

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

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**The Contribution of Muslim Women  
in the Prosperity of the British  
civilization**

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## Dedication

I would like to thank my family and my friends for their help and support.



## **Abstract**

Islam as a religion is considered since old as the world of terrorism and terrorists by almost the west countries. In this latter, people inherited wrong ideas about Islam, that is why Muslims all over the world are disliked and they are misbehaved just because they are Muslims. In the UK, Muslims suffered a lot from stereotyped ideas about Islam which caused several issues. And because of these religious problems, feminism played a role in the UK. In each society, notably, women' role is extremely important. Therefore, Muslims women had a great effect in the construction of the UK. Thus, this research will investigate the role of Muslims women in the construction of the British society. Or in other words, how did Muslims women survived against Islamophobia and shaped there identities. Chances should be given to Muslims women so that stereotypes views about Islam and Muslims can be ended. And Different clubs associated to protect Islam in Great Britain.

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## General Introduction

In Great Britain societies, Islam has taken a place. It is practiced till these days. However, Islamophobia had shown in Great Britain because of the misunderstanding of Islam.

Thus, this research sheds light on the role of feminism with an Islamic background in the British communities. This research tackles different points about the effects of Muslims women on the British society to guarantee their existence. Therefore, two problematic are raised within this paper which are:

- 1- How Islam took place in Britain and how it became a common religion in GB?
- 2- How Muslim women participated in the development of the British society?

In contrast to the Victorian Period, Islam addresses the status of women from weak to strong characters and therefore creates a new identity for them with more available rights and opportunities. In the same vein this study attempts to give the readers a general idea about Muslim women in Britain.

This extended essay consists of two chapters: The first part of the first chapter is connected with social history of Victorian Age in the second half of the nineteenth century and the spread of Islam in United Kingdom which carried through the translation of Muslim books that enfolded culture of Islam via the connection between British Empire and Islamic countries. However, the second part of the first of chapter tries to focus



on the values of Muslim women according to Islam, and provides a vision about their position, their rights, and their roles as well.

Moreover, the second chapter gives a description of Islamophobia in Britain towards Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. It examines the different features and major attitudes of Islamophobia. It presents all the challenges and obstacles that faced Muslim women and describe their successful experiences focusing mostly on their roles.

## *Chapter One*

### *Historical Background*

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter tries to shed light on Islam in Britain with the major historical event which occurred during the Victorian era, emphasis was on the status of women condition and the worst social effects during the Industrial Revolution. This chapter starts by giving a brief view about Islam, and how it spread in United Kingdom among the crusades against Islam. In addition, it focuses on the friendship between Britain and some Islamic countries, and the history of Ottoman *Sultan*<sup>1</sup> who helped Ireland during the Great Famine.

Besides, the translation of Arabic books in different kind of knowledge and *Quran*<sup>2</sup>. Then, it attempts to speak about the adventure of Muslims immigrants in Britain and their contribution in expanding Islam. This chapter also offers an overview about women's position throughout their work in term of Islam, and their significant role. Finally, it tends to provide the impact of Islam on humanity and the way it rephrase the life of female. It gives a vision about the status of Muslim women, and the main themes that deals with, as well as its role in reflecting the Islamic social society.

## **1.2 Britain in the Past**

Among the Victorian period, Britain was characterized by great change in the way of Industrial Revolution that produced both the advantages and the inconvenient on social life. This era witnessed a great economic growth and technical progress. It was a time of dramatic changes full of activity on the working like stability and prosperity. During the Victorian Era, Britain, a very small country, expanded its already vast imperial holdings, so that by 1914 its comprised one-quarter of the world's population and fifth of its land. (Steinbach, 2012, 58)

Victorian period is a process of fighting for creating change from the Middle Ages till Industrial Revolution occurred. Industrial Revolution was a

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<sup>1</sup>Sultan: a ruler of a Muslim state or country.

<sup>2</sup>Quran: the central religious text of Islam.

labour more productive bringing improvement, wealth and power to Great Britain. It achieved organization of commerce and industry, building, transport and agriculture for increased consumption with popular growth. Moreover, it supported in the opening of shopping and treatments, and was a movement that came with efforts and hard work. In another word, Industrial Revolution was an umbrella of fabrication and series of innovation and commercial exchange with other countries. Although, it brought positive aspects there were also negative impacts on British society like misery and poverty for working people.

One of the first major historians to attempt a history of nineteenth- century Britain was George Macaulay Trevelyan, whose *British History in the Nineteenth Century (1782–1901)* was published in 1922. To Trevelyan this was an epoch of change, ‘more rapid ... than in any previous epoch of our annals’, in which economic growth ‘led to social and social to political change’. This was a period of ‘new thoughts and new ideals’ (William, 2014, 02) at this stage it is worth noting to mention that the conception of female as to oppose to male has been handed down from the Victorian Era.

### **1.3The rise of the Industrial Revolution**

The Victorian Era was marked by the height of Industrial Revolution. It was an era of development and wealth for Great Britain but it brought suffering and misery too for the working class especially women

#### **1.3.1 The barriers that Muslim women had**

Women were not protected from danger in work, they were exploited by men for realized their aims, and considered as furniture especially in the factory. She worked long hours for increase production and her work daily this resulted the separation of her family. During the first 60 years of the Industrial Revolution, living conditions were, by far, worst for the poorest of the poor. The Poor Law of 1834 created workhouses for the destitute. Families,

including husbands and wives, were separated upon entering the grounds. They were confined each day as inmates in a prison and worked every day. (Thompson, 1966, 267)

Men had precious share, they were public creatures whereas women have been obliged to do for domestic duties and their families, the mother were focused on children, they see themselves as prisoners. When the Industrial Revolution took part in Britain it resulted the worst possible suffering for woman. In the other hand, widowed women took place of her spouse while going to work in factories for gaining subsistence and make works exploited her weakness. The poor women suffered the worst tribulations and trials of labour; they were living in danger and injustice. (Qutb,1984,90-91)

In other wise, women were deprived from the right of education, they had not the opportunity to go to school, and they were staying at home to learn how to cook and to sew. However, just few women who belonged to the aristocracy class were seen as angles in the castle. Those women took care for their animals better than their servants, and they were lucky enough to be educated at home while other girls could not. The middle and upper class girls learned a list of subjects like literature, mathematics, geography, history and modern language.

During this era, boys could travel and they had priority in being further educated. In the work of Marry Wellstone Craft <sup>3</sup> the ‘‘Vindication of the Rights of women’’ blames both genders, women appeared intellectually inferior to men because they do not succeed in getting education, they were treated by male as subordinate beings and they accepted the oppression without any reaction, she focuses on the principles of female and women who have capacities to change the society and contribute in it. Women have never been given a role in British society; they were totally excluded from the art and literature. They were treated as object, and had no right to have opinion or

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<sup>3</sup>Marry Wellstone : Feminist British writer (1759-1797)

value until they get married and finally be manipulated by their husbands. When women are not chosen to get married, they turned to prostitute because they were considered as banned from their family. So, they start to live in hard way and horror, suffering from slavery and mal oppression.

To fight back against men's abuse, women started to use their pen and express their feelings and thoughts. Mary Shelley<sup>4</sup> was the first women who write about slavery women, she was influenced by British writers such as: Jane Austen<sup>5</sup>, Emily Bronte<sup>6</sup>, Emily Wellstone Craft<sup>7</sup>, they perpetuated on their work the position of women and described the horrible situation in which they were living by explaining how women were not allowed to choose their husbands, while men were free to have choice and marry as men n controlling their own financial properties. At that time, women were obliged to accept with no right considered as domestic creature who their own right was to be mothers and caring children.

### **Islam in England**

Islam was born in the seventh century in the Middle East in *Mecca* and has impact on culture by introducing moral codes came from the *Quran*, these codes came from *Quran*, it focused towards and in explaining beliefs with God and contributed in teaching the *Quran*, the interpretations of it were among the factors that led to the spread of Islamic European countries by formulated power connections and treatments in many domains.

#### **1.4.2 The role of Ottoman among Britain in 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

\*Islam attempted to expand the peace in the world during campaigns and one of those contacts was with Britain. In fact, some Islamic countries

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<sup>4</sup>Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) an English novelist

<sup>5</sup>Jane Austen (1775-1817) an English novelist

<sup>6</sup>Emily Jane Bronte (1818-1848) English novelist and poet

<sup>7</sup>Emily Wellstone Craft: Mary Wellstone's daughter

succeeded in making friendships with English people and keep it in that way for many centuries. Queen Elizabeth I<sup>8</sup> formulated an agreement with Sultan Murad III and the first treaty of commerce was signed in 1580. Several treaties were made between England and Othman Empire by using the dispatches besides of the first English ambassador William Harborne<sup>9</sup>. (KINEALY 2013, 115-119)

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Irish history witnessed a divesting event which was the Great Famine. Between 1845 and 1852 blight hit the island's potato crop, and potato was a staple item of food in Ireland at that time. Also, one English religious journal published an article about that entitled ‘‘A Benevolent Sultan’’, in which the author wrote ‘‘ for the first time a Mohammedan Sovereign representing multitudinous Islamic population. The press blamed the British diplomats in constant for rejecting the initial donation just to avoid embarrassing the Queen Victoria.

After that, the part town of Drogheda in Ireland mentioned a crescent and a star as an Islamic significant and considered them as a gift adopted after the Ottoman Empire. The citizens of Drogheda appreciated when The English courts attempted to block the ships, but the food arrived in their town and was left there by Ottoman sailors. After that, Britain and Ottoman territory had started a good relationship especially when Britain had become involved in German War to defend Ottoman Empire against a hostility expanding of Russian, even though, the British did not forget the services of the Sultan when he help them during hard times. (Murphy, 2003, 34-38)

In the Middle Age, Islam is generally thought as being a recent arrival in England and that there has been contact between Muslims and English people for centuries. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, King of Mercia<sup>10</sup> copied gold dinar from the dinars of the Caliph Al Mansur<sup>11</sup>. The coins mentioned the Islamic inscription

<sup>8</sup> Queen Elizabeth: (1533- 1603) was Queen of England and Ireland from 1558 until her death

<sup>9</sup> William Harborne: (1542-1617) English Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>10</sup> King of Mercia: King Offa (757-796) one of the Anglo Saxon.

<sup>11</sup> Caliph Al Mansur: 2<sup>nd</sup> Caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate

and were engraved with religious term. These coins opened the trade and were adopted as shopping centre. The two countries were ruling with peace between them and their leaders respected each creed. Even though, it is well known that the Islamic history played an important role in treating all people as equal and ruling them with diversity and humanitarian way<sup>12</sup>.

#### **1.4.3 The transfer of Islamic attitudes**

Muslim scholarships, Islamic geographical, literature, philosophy and science were translated with Latin language and was studied by the English students from 1386. Professor John Makdisis<sup>13</sup> denounced the English jury and said that the juries in a court listened to the facts about a certain crime and when they decided whether to accuse a person guilty or not they used Islamic ways. He agreed that these institutions were transmitted to England by the Islamic civilization applied by jurors.

It is clear that Islam uses simple teaching and easy to understand besides that Islam showed science as powerful instrument, and the only thing that helps in increasing knowledge and flourishing discovering. The first version of the *Quran* from French to English was published by Alexander Ross<sup>14</sup> in 1649, who he translated it from Du Ryer<sup>15</sup> in 1647 French *Quran*.

Muslims in England appeared by drawing principles of Islam in different sources surrounding from the literary works and translations of *Quran* from Arabic and Turkish. They printed them in English as in Latin language and they preserved books which affected British culture at that time. Also, in 1620s William Laud<sup>16</sup> used many approaches to study Islam, besides of writers like John Fox<sup>17</sup> and Edward Pococke<sup>18</sup> who were interested in Islamic theology and

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<sup>12</sup> [Http : //en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam)

<sup>13</sup> Johan Makdisis: Professor of Law.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Ross: (1832- 1897) European Author.

<sup>15</sup> Du Ryer: French Orientalist who wrote the third Western translation of Quran.

<sup>16</sup> William Laud: (1573-1645) He was the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633.



## *Chapter One: Historical Background*

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<sup>17</sup> John Fox: (1952-1990) was an American novelist.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Pococke: (1604-1619) was an English Orientalist and biblical scholar.

use it in their novels too. To sum up; the religion was the beginning to grow in the world by challenging the traditional view and superstition. (Mandawille 2011, 50)

### **Flows of Muslim in Britain**

The first group of Muslims that arrived in Great Britain was about 300 years ago. A large number of them immigrated in England in the first quarter of the twentieth century, among them Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, all of them with one main goal, which is searching for a better material life. Although they found many obstacles, they continued their adventure.

### **Immigration to Britain**

Over centuries many people from all over the world have come in Britain. After the World War II, Britain has a long history of immigration. In 1950s; 1960s; 1970s, a large groups of Muslims went to England coming from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in order to search for a better material life based on security. Many immigrants have tended to seek their fortune in Britain, as soldiers, officials, tourists and a great number of seamen worked on British ships. Adventures and labour migrants are used to categorise the flux of people entering a country. Immigrants have been used as the all-encompassing term to describe a group of people entering Britain.

Muslim population are increased year after year, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially Muslims students who were send to Europe for further studies and to form movements in European countries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was one million British Muslims and the year after, the number increased and become one to two million Muslims in London, half of them were born English Muslim. (Richardson, 2002, 99)

### **The Need for Labour**

The main cause for Muslim immigrants in England was employment. The Muslims immigrants followed the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; it was a key for trade which caused a demand for employers to work in ships. Most of those immigrants came from the Yemen although 50% of them originated from either Pakistan or Bangladesh. Britain needed unskilled and skilled labour; the National Health Service (NHS) was also in need for medicines especially from Asian countries. Besides that, Britain's Muslims began also to work in London Transport System.

Therefore, immigration was increasing by commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 where the access to Britain was restricted and citizenship regulations were further tightened up in 1968 and 1971; the act also removed the rights of automatic. Even though the immigrants who came to Britain have British passports, it took a long period before they felt like British citizens. Many of them came not only to work but also to stay, this resulted problems between blacks and white Britons and increased the level of hostility which was due to simplified reactions from the authorities. Another problem was poverty and discrimination which caused sufferance to Muslims. Besides, 5% of Muslims households in the United Kingdom are owner occupiers; they are disproportionately represented in the most deprived urban areas.<sup>19</sup>

### **Multiculturalism, Integration and British Muslims**

Many Africans and Asians people centred in part cities Hull, Liverpool and on London. All these areas became swiftly multicultural. The United Kingdom had seen significant debates about the multicultural and race relations of immigrants and this had invented criticism. In 1958; Britain had witnessed violent clashes between white Britons and Indian people community living in United Kingdom. A year after, the Notting Hill carnivals was established which displayed the colourful community and has been a celebration of London's multicultural diversity and was consider as an annual event. Multiculturalism

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.euro-islam.info/countryprofiles/UnitedKingdom>

was new mean in anti-discrimination laws and enforcement functions, promotional roles of work especially the creation of an independent.

It is related to the belief that some ethnic and religious minorities do not think of themselves as the British. Another debate about national identity and interests over radicalization in Muslim communities has due to the appearance of semi distinct strands of policy. First, integration policy focused on settlement services for no recognized refugees. It introduced the form of antidiscrimination laws and race relations of 1965 and 1968. It has led the government to change the beliefs and to expand equality and give more importance to values. The second community cohesion is concerned with bringing communities together through a different level of initiatives, which encourage education between schools with ethnically and mixed housing policies.

It is a way to accommodate social and varieties cultures. The third one is the promotion of citizenship has related the naturalization process which includes new citizenship tests, language tests and citizenship ceremonies. Finally, equal opportunity created under labours have empowered and extended the violence from works, it was belonged to Race Relation Act 2000 and has a goal to destruct racism and authorities, including the correction of ethnic inequalities in employment and service delivery. (Alexandra, 2008, 1-3)

For those reasons, Islam is considered as the second largest religion in the United Kingdom after Christianity and with a massive number of Muslims, it has encouraged the establishment of more than 1500 mosques. The Shah Jahan Mosque, built in 1889 by Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner<sup>20</sup>, was the first mosque to be built in the UK and Northern Europe.

Besides of the imams of the mosque: Sadr-ud-Din; Abdul Majid; William Bashy; Shaikh HalizWahba; and Marmodike<sup>21</sup>. They all attempted to

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<sup>20</sup> Dr Gottlieb WilhemLeitner : British Orientalist and Professor of the Kings College London

<sup>21</sup> Sud-Din, Abdul Majid, William Bashy, Shaikh HalizWahba, and Marmodike: Builders of the mosque

contribute and cultivate their aim of religion in mosques as to encourage greater learning in Islam.<sup>22</sup>

**British politic toward.....**

In the elections of May 2005, the integration of Muslim reached 48 persons who participated in candidacy from the major parties, Sayeeda Warsi<sup>23</sup> (vice chair the conservative party) and Fiyaz Mughal<sup>24</sup> (Liberal Democrat) Britain empowered Muslim woman and gave her authority.

In 2008, The England had a Blasphemy law; it was used to protect the opinions and customs of church. The purpose of it was to embrace all kind of religions in term of protection and reinforcement of the rank of Muslim women. Until that point, there is always a disagreement concerning the role of Islam. Furthermore, there is a freedom in United Kingdom to practice any religion and mostly the country and religious minorities have good connection between them. Also, there is a collection of data on education from various statistical agencies within the country which helps in organizing Indian Muslims and divided them by predominately Muslim origin and predominates by non-Muslims origin. Queen Elizabeth II<sup>25</sup> has famous speech “Defender of the Faith” (Scriven, 2012, 230)

The public import of Rushdie Affair drew the conditions for a critique in the public culture such as the race riots in 1958 and 1981. It was important event and a milestone in the revolution of race relations in the United Kingdom. Before Rushdie Affair integration was a tool in achievement assimilation which affected on changing and got used to new situations: adjustment of groups in the dominant society. (Césari, 2004, 99)

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.the-wayfarer.com/britains-first-mosques>

<sup>23</sup> Sayeeda Warsi : British-Pakistani lawyer

<sup>24</sup> Fiyaz Mughal: Director of Tell Mama

<sup>25</sup> Queen Elizabeth II: Queen of the United Kingdom.

### **The Status of Muslim Women in Islam**

Women in pre-Islamic Arab times were considered to be a heavy burden on the family. The birth of the daughter was embarrassing for the father, who considered it a disgrace and a matter of shame. Therefore, the Arabs of that time practised widely ‘female infanticide’: burying their female child alive. This custom was common among the Arabs and it was even viewed as a generous act. With the advent of Islam, the position of women was radically redefined. Firstly, it prohibited the practice of ‘female infanticide’ and restored the birth rights of women. Hence Islam elevated them to the status of being as worthy of human dignity as were men. Both men and women were henceforth to be regarded as equal in humanity

In relation to the absolute, woman is equal to man in all essential rights and duties; God makes no distinction between man and woman. It is within this context that Islam has granted women broad social, political and economic rights, education and training rights and work opportunity rights. To protect these rights from being abused by men, Islam provided firm legal safeguards.<sup>26</sup>

### **Women through Islam**

In many societies, a woman is still regarded as a second-class citizen and deprived of various basic rights enjoyed by the male population. However, Islam was the first religion formally to grant the women a status never known before. The *Quran* contains hundreds of teachings, which apply both to men and women alike. The moral, spiritual and economic equality of men and women as propagated by Islam is unquestionable. The specific verses of The *Quran*, which address themselves to men or women, deal with either their physical differences or the role they each have to play in safeguarding the moral fibre of the society Islam envisages. (CHAUDHRY, 2012, 01)

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<sup>26</sup>[http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_pre-Islamic\\_Arabia](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_pre-Islamic_Arabia)

Inferior, mistreated and enslaved-for many people, these are the first words that come to mind when thinking about women in Islam. These stereotypes perturbed Islam with cultural practices and fail to recognize that Islam has strengthened women with many rights and protections and honoured them with a signified stature since the 7th century. At a time when female children were buried alive in Arabia and women were considered transferable property, Islam honoured women in society by elevating them and protecting them with unprecedented rights. (ARSHUL, 2011, 01)

In 610 C.E., God began to reveal the message of Islam to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in Mecca. Muhammad, called people towards the belief in one God and encouraged them to be just and merciful to one another. He particularly transformed their mind set regarding the treatment of women. Islam abolished the practice of killing female children and raised the stature of women in society to one of dignity, esteem, and privilege. For that, God devotes an entire chapter of the *Quran* to women. Islam proclaims that all human beings, men and women, are born in a pure state.

In the divine scheme of regulation of the relationship between men and women, Islam has assigned a position of dignity and honour to woman. Such beneficent regulation is essential for peace, comfort, happiness, continuation of the species and progress. The *Quran* emphasizes that God has created all species in pairs, and so men and women have been created of the same species. (John, 1988, 03-07)

### **The Rank of Muslim Women in the Family**

The family is the first and essential area in which women's rights have to be secured. Marriage and parenthood are among the basic objectives of the Islamic legal system.

The family is an important part in Islam, and women's position is honoured and respected. Concerning Marriage, in Islam it is based on mutual peace, love, and compassion. And Muhammad embodied the best character and is a role model for all Muslims. His example of being helpful around the household and treating his family with compassion and love is a tradition that Muslim strive to implement in their daily lives. Muhammad, treated his wives with the utmost respect and honour and never abusive towards them. One of his traditions clearly states, 'The best of you are those who are best to their wives' (Muslim). So any form of emotional, physical or psychological abuse is prohibited in Islam and the improper treatment of women is no exception to this rule.

Besides, a woman has the right to accept or reject marriage proposals and her approval is required to complete the marriage contract. She cannot be forced to marry someone against her will and if this occur for cultural reasons, it is in direct opposition of Islam. (OSMAN, 1999, 06)

As the wife, God also gives mothers a high status and elevates their position in the family. In the *Quran*, God mentioned all the sacrifices mothers make in bearing children to remind people to treat their mothers with love, respect and care. Emphasizing the importance of mothers, the Prophet Muhammad, said: "heaven lies under the feet of your mother." (OSMAN, 1999, 14)

On another occasion, a man repeatedly asked Muhammad, "Who amongst the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?" Each time, the Prophet, peace be upon him, replied " your mother". When the man asked for the fourth time, he replied, " your father". (Sahih Bukhari 5971 and Sahih Muslim 07/02)

### **Women's Rights**



Islam has an extensive tradition of protecting the civil liberties of women based on the guidelines set forth by God and His Prophet. Women are empowered with many rights and protections under Islamic law and are honoured with a dignified stature in society. (OUTEB, 12, 1984)

### **The Right for Education**

Among the early Muslims, women were active participants in the cohesive functioning of the society. Women expressed their opinions freely and their advices were actively sought. Women nursed the wounded during battles, and some even participated in battlefield. Women traded openly in the marketplace, so much so that the second caliph, Omar, appointed a woman, Shaffa bint Abdullah, as the supervisor of the bazaar.

The right to education both the *Quran* advocated for it, and approved that men and women equally need to seek for knowledge. This declaration was very clear and was largely implemented by Muslims throughout history. One of the most influential scholars of Islam was Muhammad's wife, Aisha<sup>27</sup>. After his death, men and women would travel to learn from her because she was considered a great scholar of Islam. The recognition of female scholarship and women's participation in academia has been encouraged and practised throughout the majority of Islamic history. For instance, *al Qarawiyin*<sup>28</sup> Mosque and University, the oldest running university, was funded by a woman, Fatima al Fihri<sup>29</sup>, in Morocco in 859 C.E. (OSMAN, 1999, 34-36).

### **The Right to Work**

The *Quran* and statements of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, affirm the human rights of women and their role as participants in society.

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<sup>27</sup> Aishah Bint Abi Bakr (613-678): one of Muhammad, peace be upon him, wives

<sup>28</sup> Al-Qarawiyin : **religious university**

<sup>29</sup> Fatima al Fihri: (800-880) the woman who established the Qarawiyin Mosque

Like their male counterparts, Muslim women have the right to work, obtain an education, and participate in government.

According to Islam, as a rule, woman can work inside her house or outside; she can help her husband in providing the needs of her family. The important thing is spending the life in peace and order and individual's undertaking the responsibilities which are suitable for their opportunities and abilities in a well- balanced way in supplying the needs.

There is no harm in working of a woman in the house or workplace of a stranger man if it is in the way Islam orders; namely, if she works with some other women or if she works in an open area. But, if she has to stay with a stranger man alone in a closed place, it is haram since solitude occurs (*Al- Fiqhala' al- Mazahib al Arbaa*, c.03, 125).

Considering this basic fact, Islamic law does not deprive a woman from the right to work within the limits that protect her honour and dignity. Islam permits the woman to personally conduct her business contracts and financial transactions.<sup>30</sup>

### **Right in Economic Independence**

Of the great faiths, Islam has been foremost in assigning to woman a position of economic independence. It is well known that in the United Kingdom till as late as 1882, when the first Married Women's Property Act was passed by Parliament, a married woman could hold no property of her own, independently of her husband. Any property that a femme sole (unmarried woman) held in her own right vested automatically in her husband on her marriage. A hundred years later traces still linger in certain aspects of British Law which illustrate a married woman's position of dependence upon her husband.

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.islamswomen.com/marriage/fiqh\\_of\\_marriage\\_8.php](http://www.islamswomen.com/marriage/fiqh_of_marriage_8.php)

In Islam the independent economic position of woman has been established since the very beginning. Mention has been made of the obligation of the husband to make a settlement at the time of marriage. This settlement is called dower. In addition, the widow is entitled to her share in the husband's estate, which is determined by law. Any property that a woman might acquire by her own effort, or might inherit as an heir or receive as a legacy or gift, belongs to her independently of her husband. She may ask her husband to manage it, but if she chooses to manage or administer it herself, he cannot interfere in her management or administration of it. A married woman who possesses means of her own may and in most cases does, contribute a portion or the whole of her independent means towards the upkeep of the household, but is under no obligation to do so. The up keep of the household is the entire responsibility of the husband; even when the wife is in her own right better off than her husband.

She also has the right to work and spend the money she earns as she wishes. She has no obligation to share her money with her husband or any other family members, although she may choose to do so out of good will. For instance, Khadija<sup>31</sup>, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, was one of the most successful businesswomen of Mecca, and she freely spent from her wealth to support her husband and the cause of Islam. (Shakeel 2002, 01)

### **The Right for Inheritance:**

Like education, before Islam women were deprived of inheritance and were themselves considered property to be inherited by men. Islam gave women the right to own property and inherit from relatives, which was a revolutionary concept in the seventh century. Whether a women is a wife, mother, sister, or daughter, she receives a certain share of her deceased relative's property. This share depends on her degree of relationship to the

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<sup>31</sup> Khadija : one of Muhammad's wives

deceased and the number of heirs. While many societies around the world denied women inheritance, Islam assured women this right, illustrating the universal justice of Islam's divine law. At the time of marriage, a woman is entitled to a financial gift (dowry) from her husband. This dowry is legally owned by her and cannot be used by anyone else. In the case of divorce, she has the right to keep whatever she owned before the divorce and anything she personally earned after marriage. (JAWAD 1998; 21)

#### **1.5.3.5. The Right to divorce**

Divorce existed before Islam, but the advent of Islam made the divorce process much more favourable to women. Women's property is not divided during a divorce. Whatever a woman earns or is given before and during the course of the marriage remains her property if the marriage ends. This prevents men from taking advantage of women's property or wealth through marriage. On the other hand, the man's property is divided if a divorce occurs according to the couple's marriage contract. (JAWAD 1998; 44-45)

#### **1.6. Conclusion**

In a nut shell; this chapter attempts to over view historical background of Islam and his ascension to Britain .we found that Islam culture translation from Arabic to European languages contributed to the expansion of this religion. Moreover; the second part devoted to speak about women in Islam their rights and their rights and their visibility in society as a free human.

The next chapter begins with existence of Muslim woman and Islamophobia has been present in Western Culture. It discusses the arguments about Islamophobia and the different forms of racism and race inequality.

## *Chapter Two*

### *Muslim Women and Islamophobia in Britain*

**Introduction**

The second chapter attempts to highlight the status of women among Islam, in order to show the reader what was their position and how they take their rights when Islam preserve in Britain and how they lived in British society, it bears the violation of Muslim rights and rejection of his religion. This chapter starts by providing definitions of Islamophobia and its effects on Muslims lives. Then, it offers a description of the relationships between Muslim woman and non-Muslims by drawing a line of similarities and differences of oppression women during the Victorian Age and the threats abuse due to Islamophobia. Finally, it tends to supply a version about the most important feminism in Islamic laws where women's empowerment can challenge this phenomenon and contribute to make benefits to the society with free practices of their religion.

**Feminism under Islamic Law**

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world with an estimated 1.5 billion followers. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, reactions to discriminatory practise in non-Muslims countries have led to further reinforcement among Muslims and even non-Muslims sympathizers, globally. Nevertheless among Muslim nations men embrace varied perspectives about the status of women and generally undermine their roles. In such societies women's liberties, dress styles, veiling and hijab are controlled by men, rather than by women.

All women whether Muslims or not, have similar aspirations and expectations as their male counterparts. The public perception that Muslim women are oppressed and unequal needs to be challenged and addressed both within the Muslim and communities. (ANADOLU, 2009; 01-04)

**The Rising of Islamophobia**

The misrepresentation, disadvantage, and discrimination experienced by Muslims in Britain today, were part of British society and history long before the events of 2001. Portrayals of Islam as undifferentiated have often obscured the complexities of the historical experience of Muslims in different societies.

Western Orientalist and Islamist alike have tended to emphasize what distinguishes Islam from the West, presenting it as the 'others' The Christian West has described Islam as dangerous, powerful force and violent that requires tight control but also needs to be kept at a distance.

The imagery of the Iranian Revolution (1979), The Public Burning of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (January 1989), the Orchestrated Hysteria before and after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (1990-1991), and the Attacks of 11 September 2001 have all combined to confirm an antipathy towards Islam and Muslims in the Western popular mind.

Islamophobia includes when someone or something is targeted, discriminated against or excluded in any way, due to their Muslim identity. It also includes prejudice that promotes fear against Muslims in particular. It was expressed in a number of ways after September 2001. Muslims around the world were targeted and Muslims in Britain were by no means exempt. All Muslims adults or children were attacked physically and verbally. They were called murdered and were excluded from society.

Two Cambridge University's students had their headscarves ripped off. In West London, an Afghan taxi driver was attacked shortly after 11 September and left paralysed. There were death threats against Muslims and reports mentioned a rise of 72% in crimes against Muslims just in September 2001 as compared with September 2000. (HUMAYUN 2003, 4-5)

### **2.3.1 Islamophobia and Racism**

The Westerns opinions observed Islam as a religion with no values while compared with others which result the creation of Islamophobia. It composed of Islam and Phobia means the fear from Islam and the prejudices toward Muslims. It is a widespread phenomenon in Britain.

Many scholars consider Islamophobia is a type of racism; they have adopted a lot of definition of it and developed to measure it in form of fearful attitudes towards discrimination which are noted forms of Muslim phobia: Anti-Muhammad, anti-mosque, anti-Islam, and it follows. Also in violation of human rights and rejection of Muslim religion, it takes the shape of violent forms and racism which evaluates the viewing of other people's cultures as less as evil or the belief that one idea or religion is inherently superior to another.

In the Runnymede report, Islamophobia was defined as "An outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination." by professor Fred Halliday.

The report went on to state that Islamophobia is the "dread of Islam and therefore, the fear and dislike of all Muslims," which also includes discrimination against Muslims through their exclusion from the economic, social, and public life. The professor tried to change the different views about Islam and to explain that Muslims are facing problems in many factors such as: slavery, immigration, culture language, and customs. Also, the main issues were with the political factor which created conflicts between both sides. Until now, debates occur between the relationship of racism and Islamophobia and how they are affecting society. (ROBIN 2002, 04-06)

#### **Mass Media of Islamophobia**

The hostility toward Islam and Muslims has been a characteristic of European societies and it carried different functions. Each version of



Islamophobia has its own shape as well as its similarities in Britain; it can refer to different ways such as the verbal and physical abuse, assaults on public places, violence and tolerance against mosques, negative stereotypes, anti-Muslim graffiti at universities and stickers insults.

For some time now Muslims in Britain, and across the Western world, have also expressed their concerns about the way Islam is portrayed in the media which continues to reinforce Islamophobia attitudes in the majority of communities. Besides, it has been argued that the media's portrayal and representation of Islam has been one of the most prevalent and socially significant sources of Islamophobia in Britain. (SHADID and KONINGSVELD, 2002; 180)

### **Newspapers' Controversy**

The 1997 Runnymede report on Islamophobia powerfully illustrated how Islam and Muslims were negatively stereotyped in the press. Headlines such as 'The People's "slaughtering goats"' are certainly contributed to this Islamophobia atmosphere. Also, the attacks of September 2001 gave further impetus to Islamophobia in the media. The Daily Telegraph, under the heading 'A Religion that sanctions violence', which served to perpetuate the view that Muslims and Islam are violent and dangerous. (SAID, 1981, 06)

### **Stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims in Movies**

For this analysis, a range of film genres were examined, it was evident from all genres that they contained negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in general and Arabs in particular. Nevertheless, they all exhibited examples of Islamophobic discourses.

The action movie genre is more easily able to focus on topics such as threat, violence, fear and terrorism and this was the case in both *The Siege* (1998) and *Executive Decision* (1994), both of these films were criticised by

the Muslim community for the stereotypical clash of civilisations theory and negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims, depicting them as the enemy.

Besides, the British film *East is East* was much cruder in its references to Pakistani culture and Islamic values. The film focuses on a family living on Greater Manchester in the 1970s, as the father is Pakistani and the mother English. However, the fact remains that the Muslim husband is shown as being both physically and verbally abusive to his wife. (SAIED, 2003, 01-06)

### **Depiction of Muslims in Cartoons**

At possibly the other of films genre are children's cartoons and although they seem innocent enough, Sardar<sup>32</sup> (1998) amongst others, has demonstrated how in actual fact they reinforce negative attitudes towards other people and cultures.

Sardar (1998) uses examples of Pocahontas to tease out the various scenarios used by producers such as superior and inferior cultures or justification of domination by Westerners. So for example in Walt Disney's *Aladdin*, Throughout the film most of the Arab dwellers of 'Agrabah' are shown as brutal, chasing Aladdin, merchants selling their goods on market stalls. In contrast to the Arabs who are ruthless caricatures, Aladdin, Princess Jasmine and the Sultan are americanised to be precise heroes of the film. They have American accents whilst the rest of the cast have exaggerated and ridiculous Arab accents.

Rather than portray the Arab culture and Islamic religion in a positive or neutral light, the producers associate it with harsh punishments, and, uncivilised or inferior cultural identifiers attributed to Islam showing a distinction between American culture and lifestyle and Arab cultures.

American values are depicted through Aladdin and Jasmine – kindness to others, freedom, justice and love, whereas the Arab culture is illustrated by

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<sup>32</sup> Sardar: Cartoon

the villains, including the evil vizier, Jafar who is barbaric, cruel, harsh and oppressive. The cartoon adventure, with its huge popularity amongst both young and old, offers a brilliant opportunity to challenge the hegemonic representations of the 'other' in mainstream television, cinema and other media, but more often than not this opportunity is missed. In fact animation could play a key role in determining ideas about different cultures and places at an early stage in people's lives. (HUMAYUN, 2003, 29)

### **Ideological Perception of Islam**

The increasing of Islamophobia in Britain is reflected on superiority and inferiority sides which led to the creation of the "Othering". The first meaning consist of the word "other" with a small "o", which refers to Muslims, the Orient and Islamic countries. However, the word "other" with a big "o" known as the Grand Autre by critics, it presents the West. It is an alternative ideology because it has a big part in ethnocentrism which played a major role in all instances of colonialism.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout history, the world has witnessed many kinds of colonization either on direct or indirect way that belongs to chronological order and changes what happened after the war. For this cause, manifested struggle and cultural clashes in different ideologies and helped the colonizer to study and have information about the colonized country in order to expand their power and spread Christianity. Ideology is comprehension of ideas before the science of ideas; it attempts to understand the other ideas to be illuminated without being influenced by any culture.

In the other hand, we can find a link between Islamophobia and ideology that can be perceived as inferior and threats abuse. Over the last years, the growing of Islamophobia in the UK can be easily observed. It has expanded and became more aggressive and a real danger starts to appear in the environment of Muslims.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism#Othering>

Besides, ideology underlying racist practices that appears in many aspects in a social life. Also it is based on stereotyping and discriminating changes concerning different ethnic. Islamophobia consist of the destruction of religious traditions and provoked racism in racial segregation. Concerning Islamophobia and racism, it has examined aspects that influenced tolerance and terrorism through the *Quran*.<sup>34</sup>

### **Islamophobic Institution**

Racial discrimination or educational institutions and powerful organizations have capacities to govern and influence the lives of many individuals as well as devising between two cultures such as the Black and the South Asians. From different Islamophobic institutions, there are employment institutions which are affecting Muslims in their workplace and areas of education.

Muslim women in particular are victims from these racist institutions and can be mistreated only for her veil which reveals her Muslim identity. It is also consider as a complex multifaceted issue that is often grown in debates. In most European countries, the veil has become the centre of public discussions and disagreements and it is often seen as oppression toward the female. Moreover, the veil is also known as the headscarf among European people. Usually, federal states and individual schools take decisions to prohibit the practicing of any religion or using a symbol of it in public schools. Besides that, the clothes that show the identity of a person through her religion or beliefs are also notpermitted. Over many years, organizations and activists work hard to spread Islamophobia in their programs and to show an attitude of discrimination toward non-Muslims by using laws and practices that distinguishes between both cultures and create more racism behaviour and thinking. (EUMC 2006, 10-13)

### **2.4. The Obstacles that Faced British Muslim Women**

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<sup>34</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophobia#Links\\_to\\_ideologies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamophobia#Links_to_ideologies)

The challenges faced by British Muslim women who have converted to Islam have been investigated in a study by the University Of Cambridge Centre Of Islamic Studies and the New Muslims Projects. Studies have mentioned that around 5.000 British people converted to Islam every year, and most of them are women. However, Muslim women have always experienced the higher incidences of anti-Muslims violence than men.

Unfortunately, there are serious challenges facing many British Muslim women today. Seven in ten Muslim women are economically inactive and have the worse health than any other faith group. They also can be victims of culturally based crimes, such as; forced marriage and honour based attacks, as well as, the lack of female leadership among British Muslim organizations and mosques. It clear, that none of this is condoned by Islam, but often rises from unreconstructed cultural practices. (SULEIMAN 2015, 57-60)

Nowadays, there are at least 800.000 Muslim women living in Britain, all with a unique point of view on the challenges they faced by the community they live in, whether it is a threat of violent or anti-social behaviour, or even young people feeling isolated. However, their voices go unheard, some does not have the confident or skills and others face practical barriers. The secretary<sup>35</sup> Hazel Blears thinks that there is too much focusing on Muslims appearance with debates about headscarves and veils, whereas, there is too little focus on what they say and do. She suggest to better listen to Muslim women by valuing their contributions in their country and opening the door for more to get involved.<sup>36</sup>

Another point of view of a British Muslim women, <sup>37</sup>Masuma Rahim, where she revealed the truth about her daily like as a Muslim women and said: “ Since the Paris attacks, people who look like me are given hell every day.....I feel i have a duty to distance Islam from the acts of supposed Muslims

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<sup>35</sup>Hazal Blears :The secretary of state for communities and local government

<sup>36</sup> [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7422/7/669801\\_Redacted.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7422/7/669801_Redacted.pdf)

<sup>37</sup>Masuma Rahim: British citizen

and to out my faith as non-violent. There has been a 300% increase in reported Islamophobic attacks. A number of Islamic centres have been targeted and while people are happy to film these incidents, few appear keen to stop it.” (Masuma Rahim, 2015)

Masuma Rahim continue her confession by mentioning that headlines in the newspapers *The Sun*, has just referred to Muslims as that one in five British Muslims gave sympathy for Jihadist. Unfortunately, this distortion based on questionable research has done nothing to make Muslims feel safe or in secure.<sup>38</sup>

### **2.4.1 Education among Muslims in Britain**

Most of Muslim schools and educational system are dealing with Islamophobia across Britain in general and educational institutions in particular. Many Muslim pupils are suffering from a backlash and for girl sexual abuse. In the other hand, the government is failing in omitting the rise of Islamophobia especially at schools, since the parents and teachers are also using verbal and physical attacks against Muslims students.

In one case among others, a cartoon was spread against the prophet Mohamed which caused an Islamophobic atmosphere for students who find themselves in situation where they are obliged to defend their religion and beliefs. They were called also terrorists and murderers and some of them even stopped going to school. In British schools exist more than 400.000 Muslim pupils and they are increasingly consider as terrorists and having a bad impact on society. (Jodie 2005, 02-10)

Laura Pidcock<sup>39</sup>, the educational team manager, said: ‘ what we are seeing is a process of homogenisation between immigrants and Islam. You children equate immigrants with Muslims and Muslims with immigrants. There is a perception

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/01/muslim-woman-britain-paris-attacks>

<sup>39</sup> Laura Pidcock: British Councilor

of Muslims as a single collective body and a sense that this can be a threat.”(Laura Pidcock, 2015)

#### **2.4.2. Muslim Women’s Experiences of Marriage in Britain**

This study highlights the difficulties and challenges faced by many Muslim women married in Britain. In fact there is a growing concern about Muslim women who are suffering gender discrimination and a lack of knowledge of their rights under British laws. Moreover, seeking help from non- Muslim and legal sources maybe strongly discouraged as it may be deemed to incur shame on Muslim families.

However, many Muslim women are suffering from significant disadvantages because they lack legal protection. (JAAN 2014, 04-12)

#### **2.4.3 Job discrimination**

Many of local government authorities have suggested written guidelines on meetings in order to give and advance to personal skills rather than religion or culture. It is known that employment also applies discrimination when it concerns person’s religion. Regulation and the system of workplace do not allow Muslims to practice their religion with freedom and there are even manifestations against their customs.

<sup>40</sup>Dr Khattab, of Bristol University, said the situation was “likely to stem from placing Muslims collectively at the lowest stratum within the country’s racial or ethno-cultural system due to growing Islamophobia and hostility against them.”

Muslims employees are also deprived from holidays or events, and they are constantly considered as guilty of any act of terrorism that happened. Until now, there is always a disagreement and debate concerning Muslims in workplace, and the services never tried to make this environment more suitable

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<sup>40</sup>Dr. Nabil Khattab : is senior lecturer in Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

for them. In the other hand, the main issue for Muslim women in Britain was the veil, it was seen as ugly by most of citizens and they never shows respect toward it. Moreover, research about United Kingdom has claimed that Muslim women face serious disadvantages more than men in the British labour market. Andolu Agency spoke to Dr Nabil Khattab who said that ‘‘British Muslim women were six times more likely to be unemployed compared to their non- Muslims, and that Muslim women’s barriers are more complex. It consists of religious, ethnic and physical penalties.’’

As a result of his studies on performance and patterns of participation in the UK labour market, Khattab found that the percentage of Muslim women working in professional jobs varies of 8% to 23% only. He also said that the physical appearance or cultural visibility in public spaces was a significant factor in facing penalties. Besides that, other factors can guide a Muslim woman to look for certain jobs, and it played a role too. For example he said ‘‘ they do not prefer to work in places where alcohol is served, so they are competing with a lower number of employment opportunities’’

When Muslim women are competing to find a job that correspond their skills, they always face the different stereotypes and prejudices about them, and the Islamophobic attitudes toward them. ( Khattab, Johnston and Manley 2015; 977 – 995)

In the other hand, the young British Muslim women; Iman Amrani<sup>41</sup>, was explaining better this discrimination by telling her own story and says: ‘‘ every day there are attacks on Islam, prejudices against Muslims and Islamophobic assaults. But the truth is that Muslims are part of Britain, and part of Britain history’’. Concerning the challenges she is facing while looking for a job, she said:’’ studies have shown that applicants with Muslim names are significantly less likely to be called in for a job interview than those with

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<sup>41</sup> ImanAmrani : British Muslim citizen



Christians names that have the same qualifications. Similarly, researches in Britain have shown that religion now faces more prejudices in the workplace.”

While growing up, Iman was encouraged to use a nick name as Immy in order to be less identifiable as Muslim and in consequence have more chance for a better job and future. Iman continue “ while I largely resisted to this advice, many friends did change their names for the same raison. There is Ozzy, whose real name is Oussama, and Youssef, who became Joe. We are all ambitious young people with diverse backgrounds, personalities and experiences, and being a Muslim is a part of that. But none of us want to be defined solely by our religion. Unfortunately, our generation grow up in the shadow of the 09/11 Attacks.”( ImanAmrani ,2016)

#### **2.4.4. Economic participation**

Although there are significant differences between different groups, Muslims in general, are much more likely to be economically inactive. Almost two thirds of Muslim women are economically inactive (66%), compared with about a quarter of all women (26%).The reasons for the economic inactivity of Muslim women can be quite varied. They can be outside the labour market if they are studying full time, retired, looking after children or other family members, or because they lack formal qualifications, are not proficient in English, or are unable to find suitable/affordable childcare.

There are many government initiative in place committed to breaking down the barriers to employment and ensuring fair access for all. Among them, the AURAT Entreprise, that was set up to empower and encourage Muslim women in learning as first step. Nearly 50 per cent of the women who have attended Aurat Entreprise’s projects have progressed to adult learning. Courses to build.

The next centre is the United Multicultural Centre, which is opened to young British Muslim women and give them the opportunity to acquire skills and gain employment. And finally, we have the Community Cleaning

Services, set up by Shamim Husain as a social enterprise to tackle the social and economic exclusion of Muslim women. Shamim felt isolated when she arrived in the UK 20 years ago because she lacked the language skills necessary to integrate into society. Several years later, after graduating from university, she set up CCS to address the plight of Muslim women who are socially excluded because they cannot speak English. (BLEARS, 2008, 10-14)

### **Civic Participation**

Civic engagement covers a wide range of activities, from volunteering to acting as a local councillor or being a school governor. Muslim women are particularly under-represented in civic life, facing similar barriers to other forms of participation. Recent government consultations have highlighted that women from Muslim backgrounds do not feel they have a voice in their communities nor are able to influence local or national public policy or services, and that they want to engage in decision-making that impacts on the lives of their families. Civic engagement touches on all aspects of community life, providing the widest range of ways in which citizens can be involved in issues that affect their day-to-day lives. (BLEARS, 2008, 23-30)

### **Fatima Women's Network**

Forum for Advocacy, Training and Information in a Multicultural Arena (FATIMA) Women's Network is an infrastructure organisation that works with BME women's organisations across the East Midlands to build capacity and develop sustainability through personal development, leadership skills, training, advocacy, research and employment and business support. FATIMA's approach has been to develop links and work in partnership with a wide range of organisations and government agencies such as the army, police and schools.

Fatima works with women of all ages and ethnic groups but a significant number are young Muslims of Somali, Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin who are not accessing other community provision. Out of the 2,000 members, more than 60 per cent are Muslim. Extensive work has been done with Muslim women and families, Muslim women's groups and young people to address issues of employability and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour.

The organisation provides a diverse range of activities to support the needs of the women they support. Regionally, Muslim women's groups have accessed training on funding, policy development, financial management and public sector procurement through consortia development. Muslim women have used these skills to organise events themselves at their local schools to raise money for charity or school funds.<sup>42</sup>

### **Shaah Iyo Sheeko Women's Group**

The Shaahiyo Sheeko Women's Group comprises Muslim women from various backgrounds that share similar faith needs. The aim is to provide a culturally sensitive environment in which women can develop their skills, share learning and understand the significance of volunteering. In addition, the women can also attend classes in dressmaking, craft, cooking and Healthy eating and English language skills.<sup>43</sup>

### **Muslim Women in Arts, Culture and Sports**

The arts can be used to convey messages in powerful and innovative ways. Drama workshops and musical performances are effective tools in conveying messages to wide audiences as well as being a means of self-expression, identity exploration and giving artists a voice. This section looks at projects that are using arts and sports to engage and empower Muslim women, often breaking down many myths and stereotypes about the role and identity of Muslim women. (BLEARS, 2008, 31-38)

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.fatima-network.com>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.sfsg.org>

## **ULFAH ARTS**

NazKoser<sup>44</sup> founded Ulfah Arts in 2004 to promote the understanding and appreciation of the arts among Muslim women.

Muslim women were, in general, reluctant to get involved in the arts because they felt it compromised their religious and cultural beliefs. Naz felt that by providing a safe women-only environment they could explore their artistic talent, discover their creative ability and consequently understand themselves better. Since its inception, Ulfah Arts has supported and developed over 200 artists, 80 per cent of which are Muslim women. It has engaged an audience of over 30,000 and involved over 200 people in its projects, again the majority of whom have been Muslim women of all ages.<sup>45</sup>

## **THE MUSLIM WOMEN'S SPORT FOUNDATION**

The Muslim Women's Sport Foundation (MWSF) was established with the initial aim of organising and training the British Muslim women's team to compete at the International Islamic Women's Games. This was the first time that a non-Muslim country had been invited to compete at the event. The founders of the MWSF used this opportunity to fulfil the ambitions of talented Muslim sportswomen who wanted to compete at an elite level, but were unable to do so due to the lack of faith sensitive opportunities.

### **2.6.4.3. Preventing Violent Extremism**

The threat of violent extremism is real and sustained. There have been 16 plots primarily targeting the UK since 2000. The Security Services and Police are contending with over 200 groupings or networks, totalling around 2,000 individuals. Muslim women have a key role to play in challenging prejudice and stereotypes both within their own communities and in wider society. They possess a largely untapped potential to challenge the attitudes that can foster violent extremist ideas. Muslim women are at the heart of

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<sup>44</sup> Nazkoser : founder of Ulfah Arts in Britain

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.Ulfaharts.co.uk>

communities undertaking a multitude of roles. Resilient communities cannot be built and sustained without their active participation.

There are a number of projects taking place across the UK which aim to give Muslim women a stronger voice, increased confidence and the knowledge to challenge and tackle violent extremism. (BLEARS, 2008, 39-46)

#### **2.4.6.4. Muslim Women in Literature**

Many stereotypes present in modern day society portray Arab women or more precisely, Muslim women, as having little to no independence. These stereotypes assert that Muslim women are oppressed and psychologically weak. Thanks to the literary talents of three Muslim women authors who demonstrate they are the exception to such a role, the lives of three powerful Muslim women are described in details and reveal how strong those women can truly be.

In Fadia Faqir's <sup>46</sup> *Pillars of Salt*, the main character is Maha who experiences a transformation from a dutiful daughter to a strong, liberated woman after the death of her husband. During Leila Al Atrashe's <sup>47</sup> *A Woman of Five Seasons*, another female protagonist named Nadia experiences mental rebellion as she copes with conflicting emotions about the man she love and the man she is supposed to love.

Last, in Liyana Badi's <sup>48</sup> novella *a Land of Rock and Thyme*, Yussra displays tremendous valour and courage when faced with unfathomable tragedies that change her life forever. The common relationship through these novels is the amazing strength between the protagonists. Intellect; and courage of each character after their tragic events make them appear as examples to break the common stereotypes.

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<sup>46</sup> Fadia Faqir : British Arabic author

<sup>47</sup> Leila Al Atrashe : Palestine/Jordanian writer and journalist

<sup>48</sup> Liyana Badi: British Arabic Author

Each of those women, are Muslim woman who are still honouring their faith while living the type of life they choose to live. Maha choose to be independent and it is only because her brother, she is not living a better life. Nadia became with a great power and control over her husband that was justly earned. Yussra is starting a new chapter of her life, with a child ready to be born and a promise to keep living and having hope for better life. Each story is unique, but the message is still the same, all women can become their own person and still be women.<sup>49</sup>

### Highs and Lows for Muslim Women Nowadays

For Muslim women 2015 has been a year for highs and lows: from major political successes to incidences of violence. In British politics, eight Muslims women were elected to Parliament in May's general election. In June, biologist Ameenah Gurib-Fakim<sup>50</sup> was sworn in as the first woman President of Mauritius. Plus, a hundred years on from the Suffragette movement in the UK, Saudi women finally got to vote in local elections. This year, Muslim fashion also went main stream. Uniqlo launched a 'modest wear' line symbolising a new artistic side to Muslim women.

<sup>51</sup> H&M put a *hijab* in their global corporate social responsibility campaign, and department store House of Fraser began stocking a line of 'sporty *hijabs*' for Muslim women who want to exercise. So with all this high-profile success, it's sad that we end 2015 in the face of growing anti-Muslim feeling - heightened in the wake of the Paris terror attacks. And it's Muslim women who constantly bear the brunt of such verbal and physical Islamophobic abuse. Figures released by the Metropolitan Police, in September, showed that anti-Muslim hate crimes in Britain rose by 70 per cent in the past year. Tell Mama, an organisation that monitors these attacks, says 60 per cent are directed at women.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=34627>

<sup>50</sup> Ameenah Gurib-Fakim : (1959) is a Mauritian Biodiversity scientist who serves as President of Mauritius

<sup>51</sup> H&M : Fashion Line Clothes

On a bus in London, in October, a pregnant Muslim woman was verbally assaulted by a woman who threatened to kick her in the stomach, repeatedly referring to her as an 'Isis'. Other women have reported being sworn and spat at, punched and even having dog faeces thrown at them. As a result of this rapid spike in attacks on Muslims in general and women in particular, many are increasingly fearful of wearing their headscarves.

### **British Prime Minister's Speech against Muslim women**

Another week and another barrage of politicians and newspaper headlines place various demands on British Muslims. This week's disproportionately focus on Muslim women, calling on them to change the way they dress, speak more English more often, and reform Islam. From research undertaken with Surrender Guru, we found clear evidence of how successive British Governments had instrumentally used the issue of gender when seeking to engage with Muslim communities. So while Cameron said he was opposed to a French ban against the wearing of the *niqab* (face veil), he added that it was not only "proper and sensible" for public officials and institutions to be able to do so, the reality is that procedures are already in place for Muslim women who wear the *niqab* to remove it if requested. Muslim women to remove any coverings (face or hair) but also ban them if deemed appropriate. (ALLEN 2016, 01)

A further announcement has seen Cameron threaten to deport Muslim women who fail English language tests after coming to the UK on spousal visas. Under new guidelines, those women will be required to pass an additional English language test after two years at which time they will have to show a worryingly vague 'improvement'. But as the research into the National Muslim Women's Advisory Group (NMWAG) showed, such views and indeed the demands that come with them are as unreasonable as they are destined to fail. Formed in 2008, the NMWAG's remit was to advise Government on issues relating to the empowerment and increasing participation of Muslim women in civic, political and public life. Key to this was the explicit acknowledgement by

Government that Muslim women were not only able to influence and challenge extremist ideologies but so too the religion, theology and culture of Muslims in Britain.<sup>52</sup>

### **Conferences As a response to Cameron's Speech**

With over 300 participants, the conference explored the empowerment of Muslim women and encouraged them to become activists and community leaders in order to have their voices heard. This conference looked at the evolving role of Muslim women within their own community and more widely in society. One of the aims was also to highlight the pioneering contribution of Muslim women throughout history and to provide assessment of where Muslim women are today in 21st century in Britain and what Muslim women are capable of becoming in order to contribute dynamically to their communities and country.<sup>53</sup>

After the media reported that the British prime minister had spoken in a private conversation about the "Traditional Submissiveness" of Muslim women, he was set straight by a large group of very smart women in the Islamic faith. Thousands of Muslim women of all ages have tweeted their professional and educational achievements. Shelina Janmohamed, the activist author of "Love in a Headscarf," launched the social media campaign after reading Cameron's remarks, first reported by The Telegraph last week, that the "traditional submissiveness of Muslim women" prevented them from acting as moderating influences on young Muslim men who might become radicalized. (JACKSON, Jan 2016)

### **Achievements of Muslim Women**

Muslim Council of Britain is the UK's largest Muslim umbrella body with over 500 national regional and local organisations, mosques and schools. In 7<sup>th</sup> march 2014, Muslim Council celebrates British Muslim women

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/muslim-womens-experiences-of-involvement-in-uk-governance/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.wewillinspire.com/muslim-women-pioneering-change-in-21st-century-britain/>



on International Women's Day. It celebrated the unprecedented number of British Muslim women involved in public life. Muslim women are also distinguishing themselves academically in top universities and taking leadership positions in Islamic societies, such as: Sarah Mohamed at Imperial, Samia Aziz at Cambridge, and AayanHussein the president of the Oxford University. In the world of finance Farmida Bi is the head of Islamic Finance at Norton Rose Fulbright, She is an expert in Islamic capital markets and has advised the arrangers on a number of the leading transactions.

The Muslim women's Association recently celebrated 51 years as a UK organisation. Their president; Ms Naiza Malik says'' The Muslim Council have adopted a new constitution this year which ensures that at least one third of voting delegates are women. The International Women's Day is an occasion for us to acknowledge the contribution made by each and every one of the women in elevating the role of women in our society''. The Muslim Council also applauds the inspirational campaign led by Fahma Mohamed, a 17 years old student, who met with the education secretary to ask him to write to every school in the country about the horrors of FGM<sup>54</sup>, which they agreed to. Also many congratulations to Warsan Shire, who is a Somali-British writer, poet, editor and teacher. She has received the Brunel University's African Poetry Prize, and now is part of new wave of British Somali writers and activist.<sup>55</sup>

During another ceremony at Manchester's Lowry Hotel, a power list was established to celebrate the achievements of Muslim women from across the business, arts, media, voluntary and public sectors. This list of female Muslim high achievers challenges many stereotypes. Trevor Phillips<sup>56</sup> said : '' This list is just the start of a more ambitious project to create a network of women defined by their professional capabilities and interests, where faith and their backgrounds may just be one part of who they are.''

<sup>54</sup>FGM:Female Genital Mutilation

<sup>55</sup><http://www.mcb.org.uk/muslim-council-of-britain-celebrates-british-muslim-women-on-international-womens-day/>

<sup>56</sup> Trevor Philips : British writer

Shadow Minister for community cohesion and social action, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi<sup>57</sup> was named as the most influential in this power list. She notably helped rescue a Briton jailed in Sudan and have always be proud of her faith and it power. She said: ‘‘ I grew up on stories of strong women within Islam, whether it was Khadija, the wife of the prophet, an extremely successful business woman, who employed the prophet to work for her before they married. Ayesha who led many men into battle, and Fatima; the prophet’s daughter, who was an intrinsic part of the social and political discussions.’’One of the most specific forms of prejudice is journalists who ask ‘‘ are you a Muslim first or British first? ‘‘

‘‘ I think Islam is hugely liberating religion for women. When Islam is interpreted properly, it is a religion that supports and reveres women.’’ Baroness replied.<sup>58</sup>

## 2.6Conclusion

The existence of Islam in Britain gave a positive aspect on women’s lives and offers to them many rights in order to have a position that they originally deserve. The rank of women started to change gradually thanks to Islam; they finally got the opportunity to rebel against the unfair social norms of their countries. *Quran’s* instructions and Farwell Sermon speech of the prophet have improved for those rights too. Moreover, this second chapter have presented the permission for women to contribute and improved their country in different fields.

<sup>57</sup>Baroness Sayeeda Warsi :British-Pakistani lawyer and politician

<sup>58</sup><http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/local-news/britains-most-powerful-muslim-woman-914563>



## General Conclusion

Islam is characterized by many contributions to different domains as well as many changes in the attitude towards women. The common stereotypes about Muslim women are limited to housewives, who provide their husbands with a clean and comfortable house only. But this role started to change when Islam began to appear in Britain.

Many speeches stress on the value of women and their honoured position that God allows them to have. Although several habits expressed by women's rights differs them from men, but each one needs the other part of an essential relationship and a strong family.

In fact, the adventures of women began to take their rights under Islamic law because they found all the protection and complete welfare. Moreover, there is a vision about Muslim women in UK, it includes education, marriage and divorce, work and how Islam regards these blessings.

There are several expressions that show the presence of Muslims in UK, and denounce the expanding of Islam and the improvement of the female situation. Many Muslims were inspired to assess their personal situation and to take steps to change their lives because the only religion that glorifies woman is Islam. It gives many right and roles in their life, instead it shows that they live mainly as mothers and daughters, wives essential parts of the family both factually and figuratively.

However, Islamophobia began to appear as a reaction against Muslims and affect their daily lives especially Muslim women, that why is, it brings the negative aspect in different kind of humiliation in British society especially when the woman wears the veil so, they are living in inferiority; British people observe that Muslim women as terrorist. Muslim women spread the message of challenges and work with efforts by building organizations and

institutions that encourage and give freedom to practice their faith and aims to omit the violence against them. The status of women in England began to change gradually thanks to Islam, many British women convert Islam for give their rights and roles. Muslim women face the beliefs of non-Muslim in order to provide their evidence in different country.

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