



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

MUSLIM WOMEN WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Dr.M.I.Noorjahan Begum,M.A.,M.Phil.,SET,Ph.D.

Asst. Professor, St. Joseph College of Arts and Science– Cuddalore.

Abstract— Muslim Women Welfare and Development Schemes focus on enhancing the well-being and progress of Muslim women within societal frameworks. These initiatives aim to address issues such as gender equality, education, and economic empowerment. Schemes often emphasize the implementation of Islamic laws to protect women from various forms of exploitation, ensuring their dignity and independence. Programs typically include provisions for financial support, education, and skill development, recognizing the importance of empowering women economically and socially. Efforts may also be directed towards legal frameworks, ensuring that Muslim women have equal access to justice and protection. By amalgamating Islamic principles with contemporary needs, these welfare and development schemes strive to create an inclusive environment that fosters the holistic growth and empowerment of Muslim women, reinforcing their rights and status within society.

Index Terms— Muslim Women, Welfare Schemes, Development Initiatives, Gender Equality, Economic Empowerment, Islamic Laws,

Dignity and Independence, Legal Frameworks, Education Programs, Social Empowerment

I. INTRODUCTION

A woman's welfare and development is in her safe and maintenance. Naturally Islamic laws for women are made for safety and maintenance of women. Among them few laws of Islam say about severe punishments for harassments against women like female infanticide, male - dominant on women, etc. Islam gives rights to women in getting bride - price; in getting property from inherit; in spending it as she likes and in getting education. Liability for maintenance is an incentive for living in cooperation and works as a check on lavishing husbands.¹ It protects women from depending upon anybody other than the husband. Maintenance cements the family ties, breeds confidence and generates good - will. Because of these reasons remarriages are allowed in Islam for widow and divorced women. In India the personal laws of maintenance have been supplemented by the common provisions relating to maintenance inserted into the body of the code of criminal procedure.²

The code is applicable to all persons irrespective of religion or caste. The relevant provisions of the code provide summary procedure to make speedier remedy available to the neglected wives. Under the new code of 1973 a neglected wife can claim maintenance from her husband only when she is unable to maintain herself. However, divorcees have been made entitled to claim maintenance till their last breath or re-marriage whichever ensues first. But provisions has been inserted in section 127 (3) (b) of the Code on representation made by Muslims where by any conflicts with personal laws were expected to be avoided.³ Also Magistrate had been empowered to vary or cancel, as the case may be, a maintenance order under the code in consequence of the decision of a Civil Court. But the judiciary having over-stepped its interpretative role has adopted anti-shariat rule of decision without due consideration of the exemption clauses. In response to forceful demands by the Muslim community the Parliament passed the Muslim Women (protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 to save future cases from the effect of some recent Supreme Court rulings. Islam provides an efficient legal frame work for the protection of a woman's dignity and safeguards against her exploitation.⁴ Till her marriage, the father has been cast the strict legal duty to look after her and meet all her requirements. The Islamic law vests in her all the rights due to her as an independent human being. She is entitled to inherit from her parents along with her brothers. On her marriage she does not lose her individuality. She does not cease to be an independent member of society in her own rights and her personality does not merge into that of her husband.⁵ She can own property and dispose it of in any manner she chooses. She can sue and

be sued in her own name. She becomes the absolute and exclusive owner of whatever she earns by her skill or whatever she gets through inheritance or gift from any source. She does not require to seek leave of her husband to dispose off her property in the manner she deems fit. All this is not by way of favour from the society which can be withdrawn at the whim of any person or any legislature at any time.⁶ It is all guaranteed by the Islamic law which is permanent and beyond the modifying power of any authority on the earth.

II. HADITH AND WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

The Hadith constitute the fundamental source of information on the life and activities of the Prophet of Islam. The word "Hadith" in itself means "event" or "conversations" and, in fact, is the report of the words and the deeds of the Prophet as they were noted by his contemporaries and transmitted by a chain of transmitters who tried to report exactly what had been heard or seen. Any hadith is usually in two parts. The first is the list (isnad) of the transmitters, whose life and sincerity have been scrupulously checked by Muslim scholars who even wrote their biographic and the second is the account of an event or of the words of the Prophet himself.⁷ The Hadith and the Canon law of the Holy Quran are the basic laws governing the Muslim society. Among the people adhering to various sub-sects (of Sunnis) the basic concept and principles are same and there are some minor differences in celebrations, customs and practices.

III. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

Women empowerment through employment has elevated not only women's economic status but also social status in India. Women have been the major work force in India. Now, it has been witnessed a far reaching change in the economic activities of women employment is getting day by day. Seventy eight per cent of women at work in India are engaged in agriculture and allied activities.⁸ As significant shift towards non-agricultural employment, women are generally employed in public service education, social medical and health services. Women's work participation in the district, reflects the structural features of the Indian economy and society. As per the Census of 1961 here in the district 75 percent of the rural women were involved in agriculture and allied activities.⁹

The urban women of middle and upper classes involved in industrial, commercial and public sector activities. The overall work participation rate for the Tamil Nadu State was 31.7 percent in 1961 taking into consideration all workers, main and marginal. If marginal workers are excluded, the work participation rate will come down to 39.3 per cent. The female population in Tamil Nadu as well as in Cuddalore District had a lower work participation level compared to males.¹⁰ The work participation rate of women is only 14.6 per cent while that for men is more than double this level. The female work participation level in Cuddalore District was lower both comparing State level and male work participation at district level. During 1951-1961, it is understood from the above table, female work participation had improved gradually. Rural-urban differences existed in the work participation level

for both males and females. The urban level is generally lower than rural, significantly lower for women. While there were 559 female workers per 1000 male workers in the rural areas, there were only 223 female workers in the urban areas. There had been upward trend in the overall women work participation during 1951-1961¹¹. In the district it is important to note here that the female main worker's level also increased during the period. It can be assumed that the working women in the district had helped to develop national economy. According to International Labour Organization Report, 27 percent, out of every 1000 women were main workers.

The new opportunity for women in the non-agricultural sectors had improved the economic status of women in the district.¹² In 1971 there were 75.919 women, employed in non-agriculture sectors. In Cuddalore, women were also working in the capacities of lawyers, doctors, teachers, administrators, stenographers, typists, shop keepers, etc., These types of economic activities of women in the district had secured for their improved social and economic status. In the district, rural and urban women in the age group, 35-39 and 40 - 49, have involved more and more in economic activities both in rural and urban areas. Women empowerment through employment has secured better social status to 20-30 per cent in Cuddalore.¹³ The status of women and its contribution to social and economic development largely depends on the availability of employment opportunities for women. Women in general in Cuddalore District are emerging as working force for human resource. 75 per cent of women in the district are engaged in agriculture and allied activities.¹⁴ Significant shift in the non-agricultural employment was taking place in urban

areas in the district. In the case of main workers, employment of married women was two or three times lower than that of single, widowed, divorced and separated women. The participation of married women in economic activity was higher before or around the marriage age, and falls sharply between the ages of 25 and 35 – Corresponding to the period married women were pre-occupied with maternity problems, care of children and home, family responsibility of one kind or the other, etc.¹⁵ In agriculture sector both married and teenaged were involving more and more. Because of the increasing economic necessity and growing cost of living, most women liked to continue working in agricultural sector.¹⁶ With the break-up of joint family system, more and more working women were in Cuddalore District hard pressed to fulfill their dual role as a mother and a working woman. If women are to utilize their professional training and continue working uninterrupted, even after family responsibility have increased, provisions of child care facilities and the opening of day care crèches, nurseries and ballades, on a very extensive scale are called for.¹⁷

IV. MUSLIM WOMEN'S WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

Islam which is not just a religion and more a code of life through surah Nisa, Verse 34, prescribes: "Men are in charge of women by what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend for maintenance from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in the husband's absence what Allah would have them guard." The Quran uses the word "qawwamun" for men, which means "Protector or guardian or maintainers".¹⁸ The term is often distorted to present that Quran preaches that men

are superior to women. The truth is far from it, the verse only sets the dynamics between husband and wife. The first reason why men are protectors over women is their physical ability to protect women. The second is that "they spend out of their wealth". Although the Quran permits women to earn and own wealth, it expects that men will generally be able to earn more than women because of the natural differences between them.¹⁹ This means that they will generally be responsible for the economic needs of women. Being a protector at the same time is not a badge to be worn on puffy chests and an authority to dictate - it is a responsibility. The right to maintenance - that is expenses, food, clothing, lodging - exists irrespective of her own means. The Shafis state that the scale of such maintenance shall be according to the means of the husband alone.²⁰

The Shia schools state that such scale is to be determined by the standard of living of the wife before marriage. The Hanafis, Malikis and Hanbalis take a more utilitarian stance by calling for the average of the husband's means and the standard provided by the wife's father before marriage.²¹ The duty of the husband to maintain his wife lasts during the life of the marriage. In case of death of the husband the duty ceases and does not pass onto any relatives of the husband. In case of a divorce pronounced by the husband all schools of thought are agreed upon the fact that the duty to maintain lasts during the period of iddat (waiting period of the wife); and if the wife is pregnant at the time of the divorce or she announces pregnancy during iddat, the duty to maintain lasts up till the delivery of the child. Once a Sahabi wanted to know the obligation incumbent upon men towards women. The Holy Prophet said: "Provide them (the wives) with food and clothing

as we use for ourselves, and do not try to find fault with their looks and with the work they do."²²

V. CONTRIBUTION OF MADARASAS TO WOMEN WELFARE

Madarasas play their own role for the betterment of the society. Thoughts, beliefs, education, and training are important for the improvement of individuals as well as society. Madarasas propagate healthy thoughts and beliefs and lay stress upon spiritual matters as well as on education.²³ Madarasas stand for doing away with the un-Islamic rituals and customs, which had crept into the Muslim society. Madarasas also strive for the social, moral and intellectual uplift of the Muslim society.²⁴ The most significant contribution of the Madarasas towards the society is moulding of model citizens. Their products are God-fearing, pious, conscientious and dutiful. They are dependable and trustworthy. Anybody can bank upon them. Even in enmity, they are noble, elegant and courteous. Unpleasantness is foreign to a Muslim well trained in a Madarasa.²⁵ It is considered that the products of the Madarasas are the proverbial salt of the soil.

VI. POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After Independence the Congress Government was in power and the policies were completely changed. Many of the Muslim schools and colleges were transferred as common schools and Colleges. The Communal G.O was also changed and Muslim progress in education and employment was restored.²⁶ Apart from this recruitment of Muslims to most of the services had been stopped. Besides, the representation of Muslims in the services had been reduced. Muslims had also been removed from the key posts which they occupied. This had a more

depressing effect upon the Muslim community in the province. The Muslim scholars condemned the attitude of the Government and spoke in the Legislature that, "whether it was good for the body politics that a majority community, which was not at all negligible in number for there are about four and a half crore Muslims in the land should suffer from such acute dejection."²⁷ Statesmanship requires that the Government should change their attitude and lift up the Muslims from their present mood of despondency and secure their support against the forces that were threatening to spread anarchy and disorder in this land. Scholars also criticized the policy of the Government that, it was unwise on the part of the Government to show discrimination against any community in the matter of services, as they have done against the Muslims.²⁸ There were 50 lakh Muslims in this State. She said that the ban placed on the recruitment of Muslims to the police force has created immense bitterness and resentment in the minds of the younger generations, who were the moulders of future public opinion.

What is understood is the fact that a minority community like the Muslims was more sinned against than sinning as for no fault of their's. They had to struggle hard to get appointed in Government posts. One of the objectives of the present research was to bring to light the lot of the Muslims, the once the rulers now in the hands of the British.²⁹ The force of the debate is that women could keep confidence, they could discharge any duty to their conscience, when assigned. They could register their potential in the police forces, they could keep the inner conscience or the spirit of the law as Judges, they could manage any school, college or any institutions when permitted to do so, they are no way inferior in physique,

psyche and moral sides.³⁰ They could be better administrators when opportunities are given to them. Let the Government change their attitude and psyche that women are inferior to men. The courage and confidence, of course, have led them to empowerment.

VII. APPOINTMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddheen moved a resolution in the House to the effect that "the Assembly recommends to the Government to constitute a committee consisting of the members of the Legislature and the representatives of women's organizations to consider the removal of the statutory bar that exists at present to the appointment of women to certain posts in Government service in this province."³¹ Again she argued that it was too late in the day to argue that men were intellectually superior to women. She also quoted the views of Havelock Ellis, "who made a deep study of sex psychology, has stated that from the stand point of brain anatomy and brain physiology, there was no ground for attributing any superiority to one sex over the other".³² According to her, the idea of women's inferiority was logical perversion and psychological misunderstanding. In those days women students were scoring higher marks and secure superior ranks than their men contemporaries at university examinations, not merely in the Arts courses, but even in the spheres of science and research.³³ It has been acknowledged that women were in no way inferior to men in intellect and in their ability to teach, it was proper that they should not be debarred from becoming professors or lecturers, simply because they were women.

VIII. WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES

Women were not permitted to occupy the posts of even clerks and typists in the judicial ministerial service, whereas in the State of Travancore they were allowed to hold the responsible office of a subordinate Judge.³⁴ Another area of debate and discussion of members in the Legislative bodies was with regard to women employment, particularly Muslim women. It was already seen that the men of the Muslim community increasingly felt the need of women education and employment. But it was very much regrettable to find that in the province, women were debarred from as many as 66 categories of posts under the Government.³⁵ Some important posts denied were Principals, Vice Principals, Professors and Lecturers, and Professors or Lecturers or Clinical and non-clinical Professors or Lecturers or Clinical and non- Clinical Assistants or Tutors or Directors of Tuberculosis Hospital, Dental Surgeons, Clerks and Typist in the Judicial Ministerial Service, Clerks and Typists in the Office of Registration, Excise Department and the Revenue Department. No women was appointed to the District Munsiffs.³⁶ To a question of Begum Sultan Mir Amiruddheen regarding the number of women in the upper division and lower division clerks in the various Departments of the Secretariat the following figure was submitted by the then Chief Minister R. Prakasam.³⁷ This was the condition of women getting appointments in various Departments.

The reason for the paucity of women in those posts, the Chief Minister said that they were not ready to offer themselves and also they did not come up to the requirements. For instance, a woman could not become a clerk to a District

Judge, because she was not deemed capable of keeping secrets. Begum Sultan Mir Amirudheen condemned this attitude of the Government and urged the Government to withdraw such an attitude. There was no ground for attributing any superiority to one sex over the other. The distinctions were there to illustrate that women had attained in the fields of science and research. The idea of women's inferiority was logical perversion and psychological misunderstanding; Women were in no way inferior to men in intellect and in their ability to teach; Madam Curie, the discoverer of Radium to cure cancer and also the winner of the Nobel Prize, Madam Juliot, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics were ladies. From this one could conclude women could attain eminent heights in various fields including those of research in medicine; Women were too garrulous to be able to keep secrets; Women served during the last war in the women's auxiliary corps and similar Departments were found to be most efficient in their work and in whom the utmost confidence could be reposed in regard to military secrets.³⁸ "If a woman finds herself capable of political administration, let her rule. If a man finds himself of washing only dishes let him wash" - Plato.³⁹ Hence Mir Amiruddheen requested the Hon. Minister and the Government to remove the existing bar to the appointment of women to the above mentioned categories. This was the position of women in general. But what was the position of Muslim women these days. There were not many changes.

IX. APPOINTMENT OF MUSLIMS IN VARIOUS SECTORS

One of the two most important issues was the employment of Muslims in the various departments of the Government. The other being

education that was discussed earlier. To begin with, there was perhaps less opportunities open to the Muslims. That was mainly because of their less educational qualifications.⁴⁰ But with the passage of times there was a considerable improvement every year in the matter of appointments. Even though the Muslims got sufficient opportunities the Muslim Legislators were not confident with them but demanded more and more and pointed out that there were large number of Muslim graduates going about in the streets for want of employment, that too highly qualified people.⁴¹ The Government had also taken efforts to enable the appointment of backward communities. Every year the Government published a statement in the Madras Administrative Report regarding the appointments of various communities. As per this report the Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1950 was 78 or 93 more than in the previous year. There were 19 Muslim women employed in the Excise Department, 36 in Courts of Law, 23 in the Land Revenue, 23 in the Education, 19 in the Forest, 95 in the Registration and 10 in the general Departments. The percentage of Muslim women thus employed to the total population of the Presidency was 6.42.⁴² It is also evident that the total number of Muslim women in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1951 was 816 or 262 more than in the previous year.⁴³ There were 9 Muslim women employed in the Excise Department, 37 in Courts of Law, 24 in the Land Revenue, 20 in the Education, 9 in the Forest Departments. The percentage of Muslims thus employed to the total population of the district was 6.42.

The report also gives the data that Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st

April 1952 was 81 or 27 more than in the previous year.⁴⁴ There were 11 Muslim women employed in the Excise Department, 16 employed in the Transport Department 41 in Courts of Law, 26 in the Land Revenue, 21 in the Education, 11 in the Forest, 11 in the Registration Departments. The percentage of Muslim women thus employed to the total population of the Presidency was 6.6 but nearly 14.49 percent of the posts in the superior service were held by them. It is also given that the total number of the Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1953 was 84 or 22 more than in the previous year. There were 69 Muslim women employed in the Police Department 10 employed in the Excise Department, 42 in Courts of Law, 24 in the Land Revenue, 22 in the Education, 12 in the Forest and 11 in the Registration Departments.⁴⁵ The percentage of the Muslim women thus employed to the total population of Cuddalore district was 6.6 but nearly 14.62 per cent of the posts in the superior service were held by them. It is also on record that the total number of the Muslims in the superior grades of Government service at the close of the official year 1963-1964 was 84 as compared with 84 in 1972 - 1973 and 81 in 1981 - 1982.⁴⁶ Five hundred and eighty were admitted during the year, of whom 53 secured appointments in the Police Department. The total number of appointments in superior service was 59, so that the proportion held by the Muslims was 14.29 percent against 14.62 in the previous year. The Muslim women were as usual employed in greatest numbers in the Registration and Judicial departments. The Department of Law and Justice (Judicial department) employed 46 Muslims, Land Revenue 26, and Education 24. In other Departments the numbers were comparatively

small. The total number of appointments in the superior service was 59 so that the proportion held by the Muslims was 13.78 percent against 14.29 per cent in 1983-1984.

The Courts of Law employed 46 Muslims.⁴⁷ The Land Revenue Department 26 and Education 21. In other Departments, the numbers were comparatively small and in all cases the majority of appointments were in the lower grades. According to the report, there were 8 Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1985, or 32 more than in the previous year.⁴⁸ There were 29 Muslims employed in Courts of Law, 20 in the Education, and 26 in the Revenue. Other Departments employed less than a hundred each. The report states that on 1st April 1987, there were 23 Muslims employed in the superior service of Government. This was 21 less than last year's figure. 57 Muslims were admitted into service during the year, the majority as usual entering the Revenue department.⁴⁹ The next highest figures were 12 in the Education Department and the same number in the Judiciary. Although the percentage of Muslims to the total population of the Presidency was only 6.6, Muslims occupied 42 per cent of the number of posts in the lowest grade, and 24 per cent in the next grade above. Excluding the lowest grades, the percentage of Muslims in other posts stood at 11. There were 67 Muslims employed under the Law and Justice department, 33 in the Land Revenue and 23 in the Educational Department. The report gives that there were 80 Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1988; or 288 less than the number employed in the previous year.⁵⁰ The number of Muslims admitted into the service during the year, excluding those who joined the establishments of Civil and Criminal Courts. The percentage of

Muslims to the total population of Cuddalore district was only 6.6, but nearly 14 per cent of the posts in the superior service were held by them. The report also provides that the Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1989 was 79 or 28 less than in the previous year.⁵¹

The number admitted into the service during the year excluding those who enlisted as Registration Department as clerks. There were 64 Muslims employed in Judicial, 26 in the Land Revenue, 23 in the Education, 13 in the Forest, and 12 in the Registration Departments. Other Departments employed less than a hundred in each. The percentage of Muslims to the total population of Cuddalore was only 6.6, but 13.46 per cent of the posts in the superior service were held by them.⁵² It is recorded in the report that there were 85 Muslims in the superior service of Government on the 1st April 1990, or 61 more than in the previous year. The number admitted into the service during the year, excluding those who enlisted as into the Education Department and 12 in the clerical ranks of the Registration and Land Revenue Departments. There were 65 Muslims Courts of Law, 34 in the Land Revenue, 29 in the Education Departments. The percentage of Muslims to the total population of the district was only 6.6, but 13.64 per cent of the posts in the superior service were held by them.

X. MUSLIM WOMEN APPOINTMENTS

FROM 1955 TO 1965

In the year 1955-1965 the Muslim of the Gazetted Office was 98 out of 15 were women i.e. 6.14 percentage. And in the non-Gazetted Department they got 126 out of 27 were women i.e. 15.93 percent. In 1956-1957 in the Gazetted Officers level of the Muslims got 19 seats out of 6

were women i.e. 6.10 percent.⁵³ In the non-Gazetted seats they got 12 out of 78 i.e. 15.91 percent. There was an increase of only one in the Gazetted and a decrease of 12 in the non-Gazetted level of the previous year. In 1957-1958 there were 104 Muslims out of 15 were women i.e. 6.53 percent in the Gazetted Officers level. In the Non Gazetted Department were 125 out of 28 were women i.e. 15.90 percent.⁵⁴ The increase was five in the Gazetted and a decrease of 67 in the non-Gazetted level of the previous year. According to the report for the 1958-1959, the report has the data that the Muslim got 10 seats out of 110 vacancies i.e. 9.20 percent and in the non-Gazetted posts, they got 105 out of 26 were women i.e. 13.75 percent.⁵⁵

For 1959-1960 the report has the data that the Muslim of the Gazetted Office was 110 out of 16 were women i.e. 6.1 percent. In the non Gazetted Department they got 118 out of 27 were women i.e. 15.27 percent. This was an increase of 8 in the Gazetted and 12 in the non-Gazetted level of the previous year. In 1960-1961, there were 11 Muslims in the Gazetted level out of 5 were women posts i.e. 7%. In the non-Gazetted vacancies, there were 119 Muslims out of 28 were women i.e. 15.42%. An increase was one in the Gazetted and 17 in the non-Gazetted level of previous year. From 1965 onwards there was an improvement in the appointment of Muslims in the various levels.⁵⁶ From 1969 to 1975 the Legislators very often asked questions by producing data regarding appointments. But after 1975 there was not such a speed because they got a good share than their proportion of population. However, from 1982 onwards the Government gave the complete right of appointments to the Public Service Commission.⁵⁷ It is thus learnt from

the annual report that there was perceptible changes and improvements in the position of Muslims in the Province. This was possible because of the undaunted fervour of the Legislators, who took keen interest in the debates, discussions, committee recommendations and memorials and got a commendable slice in the jobs of the government services. The complaint that the Muslims were a neglected lot in regard to employment does not hold water. If at all there is any decrease in the appointments, it might have been due to their less qualification or non-interest in taking up jobs in the government services.⁵⁸

XI. PROPERTY RIGHTS OF MUSLIM

WOMEN

The Bill intended to bring the special property of the females also within the purview of Muslim law. In places where the Muslims were still governed by the customary law, the rule was that property received by a female by means of gift or inheritance was not to be regarded as her special property.⁵⁹ She was precluded from bequeathing, alienating or dealing with the same in any manner, she had merely a life interest in such property and on her death that reverted to the heirs of the last male owner. When the special property of female was brought under the operation of the Muslim Law, the owner there of would have absolute rights of enjoyment and disposal over the same, in regard to marriage also, the Shariat Act replaced the customary law by Muslim Law for in the Punjab, among certain sections of Muslims, the rules as regards '*Iddaf*' was not being observed, "since the main idea underlying this bill is that Muslims who therefore have been governed by their customary law should hereafter be governed by the Muslim law.

XII. RIGHT AGAINST DIVORCE

In regard to the provision relating to divorce one of the members of this House, namely the *Yuvaraja* of Pithapuram stated that he would like divorce to be made easy. Begum Mir Amiruddin entirely disagreed with him in that matter, and said, while divorce should be made possible in certain hard cases, that should not be made easy, because we should be on our guard against the disintegration of family life and must not allow Indian society to follow the path of America and Russia in this regard.⁶⁰ Indians must maintain their equilibrium and not go beyond bounds. In Islam divorce was permissible but the Holy Prophet condemned it in explicit terms by saying of all permissible acts divorce was the most hated by Allah.⁶¹

Divorce is the most hateful of acts, which might be resorted to only when it was an inescapable necessity to afford relief in hard cases.⁶² Every nerve must be strained to maintain family stability on the bedrock of willing, enlightened co-operation, mutual understanding, and respect and only when disruption was absolutely unavoidable that recourse may be had to the pernicious remedy of divorce.⁶³ Some members had expressed the view that divorce was easy among Muslims was much as 'the husband utters' *talaq, talaq, talaq*, and his marriage is dissolved. But she pointed out that divorce was not as easy among Muslims since it became obligatory on the husband to pay to the wife the amount promised by him as "*Mahr*" (Dower), which among middle class families ran to thousands and among the richer classes even to lakhs of rupees. This served as a veritable check on the arbitrary exercise of the power of divorce by the husband. Under Islamic law there were provisions enabling

Muslim women also to obtain divorce but there were practical difficulties in the matter. Some ten years ago, an Act was passed in the Central Assembly enabling Muslim women to move the Court for obtaining divorce in certain hard cases.⁶⁴ Though divorce was permissible among Muslims they did not hear of many divorce cases in that community. The reason was that Indian women, whether they were Hindus or Muslims, were attached to their homes and the domestic instinct was predominant among them.⁶⁵ So long as they preserved their ancient cultures and noble traditions, and did not imitate the social life of the west and fall a prey to exotic vices, there was no danger of Indian women perverting their freedom and losing their equilibrium. Prophet Muhammad had said 'the worst act which a Muslim can commit, without committing a sin, is to divorce his wife'.⁶⁶ Therefore, divorce also had not been encouraged by Prophet Muhammad. So when, the domestic affair reached a crisis, what was the use of having a wife who was day in and day out fighting with her husband.

It would be a great trouble and under such circumstances divorce must be used as a safety valve to save the boiler. A man must divorce his wife only on those circumstances. The woman who was divorced might also marry another man and live in peace.' However the other side has also to be looked into. It is cent percent true that divorce among Muslims is a hard affair. But the male domination and ill-treatment of many Muslim women by their husbands having illicit relations with other women is cruel and heart-breaking. To such cases, women were silenced by these provisions or statements.⁶⁷ The supreme court in a recent judgement wanted the government to clarify all Personal Laws and to introduce a uniform civil

code. But, a section of Muslim community objected to it. A few people welcome changes in the Personal Law provided the fundamental aspects of Shariat are retained. It could be hoped that Muslim women would welcome change in the statutes concerning marriage and divorce. 'Triple Talaq is also a major issue among Muslims as one concerning women. By pronouncing 'Talaq' three times the husband divorces his wife. It is hoped that to solve these kinds of problems, the Muslim Personal Law could be re-examined to the benefit of the Muslim women.⁶⁸ This does not mean that it should be amended entirely or in its essential aspects. The plea is that Muslim women should not be made to suffer on account of the special nature of Muslim Law.⁶⁹ If the women's issues are studied in theoretical perspectives, it can be understood that these arise due to many factors. One major factor is the psychological factor. Firstly, if a woman enters into the word of men she is bound to lose herself in the overwhelming crowd unless she has an iron will to keep moving forward. Secondly, an inferiority feeling is sown into her mind by the society. Thirdly, men like to see women suffering because he would be a good father than be a good husband. Therefore the problem is basically a psychological one that lies deep in the minds and hearts of men.⁷⁰ The man who tortures his wife feel pained if the same happens to his daughter after her marriage. That is why women's problems cannot be solved by law alone.

XIII. TAMIL NADU MUSLIM SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEME

In wake of the recommendations made by the suchar commission report for the economic upliftment of the poor Muslims, the state government has launched several schemes for their welfare. One such scheme launched by the Tamil Nadu government is Muslims Women's Aid Society (MWAS), to help the destitute Muslim women in the state. It was established in 2007 as a pilot project first in Chennai and after its success in the state capital, the government extended this scheme to all the districts of Tamil Nadu in 2008 - 2009. The MWAS is supposed raise funds from the public that is deposited into the bank and then the society applies for a matching fund from the government.⁷¹ The maximum fund that can be deposited is Rs.10 lakhs per annum and MWAS can avail a matching fund of Rs.10 lakhs from the state government.⁷² The funds so availed is utilized only for the development of the destitute Muslim women. The District collector acts as the president of the MWAS, the project officer of women's welfare as Vice President and the District officer for Backward class and Minority's Welfare as Treasurer, besides there are six women members from Muslim community in this self help group (SHG).⁷³

XIV. ROLE OF NGO AND SHG IN WOMEN WELFARE

The Social Awareness and Development Organization for Women (SAADOW) is another NGO functioning at Cuddalore District. Its primary objective is to enhance the economic status of Muslim women and its major objective is also to alleviate poverty by imparting additional skills to the women members, who were once unemployed.⁷⁴ It provides opportunities for

women to have training in tailoring, toy making, typewriting and computer use. This Non-Governmental Organization, by identifying the needs and requirements of the women community, in collaboration with the self help group of that area selects the trainees for the training courses arranged by the Social Awareness and Development Organization for Women (SAADOW). They offer daily training for three hours and in it 50% of the hours are arranged for theory and the rest of the hours are arranged for practical classes.⁷⁵ The women self help group members take efforts to avail loans from the banks for the trainees. Thus the self help groups serve as a catalytic agent for the women empowerment even by making arrangements for financial assistance. They offer opportunities to gain circulating and also to avail Bank loans and government subsidies. The Unity Charitable Trust functioning from Neyveli has also formed poor women's self help groups having 550 members. The volunteers of the above organization visit the houses of the members of the SHG regularly and participate in the meetings of the SHG.⁷⁶ The status and position of the economically poor women folk of this area are analysed initially for taking necessary steps for promoting them. Then as per their needs steps are taken to enable them and to enhance their economic status. The economies of the poor women are upgraded by the Trust through the adoption of the micro credit programmes Almost all the members of the SHG hail from economically downtrodden families.⁷⁷ They are desirous of gaining equal status in the family by their own personal efforts with the support rendered by the NGOs. So compulsorily the members of the SHGs are engaged in the activities

which assist their economic empowerment. The SHG created through the passages of micro credit, obtain economic gain and empowerment both socially and economically.

The Micro –Credit Scheme or Need Money Programme adopted by the SHG “is uniquely run by young women for young women, creating a bond of female solidarity that is integral to its success”. Under such a pretext on the Rural Education and Action Development (READ) basis functioning in Tamil Nadu from 1994 onwards there are 11,000 SHGs.⁷⁸ This organization READ provides schools and education programmes for the children of poor women and health and sanitation camps for the women of SHGs. HIV/AIDs prevention schemes, consumer awareness services and training in various modern techniques are also taught to the members of the SGHs, which in turn empowers them to have equal status with men. So special organizations endeavour through SHGs and assist the implementation of supplementary programmes of education, adult literacy and health care programme.⁷⁹ Through SGHs, as tools, the women are encouraged to make their own decisions and empower themselves and their families which are the part of the communities. Through the creation of an idea, discussion, action and successful implementations, SHG, are ensuring the women within them are becoming more authoritatively recognized in their society. Hence it is a leap of women towards gender equality.⁸⁰ With the valuable assistance and guidelines offered by the distinctive specialized social welfare and social service agencies the SHG’s poor women members are encouraged to save, invest and achieve profit by marketing their own produces. All the above

things instill confidence in their minds of the women to stand on their own legs.

Department of Special Programme Implementation

The Department of Special Programme Implementation Department was created in G.O. (Ms) No.423, Public (Spl.A.) Department dated 16.5.2011 for monitoring the issue of orders and implementation of various schemes or programmes announced by the Government. This Department functions as the nodal Department for the all round development of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified and Minority Communities in the State of Tamil Nadu.⁸¹ The Basic objective of the Department is to formulate policies, laws, regulations and programmes for the Socio, educational and economic development of the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified and Minority Communities in the State.⁸² The aim of this Department is to empower the target through their educational, economic and social advancement. Accordingly, this Department is formulating and implementing various welfare programmes and schemes to achieve the above objective.⁸³

District Backward Community and Welfare Board:

Cuddalore District Backward Classes and minorities welfare office is functioning in the District Collectorate, Cuddalore from 20.10.1986.⁸⁴ Many Schemes are being implemented to Backward classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities and Minority people under the Backward classes, Most Backward classes and Denotified Communities Department following the instructions issued by the Government then and

there. The follow schemes are being implemented through the District Backward classes and Minorities. Welfare office, Cuddalore for the welfare of Backward classes, Most Backward classes and Denotified communities and Minority people.⁸⁵

Distribution of Sewing Machines

Knowledge of Tailoring being to Backward class/Most Backward class and Denotified Community and Minorities are eligible for the scheme Income should be Rs.40,000/-P.A. in Rural areas. Rs. 60,000/-P.A. in Urban areas. The age Limit is 20-45.⁸⁶

Tamil Nadu Minorities Economic Development Corporation:

TAMCO is acting as State Channelising Agency for National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, New Delhi. TAMCO obtains funds from the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation for implementation of their schemes for the welfare of Minority beneficiaries. The State Government gives Government Guarantee for the entire loan amount financed by National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation. This Government Guarantee covers interest and service charges also. The Tamil Nadu Minorities Economic Development Corporation-999-2000 Term loans are being sanctioned under various schemes by TAMCO to minorities.

Muslim Women Aid Society (MWAS)

As per the G.O. No:14 BC, MBHC & MW Department Dated: 23.4.2007 Government ordered to form a society namely Muslim Aided Society for the upliftment of Muslim Women in all manners, as instructed by the Government.⁸⁷

Constitutional and Legal Rights of Muslim Women

The constitution of India grants equality to women and also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them.⁸⁸

Five Year Plans and the Muslim Women

The Five Year Plan (1951-56) was mainly welfare oriented as far as women's issues were concerned. In the second Five year Plan (1956-1961) effort were geared to organize "Mahila Mandal" i.e., women groups at the grass root levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes.⁸⁹ While the Third and Fourth Plans and other interim plans (1961-1974) accorded high priority to women's education as well as maternal and child health care services. In the Fifth Plan (1974-1978), there was a shift from "Welfare" to "development" policies.⁹⁰ The Sixth Five Year plan (1980-1985) women's development received recognition and adopted a multidisciplinary approach and the thrust was on health, education and employment.⁹¹ In the Seventh Plan (1985-1990) development received recognition and adopted a multidisciplinary approach and the thrust was on health, education and employment.⁹² In the Seventh Plan (1985-1990) development programmes continued with the objective of raising their economic and social status and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. The most significant step there in was to promote 'beneficiary – oriented programmes' which extended direct benefits to women. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) emphasized special programmes to be implemented to complement the general development programmes. The focus was that the women must be enabled to function as equal

partners and participants in the developmental process. The approach of Ninth Plan marks a definite shift from “development” to “empowerment” of women.⁹³

Policies and Programmes

With the broad goals laid down by the Five Year Plans, Government has consciously fostered and enabled policy environment in which women's concerns are properly reflected, articulated and seriously addressed. As a part of this effort many policy instruments have been brought forth over the year. The National Perspective Plan (NPP) for women was drawn up to facilitate mainstreaming of women's issues in policies and programmes.⁹⁴ The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) formulated various schemes for the girl child, to take care of her gender specific needs. Mahila Samridhi Yojana (1993) was major initiative to empower women by raising their economic status. The 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendment Acts of 1993 made historic events in the advancement of Indian women as they ensure 1/3 rd to total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies in rural and urban areas. Various socio-economic programmes were also adopted for needy women to enhance the socio-economic position as well as the social status. So far the Muslim women issues are concerned there is a wide gap between the text (Programmes and policies) and the context (the real social situation of women).⁹⁵ The government stipulates the proportion of women in management and policy making bodies, but the proportion is too low in village situation. Excellent middle aged or young women's cadre is almost nil among the Muslims especially in the grass root units. This is due to the barrier of traditional customs of seclusion and isolation. The fact is that the level of

education of women is very low and this results in lacking the skills to participate in competition.⁹⁶

Muslim Women and Education Policy:

Once the Muslims of Cuddalore thought that the religious education (Madarasa education) alone was enough for their children. This attitude has been changed now; they realized the indispensability of the modern education and sending their daughters to educational institutions even outside their locality.⁹⁷ A Muslim lady named Thahira Ammal contested in the local body election and became the chairperson of the local self-government (town panchayat) and another lady named Sabeera Banu who did her civil engineering course, now engaged herself in building construction and architect and earning equal to a male engineer.⁹⁸ Another girl named Parveen who obtained her M.A., M. Phil., in English literature is working as Lecturer in Jawahar College of Cuddalore. More than a dozen ladies are working as teachers in St.Mary's Matriculation and Higher Secondary School, Cuddalore. These are all a few examples pointed out here for the empowerment attained by the ladies of this area. These kinds of situation or incidents were unimaginable some twenty years back in this region and this shows that the Muslim women have begun to involve themselves in political and administrative fields, which is mainly due to the spread of education among them.⁹⁹ In the survey conducted by the researcher a number of Muslim women enthusiastically expressed that their life became more meaningful after getting education. They also said that wide propagation through educational conferences and seminars to be conducted to make the Muslim women to understand the importance of education. Even though Islam is a rational religion, somehow or

other irrational beliefs and practices crept in to the Muslim community in the name of religion. 'Dargha' (tomb of saints) worshiping cult is one of such un-Islamic practices developed among the Muslims.¹⁰⁰ This Dargha cult is against the monotheism of Islam. This practice is very common in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts.¹⁰¹ As a result of the spread of the modern education, scientific thinking and right religious understanding have sprang-up among the educated youth and they began to question the authenticity of the Dargha cult. Because of the opposition raised by the educated mass and well-learned religious scholars, now-a-days the Dargha worship is getting unpopular among the Muslims.

Tamil Nadu Thouhit Jamath, led by P.Jainul Abdheen, an Aalim (religious scholar) and Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam led by Zawahirullah are the two parties with their well-educated followers vehemently working for the above-mentioned cause.¹⁰² They have successfully drawn the attention of the political parties and the State Government towards them and their demands. Thus a political awakening has been evolved among the Muslims especially among the young generation. This is one of the impacts of spread of modern education. The Government formulated several education policies to eradicate illiteracy and to strengthen the nation's education. Eliminating Illiteracy would be a powerful achievement for the Government, yet, too little is done in this respect of the Muslim women and girls of villages. Further the difference between cultural learning methods of Muslim minority (through Madrassa or maktab) and the methods of modern education impede the process of educational upliftment in the villages. The action of the Government in making available the

existing facilities for collegiate education in the Mohammedan College to Muslim women students was a step towards the advancement of women's education, and the Muslim women students were deriving considerable advantage there from, there was no substance in the protests raised against this action; for the simple reason that no one was compelled by Government to resort to a mixed college.¹⁰³ But this does not obviate the necessity for a separate college for Muslim women. Government was aware that, while the educated section of the Muslim community was not averse to Muslim women students taking advantage of such of the facilities as are now available in men's colleges for university education, still there was a large body of opinion in the Muslims against the principle of co-education, not only in the high school stages but also in the degree classes.¹⁰⁴

It was inevitable that so far as professional courses were concerned, in the absence of separate facilities, women students must seek admission to men's Colleges, but that was not to be a justification to refuse to afford wherever possible, separate facilities, which were considered essential for women students from all points of view. It will be conceded that for the healthy development of the mental and moral faculties of women students. Moreover, the Muslim women have to concentrate more on imparting knowledge to their youth in the field of information technology also. So, measures must be taken to bring back the 70 per cent dropout into the fold of education.¹⁰⁵

Muslim Women and Social Progress:

The spread of Modern education has brought social reforms among the Muslims of Cuddalore against the superstitious beliefs and practices prevailed among them in the name of religion. For example, previously the

Maraikkayars of Cuddalore kept themselves aloof from the rest of the Muslims of Tamil Nadu in marriage alliance and inter mingling. They strictly follow the Shafi school of thought (There are four school of thoughts found among the Muslims of the world) and do marriages among themselves only.¹⁰⁶ The educated youth of this town has broken this barrier and do marriages outside and with people of other school of thoughts. Moreover the Muslims of Cuddalore followed unnecessary and un-Islamic rituals during their marriage ceremony and the marriages were held for three consecutive days.¹⁰⁷ These practices have disappeared now because of the efforts taken by the educated youth of this place. This sort of enlightenment, inquisitive mind and questioning the unreasonable practices are developed in them because of their growth of literacy.¹⁰⁸ The most appreciable social change brought by the Modern education is the literacy of women folk. Some twenty or twenty five years back it was very rare to see a girl with eighth standard qualification.

A women can also divorce her husband if she so desires. Polygamy is not an institution of Islam and it is an allowance made to accommodate human needs. Polygamy and divorce are met in low percentage. In spite of all these laws, the position of the women during the period of study does not seem to be enviable. Except the right of property, other rights and privileges were granted only minimally.¹⁰⁹ There is no place for caste or class in Islam. Social incompatibility with regard to either intermarriage or interlining whether due to difference of race or occupation is the essential elements of caste. There are sects and sub sects in Islam. The appellations like Marakkayar, Rawthar, Labbai and Deccani are not castes, but the Muslims of Cuddalore region will look as if

affected by the caste system (Jathi) as in the Hindu society, but socially all subjects of Muslims are equally ranked. An educated young female generation with scientific and rational approach towards the day-to-day life has come up now. A social awareness about the education has developed among the Muslim women in Cuddalore.¹¹⁰ The Muslim students who studied at Muslim High Schools and College have brought laurels to their institutions. In the convocation conducted in Jawahar Science College, Cuddalore in the year 2004, 101 Muslim boys 26 girls received their graduate degrees and 37 Muslim boys and 6 girls received their post graduate degrees. A Muslim student from Jawahar Science College got Russian Government scholarship, went to Russia and did his M.D., in medicine. To our surprise two women studied medicine and became Doctors, this state of affair is unimaginable some twenty five years ago. Thus, a social awareness about the education has noticeably increased among the Muslims is proved without any iota of doubt.¹¹¹

Muslim Women and Economic Progress;

As far as the economic changes are concerned the spread of education has got its special impact. Even though the Muslims of these regions are economically backward but when compared with their previous condition they are in a better status now; this credit goes to the spread of education among them only. Once the Muslims of these districts were working in the foreign countries for a meager salary, which vary from Rs.5000 to 8000/-. Now, their educational and professional qualifications gave them a raised economic status. Previously most of them went to Gulf and South East Asian countries as contract laborers. But now they are going to Western

countries like USA, Canada, England and Australia to seek their fortunes because of their professional and technical qualifications.¹¹² The young educated people who are well settled in foreign countries have developed among them a farsightedness, philanthropic attitude and a social responsibility. To give an example to this, the alumni of Annai Velankanni College who are working in foreign countries had donated large sum to their Alma mater.¹¹³ We could see some of the buildings in Jawahar College are built with their assistance. The Muslim students who obtained technical qualifications have become industrial owners and they are using modern technical development in their industries and are able to give employment opportunities to hundreds of young people. The industries especially the tanneries owned by the Muslims once had old methods of production. But after gaining modern technical know-how, their industries got modernized and the production increased so that their economic status has improved a lot. Some 20 or 25 years ago only a very few Muslims were working in the government departments.¹¹⁴ Previously the Muslims had a dislike for the Government service.

The education has changed their attitude and now the Muslims have developed a liking for Government jobs and they are competing in equal terms with others in public service examinations and occupying key administrative posts and high ranks in the police department too. The credit goes to the efforts of the philanthropists, Government attitude and in consequence of the spread of education.¹¹⁵ A self financed college called Jawahar College for Arts and Science has been founded at Cuddalore by a gentleman. After obtaining his degree he went to Singapore to seek

his fortune and earned a lot of money there. He spent all his earnings for the establishment of this college. In Cuddalore city a women college named St. Annes College of Engineering had been established in the year 2000 for the development of the Muslims, especially in the women's education.¹¹⁶ Yet another college named Rajiv Gandhi College of Education is an affiliated college, which means it is affiliated with a larger university. The college provides the programme and the university awards the degree. The affiliated college is established or maintained by the university. Like this there are Engineering colleges and polytechnics established by the Muslims all over the district.¹¹⁷ These developments shows that the Muslims have come up from their old beliefs and began to make use of their wealth for the cause of education. The policies of economic reform have attracted some Muslim women towards the economic sector. But they cannot perform up to satisfactory level because of their poor education and skills. The modern macro-economic policies which requires trained and skilled workers affect the interest of women due to their poor quality of human resources owing to lack of education and training.¹¹⁸ The planned economic development envisaged an all around socio- economic progress without showing disparity to anybody. However, gender inequality and gender bias continue to exist in society especially in Muslim community. But Islam protects the rights of womanhood by giving economic liberty and other privileges to them.¹¹⁹ Inequality syndrome further manifests itself in the form of social indicators like sex ratios, low literacy, female infanticide, morbidity and mortality amongst a girl child, all these things

brings down the status and the empowerment of women.

Muslim Women in Political Field:

The Muslim women are participating in political field. In the political field also they make their claims for due place. Political awareness has aroused among the Muslims in the recent years due to the spread of education. The Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (T.M.M.K) led by a learned Professor Zawahiru Uah of Islamiah college of Vaniyambadi and Tamil Nadu Thouhit Jamath (T.N.T.J) led by an Aalim (Religious Scholar) P.Jainul Abdeen are the two movements working for the cause of the Muslim's empowerment in the political field in the recent years.¹²⁰ Educated Muslim youth rallied under their leadership demanding reservation for the Muslim community in Government jobs, Legislative assembly and Parliament. For a long time the Muslims had a wrong notion on the Family-planning scheme of the government. The educational progress has made them understand the advantages of small family norms and now-a-days they are co-operating and at the same time not deviating from the Islamic principles with the government.¹²¹ For example, previously in Cuddalore, every family had four or five children but now-a-days they have one or two children only. In the year 2004, the total number of birth was 311 among this Muslims were 178, the total number of death was 115 among this Muslims were 76.¹²² For the last two decades as derived from the rough estimate of the records of the Town Panchayat and Directorate of Census Operations, the birth rate of Cuddalore has decreased but at the same time the death rate has also decreased because of the advancement of medical facilities, due to this the population has increased.¹²³

As a result of the observation of small family scheme their economic status and the educational condition have received an appreciable improvement. The advantages of the knowledge of the English to the Muslims were almost immeasurable. Only after learning English, the Muslims came to know the wrong interpretations and distortion of the History of India. The Muslims tried to remove the biased views of the British and successfully rectified it. The Modern education has brought a revival in the thought process of the Muslims (i.e.) from medievalism to modernism. The Nationalist spirit of the Muslims went to a high proportion only after learning Modern education. The Muslims understood that their fear psychosis was quiet wrong, which was a result of their ignorance. To acquire knowledge the caste, creed, race and language should not be a barrier. The Muslim's knowledge on modern democracy, science and arts was enriched because of the Modern education. The Indian literature of both Hindus and Muslims did not include any idea on nationalism but was known to them only after the introduction of the modern education.¹²⁴ It was inevitable and can be historically explained by the fact that due to economic backwardness, the Muslims were not socially or politically integrated into a nation. The Muslims not only reinforced their knowledge enormously but also developed a broad outlook and perspective of the world. The Muslims involved themselves in the National freedom struggle in a better way because of the awareness they got from the learning of higher education.¹²⁵

Women and Health Policy

Women and child health care are given importance at various levels of the programme as a necessary item for the integrated development of

the society. But the health of the Muslim women and children depends on the Traditional customs have an effect on women and children's health care, poverty causes the people to ignore the nutrition problem, which leads to many diseases and also does not have enough medical facilities.¹²⁶ Family welfare (family planning) programme has been a major issue relating to mother and child health. The Government has emphasized that men and women have the same responsibility for family planning. The village people now-a-days have realized the importance of having small family. Now-a-days they said that "A big family means economic hardship and lower quality of life".¹²⁷ However, the village, people still prefer more children specially the boys because of labour and wage they provide for family. The welfare of women in a society is to be viewed from demographic condition and political rights and also from the role in family and society. If we see Muslim women in regard to their socio-economic, political, organizational and personality attributes, we may say that they do not have much higher economic status.¹²⁸ But if we consider their role in family management and retention of culture, heritage and tradition we cannot ignore their important social position. Actually the role played by Muslim women are invisible which sustain their society and culture. Muslim women's lack of control over resources and lesser say in community life many give an impression about their lower social status.¹²⁹ But their concealed power and position in functioning of Muslim society cannot be denied. In traditional Muslim society women have some important role to play. Gender principles under patriarchal social system are central in organizing the Muslim community.

Gender and division of labour are decisive elements in Muslim society that conveys respect and cohesion rather than divisive force of conflict between the genders.¹³⁰

Women in Muslim society enjoy more privileges than women of other communities at least theoretically. They are not ignored in the family, their social role is also not ignored. But they are not given credit and importance or religious and organizational matters even though these are assumed by their religion. Thus, they lead their life as invisible hands shaping and maintaining the structure and culture of the Muslim society. This social circumstance makes the Muslim women dependent upon men of their society. Men dominate in public and community affairs and continue to play the role as head of the household by way of their decision making power.¹³¹ On the other hand women enjoy greater freedom and say in family and domestic life. No doubt the Muslim women enjoy respectable status in the domestic sector and enjoy some privileges given by their religion, but at the same time there is evidence of discrimination. They are excluded from religious and political authority and outside activities. The elements of cultural ideology and structural arrangement of Muslim society explicitly devalued the women in those affairs and accorded the secondary position.¹³² The Muslim tradition in one hand gives the women a domestic and cultural power, while on the other hand in social and political domain men continue to dominate over women as authority of the community.¹³³ The forces of patriarchy and male domination in the society do not allow women to participate fully in all domains of community social life as advocated by Islam. Further, the Muslim women provide an anomalous social

position. Thus, improvement, in aspects of achieved role may help them to develop their social position further. The time has gone very far when the Muslim women were orthodox. In present time the Muslim women are walking shoulder to shoulder with women of other communities. In present days Muslim women are driving the car, working in banks and other government offices. They are also in key post in the field of education and also expert of server technology, art culture and cinema and also in another field of social development which shows the term of orthodoxy in Muslim women is gradually vanishing with the like of time and also they are becoming a part of necessity in the modern society and building of natural development and progress.¹³⁴

Welfare Schemes in Recent Years:

The Government is implementing various welfare schemes for the educational, economic and social upliftment of the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, Denotified Communities and Minorities. The Government provides scholarship, hostel facilities, bi-cycles for the educational advancement of girl students of Muslim communities.¹³⁵ The Islamic Educational Trust also runs schools for the educational upliftment of the Muslim community. In order to promote livelihood opportunities of the poor of these communities, the Government implements schemes such as distribution of sewing machines, iron boxes, house sites and loan schemes through the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Economic Development Corporation and the Tamil Nadu Minorities Economic Development Corporation. Further, the Government provides various social welfare assistance to the people of Muslim community and Denotified Communities through

the Welfare Boards constituted for the communities. The Government implements various schemes for the welfare of the Muslims such as assistance to Hajj pilgrimage, financial assistance to Jerusalem pilgrimage, grant of Rs.1 crore to take up maintenance and renovation works in churches and pension for Ulemas.¹³⁶ The Ulema pension has been enhanced from Rs.1,000 to Rs.1,500 per month, from the year 2016-2017.

The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Economic Development Corporation is providing loan assistance for the Economic upliftment of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities at lower rates of interest for establishing trade or business.¹³⁷ TABCEDCO is sanctioning loan to the individuals, Self Help Groups through the sub-channelizing agencies such as District Central Co-operative Banks or Urban Co-operative Banks, Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies, Tamil Nadu Co-operative Milk Producers Federation (Aavin), Tamil Nadu Industrial Co-operative Bank, Taminadu Handloom Development Corporation.¹³⁸ The Tamil Nadu Minorities Economic Development Corporation was established with the objective of providing loan assistance at lower rate of interest to take up self employment activities by the economically backward religious minorities viz. Muslims, Christians, Buddhist, Sikhs, Parsis and Jains in Tamil Nadu. The Corporation sanctions and disburses the loans through Co-operative Banks or Societies under several schemes viz., Individual Term Loan Scheme, Micro Financing through Self Help Groups, Education Loan etc. Government is also taking keen interest according every possible help for the development of Muslim women through many type of actions plans such as

educational plans, health plans, awareness progress etc. Through these programs women are coming out from veils and proving themselves in various fields. In last five years rapid change has been noticed in women of Muslim society of Cuddalore. Level of education has increased its bar where women of rural areas were very little matriculated now they are trying to learn atleast upto graduation. Education, health plans, and especially electronic media has played an important and successful role in upliftment of women especially in rural areas. This clearly shows the slow and steady change in the society of Muslim women of Cuddalore district.

The Muslim community of Cuddalore district has a unique characteristic feature of maintaining a humble facade with solid infrastructure in the field of socio-economic and

religious. Though the underbelly of the community still drips with poverty and educational backwardness, some philanthropists, and of late, the ones who use education for commerce, erected enough number of monuments of their munificence and enterprise respectively. There is no doubt, that there has been a social change in the traditional status of Muslim women in the Cuddalore region. They have challenged some of the old values of conservatism and have come out of their shells. It is a fact that, the impact of modern education, the economic independence, socio religious reforms and expansion of trade caused a tremendous improvement in their lives. So the general trend among Muslim women is towards getting educated.

¹ Gurumoorthy, T. R., *Women Empowerment and Social Change*, New Delhi, p.59.

² Raj Prapti, Bela Rani Sharma, *Encyclopedia of Women Society and Culture*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1994, pp.1-4.

³ Vijay Kaushik, Bela Rani Sharma, *Encyclopedia of Human Rights and Women's Development*, Vol. 5, New Delhi, 1996, p.209.

⁴ Singh, Alka., *Women in Muslim Personal Law*, New Delhi, 1992, p.34.

⁵ Edward William Lane. *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, New Jersey, 1987 p.214

⁶ Sulaiman. S.M., *Islam and Indian Religion and Tamil Culture*, University of Madras, 1977, p.23.

⁷ Mohammed Amin, *Wisdom of the Prophet Mohammed*, New Delhi, 1987, p.102.

⁸ Lalitha Devi, *Status and Employment of Women in India*, New Delhi, 1982, p.68.

⁹ The Census of India, Madras, South Arcot District, 1961.,

¹⁰ South Arcot District Census Hand Book, Madras, 1961.

¹¹ *Census of India*, 1961, District Census Handbook: South Arcot District.

¹² *Statistical Atlas of the South Arcot District*, 1950-70.

¹³ *Gazetteers of Tamilnadu*, Cuddalore District, Vol I, K.S.K. Velmani, 2001.

¹⁴ Govt of Tamil Nadu, District statistical Handbook, Statistical Department, Cuddalore, 1990 – 1991.

¹⁵ Census of India 2011, Literacy, Workers, Age Group, Religion. Disability, Chennai, 2011.

¹⁶ *Reports of the Department of Agriculture*, Cuddalore, 2004-2005.

¹⁷ *Gazetteers of Tamilnadu*, Cuddalore District, Vol II, K.S.K. Velmani, 2005, p.18.

¹⁸ Abdullah Yusuf Ali., A., *Teachings of Holy Quran*, Madras, 1979, p.113.

¹⁹ *Holy Quran*, Verse – 16:77.

²⁰ Thoburn. J.M., *India its society culture and Religion*, Jaipur, 1989, p.124

²¹ Engineer, Asghar Ali., *Islam, Women and Gender Justice*, Delhi, 2000, p.120.

²² Abdullah Yusuf Ali., A., *op.cit.*, p.133.

²³ Thahir Mahmood, *Educational Development in Muslim world*, New Delhi, 1994, p.13.

²⁴ Ahmed, Munir, *Islamic Education prior to the Establishment of Madrasa*, Madras, 1987.

²⁵ Rama, K.G., *Women's Welfare in Tamil Nadu*, Madras, 1974, p.44.

²⁶ G.O. No. 278, 'Confidential Report', Public department, 2nd March, 1948.

- ²⁷ Agarwal, C. M., *Dimensions of Indian Womanhood, (Vol. II)*, India, 1993, p.122.
- ²⁸ Rama, K. G., *Women's Welfare in Tamil Nadu*, Madras, 1974, p. 57.
- ²⁹ Ashok Kumar, *Women in Contemporary Indian Society, (Vol. I)*, New Delhi, 1993, p.280.
- ³⁰ Rama, K.G., *op.cit.*, p.133.
- ³¹ Ashrafi, Talat Ara., *Muslim Women in Changing Perspective*, Delhi, 1992, p.78.
- ³² Singh, Indu Prakash., *Women and Law and Social change in India*, New Delhi, 1998, p.103.
- ³³ Anita Arya, *Indian Women: Education and Empowerment, (Vol. II)*, New Delhi, 2000, p.123.
- ³⁴ Samad, M. Abdul., *Islam in Kerala, Groups and Movements, in the 20th century*, Kollam, 1998, p.67.
- ³⁵ *Report of Women's Development in Tamil Nadu*, Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited, Madras, 1993, p.133.
- ³⁶ Shah. A. M., Baviskar. B. S., Ramaswamy. E. A., *Social Structure And Change (Vol. II): Women in Indian Society*, New Delhi, 1996, p.89.
- ³⁷ Madhu Kumari, *Women Empowerment and Social Change*, New Delhi, 2011, p.232.
- ³⁸ Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Department of Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, 1997
- ³⁹ Esther Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 1970, p.83.
- ⁴⁰ Sharat Dwivedi, *Status of Women in Independent India*, New Delhi, 2008, p.12.
- ⁴¹ Singh, Indu Prakash., *op.cit.*, p.87.
- ⁴² *Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of Madras*, Public Department No.886, vol.11, dated 22 November 1950.
- ⁴³ *Reports on the Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1950 - 1951.*
- ⁴⁴ *Madras Administration Report 1951-1952*, Government of Madras, Madras, 1952.
- ⁴⁵ *Madras Administration Report 1952-53*, Government of Madras, Madras, 1953.
- ⁴⁶ *Reports on Public Instruction in the Govt of TamilNadu, Madras*, 1981-1982.
- ⁴⁷ *Administration Report, 1983-1984*, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1984.
- ⁴⁸ *Annual Report of Social Welfare Department*, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1985.
- ⁴⁹ *Information of Government of Tamil Nadu*, Madras, 1987.
- ⁵⁰ *Performance Budget of Social Welfare*, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai 1988.
- ⁵¹ *Reports on Public Instruction in the Govt of Tamil Nadu, Madras*, 1988-1989.
- ⁵² *Govt of Tamil Nadu, District statistical Handbook*, Statistical Department, Cuddalore, 1989 – 1990.
- ⁵³ *Reports on Public Instruction in the Madras State, 1956-1957.*
- ⁵⁴ *Reports on the Administration of the Madras State, 1957-1958.*
- ⁵⁵ *Census of India, 1959-59*, District Census Handbook: South Arcot District.
- ⁵⁶ *A Handbook of Women Development Programmes*, Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited, Madras, Govt, of Tamil Nadu, 1965.
- ⁵⁷ Policy Note on Social Welfare, 1980-82, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1982.
- ⁵⁸ Performance Budget Social Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1982.
- ⁵⁹ Singh, Indu Prakash., *Women and Law and Social change in India*, New Delhi, 1998, p.46.
- ⁶⁰ Abdul Ghaffar Hasan, *The Rights and Duties of Women in Islam*, Fordham University, 2006, p.27.
- ⁶¹ Arnold T.W., *Preaching of Islam*, Lahore, 1961, p.66.
- ⁶² Abdullah Yusuf Ali., *A., op.cit.*, p.129.
- ⁶³ Aziz Ahmad., *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, New Delhi, 1964, p.78
- ⁶⁴ Robinson, F., *Islam and Muslim Society in South Asia, Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol-VII, no.2, Madras, 1983, p.38.
- ⁶⁵ Engineer, Asghar Ali., *The Quran, Women and Modern Society*, New Delhi, 1999., p.110.
- ⁶⁶ Abdul Ghaffar Hasan, *op.cit.*, p.140.
- ⁶⁷ Dietrich Reetz ., *Islam in the Public Sphere*, Religious Groups in India, 1900-1947, New Delhi, 2006, p.75
- ⁶⁸ Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Family Kinship and Marriage Among the Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1976, p.87.
- ⁶⁹ Rama, K.G., *op.cit.*, p.138.
- ⁷⁰ Ishtiaq Ahmed, *Ritual and Religion Among Muslims in India*, New Delhi, 1981, p.98.
- ⁷¹ Policy Note on Social Welfare, 2009, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2009.

- ⁷² Gazetteers of Tamilnadu, Cuddalore District, Vol II, K.S.K. Velmani, 2009, p.18.
- ⁷³ Sharat Dwivedi, *Status of Women in Modern Society*, New Delhi, 2010, p. 191.
- ⁷⁴ District Census Handbook: Cuddalore District, 2004.
- ⁷⁵ Vaigarai, *Women Empowerment*, Vol.7, Thiruchirapalli, 2002, p. 15.
- ⁷⁶ Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, Department of Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, 1974.
- ⁷⁷ Mamta Rajawat, *Women Education and Social Empowerment*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 312.
- ⁷⁸ *Women's Welfare in Madras*, Director of Information and Publicity, Government of Madras, Madras, 1961.
- ⁷⁹ *Tamilarasu*, A Annual-Bi- Journal, July– September 1976, Chennai, 1976, p.15.
- ⁸⁰ *Report of Golden Jubilee Celebration 1917-1967*, Women's Indian Association, Thiruvannamiyur, Madras, 1987, p.4.
- ⁸¹ *Administration Report*, Chapter. XVIII, 1993-1994, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, p. 351
- ⁸² *Performance Budget of Social Welfare*, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai 2011.
- ⁸³ *Policy Note on Social Welfare*, 1991, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1991.
- ⁸⁴ *Administration Report*, 1985-1986, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1986.
- ⁸⁵ *Annual Report of Social Welfare Department*, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2000.
- ⁸⁶ *Tamil Nadu Economic Appraisal 1980 – 1990* Evaluation and Applied Research Department Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai – 108
- ⁸⁷ *Administration Report*, 2007-2008, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2007.
- ⁸⁸ *Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India*, Department of Social Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi, 1974.
- ⁸⁹ *Report of Second Five Year Plan*, Government of India, New Delhi. 1961.
- ⁹⁰ *Report of Fourth Five Year Plan*, Government of India, New Delhi. 1974.
- ⁹¹ *Report of Sixth Five Year Plan*, Government of India, New Delhi. 1985.
- ⁹² *Report of seventh Five Year Plan*, Government of India, New Delhi. 1990.
- ⁹³ *Report of the Planning Commission*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1997.
- ⁹⁴ *Report of the National Perspective plan for women*, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 1990.
- ⁹⁵ *Plans and Prospects of Social Welfare in India (1982-1983)*, Government of India, Delhi, 1983.
- ⁹⁶ *Women's Welfare in Cuddalore*, Director of Information and Publicity, Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1961.
- ⁹⁷ Shukla, P. D., *The New Education Policy in India*, New Delhi, 1988, p.48.
- ⁹⁸ Gazetteers of Tamilnadu, Cuddalore District, Vol II, K.S.K. Velmani, 2005, p.14.
- ⁹⁹ Jaffar S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, Reprint, Delhi, 1972, p.135.
- ¹⁰⁰ Mines, Mattison, *Social Stratification among Muslim Tamils in Tamilnadu*, New Delhi, 1978, pp.61-71.
- ¹⁰¹ Interview with S.Nooredheen, Cuddalore, dated, 22.07.2020.
- ¹⁰² Ahmad, Imtiaz, *Educational Development of Minorities*, New Delhi, 1989, p.56.
- ¹⁰³ *Review of the Progress of Education in India, 1960-70*, Delhi, 1973
- ¹⁰⁴ Rabat Abrar, *Directoriy of Muslim Educational institutions in Tamil Nadu*, Aligarh 2000, p.67.
- ¹⁰⁵ Kaur, Kuldeep, *Madrasa Education in India, its past and present*, Chandigarh, 1990, p.144.
- ¹⁰⁶ Interview with N.M.Nooredheen, Cuddalore, dated, 18.6.2020
- ¹⁰⁷ Aziz Ahmad., *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, New Delhi, 1964, p.78.
- ¹⁰⁸ Sulaiman S.M., *op.cit.*, p.87.
- ¹⁰⁹ Mohammad Sherif., *Women's Rights in Islam*, Delhi, 1997, p.213.
- ¹¹⁰ Rahim, Abdul M., 'Islam in Nagapattinam', *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional cultures*. Madras, July-December, 1974, pp. 85-99.
- ¹¹¹ Interview with Aziz Ahmad, Cuddalore, dated 1-05-2020.
- ¹¹² Gazetteers of Tamilnadu, Cuddalore District, Vol II, K.S.K. Velmani, 2005, p.218.
- ¹¹³ Cuddalore District Census Hand Book, Madras, 2011.
- ¹¹⁴ District Census Hand Book, Cuddalore, 2011.
- ¹¹⁵ Interview with M.Syed Ahmed, Cuddalore, dated, 22.07.2020.

¹¹⁶ *Annual Report of Education Department, Cuddalore District, Cuddalore, 2017.*

¹¹⁷ District statistical Handbook, Statistical Department, Cuddalore, 2000 – 2001.

¹¹⁸ Interview with S.Noorudheen, Cuddalore, dated, 22.07.2020.

¹¹⁹ Ram Gopal, *A Social History of Indian Muslims*, New Delhi, 1988, p.66.

¹²⁰ Report of History of Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnatra Kazhagam, Chennai, 2004-2005.

¹²¹ Chandrababu, B.S., *Social Protest and its Impact on Tamilnadu*, Madras, 1993, p.87.

¹²² District Census Hand Book, Cuddalore, 2004.

¹²³ Interview with M.Syed Ahmed, Cuddalore, dated, 22.07.2020.

¹²⁴ Fiykenberg, R.E., *Modern Education in South India 1784 to 1854*, Vol.91, No.1, 1986, pp. 37-65.

¹²⁵ Syed Irfana. H., *Education of Muhammadan women in the Madras Presidency under the British Rule, 1854-1947*, Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, University of Madras, 1987, p.28.

¹²⁶ Report from the Department of Public Health, Vital Registers from 1976 to 2005, Cuddalore.

¹²⁷ Annual Report of the Directorate of General Health Services 2012-2013, Ministry of Health and

Family Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi.

¹²⁸ *Pamhlet*, Muslims in Cuddalore District, Rahmath Nagar, 2004, p 5-6

¹²⁹ Abdur Rahim. M.R.M., *Islamic Encyclopedia* Volume-3, New Delhi, 1970, p.174.

¹³⁰ Quadir Hussain Khan, *op.cit.*, p.159

¹³¹ Jaffur Shareeff, *The Customs of Muslims of India*, New Delhi, 1991, p.126.

¹³² Mohammed Qutab, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*, New Delhi, 1986 p.90-98.

¹³³ Interview with N.M.Noor Hajeeyar, Cuddalore, dated, 18.6.2020

¹³⁴ Cuddalore District Gazetteers - by F.J.Richards, ICS, Vol.1, Part-I, Madras, 2011.

¹³⁵ *Report on Public Instruction in Cuddalore District*, 2010-2011,

Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1999.

¹³⁶ Gazetteers of Tamilnadu, Cuddalore District, Vol II, K.S.K. Velmani, 2005, p.268.

¹³⁷ *Administration Report*, 2017-2018, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2017.

¹³⁸ Policy Note on Social Welfare, 2019, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2018.

