A Paper

on

The Position of the Women among the Moslems

Written by

Mr. "Al-Sallar Klein, B. A.

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Table of Contents

Preface

I. Condition of Woman Among the Arabs before Islam 2
II. Polygamy and Islam 4
III. Divorce and Islam 8
IV. Seclusion of the Women 13
V. Muslim Women in Various Capacities 21
VI. Learning Among the Muslim Women 25
VII. Books Consulted 32
In the following pages I have tried to show the correct position of the women among the Moslems. I do not pretend to any originality in the matter, unless it be the selection of material. I have used a very large number of books in the preparation of this paper, and taking the widely scattered material from here and there, have tried to put it into a shape, that would give the connected idea on the subject.

The subject has by no means been exhausted. Only some of the much criticized institutions of the Moslems have been taken and discussed briefly.

A list of books used is given at the back. Some of these books have been of very great help, others have contributed a single fact or idea. Mr. Greenfield's works need a special mention. They are of special interest for all who want to have a correct idea of Islam and the Moslem History.

I have made a free use of quotation, believing that by this way no injustice would be done to the author.
I

Condition of Woman

Among the Arabs before Islam.

In Arabia before Islam woman was more degraded than in the laws of Islam. She could not inherit property, she was a part of the property inherited by her husband's son, who could force her to marry him. Polygamy was universal and without any restrictions. Divorce was very common at least as far as the man was concerned. The power of divorce possessed by the husband was unlimited. He could dismiss his wife and recall her on his slightest whim. It is said that one Omm Cherijeh had had forty husbands. Indeed the sexual tie among the Arabs was very loose. They recognized no rule of humanity.

The birth of a daughter was shameful and the innocent creatures were burned alive.

The proverbs of a people are index to their character and ideas. A collection of these made by Dr. Jessup will illustrate the Arab view towards women more fully:

1. The best son-in-law is the grave.
2. Obedience to woman will have to be repented of.
3. The heart of woman is given to folly.
4. Leave not a girl, nor a green pasture unguarded.
5. Women are the whips of Satan

(1) Bosworth Smith: Muhammad and Muhammadanism p. 97
All these proverbs were current before the advent of Islam. Some of these are attributed by superficial European scholars to the Prophet as his sayings. But this is a mistaken view.

Such then was the condition of the women in Arabia before Mohamed preached the words of God. Islam raised the position of woman and made her equal of man both before God and in the eye of the law. From a condition of misery and utter wretchedness she was raised to be man's helpmate and companion.

It is true that Islam at the time of its advent did not abolish polygamy or divorce. It was perhaps impossible to do that. But Islam did lay down the principles which by development in the fulness of time should rid Moslem society of all that is obnoxious and progress-hindering.

Some of the European scholars believe that Islam cannot be reformed, that reformed Islam is no more Islam. Such an attitude of mind I am unable to explain except on the ground of deep-rooted prejudices. If the inspiration of reform, if we draw our inspiration if for reform from the Koran and the words of the Prophet, there can be no reason why a reformed Islam should be no more Islam.

Polygamy, divorce and seclusion are identified with Islam. They are said to be its characteristics. Now in successive chapters I propose to show how far Islam and the Moslems are responsible for these institutions.
Polygamy and Islam

Polygamy is not an institution introduced by Islam. It was practiced by almost all the Eastern nations of Antiquity. At the advent of Islam, the Arabs indulged in unrestrained polygamy.

We must remember that circumstances at times make the practice of polygamy necessary for the preservation of women from starvation or utter destitution. "The late and Lady Duff Gordon have both remarked that in the generality of cases sheer force of circumstances drives people to polygamy in the East. With the progress of thought with the ever-changing conditions of the world, the necessity for polygamy disappears and its practice is tacitly abandoned or expressly forbidden."

Mr. Ameer Ali, than whom, there is no greater scholar of Islamic society is convinced that polygamy, at present, is against the spirit of Islam. Ever-changing circumstances and continual wars had compelled the early Muslims to practise it.

(1) Mr. Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam

(2) Times of India Dec 5, 1927 "As an interpreter of Islamic history and belief and a reconciler of the Faith with modern progress and enlightenment, he stands without a rival in the modern world"
The Prophet's own marriages, the Ameer Ali
regards admirably as "explained in the light of charity,
generosity and mercy." This belief of his is
shared by some of the European scholars also. Here is
the testimony of De Bunsen, who says "As to his
own example, we are of opinion that had Khadija
survived Mohamed, his faithfulness to her would
have made his life a protest against polygamy.
Respecting his marriages after Khadija's death, they
ought to be considered from the most humane
point of view, after duly weighing extenuating cir-
cumstances." (2) To the reader who wants to have
a better understanding of the subject, I refer
to the Ameer Ali's exposition of it in the Spirit of Islam.
It is not in the province of this paper to deal with it at
any length.

"Compatibility of Islam with every state of
mankind's progress shows the founder's wisdom. Elasticity of
laws is the greatest test of their usefulness." It is
true that Islam has sanctioned polygamy in the
past, and that the Koran says "You may marry
two, three, four wives but not more" but the verse goes
on still further and says "but if you cannot deal
equitably and justly with all, you shall marry my
one." Now as a matter of fact it is practically
impossible to deal justly and equitably with all.
Even in the Koran, in another place, it is written that "ye
will not have at all in your power to treat your wives alike
with equity, even though you fain would to do so."

(1) Ameer Ali : The Spirit of Islam p. 331 - 338

(2) De Bunsen : Islam or True Christianity p. 156.
Not only the Koran is against polygamy but the Traditions also declare the same thing. "When a man has two wives and does not treat them equally, he will come on the Day of Judgment with half his body fallen." Still in a more direct way says the Prophet: "Happy and fortunate is the man who has only one wife, pure and virtuous." [2]

In what other way can monogamy be more directly inculcated. "Neither Jesus, nor Mohamad could at once effect existing society or obliterate all national and political institutions. Like Jesus, Mohamad contented himself, except where ordinances were necessary to meet the requirements of the moment with planting principles in the heart of his followers, which would when the time was ripe for it, work out their abolition." [3]

This is not a new idea. Even at the time of al-Mamun, the Moslem doctors "taught that the developed Koranic laws inculcated monogamy." [4]

I believe that in a highly civilized society monogamy must be the only form of married life, and this is exactly the germ principle of Islam.

Polygamy, in reality is not so common among the Moslems as is usually supposed. "Among the Indian Mussulman," says the learned jurist "ninety-five men out of every hundred are at the present moment, either by or by necessity, monogamists." [5]

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1. Misbah: Bab-e-Nikah
2. J.S. Mill: In the Parliament of Religions p 1147
4. A. Ali: The Spirit of Islam p 327
5. The Spirit of Islam.
This is not true only about India, the percentage of monogamists is still greater in Persia, where ninety-eight men out of hundred marry only one wife, while "a case of polygamy" says the Vaghabut "was unknown in Candia amidst a population of 40,000 Mussulmans". And again the Nakhsh bandi speaking about the Moslems in general says "In fact polygamy is a such rare occurrence (among Moslems) that not more than one husband among thirty has more than one wife". Some of the greatest Muslim rulers have been monogamists.

The time is at hand when some Moslems will abolish polygamy. Mr. Ameer Ali expresses an earnest hope "that before long a general synod of Muslim doctors will authoritatively declare that polygamy like slavery is abhorrent to the laws of Islam."

After all polygamy is not such a great evil as supposed in the West. Evil is a relative term. Polygamy was prevalent among God's chosen people, and David the man after God's heart indulged in unlimited polygamy. Each age had its standard. To judge the Islam of those days according to the standards of the twentieth century is a mistake. Each institution in its time serves its purpose and it is for that reason that it exists at all.

Polygamy has served its purpose in the Muslim society and is therefore a doomed institution.

(3) An. Nakhsh Bandi: Moslem Law of Inheritance and Rights of Women XI.
(4) Ooster: Islam Under the Arabs. As Sufiah had only one wife. E.H. Noltemeier: Hist. of India p. 60.
Divorce is another fruitful cause of attack on the Muslim society. It is a mistake to think that Mohammed allowed easy divorce. It is no doubt permitted but the Prophet himself looked upon it "with extreme disapproval and regarded its practice as calculated to undermine the foundations of society." Divorce is subject to formalities which allowed (and we will add recommended) a revocation if a hurried or not well considered resolution. Three successive declarations at a month's interval were necessary in order to make it irrevocable.

The above is what H. Saullot, than whom no Western writer has analysed the laws of Mohammed better, says (3). "The frequent admonitions in the Koran against separation, the repeated recommendations to heal quarrels by private reconciliation, show the extreme sacredness of the marriage tie in the eyes of the Arab legislators.

(4) Sura iv. 127, 128 "If a woman fear ill usage or aversion from her husband, it shall be not be blamable (the spirit of the expression means 'it will be commendable') in them if they agree with mutual agreement for reconciliation is best. (Men's) and are prone to variance, but if they act kindly and deal fairly (towards wives), verily God is well acquainted with what ye do........ and if ye agree and act fairly, then verily God is forgiving and merciful."

Sura iv. 39 "And if ye fear a breach between them (man and wife), then send a judge chosen from his family and a judge chosen from her family; if they desire a reconciliation, God will cause them to agree; verily God is knowing and approved of all."
The extremely cautious permission has been taken up by the Umma, the “Fathers of the Church” as actual as a pretended positive rule. Islam never meant that divorce should be as easy as is often the case. The rule that after the final, that is, after the third pronouncement of divorce a man could not take back his wife, unless she was actually married to and divorced by another man, was intended to be a great check upon divorce. Arabs were very jealous of their wives and would take such a thing as a great blow to their dignity. It was for preserving this dignity, that the wives of the Prophet could not marry again. The action of retaking a finally divorced wife is exceedingly abhorrent and against it the Prophet of God has hurled a mighty curse. “Cursed be the second husband, who makes the wife lawful for her first husband, and cursed be the first husband, from whom she is made lawful.” And “divorce itself of all lawful acts is the most abominable in the sight of God.”

As a matter of fact, divorce is rare amongst the higher and middle classes and certainly bears no comparison with the prevalence of the custom in the most civilized countries of the world.

(1) Ameer Ali: The Sufi of Islam. P. 347; (2) Mishkat XIII-C-XV. Hughes, Brief of John; (3) A well-known saying of the Prophet; (4) An Nahshabi. Modern Law of Islam; (5) Social Progress 1906. In the U.S. America: In Indiana one divorce to every five marriages. In Maine one divorce to every seven marriages. Only a few of the states collect figures. In Chicago alone there were 2,454 divorces in 1903 and the number for the last ten years was 16,388.

Switzerland (1898), 1,018; Germany (1899), 5,633; France (1897), 7,460; England (1897), 9,727. In Japan (1886) 117,961 divorces against 315,311 marriages (Holtz, Hist. of Mat. Inst.). The rule is almost everywhere increasing.
Though accepting divorce as a principle, the spirit of Islam is against its practice. Divorce is not allowed only in extreme cases. It is a medicine, a very bitter medicine indeed, which must be taken when it is the only remedy left to cure the patient, to secure the well-being of the family. A Moslem must not hate his wife nor "hate her for if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, then let him be pleased with another that is good." (1) and "perhaps a man does not like a thing in which God has put much good for him." (2) During the three months after the divorce, the woman remains three months in her harem at the man's cost, and he is at liberty to take her back. Indeed, a single tender glance or word of concession is sufficient to restore the marriage. (3)

It is a great mistake to think, as is often the case, that the custom of divorce among the Moslems is one-sided. It is said that man alone has all the power to divorce and a woman is at his mercy. "In what," says Fatima Kheram, the well-known, distinguished lady of Turkey, in her reply to a French lady of rank and education, "is our position inferior to that of whom men..... If the husband has the faculty of divorcing his wife, the wife also can divorce her husband." (4)

Theoretically, it seems to the superficial student, that a husband has a greater power of divorce, but in practice it is quite the contrary. "The wife is entitled to a divorce


(2) Koran

(3) Howard: History of Muhammad, Institute, Vol. II, p. 233

when the husband (1) leaves her without support, (2) accuses her falsely of unfaithfulness, (3) refuses to acknowledge the child, which she has borne him, (4) when he abandons the faith, (5) fails in marital duty. But in practice little use is made of this form, the woman preferring, instead, to declare before the judge, that she is in a matrimonial "insurrection" by which means the husband is usually led to repudiate her.

Let us now look upon divorce in the abstract.

vice versa. It is not an unmixed evil, it is, in fact, sometimes not and absolutely necessary for the well-being of society. Insufficient divorces can be multiplied indefinitely and it can be shown by fact and figures, that at times divorce is the only remedy. I conclude the chapter with some observations of persons, who can speak upon the subject with authority. "There are, sometimes, wrongs committed under the shelter of the marriage bond so monstrous as to warrant any legal means of relief," and showing the statistics and proving by fact and figures, the able sociologist continues, "After all, in this fact do we not catch a glimpse of the proper sphere of divorce legislation? Divorce is a remedy and not the disease. It is not virtue in a divine law as appears to be assumed, to restrict the application of the remedy at all hazards, regardless of the suffering of the social body... Divorce is not immoral. It is quite probable, on the contrary, that drastic, like negligent legislation is sometimes immoral. It is not necessarily a merit and it may be a great social wrong to reduce the legal cause for a decree to one 'scriptural' ground. The most enlightened judgment of the age heartily approves of the policy of some states in extending the causes so to include, intemperacy

from habitual use of strong drinks or narcotics, as being equally destructive of economical happiness and family well-being. The divorce movement is a portentous and almost universal incident of civilization” (1). And lastly the strong words of Commodore Wright, who says “I do not believe that divorce is a menace to the purity and sacredness of the family, but I do believe it is a menace to the infernal brutality, of whatever name, and be it crude or refined, which at times makes a hell of habitual relations . . . . I believe the result will be enhanced purity, a sublime sacredness . . . to preserve which society must take the bitter medicine variously labelled divorce. The problem of individual liberty has become the problem of social liberty . . . Individual liberty appears to be the essential condition of social progress.” (2)

(1) Commodore Wright. (2) Social Progress 1906.
All the students of history know that the life of seclusion of the women is a stage in the life of woman. It is not an institution characteristic of Islam. Many nations of antiquity practiced it, and to this day it is common among nations widely separated and away from the influences of Islam.

Among the Arabs women were and are still free. The system of seclusion in vogue in many of the Moslem countries did not come into practice until long after. Among the republican history Moslem, the women moved freely in public, attended the sermons of the Caliphs and the lectures delivered by Ali, Ibn Abbas and others.

It is true that seeing the corruption of morals around him, the Prophet gave some directions, which were simply meant to improve decency and good behavior. "But to suppress" says the Ameer Ali "that he ever intended his recommendations should assume its present inelastic form, or that he ever allowed or enjoined the seclusion of women, is wholly opposed to the spirit of his reforms. The Koran itself affords no warrant for holding that the seclusion of the women is a part of the new gospel."

(1) Duke Clinica, Korea and the Spanish Colonies of South America
(3) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. 353
To understand the laws derived from the Koran
-the see one has to understand the nature of the Book. It
was revealed to the Prophet, not all at once, but consist
of revelations made apart in time, and often for the exigency
of the moment. Now the garments of the Arab women
did not cover their bosoms. When in the early morning
they would go out for the necessary calls, they were
often insulted by the low people, and the people had
the excuse, that they could not distinguish the
good women from bad. It was for this and for general
morality, that the Koran said "A Prophet speak to
thy wives and to thy daughters and to the wives of the
faithful, that they let their husbands fulr law.
Thus will they more easily be known and they will
not be affronted, God is indulgent, merciful." (1) and
again "Tell the believing men, that they should
restrain their looks and observe continence, this will
be more pure for them, for God is knowing that which
they do. And say unto the believing women, that
they should restrain their looks and preserve their
modesty, and should not display their ornament
except what necessarily appears theretofrom and
let them draw their kerchiefs over their bosoms." (2)

"These directions are addressed to both men and
women and have for their object the promotion of good
manners and decency." (3) It is easy to understand the
force of these directions, when a man imagines the state
of society at that time, and the object of the teacher

(1) Koran. Sura XXXIII -5-9
(2) Koran. Sura XXIV -31
(3) Nakshbandi
Certainly there is nothing in the above two passages from the Koran, which enjoins the seclusion of the women, and establishes it, if at all, as a permanent institution.

The custom of seclusion of the women was in vogue among the Persians from the early times. It made its first appearance among the Moslems in the reign of Weliid II. "The character and the habit of the sovereign favored the growth and development of a practice, which pride and imitation had transplanted to the congenial soil of Syria. His utter disregard of social conventionalities and the daring conduct with which he entered the privacy of families, compelled the adoption of safeguards against outward intrusion to uncultured minds, while and wanderers appear to afford more effective protection than nobility of sentiment and purity of heart. Despite these unfavorable circumstances, women continued, down to the time of Mahommed, the tenth Caliph of the House of Abbas, to enjoy extraordinary amount of freedom."

Considerable light is thrown on the law-giver's recommendation for female privacy by the remarkable immunity from restraint or seclusion, which the members of his family enjoyed. Ayesha, his favorite wife, after his death, personally conducted the insurrectionary movement against Ali; Fatima, his beloved daughter, often took part in the discussions of the Caliphate.

Mr. Ameer Ali, describing the early Islamic society, remarks: "Fathers were still proud to assume surnames after their beautiful daughters and accomplished daughters, and brothers and lovers still rushed to battle acclaiming the names of their sisters and lady loves. The high-bred still maiden could still hold conversation with men without embarrassment, and in absolute unconsciousness of grief. The beautiful lines of Ferdowsi were still applicable. Life full of smiles, countenance full of modesty, conduct virtuous, conversation lively."

She entertained the guests without shyness and as she knew her worth she was respected by all around her. A well-known author relates that returning from Mecca, he halted at a watering place not far from Medina. The heat of the sun drove him to ask for shelter in a neighboring house, which appeared to be of some pretensions. He entered the courtyard and asked the inmates if he might alight from his camel. A lady's voice gave him the right for permission. He then asked for leave to enter the house, and receiving permission, he entered the hall, where he found a 'maiden fairer than the sun,' engaged in some household duty. She bade him be seated and they conversed and the words like pearls were scattered from her lips. Whilst they were conversing, the grandmother entered and sat down by their side.

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(1) Ameer Ali: A Short Hist. of the Saracens, p. 200
(2) Such as Abu Sufra, Abu Da'ila
(3) Homer of Persia
(4) Abu Taghlib: M d al-Ma'mun ad-Dhil (died 308 AH) quoted by Khwarizmi in his Kitab al-Kubra.
side, laughingly warning the stranger to beware of the 
witchery of the fair girl.”

Sukania, the great-grand-daughter of the Prophet—
was an accomplished lady; her residence was the resort of 
the poet, fakils (jurists), and learned and wise people 
of all classes. The assembly in her house were brilliant 
and animated and always enlivened by her repartee.

Sarria, the daughter of the Almoravid Caliph, rode in the street unveiled and Sozy in his Histoire de l'Islamisme, observes "l'usage de se voiler 
n'avait pas été par la femmes Almohadides”.

"It is sufficiently well known," says a living 
Orientalist of great repute, "that Moslem women have 
appeared in society unveiled and have given public 
lectures at universities. It is even said that when 
Almohad Ibir Tarik invaded Spain, a division of the troops 
was commanded by a woman."

In Spain "the Saracen lady was an undisguised 
spectator at the frequent jousts and tournaments."

Absolute seclusion and sequestration of the sexes 
became general only in the reign of the Abbaside Kadi 
billah (381 A.D), who did more to stop the progress of Islam 
than any other sovereign. In the time of Mama, Rashid 
and Mama, women seem to have been enjoying perfect 
freedom. "Reunions and evening conversations at the 
residences of cultured women of rank and position did 
not cease until the time of the Almohads.”

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(1) AmeerAli: Spirit of Islam p 202
(2) Coppee: History of the Arab Conquest of Spain VolII p 231
(3) A. Vambrey C.U.O.: Western Culture in Eastern Lands p 313
Hamilton, the translator of Hedaya, speaks about the seclusion and other institutions and customs regarding women as a treatise upon propriety and decorum.

"In it," says he, "is particularly exhibited the scrupulous attention paid to female modesty and the avoidance of every act which may tend to violate it even in thought. It is remarkable, however, that this does not amount to that absolute seclusion of women supposed by some writers... In fact, this seclusion is the result of jealousy or pride and not of any legal injunctions, as appears in this and several other parts of the Hedaya. Neither is it a custom universally prevalent in Mohammedan countries." The people of Java, for instance, never observed the custom.

"The seclusion and veiling of woman," says the high authority of the Dictionary of Islam (p. 374), "is put as a compliment rather than a restraint."

In conclusion, if the women seem to occupy at present an inferior position to man, or lead a miserable life, it is not due to any religious injunction but is rather an aspect of the general stagnation of the modern society. Education is spreading. Educated women want educated wives. Women are being educated. When the modern wives are educated, they will take their place in society as men's honored and respected companions and helpmates. Seclusion is a doomed institution. Quite a number of families in India have rejected the time-honored custom and have married the stages from the veiled to a half-veiled face, and from a thick veil to a transparent one and from this to an unveiled face.

under an umbrella etc etc are matters of common observations.

After all seclusion is not such an evil
as supposed by the European people. It has its place
in society and sometimes it is essential for the
well-being of the people. It has both its pros and cons.

Mr Bosworth Smith thinks that it has freed all
Mohammedan countries from those professional out-
casts, who live by their own misery. Of course he
speaks of the Moslem countries not under the direct
influence of European Civilization.

Before dismissing the subject it seems
but proper to say something about the life in seclusion.
I can speak about India out of my own experience and
observation, but I shall let the Urgubert say a few
words about the Turkish Harem.

In the Turkish Harem, according to him, the
women do not pass their time idly and idly in idleness as is
often supposed. "Domestic occupations of the women
independently of these avocations, which women have
in Europe, are numerous enough to occupy a great-
deal of their time." Speaking about the salutary influence
of the Harem, he goes so far as to say that "the Turk — agricultural
seamen, general, mechanic or professor — is far below other
European nations, as he is above any of them in his domestic
virtues, or his social integrity. He exists therefore he has a place
among nations only in consequence of these, which, again are not
the result of statute principle, but of habits; and of habits —
the impress of which is derived from the Harem."

(1) Urgubert : Spirit of the East 367
Modern women in India, with the exception of the lower classes, do not go out of their houses and go out for shopping, or paying visits, as they do in Turkey. Seclusion, or Purdah, as we call it, in India, has taken an extreme form there, which is without any warrant at all.

Yet, even there the women are not miserable. They go out sometimes, in carriages, with their fathers, brothers, or husbands on trips and picnics and have very pleasant times. Besides, they find their pleasures and recreations at home in the pure atmosphere of their husbands and children's love and peaceful occupations of domestic life. Very often and regularly they read books, not only to themselves, but also to all the women of house and to all the women of the neighbouring houses. Their reading usually consists of histories of Muslim dynasties, biographies of the heroes of Islam, anecdotes of the great men, religious books, books on manners, moral essays and poems in praise of God and the Prophet. The Koran, with meaning in vernacular forms, of course, a very great part of their reading. The children also, silently and attentively hear their mothers or sisters read and are often very much influenced. I have found such a life most helpful instrument of character-building. The children are inspired with high ideals. They began to hate evil from the very beginning. In such atmosphere are the children trained.

I. It is a pity however, that such a life is becoming less and less common every day.
Moslem Women In Various Capacities

In the Moslem society, a woman occupies a very high position. If she seems to be inferior to man as she really is at present, it is due to economic conditions. From the earliest time, women have been inferior to men and this has been due to their inability in carrying on the struggle for existence because of the period of maternity. In a matter of fact, bodily, they are weaker than men and men have kept them under subjection.

A Moslem woman can do anything which she is able to do. There is no legal or religious disability against her.

With some qualifications, it can be safely said that she is an equal of man in every respect.

"In what?" asked Fatima Khaman, in reply to a French lady, "is our position inferior to men?" What is it that a man can have and a woman cannot, unless it be due to physiological and anatomical difference? If a man can be a sovereign; so can a woman, if a man can be a general, so can a woman; if a man can be a Kazi or judge, so can a woman; if a man can be a professor or lecturer, so can a woman. And finally a woman has the right to vote in the Modern Constitution.

(1) Dr. Iqbal, M.A., Ph.D., in a Paper read at Lahore and published in The Observer.
"Women stand higher by the Muslim law than they do in the Roman law, and consequently in the European codes and customs, derived from that great mother of Western legislation. The privileges and advantages of a class of society depend chiefly on the laws regarding property, which imperceptibly, but steadily, from century to century confer influence and power to those favored in the distribution. It is most essential to the comprehension of the relative position of the Moslem and Christian women to compare their legal rights as regards property." (1) The Moslem women possess greater legal rights than those possessed by the English women, even since the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 (2). Whether married or not, the Moslem woman under no legal disability as children do; her contracts in buying and selling are valid and she only is bound by them. She can manage all her affairs. As soon as she is of age, the law vests in her all the rights which belong to her as an individual being. She cannot be married without her consent even by the Sultan. Her property is her property and cannot be wasted by her profligate husband. She has right to have custody of her children. "All the privileges which belong to her as a woman and a wife are secured to her, not by the conventions, which come and go, but by the actual text in the book of law." (3) And to quote Mr. Webb of America, "to-day there is no class of women in the world whose right are as completely protected as those of the Moslem community." (4)

(2) See Allen: The Brunner’s Islam or True Christianity.
As I said above, a Moslem woman can occupy the highest possible position in a state. She can rule over men and can have dominion over them.

Of the Moslem queens, Rudhia Begum, the daughter of Altamish, was the queen of Delhi. She was prepared by her father, to her brothers, and she proved herself worthy of the preference. She studiously attended to affairs of state, assumed the imperial robes, and every day gave audience from the throne; revised and confirmed the laws of her father, and dispensed justice with rigid impartiality.\(^{(1)}\)

Another Moslem queen was the high-spirited Shajar ad-Durr, the slave wife of Saladin's grand-nephew, "the woman who defeated the crusade of Louis IX, and afterwards spared the saintly hero's life."\(^{(2)}\)

Still another Moslem queen was Shanh, the last of the princely line of Salghar, "She ruled the great province of Fars for nearly a quarter of a century, during the troubled period of Mongol supremacy."\(^{(2)}\)

The rulers of the Moslem State of Bhopal, in Central India, have been women for several generations and have distinguished themselves as patrons of learning and the learned.

As for the queen-mothers and royal consorts who have actually ruled vast empires, there can be no counting.

\(^{(1)}\) E. H. Newan Ph.D., Ltd., History of India, p. 669.

\(^{(2)}\) S. Lane-Poole: Medieval India, p. 74.
"It is a curious arrangement of Muslim law," remarks Mr. Hughes, "that a woman may execute the office of a Kazi or judge."

We have already seen that a part of the military invading army of 'Umar bin Zaid, Tarik, the Conqueror of Spain, was commanded by a woman; and we know that Ayeshah, the favorite wife of the Prophet, led the army against the Nuzjahan, the wife of the Emperor Jahangir of India, opposed the troops of Mahabat Khan. Khoda and Ophirna held the crafty Peter at bay, before the siege of Damascin, till rescued by Khalid and Sherari. Two female commanders of the 'Caliph Himmam, the founder of Bagdad, fought against the Greeks. The Muslim Amazons have never been wanting, and a large number of names can be given if time and space would permit.

Muslim women have been found in all walks of life. We have seen them as sovereigns, generals, Kazi's. There have been many a woman scholar, poetess, musician, secretary to the king, university lecturer, jurist, preacher, teacher, saint, statesman and what not.

In the next chapter I intend to tell something about the learning among the Muslim women and there I shall indicate some notable women in various lines.

(1) Hughes: Dictionary of Islam, p. 674
(2) Ockley: History of the Saracens, p. 115-120.
Islam has made the acquiring of knowledge a duty of both men and women. Every male and female must seek knowledge even if she is in the far East. The one who acquires it, in the way of the Lord, performs an act of piety; who speaks it, praises the Lord; who seeks it, adores God; who disperses instruction in it, bestows alms; and who imparts it to its deserving object performs an act of devotion to God. He who leaves his home in search of knowledge, walks in the path of God. 

"Ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the martyr." No system of religion gives such an incentive to scientific and literary activities as Islam. Observation must be trained. "Travel and see how the world began." "Look at the heavens and think. Look at the colored rocks and meditate." Observe how the plant grows from the seed, how it brings fruits, how the fruits ripen. "A moment of meditation is better than thousands of years of prayers" etc etc. Such is the spirit of the teaching of the Koran.

It is but natural that truly devout Moslems must be the light givers of the world. At the time when the tide of Moslem Civilization was on the rise; when the Arabs had lighted the Dark World with the torch of learning, when the men had attained to a wonderful excellence in the arts and sciences, "it was indeed found, that even
the women had become students". They were not excluded from any of the studies. "They studied science, mathematics, mathematics, and history, as well as the lighter arts. They studied enough to be companions to their husbands."

The women had their own college, where they studied medicine and jurisprudence. They lectured on rhetoric, ethics, and belles-lettres, and participated with the stronger sex in the glories of a splendid civilization. The wives and daughters of magnates and sovereigns spent their substance in founding colleges and endowing universities, in establishing hospitals for the sick, refuges for the homeless, the orphan and the widow.

The daughter of the Mameluke Sultan Malik Taibi established at Cairo in 684 A.H., a well-known educational institution. The daughter of Malik Al-Ashraf, known as the Khattim, erected a splendid college at Damascus. Zamarid Khattin, wife of Nassiruddin Al-Awla, founded another college at Homs.

Margam, the daughter of Abu Bakr and El Faisi, had a college at Seville, out of which came so many maidens and damsels, who subsequently rendered themselves illustrious by their graces and acquirements.

The remainder of the chapter I propose to devote to short notices of some of the many thousands of the most noteworthy women in Moslem history.

(1) E. M. Yonge: Christian and Moslem in Spain, p. 74
(2) Conde: Arabic in Spain, p. 484
Ayécha, nicknamed Siddiga (the Truthful), the favorite wife of the Prophet, was one of the most eloquent women of her time. She has handed down hundreds of traditions. The greatest of the Companions of the Prophet would ask about the religious questions. Abu Bakr, Ameen Rabab, has called her the greatest jurist of the time, and she ascribed to her that she had not seen anyone having greater knowledge of law (Fiqh), medicine, and poetry than she.

Fatima the Prophet's favorite daughter was a remarkable woman for the age in which she lived, clever, accomplished and witty. Her sermons, songs, and aphorisms, serve as an index to her strength of character and nobility of mind. Her virtue gained her the title of "Our Lady of Goodly" by which name she is known among the Moslems.

Sukaimah, the great-granddaughter of Fatima the Prophet and daughter of Hussein the Martyr, was the most brilliant, most accomplished and most virtuous woman of her time—"la dame de son temp, la plus belle, la plus gracieuse, la plus brillante de qualites" as Peron calls her. Her selfless nature, scholar, she prized the converse of the learned and pious people. The ladies of the Prophet's family were noted for their learning, their virtue, and their strength of character.

St. Rabia of Basra, is described as one of the most eminent among the holy persons of her time. Her tomb is a place of pilgrimage to this day for both men and women.

(1) Zeinab: "Zainab" Manthun (in Arabic) p. 280-97.
(2) Ameer Ali: Short History of Islam, p. 54.
Shaikha Shukri, designated as Fakhruddin
Nisa (Teacher of Women), lived in the ninth century. She
accompanied among the greatest Ulama. She took lessons
under the greatest of the Sufis, like Abul Khazai
Tabrizi and Fakhruddin Ilyas as Shastani and
others. She wrote many works on tradition, law, unity
of God, and the like. Besides "She lectured, in public
in the great mosque of Baghdad, to large audi-
cences on literature, rhetoric, poetry, history and
belles-lettres. She occupied the annals of Islam
a position of equality with the most distinguished
Ulama. She was also renowned for the excellence
of her hand-writing."

Fadhl the poetess, wrote poetry, which is con-
idered equal in merit to that of the foremost poets.
Her Khastishid acknowledged the superiority of
Abdulah at Tambouranich. Princess Alaych, the
sister of Harun al-Rasid, was a poet of considerable
talent and one of the most accomplished musicians.
Zainab Um-al-Shuyukh was one of the most famous
lady jurists and Tahkeh lectured on the traditions
and was a poet of great talents. (3)

Nayvun, the daughter of Abu Bekr al-Ghasani, was
an eloquent poetess, well versed in history and litera-

Zanah and Hamda were the daughters of
Ab and a book seller. They lived near Granada. They were
excellent preachers, thoroughly versed in all branches of learning
and science. Their love of learning brought them into company of
scholars, with whom they mixed in perfect terms of equality. (4)
Ayesta, who was the daughter of Ahmad Ben Muhammad Cassim of Cordova, has been described by Abu Hayam in this manner "there was not a damsel in Spain, who could exceed her in beauty or in praiseworthy manner of her life, while there were few, who approached the distinction to which Ayesta had attained in erudition, eloquence, and poetry. She wrote elegies on the various kings and princes of her time and all admired the merit of her composition as well as the beautiful characters in which they were written, whether on paper or on wallum."

Nozama, a slave-girl of Mothair Rahman II, composed elegant poems and songs and she was also the secretary of the king.

Sadfa, the daughter of Ja'ffer Ben Naser el-Fezzenini, had made a very large collection of books on the arts and sciences. She composed beautiful verses and sang with a voice of wonderful sweetness.

Rudhia, called the Fortunate Star, the freed woman of Mothair Rahman II, was the admiral of her age, for her eloquent verses and for the profound learning displayed in her historical books. She travelled much the East, where she was applauded by the learned in parts and wherever she appeared, the renown of Rudhia was found to have gone before her.

Nur Jahan was the famous consort of the
Mughal Emperor Jehangir. Dr. Nolan
writes about her as follows: Her personal charms
were unrivalled, her mental powers of the highest
order; indeed it is said, that one of these
attractions, which captivated her royal spouse
was her facility of composing extempore verses.
The magnificence of the emperor's court was in-
creased by her taste and the expense diminished
by her good arrangements. To her is attributed
the invention of the 'allaq of roses.... All affairs
of the state were entrusted to her management.
She sat behind an open lattice, whilst many
of the nobility paid obeisance and the coin was
issued in her name. She was in every respect
the absolute monarch of the Empire. Her in-
fluence exemplified in the conduct conduct
of the emperor. Though retaining some of his
old vices, he was never after guilty of monstrous
outrages as before ""

In their princesses were almost all women
of great poetic talent. The names of Jahanara, Roohan
Ara and Zebun Nisa may be mentioned with special
merit.

Of the living women, Fatima Aliyeh Khanum
Khanum is the foremost among the educated women of
She is the daughter of Juddat Pasha, ex-minister of
justice and ex-vali of Aleppo. She was born in 1862.
She knows Turkish, Arabic, Persian and French
perfectly and is well versed in other arts and sciences

(11) Dr. Nolan. Hist. of India p. 652
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Indian princesses were almost all women
of great poetic talent. The names of Jahangir, Rashun-
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Of the living women, Fatima Aliyeh Khanum
Khanum is the foremost among the educated women of
She is the daughter of Juddat Pasha, ex-minister of
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She knows Turkish, Arabic, Persian and French
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(1) Dr. Nolan Hist. of India p. 652
She had had many interviews with European ladies of knowledge and learning. She writes articles in newspapers, is the author of a number of books.

Zeinab Khanam is the daughter of Haji Khamm Hussein. She is an inhabitant of Cairo and is an author. Her book, called *Ad-Darul Manthur fi-Tabaqat Rubbat al-Khadra*, is a voluminous one, having as many as 552 large pages. It is a biographical dictionary of women in all nations and in all ages. It gives the selection from the works of authoresses and gives short anecdotes and episodes in the lives of the various women mentioned there in. It is a laborious work, but perhaps not a very scholarly one.

The above are only a few names, which I have chosen at random. To those who are interested in this subject I recommend the book called *Ad-Darul Manthur*, written by Zeinab and described under her name.

The reading of this chapter, I hope, will throw considerable light on the condition of learning among the Moslem women, who have distinguished themselves in every branch of the polite literature.
Books Consulted.

The following are some of the books consulted and used in the preparation of this paper.

1. The Koran
2. Ameer Ali: A Short History of the Saracens
3. The Spirit of Islam
4. An Nakshbandi: Muhammadan Law of Inheritance
5. Urguhart: Spirit of the East
6. Vambrey: Western Culture in Eastern Law
7. COPPE: Conquest of Spain by the
8. Bondé: Arabs in Spain
10. Bosworth-Smith: Mehammed and Muhammad
11. Ockley: History of the Saracens
12. Hughes: Declaration of Islam
13. G. N. Yonge: Christian and Moors in Spain
14. De Brunnen: Islam or True Christianity
15. Parliament of Religions
16. Aitken: Islam Under the Arab
17. E. H. Norton, Ph.D., LL.D.: History of India
18. G. F. Howard: History of Matrimonial Institution
19. Social Progress 1906
20. S. Lane-Poole: Mediaeval India
21. E. L. Palmer: Harun Alyschad
22. Zerwah: Ad-Darul Mantuh.