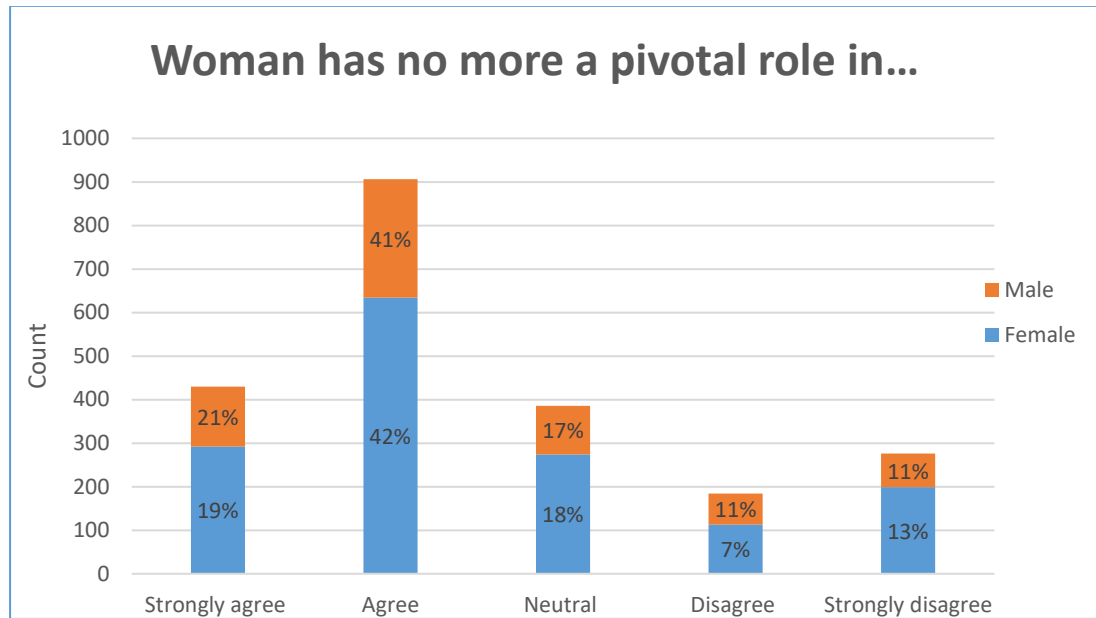
Figure; 4.2.1

Table: 4.2.1

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly agree	430	20%	
Agree	906	42%	
Neutral	386	18%	**3.47**
Disagree	184	8%	
Strongly disagree	276	13%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement is very central to the survey on the impact of contemporary Western thought. Though most of the participants (62%, including 42% women and 41% men) expressed 'agreement', followed by 19% of women and 21% of men showing 'strong agreement'. However, 13% of women and 11% of men strongly disagree, and 7% of women and 11% of men, though relatively smaller, also disagree with the statement. There was no earlier study of this kind on this theme. However, the trend confirms the negative impact of contemporary thought, thus evading domestic responsibilities.

Figure: 4.2.2
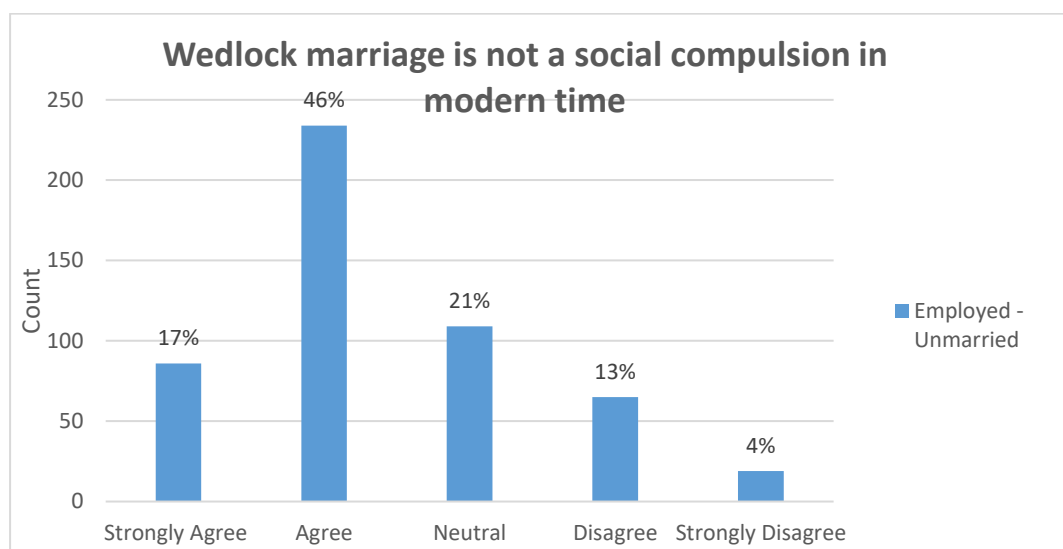
Table; 4.2.2

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	451	21%	
Agree	965	44%	
Neutral	446	20%	3.67
Disagree	244	11%	
Strongly Disagree	76	3%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement sought to ascertain the importance of the institution of marriage in the minds of females (unmarried and employed). The majority of the respondents agreed (46%) and strongly agreed (17%) with the social necessity of wedlock, but a seemingly small part (13%) of disagreement, along with 4% strongly disagreeing with the statement, is noteworthy, especially when seen in conjunction with a fairly large number of over 21% staying neutral. This confirmed the growing trend of staying single and the inclination to seek divorce among the economically empowered class.

Figure: 4.2.3
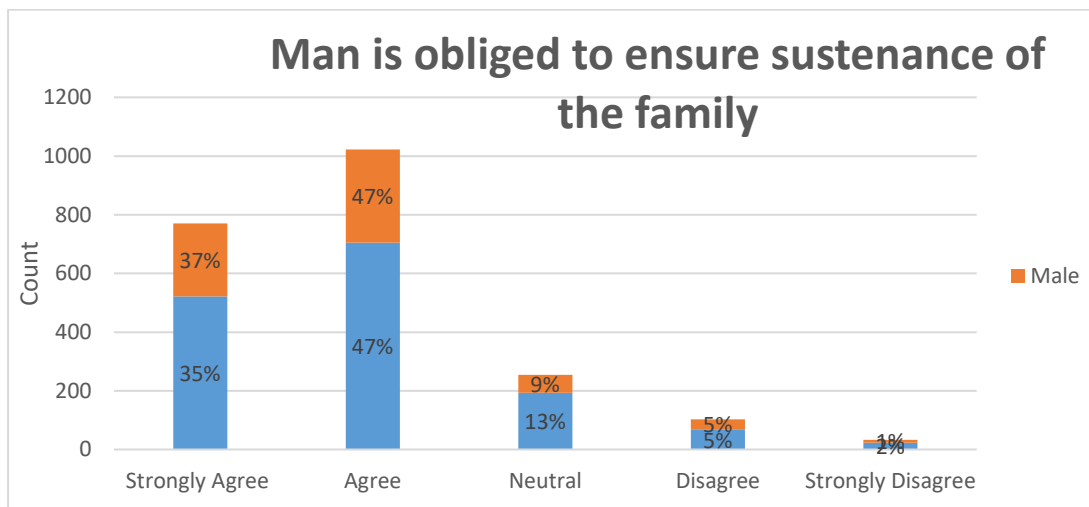
Table 4.2.3

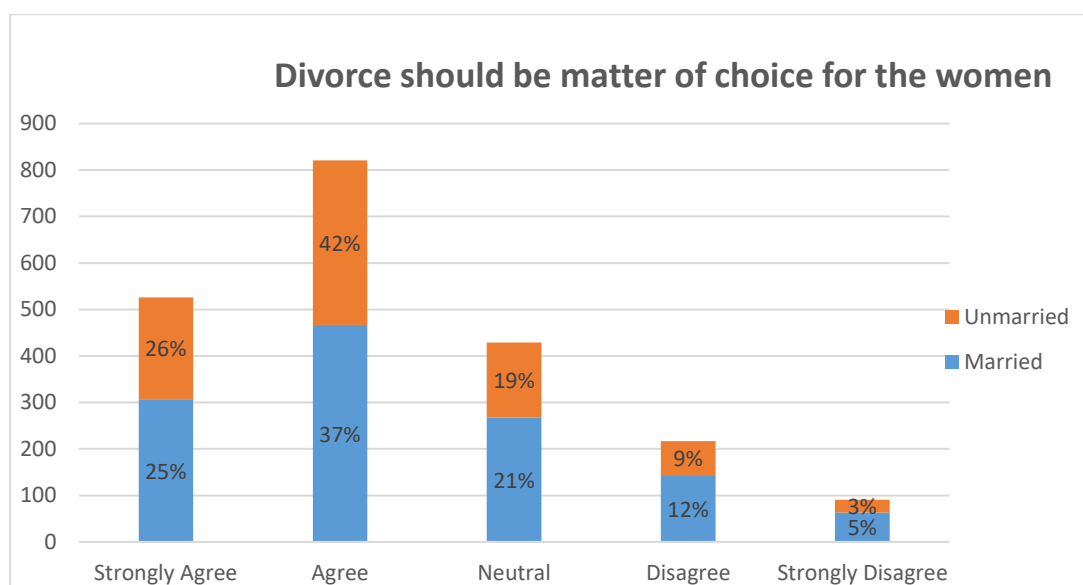| Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	770	35%	
Agree	1022	47%	
Neutral	254	12%	4.10
Disagree	103	5%	
Strongly Disagree	33	2%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was aimed at ascertaining the validity of the traditional thought that the male is obliged to ensure the sustenance of the family. 47% of the female participants agreed with the statement, while 35% showed strong agreement with the statement. While only 2% strongly disagreed with the statement, another 5% also sided with them in rejecting the statement. A significant number, 13% female and 9% male, remained neutral, which reflected a confused class sitting on the fence. The nonexistence of clarity to support the statement and the small number of disagreements are indicative of eroding faith in man's ability and obligation to sustain the family.

Figure: 4.2.4
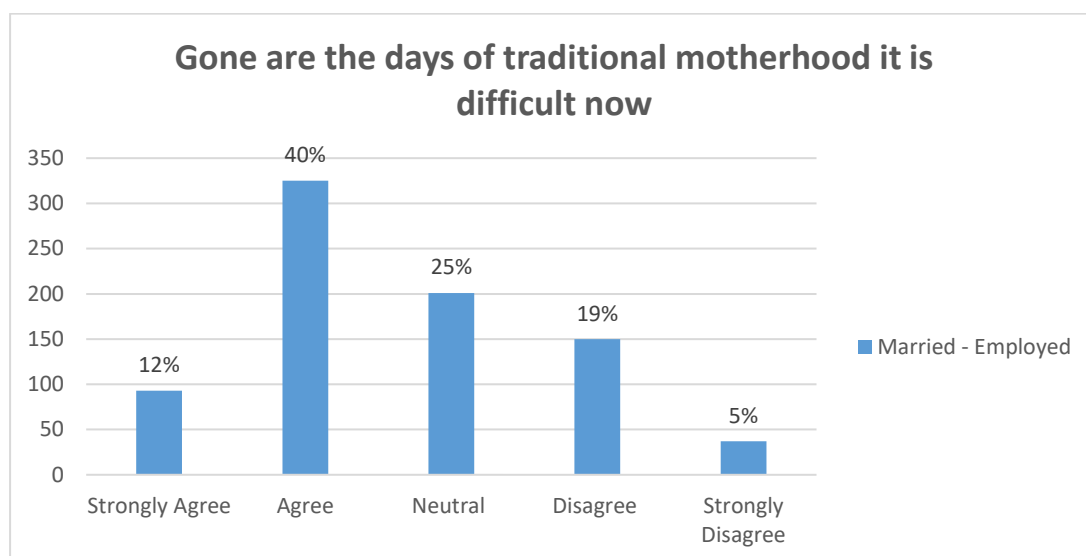
Table: 4.2.4

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	249	12%	
Agree	868	40%	
Neutral	543	25%	3.34
Disagree	413	19%	
Strongly Disagree	109	5%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was to ascertain the mindset about motherhood, particularly among married and employed female participants. 12 % of the participants strongly agreed with the statement, while 40% agreed with the change, with 25% staying neutral. However, 19% of the participants disagreed with the statement, along with 5% strongly disagreed. The numbers are reflective of being overtaken by the trend of aversion to the mother's role under the influence of contemporary thought.

Figure: 4.2.5

Divorce should be matter of choice for the women

Table: 4.2.5

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	554	25%	
Agree	854	39%	
Neutral	450	21%	3.71
Disagree	232	11%	
Strongly Disagree	92	4%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was to ascertain the mindset about motherhood, particularly among married and employed female participants. 12 % of the participants strongly agreed with the statement, while 40% agreed with the change, with 25% staying neutral. However, 19% of the participants disagreed with the statement, along with 5% strongly disagreed. The numbers are reflective of being overtaken by the trend of aversion to the mother's role under the influence of contemporary thought.

Figure: 4.2.6

Sexual orientation (straight, lesbian gays etc) is natural mindset
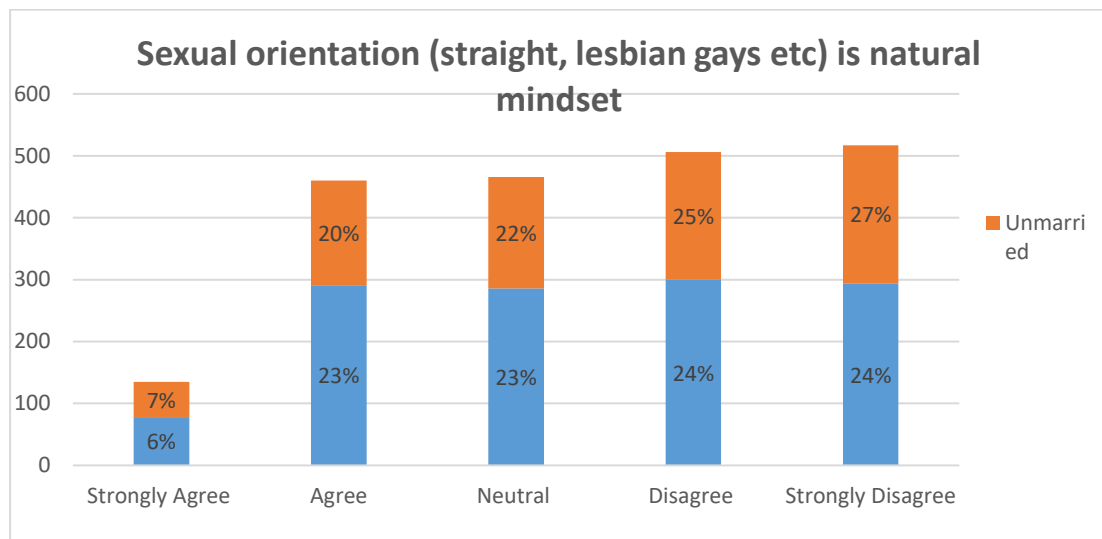
Table: 4.2.6

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	140	6%	
Agree	484	22%	
Neutral	487	22%	2.61
Disagree	532	24%	
Strongly Disagree	539	25%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was structured to establish the existence of germs of sexual deviance like lesbians in women as one of the impacts of unchecked freedom in the West. A significant number of the participants (23%) married and 20% single agreed, while 6 to 7% strongly agreed with the statement. The results are indicative of the existence of unnatural sex choices and the possibility of sexual deviance.

Figure: 4.2.7
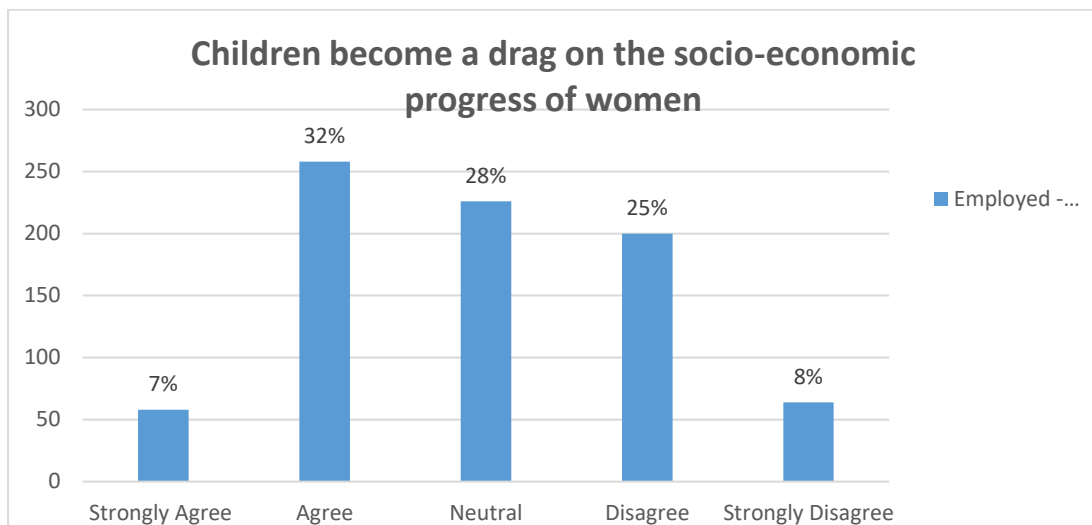
Table: 4.2.7

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	142	7%	
Agree	676	31%	
Neutral	617	28%	3.02
Disagree	577	26%	
Strongly Disagree	170	8%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was to confirm the aversion to domestic responsibilities established through earlier charts among working married women. Over 32% of participants agreed with the statement, along with 7% expressing strong approval of the statement. The results indicated rising negligence in the grooming of children, thus impacting the next generation.

Figure: 4.2.8

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT

- Strongly Agree 18%
- Agree 38%
- Neutral 21%
- Disagree 15%
- Strongly Disagree 8%
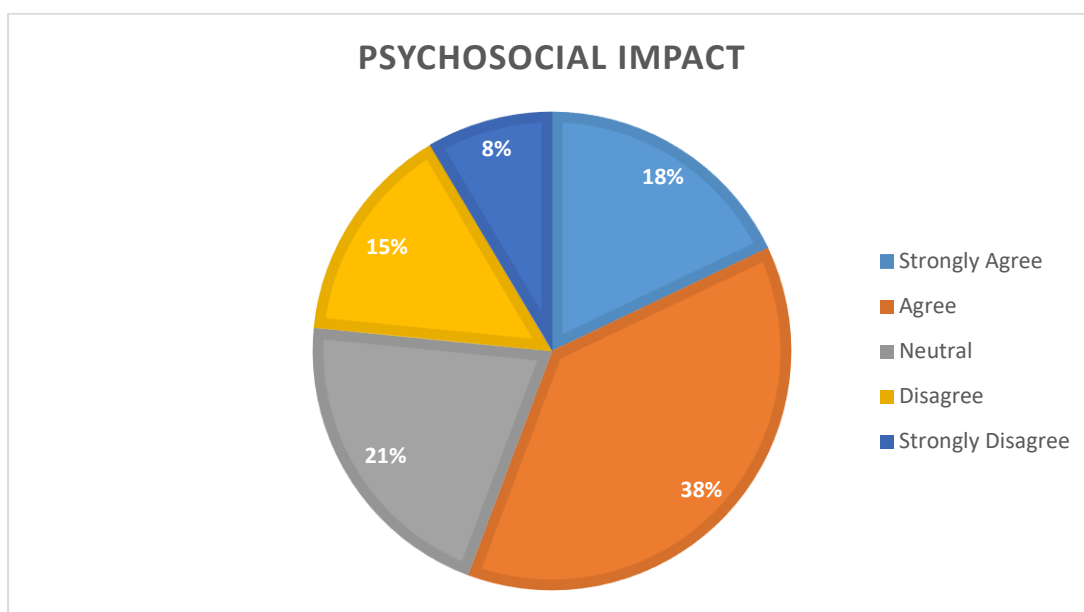
Table: 4.2.8

Response	Average Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	391	18%	
Agree	825	38%	
Neutral	455	21%	3.42
Disagree	326	15%	
Strongly Disagree	185	8%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The overall analysis of data collected on social impact showed a mean of 3.42, which indicates the visible impact of contemporary thought on Muslim women in Pakistan in all social aspects of life. This pointed out a growing lack of interest of Pakistani women in major domestic roles, suggesting a tendency toward denying domestic responsibilities, trust in the institution of the family, societal norms, and female primary orientation. A growing aversion to household duties will impact the next generation's grooming, and result in long-term social isolation for the parents.

Figure: 4.2.9

Role of women in economic activities should be driven by individual choice
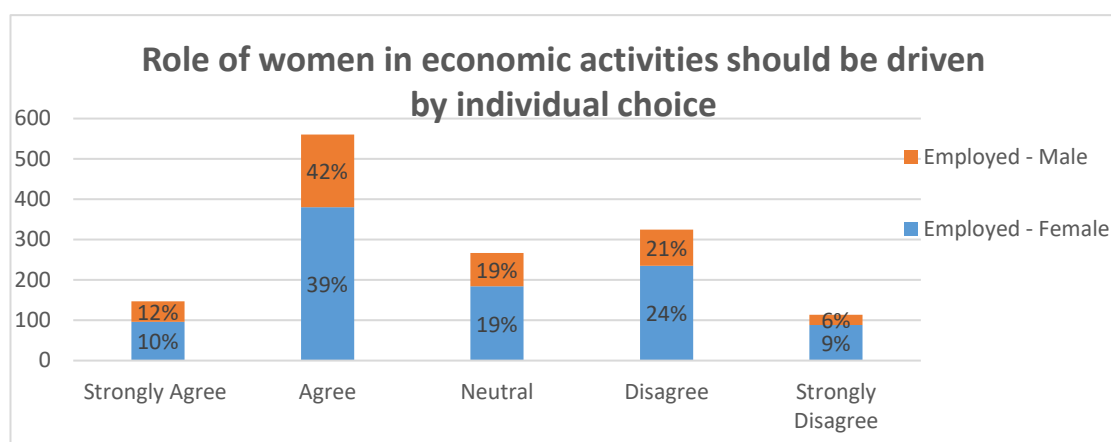
Table: 4.2.9

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	228	10%	
Agree	855	39%	
Neutral	437	20%	3.23
Disagree	508	23%	
Strongly Disagree	154	7%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement aims to confirm the urge for economic empowerment by defining the very purpose of engagement in economic activities among working participants. A significant number of participants (39% women and 42% men) agreed to the statement, besides over 24% of women and 21% of men opposing the statement. The results indicated the preference for individual choice instead of the need to participate in economic activities. It indicated the ingress of thought into materialism and individualism.

Figure: 4.2.10
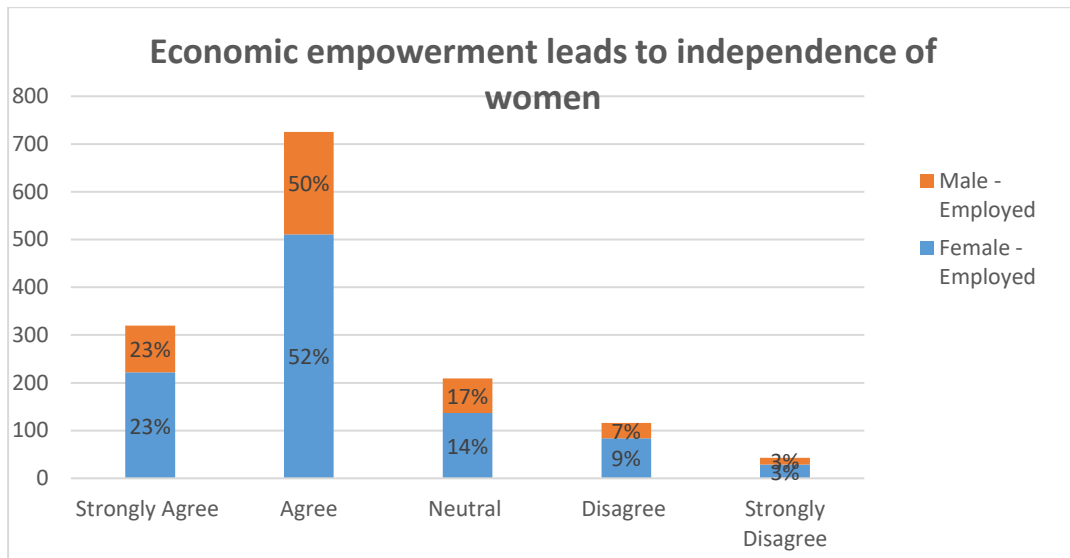
Table: 4.2.10

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	492	23%	
Agree	1108	51%	
Neutral	329	15%	3.81
Disagree	190	9%	
Strongly Disagree	63	3%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was aimed at establishing the impact of the desire for economic empowerment irrespective of the driving force (by compulsion or choice) on women. Over 50% of female and male employed participants agreed with the theme, with another 23% strongly agreeing. While a small number (2 to 3%) strongly disagreed, another 8% also disagreed and around 14 to 17% abstained. The majority view established that economically empowered women are socially independent as well.

Figure: 4.2.11
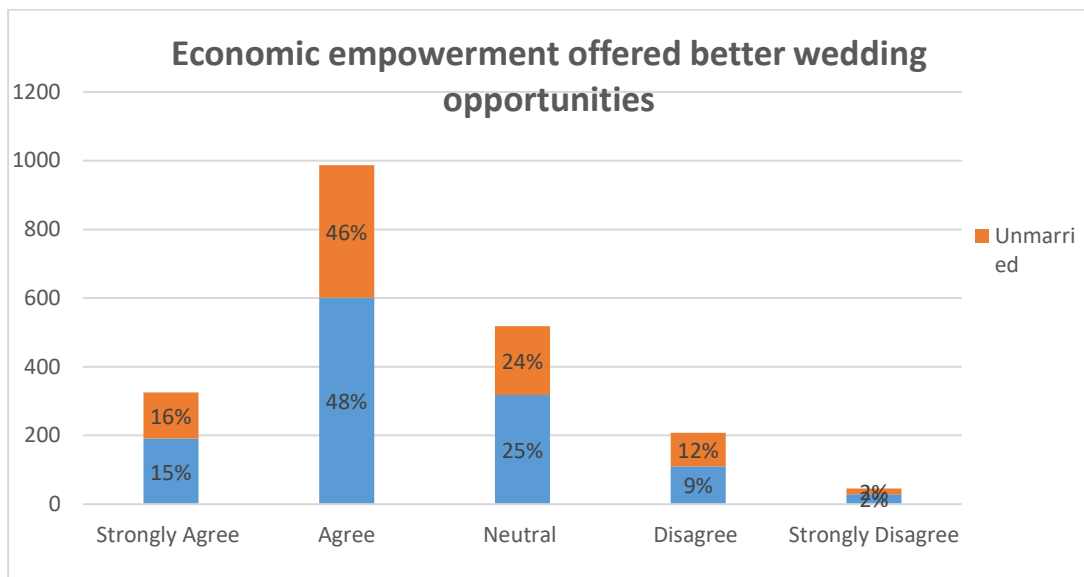
Table: 4.2.11

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	339	16%	
Agree	1035	47%	
Neutral	537	25%	3.64
Disagree	223	10%	
Strongly Disagree	48	2%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

A visible number of female participants (over 48 % married and 46 % unmarried) agreed to the statement, while over 24 % abstained. The result confirms the earlier assertions about desire for economic empowerment and a better future perspective, among other reasons.

Figure: 4.2.12

Woman are being exploited in the economic activities employment (moral/physical abuse)
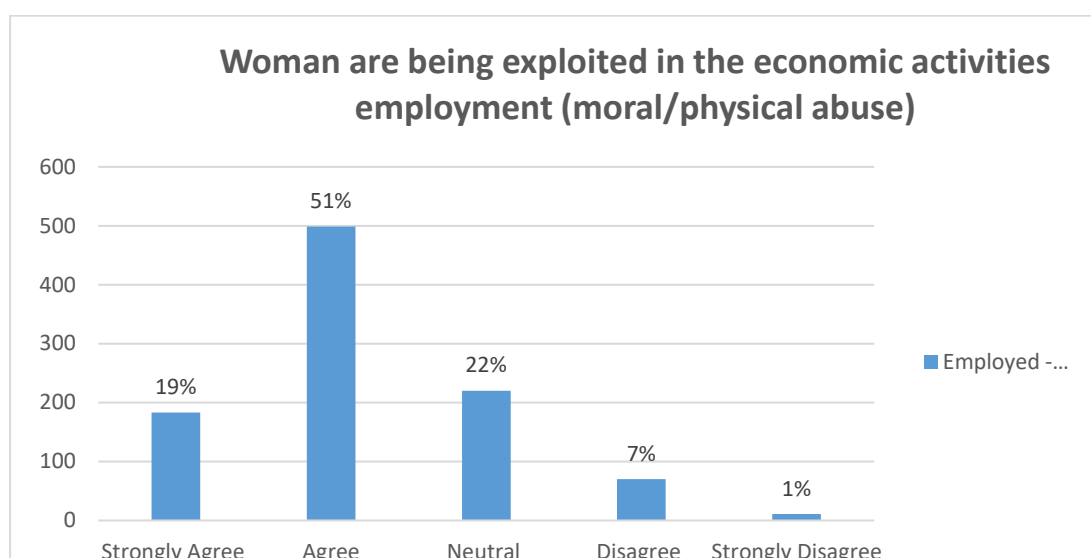
Table: 4.2.12

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	420	19%	
Agree	1076	49%	
Neutral	485	22%	3.77
Disagree	166	8%	
Strongly Disagree	35	2%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was aimed at confirmation of the perception of harassment of females in the workplace. A large number (over 5%) of participants expressed their agreement with the statement, along with over 1% strongly agreeing. The survey involved only working women, thus establishing that working women are being exploited in the workplace.

Figure: 4.2.13

Free mixing of genders is the need of present time
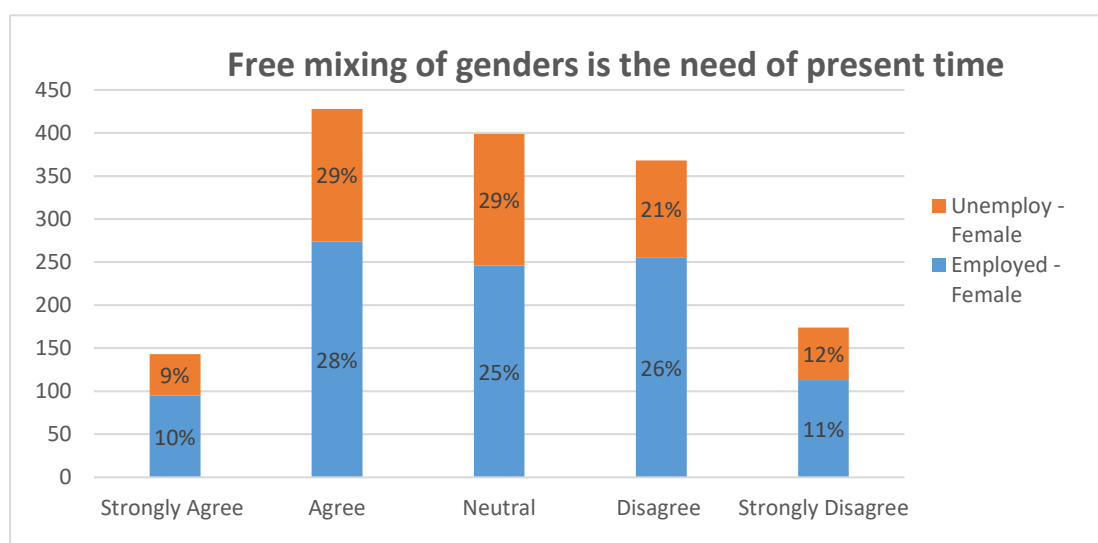
Table: 4.2.13

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	207	9%	
Agree	595	27%	
Neutral	596	27%	2.99
Disagree	538	25%	
Strongly Disagree	246	11%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was structured to ascertain the evolution of the mindset on free mixing of genders under the influence of contemporary thought. The opinion is divided, with a fairly large number of participants (28% employed and 29% unemployed) agreeing with the assertion, while an almost similar number (26/21%) express rejection and 11-12% strongly. The large segment (25/29%) has been neutral. The results confirm the fairly strong influence of the desire to promote freedom in line with contemporary thought.

Figure: 4.2.14
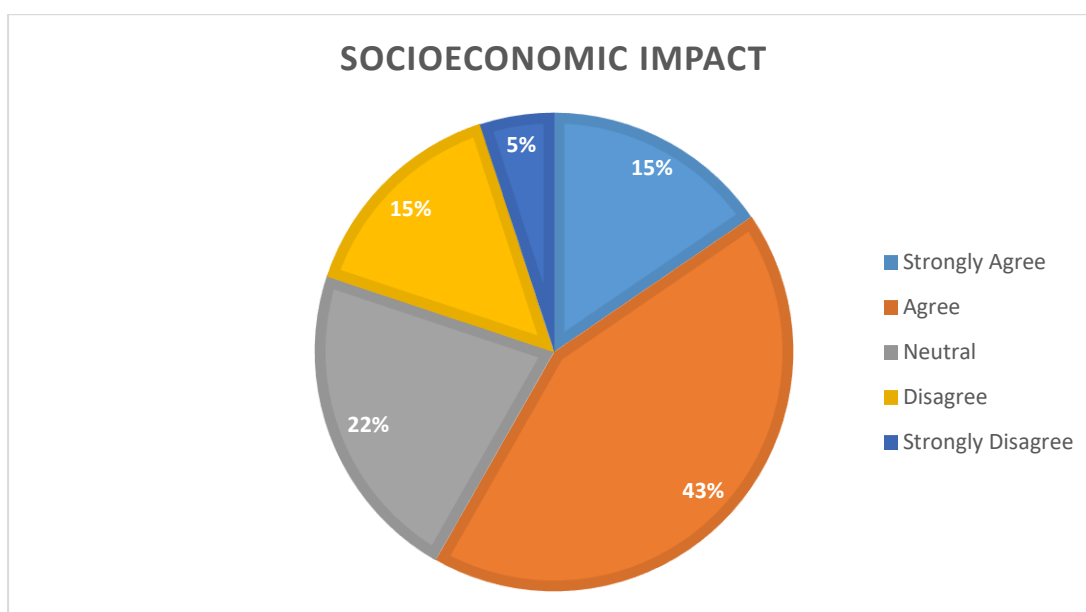
Table: 4.2.14

Response	Average Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	337	15%	
Agree	934	43%	
Neutral	477	22%	3.49
Disagree	325	15%	
Strongly Disagree	109	5%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The evaluation of the opinion on socioeconomic-related issues reflected the existence of an impact of 3.49 on Muslim women in Pakistan. The growing opportunities for economic empowerment in Pakistan assist in promoting the desire for personal and professional development, besides the incapacity of male family members to support the family, forcing women to earn, where women are exploited at work for a variety of reasons.

Figure: 4.2.15
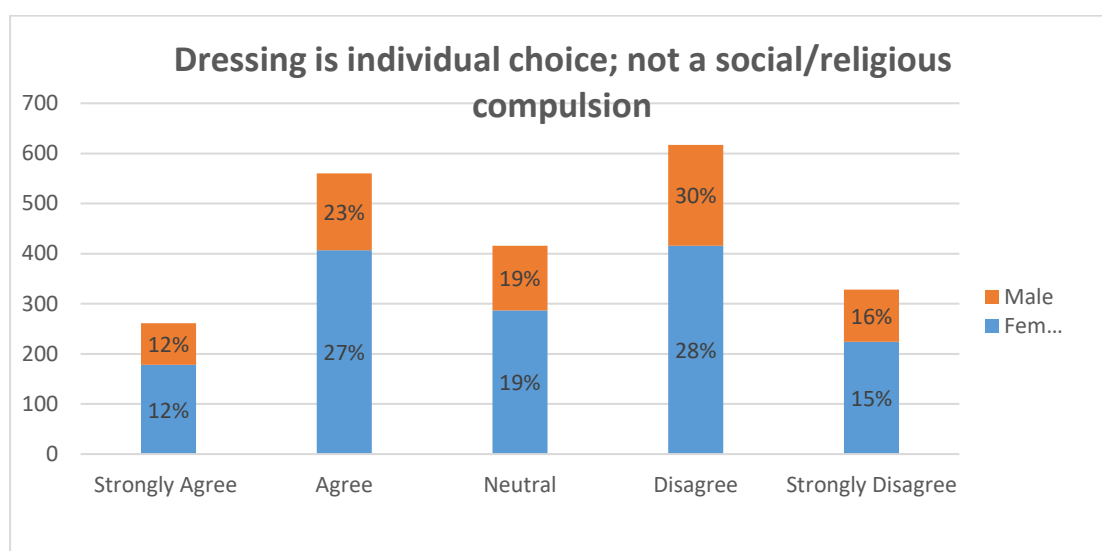
Table: 4.2.15

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	261	12%	
Agree	560	26%	
Neutral	416	19%	2.91
Disagree	617	28%	
Strongly Disagree	328	15%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was structured to confirm the most visible cultural change in the female outlook, attributed to contemporary thought. 28% female and 30% male participants rejected the statement, along with 15/16% expressing strong disagreement. However, an almost similar number (27% female and 23% male) agreeing with the statement, besides 12 % strongly agreeing, reflected a disregard for indigenous cultural values and lack of religious orientation in terms of outlook.

Figure: 4.2.16
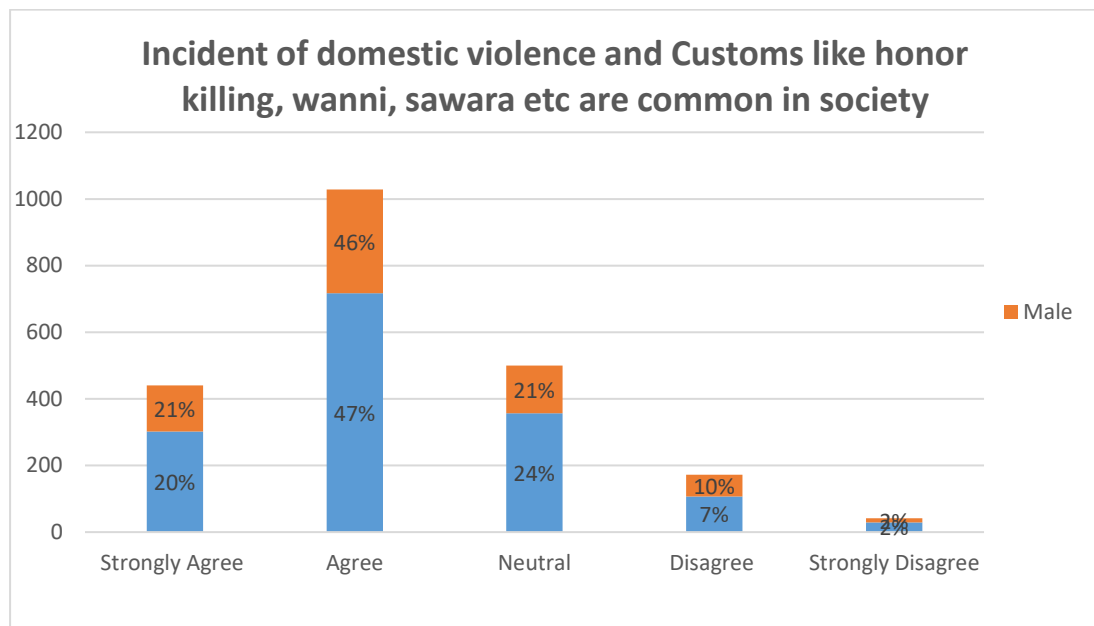
Table: 4.2.16

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	440	20%	
Agree	1028	47%	
Neutral	500	23%	3.76
Disagree	172	8%	
Strongly Disagree	42	2%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement aimed at establishing the level of knowledge of participants about social customs like honor killing, wanni, sawara, watasata (exchange/cross marriages), etc., which are used to defame Pakistani society. A large number of respondents (47%) agreed and 20% strongly agreed. While the basis of knowledge is unknown, the results show the alignment of thought to the perception created by the global media.

Figure: 4.2.17
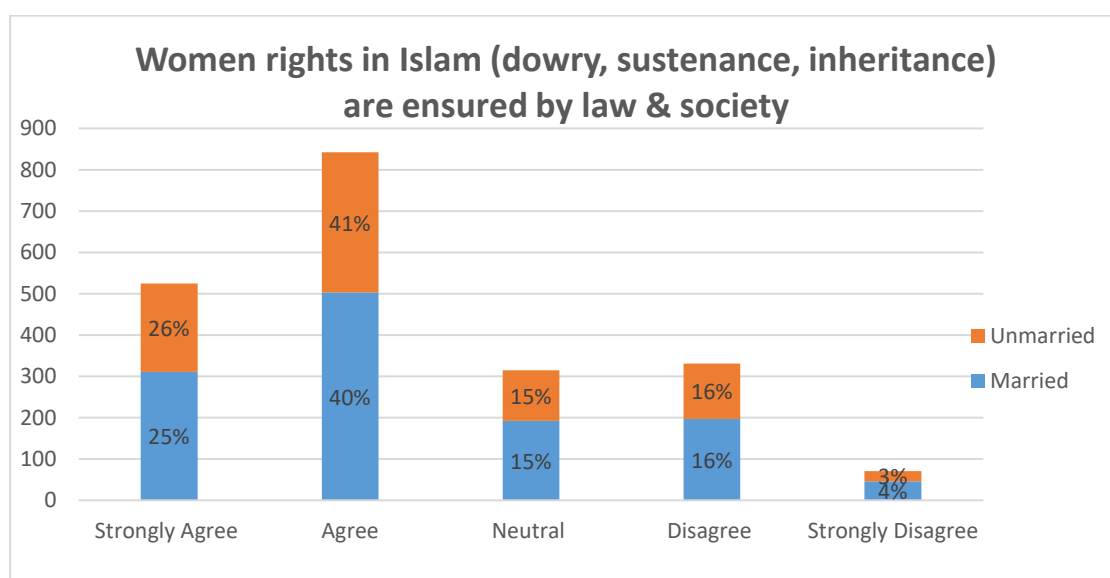
Table: 4.2.17

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	558	26%	
Agree	883	40%	
Neutral	330	15%	3.69
Disagree	338	15%	
Strongly Disagree	73	3%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was aimed at establishing the awareness of the female participants about the legal instruments that protect women's rights. A majority (40%) affirmed the adequacy of legal protection for women, with around 26% strongly agreeing with the statement. A significant number (around 15%) rejected the statement on account of dissatisfaction with the legal protection of women, reflecting the inadequacy of protection of women.

Figure: 4.2.18
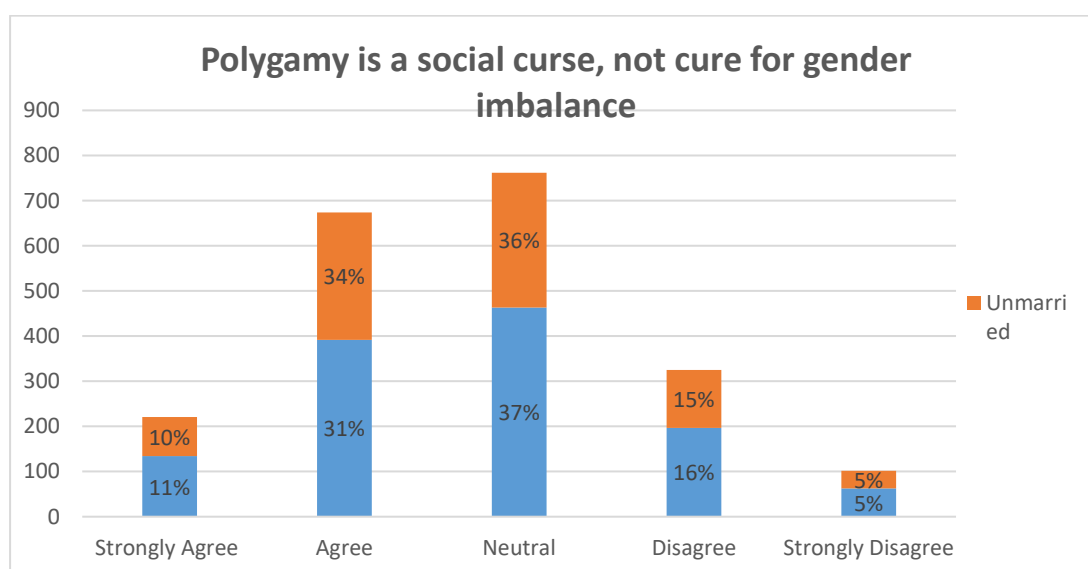
Table: 4.2.18

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	235	11%	
Agree	706	32%	
Neutral	792	36%	3.28
Disagree	343	16%	
Strongly Disagree	106	5%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was aimed at gauging the understanding of participants on the concept of polygamy. A clear majority (36%) stayed neutral, which may be attributed to the absence of clarity on the issue or first-hand knowledge of any such family. The statement was supported by 31% of women and 34% of men, including 11% showing strong agreement. Thus, the result affirmed the aversion of society to this social provision of Islam. The social bias against polygamy may also be attributed to the influence of alien culture and contemporary thought demonizing Islam on this issue.

Figure: 4.2.19
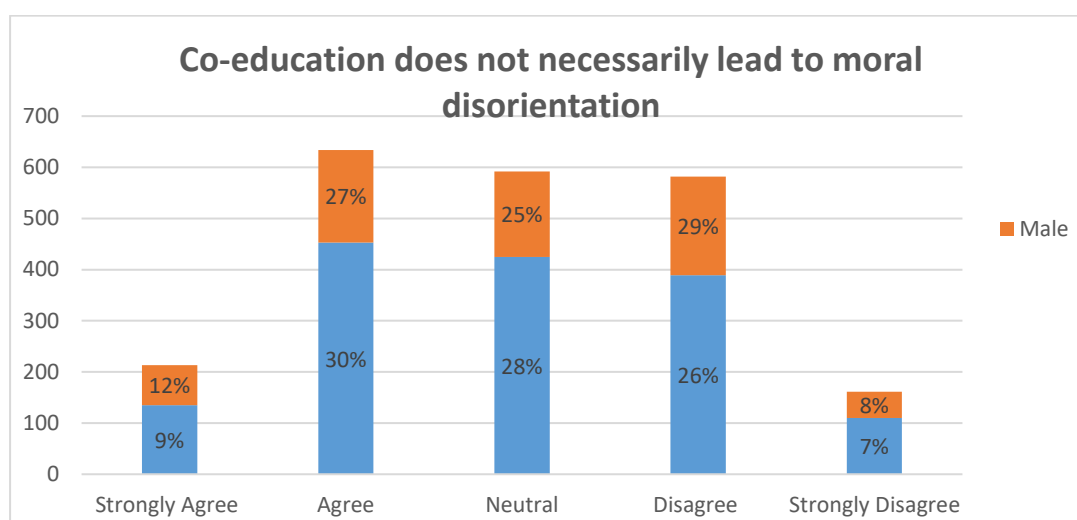
Table: 4.2.19

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	213	10%	
Agree	634	29%	
Neutral	592	27%	3.07
Disagree	582	27%	
Strongly Disagree	161	7%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was highly sensitive in terms of varying perceptions about coeducation. The statement was rejected by 26% of female and 29% of male participants, besides 7% strongly disagreeing with the statement. An almost equal number (30%) agreed with the statement denying higher chances of moral disorientation through coeducation, while 10% strongly agreed. A significant portion (27 %) remained undecided. The results indicate the dubious role of coeducation in society.

Figure: 4.2.20
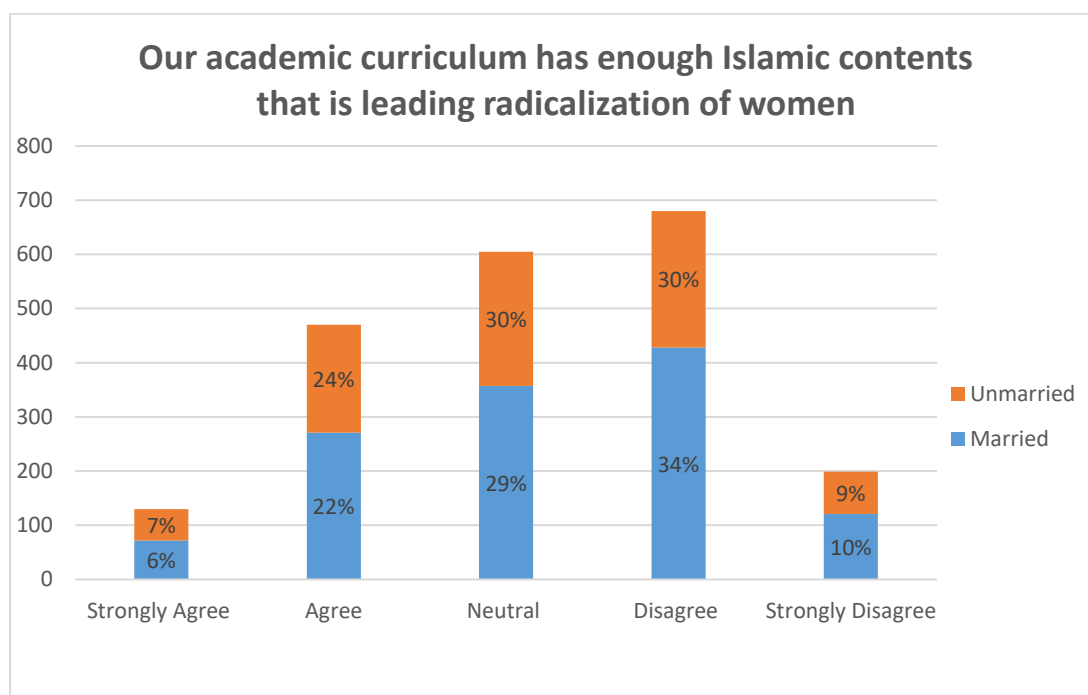
Table: 4.2.20

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	137	6%	
Agree	491	23%	
Neutral	639	29%	2.84
Disagree	707	32%	
Strongly Disagree	208	10%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement aimed at establishing the perception of participants about the Islamic content in curricula at various levels and their impact on society. A large number (32%) rejected the statement, along with 10% strongly disagreeing. However, the results indicate a substantial number of participants, 29 % of female and male respectively, agreeing with the negative perception of the Islamic contents of the syllabus.

Figure: 4.2.21

Islam offers greater religious spiritual and moral ascendency to the women
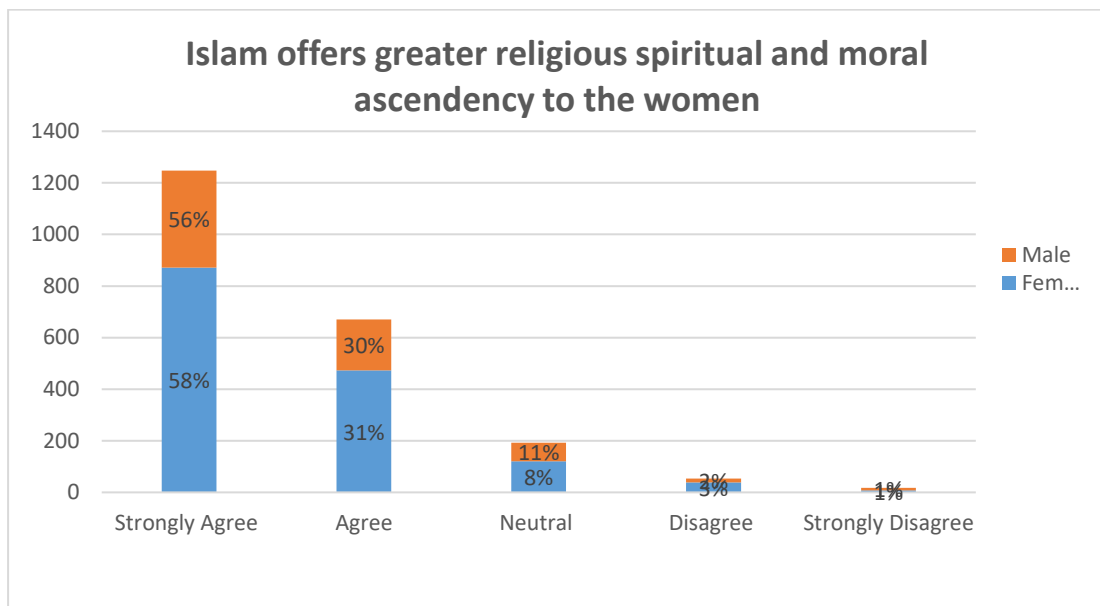
Table: 4.2.21

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	1247	57%	
Agree	671	31%	
Neutral	192	9%	4.41
Disagree	54	2%	
Strongly Disagree	18	1%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement about the spiritual, moral, and religious status of women granted by Islam has been supported by the vast majority. However, a noticeable number (8 to 11%) staying neutral and a small number (2 to 3%) expressing dissatisfaction with the Islamic provisions elevating the status of women, is reflective of the negative impact of alien thought demonizing Islam.

Figure: 4.2.22
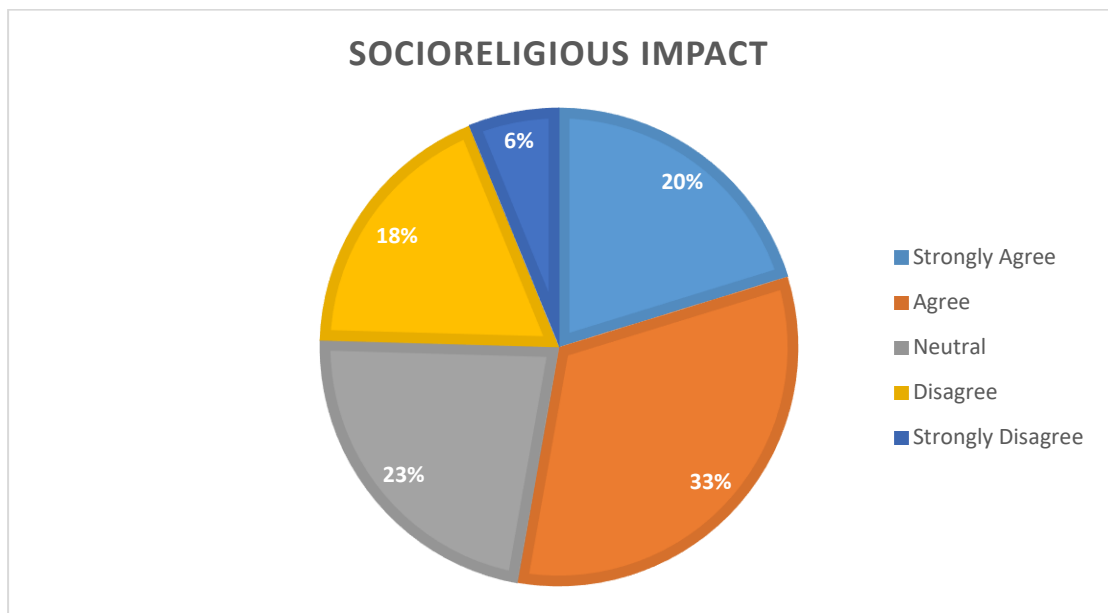
Figure: 4.2.22

Response	Average Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	442	20%	
Agree	710	33%	
Neutral	494	23%	3.42
Disagree	402	18%	
Strongly Disagree	134	6%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The analysis of factors evaluated under socioreligious impact displayed a mean impact of 3.42, confirming the trend toward westernized outlooks and attire being generally accepted by Muslim women under the influence of contemporary thought, with the possibility of swaying rationality and morals. However, Muslim women's desire to retain their Muslim identity reflects the need for true application of Islamic teachings and the importance of formal religious education, confirming my hypothesis that *Fiqh al Sīrah* provides Muslim women with responses to the challenges of modern thought.

Figure: 4.2.23
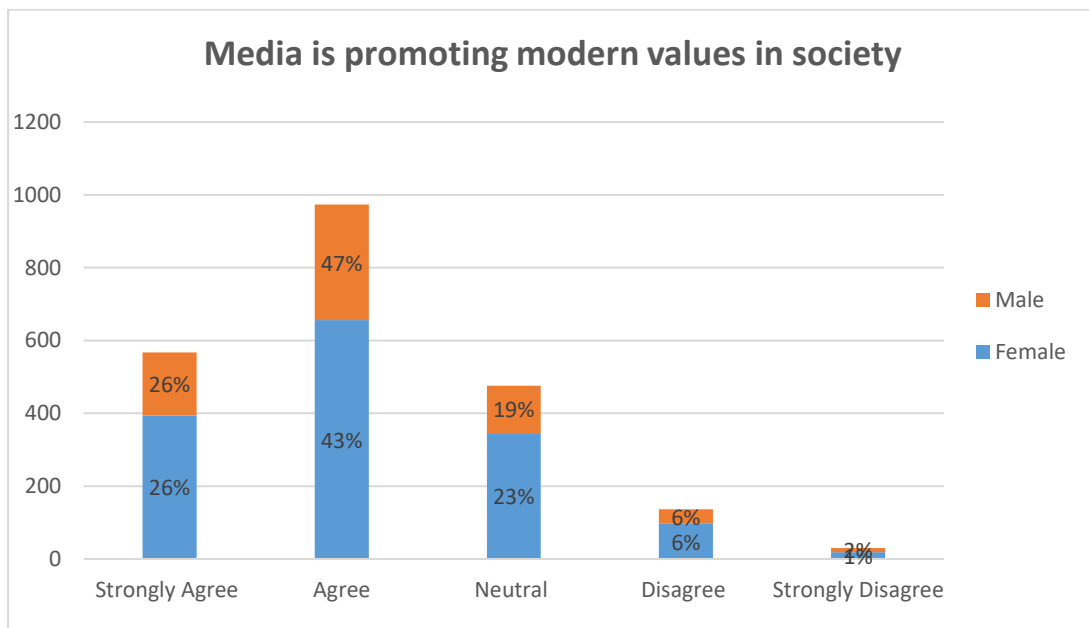
Table: 4.2.23

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	567	26%	
Agree	973	45%	
Neutral	476	22%	3.88
Disagree	136	6%	
Strongly Disagree	30	1%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

A large number of participants, including 43% female and 47% male, agreed with the statement, along with 26% strongly agreeing that the negative role of the media in promoting alien culture and values reflected the need to realign the role of the media.

Figure: 4.2.24
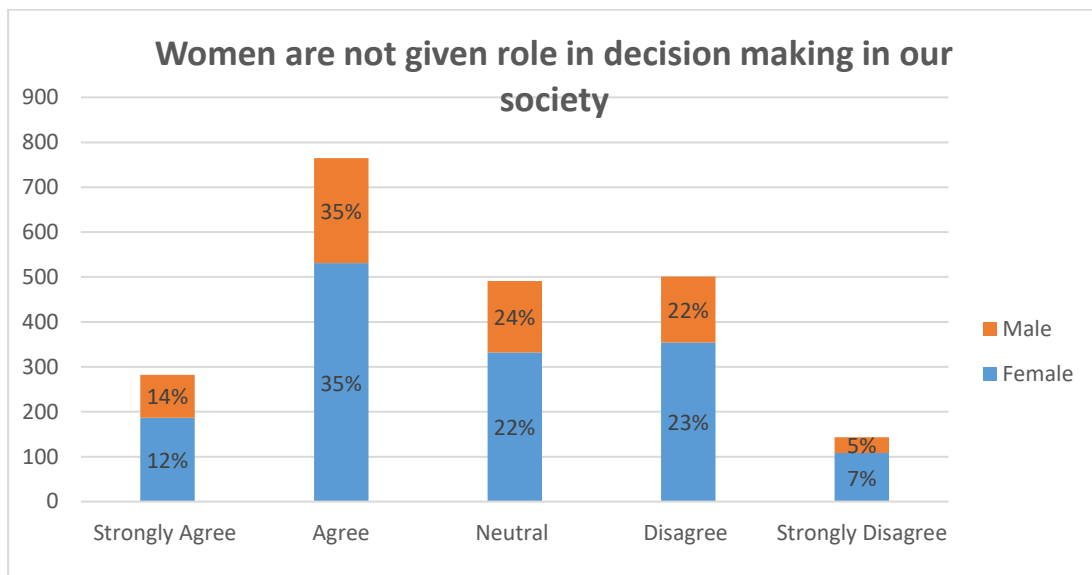
Table: 4.2.24

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	282	13%	
Agree	765	35%	
Neutral	491	23%	3.25
Disagree	501	23%	
Strongly Disagree	143	7%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was aimed at gauging the inclusion of women in decision-making in Pakistani society. Though 35% of both male and female participants agreed with the statement, along with 12 to 14% strongly agreeing, 22-23% showed disagreement, and 5 to 7% strongly disagree. The result reflected the by and large exclusion of women in decision making, therefore, leaving much to be desired.

Figure: 4.2.25

'My Body My Choice' is a slogan reflecting women's rights
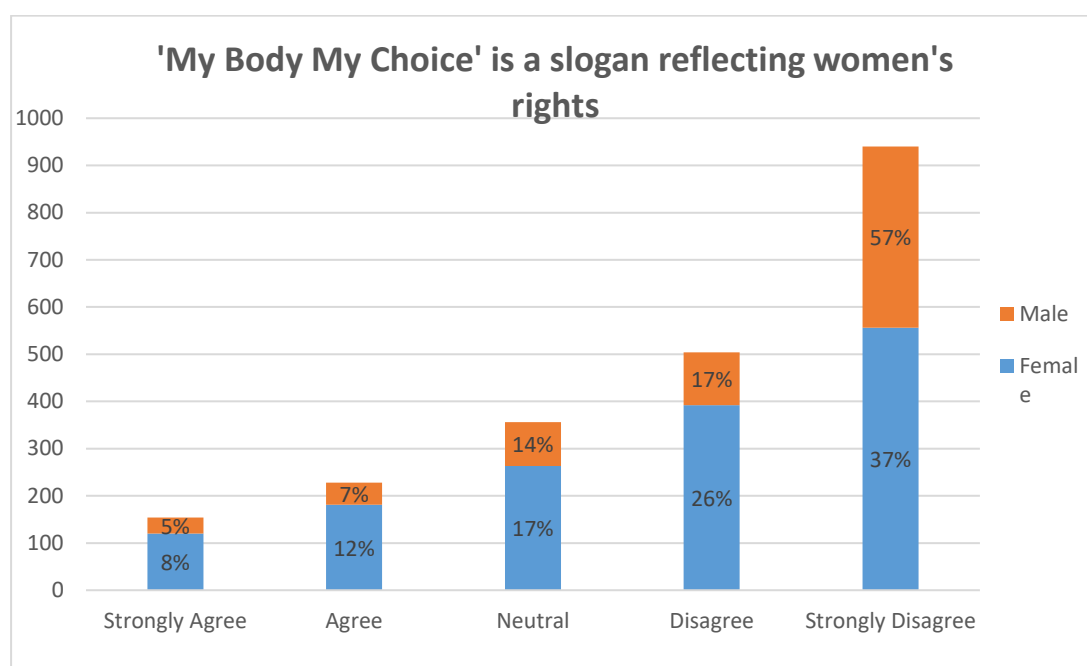
Table: 4.2.25

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	154	7%	
Agree	228	10%	
Neutral	356	16%	2.15
Disagree	504	23%	
Strongly Disagree	940	43%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

This statement was aimed at measuring the level of rationality of the participants under the influence of contemporary thought on feminism. 37% of females and 57% of males among the participants strongly disagreed with the statement. Thus, the result reflected that it had nothing to do with women's rights. However, approximately 12% of the female participants agreed and 8% strongly agreed with the statement are found to be under the psychological dominance of contemporary thought.

Figure: 4.2.26

Gender equality is call of the time in all walks of life
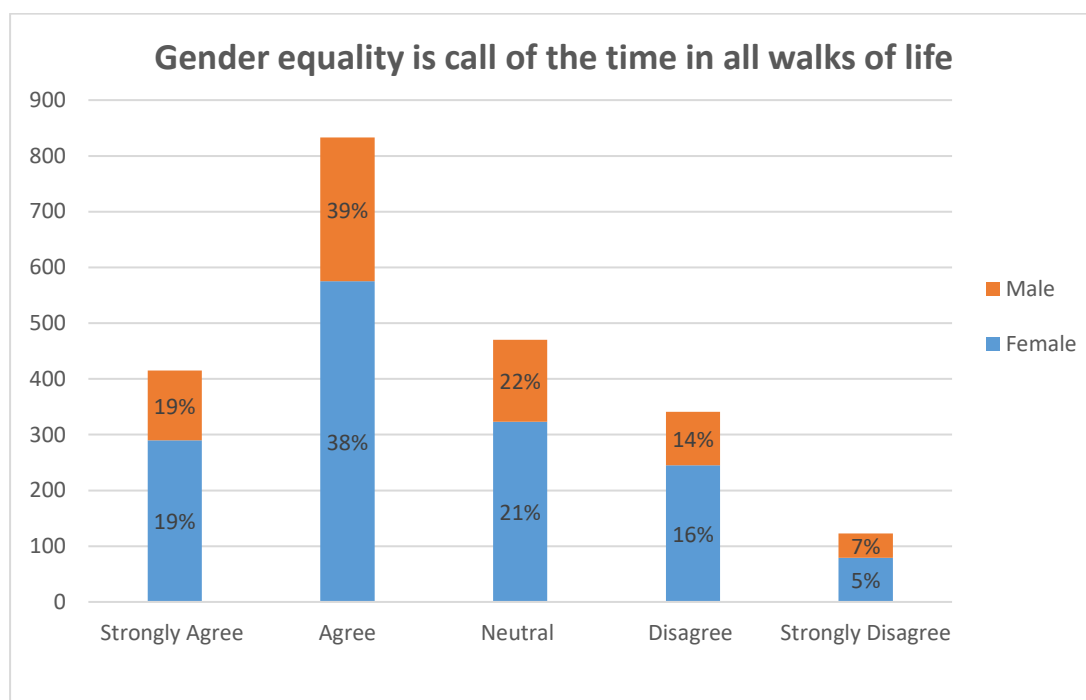
Table: 4.2.26

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	415	19%	
Agree	833	38%	
Neutral	470	22%	3.49
Disagree	341	16%	
Strongly Disagree	123	6%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement aimed at finding the ultimate influence of contemporary thought on gender equality. The majority of the participants supported the call for gender equality in all walks of life, with 38/39% agreeing and 19% strongly agreeing with the statement. This may not be reflective of the quest for women's rights, but gender equality as advocated by western feminism.

Figure: 4.2.27
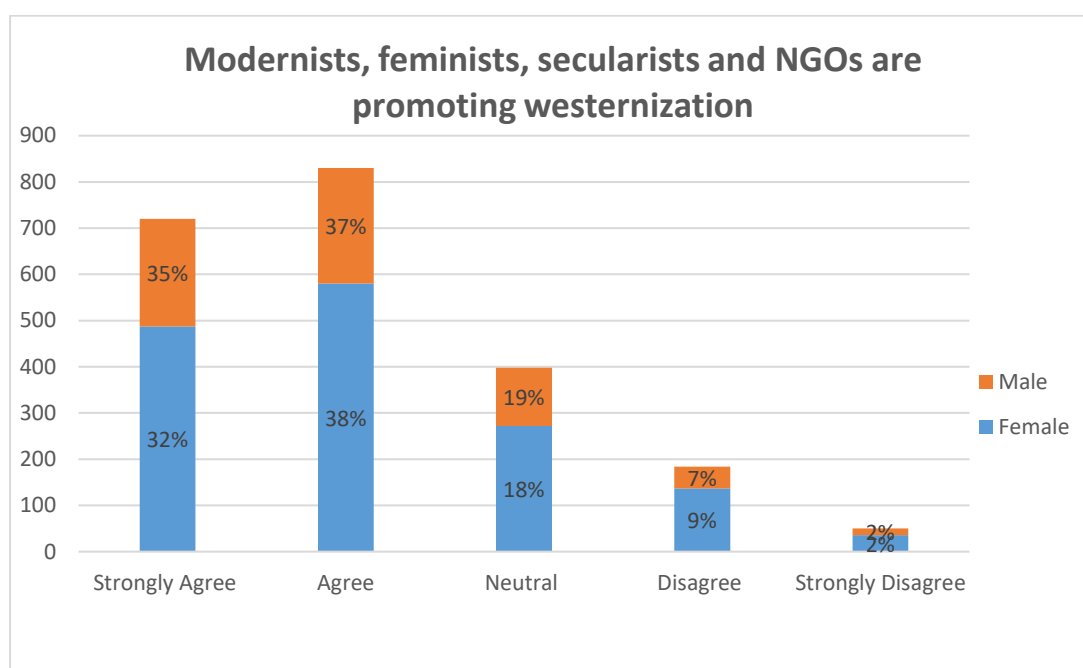
Table: 4.2.27

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	720	33%	
Agree	830	38%	
Neutral	398	18%	3.91
Disagree	184	8%	
Strongly Disagree	50	2%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

The statement was aimed at ascertaining the realization of the participants about the vehicles of contemporary thought and their influence on Muslim societies. A majority (37-38%) agreed with the statement, along with 32 to 35% expressing strong approval. With 18 – 19% remaining neutral, only 7-9% disagreed with the statement. The results indicate the negative role played by agents of contemporary thought.

Figure: 4.2.28
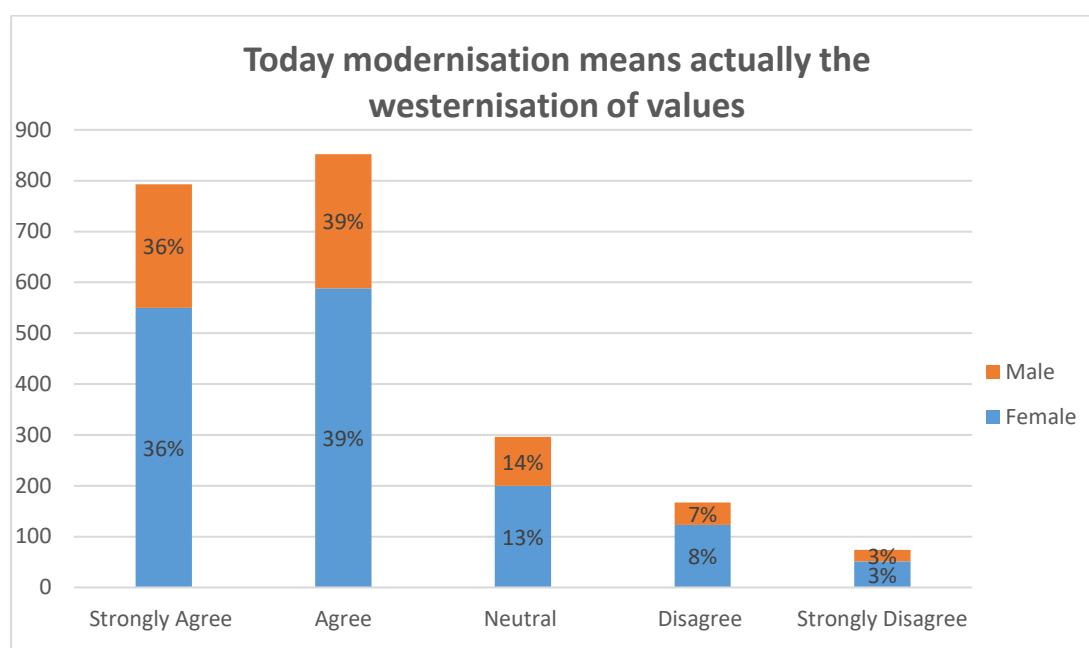
Table: 4.2.28

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	793	36%	
Agree	852	39%	
Neutral	296	14%	3.97
Disagree	167	8%	
Strongly Disagree	74	3%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

   The statement was aimed at determining the level of realization of the participants about the growing influence of contemporary thought on Muslim societies. The majority (39%) agreed with the statement, with an almost similar number (36%) expressing strong approval. While 13/14 % remained neutral, only 7 to 8% disagreed with the statement. The result vindicated earlier conclusions about the setting in of the influence of contemporary thought on Muslim women.

Figure: 4.2.29
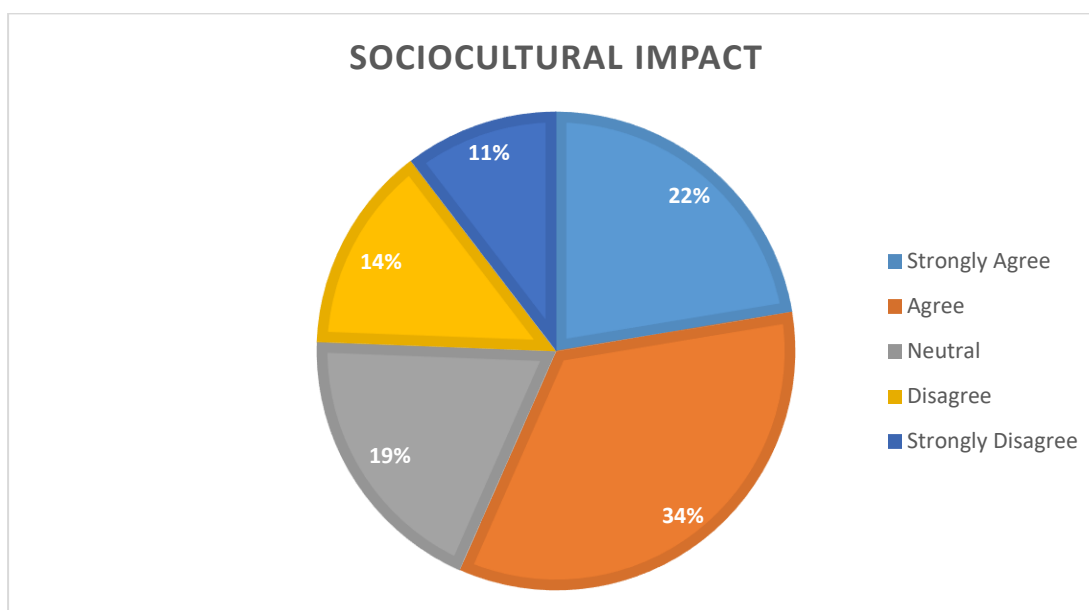
Table: 4.2.29

Response	Average Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Strongly Agree	489	22%	
Agree	747	34%	
Neutral	415	19%	3.44
Disagree	306	14%	
Strongly Disagree	227	10%	
Total	**2182**	**100%**	

      A survey of attitudes in a sociocultural context showed a mean impact of 3.44. Westernized education has attracted a mixed response to the benefits and negative consequences of the westernization of values through coeducation. Academic institutions' diminished role in character development is justified by the lack of religious material in the standard academic curriculum. Data analysis confirms that the media plays a detrimental influence in propagating Western ideals, stressing the importance of a stronger regulating framework.

Figure: 4.2.30
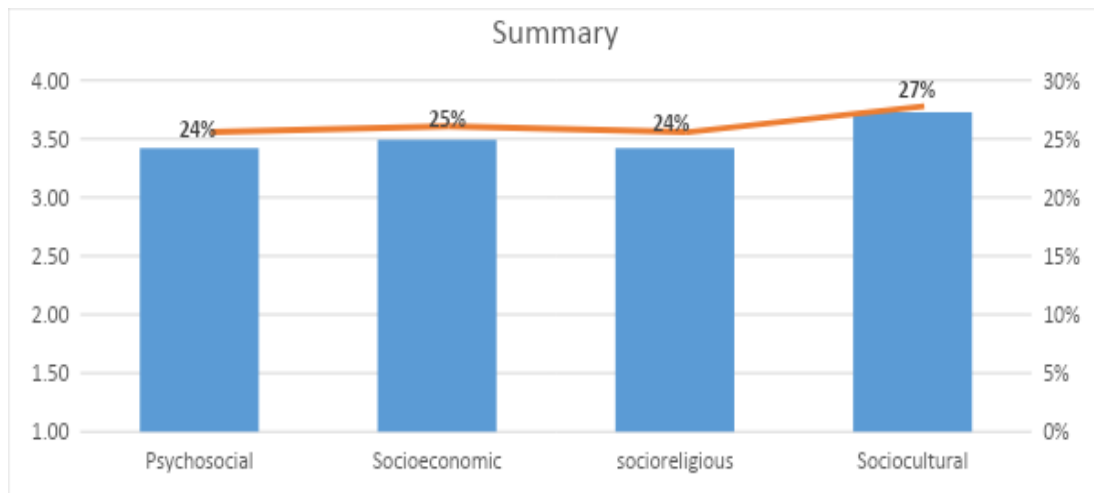
Table: 4.2.30

Area of Impact	Mean	Percentage
Psychosocial	3.42	24%
Socioeconomic	3.49	25%
Socioreligious	3.42	24%
Sociocultural	3.73	27%
Total	**14.06**	100%

The comparative study of impact areas based on the mean impact of each factor reflected that Muslim woman appear to have accepted the highest influence of contemporary thought in the sociocultural context, followed by the socioeconomic context, with the psychological and socio-religious context closely following. The average percentages remain around 25%, with sociocultural impact leading with 27%, followed by socio-cultural impact at 25%, and socio-religious and psychological lagging closely behind with 24% of each respondent being impacted. The final picture is a clear reflection of society being influenced by the Western lifestyle and to maintain that standard of living, involvement in economic activities is forced upon the womenfolk, driven by desires, not needs.

4.3   Discussion

The development of this part of the project was undertaken in phases. Initially, a pilot study and a review of the contents based on the results of the survey were carried out. A draught of the questionnaire for the interview was prepared based on interaction with a selected group of people. This consultative group comprised five experts, including two academics, two psychologists, and one senior management practitioner. The questions were discussed with each of them individually. Thereafter, a pilot study was conducted with interviews of a selected group. It was established that not all people may not be able to attempt all the questions. As a result, it was determined that the selection of interview questions should be left to the experts being interviewed. Moreover, it was felt that all the people may not be comfortable with the questions in the English language. Therefore, they were translated into the Urdu language as well. The other limitation to conducting the interviews was the pandemic, which denied the opportunity for direct interaction as people were reluctant to give interviews in person. Thereafter, the other options were explored to conduct interviews through video links and phone calls. The honourable experts' commitments posed availability issues. Therefore, the options of taking responses through writing or voice recordings were also exercised. Thus, interviews were conducted with the selected experts, including religious experts, policymakers, feminist activists, intellectuals, academics, psychologists, the media, art, and social workers, through different modes of communication.

The inputs from these experts are captured in the succeeding paragraphs in the sequence of the questionnaire. The exercise of interacting with such a large number of scholars, experts, and activists was found to be extremely useful. It helped to confirm the results of the survey and find solutions to problems caused by the spread of modern ideas.

Q1.   There is a difference of opinion among the scholars on the relevance of the sociocultural norms of the Prophet's era to the contemporary environment. What are your views in this regard?

The question attracted an interesting response from the respondents, as almost all of them attempted to respond in positive. There was a unanimous view that the culture of the Prophet's era was Arab specific, and Islam was infused into it. Thus, corrections or changes were made in line with the principles of Islam, wherever they were needed. Wherever Islam spread, the impact of Arab culture went with it and was adapted by the local community. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ however, introduced social norms in line

with divine guidance to govern the lives of human beings as desired by the Creator. It was pointed out by one of the scholars that these social norms were a continuation of the earlier religions. The morals and values of Islam, however, remain unchanged, as pointed out by some of the respondents, being universal. They also asserted that abandoned moral values like modesty and chastity cannot be termed as social evolution, but a degeneration of society in the garb of modernity. It was pointed out by the respondents with a modernist outlook that adjustments must be made following developments in life. However, during the discussion, it was revealed that they were pointing to cultural evolution. One of the respondents observed that secularists try to generalize sociocultural evolution and asserted that following Islamic values, to them, is retrogressive. One of the female respondents highlighted that the dress code must be adjusted to the contemporary environment. When pointed out that dress and dress codes are different, she corrected her stance on the dress. However, she asserted that it was an individual's choice to dress up the way they decided. There was a general opinion that Western culture had been adopted by us because of the colonial experience, and the local designers were constantly changing to expose women's bodies, which violates the basic principles of modesty and '*haya*'. The religious scholars among the participants pointed out that there is a difference of opinion among the scholar's community on the covering of the face. However, the basic premise of the dress code remained the same; not to expose the woman's body, whether covered or uncovered. The engagements of women in social activities warranting leaving home were agreed to by all respondents if it doesn't impact their domestic environment and it is an individual or societal requirement. In a nutshell, it was generally agreed that the morals and values of the Prophet's era remain very much relevant to the contemporary era. If adjustments are warranted in the light of advancement, the basic principles of modesty and '*haya*' must remain intact, as it is the absence of these two that led to dwindling respect for the female, thus endangering her chastity under the influence of contemporary thought.

Q2.   It is believed that the institution of the family stands threatened due to the eagerness of women to pursue economic empowerment. What do you suggest for the balance between work and family?

All the respondents agreed with the stance of Islam regarding the economic empowerment of women and preference for family. However, opinion on the requirement to work was divided. The Quran was quoted by some of the scholars as saying, "*the earnings of men belong to them, and the earnings of women belong to women."* (4:32)

Some of the scholars highlighted the participation of women in economic activities. Hazrat Khadija رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا was quoted by some as being the role model for empowering women in an economic context. She was found deciding the terms of business by herself and spending her wealth on the welfare of her family and the community at large. In the contemporary environment, the participants pointed out that women in Pakistan are part and parcel of our rural agriculture-based economy, where they work side by side with the male members. This type of commitment is neither paid nor acknowledged as economic empowerment. Under the modern concept of women's empowerment, the respondents identified three kinds of engagement of women in economic activities. Firstly, those eager to utilise their education and abilities for professional development as entrepreneurs or executives. The second category belonged to women, who had to work for their sustenance and support their families. These women were generally identified as being employed in low-level jobs, such as clerks, receptionists, beauticians, health workers, secretaries, salesgirls, housemaids, teachers in street schools, etc. The third category emanated from the professional requirements of society, such as female doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, judges, policewomen, and support staff in female-oriented environments. While the first category was generally identified as being for young unmarried ladies, it was pointed out by some that after marriage, their continuation of employment should be governed by the rules governing the subsequent two categories, where they may need to work for personal reasons or societal needs. Nearly all the respondents supported the idea of professional engagements, while some of them pointed out the need for a conducive environment, which should allow women to work peacefully. Some were of the view that free mixing of genders was identified by male respondents as being the source of concern as cases of harassment and molestation take place in such an environment. Some female respondents were of the view that it depends on women to show strength to avoid exploitation by colleagues and superiors. The female respondents were generally of the view that the choice of raising a family lay with the couple, thus a continuation of the job after marriage rests with her. A lady scholar vehemently opposed the full-time work of women after the wedding, as the household was a full-time commitment. Most of the respondents were of the view that on becoming a mother, a woman must decide on the importance of childcare and grooming of the younger generation. They pointed out that most children grown without mothers' due care are visibly noted to be suffering from various social complexes and deficiencies. The priority of work was understandable by even opponents of the job after marriage, in the case of female supporting families with no male member. In such

cases, they determined the availability of elderly people, such as a mother or mother-in-law, to care for the child. The consensus was found on the point that the interests of the family and children should not be compromised if the sustenance of the family can be ensured by the male partner.

Q3. **The rising trend of marriage breakups and the disinterest of females in wedlock are believed to threaten the fibre of our society. What are your views on it and how to guard against this threat to social life?**

The respondents had divergent views on this question. While a smaller number of them denied any significant possibility of aversion to marriage, the majority were of the view that the institution of marriage is under threat both ways; the option to remain single and the rising trend of breakups. At the same time, it was pointed out by one of the respondents that many girls give up their aspirations for higher studies and get married at an early age to satisfy the demands of their parents. Some of the scholars quoted facts and figures that indicate a rising trend in divorces. The option to remain single was pointed out to be popular among highly educated and economically empowered females. This desire was linked to their aversion to domestic responsibilities, and they ended up with a sense of isolation and depression. It was agreed by all that remaining single is not a natural option in life because of the physiological needs of an individual and can lead to extramarital involvement. While some of the respondents highlighted that where a woman is denied choice or consent for a life partner, the possibility of dragging the relationship is greater. It was also pointed out by some those Pakistani women generally try to adjust to the environment after the wedding for respect of the family, self-sustenance, and the future of their children. One of the female respondents believed that it was the woman who must scarify her emotions to adjust because our society still suffers from the influence of Hinduism, where divorce is considered a stigma. She also highlighted that while women struggle to sustain wedlock, the ego and irresponsibility of husbands lead to divorces in most cases. The respondents brought out reasons for the increasing trend of breakups. One reason was a marriage at an early age as compared to a more mature stage. It was mentioned by one of the respondents that in 2013, in a district of 5000 cases of divorce, 3000 couples were married at an early age. One of them identified financial problems as straining marriages, particularly in the lower middle class. Some saw the joint family system as a source of disagreements with in-laws, which could lead to marriage dissolution. Working women with financial independence are less inclined to make

compromises to sustain the relationship. Extramarital affairs by either partner are identified as another reason for divorce. The workplace tensions and frustrations, leading to undue anger from partners, were also quoted by some as the reasons for breakups. It was highlighted that, besides the divorced couple, children also run the risk of mental health problems. It was also brought out by some that divorces are more common among couples opting for 'love marriages' because of the high expectations and emerging mismatch in social and family ethos. One of the respondents highlighted that it all depends on the grooming of the girl and the parents' attitude. That will help the girl to move on well, especially if she has been given the option to exercise her consent. Almost all the respondents agreed on the need to educate the younger generation about the sanctity of Nikah and the importance and purpose of the family and the way to lead a happy and satisfying life; call it 'sex education in accordance with our ethos, both at home and in educational institutions at a higher level.

Q4.   Working women are exposed to all kinds of people in pursuit of their careers. What are the ills with which a contemporary working woman is confronted in professional life and how to safeguard her chastity and honour in such an environment?

All the respondents agreed that women are exposed to all kinds of people, including those with lower morality standards, who take working women as easy prey. The enabling environment is provided by the open mixing of genders. The bad experiences of women in the workplace are a poor reflection of the management of the organisation they are serving in lower positions. There was a consensus that women workers suffer from discrimination in terms of less pay, blackmailing, exploitation of the needy, long working hours, and harassment during travel. It was pointed out by some of the respondents that sexuality is one of the strongest human instincts and it is controlled through individual grooming, where values and concepts of right and wrong are inculcated. It was highlighted by one of the scholars that the Divine commandment to lower the gaze in front of the opposite sex is the rule for the interaction of genders in various places that can avoid any evil taking birth because of free mixing up. One of the respondents, who had been chief executive of a very large organization, asserted that women serving in lower positions are generally the needy ones and may be exploited by their middle-level supervisors. An academic added that female teachers are also harassed by male colleagues, and they are forced to keep quiet for fear of losing their reputation among the teachers and students. Education, marital status,

job level, appearance, attire, age, working hours, organisational environment, need for a job, and chances of an encounter with male colleagues were highlighted as some of the variables leading to the vulnerability of women to harassment by male colleagues. He added that the problem remains unaddressed as the women keep it to themselves for fear of losing their jobs or drawing criticism for their conduct. Therefore, most cases are likely to go unnoticed until a mishap takes place. It was highlighted by a woman activist that despite Women's Protection Laws being in place, the victims do not opt to exercise the legal option because of fear of disrespect to their families, thereby providing a chance for the perpetrators to further embolden It was generally asserted by all the respondents that protection of chastity is an individual woman's responsibility and depends on her strength of character and grooming. She should have faith in herself and Allah and set priorities. Firstly, she should respectably carry herself, avoiding a provocative outlook that will reduce the chances of mischief, and she should develop the courage to respond to any such threat emanating from her colleagues or superiors. One of the scholars also highlighted the role of the family in encouraging the young to confront any such evil squarely. Moreover, the need for social advisors at the workplace was also indicated to provide counselling and support to female workers to guard against harassment. One said that a woman is the best judge of when to quit a job if her honour is at stake. The organisational heads need to also identify those timid middle-level female leaders who tend to brush such cases under the carpet to avoid labelling their own department as bad or corrupt.

Q5.   Young girls at their formative age are left at the mercy of higher education institutions, where they spend more time as compared to their homes. Is our academic environment and curricula conducive to the grooming of young personalities? Any suggestions for improvement?

This question was only taken up by those with an academic background. It is generally agreed by all that the coeducation environment has been found damaging, even in Europe, where it is being advocated to create separate educational institutions for both genders. It was highlighted that parents in the contemporary environment have absolved themselves of grooming children as all kinds of fashionable grades and classes like preschool, early years, prenatal, etc., aimed at making money are found in every nook and corner of the country. There was consensus among all the respondents that early years' grooming could be best done by the mother herself and in her mother tongue. In the quest to learn English, the kids are thrown out of the house, leaving them at the mercy of ill-

trained teachers and maids. It was highlighted by one of the respondents that no nation has ever progressed through education in an alien language. Hence, we should teach the young ones in their language. English may be taught as an additional language. It was agreed by all that the curriculum at all levels needs to be rehashed as the element of character building is missing. We are preparing ATMs and not much effort is being directed towards personality formulation. Young girls at college and university must be equipped with the necessary skills for the management of home and family affairs. A course needs to be developed for girls as a compulsory program. It was also suggested that, if we have the money, we should set up separate schools for boys and girls up until college and, if possible, until university as well.

Q6. **The social transformation is reflected in the westernized and bold outlook of young women, with a belief in individual choice. How do we check further downside movement in this regard, which is viewed as a threat to chastity?**

The interviews were conducted in the wake of the Prime Minister's interview, advising women to cover up to prevent sensual temptation. He had remarked, "In a society where vulgarity is prevalent, there are consequences." Hence, there were more opposing views to the prime minister's view, especially from secular minds with a Western mindset. They supported the social transformation. One of the respondents said that if the dress code is blamed for a heinous crime, it may weaken the victim as blame is put on the victim, shifting focus from the perpetrator. There was an argument that character should not be judged by the way one dresses up and how one conducts herself. On the contrary, it was pointed out by some that dress codes like hijab and abaya did act as a safety mechanism. One of the academics pointed out that the students wearing hijab, while commuting on public transport felt more secure and were found without a hijab on the day. She was dropped by some family members. One of the respondents highlighted the negative role of the media in displaying vulgar dresses and revealing the bodies of women and blamed the commercial interests for leading to dress shows and catwalks with a westernised outlook. The women's activist was very critical of the question, saying it is one's own choice, how he or she dresses up and no one should be dictating in this regard. It was pointed out by the scholars that the choice of dress remains with the individual, but the dress code is based on societal norms. They were of the view that traditionally, the dress of Western women was no different than that of Muslim women, who wore long gowns and headscarves. That added to the grace of women. The female shedding of the dress is not a new phenomenon,

dating back to industrialization and subsequent modernization, which have been taken over by commercialism, where women's bodies are exploited to some extent. It was pointed out by most of the respondents that the designs that led to the shortening of female dresses and see-through types of cloth in Pakistan are motivated by contemporary thought and a desire to look like "blonde." One of the respondents quoted Maryam Jamila; an Islamic scholar of Western origin, who narrated the incident that she could not find a doll for her daughter as she was looking for a Pakistani doll. She said all dolls had a white complexion, blond hair, and were dressed up in skirts or bikinis. That is how we are inculcating the Western mindset in a female child, so her aspirations to look like a Barbie doll cannot be ruled out. He indicated the gradual exposure of the female body: changing from shalwar to trouser to expose her legs; shortening the length to expose up to the shin; tightening to highlight the shape of the lower half. Similarly, sleeveless shirts with low necks with shoulders exposed in the name of fashion are nothing but the desire to expose one's body to strangers.

One of the female respondents with a showbiz background said that such a trend should be seen from the perspective of the vulnerability of women to evil reactions from males, like leaving a piece of meat uncovered and expecting the crows not to attack. She supported the remarks of Mr. Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in a TV interview, that provocative dresses raise sensual temptations for men. The corporate dress of girls on reception counters is all western and it is written on the wall when skirts will be seen on the street, if not checked. One of the respondents asserted that, unfortunately, westernisation is being seen by young minds as a symbol of progress, which is not so. It is knowledge and its application in our own environment, keeping our own identity and values at the forefront. He added that as we interact with the West in this global village, we must be mindful of our ethos. While the dress may be an individual choice, why eulogise the bikini and demonise the abaya? According to most respondents, societal norms must be respected, and home grooming should guide girls on what to wear. However, higher education institutions must enforce a minimum dress code, as they have an important role in personality formulation. The dress code for female teachers will help the students to be motivated automatically.

Q7. Mainstream media (Electronics) in general and social media, in particular, are the most powerful tools for the transformation of public opinion and society. How do you suggest these important means be utilized for the preservation of socio-cultural and religious values?

All the respondents agreed that the media reflects the image of a nation, as it displays the cultural outlook of a nation. Those from media backgrounds were of the view that policies are designed and implemented by state and media authorities for an operational drive-in society. According to most respondents, the core functions of the media as a method of control, public opinion influencers, ideological boundaries, and national security are all part of every society. Some have pointed out that the media does not grow in a vacuum but is directly influenced by society's evolutionary process. The media is considered relevant because it serves to preserve and reflect the cultural, political, and economic ideologies of a particular society.

Most respondents stated that all happenings in Pakistan are not negative. While the local media does not mention anything constructive or beneficial, such programmes erode and reduce the outlines of our identity across the world. Image construction around the globe is represented by the media's undemanding authority, which Pakistani media must comprehend. The Pakistani media portrays and uses women as objects rather than highlighting their beneficial contributions to society and families. Women's achievements and value in our culture are not accurately depicted. Our media, having gained freedom, has lost its identity. Anyone watching our channels abroad is bound to mix up with Indians because of the foreign influence they carry. Our dramas are based on themes that are alien to our culture and promote Western thought, undermining family values, religion and national identity. Intimate scenes in dramas were unheard of in the past, especially in Pakistani dramas, which used to be widely watched in India as well. The themes revolve around themes that are not aligned with our ethos. The dresses are too short, the dialogue is offensive, and the closeness between men and women goes beyond what society expects. The sensational news and meaningless talk shows add stress to viewers and are viewed as a source of societal fissures. It was highlighted by all the respondents that social media is yet another bigger source of promoting falsehoods, alien culture, intolerance, backbiting, blame games, negativity, frustration, etc. Its access is so easy and widespread that no one can stay away from its influence. It was pointed out by some of the respondents that some social media apps are causing psychological diseases. The connectivity to the nearby ones is fast diminishing in a quest to stay connected to those out of sight. Some of the respondents also highlighted the wastage of time and money, as one entered an ocean and would not realise the passing hours in surfing from one site/medium to the other. It was a

unanimous opinion that the media is doing more damage than good and needs direction to safeguard and promote our social and cultural values while projecting them abroad.

Q8. Foreign-funded NGOs working for the empowerment of women in Pakistan are viewed with contempt by a segment of society, viewing them as a vehicle for the promotion of alien thought and values. Notwithstanding the difference in opinion on their role, how can the government and society avert their negative impact on our society?

Almost all the respondents acknowledged the importance and role of NGOs in any welfare state. It was highlighted that the performance of NGOs operating in the developed countries of the world is unparalleled and exemplary, be it natural disasters or social problems. It was mentioned that there are hundreds of NGOs operating in Pakistan with offices in every major city and tehsil headquarters. The question was raised by some of the respondents about the role of these organisations and the spirit of service to the people. Do they have another agenda behind the scenes? It was also highlighted by one of the respondents that a percentage of NGOs working in Pakistan are limited to bogus and paperwork and some are aimed at personal gains. Mukhtara'n Mai Foundation was quoted by someone, set up by the rape victim turned philanthropist, who took advantage of her popularity through the projection of a sick image of Pakistan for many years, to start receiving financial donations from all over the world. He said that crores of rupees were deposited in the account of the Mukhtaran Mai Foundation, and she is living a luxurious life thanks to these donations. against the national interest. Permission will not be granted, and illegal NGOs will be shut down.

It was mentioned by all that thousands of foreign-funded NGOs are working at different levels in Pakistan and their activities are in education, social welfare, health, and other public welfare activities in every part of the country and in every sphere of national life. Besides funding from abroad, their policies and agendas are set abroad. It was highlighted that one must acknowledge their efforts to provide and assist the people with health, education, employment, and other social needs in terms of poverty alleviation. However, it was also pointed out by one of the respondents that there are many such organisations and institutions being used for espionage, promoting cultural disorder, political chaos, and social instability. One of the respondents mentioned that in Pakistan foreign NGOs, in the garb of women's empowerment and emancipation, have spread a

network of nasty and obscene activities on the cultural front, undermining Islamic values and traditions and destabilising the family system. One also mentioned that some NGOs are working to weaken the ideological identity and turn Pakistan into a secular state.

It was suggested by some of the respondents that we would like to ask the patriotic religious and political circles to keep a close watch on the situation and play their role in the protection and survival of the ideological identity of the beloved homeland, national unity, sovereignty, national integrity, and social stability. Some of the respondents accused Western NGOs of promoting Western culture, where the institution of family is disappearing, marriage is becoming non-existent, elderly parents are ignored, and all this is happening in the name of freedom and women's emancipation, the central agenda of most of the NGOs. It was asserted by one of the respondents that there is no 'free lunch'. Hence, those pumping in money through these institutions are at liberty to promote their thoughts as well. The unfortunate thing is the support of liberals, who support their agenda and work towards its advancement. Most of the people who answered said that the government needs to regulate and keep an eye on their activities and goals, and that public institutions could help strengthen the role of local NGOs by keeping an eye on them.

Q9.   Pakistan, being a signatory to the UN conventions on human rights, has been carrying out legislation concerning women. Does the legal framework in Pakistan provide enough protection for women as ordained by our religion? If not, suggest areas for improvement.

The question was attempted by only three respondents because of a lack of legal knowledge. One of the respondents dealing with human rights enumerated the number of laws in the context of women's rights. The respondents said that there is no dearth of laws in Pakistan regarding women's rights. However, they expressed frustration with the implementation of the laws. It was pointed out that Pakistani women are socially not empowered to take up the case against their husbands in cases of domestic violence or challenge their brothers or parents to get their due rights in inheritance. Firstly, she must bear the wrath of the family for not behaving in a desired manner, and secondly, the environment in police stations and the courts is not conducive to being visited by a lady alone. One of the respondents witnessed the family court, where a woman with three children was begging the judge in front of two dozen men packed in the courtroom about the implementation of a court order for subsistence by her estranged husband. It was

mentioned by one that the judiciary, over a period, has reformed in terms of inflating the packages of judicial staff to prevent corruption, but no attention has been paid to establishing separate courts for women, away from criminal courts, which make it impossible for ladies to traverse.

It was highlighted by one of the respondents that we all boast so much about the women's rights granted by Islam. However, men are not ready to grant these rights when it comes to implementation. Despite legislative provisions, women are being exploited by various customs by giving them compensation for settling disputes and cross marriages, forcing them to compromise for the sake of saving the situation involving two families, besides denial of their rightful share of the property. One of the experts expressed reservations about the recently passed Domestic Violence Act 2021, as it does not augur well with the social system in Pakistan and may lead to confrontations within a household, thus damaging the social fibre in the long run. Some of the respondents criticised civil society for not playing an active role in the implementation of the laws for common women, saying these organisations are very eager to protect eloping couples. Nearly all the respondents suggested more be done at the individual, family, society, and state level to provide easy access to legal options through ladies' police stations/desks, ensuring female share in inheritance, establishing separate women's courts, capacity building of institutions related to women's protection, etc.

Q10.   The *Fiqh* differences among various sects on women-related issues and other divisions on a sociocultural basis are leading to further exploitation of women in our society. How do you suggest the harmonization of religious thought for the betterment of women in Pakistan?

This question was responded to by only three experts due to a lack of understanding of formal differences. It was highlighted that there is a difference of opinion among various schools of thought about the proclamation of divorce, *khula*, period of Iddah, inheritance, women's evidence, blood money for women, domestic responsibilities, covering (*parda*) of the face, domestic responsibilities, working outside the home, punishment for adultery/fornication/rape, family planning, education, etc.

It was pointed out by one of the scholars that, like other issues where the different schools of thought carry differences in opinion, women face a challenge when confronted with a proclamation of 'three divorces' at a time. Such acts out of anger or stupidity are repented

by both partners, and then they are found running from pillar to post to find a way out. He quoted one of the scholars, who referred the couple to a Mufti of another *fiqh*, where they could find some relief. He stated that all Ulema opinions on such issues are correct according to some Prophetic traditions. Therefore, there was no harm in finding a solution through the course followed by other sects. However, it was generally agreed that such issues should be sorted out through ijtihad by Ulema and referring to the Islamic Ideological Council to ensure due legal protection for women from the religious point of view. One of the scholars pointed out the need for learning the religion by all men and women to develop a better understanding of Islamic injunctions concerning women.

4.4. Conclusions

The analysis revealed that contemporary thought has a discernible influence on the thoughts of Muslim women in Pakistan, so the social system is threatened in the long run. There is a decline in Pakistani women's faith in the primary role of women and the protection provided by religion and society. Growing aversion to home chores in pursuit of personal advancement is likely to result in neglect of the grooming of the next generation. Data analysis confirms that the media plays a detrimental influence on women in propagating Western ideals. Modernists, secularists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are viewed as agents of change by some Muslims who are attempting to reconcile Islamic values with contemporary thought through an apologetic view of Islam. In Pakistan, the line between faith and culture is blurred and the elements of culture considered to be religious, lead to criticism of Islam. The urge for Muslim identity among women provides space for corrective measures based on Islamic thought, to be extracted from the study of Sīrah. The interpretation of the results of the analysis of the survey and discussions are summarised as under:

Psychological

- The analysis revealed that contemporary thought has a discernible influence on Muslim women in Pakistan in all spheres of life.
- It is also discovered through surveys that there is resistance to the blind following of the West, implying that a possibility of reformation exists in Muslim women.
- A decline in Pakistani women's faith in the primary role of women is also observed in the survey, indicating a trend toward negating the domestic role, the importance of the family as an institution, social values, and female domestic orientation, as well as a growing trend toward staying single and seeking a divorce.

- In the data analysis, growing aversion to home chores in pursuit of personal advancement is noted, indicating neglect of the grooming of the next generation. In the long term, this may result in the social isolation of the parents since children groomed in this manner are more likely to pay back in the same way.

- Given the proven reality that women are being denied the right to inherit property, given in marriage in exchange, the data reflects the absence of social justice and peace and tranquillity for women.

Socioeconomic

- While increasing chances for economic empowerment in Pakistan assist in promoting the desire for personal and professional development, the incapacity of male family members to support the family cannot be ignored in pushing women to earn.

- It is revealed that women are exploited at work for a variety of reasons, demonstrating a decline in morality, a breach of socio-religious norms, and an exploitation of women's desire for gender equality, economic empowerment, and socioeconomic compulsions.

Ideological/ Religious

- It is discovered that the trend toward westernized outlook and revealing attire is generally accepted among Muslim women under the influence of contemporary thought, swaying rationality and morals.

- There is support for gender mixing, thus confirming the effect of the desire to advance freedom in accordance with modern thought, therefore jeopardizing modesty, morality, and socio-religious norms.

- The thesis's premise concerning the efficiency of Fiqh al Sirah in providing Muslim women with responses to the challenges of modern thought has been validated.

- Muslim women desire to retain their Muslim identity, which reflects the need for correct application of Islamic teachings and the importance of formal religious education.

Sociocultural

- Even though people had different ideas about how useful coeducation was, they were aware of how it could hurt society and cause values to become more like those in the West.

- A survey shows that there isn't much religious material in the standard academic curriculum, which explains why schools have less of an impact on character development.

- Data analysis confirms that the media plays a detrimental influence in propagating Western ideals, stressing the importance of a stronger regulating framework.

- The analysis showed that modernists, secularists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are seen as agents of change. They try to reconcile Islamic values with modern thought by taking an apologetic view of Islam, which causes ideological confusion under the guise of enlightenment.

Chapter 5

Guidelines from *Fiqh al Sīrah* to Encounter the Challenges of Contemporary Thought

In the previous chapters, the evolution of contemporary thought on women and their encounters with Muslim women and the influence of Pakistani Muslim women led to the identification of challenges. It is evident from the fact that in contemporary Pakistani society, we often come across views expressing the underutilization of women, oppressive domestic environment, and eulogizing the role of Western women in socio-economic development.[1] The outlook of the proponents (males and females) of this idea has been discussed in earlier chapters and established that they challenge Islamic culture on secular grounds. However, it has also been demonstrated that this thought has crept into the minds of Muslims, who are oblivious to the role and status granted to women by Islam, thus mostly inspired by secular feminism. Nonetheless, there are those female activists who take the line of argument adopted by Muslim feminism, i.e., a reinterpretation of the *Qur'an* in support of feminism. It has been demonstrated that society, in its pursuit of modernisation, is also consciously or unconsciously ignoring the fact of loss and gain that the West has encountered in the process.

The ever-increasing number of Western women entering Islam defies women's satisfaction with the Western lifestyle, which tends to inspire ignorant people in the East. Such a phenomenon in the wake of anti-Islamic propaganda warrants serious thought in contemporary Islamic societies, where the tendency toward westernization, denial of social justice, and domestic violence are pervasive, thus presenting a dismal image of the Islamic social system. Therefore, the inspiration of Western women coming into the folds of Islam is not Muslims but Islamic teachings, and they are cognizant of the fact that the situation in Muslim societies is because of the violation of the Islamic way of life. Islam thus appears to guarantee the safe and secure lives of women, and the suffering of women both in the West and East can only be addressed through a genuine understanding of Islamic teachings and their application in letter and spirit.[2]

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[1] Ali, Tanzeen, Krantz Gunilla, Gul Raisa, Asad Nargis, Johansson Eva, and Mogren Ingrid, '*Gender roles and their influence on life prospects for women in urban Karachi, Pakistan: a qualitative study*' Global Health Action, 2011.

[2] Jameelah, Maryam, *Islam and The Muslim Woman Today*, (Mohammad Yusuf Khan,1976).

Even non-Muslim scholars have acknowledged the just system in Islam, as Annie Besant, an Indian scholar wrote,

"I often think that woman is freer in Islam than in Christianity. The woman is more protected by Islam than by the faith, which preaches monogamy. In Qur'an, the law about the woman is jester and more liberal.… Look back to the history of Islam, and you will find that women have often taken leading places — on the throne, in the battlefield, in politics, in literature, poetry, etc.."[1]

It is understood from the earlier part of the research those Muslim women need to design their distinctive role compatible with the Islamic worldview within the contemporary environment. Therefore, this research has been directed towards the analysis of the challenges posed by contemporary thought to Muslim women and exploring the solution through *Fiqh al Sirah* to establish guidelines for application as a response to these challenges to save society from the cultural and social disaster in the making. Allah in the *Qur'ān* while addressing the Prophet ﷺ says,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ[2]

"We bestow you with best character traits."

The *Sīrah* of the Prophet ﷺ provides us with the model of a social framework concerning women as well. Thus, the study of *Sīrah* based on this paradigm is a call of the times. The response to the challenges of contemporary thought presented in this chapter is based on reflexivity, thus examining *Sīrah* in context rather than merely a textual point of view. Before embarking upon the specifics, I will briefly glance through the development of Islamic thought that forms the foundation of the subsequent presentation of response.

5.1.   Islam and Contemporary Thought – Confluences and Conflicts

As discussed in Chapter 2, Feminism is the predominant contemporary thought that carries gender equality at the core of the discussion on human rights and criticizes Islam for violation of human rights on this basis. The feminist thought finds similarity with the Islamic concept of the status of women. However, the former is viewed as a rebellion against historical traditions blaming them for gender discrimination, and is aided by the incentive of economic empowerment, therefore it cannot be recognized as a universal principle for women's rights. Islam considers all genders to be equal, with distinct capacities and roles/responsibilities, while contemporary thought conflates women's roles

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[1] ibid
[2] *Qur'an* 68:4

and responsibilities in opposition to the natural spirit of humans. Since social justice and equitable economic opportunity are the fundamental principles for seeking gender equality, feminist thought is finding a place in Islamic societies, where women's rights are not valued in accordance with Islamic teachings. Islam protects women's rights through its principle of fundamental social justice, which fits with feminism's core objective. However, it rejects feminism's resulting norms, such as gender mixing and sexual deviance.[1] Convergence of thought on human rights and the violation of the same in Muslim societies is used as a psychological tool by modernists to propagate the supremacy of contemporary thought. The theme is finding ground in Muslim societies, where modernists support contemporary thought, pointing towards the claim that women are second-grade citizens in Muslim societies. This argument draws strength from the opposition to the principal position on social issues in Islam. The Muslim feminists have also demanded the reinterpretation of Quranic injunctions regarding women and join the western critics in highlighting oppressed Muslim women, without taking cognizance of the fact that it is not because of Islam but the lack of manifestation on Islam that leads to denial of rights to Muslim women in certain part of Muslim world. The feminists draw support of Muslim feminist activists without understanding the position of Islam on the following points, which will be discussed through the study of *Fiqh al Sīrah* in the succeeding sections:

- The lead role /responsibility of the man for sustaining the household; the husband-and-wife relationship.
- The perception of discrimination of women, especially in legal evidence.
- Half share allocation in the inheritance.
- The right to divorce lies with males, though females may ask for it through legal recourse.
- The (misplaced) concept of Polygamy.
- Resistance to hijab and modesty.

5.1.1. Status of Women in the Light of Sīrah of the Prophet ﷺ

Muslim society's backbone is the family. Thus, family life keeps society together, and Muslims are expected to emulate the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ example of marriage and family rearing. Muslim families are often extensive, consisting of parents, children,

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[1] Hanaf, Hassan, *New Directions in Islamic Thought,* (Centre for International and Regional Studies 2010), 3-5.

grandparents, and sometimes elderly relatives. An extended family system is often thought to indicate more stability, continuity, love, and support for one another. Because Islam places a high premium on the well-being and care of close relatives (*Aqrabaa*), they are part of the extended family. A male serve as the family's leader and main supervisor. Indeed, the extended family's oldest member acts as the family's head. Most of a man's duties lie outside the house. He is responsible for the family's economic and material well-being, as well as its relationships with the rest of society, the economy, safety, and security, as well as its internal disciplinary responsibilities. The primary duties of a woman are familial. While the oldest woman is still considered as the family's centre, the woman who forms the family circle's or fold's core retains the relative central position. Islam's social structure is inextricably linked to the family. Islam is not interested in establishing a sensate, sex-obsessed society. It establishes an ideological society marked by a high level of moral consciousness, a strong commitment to Islamic teachings and ideals, and a purposefulness in all human behaviour. Its discipline is voluntary, stemming from everyone's commitment to Islam's values and objectives. This civilization is defined by an exceptional sense of social duty. The whole system is intended to bolster and strengthen the family, not to weaken it. A spectrum of reciprocal rights and obligations of all members of the family has been established by Islam to promote the establishment of balanced interactions between all parties.

Islamic law and practice recognize gender distinctions, resulting in distinct duties and responsibilities for men and women. Many Muslims, on the other hand, feel that men and women complement one another. Islam believes in discipline and order in all spheres of life. It was considered a norm to nominate a leader during the journey for better coordination, management, and decision-making. So, the need arises, in the long journey of life involving partners, to put the onus of the leadership role on one of them. It is highlighted that the lead role would mean a greater sense of responsibility. The family is the basic unit of society that needs to be strengthened through organizational structure and rules of governance. Allah has created pairs of all living beings, including plants. The husband-and-wife relationship is the primary point that initiated humanity. Therefore, the *Qur'ān* says,

وَمِنْ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦٓ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَٰجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَـَٔايَـٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ[1]

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[1] *Qur'an* 30:21 (Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

"And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect."

The verse of the *Qur'ān* indicates that peace for the couple in a legitimate relationship lies in mutually sharing satisfaction, tranquillity, comfort, relief, and similar feelings. The relationship is not confined to mutual pleasure, but forms the basis of mutual existence, as the *Qur'ān* says:

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ ٱلصِّيَامِ ٱلرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَآئِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ عَلِمَ ٱللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ ۖ فَٱلْـٰٔنَ بَـٰشِرُوهُنَّ¹

"Permitted to you on the night of the fasts is the approach to your wives. They are your garments. And ye are their garments. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them and seek what Allah hath ordained for you."

This verse provides an equal sense of responsibility towards each other, covering up each other's follies and secrets. This is in the social context, and when it comes to physical obligation, the natural limitations of females and the ability of males come into play, besides psychological weaknesses. Therefore, the male has naturally experienced a degree of ascendency since the inception of the world. Adam was created first, followed by Eve. Thus, for successful management of domestic affairs, one of the two partners must be assigned the lead role. The leader has additional responsibilities to protect and sustain the family unit. Thus, the male is more sustainable for the responsibilities of leader and provider due to his physiological ascendency, whereas the female has an important responsibility to manage the household within the means provided by the man. Thus, the *Qur'an describes* it very clearly.

ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى ٱلنِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَآ أَنفَقُواْ مِنْ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ ۚ فَٱلصَّـٰلِحَـٰتُ قَـٰنِتَـٰتٌ حَـٰفِظَـٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱلَّـٰتِى تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَٱهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِى ٱلْمَضَاجِعِ وَٱضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُواْ عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا²

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them

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¹ Ibid 2:187
² Quran, 4:34

from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct admonish them (first) (next) refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance): for Allah is Most High Great (above you all)."

The term "*Qawāmūn*" (in charge) means the one assigned to protect and sustain. Protection is the sense of security provided by the presence of a male member during the woman's daily routine, while sustenance has been ordained by the *Qur'ān* through the spending of wealth on women. The spending of wealth on a woman by a man justifies a woman's being free from the responsibility of earning a livelihood. Allah Almighty has not left any loophole in this gender equation to avoid exploitation of women, even after divorce, as weaker folk. So, the *Qur'ān* says,

وَٱلْمُطَلَّقَٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَٰثَةَ قُرُوٓءٍ ۚ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَن يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ فِىٓ أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِن كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ ۚ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوٓاْ إِصْلَٰحًا ۚ وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ ٱلَّذِى عَلَيْهِنَّ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ[1]

"*Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods nor is it lawful for them to hide what Allah hath created in their wombs if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period if they wish for reconciliation. And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them, and Allah is Exalted in Power Wise.*"

As Nasr has so aptly brought out, Shari'ah envisions men and women playing complementary roles. It endows the male with the privilege of social and political power and mobility, which he must pay for by shouldering significant duties and shielding his family from all the economic and social forces and pressures. Although he is the ruler of the world and the leader of his own family, the man behaves in his house as one who acknowledges and respects his wife's authority in this realm. Through mutual understanding and acceptance of the duties put on each other by God, the Muslim man and

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[1] Quran, 2:228

woman may develop their identities and establish a strong family unit, which is the fundamental institution of Muslim society.[1]

Besides having relatively less physical strength, women have psychological limitations of being rash and reactive, thus impacting their capacity for decision making, while men are more prudent.[2] The contemporary studies by WHO report state, "Gender and women's mental health" highlights "gender differences occur particularly in the rate of mental disorders - depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints. These disorders, in which women predominate, affect approximately one in three people and constitute a serious public health problem."[3] The emotional state of women can be ascertained from the physiological changes during the menstrual period and pregnancy, which impact their physical and mental abilities.

The society of *Makkah*, where Islam brightened its light first, was too cruel to women and used to bury their new-born daughters, considering them to be a threat to their pride and respect. However, in Medina, the situation was different, and women enjoyed greater liberties and respect in society, as can be established from various traditions, as mentioned by *Ḥaḍrat Umer* رضی اللہ عنہ about the women of Medina being more powerful and influential.[4] Martin Lings has quoted that Umar came one morning to the house of the Messenger ﷺ, and as he approached he heard the sound of women's voices raised to a pitch which he considered to be unseemly in the prophetic presence. The women were moreover of Quraysh, that is, of the Emigrants, which confirmed his opinion that they were learning bad ways from the women of Medina who for generations had been less restrained and more self-assertive than the women of Mecca.[5] Readers Digest conducted a study in March 1987 and established that men beating up their female partners do it in the quest to tame her in the desired manner.[6] It is also a psychological fact that women are more attracted to men with a dominating personality than timid and docile ones. The Prophet ﷺ said,

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ، وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي[7]

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[1] Nasr, Syed Hossein, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (ABC International Group, Inc. London, 1966), 110-113.

[2] Folstein, MF, SE Folstein, PR McHugh. Mini mental state: a practical method for grading the cognitive state of patients for the clinician. *J Psychiatr Res.* 1975; 12:189–198.

[3] https://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/67.pdf

[4] Ahmed, Israr, *Islam main aurat ka muqam*, (Anjuman' e khuddam al *Qur'an* Lahore, 1999), 17

[5] Lings, martin, 275.

[6] Reader Digest March 1987,140.

[7] Sunan Ibn Majah, *Baab 9*, Hadith No 1977.

"The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family."

The relationship with multiple wives demonstrated by the Prophet ﷺ was exemplary. It was not merely that of a master, but of a friend. The hadith Prophet ﷺ was narrated by Abū Umāmah رضى الله عنه that:

مَا اسْتَفَادَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بَعْدَ تَقْوَى اللَّهِ خَيْرًا لَهُ مِنْ زَوْجَةٍ صَالِحَةٍ، إِنْ أَمَرَهَا أَطَاعَتْهُ، وَإِنْ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهَا سَرَّتْهُ وَإِنْ أَقْسَمَ عَلَيْهَا أَبَرَّتْهُ، وَإِنْ غَابَ عَنْهَا نَصَحَتْهُ فِي نَفْسِهَا، وَمَالِهِ[1]

"Nothing is of more benefit to the believer after Taqwā of Allah than a righteous wife whom, if he commands her, she obeys him, if he looks at her, he is pleased if he swears an oath concerning her she fulfils it, and when he is away from her she is sincere towards him with regard to herself and his wealth."

5.1.2. Institution of Marriage – A Fortress for Women

Freedom is a fundamental virtue in the contemporary world. The West has unlimited freedom; thus, every individual has the right to freedom, and no one else has the authority to curtail that liberty. A sensual connection may be formed only with her consent; it can not be established without her consent, even for husband and wife. Islam does not believe in absolute freedom, and it does not accept liberty that infringes on the rights of others. While Islam acknowledges sex as a natural necessity for a boy or girl and a man or woman, it is constrained by marriage, forbidding all forms of open and covert sexual contact without marriage, as discussed in the earlier section.

While the institution of marriage has lost its importance in the West, the Islamic social system revolves around a family based on wedlock. Prophet ﷺ in this regard is reported to have said, as narrated by *'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd* رضى الله عنه :

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ، مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ[2]

"O young men, those among you who can support a wife should marry."

This is a great pearl of wisdom about modesty besides highlighting the affordability of relationship in wedlock. Those who can afford to maintain a family have been directed to get married to save themselves from any violation because of sensual desire, while the poor ones are advised to observe fasting to suppress sexual inducement. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of *Nikāh* is a long-lasting relationship. However, the possibility of such

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[1] Ibne Maaja *Kitab Al Nikah*, Hadith No 1857
[2] Sahih Muslim , *Kitab Al Nikah*, Hadith No.3400

circumstances cannot be ruled out, where the object of marriage has failed for various reasons. It may happen in mismatches of socio-economic status of the couple or educational and intellectual inequality, or if there are moral or physical differences that are established after marriage. If the inability of the couple to pull along well diminishes, then parting ways is imminent. Dragging such a relationship further will cause more harm to the couple in the psychological realm and will impact the children emotionally. In parting ways, there is a strong possibility of both finding more peaceful and affectionate partners.[1]

Islam, being a religion of nature, has laid down rules in keeping with the nature of human beings. The option of divorce under such undesirable circumstances is available in Islam, but unlike Christianity, which does not allow it at all, and Judaism, which offers an open hand in this regard. Islam has laid down a process that allows enough time to rethink and deliberate before reaching the extreme position, which has been declared as the most undesirable among 'ḥalāl' things. Western thought objects to the final decision being held by man. The proponents of women's empowerment ask for the right to be given to women as well, alternatively depriving both rights and having them delegated to the court of law.[2] The *Qur'ānic* verses in the context of divorce are all addressed to males (with masculine terminology). The women have been given the option to abandon the right to *Mehr* (jointure) in *Qur'ān*.[3]

As discussed, regarding the superiority of man in the social equation, one can understand that a man being more responsible for the maintenance of the family is expected to take a better view of the circumstances. He is the one undertaking the financial burden of sustenance of divorce, children's rights, losing the right to dowry, and confronting the expenses of a second marriage. Therefore, his decision-making is expected to be the result of deeper thought and more deliberation. One can imagine that if the rights were to be exercised by women, who are more emotional and tend to gain financially by taking away dowry and leaving behind children, then the rate of divorce would rise exponentially. A place like this could be a sure-fire way to break up the family, which has been a strong social unit in most Muslim societies so far.

Recent activities like "Aurat March" brought the slogan "MERA JISM MERI MARZI", the direct translation of "My Body My Choice," coined unofficially by feminists in the West in the context of gender equality, especially for reproductive rights and access

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[1] Alvi, *Tehreek E Niswan aur Islam*, 246

[2] Alvi, *Tehreek E Niswan aur Islam*, 265-66.

[3] *Qur'an* 4:4, also see 4:24.

to abortion. The Pakistani female activists adopted the slogan, drawing controversy in media discourse. Mostly, it was interpreted as women refusing to conjugate rights to their husbands, encouraging them to stay single. The inspiration is drawn from the criminalization of sex with a wife without her consent, termed as' marital rape'. This was discussed in the West for a long period of time, and in certain nations, it is unlawful and punitive to have sex without the permission of the wife. Therefore, it is important to respond here. Intimacy between husband and wife is a pleasant and beneficial deed; it brings both physical and psychological comfort. The physical intimacy between husband and wife is described as pleasant as sweetness. The Prophet ﷺreferred to it as' charity'.[1]

This clarifies the mutual satisfaction of both husband and wife being respected by Islam, which also requires spouses to look after one another, treat one another properly, and fulfil one another's needs as discussed previously. This reference to charity is both for husband and wife, as they bring joy to each other, thus pleasing the partner. The Prophet ﷺ in relation to recompensating anyone who fulfils his sexual appetite among us has clarified that if one were to commit to anything unlawful in this regard, it shall be a sin on his part. Therefore, if one commits it to something legitimate, he should have a reward. The objection by Western thought to the emphasis of Islam on 'obedience' of women is often termed as slavery for women. In Islam, the woman has been directed to follow her husband and not to defy him, especially when her husband desires intimate pleasure from her and she has no reason to refuse. Prophet ﷺ is reported to state,

<div dir="rtl">إِذَا الرَّجُلُ دَعَا زَوْجَتَهُ لِحَاجَتِهِ فَلْتَأْتِهِ، وَإِنْ كَانَتْ عَلَى التَّنُّورِ [2]</div>

"If a husband summons his wife (for sexual intercourse), she should instantly depart, even if she is sitting in the oven."

Critics argue that all of this and similar hadith are directed at women. But it must be noted that these apply equally to men and women, as husbands and wives should not abstain from satisfying the sexual desires of their partners, even if they do not have their own desires at the time. But it is natural that sexual pleasure is contingent upon the mutual involvement of both partners. Moreover, one of the most critical aspects of sexual intimacy between couples is moderation. The couple can decide for themselves the frequency. If the husband wants but the woman is hesitant, or the wife wants but the husband is involved in another job, both can make some compromises to respect the other partner, because respect

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[1] Mishkat ul Masabih, *Kitab ul Zakat*, Hadith No, 1898.

[2] Tirmizi, *Baab Ul Nikah*, Hadith No. 1160.

and understanding are the foundation of a family relationship. And in this situation, the husband bears a larger burden of tolerance and restraint because the wife experiences mood swings due to physiological reasons: irritability in the days before menstruation, nursing difficulties for the infant, or there may be other household issues. Forced sex is unpleasant, and both partners are supposed to be completely supportive of one another. Mutual pleasure is plentiful. The spirit of the Hadith is to save the man from going astray, in the event of the refusal of his wife to cooperate.

If a woman consistently refuses to consent to an act of intimacy, the man should seek to ascertain the reasons for her refusal and then eliminate those reasons. If one of the spouses' sexual demands is not permanently met by the other, *Shari'ah* has also resolved this issue through an amicable divorce option, and the husband is permitted to remarry if he does not seek divorce.

The wife of *Hadhrat Sabit bin Qais* رضى الله عنه approached the Prophet ﷺand said that she would not blame Thabit for flaws in his character or faith, but as a Muslim, she was likely to commit un-Islamic behaviour (if she remained with him). Allah's Apostle ﷺ asked her, "Will you return the garden that your husband gave you (as Mahr)?" Yes, she replied. The Prophet ﷺthen addressed Thabit, saying, "O Thabit! Accept your garden and divorce her at once. So, the marriage came to an end.[1]

It can be understood that, under normal conditions, when the wife is healthy and without an explanation of a cogent reason, she cannot reject intimacy merely by stating that she does not want it. It would be incorrect to assert that she would allow her husband to have intercourse just when she desired. She should be ready to satisfy her husband's sexual desires, just as the husband is responsible for allowing his wife to have intercourse whenever she desires. If the husband wants sexual intercourse and the woman believes she is being harassed by the husband, she has the right to seek separation if the husband is unwilling to divorce or *khul'a*. She may get an annulment of the marriage by bringing a case to the Judiciary. Islamic law grants a woman the freedom to seek a divorce from her spouse for whatever reason she desires.

5.1.2.1 Safeguarding Women's Interest in Marriage

The wave of freedom of women and the misuse of social media and other means of connectivity have led to frequent cases of eloping couples seeking protection from the judiciary to justify their immature and ill-conceived steps in life. The media coverage is

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[1] Sahih Al Bukhari, *Baab Ul Nikah*, Hadith Nos: 5273. See also 5274 & 5276.

seen projecting such cases in the context of human rights to gain a sympathetic view of society towards such low moral behaviour. The courts in Pakistan have been divided in their judgment, providing an opportunity for feminists to advance their agenda in the garb of a difference of opinion on the issue between Islamic jurists. The restriction of the consent of the elder/guardian (Walī) on the Nikāh of Muslim girls is considered an injustice. The response to such a thought on the freedom of women imported from the West is discussed in the succeeding paragraphs from an Islamic point of view, with special reference to Fiqh al Sīrah. Before proceeding further, let me dilate a bit on the concept and social role of Walī. In the Arabic language, the word "Walī" means guardian, friend, associate, assistant, organizer, relationship master, custodian, protector, authenticity, etc.

In Qur'ān, the term Walī is generally used in the meaning of guardian, supporter, helper, and caring person. *Qur'an* used the term "*Walī*" in *Surah Baqrah*:

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ[1]

"*Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and [that] you have not besides Allah any protector or any helper*?"

The terminology of "*Walī*" in the context of *Qur'ānic* meaning points towards an extremely sincere and devoted person. In the family, the elderly are looked at traditionally for advice based on their wisdom and experience. He exercises his organisational abilities in the conduct of domestic affairs and inter-family relationships. In families, the tradition of appointing a head of the family on the demise of the elder one is commonly practised in most societies. *Nikāh* is one of the most important decisions in the lives of individuals. So, the guidance and advice of the guardian takes precedence, especially when the couple is from a different family and social background, termed as "*Kufwe*." The criteria set by the Prophet is to look for four things: wealth, ancestry, appearance, and religious standing.[2] He did not suggest that a rich or one from a high-profile family or a very handsome-looking man should be selected for *Nikāh*, but these attributes should be aligned with the family of the girl; neither substandard nor superior, as both can lead to social issues subsequently.[3] It must be understood that the concept of 'Walī' is not to suppress the right of women to choose or approve their life partner, but to reinforce it through a sense of security provided to them against any maltreatment. It demonstrated the strength of a woman who has her

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[1] *Qur'an* 2:107.

[2] Ala-ud-Din, Haskafi, Al-Durr al-Mukhtar Sharh Tanwir al-Absar. Kitab Bhavan 1992, vol:2, 437.

[3] Sahih al-Bukhari, *Baab Ul Nikah*, Hadith No 5090.

entire family standing by her against any ill-intentions of her life partner. It also secures her right to inherit by remaining a part of the family.

Similarly, in *Surah Nūr*, Allah commands that the single women be given to *Nikāh*.[1] Allah commands men to do so (give them to *Nikāh*). That proves the importance of the guardian or *Walī* in the matrimonial matters of the women of the family. A similar text is there at various points of discussion regarding widows, orphans, divorcees, and maids.

The Prophet ﷺ is quoted by his companions رضى الله عنهم about the invalidity of *Nikāh* without the consent of "*Wali* ."[2] The clear command concerning the widow about obtaining her consent and the maiden being asked for her permission is narrated *Abū Hurairah* رضى الله عنه : The Prophet ﷺ said,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ، وَكَيْفَ إِذْنُهَا ؟ :لَا تُنْكَحُ الْأَيِّمُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْمَرَ ، وَلَا تُنْكَحُ الْبِكْرُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْذَنَ ، قَالُوا
أَنْ تَسْكُتَ3 :قَالَ

"Widow should not be given in marriage except after consulting her, and a virgin should not be given in marriage except after her permission. The people asked, O Allah's Messenger ﷺ! How can we know her permission? He said, her silence (indicates her permission)."

The *Ḥadīth* indicated that a widow is more experienced, having been the wife of someone. Therefore, she can be trusted with the decision about a marriage proposal. Therefore, she has a much greater right to make her own decision about her future partner in life. The maiden is not considered mature enough, as her approach can be merely emotional about a person. Therefore, her permission is sought in this regard, which selection is left to the family or elders. Permission is sought to ensure that nothing prohibits her from getting going with the proposed groom. This *Ḥadīth* neither allows '*Walī*' to impose his wishes on the women irrespective of their marital status, nor obliges the women to decide independently, without the involvement of the family and elders. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that no woman should arrange *Nikāh* of another woman or should arrange her own marriage. She is termed an adulteress, who arranges her marriage. Therefore, *Nikāh* of her own accord, is stated to be *zina*.[4] This is believed to be a restraint to discourage independent steps about marriage to provide adequate security for women.

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[1] Quran, 24:32

[2] Abu Dawood , *Baab Ul Nikah,* Hadith No:2085. See also, Tirmizī : 1101,1102, Ibn Maja : 1881.

[3] Sahih al-Bukhari, *Baab Ul Nikah*, Hadith No 6968.

[4] Ibne Maaja : Vol. 3, Book 9, Chapter on Marriage, Hadith No 1882.

It must be noted that the willingness or consent of the female is not undermined by the authority bestowed upon 'Walī'. There are *Ḥadīth* that show that the Prophet ﷺ dissolved the *Nikāh* of women, who had expressed their disliking or aversion to marriage. Similarly, in the case of *Nikāh*, the absence of *Walī*'s consent can also be challenged in a court of law, if the family of the woman feels let down because of the social status of the man.

5.1.2.2. Salvage of Marriage Through All Possible Means

As discussed above, Islam has laid down a well-meaning process to save the situation till the end. The study of *Fiqh al Sīrah* in conjunction with *Qur'ānic* teachings suggests certain measures to prevent the breakup of marriage: The first step in the case of conflict is to take corrective measures laid down by the *Qur'ān*:

وَٱلَّـٰتِى تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَٱهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِى ٱلْمَضَاجِعِ وَٱضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُواْ عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا[1]

"And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them (first) if they persist, do not share their beds, 'but if they persist, then discipline them (gently). But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great."

It can be noticed that Islam has prescribed a gradual treatment for the rebellious mind through verbal counselling to revive faith in Allah and fear of the Day of Judgment and draws attention to mutual relations based on rights and responsibilities, collective good, and the future of children. In the case of failure of the soft measure, disciplinary action must follow in terms of quitting the bedroom. This should have a serious impact on her behaviour because, in this way, her beauty, and charm happened to lose their attraction to men. Failure to achieve the corrective result of corporal punishment is inevitable to tame the rebellious and self-centred personality of women. This provision is believed to be only in case she refuses the legitimate rights of her husband. It should not be exercised because of any dislike of the husband. The concept of dealing with women laid down by Islam is so natural and practical that there is no need to go to the next step, which may be harsher if she gets corrected with action of lesser intensity.[2]

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[1] *Qur'an* 4:34.

[2] al-Booti M Sa'id Ramadan, *Duroos'e Seerat*, Translated by Muhammad Raziul Islam Nadvi, (Nashriyat, Lahore, 2017),125.

The Prophet ﷺ forbade corporal punishment of animals, saying, do not beat your camel on the face.[1] As Anas ibn Malik reported:

<div dir="rtl">

وَيْحَكَ يَا عَنْ أَنَسٍ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَتَى عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِ وَسَوَّاقٌ يَسُوقُ بِهِنَّ يُقَالُ لَهُ أَنْجَشَةُ فَقَالَ أَنْجَشَةُ رُوَيْدًا سَوْقَكَ بِالْقَوَارِيرِ [2]

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"The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, came to some of his wives

while they were being driven by a camel-driver named Anjasha. Prophet ﷺ

said, "O driver, be gentle when you carry the precious glass."

It may be established here that, the one who prohibited hitting the face of the animal, as it could leave any mark, so how could he allow such punishment for women, who are more delicate, and the face must be preserved as a reflection of her beauty. This refutes the claims about the oppression of women in the Muslim world.

5.1.3. Legal Status of Women; Non-discrimination

Western critics of Islam often quote the concept of half evidence of women in Islam. The verses of *Qur'ān*[3] They point to the emphasis on the evidence of two women in the case of financial transactions, which is also being criticised for projecting the evidence of women. Thus, the Prophet ﷺhas not degraded women in the intellectual context. The matter of evidence is in relation to the emotional and psychological makeup of the women, thus the requirement of a second woman as a co-witness to endorse the first one. Most scholars have linked it with financial transactions. All agree to allow the witness to be a woman. Abdul Haleem quotes some of the scholars in his book "Women in the Prophet's Era."[4] In that context following hadith is quoted with reference to *Ḥaḍrat Abū Saʿīd Khiḍrī* رضى الله عنہ who has narrated that the Prophet ﷺ, went to the women and said,

<div dir="rtl">

يَا مَعْشَرَ النِّسَاءِ تَصَدَّقْنَ، فَإِنِّي رَأَيْتُكُنَّ أَكْثَرَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ ". فَقُلْنَ وَبِمَ ذَلِكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ " تُكْثِرْنَ اللَّعْنَ وَتَكْفُرْنَ الْعَشِيرَ، مَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْ نَاقِصَاتِ عَقْلٍ وَدِينٍ أَذْهَبَ لِلُبِّ الرَّجُلِ الْحَازِمِ مِنْ إِحْدَاكُنَّ يَا مَعْشَرَ النِّسَاءِ ". ثُمَّ انْصَرَفَ فَلَمَّا صَارَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ جَاءَتْ زَيْنَبُ امْرَأَةُ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ تَسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَيْهِ فَقِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَذِهِ زَيْنَبُ فَقَالَ " أَىُّ الزَّيَانِبِ ". فَقِيلَ امْرَأَةُ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ. قَالَ " نَعَمِ ائْذَنُوا لَهَا ". فَأُذِنَ لَهَا قَالَتْ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ أَمَرْتَ الْيَوْمَ بِالصَّدَقَةِ، وَكَانَ عِنْدِي حُلِيٌّ لِي، فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَتَصَدَّقَ بِهِ، فَزَعَمَ ابْنُ مَسْعُودٍ أَنَّهُ وَوَلَدَهُ أَحَقُّ مَنْ تَصَدَّقْتُ بِهِ عَلَيْهِمْ. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " صَدَقَ ابْنُ مَسْعُودٍ، زَوْجُكِ وَوَلَدُكِ أَحَقُّ مَنْ تَصَدَّقْتِ بِهِ عَلَيْهِمْ "[5]

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[1] Sahih al Bukhari, *Baab Ul Adab*, Hadith No. 6042.
[2] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī Hadith on women 5797, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2323
[3] *Qur'an* 2:282.
[4] Abushqah, Abdul Haleem, "*Aurat Aehd Nabvi mainn"* (Urdu Translation), (Nashriat, 2018), 155.
[5] Sahih Al Bukhari, *Baab Ul Zakat*, Hadith No. 1462.

"O group of women! Give Alms, as I have seen that majority of dwellers of Hellfire were you (women). They asked, why is it so, O Allah's Prophet ﷺ? He replied, you curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not   seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you. The women asked, O Allah's Messenger ﷺ! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion? Did he say, Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man? They replied affirmatively. He said this is a deficiency in her intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses? The women replied in the affirmative. He said this is the deficiency in religion."

This *Ḥadīth* is quoted by those opposing/favouring the gender equation. Hence, it must be analysed from various angles. Firstly, the audience of the Prophet ﷺ were the women of *Anṣār* of *Madinah* and it has been discussed in various places that the women of *Madinah* enjoyed better status in society and dominated their men. That is the reason *Ḥaḍrat 'Umer* رضی الله عنہ is quoted as having said that the wives of immigrants started imitating them. Therefore, the expression of the Prophet ﷺ is related to the aspect of the domination of the minds of wiser men by the otherwise weak women folk. Therefore, it is not to highlight the weaknesses, but the ability to influence the opposite gender. Thus, the style of expression of the Prophet ﷺ was to motivate them to give alms. The other aspect in this regard is the high reward for alms to escape hellfire. Moreover, influence may be exercised by them in good deeds. The second aspect of the inferiority of intelligence should not be viewed as a physical inability of prominent nature. It is in this lighter vein that the Prophet ﷺ pointed out the mental capacity of women in relation to men. In the short term, the emotional and timid nature of women could hamper their thinking and intelligence in a particular situation of fear and anxiety. In the long term, the mental stress caused by the menses and pregnancy may have a negative impact on the mental ability of the woman as well, thus restricting her activities and responsibilities to an extent. The Prophet ﷺ pointed out the inferiority of intellect in the same context, as the upbringing of children, being the supreme duty of a woman, could not be assigned to an inferior mind.

5.1.4. Women's Right to Sustenance/Inheritance

Critiques of Islam argue against the half share of women in inheritance as compared to men. This is a flawed understanding of Quranic injunctions. Probably, no other issue has been so clearly dictated in the Quran as the law of inheritance and the system of social

security for women in Islam. It is worth noting that in more cases woman gets more than a man, in few cases equal to a man and in one incidence, she gets half of the man. Without getting into the calculation of share in different scenarios, the concept of sustenance is dilated upon in these paragraphs. Islam has blessed Muslim women with an economic status that does not leave any obligation to run from pillar to post in the urge to make both ends meet, as seen in the West. As a daughter, she is supported by her father, as a wife by her husband, as a sister by her brother, and as a mother by her son. These arrangements are made because of the importance of her role in domestic affairs, in the eyes of Islam. Islam desires her to be fully dedicated to her domestic responsibilities. The prerequisite for marriage in Islam is the ability to sustain a family, as per the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ, who advised young men with wealth to get married and those, who cannot afford a family, to opt for fasting to subdue the sensual urges.[1] This is so realistic because the domestic responsibilities are 24/7 types of commitment without any relief, respite, or vacations. It is not only the subsistence of women that has been ensured by Islam, but she is also economically empowered through her established right of inheritance in all relationships. She is entitled to a share of the inheritances of her father, husband, and even sometimes from brothers and sisters as well, as discussed above. Moreover, she enjoys full rights to her dowry/jointure (*Mehr*) besides the gifts received at the wedding. Thus, one cannot deny the economic benefits provided by Islam to women, aimed at saving them from undue exposure to the environment, with all sorts of evils.[2]

In extraordinary circumstances, where the woman does not have family support, as in the case of the death of her husband or divorce, the responsibility for the upbringing of orphans, may justify her finding a job/work to earn her living. Similarly, in the case of the meagre income of her husband or his physical disability, the need to work becomes unavoidable. Under such circumstances, the institution of *Bait al-Māl* is meant to support the needy. The concept of a welfare state given by the Caliph *'Umer* رضى الله عنہ is in vogue in many countries in the West. Similarly, the concept of *Zakāt* and *ṣadaqāt* by the richer segment of society also provides for the subsistence of orphans, widows, poor relatives, the downtrodden, and neighbours. If such a system is followed in letter and spirit at the individual, social, and state levels, the need for poor women to work may never rise. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, as narrated by Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنہ that

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[1] Ibne Maaje, *Kitab Ul Nikah,* Hadith No.1846.

[2] Alsabah, Noor and Shagufta Firdos, 'Gurbat k khatmay k liye Azwāj'e Mutaharāt kí masāj̤, Wives of Prophet ﷺ and Poverty Alleviation, *Al-Ilm*, Vol 2, Jul-Dec (2019), 50.

whoever tries to support the widow and destitute, is comparable to a Mujhid (warrior) who battles in Allah's cause, and to anybody who stands at night (in voluntary prayers) and fasts throughout the day.[1]

This shows that for Muslims, there is a higher reward for supporting the widows and poor. Similarly, parents have been promised the best reward for alms in the case of spending on their daughter, who happens to return to them after marriage (divorced or widowed). In such a society, why should a woman be worried about her subsistence, in case of losing her husband for whatever reason? Islam, however, allowed women to undertake economic activities in cases of social compulsion, as narrated by *Jābir* رضی اللہ عنہ that his maternal aunt got divorced after three years, and she immediately went out to fetch fruit from her palm trees as she had no other source of income. A gentleman approached her and prohibited her from going out). As a result, she approached the Prophet ﷺ and informed him of the situation. The Prophet ﷺ not only permitted her to go out and cut fruit from her palm trees but also asked her to give alms *(ṣadaqāh)* and perform an act of kindness.[2]

Similarly, there is a narration about the wife of Abdullah *bin Masūd* رضی اللہ عنہن , who was good at handicraft, asked the Prophet ﷺ, if she could sell her handcraft in order to support her children and husband, who had no source of income. The Prophet ﷺ not only allowed her, but also informed her of an additional recompense from Allah.[3]

It is so unfortunate that this wonderful social welfare system is not in vogue anywhere in the contemporary Muslim world. Muslims are also dominated by the contemporary thought of materialism and excessive individualism. There are very few to take care of poor relatives and neighbours. It is rather commonly observed that uncles of orphans deprive the latter of their due share of their properties, while the real brothers do not let the sisters have their legitimate share of the inheritance. Under such circumstances, the widows are forced to go to work to earn their livelihood and for the subsistence of their children. This leads to further ridiculing the commands of Allah in larger psychological contexts. Therefore, Islam allows women to work under such conditions. However, due care must be exercised to avoid the exploitation of women by unscrupulous characters in society. There are numerous examples from the lives of *Ṣaḥabiyāt* رضی اللہ عنہن (Women companions of the Prophet ﷺ), who used to work to earn their living and to help others,

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[1] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul Sadaqa*, Hadith No. 5353, see also 6006 and 6007.
[2] Sunnan Abu Dawood, *Kitab Ul Talaaq*, Hadith No. 2297.
[3] Sunnan Alkubra, Al behaqi Vol, 4, p, 179 (quoted in PhD thesis of Hajra Madni, 2006).

especially to serve the poor. The succeeding paragraphs have been extracted from the study of the lives of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, and the female companions *(Ṣaḥabiyāt رضى الله عنهن)* of the Prophet ﷺ.

The bottom-line is that the male transfers more of the inheritance to another woman in marriage as a wedding gift (who was previously "disadvantaged" in the inheritance) and must meet provision and maintenance duties from the rest. The woman, on the other hand, does not have to fulfil any supply and maintenance commitments. We see that the woman does not have to carry out any financial duties within the Islamic social and family system, save for the payment of the obligatory contribution to identified needy individuals, which comprises the third pillar of Islam.Rather, she gains from the obligations put on males.

5.1.5. Polygamy: Cure not Curse

In reaction to masculine superiority, polygamy and the right to divorce are objected to by proponents of gender equality. While divorce has been discussed in sufficient detail in the earlier sections, polygamy is described in the following paragraphs. Polygamy is prohibited legally in some countries, while it is legally allowed in various countries, but is contested socially and morally. In Arab countries, there is no legal, moral, or social resistance to polygamy.

Contemporary thought on the aversion to polygamy goes back to the Christian spiritual concept that advocated staying away from women. Wedlock has lost its relevance in the West; thus, criticism of polygamy gains support in the name of human rights. Islam has allowed up to four wives in *Nikāh* of a Muslim man at a time, with the condition of ensuring social justice among them, and commanded them to restrict themselves to one marriage, if they are unable to do so, as explained in earlier sections with reference to *Surah al-Nisā* Verse 3 in *Qur'ān.* The rights and responsibilities of partners in wedlock in Islam are so huge that it practically prohibits a man from polygamy unless there is a pressing reason to do so. The multiple marriages of the Prophet ﷺwere based on social, political, and diplomatic considerations, and the way he led a balanced and just life was not possible for any mortal. His first marriage, at the age of 25, to a forty-year-old widow, is testimony to the absence of any sensual motive in marriage. Umer رضى الله عنه, is reported to have said that Prophet's marriages neither motivated by beauty, love and wealth. It was the need of the time for reformation of society and social concern.[1] Therefore, Western

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[1] Haykal, Muhammad Husayn, The life of Muhammad ﷺ, Translated by Isma'il Razi al Faruqi, Temple University, 334.

criticism is out of place. Notwithstanding the above, the following arguments are put forward to explain the viewpoint of Islam on this issue:[1]

- Multiple marriages may be seen as a measure to avoid immoral activities for men with higher sexual desire, especially in the case of physical and medical restrictions on sexual intercourse with the wife.

- In the case of a wife's infertility, the desire to have a child can be satisfied through a second marriage.

- Polygamy can help to correct the gender imbalance by increasing the number of females, widows, and divorcees.

Western criticism also led to the suggestion of polyandry (women having more than one husband) in support of the attack on the practise being allowed in Islam. This is a highly unnatural concept, with moral, physical, social, and medical complexities. The dispute about the identity of the child, and the conflict of interest between the multiple husbands, notwithstanding.[2]

5.1.6. Modesty – Virtue not a Curb

The critiques of Islam have especially targeted the dress of Muslim women, thereby banning hijab in certain western countries. If women are required to have attire of a certain dimension, Islam prescribes a dress code for men as well. If Islam desires women to control their gaze, so does it order men to lower their gaze? Does Islam restrict women from freely and exclusively mixing up with strangers? Or does it resist men doing so? Islam allowed the choice of life partners for both genders and parted ways in case of an unmanageable difference of opinion or conflict. Both can own and manage properties and wealth. Allah has promised equal rewards for both in life and the hereafter. However, women are being informed of exclusive rewards for motherhood.

Islam considers modesty to be the greatest virtue of a woman, which provides her with the strength to withstand social evils and saves society from vulgarity and moral crimes. 'Ḥayā' (modesty) is an instinct of a human being that restrains him/her from vulgarity. In simple terms, the repulsive thought towards the malevolent is 'Ḥayā. This is virtually the voice of conscience, which seems to be suppressed by contemporary thought in the name of freedom and pleasure, where evil is offered space through various social

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[1] Rashdi, Zahid Ur, 'Islamic Law on Wedding and Modern Thought' *Monthly Asharya (*Urdu) August Gujranwala (2006), 15.
[2] ibid

and psychological theories and tools, leading to legislative cover. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said,

الْإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ شُعْبَةً، وَالْحَيَاءُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ .[1]

"*There are over sixty branches of Faith (Imān) and Ḥayā (modesty) is one of these.*"

These *Ahadeeth describe* the character in a wholesome manner and are certainly based on faith and applicable to believers in Islam. *Ḥayā* in Islam is an extension of the divine message received through the earlier prophets.

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said,

إِنَّ مِمَّا أَدْرَكَ النَّاسُ مِنْ كَلَامِ النُّبُوَّةِ الْأُولَى إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحْيِ فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتَ[2]

"*If you do not feel ashamed 'Ḥayā' then do you like.*"

There is no real synonym in other languages for 'Ḥayā' being the central attribute of human character, which if lost, then one is devoid of differentiating between good and bad. 'Ḥayā' being central to the character of human beings, covers almost all aspects of human life and behaviour. When it comes to gender relations, it becomes even more important. The natural attraction between the opposite genders is regulated by Nikāh, which binds both partners in a relationship of loyalty and sincerity. In the case of violation of the terms of the marriage contract, 'Ḥayā' is the first casualty.

Islam has not only provided guidelines for the protection of women's chastity and modesty, but also laid down the principles of deterrence against levying false accusations against women. According to the *Qur'an*, anyone accusing a woman of *Zinā* must bring four eyewitnesses, otherwise face the punishment of 80 lashes for false accusation and never trust them for their evidence.[3]

That leaves no space for revealing dresses worn by women, which cause seduction among the opposite gender. The dress must cover the body and not reveal it further. The Prophet ﷺ said that women who wear see-through/ short clothes will remain naked on the doom's day.[4] The dresses in modern designs are curbed under this code, where the size of dresses is shrinking, exposing body parts or see-through clothes, and revealing styles. This pertains to dresses where the density of the fabric of the cloth is so thin, or fashion designs

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[1] Sahih Muslim, Branches of Eiman, Hadith No 152 & Sunnan, *Kitab ul Eiman*, Hadith No. 5007.
[2] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Baab ul Adaab*, Hadith No. 6120.
[3] Qur'an 4:34.
[4] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Baab Dars fil Lael*, Hadith No 115.

with deep cleavage and cold shoulders, tights, and capris, revealing necks, breasts, arms, legs, backs, and waists. The dress code at home is, however, lenient.

Maulana Wahiduddin in his book "Muhammad ﷺ a Prophet for all Humanity" has highlighted that in Arab tradition, even the plunderers, while looting the women, would not do it of the women bodies by themselves, with their own hands. They would rather ask the victims to hand over the valuables by themselves and would look the opposite direction, to avoid taking sight of the women taking off their clothes.[1]This is an eye opener for the contemporary era, where revealing clothes are worn by the womenfolk and in western society nudity is not seen as a social evil.

There is an argument by some that *Ḥayā* (modesty) and chastity are feelings in the heart and eyes, so why should Muslim women look different with a veil and *hijab*, thereby attracting criticism from the West? This is so naive a thought that Muslim women of the level of wives of the Prophet ﷺand female companions in the Muslim society of the Prophet's ﷺera were specifically ordered about the dress code, so how can a woman of our time, with some men of relatively lower morality around them, feel safe from evil and sins while wearing revealing dresses? It makes no sense to encourage women with full makeup and revealing dresses to be seen in public places with the hounding gazes of strangers following them, while many of them choose to ignore their desire to look prettier at home. This argument appears to be aimed at getting rid of the veil and *ḥijāb*. Hence, it can be concluded that modesty is a virtue in Islam, while feminists consider it to be a curb on women's freedom.

In the backdrop of the above discussions on Islam and feminism, it is established that man has been given a lead role in domestic affairs. It places a lot of responsibilities on the man, while acknowledging the mother and household roles of the woman with a lot of appreciation. The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined with overlap to ensure a well-integrated domestic setup. A man ensures the protection of the dignity and honour of women, besides providing them with an affordable living standard to enable them to pay full attention to their social and domestic responsibilities without any distraction. The opposite of this would be an independent woman running from pillar to post, striving for both ends to meet, with no sense of security and dignity, and avoiding domestic responsibilities.

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[1] Khan Wahiduddin, "Muhammad ﷺ a Prophet for all Humanity" Good word Books,

It can be concluded that women are given first-class status in the Muslim social order, according to Islam. The facts of life negate this assertion about the superiority of man. One cannot deny the fact that men and women differ from each other in physical, psychological, and physiological aspects. Hence, Islam places responsibilities on both genders in line with their nature and physical and emotional capacity. Syed Hossein Nasr described the responsibilities of women in these words:

"In return for these privileges which the woman receives, she has also certain responsibilities of which the most important is to provide a home for her family and to bring up her children properly. In the home, the woman rules as queen, and a Muslim man is, in a sense, the guest of his wife at home. The home and the larger family structure in which she lives are for the Muslim woman in her world. To be cut off from it would be like being cut off from the world or like dying. She finds the meaning of her existence in this extended family structure, which is constructed to give her the maximum possibility of realising her basic needs and fulfilling herself."[1]

It can succinctly be stated that the issue of gender equality is irrelevant from an Islamic standpoint. It is comparable to discussing the rose's and jasmine's comparability. Each is unique in terms of scent, colour, shape, and attractiveness. Males and females are not identifiably male and female. Each has its own distinct qualities and traits. Women are not treated equally with men. Men and women, however, are not equal. Islam considers their social obligations as complementary, not hostile. Everyone is assigned certain duties and tasks based on his or her character, delicacy, and constitution. Islam, on the other hand, has provided such a superior status to women along with protections of their rights that Islam appears to be fully aligned with the basic objectives of feminism. It can be shown that modern feminist ideas came from the West, where women's rights were not respected. It is evident from the narration that at the time of fall of Makkah the Prophet ﷺ announced amnesty for the disbelievers taking refuge at specified places in which house of Umm'e hani رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا; was declared as a shelter for men and women.[2] The incident proves that the respect for women was equally applicable even in such important matters involving life and death of the people.

It is concluded from the discussions that feminist ideology has some resemblance to the Islamic perspective on women's status. However, since the former is seen as a

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[1] Nasr, Syed Hossein, *Ideals and Realities of Islam,* (Thorson Pub, 1994), 110-113.
[2] Al Qayyam, ibn, Zaad al Ma'ad, Urdu Translation, Nafees Academy Karachi, Vol, 3, 634.

rebellion against past practises blamed for gender discrimination and is accompanied by economic empowerment, it cannot be regarded as a universally recognised basic of women's rights. Islam sees both genders as equal, with distinct abilities, responsibilities, and obligations. However, contemporary ideology conflates women's roles and responsibilities in comparison to the basic human spirit. Due to the importance of social justice and equitable economic opportunity in attaining gender equality, feminist philosophy is gaining support in Islamic societies where women's rights are not recognised by Islamic teachings. Islam protects women's rights via its fundamental social justice notion, which is consistent with feminism's essential goal. It does, however, oppose feminism's resulting norms, such as gender mixing and sexual deviance. Modernists use the confluence of human rights thinking and the denial of such rights in Muslim communities as a psychological tool to spread contemporary thought's dominance. Thus, it is the gender equation, not equality, that is at stake in Islam's social structure.

5.2   Guidelines to Encounter the Contemporary Challenges

Islam has a comprehensive code of conduct. Every aspect of human existence receives suitable instruction about its performance. We have role models in the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺwives and other female companionsرضى الله عنهن , who are regarded as the finest examples for us throughout history. The study of the lives of Ummahāt al Mominīn رضى الله عنهنoffers a role model for fostering peace and stability in family life and society. The interaction of the Prophet ﷺwith his wives and other noble ladies demonstrates the standing of women in a Muslim community, which is necessary for the establishment of a good Islamic society. Additionally, the approach of *Fiqh al Sīrah* establishes pertinent precedents for responding to Western criticism and the blame game on the role of women in Islamic culture. A wholesome study of the interactions of the Prophet ﷺwith his female companions will lead us to extract guidelines for Muslim women in the contemporary sociocultural, psychosocial, socioeconomic, and socioreligious environments and challenges posed by contemporary thought.

5.2.1   Reinforcing Sociocultural Foundation of Muslim Society

In contemporary thought, the institution of marriage has been seen as the most fatal causality. As discussed in earlier chapters, in the pursuit of pleasure and freedom, *Nikāh* has been rendered irrelevant, leading to a high number of fatherless children and the miserable lives of single mothers in the West in their quest for empowerment. It has been established through the survey that Muslim working women are also developing

tendencies that are averse to accepting domestic responsibilities. Some earning unmarried women do not consider marriage as a necessity of life, while those in wedlock express the right to seek a share of domestic responsibilities with their husbands, leading to growing conflicts between husbands and wives. If the parents are unable to intervene and play their role, the chances of divorce are greater.[1] Contemporary social activists and modernists under the influence of contemporary thought are found arguing against the Islamic concept of divorce being an arbitrary right of man, thus exploitative of women. They are of the view that a man, under emotional stress or convulsion, may push a woman or even a child into darkness and helplessness. Hence, they advocate that this right be shared by both partners and that men should be responsible for sustaining abandoned women throughout their lives.[2]

As discussed in the following paragraphs, Islam provides a wonderful framework for the purposeful establishment and stability of the family as a cornerstone of a peaceful society.

5.2.1.1 Reinforcing the Edifice of Social Order

The understanding between husband and wife plays a major role in a prosperous home environment. All the wives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ loved him from the core of their hearts. There are several examples which came across during the study of *Sīrah* that show their strong affiliation with *Ḥaḍrat* Muhammad ﷺ. Ḥaḍrat *Khadija* عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِىَ always stood beside *Ḥaḍrat* Muhammad ﷺ on every occasion when and where needed. During the early days of Islam, when everyone was against the Prophet ﷺ because of his mission, she was the one who accompanied and supported him. At the time of the social boycott of *Quraish* for three years in *Sha'b Abī Ṭālib*, *Ḥaḍrat Khadija* عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِىَ was standing by the Prophet ﷺ throughout the episode.[3] Respect and cooperation with the husband at the time of hardship is the basic ideology of the Islamic social system. At the time of every distress, the wives of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ always cooperated with him and tried their best to boost his morale. *Ḥaḍrat Khadija* عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِىَ played a prominent role in the early days of Islam that will be remembered till the end of this world. At the time of the first revelation, as a human being, the Prophet ﷺ was terrified when he reached back to his home. When *Ḥaḍrat Khadija* عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِىَ came to know about his experience,

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[1] Rasheed, Zuaira, *Why increasing trend of divorce? Nawae Waqt*, 8 September 2019 & Jabeen Ismat, Rising trend of divorce in Pakistan, DW, 19 May 2010.

[2] Alvi, *Tehreek E Niswan & Islam*, 208-9.

[3] Georgiou, Constantan Wargil, *Muhammad ﷺ Prophet of Islam*, Urdu Translation, 64-65.

she started to console the Prophet ﷺ and extended full support to tranquilize him. She said that there was nothing to worry about because you are very kind to everyone and always help the needy and indigent.[1]

Frankness between husband and wife creates confidence and is useful in developing an understanding. The wives of Muhammad ﷺ had such an unmatched environment in their homes. Muhammad ﷺ had a lot of responsibilities for preaching Islam, governance, and other social activities, but on his return home, he was always welcomed with smiling faces to reduce his mental stress. *Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayshah* 's عَنْهَا اللّـٰهُ رَضِیَ frankness and understanding were to the extent that most of the time, she kept herself ready for a healthy competition like fast walking. Once accompanied by Muhammad, Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayshah عَنْهَا اللّـٰهُ رَضِیَ started a race with the Prophet ﷺ and was ahead to be the winner.[2] This shows the peak of understanding and frankness and Prophet ﷺ might have lost to her intentionally to make her happy. Similarly, he enabled his wife to be entertained, as narrated by *Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayshah* عَنْهَا اللّـٰهُ رَضِیَ,

وَالْحَبَشَةُ حُجْرَتِي، بَابِ عَلَى يَقُومُ عليه وسلّمَ اللّهُ صَلَّى اللهِ رَسُولَ رَأَيْتُ لَقَدْ وَاللهِ لِكَيْ بِرِدَائِهِ، يَسْتُرُنِي وسلّمَ، عليه اللّهُ صَلَّى اللهِ رَسُولِ مَسْجِدِ في بِحِرَابِهِمْ، يَلْعَبُونَ الجَارِيَةِ قَدْرَ فَاقْدِرُوا أَنْصَرِفُ، الَّتِي أَنَا حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَجْلِي، مِن يَقُومُ ثُمَّ لَعِبِهِمْ، إلى أَنْظُرَ اللَّهْوِ[3]. عَلَى حَرِيصَةَ السِّنِّ، الحَدِيثَةِ

"By Allah, I remember the Messenger ﷺ of Allah standing on the door of my apartment screening me with his mantle enabling me to see the sport of the Abyssinians as they played with their daggers in the Mosque of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. He (the Prophet ﷺ) kept standing for my sake till I was satiated and then I went back."

While Allah has termed the husband and wife as a costume for each other, the Prophet ﷺ has mentioned the wives as being among the most favourite things in the world. His behaviour towards the wives was very friendly. *Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayshah* عَنْهَا اللّـٰهُ رَضِیَ narrated:

وَكَانَ لِي صَوَاحِبُ يَلْعَبْنَ مَعِي، فَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِذَا دَخَلَ يَتَقَمَّعْنَ مِنْهُفَيُسَرِّبُهُنَّ إِلَيَّ فَيَلْعَبْنَ مَعِي[4].

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[1] Ibid, 133

[2] Masnad Ahmed, *Kitab Ul Jihad*, Hadith No.5169.

[3] Sahih Al Muslim, Kitab ul Salah, Hadith no.2064.

[4] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Al-Adab*, Hadith No. 6130.

"*I used to play with the dolls in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ, and my female friends also used to play with me. When Allah's Prophet ﷺ used to enter (my dwelling place) they used to hide, but the Prophet ﷺ would call them to join and play with me*."

The above incident is evidence of Prophet's ﷺ interest and accommodation of the emotional need of his young wife.[1] For the peaceful and effective management of domestic life, Islam has directed the wife to obey the orders of the husband. Misunderstanding and disobedience of the husband can abolish the whole social system of a home. The obedience of Ummahāt *al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن to the Prophet ﷺ was for two major reasons. Firstly, as a Messenger ﷺ of Allah and, secondly, as their loving and caring husband. Muhammad ﷺ was praised by his wives in both positions, which can be seen in *Ḥadīth* books. Several references prove the obedience of *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن and their abidance of the promises that took place between the Prophet ﷺ and his wives. In the last sermon, *Ḥaḍrat* Muhammad ﷺ directed *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن to stay at home after he passed away. *Ḥaḍrat Sudah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا was so strict in abiding by this directive that she never went for *Ḥajj* or *Umarah* and preferred to stay at home.[2] *Ḥaḍrat Umm-e-Habíbah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا also followed the direction of the Prophet ﷺ in letter and spirit. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have directed the Muslims in his last sermon in these words

"*O People, it is true that you have certain rights over your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under God's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers*".[3]

This is clear evidence of the significance of women's rights and concern of Islam about their protection.

In Islamic civilization, mutual consultation has been given great importance. Any political, social, or economic issue that was discussed by Ḥaḍrat Muhammad ﷺ with his companions رضی الله عنهم. He also preferred to ask *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن for their advice about the relevant matter. Thus, the advice of wives is of inordinate importance in Muslim societies. That is why *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنهن were good advisers to the Prophet ﷺ. Ḥaḍrat *Umme Salmah* عَنْهَا اللَّـهُ رَضِیَ accompanied the Prophet ﷺ during

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[1] Lings, Martin, Muhammad ﷺ, his life based on earlier sources, Islamic texts Society, 1983, UK. 133.

[2] Ibne Saad, Al Tabaqāt ul Kubra, Vol 8, 270.

[3] Bukhari, vol:1,Hadith:69,1670,1672,1673, vol:3,Hadith:1723

the agreement of *Ḥudaibiyah*. After signing the agreement and calling off ʿ*Umrah*, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ directed his companions to slaughter the animals of sacrifice and change *Ihrām* (dress of pilgrim). Since the companions رضى الله عنہم were upset with the terms of the treaty, it took them a little longer to carry out the order of the Prophet ﷺ. This delay made Muhammad ﷺ distressed, so he went inside his tent and discussed the issue with *Ḥaḍhrat Umme Salmah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـہ رَضِىَ. She advised the Prophet ﷺ to start this action by himself. As soon as Prophet Muhammad ﷺ slaughtered his animal and got a haircut, all the companions rushed to follow the Prophet ﷺ.[1] This is a great lesson in participative relationships, as being the closest one, the wife is expected to give the sincerest advice. This example rejects the idea of restricting women's participation in policy making. *Hadhrat Fatima* رَضِىَ اللّٰـہ عَنْهَا *, the daughter of Prophet* ﷺ *is one of the most revered women of that era.* She has been seen as a highly dedicated daughter, a faithful and contented wife, and an excellent mother, who groomed her children to set the best example of sacrifice and steadfastness in history. Christopher Paul Clohessy, in his book 'Half of My Heart', described Hadhrat Zainab Binte Ali رَضِىَ اللّٰـہ عَنْهَا as a global ideal for women. She is drawn to take a central role in the family of the Prophet ﷺ, defending the actions of his brother, challenging the wickedness of the then Islamic leadership, and actually protecting and nurturing the role of Imam Hussain رَضِىَ اللّٰـہ عَنْهَا after the unfortunate incident of Karbala.[2] *Zainab Binte Ali* رَضِىَ اللّٰـہ عَنْهَا *actually confronted the thought of Muslims who tried to restrict her to the four walls of her home. However, the initiative by some Muslim feminists to make women lead the mixed prayer congregation does not find any support from the Islamic traditions. The absence of restriction on this aspect in the scripture encouraged the proponents of this idea, which is actually found counterproductive, to draw criticism and opposition to the genuine demand for women's rights through a fresh interpretation of verses related to women.* The Prophet ﷺ said,

<div dir="rtl">وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا[3]</div>

> "*Women is the guardian of her husband's home and his children, and she will be answerable for it (on day of judgment)*."

The natural ability of women to give birth is an undeniable feature of the female's unique physical capabilities. Her aspiration to seek gender equality in socio-economic activities enables her to replace her male counterpart in some areas, which is likely to be

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[1] Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī , *Kitab Al Jihad*, Hadith No. 2731.

[2] Clohessy, Christopher Paul, '*Half of My Heart*' (Gorgias Press, 2018).

[3] [3] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Al-Jumaa* (Friday) Hadith No. 893.

fulfilled, but the man can never replace the woman. Therefore, the very basis of gender equality is challenged and is a false promise. Besides birth, the psychological makeup of a woman is best suited for the upbringing of children, and a man is bound to fail in this regard as well. The proponents of the idea of unnecessarily dragging her out of the home into the job market deprive the home of an anchor in the form of a woman, and thus the basic social unit of a family or home stands shattered.[1] Its impact can also be vividly noticed, where a Western woman spends her youth in search of pleasure but repents in old age when she seeks the company of dogs and cats for the remaining part of her life. That is the result of moving against the principles of nature by evading marriage, childbearing, and rearing responsibility.

The Prophet ﷺis also reported to have said to a man who came to him and told him that his mother was old, and she was with him at that time. He used to feed her and clean her face with his own hands. Despite all this, he would hide his face from her with shame. Have I paid for it? I asked the man. The Messenger ﷺsaid, "No!" you have not paid her dues, and you cannot do it. Her stomach was your place; her breasts were the reason for quenching your thirst. She used to do all this and wish you to live, and you are doing all this with her, and you want her to die.[2]

The Prophet ﷺ has given us very wise counsel in respect of the selection of a wife, which pointed towards her role in the rearing of a new generation:

لَا تَزَوَّجُوا النِّسَاءَ لِحُسْنِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى حُسْنُهُنَّ أَنْ يُرْدِيَهُنَّ، وَلَا تَزَوَّجُوهُنَّ لِأَمْوَالِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى أَمْوَالُهُنَّ أَنْ تُطْغِيَهُنَّ، وَلَكِنْ تَزَوَّجُوهُنَّ عَلَى الدِّينِ، وَلَأَمَةٌ خَرْمَاء سَوْدَاءُ ذَاتُ دِينٍ أَفْضَلُ[3]

"Do not marry only for the sake of beauty; may be the beauty becomes the cause of moral degradation. Do not marry even for the sake of wealth; maybe the wealth becomes the reason for insubordination. Marry rather on the grounds of religious devotion."

The Prophet ﷺ, while addressing the women is quoted to have said that they should be content and happy with the fact that when a woman conceives through her husband, Allah is so pleased with her that he rewards her in a manner comparable to fasting during the day and praying at night. As one endures labour pains, the reward is so great that it is

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[1] Larsen, Lena, 'Men Are the Protectors and Maintainers of Women' Three Fatwas on Spousal Roles and Rights." In Men in Charge? Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition, edited by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Mulki Al-Sharmani, and Jana Rumminger, (One World, 2015) 197–218.
[2] Taqi, Noori Hussain Bin Muhammad, "*Mustadrak Alwasa'l wa Mustamit Almasa'el,* (Arabic) Vol 14, 180 quoted by Mazhar Siddiqi.
[3] Ibn e Majah, *Kitab Al Nikah*, Hadith No. 1859.

hidden from anyone on earth or in the skies. Every time she carries a kid and breastfeeds it, she gets rewarded. If she is compelled to stay awake due to the kid, she is rewarded with the equivalent of seventy slaves freed.[1]

Today, the West has started to realise the damage caused to the family unit due to the feminist freedom movement. However, Muslim societies have started treading the path towards the destination from where the West is trying to move back. The gratification of the husband being pleased with every action of the husband is the basic principle of a prosperous family life for a wife. Annoying a husband or disobeying him is never encouraged in Islamic society. *Azwāj-e-Muṭaharāt* رضى الله عنهن *(wives of the Prophet ﷺ) were always in search of an opportunity to make the Prophet ﷺ happy*. The empathy between *Ḥaḍhrat* Muhammad ﷺ and Ummahāt al Mominīn رضى الله عنهن was so high that most of the time they could understand each other without saying a single word. It is learnt from this *Ḥadīth* that it is very important to understand each other for a peaceful and fruitful family life.

5.2.1.2. Guidelines in Response to Social Challenges

In the light of previous discussions, it can be concluded that the wave of excessive individualism in contemporary thought has led to the destruction of family values. It is generally understood that the choice of marriage exercised by the woman leaves her at the mercy of the groom, as she is left alone with no support from her family. This makes her vulnerable to exploitation by the groom and his family. Such a thought, if allowed to become the norm of society, will lead to the destruction of the social institutions of home, family, and society. The failure of such marriages leads to further vulnerability for the affected women. To eradicate the negative fallouts of the over-emphasis on the concept of women's empowerment and gender equality, rising above the *Fiqh* differences, discouraging legal protection for runaway couples, and improving the education and economic level of women can be done by emphasising the importance of consent of the family, *Walī* and the bride.

In a peaceful society, family life plays a very important role. A prosperous family requires the best understanding between husband and wife. A couple should have respect for each other, and sheer kindness is essential for a peaceful domestic life. Husband and wife need to play their roles as determined for both. For such outstanding conditions, the Prophet ﷺprovided special grooming for his wives to be an example for others. Factors

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[1] Al-Buti, Fiqh al Sīrah, 211.

that make the Ummahāt *al Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن role model for social development are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Having analysed the concept of gender equality *vis-à-vis the* suggested gender equation in the light of the study of *Sīrah*, the following is concluded:

- The physical makeup of the two genders is different; hence, the degree of exposure to the environment and the capacity to bear it cannot be simply equated between the two equals. A man can does not replace a woman, since she is unique in her natural ability to give birth to human beings, thus proving her higher status.

- Islam has laid down the rights and responsibilities to ensure justice and balance. A male has been naturally made responsible for the sustenance and security of his family, corresponding to his physical and mental perseverance.

- Islam accords women equality in human dignity and makes provisions for gender classification based on their functions and physiological limits. Contemporary thought has integrated women into nondomestic positions like those of men, burdening them with additional responsibilities, whereas Islamic thought seeks balance in this regard, regarding men and women as complementary partners. As a result, it is established that, according to the Islamic notion of women's position in society, balance is important to success.

- The analysis of gender equality in the *Sīrah* reveals that the Western view of women resembles Islamic thought in terms of human rights. However, their ideas about religion, liberty, and rights and obligations are markedly different.

- It was discovered that the Qur'ān uses the term "*insān*" (human being) to refer to both males and females, with a special emphasis on gender status and rights. Regardless of the criticism levelled at patriarchal philosophy, it is proven via examination of the Islamic family system that it does not always indicate that a man is superior to a woman, but that the man has the additional responsibility to sustain and secure the relationship so that it can be viewed as a model of grandeur.

Given the historical and traditional role of women in domestic affairs, the research concludes that Muslim women are not forbidden from working when socioeconomic compulsions compel them. It is recognised that women's roles and development are vital to society's social evolution and that women contribute significantly more to human growth

in society than men do because they contribute to the stability of society and the family, the latter being the primary unit of the former.[1]

5.2.1.3. Guidelines for Security and Tranquillity in Family Life: Considering the above discussions, the following guidelines are extracted for Muslim women of the contemporary era:

- Mutual trust and loyalty are the basic principles of peaceful life. A woman and a man should be loyal to each other; the former should look after honour, dignity, wealth, and domestic affairs, while the latter cares for her provisioning.

- Love, affection, and sincerity are mutual emotions between husband and wife. Both should respect the feelings of the other. Living within means demands contentment as the driving force of a happy life.

- Life partners are like the two wheels of a vehicle; hence, the husband and wife should behave like friends, where the former must treat her with justice and kindness, and, in return, the wife must be loyal, forthcoming, and trustworthy.

- Modesty is one of the basic attributes of a human being. Therefore, women must abide by the dress code for home (minimum essential clothing required in the presence of intimate relations called *satar*) and outside the home (*ḥijāb* as a cloak required in front of strangers) to protect their dignity and poise, as well as their identity as believers.

- The Prophet encouraged recreational activities. A husband and wife are like friends, and they should be pleased to participate in recreational activities for mutual joy.

- The devotion and sacrifice made by a wife give birth to lifelong affection and love by the husband. Prophet ﷺnever married another woman in the life of *Khadijah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَاand she was remembered by him throughout his life.

- Mutual consultation between the two most intimate people (husband and wife) on domestic as well as external matters should lead to better decisions in life.

- Polygamy has its social advantages, which come to fruition only if the husband maintains justice and the co-wives learn to live in an environment of sympathy,

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[1] Fadel, Mohammad, 'Two Women, One Man : Knowledge , Power , and Gender in Medieval Sunni Legal Thought', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, No. 2 (1997), 185–204.

forgiveness, sacrifice, and peace, with a sense of belonging and accommodation for each other.

- A woman is the best teacher for the grooming and education of children. Therefore, she must equip herself with the required knowledge of social, psychological, and religious aspects of life. Islam does not shy away from discussing subjects related to female education and considers it an essential aspect of women's individual and social lives.

- Children, who learn through observation, have an impact on domestic environments. Therefore, the husband and wife must maintain a cordial relationship and a religious environment in the family to let the children pick up the right things.

- Women are allowed to spend their own and their husband's wealth on the cause of Allah. Spending on the cause of Allah by men and women brings *barakah* (blessings) to the home, which never returns anyone empty-handed.

- Since a woman represents half of society, *Shari'ah* regards a woman as spiritually and intellectually equal to men; the only distinction is in the physical realm based on equity, and her natural ability and inclination for the important task of rearing children and a healthy and prosperous society. However, Islam does not prohibit a woman from engaging in economic activities to earn and spend for the well-being of her family and society.

- Women are absolved of the responsibility of working to earn their living, as a man is responsible for providing a decent and dignified living for his wife. However, she is allowed to work in case of the inability of her husband to work or after his demise or divorce.

5.2.2. Socio-religious Grooming of Muslim Women

5.2.2.1. Prophet ﷺ and Enlightenment of Muslim Women

Society is formed through the cooperation of men and women, and a developed society cannot exist unless almost half of its population (which includes women) has the human rights that the Creator has granted them. Given the important role of women in the welfare and development of society, Islam has recommended knowledge for women not only as their right but also as their duty.[1] In the same context, a mother's education, and training, as the child's first teacher, is more important than a man's education in the same

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[1] Sunan Ibn Majah, *Kitab Ul Sunah*, Hadith No 224.

context, as the formation of nations and generations depends entirely on the education and training of women.

In a family setting, a wife and husband can both prove to be the best students and teachers for each other, on the one hand, and on the other hand, keep busy for a better cause and a prosperous domestic life. The family is one of the nearest, cheapest, and easiest institutions for personality development in any civilization. The wives of the Prophet ﷺparticipated frequently in such activities very freely. The reason behind this was that, on one hand, they were wives of the Prophet ﷺ and, on the other; they were the best students at the Messenger's ﷺinstitute.

Azwāj-e-Muṭaharāt رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَاplayed a very effective role in the learning and teaching process, along with the performance of domestic responsibilities. They never hesitated to ask questions of the Prophet ﷺ about any issue unclear to them. The bulk of Islamic knowledge is conveyed to us due to Ummahāt al Mominīn رضی اللہ عنھن , who closely observed and narrated each and everything related to the Prophet ﷺ to the Ummah. *Abū Musā Asha'rī* رضی اللہ عنہ *said appreciating the role of Ḥaḍrat 'Ayshah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *that we never came across a problem that was without an answer from Ḥaḍrat Ayshah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا.[1] This is a great compliment to the honourable lady. In the modern era of diverse learning, Muslim women can emulate these examples by learning from their husbands and teaching them as well.

The position of the Prophet ﷺis very wholesome, including that of a teacher for all of humanity. The teachings of the Prophet ﷺwere not limited to any institution, gender, or group. In contrast to the evolutionary ideas of the West, in the Islamic view, the human being started his/her life with the light of knowledge instead of ignorance and darkness, as *Adhān* (call for Prayers) is sounded in the ears of new-born babies to register the first message containing the knowledge of monotheism and the idea of self-accomplishment through service of humanity.[2]

Usually, in *Masjid*, women used to line up and lag behind men when praying. There is also evidence that women sometimes attended the Prophet's ﷺ *Majlís* in the presence of men. They also used to ask the Prophet ﷺ some private questions, such as menstruation, personal cleanliness, etc., but the Prophet ﷺ never forbade them. It is not forbidden to ask such questions in the presence of men, as in the narration of *Asmā bint Yazīd* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا.

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[1] Mehmood, Muhammad Riaz & M Akram Virk, *Role of Wives of Prophet* ﷺ *in Development of Muslim Society*, Ziae Tehqeeq, 87.
[2] Ibid : 229

She said that she was in the Messenger's ﷺ audience, surrounded by several men and women. A lady inquired if there is anybody (man) who goes about telling people what he does to his wife, and whether there is anyone (woman) who goes around telling others what she does to her husband. The crowd remained quiet. She continued addressing the Prophet ﷺ that men and women, by God, do this. This thing was forbidden by the Prophet ﷺ to keep the privacy of the two partners.[1]

There is ample evidence that women were seated together and besides during sermons in the *Masjid* and *Eid* venues, of course, in separate enclosures. The women themselves insisted that the same education be arranged for them separately. At the same time, when in the Prophet's ﷺMasjid, the number of women began to increase, the Prophet ﷺto avoid mixing of genders, reserved a gate for the entrance, which was named as Bāb *al-Nisā*.[2]

Islam forbids men and women from mingling, which is a key law in Muslim civilization. In view of this Islamic rule, it is difficult to provide direct education for women, even though it is immensely persuasive. A group of women of varying ages and skills must have been selected and indoctrinated by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ so that she-bedouins and townswomen of all ages may be equipped with the tools necessary to propagate the true religion. Women of faith, such as the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, were in a position to relay the Prophet's ﷺ and his affairs to the public (men and women). His wives, particularly those who outlived him, played a significant role in the transmission of Prophetic traditions to the Muslims, since they were educated and taught the principles and norms of Islam.[3]

In addition, this educational process took place in other majlis, such as in the residences of the spouses of the Prophet ﷺ. In the time of the Prophet ﷺ, the greatest school for women was the House of the Prophet ﷺ, where women used to visit and the series of educational meetings continued, and they would ask questions directly to the Prophet ﷺ in the presence of the Ummahāt al Mominīn رضی الله عنهن . The special interest, attention, and encouragement of the Prophet ﷺfor the spread of knowledge were the reasons for urging women to learn, as well as being used to asking questions of the Prophet ﷺwithout any hesitation. The Prophet ﷺhimself and *Ḥaḍrat Ayesha* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَاalso looked at the

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[1] Albani, Nasir Uddin, *Adaab ulzafaf*, (Dar us Salam ,2002), 143.

[2] Hashmi, Syed Azkya, 'Education and Moral Training in the Prophet's ﷺEra', *Sīrat Studies* Vol 2, (2017), 58.

[3] Mubarakpuri, Saif ul Rehman, The Sealed Nectar, Maktaba Dar-us-Salam Publishers and Distributors Saudi Arabia, 313.

intellectual longings of Ansari women and expressed appreciation. One of the important ways of education and training of women in the Prophet's ﷺ time was that the chambers of his spouses were the largest schools for women, from which women in general and sometimes men also benefited. Special arrangements for the education and training of spouses: Since the wives of the Prophet ﷺ had a great responsibility to look after the family affairs and the routines of the Prophet ﷺ, they also arranged meetings for the education and training of women. The Prophet ﷺ paid special attention to the honourable ladies. *Ḥaḍrat Muhammad ﷺ supported education and managed to provide tutoring for all sectors of life.* To spread education among Muslims, *Azwāj-e-Muṭaharāt* رضى الله عنهن played a very positive role, which was not only popular among females but also among males. The honourable ladies were always anxious to learn and used to ask questions of the Prophet ﷺ that came to their mind or asked by other women.[1] This, as per *Maulānā Maudūdī, actually* proved the point that the idea of marrying so many women with different backgrounds and intellectual diversity was to help the Muslim women being educated by *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن.[2]

The role of Ḥaḍrat 'Ayshah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا and Ḥaḍrat Umm-e-Salmah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا will always be remembered with high appreciation for their contribution to Islamic education. All Ummahāt al Mominīn رضى الله عنهن were reflections of the character of Muhammad ﷺ but there was no match to Ḥaḍrat 'Ayshah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا and Umm-e-Salmah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا. They were both very fond of learning and memorising Ḥadīth. Whenever they got a chance to listen to Ḥaḍrat Muhammad ﷺ, they used to be very attentive to him and memorized his words, actions, and tacit approval (Ḥadīth). Once, Ḥaḍrat Umm-e-Salmah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا was busy combing her hair when she heard that a sermon had started in the Masjid. She instantly stopped combing her hair and started listening to the sermon by Ḥaḍrat Muhammad ﷺ. This interest in learning of *Ḥadīth* by the *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن resulted in helping most of the learned male members of the early Islamic era. Ḥaḍrat Abū *Hurairah* رضى الله عنه and *Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās* رضى الله عنه were very learned companions رضى الله عنهم of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, but more often they consulted *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن for various references, and so did Ummahāt *al Mominīn* رضى الله عنهن for various references. As per Syyed Jalāl al-Dīn 'Umarī, Ḥaḍrat 'Ayshah رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا has reported 2210 Aḥādith,

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[1] Nadwi, Muhammad Razi ul Islam, *Haqā'qe Islam* (Maktaba Islami New Delhi, 2008), 83.

[2] Maudoodi, Abul Aala, *Tafheem ul Qur'an*, Vol 4 (Maktaba Islami New Delhi, 2015), 115.

including 174 being narrated in all authentic Ḥadīth Books. Similarly, Ḥadrat Umm-e-Salmah رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا is the source of 378 Aḥādith, Ḥadrat Ḥafṣah has narrated 60 Aḥādith, Umme Ḥabībah رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا has narrated 65 Aḥādith, Ḥadrat Maimūnah رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا is the source of 46 Aḥādith. These included both direct and indirect narrations.[1]

Some people came to call on *Umm-e-Salmah's* رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا to learn about the Prophet's domestic life. She replied that what he looked like in his life was as if his internal soul was the same. There was no contradiction in his external or internal life. She narrated this story to the Prophet ﷺ and he appreciated her reply. *Umm-e-Salmah's* رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا response to any problem was so perfect and to the point that there was no confusion in her answer. Once, a man came to her and asked her to perform *Umrah* before *Ḥajj* or after *Ḥajj*. Azwj-e-Muahart رضی الله عنہن all responded with the same answer. *Hadrat Umm-e-Salmah* رَضِیَ اللّٰہُ عَنْهَا *was fully versed in the Qur'n, Sunnah, and Fiqh.*[2] The Prophet ﷺ declared the acquisition of knowledge to be equal and necessary for both men and women:

$$طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِیضَۃٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ$$ [3]

"Seeking knowledge is the duty of every Muslim."

It may be established from the above narrations that *Shari'ah* is the same for men and women in terms of human rights, with particular reference to the acquisition of knowledge.

5.2.2.2. Ideological Response to Contemporary Muslim Critique on Intergender Social Interaction in the Light of *Fiqh al Sīrah*

The above analysis and guidelines are based on Fiqh al Sīrah, which was derived from encounters of Muslim women with the Prophet ﷺ, while there are numerous incidents that show women in the company of the Prophet ﷺ and his male companions رضی الله عنہم. There are quoted meetings between the companions رضی الله عنہم of the Prophet ﷺ and the women. A few of these are mentioned in *Sīrah* books. However, the bulk is extracted from *Ḥadīth* books, which itself provides authenticity to *Sīrah* narrations. Even the Sīrah authors have relied on Hadith as a primary source. There are two views of Muslim scholars on the above discussions on the social interaction of women with the Prophet ﷺ and his companions رضی الله عنہم. Firstly, those with secular or modernist outlooks, who view these interactions as belonging to that period, and those with different moral standing, thus bear no lessons for this deplorable contemporary environment, which has totally

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[1] Umari, Jalal ud Din, *Islam aur Aurat*, (Maktaba Islami, New Dehli, 2009), 80-88.

[2] Umari, Jalal ud Din, *Islam aur Aurat*

[3] Sunan Ibn Mājah, *Kitab Ul Taaruf*, Hadith No,224.

transformed. Secondly, more hardliners, who totally restrict the two genders in their respective spheres, thereby negating the lessons drawn from *Fiqh al Sīrah*. Therefore, it is important to discuss these views and clarify the misperceptions created by the limited and extremist interpretations to negate the obvious evidence available about social interaction and its limits.

Validity to all Times and Space

There is a view that social interaction with the Prophet ﷺ is exclusively linked with his personality and cannot be taken as a general guideline by Muslims. This argument is not well-founded, as it negates the very concept of *Sunnah* (sayings, actions, and instructions of the Prophet ﷺ) adopted by his companions as legal and social norms, hence it remains valid as it is not a mere historical narration. Furthermore, there is no evidence of these *Sunnah* being given the status of exclusiveness to the Prophet ﷺ in the *Ḥadīth* books. Therefore, as per *Ibne Tamiyah*, anything that is declared halal for the Prophet ﷺ, unless specified, is halal for *Ummah*.[1] That is the reason why the number of quotes with reference to the Prophet's ﷺ companion رضى الله عنهم is in large numbers. Similar arguments of exclusiveness with reference to companions رضى الله عنهم hold no ground in the absence of any evidence in this regard. The objection advanced by some that the interactions took place on a need basis, cannot be ratified by the narrations of *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*.

Applicability in Contemporary Environment

There is an argument that society at the time of the Prophet ﷺ was a pious and rightful one, and hence the practises of that era cannot be applied to the contemporary environment of moral anarchy. There is no doubt that the society created by the Prophet ﷺ with his physical presence was the best model. However, every society comprises people with good and bad minds. During the Prophet's time, there were people like 'Umer and Abu Bakr رضى الله عنه , as well as those with varying levels of faith and even hypocrites, as mentioned in the Qur'an at various points, indicating that faith has not yet entered your hearts. It will only be so if you obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.[2] Therefore, the lessons from *Fiqh al Sīrah* based on the interaction between better people, who obeyed the commandments of Allah and not those with a rhetorical acceptance of Islam as a faith; the bulk of Muslims in today's societies belong to the latter category. To transform society under the influence of contemporary thought, for the regulation of social interaction

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[1] Tamiya, Ibne, *Majmoo ul Fatawa*, Vol 1, 9
[2] *Qur'an* 49:14.

between the genders, it is important to redefine the rules and parameters of this interaction in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah*, instead of restricting the sphere of interaction, which is next to impossible in the prevalent environment.

While the proponents of restricting women's lives to the domestic sphere have existed throughout the history of Islam, the examination of the arguments in favour of restrictions on the intermingling of women with men is as follows:

- The restrictions imposed by the Qur'ān on 'staying at home' are addressed to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. They were not even allowed by 'Umer رضى الله عنه to proceed in Ḥajj. Moreover, it does not hamper the social lives of Muslim women. Similarly, the verse on the veil for wives of the Prophet ﷺ and Muslim women was applied with a difference.

- *Ḥadīth* in Bukhārī is often quoted in which the Prophet ﷺ termed the proximity of the brother of the husband to the wife of either as poisonous.[1] This is generally quoted out of context. There is no doubt that the brother-in-law is not listed among the intimate (*maḥram*) relations. However, the restriction is there on meeting in private and not in front of others, as narrated in many *Ḥadīth* regarding the brother-in-law. It is so specified because he, as a family member, has more chances of an encounter, with the wife of his brother when alone. The presence of Satan as a third entity when a man and a woman get closer, is often quoted.

- *Umme Salma's* رَضِيَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *narration on the order of Prophet ﷺ taking cover, when Ibne Umme Maktūm* رَضِيَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا, *a blind companion came to his house.* When she asked that he be blind, the Prophet ﷺ said, *"She* was not blind."[2] This was specific to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ, otherwise, he had personally directed Fatima Bint Qais رَضِيَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا , a cousin of the blind companion رضى الله عنه , to spend her iddah after divorce in his house.[3] The logic is that the blind could bump into the wives of Prophet ﷺ, unintentionally or may not be consciously aware of his violation of *satar* (essential dress), thus avoiding an obnoxious situation. This does not have anything to do with '*Pardah'* for the eyes etc, as argued by many. A woman must keep her eyes open when she gets out of the house, as narrated in many incidents. So, it is

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[1] Tirmizī, The Book on Suckling, Chapter: *Commandments regarding Divorce*, Hadith No. 1171.

[2] Sunan Abi Dawud, *Kitab Ul Libas*, Hadith No. 4112.

[3] Sahih Muslim, *Kitab Ul Talaaq*, Hadith No. 1480.

absurd to link it to 'Pardah' only. Moreover, as men are commanded to lower their gaze, women have a similar command as identified by this hadith.[1]

- Prophet ﷺ on request of Umme Ḥamīd رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا to join him in prayers at his quarter; ḥujrah, said that your prayers in your room are better than Masjid. this is used as an argument against women coming to Masjid. This assertion of the Prophet ﷺ is believed to be based on logic to avoid the physical exposure of women to men during prayers, because otherwise there are numerous examples of noble ladies attending prayers in the *Masjid*. Similarly, another *Ḥadīth* allowing women to go to *Masjid* at night is misused for prohibition during the day.[2]

- *Ḥadīth* quoting greater reward for men in the first line during prayers that women praying in the last line is vice versa for men[3] is interpreted as an instruction to keep a division between men and women in the *Masjid*. Therefore, interaction outside the *Masjid* should not be allowed at all. This is over stretching one's imagination in his regard, as the requirement of unquestionable concentration for women during prayer is warranted to keep away from any possibility of thought going astray in the presence of men. Similarly, the expression of caution to the imam on erring during prayer is through clasping by women instead of raising voices is to avert the possibility of '*Fitnah'(slander)*.[4] Men may get cautious/curious of the presence of women, thus losing concentration in prayers.

- The Ḥadīth by *Ḥaḍrat Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا asking the Prophet ﷺ about the participation of women in Jihad on the battlefield, he replied, "Yes, but *Jihd* without being involved in fighting/war (*Qatāl*)[5], is also interpreted to be based on a restriction on the interaction of men and women. This is incorrect as the restriction on fighting in the physical context. Otherwise, women have been extensively reported to participate in various logistic activities during battles, even at the later stages of Khyber and *Ḥunain*, when the Muslim men were in sufficient strength, unlike earlier encounters.[6] Often quoted by *Ḥadīth* in *Tirmizī,* "women are '*Aurah* (concealed), so

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[1] Abushqah, *Aurat Ehd'e Risālat main,* 259.

[2] Abushqah, *Aurat Ehd'e Risālat main*, 261-2.

[3] Riyad as-Salihin, The Book of Virtues, Chapter: *The Excellence of Standing in the First Row* (In Salat), Hadith No.1084.

[4] Sahih Bukhari, Book of Actions while Praying, Chapter: *Clapping [during the Salat] is permissible only for the women,* Hadith No. 1204

[5] Mishkat al-Masabih, *Kitab Ul Hajj*, Chapter: Jihad, Hadith No, 2534.

[6] Mubarakpuri, Saif ul Rehman, The Sealed Nectar, 156, 176.

when they go out, Satan seeks to tempt them."[1] This does not stop women from going out, as the Prophet ﷺprohibited men from stopping women from going to the *Masjid*. Similarly, if they could participate in the battlefield, how could they be stopped from going out? It is, in fact, to put caution on women to take care of their attire and outlook so that it does not reveal and induce sensual feelings among men. That is why men have been told to visit their wives if they are feeling overwhelmed by the sight of another woman.[2] The guidelines for both genders are to lower the gaze and control emotions and ill-feelings, while revealing dresses, makeup, and perfumes are the tools of Satan to induce sensual feelings in the opposite sex. Moreover, a masjid is a genuine place of learning religion, and its importance is enhanced in the present times, when confusion is being injected into religious education through social media.

- The argument that chastity is the supreme asset of a woman is considered to become vulnerable, if a woman is exposed to activities involving interaction with men. This is not a valid argument, as merely staying home does not ensure the protection of chastity. It is connected to character building along the lines of the teachings of Islam and the application of the code of conduct laid down by Islam. Numerous examples have been quoted from the early Islamic community.[3]

- The opponent of the thought of women's interaction with men also advances another argument that it may be restricted to a need-basis. This does not hold ground as the interaction of women in villages is unrestricted, and so it is warranted in an urban society where even doctors, teachers, and nurses may have to interact with other men. Placing restrictions on a need basis is an unwarranted one from the *Shari'ah* point of view, as proved by *Fiqh al Sīrah*. The protocol of lowering gaze, control of obscene language, and sensual advancement must be followed while limiting the meetings to a need basis only. Balance is the key to the protection of society from '*Fitnah*'. This neither makes women captives in the house nor allows them to go astray as in the West; Islam proposes the middle path.[4]

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[1] Ibn-e Tamiyah , *Musliman Aurat ka parda aur libas , Translated by Maqsood ul Hasan faizi, Shoba' e wazarat , nashriyat o matboaat.*
[2] Sunnan e Abu Dawood, *Kitab Ul Nikah*, Hadith No 2151.
[3] Abushqah, Abdul Haleem, *Aurat Ehd'e Risālat main*, 270.
[4] Al-Hibri, Azizah, 'Islam, Law and Custom: Redefining Muslim Women's Rights', *The American University Journal of International Law and Policy,* (1997), 12.

The opponents express fear of women gradually going astray. Therefore, the interaction must be checked from the beginning. It is a natural inclination to develop an affectionate attitude towards the opposite gender, but it can be avoided if the meetings are kept purposefully. Thus, the key is character building for both genders. That will keep the interaction in line with the purpose and avert the possibility of going astray. Hence, the restriction is not the solution, but regulation through Islamic protocol.

The above discussion is not to facilitate contemporary thought to make ingress into Muslim society, but to shake our stagnant thought through comprehensive exposure to the Sīrah of the Prophet ﷺ extracted through Ḥadīth, as not very many Sīrah authors have covered the interaction of the Prophet ﷺ with Muslim women. The provisions highlighted in the preceding discussions warrant character building of Muslims, according to the teachings of Islam, acquisition of knowledge of the religion to avert the possibility of contemporary thought creeping into our lives by closing the gaps provided by the lack of knowledge and ensuring application of Islamic thought and teachings by strengthening the Islamic values and protocols in dealing with the opposite gender. *Imām Ibn Tamiyah* has explicitly laid down the rule of pursuing alien thought:

"The resemblance with people of the Book is related to those practises not adopted by one's ancestors." Those factors from our forerunners will be adopted even though these are also followed or not followed by people of the Book. Avoiding things declared Halal by Allah, on the grounds of being adopted by non-believers is not correct. More so, the things Allah has ordained for us are better than those given to the earlier religion."[1]

5.2.3 Framework for Socio-Economic Engagement of Muslim Women

As discussed in earlier chapters, the central attraction of Western feminist thought is economic empowerment. Those preaching this theme in our part of the world link it with poverty alleviation, while also advocating or seeking the role of women in economic development. While contemporary thought advocates economic empowerment, it criticises Islam for keeping women deprived of this right by being supported through male domination of the economy, thereby keeping them dependent on men. Moreover, an argument is put forward that life has become so expensive that every member of the family must work to earn a respectable standard of living. Therefore, women must step out of the home to earn and support the family, no matter at what cost.

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[1] Tamiya, Ibne, *Iqtiza Siraat ul Mustaqeem, (*Maktaba Ans Bin Malik), 177.

5.2.3.1. Complementary Socioeconomic Role of Women

It has been discussed in the earlier parts of this dissertation that Islam does not see women and men as opponents, and there is no conflict between the two genders. In Islam both are placed as one, which has been created from one being and is complementary to each other in the equation of life. Syed Hossein Nasr wrote:

"From the Islamic point of view, Islam envisages their roles in society not as competing but as complimentary. Each has certain duties and functions in accordance with his or her nature and constitution."[1]

Therefore, goodness in human behaviour is central to the attributes of human character and the concept of a prosperous and peaceful life. The centrepiece of social order is the well-being of the members of society. Being a religion of nature, Islam sees the goodness in human beings. Accordingly, the allocation of responsibilities for the collective good of society is made in accordance with the natural ability and capacity of men and women. Thus, the dispassionate study of the Islamic way of life demonstrates that the relationship between the two genders is nothing but love, affection, sincerity, care, and sacrifice, both complementing each other through an honest discharge of responsibilities for the development, wellbeing, and sustainability of the family as a happy social unit. The succeeding paragraphs dilate upon the involvement of Muslim women in socioeconomic activities.

5.2.3.2. Primary Responsibility of Women and Capacity to Earn

Economic commitments, in whatever form, cause physical and psychological stress on individuals. Hence, they are a strenuous part of one's life. The elegance, softness, sensitivity, emotional, psychological, natural, and physical qualities of the female are suggestive of softer commitments in life, so her indoor or in-house role in the management of domestic affairs and upbringing of the next generation augurs well with her physiology, capacity, and nature. A man, due to his physical and natural abilities, is more suitable for outdoor work involving arduous environments and challenges; thus, earning a living for his family. Hence, Islam places this responsibility of provisioning the family on the shoulders of the man. But the woman is not dependent on the man, as projected by critics of Islam, rather she is bestowed upon the higher status of a princess as a daughter or sister,

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[1] Nasr, Syed Hossein, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 110-113.

and a queen as a wife, in whose service the man is deputed to ensure that all her needs are satisfied by him.[1] Syed Hossein Nasr wrote:

"In return for these privileges which the woman receives, she has also certain responsibilities of which the most important is to provide a home for her family and to bring up her children properly. In the home, the woman rules as queen and a Muslim man is in a sense the guest of his wife at home. The home and the larger family structure in which she lives are for the Muslim woman in the world. To be cut off from it would be like being cut off from the world or like dying. She finds the meaning of her existence in this extended family structure which is constructed to give her the maximum possibility of realizing her basic needs and fulfilling herself."[2]

She, overseeing domestic affairs, should be able to manage the earnings against the expenditures. Here comes the sense of responsibility that demands that she should not cause stress to the man through frivolous expenditures on unnecessary things or get into a race with others with higher income. Similarly, if the man does not provide for his wife's needs despite having sufficient means, then Islam allows her to get the rightful amount from his income even against his wishes. In the times of the Prophet ﷺ, "the wife of Abū Sufyān رضى الله عنه is come to the Prophet ﷺ and complained that Abū Sufyān رضى الله عنه is rather a miser in the provisioning of family, and she is finding it difficult to make both ends meet. She asked if she was allowed to spend his money secretly. The Prophet ﷺ said in reply,

خُذِي أَنْتِ وَبَنُوكِ مَا يَكْفِيكِ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ [3]

"You and your children may take what is sufficient reasonably and fairly."

This example from *Sīrah* is a clear verdict about the right of a woman to the earnings of her husband for a respectable and reasonable living for herself and her children. However, this provision cannot be used for extravagance; a curse on fashion and styles that have crept into our lives today. Islam does not stop women from turning to the court of law to realise their right to be sustained by their husbands, and in the case of non-resolution, she can opt to be separated, if she so desires. The Qur'an advises believers to avoid competing with others who may have more resources, because Allah has bestowed different levels of capability and wealth on different people.[4]

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[1] Siddiqi, *Rasool Allah aur Khawateen; Aek Smaaji Mutaalea.*
[2] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 110-113.
[3] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul Tijarah*, Hadith No. 2211.
[4] *Qur'an*, 4:32.

Hadhrat Ali رَضِىَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَ seeing blisters on the hands of *Hadhrat* Fatima رَضِىَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا (his wife and daughter of the Prophet ﷺ) occurring from grinding and her neck becoming sour due to carrying water, asked her to request the Prophet ﷺ for a servant. Prophet ﷺ declined her request and subsequently explained to her about bigger reward for the hardships of this worldly life.[1]

This incident highlights the need to quell the unnecessary desires for the worldly ease and comfort. Moreover, there is obvious lesson against nepotism as the the Prophet ﷺ refused to oblige his daughter at the cost of other common Muslims. The women in pursuit of economic empowerment to satisfy their desires not the need may learn from the incident.

5.2.3.3. Role of Women in Socioeconomic Development

Today, the socio-economic environment is quoted as being extremely difficult to manage domestic affairs with meagre resources. Furthermore, females, who make up half of the population, are said to be excluded from economic activities. Islam does not restrict women's participation in economic activities. However, it has laid down rules of engagement in such activities to avert the possibility of social exploitation of women and lose balance in the moral context. So, balance is the most important thing in Islam, and it must never be broken. *Abdul Haleem Shiqah* writes in his unique work:

"In some of the Muslim societies, the cost of living as compared to income has increased, thus forcing the women to also participate in earning living through participation in economic activities."[2]

There is no denying the fact that contemporary environments encourage more involvement of women in outdoor activities. Therefore, it is important to create a conducive environment for the useful employment of women while forestalling the possibility of straying in the process or being exploited by men. It must be understood that women cannot be forced to work to earn money, as men have the moral and religious responsibility to ensure their sustenance. However, she cannot be stopped from playing her role in economic activities that go along with the principles of social and moral values laid down by Islam, in keeping with the physical, psychological, and emotional makeup of a woman. As described by *G.M Chughtai*,

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[1] Khan, Maulan Wahiduddin, Muhammad ﷺ A Prophet for All Humanity, Good word, 2001, 54.
[2] Abu Shiqa, Abdul Haleem, *Jihatul Islam*, (July 2017), 77.

"Islam has presented a practical and logical way of life, may it be prayers (*ibādat*) or other aspects of life concerning economic, social, family, society, civilization. Islam has never hurt the status of the woman or tried to degrade her or denied her of the opportunities for self-actualization."[1]

The exposure of women to economic activities involves their interaction and competition with men in every place. In the case of work demanding physical strength, sustained and prolonged hard work, she is bound to fail because of physical limitations, e.g., she cannot be engaged in defence as a fighting soldier or labourer, etc. The lighter jobs, like salesgirl, typist, clerk, secretary, teacher, nurse, doctor, engineer (software), managers (indoor), etc., are the most common opportunities. Here too, her physical capacity is visibly impacted by her menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and maternity. Those countries, which have dragged women out of the home for all kinds of economic activities, have different pay scales for women because of these limitations.[2] Syed Hossein wrote:

"The Muslim woman is spared direct military and political responsibility although in rare cases there have been women warriors. This point may appear as a deprivation to some but in the light of the real needs of feminine nature, it is easy to see that for most women, such duties weigh heavily upon them. Even in modern societies which through the equalitarian process have tried to equate men and women as if there were no difference in the two sexes, women are usually spared the military draft except in extreme circumstances."[3]

Ibne Ishaq[4] has narrated the incident of killing of a jew by *Hadhrat* Safiya رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا daughter of Abdul Mutalib (aunt of the Prophet ﷺ), during Battle of Ditch. This Jew was seen by her taking round of the fort, where Muslim women and children were staying. She, finding no help from anywhere, took a club and hit him till he was dead. This incident has enough evidence of women taking part in guard duty in the rear of fighting forces. Secondly, Safiya رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا asking Hassam, a Muslim man in the vicinity to strip him, as she abstained to do it by herself being a woman. This is indicative of woman keeping away even from the dead body of the stranger, who was disbeliever. Otherwise,

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[1] Chughtai, '*Daur e Jadeed men Aurat ka Kirdar,(* Ferozsons, 2011).
[2] Schieder, Jessica and Elise Gould • *"Women's work" and the gender pay gap*, (Economic Policy Institute, July 20, 2016).
[3] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, 110-113.
[4] Ishaq, Ibne, The Life of Muhammad ﷺ, Oxford University Press, 1955, 616.

women have been reported taking part in battles, as narrated by Martin Lings[1], who reported valley of arrows being fired by women warriors.

To ensure a safe and peaceful working environment, *Fiqh al Sirah* presented an excellent code of conduct for mixed gender environments, as elaborated upon in the next paragraphs.

5.2.3.4. Safety and Security of Women

Let us explore this aspect of the sociability of other Muslim women in the social context of their lives. The Ḥadīth and other narrations in Sīrah and Tafsīr Books have young and middle-aged women in focus because the older ladies have been otherwise exempted from restrictions on veil and ḥijāb in Qur'ān.[2] As elderly women have passed the age of marriage, there is no blame on them if they take off their overgarments without revealing their adornments. But it is better for them if they avoid this altogether.

In the *Ḥadīth* Books, there are some incidents quoted repeatedly from other sources of narration or reporting. Therefore, the same is narrated here, without repetition. Greetings by men to women and vice versa are the first phase of interaction between the two genders. Jareer رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ passed by us; a group of women, and we greeted him.[3] This incident is also quoted in *Musnad Aḥmad* with reference to *Jābir* and *Wasla* رضى الله عنهما. It is also reported to have visited a group of women who gathered in the Masjid and the Prophet ﷺ greeted them and gestured with his hand.[4]

Umme Haanī رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا once narrated that she went to the Prophet's ﷺ house and he was taking a bath and she greeted him.[5] The scholars have generally come to the conclusion and consensus that greetings between two genders are allowed if there is no fear of *Fitnah*; the possibility of going astray.[6] *Masjid* has been seen as the first institution in Islamic civilization, which is not only a place for offering prayers but also a centre for social, political, educational, and even diplomatic activities in the Prophet's ﷺ era. The women used to visit the *Masjid* for worship and education. That kept them connected to fellow Muslim women for mutual exchange of ideas and information on social and cultural aspects of life, making friends and wider acquaintances. Therefore, it was an equal right

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[1] Lings, Martin, Muhammad ﷺ, 181.

[2] *Qur'ān* 24:60

[3] Masnad Ahmed, *Baab Ul Salama*, Hadith No. 8273.

[4] Sahih Tirmizi, *Kitab Ul Salaat*, Hadith No 2697.

[5] Fatah ul Baari, Vol 2, 52.

[6] Nasr Abu Zayd , *Reformation of Islamic Thought, a critical historical analysis, (*Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2006).

of both genders to share the *Masjid*, hence they could not be denied the facility.[1] This very clearly proves the attendance of women in the *Masjid* in the presence of men.

'Abd Allah bin 'Umar رضی الله عنه is reported that he heard the Prophet ﷺ saying don't stop your women to come to Masjid if they ask your permission. While another narration by *Bilal bin 'Abdullah* where the Prophet ﷺ was more explicitly quoted to have said,

إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَتْ أَحَدَكُمُ امْرَأَتُهُ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَلاَ يَمْنَعْهَا [2]

" Don't stop women from exercising their right in the Masjid."

Another argument is forwarded by modernists about the futility of half the population by domesticating women, which cannot be afforded by a poor country like Pakistan. This strange logic is based on ignorance of the importance of domestic management, where women are fully occupied with domestic affairs, which is a full-time occupation. Earning money is not the only indicator of productivity.

It may be appreciated that a man, who is assured of his perfect home management and the safety, security, and training of his children will find his productivity multiplied. Similarly, the training of children is the most important function of parenthood. The children of working women were asked about the one thing they missed in their lives. They would say, "Motherhood." Children without a full-time mother's care are likely to wander off and develop psychological and emotional deficiencies. Moreover, our women in the rural parts of the country are fully involved in agriculture activities and, without their support, the level of productivity is not assured. There are many educated women in the teaching and medical professions, where their services are dedicated solely to women. When women start their own businesses and hire a lot of other women to work for them, productivity goes up.

The motive of contemporary thought is projected as women's empowerment through their presence in the market, offices, factories, as salesgirls, typists, clerks, secretaries, public relations, receptionists, etc.; besides, in the name of culture, being drawn to the stage, dance parties, corporate dinners, working to please other men. This is certainly not the purpose of a woman's life, though she may be forced to adopt such jobs under socio-economic compulsions. Thus, Islam has laid down principles and parameters for

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[1] Nasr Abu Zayd , *Reformation of Islamic Thought, a critical historical analysis* 197.
[2] Sahih Muslim, *Kitab Ul Salaat*, Hadith No 442 a.

managing such engagements in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah*, as described in the ensuing subsection.

5.2.3.5. Socio-economic Empowerment of Women in Prophet's ﷺ Era

Muslim women in the Prophet era have been found engaged in various economic activities, although men are made responsible for the sustenance of the family. The way, Western women have left home to pursue their gender equality-based right to do anything they like, the engagement of Muslim women in socio-economic activities is not seen with due respect. Those who express their reservations about such activities base their argument on two factors; one, the basic responsibilities of man to ensure sustenance, and second, their hard stance on the resultant interaction between men and women. The study of Sīrah demonstrates that not only did women exercise their right to economic activities during the Prophet's time, but they were also given equal opportunities to engage in such services due to personal, familial, and societal needs.[1]

Women in the pre-Islamic era were free to engage in various economic activities involving trade, agriculture, handicrafts, and labour for wages, and they exercised control over the wealth they earned. In *Raheeq ul Makatoom* (The Sealed Nectar), it has been reported about the industry being alien to the Arabs, however all Arabian women worked in yarn spinning.[2]

This practise continued in the Prophet's ﷺera. The example of *Ḥaḍhrat Khadijah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَاhas been often quoted, and it is worth noting that she was engaged in international trade and continued with her business after marriage with the Prophet ﷺ as well. Here are some of the narrations about women's professions and their role in the socio-economic life of the Prophet's era.[3]

Trade: *Haula* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِیَ used to sell perfume to the Prophet ﷺ as part of her business. He would recognize her perfume whenever she came to his house. Once, she came with a complaint against her husband as well.[4] *Ḥaḍhrat Qīlah Anmariah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِیَ is reported through *Sīrah* books an interesting incident. She saw the Prophet ﷺ at Hill of *Marwā* during *'Umrah/Ḥajj*, as Prophet ﷺ was removing his Ihrām (dress during 'Umrah/Ḥajj), she came to the Prophet ﷺ and said that she carried out bargaining while selling various goods by asking for more and selling at the right rate. Similarly, while buying, she would offer rates

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[1] Siddiqi, *Rasool Allah aur Khawateen; Aek Smaaji Mutaalea*, 131.
[2] Mubarakpuri, Saif ul Rehman, The sealed Nectar, 313
[3] Mehfoz, Musferah and Noor, Raziah, 'Practical Depiction of Gender Equality in Fiqh ul Seerah Perspective: An Analytical Assessment', *Al-Ilm*, Vol.3 Issue2, July–December 2019.
[4] Ibid,

lower than that by the seller and used to buy at the desired price. The Prophet ﷺ prohibited from such bargaining. This is done with a view that the buyer always lives with a doubt of having paid more, even after the bargaining.[1] *Malīkah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ mother of *Saib bin Iqra Thaqafī* رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا was also engaged in the perfume trade. *Ḥaḍhrat Saib* عَنْهَا reported that once the Prophet ﷺ asked her for anything, she needed. She requested prayers for her little son to accompany her.[2] There are incidents of ladies selling the gifts and shares from the booty and buying other things in the process. Management of income from immovable properties is also reported.[3]

Handicrafts: *Ḥaḍhrat Zainab* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ *bint Jhahsh* was an expert in handicrafts and dyeing and used to prepare many things and sell these in the market. She used to spend the income, so made, in the way of Allah, as she did not need such activity otherwise. *Zainab bint Thaqafī ,* wife of *Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullah ibn Masūd* عنه الله رضى was also engaged in handicrafts, and she used to spend her earnings on the subsistence of the orphans under her guardianship, besides taking care of the household, as her husband was very poor. Another lady from *Anṣār* was also engaged in a similar activity. In Ḥadīth, there is no such evidence that the Prophet ﷺ prohibited women from the subsistence of their husbands. Moreover, when both these ladies complained together to the Prophet ﷺ about their husbands not providing for their household needs, the Prophet ﷺ replied that they would have doubled their reward for sustaining their families.[4]

Domestic Services: The slaves (male and female) were employed in various activities and their masters used to have full rights to their earnings. There are various incidents about such activities, especially an *Anṣārī* honourable lady, who presented a wooden stage for *Masjid-e-Nabvī* which was made by her slave, who was woodwork.[5] There were slaves, who are reported in various *Ḥadīth* books as being employed as shepherds. *Rabīh*, a maid of the Prophet ﷺ was employed to work in an orchard. There were others in the weaving and sewing business.[6]

Medicine/Nursing/Logistics: This was also one of the ways of earning a living. However, honourable ladies like Rafīdah/Kaībah رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا and Umme Sanān رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا were devoted to the service of the Mujahidn. *However*, it is believed that it was their source of

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[1] Nadvi, .Syed Salman, *Seer ul Sahābiyāt ma'a Uswa'e Sahābiyāt*

[2] Ibid,

[3] Siddiqi, "*Rasool Allah aur Khawateen; Aek Smaaji Mutaalea*" 146.

[4] Read, Jen'nan Ghazal. "*Challenging Myths of Muslim Women: The Influence of Islam on Arab-American Women's Labor Force Activity.*" Muslim World ,92 (2002): 19–37.

[5] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Sales, Chapter: Chapter Belief Faith, Hadith No.2095.

[6] Al-'Asqalani, Ibn e Hajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī fī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* Vol 10, 361.

income as well. Thus, it would be wrong to say that they only worked for the logistics of the *Mujahidīn*, as their professional engagement during peacetime must have been used as a source of income. This is indicated by some of the incidents quoted in *Sīrah's* books. *Ḥaḍrat Asmā bint Anīs* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *and Umme Salwā* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *have been reported giving medications to the Prophet* ﷺ, *which they had learned during their stay in Abyssinia.*[1]

Fostering and Babysitting: This was a very common profession for women. This has been quoted in various books with varying perceptions. The fact remains that it resulted in a strong bond between the families and tribes and was seen as a noble gesture. The fostering mothers used it as a source of income as well, because the well-to-do families used to send their children for initial care and grooming to the desert-dwelling families. Ḥaḍrat Ḥalīmah رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا was the foster mother of the Prophet ﷺ and he was always affectionate in dealing with her family. *Ḥaḍrat Thobiah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *was in the same profession in Makkah. Umme Bardah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا *fed Ibrāhīm the son of the Prophet* ﷺ. There are many ladies connected to companions of the Prophet ﷺ with such a reference.[2]

Agriculture: There were agricultural farms in the suburbs of *Makkah* up to *Ṭai'f* and Medina, owned by men as well as women. Some of the female companions are reported to be managing these properties. *Umme Salmah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا, *'Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا, and *Zainab* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا among the wives of the Prophet ﷺ had their own agricultural properties. Many women were working as laborers on these farms as well.[3]

Labour: While trade, agriculture, and handicrafts were limited to specific people with wealth, property, and skills, the bulk of women were engaged in labour-oriented activities. There are various reports of war accounts and engagements of ladies as labour, coming from the vicinity of the battlefield. The grazing of animals by Muslim women is also commonly observed. The mother of *'Abdullah bin Masūd* رضی الله عنہ and others, like *Salmah* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا, *Umme Aiman* رَضِیَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا are reported to be engaged in grazing and working at home doing domestic services.[4]

Music and Entertainment: Although music is not appreciated in Muslim culture, entertainment and recreation are considered legitimate social requirements.[5] The women

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[1] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Al Tibb*, Hadith No.5712.

[2] Siddiqi, *Rasool Allah aur Khawateen; Aek Smaaji Mutaalea,* 150.

[3] Ibid, p 180

[4] Siddiqi, *Rasool Allah aur Khawateen; Aek Smaaji Mutaalea* p 188

[5] Ghazali, Abu Hamid, *Ahya ul Aloom Uddin* Vol 4 (Darul Ishaat Karachi), 521.

were engaged in the music and singing professions in the pre-Islamic era known as *Qīna*. As part of Arab civilization, at the dawn of Islam, there were women, who used to perform on *Eids*, weddings, births, and other celebrations. *Ḥaḍhrat Ḥamzah* رضى الله عنه is reported to be listening to a female singer on the occasion of the wedding of *Ḥaḍhrat Ali* and *Faṭimah* رَضِىَ اللَّـهُ عَنْهَا.[1]

Miscellaneous Occupations: There are reports of women working as beauticians, midwives, nannies, housemaids, for administrations, government officials, teachers, etc. The object was not to describe professions, but professional activities in which Muslim women were involved. These activities were based on the needs of the time and environment but approved the engagement of women in various professions to earn their livelihood. There is no evidence from the *Sīrah* about the prohibition of women working for self-sustenance as widows, divorcees, and poor ladies, while well-to-do women were also involved in work/business of varying natures.[2]

5.2.3.6. Guidelines for Socioeconomic Engagements of Muslim Women

Notwithstanding, the socio-economic conditions discussed earlier, that permitted women to work, there are other social needs of society that necessitate the professional engagement of women in some areas, like female education by female teachers and administrative support staff in educational institutions. Similarly, female doctors and lawyers deal with female issues. Women may be appointed as officials in government institutions such as the police, social welfare, and other relevant departments. Besides these, work for fun and pleasure is forbidden in Islam because of the obvious complexities discussed earlier. Today's Muslim societies are fast accepting the impact of contemporary thought on women's economic empowerment based on materialism and individualism, which needs to be checked by ensuring the social security and justice provided in the Islamic system. It must also be highlighted that woman are not responsible for the subsistence of their children in the event of the death of their husbands or divorce. It is the parents' responsibility to take care of such children. The following are some of the ill impacts of jobs for fun sake:

- The family, the kids, the elderly, and, above all, the husbands are deprived of due care.

- It may add to unemployment among men, as the share of jobs goes to women.

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[1] Siddiqi, Mazhar Yaseen, *Ehd' Nabvi ka Tamaddun* , (Darul Nawādir, 2018), 759-767.
[2] Ibid, 214-15.

- The unchecked intermingling of women and men in the workplace may lead to social conflicts and complexities.

- The extravaganza comes into the lifestyle due to the need for extra attention to the outlook and social status.

- Traveling by public transport also adds to the agony of female commuters.

Economically empowered women are likely to lose the support of their husbands, causing a psychological gulf between them, besides the possibility of neglected children going morally astray.[1] The following rule can be extracted from the study of *Fiqh al Sīrah* regarding women's economic engagement/empowerment:

- Islam allows women to work to earn wealth, especially to sustain themselves and their children under extreme circumstances. Similarly, Islam does not prohibit the employment of women, where the social demand for women is established.

- Since the inception of Islam, women have been participating in various economic activities. In the contemporary world, Muslim women may undertake economic activities within the social norms laid down by Islam. This would be a source of pride for them as well as a reward on the day of judgment.

- To avoid pushing them to the wall, men must conform to the principles of Islam in the context of inheritance and sustenance of women. State institutions like *Bait al Māl* and *Ehsas programmes* should create self-employment opportunities instead of meagre financial aid.

- The education system should inculcate education on domestic responsibilities in girls along with skills required for economic empowerment.

- The workplaces must cater to women's needs for *pardah* (privacy), ensuring the protection of their modesty.

- The legal system must adopt Islamic injunctions about women's rights and responsibilities to ensure social security and safety for women.[2]

This *Ḥadīth* is worth quoting here in the context of women's responsibilities:

<div dir="rtl">

وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ ، وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ[3]

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"Woman is a guardian of her home, and she will be answerable for it"

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[1] Rehman, Afzal, *Duar' e jaded main Muslman aurat ka kirdār*, Lahiore, Feroze Sons, 1994, 72.

[2] Nadvi, *Seer ul Sahabiyat ma'a Uswa' e Saabiyaat*.

[3] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul ahkaam,* Hadith No.7138.

5.2.4 Realigning Psychosocial Attitudes Towards Women

While the orthodox interpretation of gender relations makes the Islamic social system exclusive, rather than inclusive, contemporary thought provides greater space for the intermingling of genders. Thus, the psychosocial attitudes towards women from both perspectives can be avoided by the guidance drawn from *Fiqh al Sīrah*. Narrated by *Abū Hurairah* رضى الله عنه : Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

<div dir="rtl">

اسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ، فَإِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ خُلِقَتْ مِنْ ضِلَعٍ، وَإِنَّ أَعْوَجَ شَيْءٍ فِي الضِّلَعِ أَعْلاَهُ، فَإِنْ ذَهَبْتَ تُقِيمُهُ كَسَرْتَهُ وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهُ لَمْ يَزَلْ أَعْوَجَ، فَاسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ[1]

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"Treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so, if you should try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So, treat women nicely."

This *Ḥadīth* reflects the psychological make-up of a female being rigid and stubborn in behaviour, and it is not necessarily a biological issue. Moreover, it teaches us to handle her with care because she is a delicate species. To learn the true Islamic perspective, one must evaluate various Ḥadīth and narrations in Sīrah based on the timeframe and environment of these actions or instructions of the Prophet ﷺ, i.e. before the revelation of commandments on ḥijāb/veil and afterward, because while the traditionalists are found noncompromising on the issue, the modernists refer to the latter to find greater space for the intermingling of the genders. Therefore, we need to have a dialogue between the textual and contextual understanding of the incidents found in *Ḥadīth* and *Sīrah* to draw guidelines for contemporary challenges. This section is dedicated to exploring the social interaction between the companions of the Prophet ﷺ and his male companions, as well as other women and men from *Sīrah*. Allah, in the *Qur'ān,* says that He has created pairs for all the creatures in the universe, and humans belong to the group in command of all the other creations, meant to serve him.

<div dir="rtl">

وَمِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ[2] سُبْحَـٰنَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْأَزْوَٰجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنۢبِتُ ٱلْأَرْض

</div>

"Glory to Allah Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge."

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[1] Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī , *Kitab Ul Anmbya„* Hadith No. 3331.

[2] *Qur'an* 31:20

The two genders are the basic ingredients of humanity, and thus cannot be separated by a wall in between. There must be an overlap of rights and responsibilities towards other fellow human beings. Therefore, Islam has laid down general principles for social interaction between men and women. However, because of the way civilizations have evolved in Muslim and non-Muslim societies, the contemporary environment in socio-economic fields finds men and women working together, out of compulsions or extended materialistic desires as well. This has led to social complications, sexual disorientation, and an aversion to domestic life and wedlock with increased incidents of divorce, eloping, and extramarital relations.[1]

Yaseen Mazhar Siddiqi, one of the modern biographers, gives detailed references to the constant flow of women into the audience of the Prophet ﷺ and mentions their various motives and objectives, one of them being the understanding and education of religious issues. Siddiqi is of the view that our ancient and modern biographers have mostly recorded the traditions of men's attendance. However, little is known about the presence of women in the Prophet's ﷺ majlis (meetings). He has made remarks about various women of the time who attended meetings at the House of the Prophetﷺ. Most of the women were from Quraish, who migrated from Makkah, including relatives and non-relatives, elderly and young women, and young girls. Those, besides Muslim women, included non-Muslim women, those coming for 'Umrah, Ḥajj and pilgrimage to the Ka'abah. According to him, among the Anṣārī women, the Prophet ﷺ paid close attention to the social values of their society, and some of the Ḥadīth reached us through these women in the form of a valuable collection of religious teachings, based on diverse topics and the general teachings of the religion as well as the universal rules. Ummahāt al Mominīn رضى الله عنهن is the main source of transmission of the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ.[2]

To avoid sensual attraction from strangers, Islamic thought prescribed veil arrangements for females. The veil is a shield for the protection of females from the atmosphere and social environment. Furthermore, it gives the head satisfaction for the safety of his family at the same time. Therefore, it is seen as a symbol of Muslim identity for Muslim women. Ummahāt al Mominīn رضى الله عنهن addressed this requirement of Islamic culture from the core of their hearts. There are several occasions mentioned in Sīrah and Ḥadīth books that guide us in this direction. Once during Ḥajj, some women

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[1] Ahmed, Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam: Roots of a Modern Debate*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 40.

[2] Siddiqi, Yaseen Mazhar, *Nabi Akram oar khwātīn aik smāji mutali'a*, (Nashriyāt Lahore, 2008), 37.

requested Ḥaḍhrat 'Ayeshah رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا to come forward to kiss Ḥijr-e- Aswad. She refused because she did not want to enter a male crowd.[1] She respected the veil to the extent that whenever she got a chance for *Ṭawāf* during the daytime, she managed to keep the male at that time. She was in the habit of keeping her face covered during *Ṭawāf also*. On the way back from *Ghazwah Banī Musṭaliq*, she lost her group and decided to stay and wait till some came back to find her. While waiting, she went asleep. Later, *Ḥaḍhrat Ṣafwān* رضی الله عنہ, who was deputed to clear the site of the departing caravan, saw her and said *Inna lillah-e-wa innā ilehi rajeūn*. As she woke up, the first thing she did, was cover her face.[2] *Ummahāt al Mominīn* رضی الله عنہن *used to go out for the call of nature during the night. One-night Ḥaḍhrat Sudah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا *went out and came across Ḥaḍrat 'Umer* رضی الله عنہ *who recognized her because of her unusual height and physique. This recognition by 'Umer* رضی الله عنہ *was disliked by Ḥaḍrat Saudah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِیَ [3]Thereafter, there was a revelation about the veil for the honourable ladies.

When the Prophet ﷺ got married to *Ḥaḍrat* Zainab *bint Jahsh* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا, he invited the people to a reception arranged for the occasion. All the people came and attended the reception. It is reported that *Ḥaḍrat Zainab* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا was also present in one corner, as a bride.[4] This incident is also quoted for the revelation of the verses, instructing the believers not to sit after the meal as it leads to the discomfort of the Prophet ﷺ. So, the presence of the bride at the reception is confirmed. The Prophet ﷺ once informed *Ḥaḍrat 'Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا that angels are neither male nor female, but Allah has mentioned them as masculine. Thus, the greeting by a male to a female is established here, as Gabriel used to visit the Prophet ﷺ in male appearance, and greeted *Ḥaḍrat Ayesha* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا, as well.[5] Similarly, *Umme Salmah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا was sitting with the Prophet ﷺ, when Gabriel came and had a long conversation with her. After he left, the Prophet ﷺ asked who was he? She said that she only learned about him as the Prophet ﷺ mentioned the visit of Gabriel during the sermon.[6]

Ḥaḍrat 'Ayeshah رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا also reported the visit of a dust-stricken villager to the Prophet ﷺ in her presence when the Prophet ﷺ told him to clean and wash on Fridays. *Ḥaḍrat 'Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا also reported having visited *Bilāl* رضی الله عنہ when he was

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[1] Ul Qadri, Muhammad Tahir, *Ummahat ul Mominin Ke fazail o Manaqib*, (Minhaaj ul Quraan Publications, 2006), 40.

[2] Ibid

[3] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Baab Ul Tafseer*, Hadith No 4795.

[4] Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul Nikah*, Hadith No 5166.

[5] Ibid, *Kitab Al Izn*, Hadith No. 5895.

[6] Sahih Muslim, *Kitab Al Hajj*, Hadith No, 2950.

suffering from fever on his arrival at Madinah.[1] She also narrated that a man visited the Prophet ﷺ to enquire about bathing after sexual intercourse in my presence. The Prophet ﷺ replied that she and I both do it the same way.[2] The Prophet ﷺ, once, refused to accept an invitation to a dinner by a Muslim neighbour, as he declined to invite *Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا on inquiry by the Prophet ﷺ. It was the third time when he invited *‘Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا, then both attended the dinner together.[3] Anas ibn Malik reported that the Messenger ﷺ, would go into battle with *Umm Atya* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا had participated in battles six times accompanying her husband; they would provide water and care for the injured.[4]

All these incidents are reported in *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth* books and are indicative of the socialising of men and women in the early days after the migration to Medina, as Islamic culture evolved gradually on arrival here. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no such restriction on the meeting of Muslim women and Muslim men with due protocol.

It may be surprising to note that after the revelation of the instructions about ḥijāb or veil, the wives of the Prophet ﷺ were not disconnected from the surroundings. They remained engaged in social activities and, after the demise of the Prophet ﷺ, were rather more active, especially in the fields of education of Muslims. All this happened within the new parameters laid down by the *Qur’an*, which in no way suggested banning the participation of women in such activities, but only restricted their engagement, along with the introduction of different protocols. The examples are discussed in the following narration. One individual inquired of *Umme Salmah* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا about a person who awakens in a state of sexual impurity and wants to fast. She stated that the Prophet ﷺ used to awaken in the morning in a condition of sexual impurity, not from a wet dream, and then he would bathe and complete his fast.[5]

This narration reflects the liberty of asking questions by the male members of the group. In *Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, the permission to eat dinner in the presence of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ is reported by *Ibn-‘Umar* رضی الله عنه, who was accompanied by *Sa‘ad* رضی الله عنہ and others. *Ḥaḍhrat Zainab Binte Jahsh* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا *has been appreciated by ‘Ayeshah* رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهَا *for being highly dedicated to the service of humanity.* This *Ḥadīth* has been narrated as a good example of good deeds, but it also indicated that social work, which warranted interaction with the male segment of society as well. She was an expert

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[1] Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul Tibb,* Hadith No.5654.
[2] Sahih Muslim, *Kitab Haez,* Hadith No. 350.
[3] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitab Ul Mushroobat*, Hadith No. 2037.
[4] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Ul Jihad*, Hadith No. 1652.
[5] Sunan Ibn Majah, *Kitab Ul Saum*, Hadith No. 1704.

in dying and tailoring and spent all her earnings on the cause of Allah.[1] It is pertinent to note that carrying out such activities was not possible without interaction with larger segments of society, including males within the laid down protocols.

When the verses about *Tayamum* were revealed, it was because of *Ḥaḍrat ‘Ayeshah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ, who forced the caravan to stop at a place, without water, as she lost her necklace there. This led to the scarcity of water for Muslims during prayer time, so they were allowed to symbolize ablution by touching the dusty surface and moving over the apparent parts of the body. This *Ḥadīth* is evidence of *‘Ayeshah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ being in the company of the Prophet ﷺ in the presence of other companions, who complained about *‘Ayeshah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ.[2]

Numerous narrations can be quoted, where Muslim males approached wives of the Prophet ﷺ, after his demise, to learn about the religious practices and routines of the Prophet ﷺ. All these interactions provide adequate evidence about the meeting of men and wives of the Prophet ﷺ within the laid down protocols during various social activities, relations, and varying environments. The *Ḥadīth* narrations have not been quoted in full to avoid adding unnecessary length to the paper. However, the subject has been referred to with contextual analysis, focused on interaction.

It is highlighted that the right of women to visit the mosque for prayers was not suspended even after the occurrence of a rape case around the Masjid.*[3]* This incident is often quoted in a context other than the attendance of women in the *Masjid*. Many narrations of *Ḥadīth* show the attendance of women in the *Maghreb, ‘Ishā, Jum‘ah, Nawāfil, Janāzah,* etc. besides routine prayer. *Ḥaḍhrat ‘Ayeshah* عَنْهَا اللّٰـهُ رَضِىَ is quoted in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, that she used to visit the house for some needs (during *I’tikāf*)" and ask about the health of the sick people, passing by.[4] This practice of *I’tikāf*[5], during *Ramaḍān,* warrants the stay of individuals in the *Masjid* for the last ten days of the month. So, the staying in the *Masjid* of women may be noticed here. The visit of *Ḥaḍhrat Ṣafiah* رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا to the Prophet ﷺ, while he was in *I’tikāf* is also reported in *Bukhārī* and *Muslim* in the context of the Prophet ﷺ telling the two passers-by people that she was *Ṣafiah* رَضِىَ اللّٰـهُ عَنْهَا; his wife, to avert any possibility of evil thought in their mind.[6]

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[1] Al-baghdadi, al-khatib , *az -zuhd wa ar-raqa'iq*, Dar ul Bashair al Islamia, Hadith No 754.

[2] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab Al Taharat*, Hadith No. 334.

[3] Sunan al-Tirmidhī, *Kitab ul Zina*, Hadith No,1454.

[4] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Baab ul I’tikāf,* Hadith No 5090.

[5] A practice of retiring in the mosque for last ten days of Ramaḍān for dedicated worship, totally withdrawing from the worldly affairs.

[6] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitab I’tikāf*, Hadith No. 2038.

The above narrations are demonstrative of the right of women to visit *Masjid* for prayer, social events, and even stay if they need to. However, all of this happened under strict protocol, including the forbiddance of perfumes, makeup, staying behind men in separate lines, the priority of women in entry and exit, and an indication of mistake to *Imām* through clapping instead of raising voices like men. The Prophet ﷺ subsequently dedicated *Bāb un Nisā* (Women Gate) for entry into *Masjid e Nabvī* (euqsoM s'tehporP) ﷺ and it is still there to date. This was done on the recommendation of companions رضى الله عنہم to avoid '*Fitnah*' because of encounters with men at the entry/exit.[1]

The women's role in the education of men is also proved through various narrations, besides the mixed gathering of *Ḥajj* (Pilgrimage). The participation of women in battles is also confirmed through *Sīrah* books. Similarly, the interaction in the context of marriage proposals involving the meeting before marriage is also confirmed through *Ḥadīth* books. The attendance at the marriage reception, as narrated earlier, is also indicative of the mixed gatherings under the protocol.

The visits of Muslim women to Muslim men's houses and the Prophet's ﷺ house have been reported earlier. The mixed presence of women at funerals and visits for condolences is also established on various occasions. Women's participation in sales and purchase activities, working in fields, partnership in business, and philanthropic work have also been a practise among Muslims.

It must be noted that the social order of Islam is inclusive and has evolved from *Makkah* to *Medinah* and thereafter with the expansion of Islam to other regions. Thus, the impact of local customs and social norms was also absorbed. However, while Islam did not erect a wall between the two genders, it has laid down clear instructions to avert a situation that could induce mal intent in the opposite gender, thereby leading to *Fitnah*. The interaction is allowed on a need basis with due caution and care to ensure the protection of women.[2]

General Guidelines from *Fiqh al Sīrah* for Psychosocial Conduct: The interaction between women and men from the perspective of *Fiqh al Sīrah is* summarised below:

- It is important to pay serious attention to the character-building programme for all the members of society along Islamic lines, thus inculcating their sociocultural values in their minds to guard against the influence of alien thought.

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[1] Noorwali, Ibtehal, *ʿAbdulḥalīm Abū Shuqqa's The Liberation of Women in the Age of Revelation: A Translation and Critical Commentary,* Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. 6813. 2000.

[2] Hourani Albert, Arabic *Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798–1939.* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 80.

- Parents should be inclined to arrange weddings for siblings at the right time to avert the chances of them going astray.

- The workplace environment and social gatherings must minimise the chances of interaction between young people, and, if unavoidable, should be conducted in the presence of older people in jobs.

- The practise of lowering the gaze with respect to both genders will help in guarding against seduction.

The practise of shaking hands between both genders must be avoided to avoid the initiation of any sensual feelings. The Prophet ﷺis quoted as having said, "You may prefer being nailed in the head over touching women not *ḥalāl* to you."[1]

- 'Ladies first' is the teaching of Islam, hence it must be followed instead of pushing them on the lines of gender equality, outstripping them of this protocol.

- Avoid meetings between opposite genders in private. If unavoidable, undue lengthy meetings involving opposite genders, while keeping the purpose of meetings in mind. When in doubt, situations of inter-gender social interaction are prevented.

- Permission from the husband, father, and brother for a female to meet strangers outside and inside the house will ensure the safety and security of the woman.

- Muslim women should avoid revealing dresses, gratuitous make-up, the use of provocative perfumes, loose talk, and walking styles that induce negative vibes in men.

- Though the human face is the most notable and appealing part of the body, the physical structure is the indicator of natural human attractions, leading to the most sensual appeal to the opposite gender. Therefore, concealing one's body is both rational and psychologically necessary.

Conclusion

The research through the study of *Sīrah* and *Hadith* found that *Fiqh al Sīrah* demonstrates that Muslim women's obligations have NOT been encapsulated in the gender imperatives of mother, daughter, sister, and wife, with all other positions being deemed "prohibited." The Prophet ﷺis found stressing the difference between the social duties and obligations of men and women, as well as the gender equation. While excessive emphasis on female identity slows down her development, it is established that freeing her of

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[1] *Al-Muʾjam al-Kabīr Kitab Ul Zina*, Hadith No 16910.

feminine duties and functions leads to endless progress but jeopardises her modesty. As such, it is the duty of society to provide her with an environment conducive to maximising her talents and potential in keeping with her respect and dignity. The vital importance of a comprehensive social transformation is demonstrated in achieving success in terms of women's wellness and outdoor activity participation. Throughout my research, I found that Islam gives equal human dignity to men and women, thus guaranteeing their equality as human beings. However, it is believed that it has created natural arrangements for gender equality in line with both males' and females' roles, physiological capabilities, and limitations. Contemporary thought has incorporated women into the broader context of life alongside males in non-domestic positions, burdening them with extra obligations. While Islamic thought seeks balance in this respect, seeing men and women as complementary partners in life. Consequently, according to the Islamic thought on women's position in society, it is proven that balance is necessary for success, which may be maintained by adhering to the principles outlined above considering *Fiqh al Sīrah*. They need to update their knowledge on women's status and roles as enunciated in Islam, while ensuring rights and responsibilities accordingly. This is the way forward to save our society from the influence of alien thought and preserve our indigenous values.

Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The core objective of research paper was to investigate the influence of contemporary ideas on Muslim women through various ways and means. The analysis of attitudes towards women in Pakistani society has found these to be patriarchal, with males being held up as preferred child. There is a significant divide in Pakistan about understanding and practicing Islamic teachings. Islamic ideals are emphasised, yet there are gaps in how they are applied, which allows current Western ideology to infiltrate women's brains via numerous channels. Thus, the following findings and conclusions have led to a set of recommendations.

Findings

The research established a discernible impact of contemporary thought on Muslim women in Pakistan. Despite emphasis on religious norms and values, there are gaps in the application of Islamic values. Analysis of empirical data collected through the survey has generally confirmed the conclusions of the qualitative part of the research. Following are the major findings of the survey conducted on a sample of participants comprising of males and females (20:80) from Rawalpindi/Islamabad from a variety of social backgrounds:

- The research has destablished that contemporary thought in the West developed due to denial of women's rights. Therefore, Muslim women, are likely to be attracted if the society does not ensure rights and responsibilities granted by Islam.

- The research has figured out that contemporary thought on women bears a semblance to Islamic thought in terms of human rights, with differing perspectives on religion, liberty, rights, and obligations.

- The survey has proven that Pakistani Muslim women have been visibly impacted by contemporary thought in all spheres of life, without being aware of its implications.

- The empirical analysis established a downward trend in women's faith in their primary role, thus implying a threat to the family system.

- It is found that Pakistani women's strong desire for personal and professional progress, along with social pressures, drives them toward economic empowerment, exposing them to exploitation.

- It is observed that while Pakistani women are not fully aware of Islamic values, their society denies the application of Islamic principles, thus instilling a sense of insecurity and facilitating the penetration of contemporary thought.

- It has been demonstrated that the media, academic institutions, modernists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promote ideals in the name of freedom and empowerment without regard to the detrimental societal consequences.

- It is discovered that there is a surge in the realization of Muslim identity among Muslim women, thus validating my thesis's claim about the effectiveness of *Fiqh al Sīrah* as a response to the challenges of modern thought.

Conclusion

It has been discussed in the paper that human societies are transforming with the nature of man's thinking, bringing in improvements in every facet of human life across the globe, while cultural values traveling beyond the boundaries are seen influencing social and ideological areas. The historical encounter of Islam with various cultures has accepted the influence of local customs and practices, if not against the basic principles and ethos. However, contemporary thought emanating from the West is found impacting Muslim societies in general and women, thus, warranting serious soul searching to respond to the challenges identified in the research paper. The role and development of women is critical to the social evolution of society, and women play a considerably bigger part in human growth in society. It is revealed by research those Muslim women are not prohibited from working when required by socioeconomic impulses. The research aimed at ascertaining the impact of contemporary thought on Pakistani Muslim women in social, psychological, ideological, and cultural contexts, to establish a response from *Fiqh al Sīrah* based on the evidence of women's interaction in the Prophet's ﷺ times. The research objectives are:

- To explore the evolution of contemporary thought on women.

- To study Pakistan's sociocultural environment with respect to women in order to identify gaps and margins for infusion of contemporary thought.

- To determine the influence of contemporary thought on Muslim women in Pakistan and emanating challenges.

- To suggest guidelines in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah'* in response to the contemporary challenges faced by Muslim women in Pakistan.

In this context following research questions are to be answered:

- How did contemporary thought evolve into current discourses that influences Muslim women?

- How do the sociocultural environment in Pakistan support contemporary thought that affects Muslim women?

- What is the nature and extent of influence of contemporary thought on Pakistani Muslim women?

- How does *Fiqh al Sīrah* help Muslim women to face the challenges of contemporary discourses?

The first chapter of the study provides an overview of the subject and discusses the justification for undertaking this research. It offers a concise summary of the issue that must be investigated and solved logically in the light of *Fiqh al Sīrah*. It begins with a review of literature on Western thought on women and its linkage with contemporary women's movements in Pakistan and the local social environment, followed by the Islamic perspective on women's rights, roles, and responsibilities, and the socio-economic challenges faced by women. This chapter provides the foundation of research and an overview of the methodology followed by the study.

The second chapter explores the evolution of contemporary thought, leading to the women's freedom movement in the light of modern trends and the ways and means for the global outreach of these ideas. It has been discovered that contemporary thought has witnessed an increasing emphasis on secularism and individualism in response to the Church's governmental dominance, and industrialization has resulted in significant advances in western thought. The research identified that on encounter with contemporary thought, modern Muslim scholars, especially women, advocate a fresh interpretation of the Qur'an to advance women's rights. Despite the disagreement of majority of these scholars with feminism, the activists are found indirectly supporting Western feminist thought. It is also understood through research that the West appears to be increasingly conscious of the pain caused by the women's liberation movements.

The third chapter identifies the impact of contemporary thought on Pakistani Muslim women in the given sociocultural environment and the psychological challenges thus posed. The research has identified that for Pakistani Muslim people, there is no separation between culture and religion, as the two are intricately interwoven. Therefore, the social environment in Pakistan leaves many gaps between Islamic thought on women status and rights and social practice in ensuring justice and security for women. It is also examined that how Islamic values are losing space with regard to women's rights in Pakistani society. Hence, feminist thought is gaining acceptance in the garb of emancipation through various ways and means, thus impacting the traditional norms and the family structure besides exploitation of females. The Chapter, juxtaposing

contemporary feminist thought and Islamic teachings on women's rights, found the former as rebellious in the light of the latter, since it advocates unrestricted liberty, and is the cause of gender imbalance.

The fourth chapter primarily comprises of the analysis based on the survey to measure the impact of contemporary thought on Pakistani Muslim women, sampling Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It identifies the emerging challenges confronted by Pakistani Muslim women due to the exposure of contemporary thought. Besides, interviews with intelligentsia were conducted to corroborate the findings of the survey and seek a response from prominent personalities from various backgrounds. It is discovered that allegations of gender inequality in Islam are mainly founded on derogatory societal biases against women. However, there is enough evidence to the fact that cultural norms do hinder women's inclusion in all fields of life, thereby casting doubt on the concept of patriarchy. It is established that improper interpretation of such unfounded ideas serves as an inspiration and a platform for alien ideas in the minds of most educated women in Pakistan who rise to challenge male dominance without much understanding. It is underscored by the analysis that such a mental and psychological bent on the part of women is contributing to an increase in family breakdowns among married women and an emerging pattern of unmarried women finding comfort in their single status to avoid household obligations and so-called male dominance. It is concluded that this line of thought is undoubtedly triggering psychological challenges for Muslim women on the identity and is eventually perceived as a threat to our social and family traditions.

The fifth chapter has been included to establish the guiding principles from *Fiqh al Sīrah's* perspective in response to the contemporary challenges facing Muslim women. The chapter initially is focused on examining the development of Islamic thought with a particular emphasis on women's rights and status. This was followed by a brief introduction to *Fiqh al Sīrah* as a concept. According to earlier chapters, the lack of knowledge and application of Islamic rights and desire to freedom in the society enables contemporary thought to creep in and pose challenges to Muslim women. Therefore, in the light of contemporary challenges, acceptable and practicable solutions have been established from *Fiqh al Sīrah* through contextual interpretation of various cases regarding women reported in *Sīrah*, the *Qur'an*, and *Hadith*. It has been identified that in the contemporary sociopsychological environment, *Sīrah* and *Hadith* can be contextually helpful in uncovering solutions. The chapter encompassed analysis of the lives of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ and the interaction of the Prophet ﷺ with other women of the era, drawing

lessons for contemporary Muslim women, and responding to all sociocultural, ideological, socioeconomic, and psychological challenges.

Recommendations

In keeping with the findings of the study, it is necessary to build a social order at the individual/family/society level in accordance with Islamic values in the contemporary environment, thus integrating Islam into our lives at a deeper level in accordance with *Fiqh al Sīrah* guidelines. The following recommendations are offered for various segments of society based on the research objectives and findings:

- While society needs to value and respect women's roles as custodians of the familial system, their participation in socioeconomic activities may be guided by social and societal needs, ensuring the safety, security, and dignity of women.

- Academic institutions and the media, besides raising awareness about the negative impact of contemporary thought, need to lay emphasis on character building in accordance with Islamic teachings and values.

- The prevailing laws on the protection of women's rights need to be implemented in letter and spirit to strengthen women's positions in society while formulating new laws to deter violations of their legal rights in accordance with Islamic values.

- Islamic scholars, including females, have got to reclaim space on female issues in the wake of contemporary thought while engaging in intra-faith dialogue and *Ijtihad*. The Islamic Ideology Council may serve as a platform for such activities.

- The government needs to invest adequate resources in producing locally contextualised knowledge on gender issues that is based on Pakistan's national ideology and philosophies.

- It is recommended that the Government may exercise domestic regulatory oversight of electronic media for the promotion of our social and religious norms while reaching out to the global networks for fair reporting on Muslim women.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Study may be undertaken on the impact of contemporary thought in the larger context of Pakistani society on the social challenges, identified herein.

- Research may be initiated to explore the influence of contemporary thought on the political milieu of Pakistan as an Islamic republic.

- Studies on similar lines may be conducted to discover the challenges of contemporary thought to Muslim women living in non-Muslim societies.

- A comparative study of the attitudes of Muslim women living in western community's vis-a-vis Muslim communities may be undertaken to learn from each other's experience and practices in the contemporary environment.

It is concluded that ***contemporary thought creeps into Pakistani society through GAPS in the understanding of Islam and MARGINS in the application of the principles and teachings of Islam. We must plug the GAPS and reduce the MARGINS to forestall the negative impact of this trend.***

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Surah	Verse No.	Verse	Page No
Al Baqarah	2:107	أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ	157
Al Baqarah	2:187	أُحِلَّ لَـكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ	150
Al Baqarah	2:228	وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَن يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ۔۔	151
Al Baqarah	2:282	يَـٰأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنتُم بِدَيْ	160
Al Nisā	4:24	وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأُحِلَّ لَكُم مَّا وَرَاءَ۔۔	155
Al Nisā	4:32	وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ۔۔۔	190
Al Nisā	4:34	الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۔۔۔	59, 150, 158 &166
Al Nur	24:32	وَأَنكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ إِن يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ	158
Al Nur	24:60	وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ ۔۔۔	192
Al Rum	30:21	وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ	150
Al Qalam	68:4	وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ	147

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Sunan al-Tirmidhī: 1454	تُرِيدُ الصَّلَاةَ فَتَلَقَّاهَا رَجُلٌ فَتَجَلَّلَهَا فَقَضَى حَاجَتَهُ مِنْهَا فَصَاحَتْ فَانْطَلَقَ وَمَرَّ عَلَيْهَا	203
Sahih Al Bukhari: 2035	تَزُورُهُ فِي اعْتِكَافِهِ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ	203
Sahih Bukhari: 5090	تُنْكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ	157
Sahih al-Bukhari: 1652	وَكَانَتْ أُخْتِي مَعَهُ فِي سِتِّ غَزَوَاتٍ	202
Sahih Bukhari: 2731	خرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم زمن الحديبية حتى إذا كانوا ببعض الطريق	173
Sunan Ibn Majah: 1977	خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي " .	152
Riyad as-Salihin: 1084	خير صفوف الرجال أولها، وشرها آخرها، وخير صفوف النساء آخرها، وشرها أولها"	185
Sahih Bukhari: 4795	خَرَجَتْ سَوْدَةُ بَعْدَ مَا ضُرِبَ الْحِجَابُ لِحَاجَتِهَا	201
Sunan Ibn Majah: 1704	سَأَلْتُ أُمَّ سَلَمَةَ عَنِ الرَّجُلِ، يُصْبِحُ، وَهُوَ جُنُبٌ، يُرِيدُ الصَّوْمَ؟	202
Sunan Ibn Majah: 224	طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ،	179
Sunnan Abi Dawood: 2297	طَلَّقَتْ خَالَتِي ثَلَاثًا	163
Sahih Muslim: 2950	فَسَأَلَ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ حَتَّى انْتَهَى إِلَيَّ، فَقُلْتُ :أَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيِّ بْنِ حُسَيْنٍ، فَأَهْوَى بِيَدِهِ إِلَى رَأْسِي فَنَزَعَ زِرِّي الْأَعْلَى	201
Sahih Bukhari: 334	فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ آيَةَ التَّيَمُّمِ فَتَيَمَّمُوا	203
Sahih al-Bukhari 6130	قَالَتْ كُنْتُ أَلْعَبُ بِالْبَنَاتِ عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَكَانَ	172
Mishkat al Masabih; 1898	قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيَأْتِي أَحَدُنَا شَهْوَتَهُ وَيَكُونُ لَهُ فِيهَا أَجْرٌ	155
Sunan Abi Dawud: 4112	قْبَلَ ابْنُ أُمِّ مَكْتُومٍ وَذَلِكَ بَعْدَ أَنْ أُمِرْنَا بِالْحِجَابِ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " احْتَجَبَا مِنْهُ	184
Sunan Tirmizi: 2697	قُعُودٌ فَأَلْوَى بِيَدِهِ بِالتَّسْلِيمِ	192
Mishkat al-Masabih: 2534	قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ جِهَادٌ؟ قَالَ: " نَعَمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ جِهَادٌ لَا قِتَالَ فِيهِ: الْحَجُّ وَالْعُمْرَةُ	185
Sahih Bukhari: 893	كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَزَادَ اللَّيْثُ	173
Abu Dawood: 2085	لَا نِكَاحَ إِلَّا بِوَلِيٍّ	158
Ibne Maaja: 1882	لَا تُزَوِّجُ الْمَرْأَةُ الْمَرْأَةَ وَلَا تُزَوِّجُ الْمَرْأَةُ	158

Sahih Bukhari: 6968	لاَ تُنْكَحُ الْبِكْرُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْذَنَ، وَلاَ الثَّيِّبُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْمَر	158
Sahih Bukhari: 5712	لَدَدْنَاهُ فِي مَرَضِهِ فَجَعَلَ يُشِيرُ إِلَيْنَا أَنْ لاَ تَلُدُّونِ	196
Sahih al-Bukhari: 5654	لَمَّا قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم الْمَدِينَةَ وُعِكَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَبِلاَلٌ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَتْ فَدَخَلْتُ عَلَيْهِمَا	202
Ibne Maaja: 1857	" مَا اسْتَفَادَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بَعْدَ تَقْوَى اللَّ	153
Masnad e Ahmed: 8273	مر بالنساء فسلم عليهن	192
Sahih al-Bukhari: 6042	نَهَى النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنْ يَضْحَكَ الرَّجُلُ مِمَّا يَخْرُجُ مِنَ الأَنْفُس	160
Sahih Muslim: 2064	وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُومُ عَلَى بَابِ حُجْرَتِي	171
Saḥīḥ Muslim: 3400	يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ، مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ	153
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Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5895	يَا عَائِشَةُ هَذَا جِبْرِيلُ يَقْرَأُ عَلَيْكِ السَّلاَمَ	201

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Impact of Contemporary Thought Inventory (ICTI)

Sr. No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Sociocultural Challenges					
1.	A woman has a pivotal role in domestic affairs (primary domain)					
2.	Wedlock is no more a social compulsion in modern time					
3.	Man is obliged to ensure sustenance of the family					
4.	Gone are the days of traditional motherhood; difficult now					
5.	Divorce should be a matter of choice for the women					
6.	Sexual orientation (straight, lesbian, etc) is a natural mindset					
7.	Children become a drag on the socio-economic progress of women					
Socioeconomic Challenges						
8.	The role of women in economic activities should be driven by individual and societal needs; not a matter of choice					
9.	Economic empowerment leads to the independence of women					

10.	Economic empowerment offered better wedding opportunities					
11.	Women are being exploited in the economic activities/employment (moral/physical abuse)					
12.	Free mixing of genders is the need of the present time					
Ideological/Religious Challenges						
13.	Dress code is an individual choice no social or religious compulsion					
14.	Incidents of domestic violence and Customs like honor killing, *wanni*, *sawara*, etc are common in the society					
15.	Women rights in Islam (dowry, sustenance, inheritance) are ensured by law & society					
16.	Polygamy is a social curse not a cure for gender imbalance					
17.	Co-education offered more chances of moral disorientation					
18.	Our academic curriculum has enough Islamic content that is leading to the radicalization of women					
19.	Islam offers greater religious, spiritual, and moral ascendency to the women					
Psychological Challenges						
20.	Media is promoting alien values in society					

21.	Women are given a role in decision making in our society					
22.	"My Body My Choice" is the women rights slogan					
23.	Gender equality is the call of the time in all walks of life					
24.	Modernists, feminists, and secularists are promoting westernization					
25.	Modernization is the westernization of values					

Interviews/Discussions - Questionnaire

Q1.   There is a difference of opinion among the scholars on the relevance of the social norms of the Prophet's ﷺ era to the contemporary environment. What are your views in this regard?

Q2.   It is believed that the institution of the family stands threatened due to the eagerness of women to pursue economic empowerment. How do you suggest the balance between work and family?

Q3.   The rising trend of a marriage breakup and disinterest of females in wedlock is believed to threaten the fiber of our society. What are your views on it and how to guard against this threat to social life?

Q4.   The working women are exposed to all kinds of people in pursuit of their careers. What are the ills to which a contemporary working woman is confronted within the professional life and how to safeguard her chastity and honor in such an environment?

Q5.   The young girls at their formative age are left at the mercy of higher education institutions, where they spend maximum time as compared to their homes. Are our academic environment and curricula conducive for the grooming of young personalities? Any suggestions for improvement.

Q6.   The social transformation is reflected through the westernized and bold outlook of young women, with a belief of an individual choice. How do we check further downside movement in this regard?

Q7.   Mainstream media (Electronics) in general and social media, in particular, are the most powerful tools for the transformation of public opinion and society. How do you suggest these important means to be utilized for the preservation of socio-cultural and religious values?

Q8.   Foreign-funded NGOs working for the empowerment of women in Pakistan are viewed with contempt by a segment of society, viewing these as a vehicle for the promotion of western thought and values. Notwithstanding the difference of opinion on their role, how the government and society can avert their negative impact on our society?

Q9.   Pakistan being a signatory of UN conventions on human rights has been carrying out legislation concerning women. Does the legal framework in Pakistan provide enough protection to the women as ordained by our religion? If not, suggest areas for improvement.

Q10.   The Fiqh differences among various sects on women-related issues and other divisions on the sociocultural basis are leading to further exploitation of women in our society. How do you suggest the harmonization of religious thought for the betterment of women folk in Pakistan?

THE END