



## The Contribution of Dar-ul-Aloom Deoband and the Promotion of the Status of Women in the Society of India

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### *Abstract*

This analytical study examines the classical educational contribution of Dar-ul-Aloom Deoband of India which performed multi-dimensional work for the improvement of the Indian Muslims. Dar-ul-Aloom Deoband is recognized as one of the most influential institution during the colonial rule. With modern education and other traditional changes, the Deoband School also accepted the modern phenomenon and followed the socio-cultural changes in India during colonial era. The study explores how Dar-ul-Aloom played a role to support the modernity of the status of women in male dominant society as this study is a brief discussion



about the role of Dar-ul-Aloom Deoband which it had contributed for the welfare of the women through modern approach to provide them fundamental rights.

**Keywords:** Deoband, Education, Islam, India, Modern, Status, Society, Women.

### **Discussion**

This study examines the impact of modernity introduced by the British Raj in India on the social status of Muslim women, as addressed by Darul Aloom Deoband. During the colonial period, British rule brought new values such as individual rights, education, and gender equality. These values often clashed with traditional Islamic norms upheld by institutions like Darul Aloom Deoband. The study explores how Darul Aloom Deoband ideologues responded to these modern values, especially in their literature and religious teachings. It investigates their views on women's education, public roles, and rights within the family and society. This analysis set against the backdrop of modern human rights, showing how Deobandi scholars either adapted to or resisted these ideas in their efforts to reform Muslim society.

After the decline of the Muslim's rule in India 1857 promoted different Socio-religious movements to work for the betterment of the Muslim's community. Among the educational institutions Dara-ul-Aloom was one of the remarkable educational institutions with multidimensional tasks.

Deoband, a remote township hardly bigger than a village and away from the high roads of communication, was selected by the founders of Darul Aloom Deoband for its location of establishment. As the town provided no facilities of residence, the seminary was to necessarily residential, housing a community of teachers and students. Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanutavi (b. 1832-d. 1880) drew up the scheme and later founded the institution without any fanfare and with very humble beginnings. Soon it attracted the attentions of the people and they got

enrolled for attaining religious education (Moj M. T., 2007, p. 117). The institution grew from strength to strength gradually. Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanutvi (b.1832-d.1880) had to work for seven years to bring the college into existence in 1866 (Tayyab, 1973, pp. 8-20).

Deoband school of thought is considered as a good representative of the old and modern traditions in subcontinent. It has great combination in its philosophical approach. Islam is universal religion, it provides a discourse about modernity and the social status of women. Darul-ul-Aloom Deoband is important institution that was founded by Syed Imdad Hussain on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1867 in the village of Deoband of District Saharanpur, India under a tree. With other socio-cultural aspects, Darul Aloom Deoband played its role towards the social status of women in in society. The topic is important in its nature to understand the situation as it was a traditional Islamic institution formed on the religious doctrine with modern socio-cultural realities, especially in the context of women's rights.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the study are the following;

1. To acquire knowledge about Dar-ul-Alum Deoband.
2. To know the response of the Deoband school of thought regarding western education.
3. To explore the women's social role and status according to Deoband.

### **Research Questions**

The main research questions are following;

1. How did Dar-ul-Alum Deoband response to the British imperialism in colonial India?
2. What were the historical developments in modernist philosophy, and how did the Deoband school of thought respond to these changes?

3. How do Deobandi scholars interpret the social role and status of women in relation to modern values and Islamic teachings?

### **Review of the Literature**

There is a plethora of literature available on the historical developments of the formation and activities of Darul Aloom Deoband and its scholarly and theological stances on the reformation of Muslim society. Despite that, numerous secondary sources are also available which has provided distinct analysis and critique on the ideological approaches of the Deoband scholars. Khan (2006) in *The Deoband School and the British Raj* describes how Darul Aloom Deoband was founded in 1866 as a reaction to British colonial rule. The book discusses the institution's efforts to resist British modernization and preserve Islamic teachings (Khan, 2006). Similarly, Akram (2007) in *Deoband: A History* explores the socio-political context of 19th-century India. Akram details how the Deoband movement aimed to counter Western influences and maintain Islamic identity (Akram, 2007).

To address the historical developments of modernism and Deoband's response, Metcalf (1982) in *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* examines the ideological and philosophical developments of modernism. Metcalf highlights how Deoband scholars engaged with modernist ideas while resisting them (Metcalf B. D., 1982). Naim (1990) in *The Deobandis: A Study in Islamic Modernism* further explores how Deoband's scholars navigated modernist challenges while upholding traditional principles (Naim, 1990).

Analyzing Deobandi Scholars' Interpretation of the Social Status of Women, Shaikh (2009) in *Islamic Law and the Modern State: The Case of Deoband* investigates how Deobandi scholars interpret gender roles within Islamic law and modern values. Shaikh discusses the balance between conservative and progressive elements in Deoband's teachings (Shaikh, 2009). Rizvi (2011) in

Women in Islam: A Deobandi Perspective provides an analysis of Deobandi interpretations of women's roles. Rizvi's work examines how these interpretations align with or diverge from contemporary human rights standards (Rizvi, 2011).

This literature review shows that Darul Aloom Deoband was established to counter British imperialism. The institution has faced challenges from modernist ideas while trying to preserve Islamic traditions. Deobandi scholars have also adapted their views on women's roles in response to changing social values.

### **Methodology**

This research employs a descriptive, analytical, and comparative methodology to explore the topic of modernity and the social status of women, particularly through the lens of Darul Aloom Deoband's approach. The study is grounded in qualitative research methods and relies heavily on archival data to provide a comprehensive analysis. The descriptive aspect of the methodology involves a detailed account of the historical context surrounding the formation and development of Darul Aloom Deoband. This includes an exploration of the socio-political landscape of colonial India, the influence of British modernist reforms, and the establishment of Darul Aloom Deoband as a response to these changes. The study will describe the foundational principles of the institution, its key figures, and its role in shaping Islamic thought in the region.

The analytical component focuses on examining the teachings and literature produced by Darul Aloom Deoband scholars regarding the social status of women. This involves a close reading of primary sources, such as fatwas, religious texts, and other archival documents. The analysis will consider how these teachings have evolved over time, particularly in response to the challenges posed by modernity. It will also assess the underlying philosophies and interpretative strategies employed by Deobandi scholars in addressing issues related to women's roles and rights.

The comparative approach will be used to juxtapose the Deobandi perspective on women's social status with modern values and human rights frameworks. This involves comparing the interpretations and rulings of Deobandi scholars with contemporary views on gender equality, education, and public roles for women. The study will explore areas of convergence and divergence, providing insights into how traditional Islamic teachings have been adapted or resisted in the face of modern societal changes.

### **Data Collection**

The research will utilize qualitative data, primarily drawn from archival sources. These sources include historical records, religious texts, fatwas, and other documents from Darul Aloom Deoband. Secondary sources, such as academic books, journal articles, and previous studies on Deoband and modernity, will also be consulted to provide context and support the analysis.

This chapter discusses and evaluates the social rights, political participation and economic empowerment of women in accordance to the modernist approach and global values. It further explores the social status of women in Islam as interpreted by the scholars of Darul Aloom Deoband comparing these interpretations with modern values. The chapter begins by examining the foundational Islamic principles concerning women's roles and rights, as understood and taught by Deobandi scholars. It also explores into the religious texts, fatwas, and literature produced by the institution to understand how these scholars have defined the place of women in both private and public life. The chapter then compares these traditional interpretations with contemporary views on gender equality, women's education, and their participation in society. By analyzing the areas of convergence and divergence, this chapter aims to provide an understanding of the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity in the context of women's social status in Islam. Through this comparative approach,

the chapter seeks to highlight the complexities and challenges involved in reconciling religious interpretations with modern human rights discourses.

#### **Modern Values and the Rights of Women**

The framework of women rights in accordance with the modern values encompasses a broad range of issues, reflecting the evolving understanding of gender equality, social justice and human rights in contemporary society. Understanding the progress made in women's rights over the years is crucial. Key milestones include the suffrage movement (The suffrage movement was a social, political and economic campaign that advocates for the women's right to vote), the feminist waves and significant legislative achievements such as the right to vote, reproductive rights, and equal pay. The concept of feminist waves refers to different periods or phases of feminist activism and thought, each characterized by distinct goals, strategies and issues.

The United Nations emphasizes gender equality as a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Achieving gender equality involves ending discrimination against women and girls in all forms (Nations, n.d.). The World Bank highlights that women's empowerment is crucial for achieving gender equality. The World Bank also discusses women's access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. It also emphasizes to give liberty of their life-choices. Kimberle Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has become a cornerstone in understanding the complexities of women's experiences, emphasizing that gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class and sexuality to create unique modes of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989).

#### **International Legislation on Rights of Women**

Internationally, the females are regarded as equal segment of society parallel to the male. There are various international organizations that have recognized

through rights of women through legislation attempting to bring them out of marginalized social and economic status. An overview of those rights and legislation is provided as under.

### **Legal Rights**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination (Women, 1979).

### **Reproductive Rights**

The World Health Organization states that reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so (WHO, n.d.).

### **Economic Rights**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that gender pay gaps persist worldwide but promoting equal pay for equal work, providing maternity leave and ensuring women have access to employment opportunities are crucial steps towards economic equality. The Global Wage Report examines the evolution of real wages around the world, giving a unique picture of wage trends globally, by region and at country level (Organization, 2024).

### **Educational Rights**

UNESCO emphasizes that education is a powerful tool for women's empowerment. It ensures equal access to education for girls and women and also helps to break the cycle of poverty and creates more equitable societies. The international organizations are playing their crucial role for the development of



education across the world. Gender equality is a global priority at UNESCO. Globally, 122 million girls and 128 million boys are out of school. Women still account for almost two-thirds of all adults unable to read. UNESCO calls for attention to gender equality throughout the education system in relation to access, content, teaching and learning context and practices, learning outcomes, and life and work opportunities. The UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education (2019-25) focuses on a system-wide transformation to benefit all learners equally in three key areas: better data to inform action, better legal and policy frameworks to advance rights and better teaching and learning practices to empower (UNESCO.org, n.d.).

Syed Mumtaz Ali in his book “Huqooq-e Niswan” emphasized to give equal opportunity to educate women. He worked a lot for the freedom of women. He also emphasized to declare women as equal part of the society (Ali S. M., 1898, pp. 44-50)

### **Fundamental human rights**

Fundamental human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnicity, religion, or any other status. These rights are essential for the dignity and well-being of individuals and are often enshrined in national and international law. Here are some key examples of fundamental human rights:

1. **Right to Life:** Every individual has the right to live, and this right should be protected by law.
2. **Right to Freedom from Torture:** No one should be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
3. **Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion:** Individuals have the right to hold their own beliefs and to practice their religion freely.

4. **Right to Freedom of Expression:** Everyone has the right to express their opinions and ideas without fear of censorship or retaliation.
5. **Right to Privacy:** Individuals have the right to a private life, free from arbitrary interference.
6. **Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination:** Everyone is entitled to the same rights and freedoms without discrimination of any kind.
7. **Right to Fair Trial:** Individuals are entitled to a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal in the determination of their rights and obligations.
8. **Right to Education:** Everyone has the right to access education and to pursue personal development.
9. **Right to Participate in Government:** Citizens have the right to participate in their government, either directly or through freely chosen representatives.
10. **Right to Work and Fair Labor Conditions:** Everyone has the right to work, to choose their employment freely, and to enjoy fair and favorable conditions of work.

These rights are often articulated in documents such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and various international treaties and conventions. Promoting and protecting these rights is essential for fostering justice, equality, and peace in societies around the world.

Philosophy of women rights

Philosophy of Women Rights

The philosophy of women's rights centers around the belief that women should enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men. It encompasses a range of ethical, political, and social theories aimed at addressing and dismantling systemic

inequalities based on gender. At its core, the philosophy of women's rights is grounded in the principle of equality. It asserts that all human beings, regardless of gender, should have equal access to rights, opportunities, and resources. Feminist without addressing gender inequalities.

The women's rights movement has evolved through various waves, starting with suffrage in the 19th and early 20th centuries, moving through the second wave focused on reproductive rights and workplace equality, and continuing into contemporary discussions around intersectionality and global feminism. Philosophers highlight the historical subjugation of women and argue that acknowledgment of past injustices is essential for achieving true equality.

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a critical framework that examines how different aspects of identity (such as race, class, sexuality, and ability) intersect with gender to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. This approach advocates for an inclusive feminism that considers the diverse experiences of all women, recognizing that not all women experience oppression in the same way.

Feminist philosophy emphasizes the right of women to make decisions about their own bodies, including issues related to reproductive rights, health care, and sexual freedom. Philosophers argue that women should have agency in their personal and public lives, and that empowerment is crucial for achieving gender equality. The philosophy of women's rights also encompasses social and economic rights, advocating for equal pay, access to education, and the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace. Feminists often argue for a global perspective on women's rights, recognizing that women in different cultural and socio-economic contexts face unique challenges.

Feminist philosophy critiques patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender inequalities, advocating for systemic changes in social, political, and economic

institutions. Philosophers analyze how cultural norms and values shape gender roles and advocate for a reevaluation of these norms.

Some feminist philosophers propose care ethics, which emphasizes the importance of relationships and caring for others, arguing that traditional moral philosophies often overlook these aspects. This perspective encourages individuals and societies to take moral responsibility for addressing gender inequalities and supporting women's rights.

The philosophy of women's rights is a dynamic and evolving field that seeks to promote equality and justice for all women. By addressing both individual experiences and systemic injustices, it aims to create a more equitable society. Through the lenses of history, ethics, and intersectionality, this philosophy continues to advocate for the recognition and fulfillment of women's rights globally.

### **Political Rights**

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) women's political participation is essential for democracy and sustainable development. Increased representation of women in parliaments and political institutions leads to more inclusive and representative governance (IPU, 2020).

### **Challenges to the Provision of Women Rights**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights that violence against women remains pervasive and often goes unreported. Efforts to combat gender-based violence must be intensified globally (UNODC, 2019). UNICEF notes that deep-rooted cultural norms and gender stereotypes continue to spread discrimination against women and girls, impacting their opportunities and freedoms (UNICEF, n.d.). The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 indicates that economic disparities between genders remain significant, with women often facing higher levels of unemployment and lower

wages than men (Forum, 2020). The Lancet points out that women in many regions still face substantial barriers to accessing quality healthcare, particularly reproductive health services, which impacts their overall well-being and autonomy (The Lancet, 2018).

#### International Perspectives on Gender Equality

The World Bank's data on gender equality show stark contrasts between developed and developing countries in terms of women's rights and access to resources, with developing countries often facing more significant challenges (World Bank, 2020). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, which is integral to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

Movements such as “#MeToo” have shown the power of advocacy and activism in highlighting and combating sexual harassment and gender-based violence, promoting broader social change

The Global Gender Gap Report emphasizes the importance of robust policies and legislation that protect women's rights and promote gender equality (WEF, 2020). Educational campaigns and public awareness initiatives are crucial in changing attitudes towards gender roles and promoting equality (UNESCO, n.d.). Leveraging technology can significantly enhance women's empowerment by improving access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities (UN Women, 2020).

#### Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Stance on Muslim Women Education

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, during the early years of his career in late 1860's and 1870's was favorable towards women education and depicted poverty as the leading cause for the decline of female education among them. He had a soft corner about women's education. During the decade of 1860-1870, the Aligarh

Institute Gazette was evidently influenced by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. It published articles on the government's initiatives encouraging female education. In 1867, the establishment of a school for the Muslim girls in Bangalore solely through indigenous efforts was highly appreciated. Female education was believed to be essential for the social, moral and intellectual advancement of a nation. It was stressed that a nation could not rise to true greatness so long as its women continue to remain in intellectual darkness. During 1869, several articles in the Aligarh Institute Gazette related to the importance of female education were published. These articles appearing in the A.I.G indicates that in the 1860's, Syed Ahmad Khan was not unconcerned towards Muslim female education. A letter which he wrote from London to the Secretary, Scientific Society, Aligarh in 1869, gave the same impression.

He writes that: He was highly impressed by his landlady's daughter, who when fell ill, took to reading religious books which Sir Syed thought that she would find too obscure and irrational because of their controversial nature. He further commented, "From these remarks, you will see how well-bred and intelligent are the women here even of the middle classes. Is it unworthy of admiration that a woman on her sickbed would try to amuse herself and pass her time by such a cheerful occupation as that? Have you ever heard or seen any raja or chief, notable or gentleman in India not to speak of women resorting to such judicious and astonishing means of amusement in their sickness? Do the Indians possess such literary taste and love for knowledge" Moreover, he was also found appreciative of the progress of Muslim women training, which he had observed when he passed through Turkey and Egypt. However, there are references suggesting a change in his thinking from 1880 onwards as he started opposing every step taken by the government for the education of Muslim women (Hussain, 2022, p. 87). It seems evident from his answers to the questions put to him by the

Education commission of 1882, where he stressed the futility of every effort on the part of the government towards women education as earlier endeavors had borne nothing fruitful. He thought that government policies towards women education had not gained any response from respectable families, neither the lower class has derived any benefits. So, these policies must be stopped. He was not only uninterested but condemned such activities in strong terms. He also warned the government that under such circumstances introducing female education among Muslim would produce mischievous results. Even he went on citing the government's intention to force girls to attend schools and give up purdah as one of the causes of the revolt of 1857. He upheld the conservative ideas regarding women education and his reform movement was confined only to male circles. While the reformer of revivalist thought like Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi believed that women are potentially equal to their men in their capacity for understanding, and hence their reform and management is central to the religious change of all Muslims.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is believed to propose the sort of down filtration theory stating the once a large number of Muslim men get educated. They will carry the process to the ranks of women. His thought on the basis of his writing is argued to be similar to the most of the men of his time that women were inherently inferior to men physically and intellectually. In fact, he labelled women as emotional being and accused them of being stacked stubbornly to outdated customs. He was also critical of a similar curriculum in modern schools for both men and women. He thought that the curriculum must be different. Thus, Sir Syed, in his opposition, towards modern female education developed two primary arguments. First, he believed that education should come to Muslim men who in turn would filter it to women in their household as to him educating women before men would jeopardize gender relationship and fracture the life within the house. His

second argument is mainly built against the usefulness of the government system of education for girls categorically. According to him the content of education and the curriculum introduced by the government was devised primarily for boys which was unsuitable to meet the need of Indian girls and women (Hussain, 2022). He focused his all energies on male education and disapproved the women education not in principle but only in modern schools and found the existing education system of women education relevant and a compromise with the maintenance of social equilibrium. The defining role of women in society has always been depressed by social factors in large.

### **Sayyid Mumtaz Ali's *Huquq un-Niswan*: A Progressive Perspective on Women Rights**

The most notable among the writers who stood out for his advocacy of women's rights was Maulvi Mumtaz Ali. This distinguished him from his peers and contemporaries. It's important to consider the social circumstances of the time, rather than the content of his reformist message, which provoked the ire of the moral conservatives of the era (Tahir, 2018). His book *Huqooq-e-Niswan* faced significant opposition, even from progressive figures like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. When Mumtaz Ali presented the manuscript to Sir Syed in Aligarh, Sir Syed reacted with such anger that he tore it up and discarded it. He rebuked Mumtaz Ali, accusing him of trying to distance Muslim women from their society at a time when Muslims had already lost their political power and cultural relevance (Ali S. M., 1898, pp. 44-48).

### **Stance of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi for the Social Rights and Status of Muslim Women**

Ashraf Ali Thanvi, often referred as Hakimul Ummat and Mujaddidul Millat, was a late-nineteenth and twentieth-century Sunni Muslim scholar, jurist, thinker, reformist and the revival of classical Sufi thought from Indian Subcontinent



during the British Raj one of the chief proponents of Pakistan Movement. He was a central figure of Islamic spiritual, intellectual and religious life in South Asia and continues to be highly influential today. As a prolific author, he completed over a thousand works including *Bayan al-Quran* and *Bahishti Zewar*. He graduated from Darul Aloom Deoband in 1883 and moved to Kanpur, then Thana Bhawan to direct the *Khanqah-i-Imdadiyah*, where he resided until the end of his life. His training in Quran, Hadith, Fiqh studies and Sufism qualified him to become a leading Sunni authority among the scholars of Deoband. He believed that women are potentially equal to their men in their capacity for understanding and hence their reform and management is central to the religious change of all Muslims (Thanvi, Behsihti Zewar, 1987).

#### Controversy over the Social Status and Role of Women: An Approach of Darul Aloom Deoband

The Darul Aloom Deoband, an Islamic seminary in India, is influential in shaping Islamic thought, particularly within South Asia. It has a conservative approach to the social status and role of women, rooted in traditional interpretations of Islamic texts. This approach has sparked controversy, particularly in the context of modern values advocating gender equality and women's rights. Deobandi scholars traditionally advocate for women's roles within the confines of the home, emphasizing modesty, family responsibilities, and limited public engagement (Reetz, 2006, pp. 7-10).

#### **Men is ruler over women**

In Islam men rule over women That is why Imam Nawawi has established this second chapter, which is entitled "The Chapter on the Rights of the Wife Ali al-Maraat", that is, what are the rights of the husband over the wife and under it, he has mentioned Quranic verses and hadiths. First of all, this verse of the Holy Quran has been brought. That is, men are guardians of women and their

administrators. Men are responsible and custodian of all matters of women. Some scholars have also translated it to mean that men are rulers over women. “Qawam” means a person who is responsible for doing or managing a work as if men are Qawam over women. They are the managers of their work. and they are rulers. Therefore, while explaining the rights of a man, he first explained the principle to the woman that the man is the custodian and administrator of the affairs of your life (Usmani, n.d., p. 10).

Deobandi scholars generally support women’s education but often emphasize religious education over secular. Employment outside the home especially in mixed-gender environments, is typically discouraged (Sikand, 2005, pp. 12-15). The *ulema* of Deoband discouraged the co-education (Miftahi, 2012). The practice of *purdah* (seclusion) is strongly advocated, with women encouraged to wear the burqa and maintain modesty in public. This stance is seen as a means to protect women’s honor and religious purity. (Abu-Rabi, 2006, p. 20) Deobandi teachings emphasize traditional family structures with clear gender roles, advocating for early marriage and large families. The husband is seen as the primary breadwinner and head of the household. The Deobandi approach generally discourages women’s political participation, advocating for their role to be supportive rather than leadership positions in political arenas.

Criticism and Counterarguments on the Approach of Deoband School of Thought  
Feminist and progressive Islamic scholars argue that the Deobandi approach restricts women’s rights and is incompatible with modern principles of gender equality. They advocate for reinterpretations of Islamic texts that support women’s empowerment (Wadud, 1999, p. 6). Islamic feminists argue that true Islamic teachings advocate for the rights and dignity of women. They contend that cultural practices rather than religious doctrine are responsible for gender inequality. (Barlas, 2002)

International human rights organizations critique the restrictive Deobandi stance on women, arguing it violates principles of gender equality and individual freedom as outlined in international conventions.

### **Review of *Beshathi Zewar***

After the vast array of Quranic and Hadith literature, *Bahishti Zewar* is likely the most popular book in the Indo- Pak Subcontinent. Apart from the comprehensive nature of the book, its worth is largely due to its simplicity in style and language. *Bahishti Zewar* is a distinguished book written with Muslim women in mind. It's an amazing collection of religious and temporal information. principally, this book deals all issues related to women. still, it also includes juristic answers and issues related to Shariyah. It's also a companion for men and scholars of high rank. Indeed, it has the unique distinction of being written for women in language suitable for them yet offering light to scholars and justices. This prestigious work by Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thanvi, has been restated into contemporary English with revised commentary, glossary and supplements. It was edited and restated by Maulana Muhammad Mahomedy.

### **Impact and Influence of Deoband's Islamist Approach on Muslim Communities of South Asia**

The Deobandi approach significantly influences Muslim communities in South Asia affecting social norms and practices regarding women's roles (Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change.*", 2002). Deobandi thought has spread globally through its network of *madrasahs* and affiliated organizations, impacting Muslim communities worldwide. The controversy over the social status and role of women as approached by Darul Aloom Deoband highlights the tension between traditional Islamic interpretations and modern values of gender equality. Though Deobandi scholars advocate for roles rooted in traditional understandings of Islam, critics argue for a re-evaluation of these interpretations to align with

contemporary human rights standards. This ongoing debate reflects broader discussions within the Muslim world about the balance between tradition and modernity.

### **Gender and Social Responsibilities**

Gender and social responsibilities of women have evolved significantly over time that influenced by cultural, economic and political changes. These responsibilities often intersect with societal expectations and gender norms which can vary widely across different cultures and contexts. (Okalay, 1974, p. 47). This study goes here into the traditional and contemporary perspectives on the gender and social responsibilities of women supported by references to relevant literature and studies.

### **Domestic Responsibilities**

Traditionally, women have been seen as primary caretakers of the home, responsible for managing household chores, cooking, and cleaning. Women have often been expected to take the lead in raising children, ensuring their education and moral upbringing (Ruddick, 1989). They have played significant roles in supporting community functions such as organizing social events, caring for the elderly and participating in local traditions (Stack, 1974, p. 10).

### **Economic Participation**

Modern views emphasize women's participation in the workforce, recognizing their contributions to economic growth and development. (Goldin, 1990, pp. 19-25) Increasingly, women are recognized as entrepreneurs contributing to innovation and economic diversification.

### **Educational Responsibilities**

Women's access to and attainment in higher education have expanded, leading to greater professional opportunities and societal contributions. They are increasingly involved in political processes, advocating for policy changes and

representing diverse constituencies. They also play pivotal roles in social movements, advocating for issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability and human rights.

### **Balancing Traditional and Modern Responsibilities**

Women often balance professional careers with family responsibilities, facing challenges such as work-life balance and societal expectations. Efforts to challenge and change traditional gender norms are crucial for achieving gender equality and allowing women to pursue diverse roles in society. The roles and responsibilities of women vary widely across different cultural contexts, influenced by local traditions, religious beliefs, and socio-economic conditions Commonwealth Secretariat. International organizations advocate for women's rights and gender equality, promoting policies that support women's social, economic, and political participation

The gender and social responsibilities of women have evolved significantly, reflecting broader societal changes and ongoing efforts to achieve gender equality. While traditional roles focused heavily on domestic responsibilities, contemporary perspectives emphasize women's contributions to economic, educational, political, and social spheres. Balancing these roles requires addressing persistent gender norms and advocating for policies that support women's diverse responsibilities and aspirations.

### **Gender and Social Responsibilities of Women in Islam: An Approach of Darul Aloom Deoband**

Darul Aloom Deoband, one of the most influential Islamic seminaries in the world, adheres to traditional Islamic teachings and jurisprudence. Its approach to gender and social responsibilities of women is grounded in the principles of Sharia (Islamic law) and emphasizes roles that align with these religious frameworks. Here's a brief explanation of this approach with references:

### **Primary Role of Women as Caregivers and Governance of the Male**

Women are primarily seen as caregivers and nurturers within the family. Their responsibilities include raising children, managing the household, and supporting their husbands. The Quran mentions the complementary role of men and women in maintaining the family structure. Surah An-Nisa (4:34) describes men as protectors and maintainers of women, while women are expected to manage the household (Thanvi, Aasan Bayan al-Quran, 2019, p. 496). Nonetheless, Thanvi (2019) while explaining this verse of Quran states: since the men are responsible to look after the finances of the women, for which they enjoy the ruling or superior status over women (p. 496). A hadith by Prophet Muhammad states, “A woman is a guardian of her husband’s home and is responsible for it” (Sahih Bukhari).

### **Modesty and Hijab**

Women are instructed to dress modestly and wear the hijab to maintain their dignity and modesty in public. Surah An-Nur (24:31) instructs women to draw their veils over their chests and not to display their beauty except to their close relatives. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi in his exegesis titled *Bayan al-Quran* provides the details as to the limitations of veiling for both men and women. He states that men should be careful while gassing at women, they keep their eyes downward. Explaining the limitations of women’s decoration and veiling, he states it:

Similarly, say it to the women that they should keep their eyes downward. (which means the organs which are prohibited to be viewed should not be viewed. The male body parts which are not prohibited to be viewed should not be viewed with sexual sentiments). The women should take care of the chastity (which means they should not satisfy themselves sexually through adultery or any other way which is prohibited). The women should expose their decoration, jewelry and

parts of their bodies (which include *jumarpati*, neckless, bracelet, anklet). Whereas, the body parts include: hands, legs, shanks, arms, neck, chest, head, ears. All these parts should not be exposed to the strangers (*na-mahram*) (Thanvi, Aasan Bayan al-Quran, 2019, pp. 489-93).

### **Social Interaction**

Interaction between men and women should be conducted with propriety, often advocating for gender segregation in social and educational settings to avoid inappropriate behavior. Surah Al-Ahzab (33:53) advises believing men and women to lower their gaze and maintain modesty in their interactions. The Prophet Muhammad instructed, “It is better for one of you to be pricked in the head with an iron needle than to touch a woman who is not permissible to him” (*Sahih Muslim*).

### **Economic Participation**

Though women’s primary role is seen as within the family, they are allowed to work and participate in economic activities, if necessary, provided it does not compromise their family responsibilities and they adhere to Islamic principles. *Surah An-Nisa* (4:32) acknowledges that both men and women can earn and participate in economic activities. The Prophet’s wife, Khadijah, was a successful businesswoman, highlighting that economic participation is permissible within Islamic guidelines.

### **Community Involvement**

Women are encouraged to be involved in charitable activities and community service, which aligns with the Islamic principles of helping those in need. *Surah Al-Baqarah* (2:177) emphasizes the importance of charity and social responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad said, “The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people” (Daraqutni). However, Maulana Asraf Ali Thanvi considers it that women should not be financially exploited by their husbands.

They should be provided with the due rights and financial needs (Thanvi, Aasan Bayan al-Quran, 2019, pp. 232-233).

### **Darul Aloom Deoband Official Publications and Fatwas**

Provide interpretations and guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of women according to Islamic teachings. The approach of Darul Aloom Deoband to the gender and social responsibilities of women in Islam emphasizes traditional roles within the family, the importance of modesty, and adherence to Islamic principles. Education is encouraged, particularly in religious knowledge, and economic participation is permissible within certain boundaries. This perspective aims to maintain the dignity and modesty of women while allowing them to fulfill their religious and social responsibilities.

### **Domestic Role of Women**

The domestic role of women in Islam, particularly from the perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband, emphasizes traditional family values and gender roles based on Islamic teachings. It is a prominent Islamic seminary in India that adheres to the Hanafi school of thought and has a significant influence on Islamic scholarship in South Asia and beyond.

### **Primary Responsibilities**

Women are seen as the primary caretakers of the household. This includes managing domestic chores, raising children, and creating a nurturing environment for the family. The role of women as mothers and wives is highly emphasized. They are responsible for the upbringing and moral education of children, that is considered a crucial aspect of their role.

### **Gender Complementary**

Men and women are viewed as having complementary roles. Although men are generally seen as providers and protectors and women are seen as nurturers and caregivers. This division of labor is believed to ensure a balanced and harmonious



family life. The relationship between husband and wife is based on mutual respect and cooperation. Both are expected to fulfill their roles with compassion and understanding.

**Religious Observance:**

While there are distinct roles in the domestic sphere, women are considered spiritually equal to men. They are encouraged to engage in religious practices, acquire Islamic knowledge and uphold Islamic values within the home. Women are advised to observe modesty in their dress and behavior, both within and outside the home. This is seen as an expression of piety and adherence to Islamic principles.

The domestic role of women in Islam, from the perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband, emphasizes traditional gender roles with a focus on family, motherhood, and household management. These roles are seen as complementary to those of men, ensuring a balanced and harmonious family structure. The teachings are rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the scholarly interpretations of Deobandi scholars, reflecting a conservative approach to gender roles within the Islamic framework

**Political Role of the Women**

Deoband scholars generally hold traditional views regarding the role of women in society, emphasizing family responsibilities and religious duties. However, their perspectives on the political involvement of women can vary. Many scholars stress that women's primary roles should be centered around the family and community, advocating for their involvement in social and educational initiatives rather than formal political roles. There is recognition of the importance of women's education as a means of empowerment. Scholars encourage women to seek knowledge and participate in social reform, which can indirectly influence politics. Traditional views often limit women's roles in leadership positions,

particularly in formal political settings, citing religious texts that emphasize male leadership (Thanvi, Behsihti Zewar, 1987).

Some scholars support women's participation in activism for social justice issues, especially when they align with Islamic principles and benefit the community. The first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Khadijah, was a successful businesswoman who supported the early Muslim community. Aisha bint Abu Bakr: Aisha, another wife of the Prophet, was an influential figure in the early Islamic community, participating in political matters and leading an army during the Battle of the Camel. Historical examples show women taking on significant leadership roles in early Islamic society.

Efforts to increase women's representation in politics have led to more women holding elected offices and participating in governance. Some countries have implemented gender quotas and affirmative action policies to ensure women's representation in political bodies.

Modern Muslim-majority countries have seen women in various political roles. Countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey have had female heads of state or government. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other Islamic organizations promote women's participation in politics, emphasizing gender equality within an Islamic framework. Some interpretations, especially within conservative circles, limit women's political roles, emphasizing traditional gender roles. Progressive Views: Progressive scholars and activists argue for greater political participation of women, citing principles of justice, equality, and the early examples of active female participation in Islamic history.

### **Economic and Professional Domains for Women**

The Darul Aloom Deoband is a prominent Islamic seminary in India known for its conservative and traditionalist interpretations of Islamic law (*Sharia*). Here is a brief explanation of the economic and professional domains for women from the

perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband, with references to their teachings and interpretations. Similar to mainstream Islamic teachings, Darul Aloom Deoband upholds that women have the right to own, inherit, and manage property independently. Surah An-Nisa (4:7) is often cited to support women's right to inheritance and property ownership. While acknowledging the right of women to work, the Deoband approach emphasizes that women's work should not conflict with their primary role in the family and should adhere to strict Islamic guidelines. Women can work in environments that are segregated by gender and where they can maintain modesty as prescribed by Islamic teachings.

Darul Aloom Deoband stresses the importance of education for women, especially in religious knowledge, while also allowing for general education within an Islamic framework. The saying of the Prophet Muhammad, "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swines" (Majah, n.d., p. Hadith #224) is upheld with an emphasis on religious education for every Muslim either men or women, but this hadith condemn delivering knowledge to those who do not deserve it.

The Deoband school permits women to engage in professions, especially those that serve the community like teaching and medicine. They adhere to Islamic dress code and work in gender-segregated environments. The Deoband perspective aligns with traditional interpretations that support women's professional involvement within the bounds of Islamic decorum and modesty. However, Darul Ifta, on its official website, has issued a fatwa as to the women job in some working place where both men and women work together. It states: "It is unlawful for Muslim women to do job in government or private institutions where men and women work together and women have to talk with men frankly and without veil" (Fatwa: 577/381/L=1431). Emphasis is placed on ensuring that

the work environment for women is gender-segregated and does not compromise Islamic values of modesty and family structure. The principles of modesty from Surah An-Nur (24:30-31) and various Hadiths guide the structuring of acceptable work environments for women.

Women often face a gender pay gap, earning less than men for the same work. Women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid labor, including household chores and caregiving, which limits their economic opportunities. In some countries, laws and regulations still discriminate against women in areas such as inheritance, property rights, and family law. Even where protective laws exist, inadequate enforcement and lack of legal awareness can undermine women's rights.

The social freedom of women in the contemporary world is a complex and multifaceted issue, with significant progress made in many areas, yet persistent challenges remaining. Efforts to enhance women's social freedom must address legal, economic, cultural, and institutional barriers, promoting equality and empowering women to participate fully in all aspects of life. The approach of Darul Aloom Deoband to the economic and professional domains for women is characterized by a strict adherence to traditional Islamic values, emphasizing the balance between women's rights and their roles within the family and society, all within the framework of Islamic law and modesty.

#### Women Education in Islam: A Perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband

The perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband on women's education aligns with traditional Islamic principles, emphasizing the importance of education for both men and women while adhering to Islamic values and modesty. Darul Aloom Deoband acknowledges that seeking knowledge is a religious duty for all Muslims, including women. The Prophet Muhammad's saying, 'Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim' (Sunan Ibn Majah), is interpreted

to include women. A significant emphasis is placed on religious education to ensure women understand their faith and can fulfill their religious duties. Includes Quranic studies, Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and other Islamic sciences. While religious education is prioritized, secular education is also permitted, provided it does not conflict with Islamic values. Women are encouraged to study subjects like medicine, teaching, and other fields beneficial to society.

Darul Aloom Deoband promotes gender-segregated education to maintain Islamic principles of modesty and propriety. Separate schools or classes for female students to ensure a conducive learning environment. Emphasis on maintaining Islamic dress code and behavior within educational settings. Ensuring that educational practices do not compromise the principles of modesty as outlined in the Quran (Surah An-Nur, 24:30-31).

Aisha bint Abi Bakr is an example of a knowledgeable woman who taught both men and women. Institutions inspired by Darul Aloom Deoband often establish women's wings or separate institutions for female education. Has specific programs and faculties dedicated to female students.

Contemporary scholars from Darul Aloom Deoband support women's education within the framework of Sharia. Issued by the Darul Ifta (Fatwa department) emphasize the importance of women's education while ensuring adherence to Islamic principles. Prominent scholars from the Deoband school have publicly endorsed the education of women. Often emphasize the need for women to be educated to better fulfill their roles within the family and society.

The perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband on women's education is grounded in the principles of Islamic teachings. It emphasizes the necessity of both religious and, to a permissible extent, secular education for women, ensuring that educational practices adhere to Islamic values of modesty and propriety. By maintaining gender-segregated institutions and environments, Darul Aloom

Deoband seeks to provide women with the knowledge necessary to fulfill their roles within an Islamic framework.

#### Social Freedom of the Women

The perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband on the social freedom of women is grounded in traditional Islamic teachings and emphasizes the importance of modesty, family roles, and adherence to Sharia (Islamic law). The Deoband school stresses the significance of women's roles within the family as mothers and caregivers, seeing these roles as essential for the well-being of society. Surah An-Nisa (4:34) speaks about the roles and responsibilities of men and women within the family structure. The Prophet Muhammad praised the role of women as mothers, saying, "Paradise lies at the feet of your mother" (Nasa'i, n.d., p. Hadith # 3104).

Interaction between men and women is to be conducted with respect and within the bounds set by Islamic etiquette. Encouraged in social settings to maintain propriety and avoid situations that may lead to inappropriate behavior. Separate institutions for men and women to ensure a conducive environment for learning and social activities. Many Deoband-affiliated schools and colleges have separate branches or timings for female students. Women are allowed to participate in social, educational, and economic activities, provided they adhere to Islamic guidelines. Activities should not conflict with Islamic principles of modesty and family responsibilities.

Darul Aloom Deoband issues fatwas and public statements to guide the community on appropriate social conduct for women. Emphasize the importance of adhering to Sharia while participating in social activities. The perspective of Darul Aloom Deoband on the social freedom of women emphasizes maintaining modesty, fulfilling family roles, and adhering to Islamic principles in social interactions. Women are encouraged to engage in educational and social activities

within the framework of Sharia, ensuring that their participation does not compromise Islamic values. This approach aims to balance social freedom with religious obligations and community well-being.

The social freedom of women in the contemporary world varies significantly across different cultures, countries, and communities. It encompasses the ability of women to participate fully in social, economic, political, and cultural life, free from discrimination and with equal opportunities.

Many countries have enacted laws to ensure gender equality and protect women's rights in areas such as employment, education, and healthcare. Laws against gender-based discrimination and harassment provide legal recourse for women facing injustice. Increased access to education for girls and women has been a significant driver of social freedom, leading to higher literacy rates and greater opportunities. Programs encouraging women to enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields are promoting gender equality in traditionally male-dominated areas. Women's participation in the workforce has increased, with more women taking on diverse roles in various industries. Support for women entrepreneurs through funding, training, and mentorship programs has empowered many women to start their own businesses.

Improved access to healthcare, including maternal and reproductive health services, has enhanced women's quality of life and social freedom. Legal protections for reproductive rights, including the right to contraception and safe abortion, have empowered women to make decisions about their bodies. Increased and more diverse representation of women in media and popular culture has helped challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality. Women's movements and advocacy groups have been instrumental in advancing women's rights and social freedoms globally.

Deep-seated patriarchal norms and cultural traditions continue to restrict women's freedoms and opportunities in many societies. Violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking, remains a pervasive issue.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that women's rights according to modern values lies in their fundamental role in promoting equality, justice, and human dignity. Modern values emphasize the importance of gender equality, recognizing that women should have the same opportunities, freedoms, and rights as men in all aspects of life. This includes access to education, employment, political participation, and personal autonomy. Upholding women's rights is crucial for the development of just and inclusive societies, where everyone can contribute to and benefit from social, economic, and cultural advancements. Moreover, the recognition and protection of women's rights are essential for addressing historical inequalities and ensuring that women are empowered to live free from discrimination and violence. By aligning with modern values, the advancement of women's rights supports the broader goal of achieving a fair and equitable world for all.

The tendency of explaining women's rights among scholars of Darul Aloom Deoband varies. Maulavi Mumtaz Ali in his work *Haqooq-e Niswan* offers a progressive view on role and status of Muslims women. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, in his work *Bahishti Zewar* and exegesis of Holy Quran *Aasan Bayan al-Quran* posed strict orthodox limitations on women for the social role and their indulgence in economic or political activities. He considers it women should be governed by their male. Yet, he is also assertive on that the male should fulfil their responsibilities towards women as those are explained by Quran and *Sunnah*. Similarly, Maulana Taqqi Usmani's work *Shohar kay Haqooq* explains that Islam provides a balance perspective on the rights of both male and female. Both male



and female have their own framework of rights and duties. The fulfilment of their responsibilities leads the society towards progress and harmony. The male should recognize their duties towards the women and vice versa.

Deoband scholars offer a deeper exploration of the role and status of women within the framework of Islamic teachings, considering contemporary societal norms. The analysis reveals both areas of alignment and divergence, highlighting how traditional interpretations can either complement or conflict with modern values concerning gender equality and women's rights. While the teachings of Darul Aloom emphasize the protection and dignity of women within an Islamic context, the chapter underscores the importance of reinterpreting these principles in light of evolving global standards. This comparison fosters a deeper understanding of how Islamic perspectives on women's social status can adapt to or resist modern values, encouraging a dialogue that bridges religious tradition with contemporary gender discourses.

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