

## Clash and controversy between Muslim women's belief in modesty and social media

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### ABSTRACT

*The terms 'culture' and 'media' are vastly studied today. Many studies have been held focusing on the above terms. Undoubtedly, media and culture inter-influence each other. Today's generation's life style is colored and influenced by media. Particularly youth is more influenced by it. The youth has become able to express their yearning and expectations. The proposed research aims to study the influences of the social media on the Muslim society and particularly on the Indian Muslim women. The paper is about to show the changing behaviors of the Muslim women and it is also an effort to study whether the use of recent social media applications is sign of women's freedom or blind imitation. The paper focuses on pro woman and working woman as well as it will have a look at the matter whether women's educational ratio has increased after the use of social media or not.*

*It has been seen that several Muslim women have started online business which has made them economically stronger and it has helped them to create their identity as working women in the recent world. The recent feminists have also stressed on women's economic condition. For many Muslim women, it is very difficult to step out the threshold because of the religion norms. The paper studies that, being at home does not let the women probe into their existence, but when they use the social media applications, they get connected with the world being at home. They get in touch with the changes taking place in the world and they try to look themselves in the changed world. This mental situation allows them to be free from the customs and rigid norms of the society. They try to give way to their longings looking at other women who live their lives with full liberty. Their unfulfilled rights disturb them and make them realize their poor condition. It results in demanding their rights and raising voice against society. The mentioned research shows the conflict between the women influenced by social media and their culture. The modesty is mandatory aspect in Islam. The paper aims at studying the conflict between modesty and the new trend of fashion in the Muslim women. It is a study how the new generation's Muslim women throw away the dead habits and superstitions laid on them. The paper also shows the social media's negative effects over them and how these women have become victim of the cyber crime and misogynistic comments.*

**Key Words: Media, Culture, Modesty, Indian Muslim Women, Well-Known Social Media Applications, Pro-women, Cybercrime etc.**

## **Introduction**

Man's thirst to invent new tools and means is never ending process. The recent developments and new way of life is result of the newly invented instruments and devices. Among all the developments and inventions, internet is the most valuable, useful and handy invention. Because of the internet, the people have started using various kinds of applications related to social media. The social media applications like WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Orkut, Facebook etc are widely used and they are extremely famous among young generation. Social media refers to the applications which are used to share the information or any content rapidly, and in proper time. Now days, the social media applications have become means for running business too. The social media is very powerful as it can reach up to a huge group in any part of the world in short period of time. When it comes to India, there are numbers of users of social media applications. Using social media might be easy and common for other religious persons but it becomes complex matter for Muslim society and particularly for the Muslim women, it becomes tough task. They are bound to religious faith in which they cannot cross some lines of modesty. The modesty of clothing is a critical concept for the Muslim. The Muslims have to be modest while talking with opposite gender. It is prohibited for the Muslim women to have any relationship with the opposite gender except husband, brother, father and uncle. This norm of modesty creates conflict in the world of Muslim women. While using social media, the Muslim men and women are strictly advised to follow this modesty and particularly the Muslim women have to be more careful in this regard and sometimes, the women are not allowed to use the platform of social media with the fear that the women might fall a trap or tempted or cross the lines of modesty. The dead habits and rigid thinking has made the people believe that the honor and the chastity of the family is in the hands of women so if women break the boundaries, the family will lose its respect. All these ideologies and hegemony become barriers for using social media for the Muslim women.

## **Controversies Regarding Uploading Photos by the Muslim Women**

Posting photo is a task of one click and the young generation does it so interestingly and without any hesitation but the same activity carries religious conflict for the Muslim. Uploading photo invites many problems and controversies and it can create complexity for the Muslim women. The women face more troubles. It should be also noted that social, cultural, economic and psychological structures of the society play pivotal role regarding the freedom to upload the photos and the personal information on the social media. The Muslim women have to be more conscious about their society and chastity as well as cultural values. The Muslim women observe Islamic

discipline, and according to Islam, it is prohibited for the Muslim women to show their any part of the body publicly so it is definitely a critical step for the Muslim women to upload their photos on Facebook, Instagram or any other platform of the social media. The women, who believe in Islam, also try to maintain their faith while using social media. These women try to maintain their such a clear image that the family or society can never raise any questions or doubts over them. Many of these women never upload their photo or they upload descent and good photos which do not violate the rule of modesty. But the new generation has its own choices and desire to way of living life so when young Muslim girls are not permitted to use any platform of the social media by the families; they create their fake account and use the platform and do all the activities which other girls from liberal societies do.

Today is the world where no one can live isolate life. Everyone wants to get connected with the world and social media is the best medium to let the one be connected with the world. The norms and customs of the Islamic faith do not allow individual to cross the limit and talk and meet to the opposite gender. But those who are deprived of meeting and talking with the opposite gender in publicly, they fulfill their yearning by using social media. Qanta Ahmed has noticed this behavior of the Arab women in her memoir named '*In the Land of Invisible Women*'.

One remarkable point of social media is that it allows women to know more about their faith, dreams, career, and interesting area as they can ask questions and clear their doubts by talking with the learned dignitaries. There are several women who even use this social media platform to increase their religious knowledge and several accounts and groups are active for this field. Ted Talk on YouTube is worldwide famous. For whatever reasons they use the social media, they get connected with the world and with the new trends of the world.

Now days, our morning starts with the social media. The Muslim women too have begun to get habituated with this new trend. Gradually societies have become more practical and generous towards using these applications. The young Muslim boys and girls are gaining ample advantages of the latest applications. They are using them for their study, sharing their materials, discussing their views and adopting latest ideas and updating themselves with the current news and information. They have learned that these new means and applications connect them with the living stream of information and knowledge. If they will not use them, they will cut off from the world. The educational scenario in Muslim society has changed and now they have understood its importance, so the ratio of literacy has risen up as well as girls' educational ratio is increasing day by day. The Muslim communities and families have become more careful and active about girls' education. Muslim girls are also using smart phones and computers. They are peeping into the world through the internet. They are using the latest applications for their education, entertainment, sharing information and online

business. When these girls see the changes taking place in the world, they try to adopt those changes and they make over their life styles and sometimes it creates conflicts between them and their culture. Adolescents are attracted by the changes abruptly but their background, their societal norms, culture, Islamic discipline do not allow them to go with the whatever they come across on social media. Moreover, the adults are more anxious regarding the chastity, honor and criticism of the society.

### **Social Media, Online Business and the Muslim Women**

Today we find that world is running with the needle of clock. People have a scarcity of time. People are avoiding time consuming activities. Online shopping has resulted because of the scarcity of time and the busy schedule. There are many websites which are helpful for online dealing. Online shopping has become a medium for employment for the many youngsters. The Indian Muslim women are also seen active in this field and they earn their wages through it. WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook might be means of entertainment for the many people but these applications are also useful for growing business. These applications have made many Muslim women self-reliant. There are numbers of Indian Muslim girls who are found keeping status of various products and material on WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. The images of products and material are viewed by many persons and many customers order the material online after viewing these images. Earning their own wages can make women realize that they are not born to depend on male only. Economical or financial dealing builds confidence and self-respect in women. Many Mohmedian girls want to earn themselves but the societal barriers do not allow them to do so but their wish of earning is reached by social media. It has brought tremendous change in the Muslim women world. It has empowered the women to walk with the world. They have been learning to change and to be changed. When these women earn and contribute at their home, they acquire special attention in their families. Someway it is their journey from submissive women to broad and self-independent and reliant women. Online business through social media has brought a ray of hope in the lives of the many young Muslim women.

### **The Culture of Indian Muslim Women**

Islam is the second largest religious group in India. Near about 18 billion Muslim are living in India. They have arrived from different countries of the world and have been living here for centuries. They have adopted Indian culture in their life styles. That is why the Islamic culture of Indian Muslim differs from the other Islamic regimes. The marriage system, gatherings, give and take and social behaviors have influences of Indians. In the same way, though the Indian Muslim women follow their religion, they also follow the Indian culture many ways. Their life style is checked by the society and particularly led by the patriarchy. Generally the women are seen marginalized or submissive. They are dominated by the male governing society. In many families they do not have right to take decision and to choose the path which they like. Many a times

their education, career and marriage are decided by their parents. Sometimes they are not allowed to use smart phones or social media or they are strictly told not to upload any photo or talk with male friends. The Islamic discipline does not allow any conversation taking place among male and female. The religion prohibits affair, love before marriage, talking to opposite gender excepting husband, brother, father, uncle etc. Because of these conditions, it is problematic for using smart phones or social media for Muslim women but if one uses it minding the boundaries shown in Quran and Hadith (Saying by Prophet), he or she is allowed to use it. Today people's minds have broadened and with the course of time, the use of smart phones, internet and social media has become common in Muslim society too. Some Maulvi (Learned persons of Islam) have issued *fatwa* against using social applications. Their *fatwa*'s are about uploading photos on social media. (Ahmad, 2013) The Muslim women cannot go unveiled and if she uploads her photos, it is against of Islam and she is labeled to break the rules of *shariah*. Dressing modestly by the Muslim men and women is primary demand in Islam. It is sure that women face problem regarding internet is not related to Islam and India only. All over the world, women have to face the gender discrimination. But today many Muslim girls are being seen to upload their photos on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. They are ignoring social burden and pressure. They are continuously being warned not to disrupt the social status of the family by breaking the modesty of veil and cloth. They are facing many debates, arguments, blames and controversy. They are struck between the maintaining the honor of the family and following their yearnings.

Because of the movements of the feminism, the women have become well aware about their rights in all over the world and moreover the social media has played pivotal role to spread the movements and these movements have also reached up to the Muslim women. The women from every corner of the world have started raising their demands regarding their status, rights, space and freedom. They are not afraid of the challenges and on the contrary they have raised their voice against the male dominated society. Social media is full of large group of open minded, broad and courageous women from all over the world. The Indian Muslim women have also come across to these broad minded women and they have followed them and given up their submissive nature. There are numbers of Indian Muslim women on social media who are role model for many girls. Some of them are micro celebrities. They not only upload their photos and videos but also they encourage others to follow them. Zannat Zubeir, Arishfa Khan and many other Muslim girls have become sensation. Their earning through social media is increasing day by day and it has led the many other Muslim girls to use the recent social media applications. If we look at the recent social media, particularly WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Tiktok, we will come to know the fact that the accounts of Muslim girls are increasing day by day.



One view regarding the display of modesty on the platform of social media is that it creates opportunities to diminish the stereotypes laid on the Muslim women. European, American and Canadian media platforms have portrayed the veiled women as weak, timid and less developed because of these countries have their struggles with Middle East. Some Muslim women have come forward on social media and declared that they get confidence and pride by wearing Hijab as it connects them with their religious community. These women have shown that they wear hijab because they feel to wear it not because of force by the patriarchy. These women have inspired other women to share their emotions, religious identity and their free will to wear veil without any hesitation. It is one kind of gendered practice as Judith Butler says that gender is performative. The Muslim women not only perform their gender by wearing veil or hijab but also they have opened the doors for the huge trade related to the hijab and veil through the social media.

### **Cyber Crime and Social Media**

With the increasing use of the social media, cyber-crime has also increased. Hacking of accounts, harassment, abuse, blackmailing as well as ransom attacks have been common for some years. The issue of blackmailing is mainly related to girls and the Muslim girls are also victims of blackmailing, misogyny, abusing and hacking of the accounts. Many parents do not allow their girls to use social media because of the cyber-crime. They are frightened with the idea that if anything happens to their girls, they want be able to live in their society or they will have to bear negative comments or strict criticism. Many girls are victimized by hacking of the accounts. When the girls do not accept the proposal of the disordered boys, they hack their accounts and post ugly photos or comments and ruin their status in society and this leads the girls sometimes to attempt suicide. It should also be worth noting that all the accounts on Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are not valid. There are many fake accounts and the girls who are new to these platforms are easily misled and trapped in the web. Undoubtedly, the people are becoming aware of the all these kinds of negative aspects and the Muslim girls are also taking it seriously and they are showing their wisdom. Sometimes they are targeted, mocked and taken as jokes as it happened on Kashmiri Muslim girls after the removal of 370. Many comments became viral of marrying Kashmiri girls. The Kashmiri girls' self respect was wounded as well as their parents also went through disrespectful condition. The misogynistic comments spread all over the world and many women activists rebuked the patriarchy for spreading these kinds of comments.

### **Conclusion**

The large globe has become small because of the internet. People are reaching everywhere easily. Man has also become free from the narrow mildness, rigidity, superstitions and dead habits. Women also come across to important articles, incidents, news, programs and changes taking place all over the world. The use of social media

not only provides them entertainment but also make them think about their identity, existence and their rights. The girls, who have not enough school education, have also become practical in their dealings. Gradually the Indian Muslim women are becoming broad, courageous and firm. They are sharing their longings on social media and they have come out to show their talent, choice and skills. The social media has aroused the question of 'where they are' in them. They have learned that they have to walk with the fast world. The Muslim women will not be longer submissive, dominated, marginalized and victimized. Seeing their attitude on the social media it seems that they will emerge as strong, responsible and confident women in nearer future. They will play a pivotal role in shaping their societies and they will stand by justice without fear and hesitance. They will learn to raise the voice against injustice, torture, intolerance and hegemony.

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