PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL COURSE

A Case study of Engineering Graduates

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DEDICATED TO THE ALL THOSE WOMEN WHO DO THE THINGS WHICH EVERYONE

THINK THEY CANNOT DO

DECLARATION BY THE SCHOLAR

This is to certify that the M.Phil. Dissertation being submitted by me on the topic entitled 'Participation of Muslim Women in Professional Course: A case study of Engineering Graduates' has been completed under the guidance of Dr. Naresh Kumar. It is declared that the present study has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship or Fellowship to this or any other University.

Wajda Tabassum

CERTIFICATE OF THE SUPERVISOR

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled Participation of Muslim Women in Professional Course: A case study of Engineering Graduates' is the work undertaken by Ms. Wajda Tabassum under my supervision and guidance as part of her M.Phil. degree in this University. To the best of my knowledge, this is the original work conducted by her and the dissertation may be sent for evaluation.

Dr. Naresh Kumar

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Abstract

Research on Muslim women in terms of her economic capabilities has remained meagre. Very few researches go analysing them beyond the spectrum of religiosity and gender power play. It is a well-known realised fact that their participation at higher levels of education is quite dreary. Therefore, their low participation in professional courses is not surprising. But it is also a matter of concern whether professional degrees really help those women who are able to attain it. The rhetoric of education as an emancipator outcome has always been challenged in the case of marginalised groups. Therefore, Muslim women being one of the most marginalised have lot of implications in their level of empowerment which they accrue due to their professional degrees. In India, Muslim women's discourse towards the development have been meagre, secluded, disoriented and disillusioned. Low level of education, prevalence of extreme poverty, no political and social association, restrictions in employment, restricted mobility and extreme patriarchal setup shadowing both public and private life have made the lives of Indian Muslim women invisible. The shackles of patriarchy and customs are so strong for them that even educated women lose the battle and succumb to inferiority and subordinate position. The roads to empowerment are far more difficult as compared to others for them.

When we talk about Muslim women engineers, it has its own significance. The low level of education among girls in the community is a known fact. This low level of education has both social and financial reasons. Apart from that there is a huge role of religion interacting the daily lives of Muslim women. Therefore, under these circumstances, it is necessary to understand that what makes Muslim girls take engineering so that an informed discourse can be generated to promote higher education among Muslim girls and encourage them to take more subjects like engineering. The idea of carrying this kind of research is to understand the educational and cultural variations faced by Muslim professional women. Many of these women narrated anecdotal narratives which had larger meaning to decipher and had huge implications in generating an informed discourse in their sense of empowerment. The present study offers practical dimension through women's stories and the subsequent construction of the narratives through these women's experiences. Though the study is based on the women who have engineering degrees however, the objective of the study lies in analysing how empowered these women are in real sense even after having one of the most qualified technical

degrees like engineering. The study aims at generating an informed discourse through these women so that more enabling education for marginalised women can be created leading to empowerment without any constraints.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Women and Empowerment

Unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2001). Restrictions on mobility, associations, decision making, and career choices affect her opportunities and freedom to live a dignified life. They are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others – reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family's general prosperity (*ibid*). When a person is in a subordinate position, the ability of the person to choose is typically favour-dependent. Therefore, her choices within the household and in other spheres as well, may be restricted with varying penalties for making unapproved choices (Hill, 2003). Restricted choices and constraints in exercising freedom affect her process of empowerment. Empowerment is the process wherein women may exercise power and take her decisions to shape her destiny. The international organization UNESCO (2007) identifies the characteristics and potential of education for promoting self-recognition and positive self-image, stimulating critical thinking, deepening the understanding of the structures of power, including gender, and creating an expanding framework of information, knowledge and choices, as central to the process of women empowerment (UNESCO, 2007). Therefore, education is an important determinant which could bring changes in social and economic power relations. In the historical trajectory where women have suffered subordination and marginalisation, education acted as a catalyst to enforce the identity as equal and empowered.

Empowerment enables individuals to gain control over their lives and make their own choices. It can be seen as a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes (Mechanic, 1991). Linkages between education and empowerment are diverse and well known. Education in itself may not be a driving factor for empowerment. However, it leads to an enabling environment which facilitates the process of empowerment. Skill formation, knowledge gathering, informative associations and developed consciousness which are direct outcomes of the education enable the conditions necessary for empowerment. Therefore, disparities in education also affect the process of empowerment for an individual. According to UNESCO (2015) the global literacy rate for all males is 90.0 percent and the rate for all females is 82.7 percent. The gender gaps in the literacy rates have always been consistent

over the time across the globe as females in the bottom position. The problems of empowerment are synonymous with educational deprivations. This disadvantaged position implies women as being less empowered as compared to men irrespective of nationality, culture and ethnicity.

The discourses on women empowerment cannot be studied in isolation. It is a commonly used notion in the context of gender equality. Therefore, education becomes a necessary goal to achieve different parameters of empowerment like freedom, equality, justice and equity. These parameters gradually lead to an equilibrium in power relation between the two genders. Equal Power distribution offers inclusivity and sense of freedom to every individual irrespective of his or her gender identity. This will liberate the societies from the historicity of gender oppressions and discriminations. Women's discourses since epoch are guided by the narratives of her subordination and submission. Patriarchy in almost all the culture influences the gender relation which ultimately affected women's capabilities for development. The gender disparities in educational level reflect that subdued narratives which left women less empowered and invisible in developmental discourse. Participating in education has more social benefits as compared to economic benefits. Educational deprivation thus also affected women's social goals and development which has a greater significance as compared to economic returns.

Reasons for women not participating in education is known and common across all the religion, class, culture and nationalities. Women are more prone to educational barriers like poverty, poor infrastructure, conservative norms and practices as compared to men. UN statistics in 2015 reported that two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women and this situation has been persistent over the last 20 years and in fact beyond that. Women face constraints in terms of time, space and societal expectations. The rationality underlying women's subordination must be found in the stability it leads to social arrangements (Stromquist, 1990). The notions of patriarchal ideology placed the women at an inferior position and incompetent as compared to men. The natural ability of women to serve as mothers, wives and housekeepers became the cornerstone of sexual division of labour and barred from all such roles which were not feminine (ibid). This gender segregation of work based on the incompetency and incapability led women unprofitable to invest in their education.

Nussbaum (2001) writes in account the life of Jayamma whose entire life as a worker has been defined by the rigid stratification of the sexes in the brick industry in a society where the lower classes rarely get opportunities for education and skill development. Though men also don't always get these chances always however, when there is an opportunity for that, it is almost certain to be male. They have greater economic opportunities as compared to daughter's income and also it is considered shameful to be dependent on her income. Nussbaum also narrates the story of Vasanti who faced the typical middle-class pressures which most of the women of this class face: early marriage, domestic works and childcaring as primary responsibility and lack of formal education and of training for any useful occupation. Through the stories of these two women Nussbaum tries explaining how traditions of modesty and purity have often relegated women to such standard lives, which is against their wills. These middle-class well-off families never question adult male authority however they encourage norms of female submissiveness, silence, and innocence.

Power relations are intricately woven in the fabrics of society, which can be evidently seen in the family, as a micro unit. It shapes not only social constructs but also shapes the individuals (Foucault, 1980). Everyone is a part of that social power relation and also acts in compliance with that convention. Therefore, women in the trajectories where they were ousted by masculine power, developed as weaker sex as compared to men. Now, bringing equity in these power relations requires more than just an increase in social decision-making. As Fraser (1989) writes, breaking that power relation involves the empowerment of individuals through their self-organisation and through self-determination in all areas of activity. Fraser (1989) further adds that emancipatory outcomes in social processes depend on the development of new contexts of interaction, achieved through communication. These communications which she talks about can be initiated when women are educated enough to assert their individuality as competent and equal to men.

These emancipator outcomes aren't easy to achieve. Debates around the deprivations suffered by women always found education as panacea for their emancipation. But the larger question here is to know the emancipator potential of education. It is also important to know the extent to which education empowers women to challenge traditional expectations and rigid patriarchal norms.

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1.2 Empowerment and Education

In the academic arena, the definitions of empowerment are basically context-based. More often, it is used as an umbrella term to represent a number of emancipatory indicators, both qualitative and quantitative which are responsible for the development of an individual. The term 'power' is very integral to the conceptual definition of empowerment. Therefore, empowerment denotes relative changes in the power dimension. So, when we talk about women empowerment, it means their control over resources such as material assets, intellectual resources and ideology (Batliwala, 1994). Empowerment enables women to assert control over the factors which are responsible to better their lives. These enabling factors can be anything which can enhance their decision-making capacity and help then in challenging discriminatory ideologies which are used against them. Some of these factors as mentioned by Walters and Manicom (1996) are gaining more decision-making capacity, deepening an understanding of relations, configuring one's life and controlling conditions affecting one's life etc. In a broader sense, the power to make strategic life decisions without any hindrance so as to maximise the goals of life are the important attributes of empowerment. In the developmental discourse, empowerment occupies an integral space and is used as a 'means and end' of each other. The basic idea of empowerment focusses on achieving equality through class struggles for control over resources, enhancing decision-making capabilities to make strategic life choices and to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality.

Any discourse on empowerment puts various questions related to power. There are a number of theorists like Foucault (1989), Giddens (1994), Fraser (1989) and Hartsock (1998) who explained power dynamics and their relationships. They analysed how the institutions of societies establish systematic inequalities in power based on gender, class, race and other characteristics. Theories of power tend to divide between agency-related theories and those relating to structure. The agency versus structure argument is essentially an issue of socialisation versus autonomy in determining whether an individual act as a free agent or in a manner dictated by social structure (Chaudhary, 2016).

Sen (1999) defined empowerment as the expansion of agency of an individual. An agency approach takes women to be active agents who themselves promote and achieve social and political transformation that can better their lives. It is vital not only for improving the

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economic and social power of women, but for challenging and changing entrenched values and social practices that support gender bias in the distribution of basic necessities of life. Kabeer (1999) conceptualized empowerment in terms of "strategic life choices", comprising three interrelated components which are resources, that is, conditions under which choices are made; agency, through which choices are made and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. However, Gram, Morrison, and Skordis-Worrall (2018) points at how Kabeer's definition of empowerment leaves open how complex processes of 'bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance should be classified in terms of women's ability to 'make strategic life choices. Both Sen and Nussbaum have viewed empowerment intrinsic to human development.

Linkages between education and empowerment have different theoretical perspectives. As Singh, A. K. (2015) have mentioned two major theories which explains the linkages- one perspective from the point of view of a class struggle whereby the lower class wrests the power from the upper class, another perspectives emerging from a scrutiny of development policies and practices under which concerned groups are treated as the main stakeholders whose participation is sought in the implementation of development programme. In the first perspective, empowerment is viewed in terms of one group exercising power over others and in the second it is used in relation for achieving goals or objectives. Education acts as a catalyst which alters women's consciousness to question those traditions and practices which hinders their freedom and right to live a dignified life. Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations' Millennium Declaration 2000 recognize education as development that creates choices and opportunities for people, reduces the twin burdens of poverty and diseases and gives people a stronger voice in society.

Stormquist (2015) identified four dimensions of empowerment directly linked associated with education which were a)cognitive (critical understanding of reality), b) psychological (self-esteem), c)political (awareness of inequalities & capacity to mobilize) and d) economic (capacity to generate income) (ibid, 2002). She further adds that formal education enables women to obtain better paid jobs and in doing so supports the economic dimension of empowerment, as well as allowing women to cross the boundaries between private and public spheres. Linking education to the empowerment Murphy-Graham (2008) did their study 'women's empowerment and innovative secondary education in Honduras' and argued that education can trigger the empowerment process if it increases women's knowledge and

understanding, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity. They found out that education may initiate an 'empowerment process' if it broadens women's knowledge and understanding, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity. For them, empowerment comes from an explicit, politicised form of understanding rights. Access to education not only increases the knowledge and skills but also makes the individual more productive for higher wages (Rajapakse, 2016). Skills and knowledge are investments in one's labor productivity and it is possible to estimate the economic returns to education for different educational levels, types of education, etc. (Robeyns, 2006).

Though, the crucial role of education in empowering women can never be underestimated however the social and cultural norms impacting the lives of these women cannot be denied. The cultural and social settings do influence a person's ability to take strategic life choices under the constraints of options available to them. Under those circumstances, even educated women can also get influenced by these local settings. This brings out the discussion that how education can address itself to the needs of these women so that they derive the maximum output from their educational qualification. As Meenakshi Thapan (1997) writes that the significant value of education lies in its ability to alter women's consciousness and lives from within so that they question the traditions and practices and bring about a change in their everyday lives by asserting themselves through a positive understanding and appreciation of their identities as women. The impact of regressive culture on the women can negatively affect the empowering outcomes of education. As Nussbaum quotes (1996), 'customs are an important cause of women's misery and death', the values which the customs hold in the lives of women can never be undermined. The influence of these cultures can alter a women's behaviour in exercising full control of their lives even if they get educated and financially independent.

The relationship between education and empowerment has nuances that are reflected in various contradictions. Employment is the direct benefit of education and there are various findings which have stated that education and employment necessarily enhance a woman's autonomy (See Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001). The strategy for the maximisation of women's autonomy needs to extend beyond education and employment. For breaking the age-old shackles of patriarchy and assertion of their own identity requires more than just economic consciousness. In all patriarchal societies, but particularly in extremely conservative societies,

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women who wish to advance gender equality need to convince potential male allies, make deals and compromises and frame issues in ways that minimise hard opposition (O'Neil and Domingo, 2015). This poses a question on the empowering outcomes of education for women as their right to thrive for equality gets compromised in these conditions. The discrepancies in the outcome need to be addressed and education has to adhere to those gaps to make women empowered and conscious of their 'actual empowerment'. Realisation of their rights, awareness to challenge traditional customs which are regressive, resource mobilisation and access to wealth, control over economic resources and social and political awareness are factors which can contribute to women's actual empowerment. Therefore, the education has to be strategized itself to encompass these factors.

As Jeffery et al (2008) have suggested to avoid using education as offering a high road to the solution of problems of social inequality, whilst also being careful not to negate the life-enhancing potential of formal schooling. On one hand education is surely a prerequisite condition for empowerment but the educational discourse has to address the voice of marginalised and make education more enhanced to suit their needs for making them empowered in real sense. Education has to surely justify its discourse on the twin principle of equity and equality.

1.3 Statistics on education and employment among major religions in India

The World Bank (2019) reports that the gender gap in literacy is highest in South-Asia. Adult male literacy is 79 percent while adult female literacy is 62 percent. However, this disparity is not uniform in South-Asia. Majority of them belong to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (UNESCO, 2007). Talking exclusively about India, Census 2011 states that the literacy rate for male is 80.9 percent (aged 4 and above) while for females it is 64.60 percent. Such a huge gender disparity has various repercussions- both social and economically.
India is a land of social and cultural diversity with a 1.3 billion population. People belonging from different faiths, cultures, languages, customs and traditions form an indispensable part of India. Demographically, India has more than two thousand ethnic groups. Major religions are Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity.

Table 1.a Religious Composition of India's Population

Major Religions	Percentage Share
Hindu	79.80%
Muslim	14.23%
Christians	2.30%
Sikh	1.72%
Buddhism	0.70%
Jain	0.24%

Source: Census 2011

Though India is Hindu majority country however, every religion is given an equal right through the constitution and equal share in accessing the resources. However, equitable resource allocation is still a major task for India. Social inequality exists based on gender, caste and religion. These inequalities are quite visible in terms of education, employment and income. These disparities vary among different religions, castes and gender.

Table 1.b Literacy Rate among different religious Communities (in percentage)

Religious Community	Male	Female	Total
Hindus	70.78	55.98	65.38
Muslims	62.41	51.9	57.155
Christians	76.78	71.97	74.375
Jains	87.86	84.93	86.395
Sikhs	71.32	63.29	67.305
Buddhists	77.87	65.6	71.35
Others	59.8	41.38	50.38

Source: Census 2011

From the above table, we can see that literacy level among Muslims, for both male and female is lowest as a single religion as compared to other religions of India. Muslim lagged on all important socio-economic indicators, including health, education and employment (Hasan, 2016). In fact, one of the main reasons for their overall marginalisation has been their educational backwardness and exclusion from the mainstream employment sector (ibid).

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Educational deprivation is not an end but an important means which leads to other forms of deprivations.

Table 1.c Work Participation rate amongst major religious groups

Name of the Religion	Work Participation Rate
Hinduism	41%
Islam	32%
Christianity	41.9%
Sikhism	36.3%
Buddhism	43.1%
Jain	35.5%
Religion not stated	31.3%

Source: Census 2011

As we can see, in terms of work participation among different religions, it is unevenly distributed among the communities. While Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs have a highest participation rate, Muslim are at the lowest. Education and employment are positively correlated. It is a well-established theory that investing in human capital generates more economic returns (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). Therefore, Muslim's low participation in work can be causally linked with their low levels of education. Rajinder Sachar Committee (2006) in their report commented on the status of the Muslims in India as worse than other disadvantaged groups of the country like scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Regarding their employment status they commented that the presence of Muslims had been found to be only 3% in the IAS, 1.8% in the IFS and 4% in the IPS, only 4.5% in Indian Railways out of which 98.7% of them are positioned at lower levels. Their share in police constables is only 6%, in health 4.4%, in transport 6.5%. Talking about employment in the government sector, the report states that it only employs 23.7% Muslims while the private sector employs about 6.5%. Muslim employment in either sector is the lowest among all communities, the highest being for Hindus which was higher even than all India figure of 34.2% in the government sector and 13.1% in the private sector. This poor level of education and employment of Muslims is reflected in their consumption expenditure as well as their spending on education of their children.

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Table 1.d Religion Wise per capita expenditure in India

Name of the Religion	Average Per Capita Expenditure Per Day
Hindu	37.50
Muslims	32.66
Sikhs	55.30
Christians	51.43

Source: NSSO 68th Round

According to NSSO data, the average spending per day is lowest among Muslims which is just RS 32.66 per day! While for Sikhs and Christians it is as high as RS 55.30 per day. This low level of expenditure makes education an issue of affordability many Muslims caught in the vicious cycle of poverty. According to the 71st NSSO survey on education, the average course fee for college degrees in technical courses in government and private aided institutions was Rs 25, 783 and Rs 64, 442 respectively. Therefore, under income as an economic constraint, it is beyond the capacity for Muslim students to pursue education at beyond post-secondary level.

Table 1.e Net Attendance Ratio (%) for different level of education for each Religion

Religion	Primary		Upper Primary		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Above Higher Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hinduism	85	84	66	63	54	53	40	38	14	12
Islam	80	77	55	56	38	40	25	24	8	6
Christianity	87	87	72	68	64	63	48	54	17	16
Sikhism	87	84	63	68	58	52	51	53	14	15
Other Religions	88	86	65	69	73	68	39	40	17	10
All	84	83	64	62	52	51	38	37	14	11

Source: NSSO 71st Round

By the above data we can see that Muslims, both for male and female the net attendance ratio is comparatively low from the other religion. Though with each successive level, the net attendance ratio gradually decreases for every religion however, in case of Muslim, the decline

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is highly skewed. In terms of enrolment also we can see that Muslim have the highest share of person (aged 5-29) not enrolled in any educational system.

Figure 1. Share of Enrolment among different Marginal groups

Source: AISHE Report (2014-15)

So, we can see from the above data that though the share of Muslim population is 14 percent still their share of enrolment in higher education is just 4.50 percent. The share of enrolment just increased to 4.90 percent in 2016-17. Hasan (2016) writes that the most important reason for these differences in educational attainments across groups are limited access to good quality schools and colleges. The number of colleges in Muslim concentrated areas are below the national average. Another important reason for low participation which she mentions is low returns of education in terms of yielding jobs especially in the public sector. Geetha Rani (2014) also writes that the rate of returns to education both at elementary and higher educational levels is least among all the social groups except Dalits and Adivasis. Both the reasons create a situation where the community as whole becomes deprived with accessibility and availability of higher education however, the impact falls larger on Muslim women who are worst sufferers in all forms of deprivations.

1.4 Status of Muslim Women in India

The progressiveness and the narratives of equity and inclusiveness failed to recognize Indian Muslim Women as its indispensable agent. With a very low level of education, almost

negligible economic participation and no political representations, the situation for India Muslim women is gloomy and startling. The problems with Muslim women in India are complex and intricated. In the Islamic discourse, Muslim women were never treated at par with Muslim men in terms of occupational mobility, access to higher education, equal preferences in decision making and career choice. The patriarchal norms dictated most of her personal and professional life. No doubt, women across all religious communities face such discriminations however, the intensity is quite high when it comes to Muslim women. As Hasan & Menon (2004) write although all women suffer gender-based inequalities in marriage, autonomy and mobility across communities, Muslim women are lower than the national average in certain key areas like socioeconomic status, occupational distribution, labour force participation and education. In the epochs of time, Muslim women remained invisible and their present condition is an evidence of this statement. Even in the 21st century where women have achieved excellence at par with men, Muslim women remained isolated from such achievements. This not only hampered their self-confidence but also forced them to live a life in anonymity.

The developmental discourse is always influenced by gender and religion. Both have a significant effect and its isolation from the discourse would be highly problematic specially when it comes to Muslim women. Al Hibri (1982) points out that religions have a patriarchal view of the relationship between genders and the problem regarding gender inequality within Islam is indicative of cultural practices and traditional patriarchal and male-dominated religious interpretations used to subjugate Muslim women for centuries. But, the theological study of Islam indicates gender equality in both public and private sphere. Using this contestations, Muslim women have tried to seek for equal opportunity as men where they quote lines from Quran which argues for gender equality. This discourse in Islam also led to the rise of Islamic feminism who have tried to interpret Quran from female perspectives. They argue that a true understanding of Quran does not require subordination of the women and using this argument they strive for greater role of educated Muslim women in society. However, as Galloway (2014) puts that although Muslim women seek gender equality, how to achieve it without separating religion from culture has caused some Muslim women to accept traditional patriarchy within Islam.

In India, Muslim women's discourse towards the development have been meagre, secluded, disoriented and disillusioned. Low level of education, prevalence of extreme poverty, no political and social association, restrictions in employment, restricted mobility and extreme

patriarchal setup shadowing both public and private life have made the lives of Indian Muslim women invisible. The shackles of patriarchy and customs are so strong for them that even educated women lose the battle and succumb to inferiority and subordinate position. The roads to empowerment are far more difficult as compared to others for them.

1.4 a) Educational Status

Despite numerous provisions taken in National Policies on Education to deal with educational deprivations among Muslim, the efforts have not been succeeded. Lack of commitment and will, fallout in the implementation of the policies, difference in theory and practise and indifference attitude of the government for the community are the few reasons for this failure of the efforts.

According to the 2011 Census, 48.1 percent of Muslim Women in India are illiterate. This is the highest rate of illiteracy among all the religious community. In terms of higher education, they are worse off than schedule caste and schedule tribes (AISHE 2014-15). While the overall literacy rate of India has been around 74 percent over the time however, for Muslim it has stagnated just at 60 percent. The number further falls out as we move from elementary to higher levels of education. The enrolment level of Muslims in higher education is lower among all the communities. AISHE (2017-18) reported that the student ratio in higher education is just 4.90-5 percent in proportion with the 14 percent of their population. These data explicitly demonstrate the Muslims in higher education lack representation. As Sachar Committee has pointed out "education among Muslims in India are worse than Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes". They have the lowest rate of enrolment in higher education and much below at the national average of 23.6 percent. Therefore, it can be obviously said the illiteracy among Muslims are the major reason for their poverty and deprived conditions. The Census (2011) states that the Muslims are at the bottom in the level of education-both at primary and secondary level. There is a lot of gender disparity and the conditions of women are the worst in all levels of human development. Only 57.15 percent are literate among Muslims which is far below as compared to other minorities like Buddhist and Christians.

Sekh Rahim Mondal (1997) puts educational backwardness of Muslims in India should be understood in the wider context of their socio-economic and political marginalization. Though the community have realisation regarding economic and social benefits of education,

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however, poverty, issues of accessibility and availability of elementary education and higher cost involved in post-secondary education are the major setbacks which compels not to educate their children. From here the vicious cycle of poverty generates which further plunges the community into wider forms of deprivation. As we know, education has more benefits as social good as compared to economic good, therefore a low level of education socially deprives them from their right to live a dignified and informed life. And for women, the road to education is further hurdled. When their role vis-a-vis man is already limited with more confinement to private and almost negligible public life, education for Muslim women in the community is undesired and purposeless. Muslim women account for the lowest levels of school attainment. Along with the low level of school enrolment, the high drop-out rate is a major concern for making it to higher education. If we look at the regional variations, the situation in the northern states is further bleak. Both urban and the rural regions in the north suffer from high illiteracy rate among the Muslim women in India. According to a socio-economic survey on Muslim women in India by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, the major reasons for illiteracy among then are financial constraints and parental opposition. In case of rural Muslim women, parental opposition was the major reason for their low level of education. While for the southern regions, the primary reason remains financial constraints.

Table 1.f Enrolment of Muslim minority by stage of school education, all India

	2014-15			2015-16			2016-17		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
Primary	9562071	9196234	18758305	9492461	9139234	18631695	9464348	9090346	18554694
Upper Primary	4107070	4358513	8465583	4142781	4372472	8515253	4183037	4411010	8594047
Elementary	13669141	13554747	27223888	13635242	13511706	27146948	13647385	13501356	27148741
Secondary	1852044	1985850	3837894	1920110	2088037	4008147	2018816	2181132	4199948
Higher Secondary	963067	996308	1959375	962550	1028440	1990990	941085	1017289	1958374
Total (i-xii)	16484252	16536905	33021157	16517902	16628183	33146085	16607286	16699777	33307063

Source: DISE

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As per the above data the percentage change between 2014-15 to 2016-17 in girl's enrolment at higher secondary level is just 2.1 percent while at the primary level enrolment decreases by 1.15 percent between these two years. This can further illustrate the slow growth in enrolment rate at higher secondary among Muslim girls. This stage of schooling is necessary for their transition into higher educational levels. DISE data (2016-17) also states that for Muslim girls the transition rate from primary to upper primary stage is 88.41 percent at all India level, transition rate at elementary to secondary stage is 82.83 percent and the transition rate at secondary to higher secondary stage is 55.89 percent.

In terms of higher education, AISHE (2018-19) reports that enrolment for Muslim female at all India level is 965608 while for females in all category in India is 1040899. According to the report, scheduled castes students constitute 14.9% and scheduled tribes students 5.5% of the total enrolment. 36.3% students belong to Other Backward Classes. 5.2% students belong to Muslim Minority and 2.3% from other Minority Communities. So, we can see that the enrolment for Muslim in higher education is even lower than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The same report also suggested that Muslim Minority has more male students than female whereas other minorities has more female than male. For the teaching posts at all India level which is also one of the parameter at higher education were found to be 73 female teachers per 100 male teachers for general, 57 female teachers per 100 male teacher in SC category, and in case of ST and OBC, it is 68 and 68 female per 100 males teachers, respectively and for Muslim Minority it was 57 female teachers per 100 male whereas for other minority, there are 151 female per 100 male teacher.

All these data are reflections of the low level of education among Muslim women at all the levels of education. Though, it has gradually increased over the time, yet it is more to be achieved.

1.4 b) Socio-Economic Status

The NSSO data on female labor force participation has constantly shown that Muslim women's participation is lowest among all the communities. The Sachar Report (2006) stated that their uncounted labor is as high as nearly 70 percent within all workers. Enrolment for Muslim girls at graduate and above level is just 1.7 percent of the total (Census, 2011). No

doubt, their share of enrolment has increased over the time but still the rate is slow and not up to the expectations.

Table 1.g Per 1000 distribution of usually employed (p+ss) persons by status of employment for major Religions

Religious Groups	Self Employed Women		Regular Employee Women		Casual Labour Women		All Employed Women
	Rural	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	
Hinduism	581	411	53	439	366	150	1000
Islam	682	613	66	249	252	137	1000
Christianity	595	265	140	647	265	88	1000
Sikhism	790	508	62	482	148	10	1000
Others	540	317	49	560	411	123	1000
All	593	428	56	428	351	143	1000

Source: NSSO 68th Survey

According to the above data by NSSO, we can see that Muslim Women in rural areas are more occupied as self-employed and casual labours while their proportion is comparatively low as regular employed women both in rural and urban areas. Low level of education among the women can be one of the important reasons for the low participation. Their restrictive job mobility in the labour market does not let them have accessibility to more economic opportunities.

Apart from this, even if they complete their degree, their freedom to work, career choice and occupational mobility is restrictive. Complex interplay of various factors like austerity, religious conservatism, patriarchal discriminations etc do not let women become a part of the mainstream workforce. Muslim women in India have the lowest work participation rate as main workers and they are also among the higher number of non-working female population in the country (Census 2011). In most of Muslim families, women only work when economic crisis compels them to share responsibility. However, they are still guided by certain religious protocols like working in consent with their father or husband, not mingling with their male colleagues, avoid working at odd hours even if it's urgent, not discussing private lives with the

colleagues and dress with utmost modesty. Many times, Muslim women face discriminations from the employers as well because of their stereotyping. Das, M. B. (2004) writes that there are two main reasons for the low participation of Muslim women in the labour market. In rural areas, it is due to their limited engagement in agriculture within the overall context of differential land ownership patterns by religion while in urban areas it is due to their exclusion from professional, technical and clerical jobs. In urban areas too, there is very limited engagement of Muslim women as compared to women of other religions.

Hasan & Menon (2004) did an empirical study on various socio-economic condition of Muslim women and they write that majority of women when asked why they did not work could not respond. Therefore, they write that those women who did not respond remained silent for all the usual reasons like marriage, motherhood, restrictions on mobility and work, interrupted education etc. Though these reasons are common for all women irrespective of their religious identity, however, for Muslim women the intensity of the rigidities is much higher. The linkages between education and empowerment took different kind of trajectory in case of Muslim Women. The effects of cultural and religious influences vanquished her sense of empowerment which she derived from her educational outcomes. In many cases the degree entitlements for them are just for marriage rather than any career aspirations. This is quite evident in the AISHE and NSSO reports. The enrolments for girl's in higher education are not reciprocated by their participation in employment. Also, the enrolment is much higher in simple graduate courses rather than any professional or technical courses.

The **objectives** of the study would be:

1. To understand their meaning of empowerment.
2. To know the role of professional degrees in empowering Muslim women
3. To understand the role of religious conservatism, stereotyping in their empowerment process

Research Questions

The discourse on women empowerment is multifaceted involving on the one hand patriarchal structures and on the other opportunities associated with being educated. The present research while underscoring all these arguments aims to engage with engineering

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graduated women in the city of Delhi. Therefore, some of the broader and specific questions to be engaged in the research are as follow

a) Does education empower women to challenge power relations?
b) How do educated women perceive their degree of freedom?
c) How does participation in professional course empowers Muslim women?
d) Does religious conservatism and stereotyping hinder their participation in the professional courses?
e) Whether participation in the engineering course empowers Muslim women to expand individual sphere and career choice?

These questions would be the underscored in this study while taking narratives of the women engineering graduate. The idea here is to generate informed discourses on education based on this twin principle of equity and equality. The meaning of being empowerment or being educated might vary considerably. On the question of religion, how does it impact gendered experience of education when it is a known fact that religious traditions can act as barriers to women's education (Davies, 2013). On the contrary view, as Lynn Davies (2013) has pointed out that there is little evidence that education means a rejection of religion, rather a much deeper exploration of it and a teasing out of what are cultural, social and patriarchal constructions and what are divine ones. Therefore, it is important to analyse how educated women articulate their religiosity within the realms of empowerment as enabling or prohibiting factors.

Gender based discrimination are socially constructed. Women's physical vulnerabilities are often used as a justification for all the discriminations against her. Patriarchy ghosts her life from childhood to adulthood and she loses her own sense of individuality. She is always subjected to the male domination of the family. Before marriage it would be her father who would be her decision maker and after marriage it would be her husband. She never gets a chance to be the master of her own soul. It is not that she is incapable of taking her own decisions, but men feel like having the ownership of their women. In case of Muslim women, stereotypes entrenched by the trinity of multiple marriages, triple talaq, purdah system held them as hostage for so long that they become dislodged over the time (Hasan & Menon, 2004). They lost their vision for self-development and empowerment and got reduced to a secondary position in the society. The historicity of her deprivations is quite obviously reflective in her present condition. Social norms push a lot of Muslim women deprived to education especially

to higher and professional courses. These courses can be financially expensive therefore parents do not find it profitable to invest in their education because

a) Girls leave their parents' home after marriage while their son stays with them, so they think it more profitable to spend it on their son's education

b) There are no expectations involved in a girl's opportunity for employability. Even girls themselves get so conditioned that they do not even think of any career aspirations.

c) Even if they get education, gender discrimination in the labour market is a truth. Therefore, there is a very low probability that she will end up with a good job.

Moreover, Muslim family structure are so male dominating and powerful that they do not allow their women to participate in higher education (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2006). In most cases they remain confined within the boundaries of their home and they always need a male alibi from their family to accompany them whenever they step out of their home. Purdah from non-mehrams (those males who can be prospect for marriage) from a very young age often fills them with low confidence when they need to communicate with the opposite sex in their professional life. Constant interplays of religious conservatism and patriarchy reduce them to a status of mere puppets without any discretionary power for themselves. Even if they want to work, they have to do it in consent with the male head of their family. At the workplace also she is put to impositions like distancing or not mingling with the male colleagues, not working at late hours, dressing with utmost modesty and always giving priority to family and children over her career.

Engineering as a way towards empowerment

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process. As Nussbaum (2001) writes that one cannot understand choices and constraints without understanding different levels of specificity and generality and how she is socially placed: what it means to be a particular social situation of a woman. Therefore, the word empowerment is also contextual as well as relational. Education and empowerment are both cause and end of each other. However, how education affects the sense of empowerment under different social situations and context is yet to explore and analyse.

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Engineering as a degree is one of the most sought courses for both men and women around the world. Due to globalisation, the IT industry sprawled over every nook and cranny around the globe which gave a booming rise to engineering courses. The lucrative salaries, abundance of opportunities and other economic benefits act as both push and pull factors for individuals to take up the engineering subjects. In the Indian labour market too, professional degrees like engineering have high employability value. Individuals tend to choose it because of expected higher returns as compared to investment in education. It is one of the most sought courses in India. According to All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) there are 211022 girls who were enrolled in 2018-19 into engineering and technology. The proportion of women enrolled in engineering and technology courses was 0.2 percent in 1950– 1951, a figure which rose to 3.8 percent in 1980–1981, 16 percent in 1995, and to 23 percent in 2005–2006. In 2017 UNESCO came up with 'UNESCO Science Report: towards 2030' where they mentioned that there is substantial increase in women undergraduates in engineering in India.

When we talk about Muslim women engineers, it has its own significance. The low level of education among girls in the community is a known fact. This low level of education has both social and financial reasons. Apart from that there is a huge role of religion interacting the daily lives of Muslim women. Therefore, under these circumstances, it is necessary to understand that what makes Muslim girls take engineering so that an informed discourse can be generated to promote higher education among Muslim girls and encourage them to take more subjects like engineering. The reasons for choosing engineering in this study is mainly due to

a) Acceptance of engineering as a qualified technical degree with high employability value.
b) Anyone with an engineering degree is assumed to be educated and empowered as well.
c) Women are often stereotyped that they are not good and suitable for courses like engineering as it involves more analytical knowledge.

Though the study is based on the women who have engineering degrees however, the objective of the study lies in analysing how empowered these women are in real sense even after having one of the most qualified technical degrees like engineering. The study aims at generating an informed discourse through these women so that more enabling education for marginalised women can be created leading to empowerment without any constraint

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Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Narrative inquiry would guide the methodological orientation of the research. This method includes stories of real-life problems or situations that provide sufficient background data so that complex problems or experiences can be analysed. This method is broadly used in qualitative research as methods which relies on human knowledge and arranging it systemically to come to a conclusion. In this method stories of lived experience (data) are co-constructed and negotiated between the people involved as a means of capturing complex, multi-layered and nuanced understandings of the work so that we can learn from it (Etherington, 2013).

In simple words the word 'narrate' means 'to tell'. Therefore, narrative means to tell something in detail, maybe as a story. Narrative research is telling someone's story or experiences and then tries to analyse it and make a meaning out of it. Narrative inquiry focuses on gathering information through stories and then using those raw data for research purposes. Narrative inquiry focuses on individual stories and focuses on micro-analytic pictures. Unlike ethnography or grounded theory, narrative inquiry does not focus on broad details like cultural norms, traditions or geographical regions. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives". Therefore, narrative inquiry leads to different ways which people experienced or lived through.

This method has been used by a lot of philosophers and anthropologists like Dewey, Johnson and Polkinghorne because of its flexibility with the depiction of complex issues.

There are various functions of the narrative method which makes it unique in qualitative research methodology. Some of these functions as mentioned by Gibbs (2018) are:

a) To convey news and information as in stories of personal experience.
b) To meet psychological and complex needs, such as giving people a way to deal with disruptions to everyday life.
c) To help groups explain an issue or their collective stance towards it.
d) To persuade e.g. in a court witness, or a salesman.
e) To present a positive image or to give credibility to someone.
f) To undertake the social transmission of experience through, for example, parables, proverbs, moral and mystic tales.

g) To structure our ideas of self and to establish and maintain our identity.

Not every single narrative presents all the mentioned characteristics however, all the narrative will present at least one mentioned characteristic. What function does the participants want as a narrative will determine the experiences they share. Bamberg (2012) writes that narrative provides realms into of experience, where speakers lay out how they as individuals experience certain events and confer their subjective meaning onto these experiences; and (ii) the realm of narrative means that are put to use in order to make (this) sense. Putting things in order or based in chronology is the most important part in which the stories are narrated. Chronology of the events in very integral in the narrative research. It forms a strong base to literature and provides a qualitative approach to do the research. Because of its focus on experience and the qualities of life and education, narrative is situated in a matrix of qualitative research (Connelly and Clandinin ,1990).

Narrative inquiry is extensively used in educational research. It embraces all the human sciences and it has multi-disciplinary procedures. Whether its literature, sociology or anthropology; every discipline has a claim to narrative. In the field of education, the comprehensive overview of this design emerged in 1990. It was Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly provided the first overview of narrative in educational research and they mentioned many applications of narrative study in the context of classroom learning and teaching. Since then there has been a substantial interest among the researchers because of several factors. Cortazzi (1993) tells three factors which have influenced its development. First, there is currently an increased emphasis on teacher reflection. Second, more emphasis is being placed on teacher's knowledge- what they know, how they have been developed professionally, how they think and take decisions in the classrooms. Third, educators seek to bring teacher's voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences. Thus, the new educational dimensions which keep on evolving leads to researchers opting narrative inquiry as a research design.

Data has no meaning on its own without its meaningful representation and analysis. Presenting these data with coherent arguments is the essence of research, whether its qualitative or quantitative research. Likewise, for narrative inquiries, analysis is a crucial and important task. A good narrative involves transforming personal experiences of participants through the act of storytelling. Therefore, analysing these experiences through an unbiased and analytical

lens is the most powerful tool in a narrative inquiry. Revealing participant's views, choices and decisions they made without destructing the various contexts they lived is the essence of narrative research. While transcribing narrative data, it should be kept in mind that transcripts attempt to manage three general and complex tasks: (i) rendering reality, (ii) transforming reality, and (iii) picking out and communicating what is considered relevant about that reality to the reader and to the interpretive task at hand (Bamberg, 2012). Polkinghorne (1988) explains that narrative data analysis and interpretation as an act of finding meaning is not straightforward enterprise. Rather it may pose challenges and personal dilemmas. He mentions several issues which are some intrinsic problems in study of meaning. These are:

a) Meaning is not tangible, not static; thus, it is not easily grasped.

b) We do not have direct access to the realm of meaning of others. We are at the mercy of the storyteller's recollection or introspection.

c) Information about other people's realm of meaning can be gathered through the narratives and stories. These narratives are context sensitive. Hence, they aren't to be treated in isolation.

d) The analysis of narrative data makes use of hermeneutic reasoning; thus, the analysis methods are not as precise as quantitative tools.

e) The realm of meaning appears in various modes of presentation, such as perception, remembrance, and imagination. These complex interconnections between images and ideas make the realm of meaning difficult to investigate.

Thus, we can say that interpretation of narrative data is fluid and temporal in nature which changes subsequently with different time horizons. Also, there can be never a single interpretation of these data, due to interpersonal subjectivity.

There are different ways in which narrative data can be analysed. Data can be analysed through understanding function and framework of narrative data. Chase (2005) mentioned five interconnected, analytic lenses which are used in narrative inquiry. The first is narrative as a vehicle for the uniqueness of human actions, the second on the narrator's voice and the verbal action and choices made by the narrator. The third is the ways in which the narrative was constrained by social circumstances, whereas the fourth lens treated narratives as socially situated, interactive performances between the researcher and the participant. The fifth focuses on researchers as narrators and can be seen in autoethnographic research. Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal's (2004) draw a distinction between actual events and narratives, arguing

that narratives must be based on perception or observation of real the events. He mentioned that there are six stages in process of analysis, which includes an analysis of biographical data, thematic analysis, re-construction of the case history or life as it was lived, analysis of individual texts, a process of comparison between a narrative and life as lived, and the formation of different types of narratives.

Gibbs (2018) explains different stages which are involved in analysis and interpretation of narrative data:

1. First step is to read atlease twice the transcript to familiarize with the structure and content of the narrative or narratives and look for events, experiences, accounts and narratives.

2. Second step is preparing a short, written summary to identify key features such as the beginning, the middle and the end of the story.

3. Third step is using the right-hand margin of the transcript to note thematic ideas and structural points and looking for themes between them.

4. Then, taking notes/memos about the ideas you have and use them to highlight where people give accounts for their actions and to show the overall structure of the story.

5. Mark (with pen or pencil) any embedded mini-stories or sub-plots and use arrows to indicate linkages between elements.

6. Highlight or circle emotive language, imagery, use of metaphors and passages about the narrator's feelings.

7. Code thematic ideas and develop a coding frame.

8. Connect the ideas you have developed about the narrative with the broader theoretical literature.

9. The last step is taking case by case comparisons. It can be revealing, and their life transitions can be compared.

2.1 Purpose and experience of Narrative inquiry in this research

The idea of carrying this kind of research was to understand the educational and cultural variations faced by Muslim professional women. Many of these women narrated anecdotal narratives which had larger meaning to decipher and had huge implications in generating an informed discourse in their sense of empowerment. This research has lots of influences from Nussbaum's theoretical framework of capability approach and narrative inquiry as a

methodology helped in dwelling from theory to practise. In other words, narratives with the participants in the background of theory provided an interpretative framework to understand the dilemma of rhetoric versus reality.

The present study offers practical dimension through women's stories and the subsequent construction of the narratives through these women's experiences. It tries to generate a discourse through these stories. Stories may not be a structured answer to the research questions however, it paves the way for conducting narrative inquiry to deduce into more meaningful narratives with research objectives. The women were selected for interviews through snowball sampling and were directly interviewed. Though an unstructured interview schedule was prepared for the interview, however women were free to narrate their stories the way they wanted it with minimum level of interruptions from the researcher. Only interruptions were made to keep the conversation on track and avoid any deviations from research topic.

The timing at which the interviews were conducted holds an important significance in data collection for this study. Those women who were interviewed were living in the areas of Jamia Nagar. This area at that point of time, was the site of numerous strikes by the students of Jamia Milia Islamia and Muslim women in Saheen Bagh (area adjacent to Jamia Nagar). These women were very much affected by these strikes and in fact most of them were also attending these strikes. So, interviewing them was not an easy task. As these protests were against some decisions of the government, therefore while narrating their stories, these anti-government sentiments were vocally expressed by these women. Therefore, to avoid these deviations, the researcher had to deviate them by asking a new question every time related to the research topic.

The women for this study have been carefully selected to represent heterogeneity in sample data. The differences can be seen in terms of culture, family status, geographical location, age and occupations. The motive behind this was to analyse differences based on these variations and introspect the similarities/dissimilarities in their stories of education and empowerment.

2.2 Rationale of the study

Research on Muslim women in terms of her economic capabilities has remained meagre. Very few researches go analysing them beyond the spectrum of religiosity and gender power play. It is a well-known realised fact that their participation at higher levels of education is quite dreary. Therefore, their low participation in professional courses is not surprising. But it is also a matter of concern whether professional degrees really help those women who are able to attain it. Have professional degrees helped her freedom to work and other choices related to her career? How far she is able to establish her own individuality as a career-oriented woman within the realms of conservatism, patriarchy and labour market discriminations. For Muslim rate of returns to education is comparatively low among all the minorities. Both at elementary and higher educational levels, rate of return is least among all the groups except Dalits and Adivasis (Geetha Rani, P. 2014). UNDP (2013) states that societal or labor force discrimination can undo the returns to education for some social groups by forcing members of non-dominant groups into informal labor market. It is important to understand the outcomes of having a professional degree and its implications on Muslim women as them being one of the most marginalised group. Professional degrees are directly linked with the employment of the individual. So, this research intends to understand her occupational mobility, her share of earnings in the family income, and how the professional degree empowered her to make her own career choice and decision making.

Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change (Rappaport, 1981, 1984). Empowerment enables individuals to gain control over their lives and make their own choices. It is a broad terminology and includes both qualitative and quantitative variables. Theories of empowerment include both processes and outcomes which suggests that actions, activities, or structures may be empowering, and that the outcome of such processes result in a level of being empowered (Swift & Levin, 1987). It can be seen as a process where individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes (Mechanic, 1991). There are multiple factors which can provide the sense of empowerment in an individual and it is quite subjective in nature. The operational definition of empowerment in this study would be the freedom for the choice of work and the power for making personal or professional decision making.

A Professional is defined as "self-selected and self-disciplined group of individuals who put themselves out to the public as having a special skill derived from education and training and who are prepared to use that skill primarily in the interests of others. Professional courses aim at developing professional skills which are necessary for some specific works. The knowledge shared here is applicational based meant for a purpose of particular profession. Professional education is a formalized approach to specialized training in a professional school through which participants acquire content knowledge and learn to apply techniques.

These courses are directly linked with the employment of the individuals hence, they form an integral part in higher education. There are certain features which makes professional courses different from a regular degree course. Some of these are:

a) Area of specialization: A regular degree focuses on a broader set of knowledge while a professional course limits itself with a set of specialization.

b) In terms of employability: the purpose of professional courses is particularly related with employability in some specific professions. A regular degree doesn't aim directly on employability as the focus is on broad aspects of knowledge

c) In terms of Scope: The knowledge scope of regular degree courses is much broader as compared to professional courses. The professional courses limit itself in terms of knowledge sharing while focusing more on specialized skills and talents.

In the 21st century, the number of professional courses has grown enormously. These courses are of great significance to the economy as they are directly linked with employability and hence nation building. In India, tertiary education has an economic significance and just before independence in 1945, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) was established into an apex advisory body to conduct a survey on the facilities available for technical education and to promote development in the country in a coordinated and integrated manner. The courses which are mentioned in the purview of AICTE are:

- Engineering
- Technology
- Town Planning
- Management
- Pharmacy
- Applied Arts and Crafts

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- Hotel Management and Catering Technology etc.

These courses are an important economic driver and form an integral part in nation building. Therefore, they are a priority in national policies regarding education. In this competitive global economy, the scope of knowledge-sharing has considerably grown, and every country is competing to excel their professional capacities. Therefore, participation of individuals in these courses are very significant not, just for education per se but also for contribution in nation building. These courses offer high paying jobs and most importantly an assured prospect of employability just after the completion of the course. Many students pursuing professional courses in colleges get placed on campus itself by the employers on a decent salary. All these features make professional courses invaluable and demanding by the students. In most of the policies on education these courses occupied an integral importance to increase the number of enrolments and make it more accessible to a larger number of students in the country. Serious efforts were taken both in – qualitative and quantitative to make professional courses available to students for a direct impact on employability and hence nation building.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Nussbaum's (2001) remained one of the guiding influences in the present research. There is hardly any study which engages with the women narrative to understand the meaning of empowerment. She challenges the theoretical underpinning regarding the concept of justice as perceived by economists and philosophers in case of poor and marginalised women. She argues that there is a dire need to change our approach from universalism to relativism and more accepting towards cultural diversity. Criticising post-modernist egoistic approach towards subjectivity she deliberately emphasizes capabilities 'what actually human beings are able to achieve'. She asks the feminists to focus on the problems of third world countries and explore different possibilities of empowerment and justice within the framework of culturally diversified societies across the world. She theoretically brings out the argument why philosophy should undergird basic constitutional principle and to be implemented by all the governments. She takes her predicament of poor women in India and through their narratives explains how international politics, economics and their ideas of justice fails to address problems of women in third world countries. Using the idea of threshold level of each

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capability, she elaborates how women who are treated as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in their own rights.

In many countries, women face discriminations on the same rights of association, mobility, and religious liberty and they are also burdened ''double day'' of taxing employment and full responsibility for housework and child care, they lack opportunities for play and for the cultivation of their imaginative and cognitive faculties. Therefore, unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities. She sums up by saying that women are not treated as ends in their own right, persons with a dignity that deserves respect from laws and institutions. Instead, they are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others – reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family's general prosperity. To explain the Indian context, she uses an Indian proverb "A daughter born / To husband or death / She's already gone.'' The natal family considers their daughter as someone who would leave then eventually and will not support them when they grow old. Therefore, they find it not profitable to invest in their education as they also have to spend on her dowry and other wedding festivities. That is how discriminations starts from her home itself for a girl. Even after she gets married, her in-laws are likely to see her as a mere adjunct of a beloved son, a means to (especially male) grandchildren, an addition to the number of household workers, perhaps as a device to extract money in dowry payments from her parents.

These are some common realities in third world countries, especially in a country like India. She justifies taking narratives from developing countries like India because of two reasons. First, women in these countries suffer pervasively from acute capability failure. Second, they can be an interesting test for her approach and other approaches as well as whether they are real problem solvers or not. In examining cross-culture variations she distinguishes between western and the eastern societies, specially India in terms of culture, diversity and paternalism. In case of Indian culture, in both Hindu and Muslim traditions, powerful norms of female modesty, deference, obedience, and self-sacrifice that have defined women's lives for centuries. However, it doesn't imply that women altogether aren't happy with their lives. Many women in western countries are struggling with high divorce rates and exhaustive careerisms. Therefore, feminists condescend to third-world women when they assume that only lives like their own can be fruitful. In terms of culture, contrasts between Western and non-Western societies often depict Western cultures as dynamic, critical, modernizing, while Eastern cultures are identified with their oldest elements, as if these do not change or encounter

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contestation. For the argument from paternalism, Nussbaum explains the dilemmas of prevalent historicity of discriminations against the women in India and the constitution of India which prohibits this in any form.

Nussbaum has tried to explain what it actually means to be a woman and how much you lose just because of being a woman. Their power to make a choice and her capabilities to function as her own ends are challenged by the very society she lives in and the traditions of discriminations are made normalized to her. This research work intends to draw its lines from the theoretical framework used by her. The narratives used by her to explain the different dimensions of religion, association, mobility, capability and empowerment in her theory can be extended to objectives of this study. Therefore, the experiences or the narratives for the present study informed to a great extent from Nussbaum's theoretical and interpretative framework.

2.4 Sample data and analysis

The qualitative framework guided the present research in which attempt has been made to understand the meaning of empowerment of the engineering graduate Muslim women. Rather than precision and accuracy; trustworthiness of the narrator has been given importance in the research. The research does not aim to draw generalization. The central aim is to map the meaning of empowerment. Purposive sampling was used to select five Muslim women engineering graduate employed in the job market in the city of Delhi. Several rounds of interviews were conducted with the respondent to understand the meaning of their narratives. Data Analysis simply means examining raw data, arranging them into coding and recoding processes and then arranging them for interpretation. Data collected through interviews in the first step was coded to find a word or short phrase that can be attributed for a portion of data. Then, try to find a relation between similar codes and then gradually combine them to make a category. The emerging pattern from the categories were then used as themes. Subsequent themes were then analysed and deduce into meaningful interpretation. These interpretations were finally thematically divided into different topics to write down the observations.

2.5 Background of the women in the narrative of this study

There are five women in this study- Iqra, Heena, Nazboo, Basma and Zaira.

Iqra belongs from an elite family, living in a 3 BHK flat in a posh locality of south Delhi. She is in her mid-40s and married for the last 22 years. She did her engineering from Jamia Millia Islamia Islamia and currently she is working as a lecturer in the same university. She loves her profession as a teacher and counts it as her greatest blessings apart from her family. Her parents and grandparents were also in the academic profession, teaching in different universities. She is married to a mechanical engineer who currently lives abroad because of his work commitments. She has two sons who are currently studying. She belongs from a religious family however, not very conservative. She is not a hijabi however, she dresses herself in modest clothes. She is imbibed with Islamic values and think being a Muslim is her greatest strength.

Heena belongs from a lower middle-class family, living in the south-east part of Delhi. She is in her 30s, currently married and living with her husband in NCR. After completing her engineering degree from Jamia Millia Islamia, she took her first job in Noida. She belongs from a conservative family and she also has a very deep religious value. She works as an architectural engineer and she loves her job. She thinks her job and education is a blessing for her and she has been able to achieve so much in her life because of her career. She got married after two years of her first job and she is happy with her marriage and her husband. She likes to balance between her job and her family.

Nazboo is originally from Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh. Her family migrated to Delhi when she was twelve years old. They started living in Jamia Nagar, south-east part of Delhi. She completed her engineering degree from Jamia Millia Islamia and took her first job in Noida. She belongs from a lower-middle class family. She also belongs from a Muslim conservative family. Nazboo works in an MNC in Gurgaon and she loves her job and thinks it's a blessing for her.

Basma was born in Etawah, Uttar Pradesh and then shifted to Delhi for her education and her job. She works in Noida as a consultant. She is a young girl aged 25 and stays with her parents in south Delhi. Belonging from the lower middle-class family, she had lots of

aspirations to fulfil after doing engineering. So, when she finally got her job, she was on cloud nine. She did her engineering from Jamia Millia Islamia. Currently, she has been working in the corporate sector for the last four years. In these four years, she has changed her job twice. She tells that in these four years, her parents have been quite supportive of her decisions all throughout. Her family too is a conservative family and for Basma, religion is her way of life.

Zaira is a 26-year-old software professional from Ladakh. She was very young when her family left their village and settled in a more urban region. After giving her 10th board exams, she shifted to Jammu for her high school. While living in Jammy only, she prepared for her engineering entrance exams. She wasn't too sure where she would be getting admission, so she filled the form for multiple universities in different states However, Punjab and Delhi were her more preferred states as it was comparatively more accessible and near to her state. She finally made it to engineering in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She is quite an introverted girl and a hijabi too and doesn't like socialising much. She is working as a software professional in Delhi.

All these women narrated their stories in different ways with much information and emotions as the way they liked it.

Chapter 3: Review of the Literature

3.1 Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment is generally a contested concept which lies its axes on various dimensions. It simply cannot be encapsulated by averaging various contrasting measures. Development researchers have repeatedly encountered difficulties in constructing indicators for its measurement and have commonly identified improving the conceptualisation and measurement of empowerment as a research priority (Gram, Morrison and Skordis Worrall, 2018). The term 'empowerment' itself suggests that those in need of this empowerment are currently disempowered therefore, how empowerment is defined and the strategies proposed to achieve it, depend on how women are being represented (Lundén, 2006). In the developmental discourse, the Third Third World Women are defined and represented by western mainstream feminism (Parpart, 2003) therefore, the relation between western mainstream feminism and Third World Women, is central to the concept of empowerment. However, it also argued that by taking the west as the norm and imposing it on other parts of the world, third world women are positioned as different and deviant (Mohanty ,2003) and women belonging to these countries are portrayed as helpless and oppressed. Escobar (1995) calls it stereotyping which legitimises certain strategies of empowerment.

Any discourse on empowerment puts various questions related to power. There are a number of theorists like Foucault (1989), Giddens (1994), Fraser (1989) and Hartsock (1998) who explained power dynamics and their relationships. They analysed how the institutions of societies establish systematic inequalities in power based on gender, class, race and other characteristics. Theories of power tend to divide between agency-related theories and those relating to structure. The agency versus structure argument is essentially an issue of socialisation versus autonomy in determining whether an individual act as a free agent or in a manner dictated by social structure (Chaudhary, 2016).

Sen (1999) defined empowerment as the expansion of agency of an individual. An agency approach takes women to be active agents who themselves promote and achieve social and political transformation that can better their lives. It is vital not only for improving the economic and social power of women, but for challenging and changing entrenched values and

social practices that support gender bias in the distribution of basic necessities of life. Kabeer (1999) conceptualized empowerment in terms of "strategic life choices", comprising three interrelated components which are resources, that is, conditions under which choices are made; agency, through which choices are made and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. He states that 'women's empowerment is a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability' and 'the essence of empowerment is to enhance women's capacity for self-determination'. However, Gram, Morrison, and Skordis-Worrall (2018) points at how Kabeer's definition of empowerment leaves open how complex processes of 'bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance should be classified in terms of women's ability to 'make strategic life choices. Sen (1992, 1999 and 2009) has viewed empowerment intrinsic to human development and tried to explain it through the framework of capability approach. To explain the terms of empowerment, he has used connotations like 'agency' and 'freedom'. According to the capability approach, an individual's achieved well-being is evaluated by considering the level of her valued functionings, or the 'beings' and 'doings' that she can attain. Example of functionings can be included like, choosing to have a child, the intentional activity of actually conceiving a child, the enjoyment (or its lack) in conceiving, the process of carrying the growing foetus, the state of being pregnant, and the subsequent activities resulting from, or made possible by, being pregnant (Crocker, 1995). Sen defines an agent as someone who brings changes and whose achievements can be measured in his own values and goals. He recognises the importance of institutions to development: 'A variety of social institutions …contribute to the process of development precisely through their effect on enhancing and sustaining individual freedoms' (Sen, 1999). He calls out for the particular role of democratic institutions, civil liberties and a free press in the formation of social norms, ethics, and goals and the importance of public deliberations in addressing the problems ranging from corruption to the neglect and oppression of women and the poor.

Nancy Fraser (1989) further develops this understanding of democracy, addressing the role of self-organisation. Using the conceptual framework of Michael Foucault, she states that institutionalised power is capillary in nature, circulating everywhere through the social body and sustaining it: If power is instantiated in mundane social practices and relations, then efforts to dismantle or transform the regime must address those practices and relations. She further adds that equity in the exercise of institutionalised power involves more than increasing the input of individuals into social decision- making; it involves the empowerment of individuals

through their self-organisation and through increasing their self-determination in all areas of activity. Nancy Folbre (1994) also proposes the dismantling of inequitable power structures, stressing particularly those based on gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, or nation which she terms 'structures of collective constraint'. She mentions that groups held back by structures of constraint have an especially strong stake in redistribution of social power.

Martha Nussbaum (2011) has described the general capability approach (not her own specific theory) as consisting of two clusters, one focussing on comparative quality of life and the other on theorising about justice. The two clusters would share a focus on what people are able doing and being, and would share a commitment to five principles: treating each person as an end; a focus on choice and freedom rather than achievements; pluralism about values; being deeply concerned with entrenched social injustices; and ascribing an urgent task to government. However, it has been argued that only two of those (namely, treating each person as an end and pluralism about values) are genuinely essential to each and every capability theory, and that in addition there exists work in the capability approach that does not neatly fit into one of the two clusters that Nussbaum proposes (Robeyns 2016). Nussbaum endorses a well-defined list of capabilities, which, she argues, should be enshrined in every country's constitution (Nussbaum 2000, 2003, 2006). Her prescribed capabilities are grouped together under ten "central human capabilities": life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought, emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one's environment (Nussbaum 2006)

3.2 Education as route to empowerment

Education has a direct relation with income and rate of growth ((Psacharopoulos 1992). Robert E. LUCAS in his paper "the mechanics of economic development" (1988) discussed that the level of the education affects the level of productivity as educated people tend to innovate which leads to higher productivity. Education plays a major role in differentiating the labor in terms of quality which is reflected in their wage gap. Education not only increases the knowledge and skills but also makes them more productive for higher wages (Rajapakse, 2016). Similarly, people with more educational skill will be paid more and vice versa. Therefore, for an economy to progress it is important that they are educationally skilled. Especially for a developing country like India, education plays an integral role in raising economic productivity both at individual and national level. Women, being a part of the

workforce must be educationally equipped and qualified for better wage and economic productivity. In fact, it was also argued that educating girls and women is probably the single most effective investment a developing country can make, whether or not women work outside the home (Ozturk, 2001). He emphasized that women even if they are working from or not involved in any economic viable activities, still education creates multitude of positive remunerations for their families.

Stormquist (2015) defined empowerment as a set of knowledge, skills, and conditions that women must possess in order to understand their world and act upon it. Empowerment is thus inseparable from subsequent action — at both the individual and collective levels. He identified four dimensions of empowerment directly linked associated with education which were a)cognitive (critical understanding of reality), b) psychological (self-esteem), c)political (awareness of inequalities & capacity to mobilize) and d) economic (capacity to generate income) (ibid, 2002). She further adds that formal education enables women to obtain better paid jobs and in doing so supports the economic dimension of empowerment, as well as allowing women to cross the boundaries between private and public spheres. Linking education to the empowerment Murphy-Graham (2008) did their study 'women's empowerment and innovative secondary education in Honduras' and argued that education can trigger the empowerment process if it expands women's knowledge and understanding, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity. They found out that education may begin an 'empowerment process' if it expands women's knowledge and understanding, self-confidence and awareness of gender equity. For them, empowerment comes from an explicit, politicised form of understanding rights. Access to education not only increases the knowledge and skills but also makes the individual more productive for higher wages (Rajapakse, 2016). Skills and knowledge are investments in one's labor productivity and it is possible to estimate the economic returns to education for different educational levels, types of education, etc. (Robeyns, 2006).

Engineering is a preferred course among the students in the present times because it provides them opportunities to get jobs. Since the period of Globalisation, the growth of Indian IT sector provided an important source of employment for women (Shanker, 2008). Women engineers in India attract some kind of social aura which enhances their status in the society (ibid). She embarks upon the highest social approval of the society for freedom and other choices as well. When a woman has a good career, it transforms her gender relation as it breaks

down the traditional division of labour in family into public and private spheres and offers scope for greater women's agency by enhancing their bargaining power within the households (Kelkar et al., 2002).

In the Indian labour market, professional degrees like engineering have high employability value. Individuals tend to choose it because of expected higher returns as compared to investment in education. It is one of the most sought courses in India. According to All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) there are 211022 girls who were enrolled in 2018-19 into engineering and technology. The proportion of women enrolled in engineering and technology courses was 0.2 percent in 1950– 1951, a figure which rose to 3.8 percent in 1980–1981, 16 percent in 1995, and to 23 percent in 2005–2006. In 2017 UNESCO came up with 'UNESCO Science Report: towards 2030' where they mentioned that there is substantial increase in women undergraduates in engineering in India. It is also a product of interest on the part of parents, since their daughters will be assured of employment as the field expands, as well as an advantageous marriage. Gupta (2012) writes that the reason for more girls getting enrolled in engineering is not due to radical shift in the patrifocal ideology, the notion of the "masculine" image of science and engineering appears to have undergone a change. However, it has to be understood in a culture-specific and a constantly changing social and economic context. Parents think that having an engineering degree for her daughter will ease her marriage and also ensure her employability in the future. Dalmia (2004) points out that marriage and career issues for women are interrelated. Having a degree in higher education increases her value in the marriage market. Her earning potential is treated as an asset in the marriage alliance due to the high cost of urban living and the desire of potential husbands for an economically "independent" wife (Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Potential husbands prefer wives who are earning so that they get a helping hand in managing the family expenses. So, for parents encouraging their daughters for a professional degree like engineering has more to do with social context rather than economic context. They do want their daughters to be financially independent however, getting her married is still their primary concern which sometimes overpowers the former one. The educated women engineers are not outside the grip of the traditional social roles emphasising marriage and motherhood. Middle Class women engineers after getting a job are likely to search for a partner and get married and take up their roles of being perfect wives and mothers (Shanker, 2008).

Parikh and Sukhatme (1992) argue that the women engineers assign huge importance to the role of being a wife and mother. Their socialisation process since childhood inculcates them the traditional gender roles which sometimes overpowers their career advancement. For their parents, marriage is still a universal requirement. Middle class women engineers after getting a job are likely to search for a partner and get married and take up their roles of being perfect wives and mothers (Shanker, 2008). Women's choice between career and motherhood requirements occasionally creates a gap. Sometimes job requirements necessitate putting extra hours at work, travelling out of towns, which becomes difficult with the role of being a mother. Many women engineers also do not prefer promotions or long term abroad projects. Moreover, in engineering taking a gap from career to pursue motherhood makes one unemployable. It becomes difficult to get work after a gap. The educated women engineers are not outside the grip of the traditional social roles emphasising marriage and motherhood which often hinders their mobility (Chatterjee, 2016).

3.3 Dichotomy between degrees and dogmas

Unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2001). Restrictions on mobility, associations, decision making, and career choices affects her opportunities and freedom to live a dignified life. They are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others – reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family's general prosperity (ibid). When a person is in a subordinate position, the ability of the person to choose is typically favour-dependent. Therefore, her choices within the household and in other spheres as well, may be restricted with varying penalties for making unapproved choices (Hill, 2003). Restricted choices and constraints in exercising freedom affects her process of empowerment. Empowerment aims at giving the power to women to take her own decisions and shape her own destiny. Education with its potential for promoting self-recognition and positive self-image, stimulating critical thinking, deepening the understanding of the structures of power, including gender, and creating an expanding framework of information, knowledge and choices, is central to empowerment (UNESCO, 2007). Education is an important determinant which brings changes in both, social and economic power relations. In the historical trajectory where women have suffered subordination and marginalisation, education acts as a catalyst to reinforce the women's identity as equal and empowered. In almost all communities across the globe they face pervasive gender inequalities and discriminations in economic and social opportunities. They are still disadvantaged in the labour market in terms

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of their share in employment, remuneration and working conditions (ILO, 2018). It is still difficult for the women to mark their territory in the world of organised sector irrespective of their socio-economic development. ILO states that women are often found in more vulnerable categories of work like domestic or home-based jobs. Their vulnerability comes from the fact that it is statistically difficult to calculate the economic value of their actual labor therefore, in nearly all the cases they tend to earn low wages as compensation for their work.

Resource entitlements are crucial for survival and securing livelihoods, and for women's status and agency (Agarwal, 1994). In absence of any resource- economic or social, deprives women from their basic rights like right to live with dignity. Despite being able to act, speak out and make decisions, women continue to be represented as subordinate, their rights and obligations shaped by the ideas and workings of marriage and kinship systems rather than contributions to production (Moore, 1988). In all patriarchal societies, but particularly in extremely conservative societies, women who wish to advance gender equality need to convince potential male allies, make deals and compromises and frame issues in ways that minimise hard opposition (O'Neil and Domingo, 2015). Women try to strategize and bargain with their patriarchy to fight with their constraints which may differ according to variations in class, caste and ethnicity. These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression (Kandiyoti, 1988). Patricia Jeffery (1986) writes that house-hold structures affect the status of women in their families at different levels. In extended households which are associated with wealthy urban or land-owning rural families, the power of women in the home is likely to be circumscribed within a hierarchical structure and their power outside the home is virtually non-existent. Besides, working outside of the home doesn't guarantee power at home for women. Men and women have significantly different career-path as women tend to leave their career either temporarily or permanently because of their family and children's reasons (Huang et al., 2007). Even working in the IT sector, women professionals have undergone very limited change in terms of challenging social norms. They are burdened with the responsibility of children which hinders their frequency of job changes which is necessary for career advancement in this sector (Kelkar et al., 2002).

Drèze and Sen (1995) argued that education is crucial to the process of human development and it has an intrinsic importance. Sen emphasised on how education can assist

people in getting jobs and gain employment, enhance their understanding of legal rights, improve women's security, open up political opportunities, tackle health problems and increase the dignity of the marginalised. However, Jeffery et al (2008) pointed to weakness in Sen's account of education as a route to prosperity and power. They argued that Sen tends to obscure the complicated process through which 'education' leads to secure work, new forms of political power and vibrant social institutions. Nor does Sen specify what other processes need to occur alongside education for poor people to exercise an improvement in their lives. They further add that Sen downplays the extent to which the experience of education may further marginalise young people from subordinate groups, for whom education commonly create feelings of failure, anxiety and bewilderment.

Willis (1977), Levinson and Holland (1996) have pointed to education as a contradictory resource: opening up certain opportunities to undermine established structures of power while also often drawing marginalised young people more tightly into structures and ideologies of dominance. Jeffery et al (2008) suggested avoid using education as offering a high road to the solution of problems of social inequality, whilst also being careful not to negate the life-enhancing potential of formal schooling. They further add that paying attention to the voice of marginalised people is of paramount importance here: many subaltern informants increasingly recognise the ambivalent nature of education.

3.4 The Case of Indian Muslim Women: The voice of subaltern

Research on Muslim women in terms of her economic capabilities have remained meagre. Very few researches go analysing them beyond the spectrum of religiosity and gender powerplay. Minault (1998) has noted that imperial discourse in colonial India ignored Muslim women because 'purdah' removed women from scrutiny, both literally as well as figuratively. Hasan and Menon (2004) write that with few notable exceptions, the spotlight has always been on the role of religion in Muslim life and culture, largely producing sociologies of religion. Western feminists consider Muslim women to be subordinated and explain their subordination in terms of Islam, they tend to focus on the veil, the purdah and clitoridectomy as symbols of oppression, (Saunders 2003). This assumption, then, enables western feminists to use the veil as a measure of women's oppression (Mohanty 2005).

Despite widespread economic activity since the last two decades, the benefits of growth have not reached some marginalized communities of India (MF Alvi, 2016) like Muslims. Kazi (1999) writes that Muslim women in urban India are much worse off than their rural counterparts, not only in terms of their overall educational status as citizens of India, but also in terms of their relatively poor educational status when compared to Hindu or Christian women. Majority of Muslim women workers in India are employed in the rural areas, primarily as agricultural laborers and cultivators. In the urban areas, a part of the Muslim women workers is employed in the unorganized sector, i.e. in household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction etc. (Nahid Sarikhani, 2009). Hasan & Menon (2004) write that majority of Muslim women are the most disadvantaged, economically ill, impoverished and politically marginalised sections of Indian societies. Most of the women in this community are put to various cultural and social restrictions which hinder their path to economic development. Their lives, morality, and movement in public spaces are under constant scrutiny and control (Sachar Report, 2004). Patriarchy controls their day to day activities as well as guides important decisions of their lives like education, children and marriage. In most of the rural areas, the same condition prevails irrespective of their religion, however, intensity varies from community to community. This intensity can be viewed as more profound among the Muslim communities. Education, region and other opportunity structures differ for Muslim and Hindu women, and they may lead to differing outcomes in the labour market. Das, M. B. (2004) writes that there are two main reasons for the low participation of Muslim women in the labour market. In rural areas, it is due to their limited engagement in agriculture within the overall context of differential land ownership patterns by religion while in urban areas it is due to their exclusion from professional, technical and clerical jobs. Hasan and Menon (2004) have also pointed out a number of reasons for low work participation of Muslim women. Most of the women interviewed in their study told that they are not involved in any productive work, which suggests under-reporting, but also the need to explore the reasons for not working. Many of these women were not counting their home-based work and were assuming it just an extension of domestic work. Other reasons which they mentioned were gender stratification system and domestic work. Engineer (1994) write that her individuality and her being a legal entity is recognised in Islam, however, traditional society hardly allow her to earn. In Islam there is no concept that she has to confine herself to domestic duties alone. In fact, she is not even obliged to suckle her child and if she refuses to do so her husband has to make alternative arrangements. But in a traditional society the husband often requires his wife to confine herself

to domestic duties and disapproves of her working to earn. It is only in some enlightened families that she is allowed to work.

Kazi (1999) writes that women in Muslim communities face considerable challenges as citizens of India and as members of India's largest minority. Their poor socio-economic status reflecta lack of social opportunity which, though not a feature exclusive to Muslim women, is exacerbated by their marginal status within an overall context of social disadvantage for most Indian women. She further adds that Most Muslim women remain 'invisible' workers in the informal economy. The Muslim share in public employment is less than 3 per cent. Within this picture of marginalization, it is a predictable certainty that the corresponding figures for Muslim women are further skewed towards the bottom. A lack of information on Muslim women contributes to the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes, serving to obfuscate their life experiences and struggles. Consequently, the notion that Muslim women's status in India is attributable to certain intrinsic, immutable 'Islamic' features or that their social status derives solely from Muslim laws, is widely prevalent. Muslim in India are more disadvantaged because of religious discrimination which they continue to experience from past to present. These discriminations can be seen in terms of both education and employment (Hasan 2005, Khandker, 1992) and education as well (Jeffery et al. 2005). Muslim men and women lower levels of wage employment and education because of past and current disadvantage and discrimination. Moreover, this disadvantage may have intensified in recent decades due to increased communal tensions (Rastogi, 2007). Further the discriminations can also be seen in terms of their wage rate. Mondal (2016) writes that Muslims and Hindu lower caste in India earn slightly less wages as compared to their upper-caste Hindu counterparts with varying locational extent. These discriminatory practices can be found in the historical trajectory of India and continues to determine access to economic resources (Bosher, Penning-Roswell and Tapsell 2007).

3.5 Muslim Women's Workplace experience

In Islamic societies, Muslim women face multitude of discrimination on multiple grounds like gender and religion. It is difficult for them to exist free of pressures from the wider Islamic community and constraints on their roles outside the community as a mechanism for asserting community identity (Bouma et al., 2013). When they wear Hijab to workplace than they are often perceived with discrimination which limits their career opportunities. Many

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workplace exhibits certain discriminatory characteristics which reproduce inequalities on the basis of gender stereotypes and parental roles that significantly affect the professional career choices of women and mothers and less the careers of men (Albiston 2007; Acker 1990; Budig and Hodges 2010; Correll et al. 2007; Thornton and Bagust 2007). Women's increased participation in the labour force creates challenges for women to balance out family and family obligations. Several studies have also found adverse effects for Muslims in the workplace including negative impact on hiring decisions based on their name/religion (King and Ahmad,2010), unfavourable judgment compared to whites in hiring decisions, salary assignments, and future career progression (Parket al., 2009), and stereotyping and biases associated with their of religion and national origin (Mujtaba and Cavico, 2012).

In a study by Hana-Meksem (2012) on how stereotypes influence hiring of Muslim women, they listed find broads which recruiters hold about Muslim women wearing the hijab, with five main themes which were identified: (a) fear of Muslims, (b) hijab appearance vs. hijab functionality, (c) impact of cultural and religious differences, (d) stereotypes, and (e) discrimination in the states. Talking about Hijab, Allen and Nielsen (2002) have found that Muslim women may be more vulnerable when wearing the hijab results in disclosure of their religion. However, many Muslim women do not view their hijab as a restriction to their potential but more as a symbol of empowerment. They attend colleges and universities, work in various professions, have families and friends and enjoy life, all the while wearing hijab (Hyder, N., Parrington, C. A., & Hussain, M. ,2015). Ahmad (2011) has made a distinction between Muslim women's choice of wearing hijab in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. He suggested that wearing hijab does not represent a step toward repression for US Muslim women, unlike the situation of women in predominately Muslim countries (Syed, 2010). Hijab represented greater empowerment and greater freedom in public space. Khosravi (2012) also noted that veils or headscarves are a woman's most conspicuous signifier of Muslim religious identity. Wearing hijab would allow her more freedom of movement in public spaces (Ahmed, 2011b), while at the same time allowing her to express her complete autonomous identity (Williams and Vashi, 2007)

Many research in the past have been suggesting that the reason ethnic minority women are under-represented in organisations is because they lack relevant skills, knowledge and fluency in English (Fearful and Kamenou 2010; Syed and Murray 2009). Afshar (2012) claims that many Muslim women still lack self- confidence and self-esteem, even those who are well-

educated and articulate. However, with increase in number of educated Muslim women, they are more ambitious than any other ethnic minority groups (Baily et al. 2015). Instead these women face difficulties in being hired or promoted due to strong biases against their ethnicity and religion, as well as negative gender stereotyping they receive from men including those of their own background (Farrar et al. 2012). Social element at work is a key obstacle that South Asian Muslim women face while trying to progress in their career as they , cannot participate in certain topics of office conversations (e.g., around non-marital relationships and alcohol) due to cultural and religious reasons (Contractor 2012). Muslim women can also feel isolated and miss networking and social opportunities that are usually quite vital for promotions which has caused some of these women to seek support outside their work whereas a few of them feel the burden of having to adopt the western culture (Bano 2012).

In terms of leadership, it is widely argued that Muslim women find it uncomfortable to apply for senior or leadership roles within organisations because they consider themselves lacking in skills and expertise to become successful leaders (Kabir 2010) and they tend to be undermined by their male counterparts because these women are perceived to be less outspoken in the boardroom (Ghumman and Ryan 2013). However, Hargreaves and Anderson 2014) give examples of many ethnic women who have been successful in their careers.

3.6 Role of Religion in the lives of Muslim Women

Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar (1999) write that Muslim women's role and participation in religion is both limited and expansive. At the formal, institutional level, it has been argued that women lack both voice and visibility. They argue that how Muslim women appropriate and convene in their own sacred spaces to organize and perform female cantered rituals, the mechanisms they use to socialize children, and the strategies they engage to uphold and protect the religious identity of their family. 0:237), Muslim women nonetheless have been able to create their own "arenas of activities" (Fruzzetti, 1980) where they engage in their own "separate parallel discourse" (Kumar, 1994) focusing on concerns and issues relevant to their lives. As far as Islamic feminism is concerned, it has been defined as feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm used to empower women, and to bring about legal changes and societal transformation (Ahmadi, 2006). Djelloul (2018) has explained it in more simple terms. He explains it as a current of thought being developed by a transnational network of activists in widely contrasting socio-political context. Islamic feminists are

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concerned with developing an ethical reading of the bases of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Sunna, in order to find a form of religious exegesis that will support their feminist viewpoint. It is therefore legitimate to speak of the production of a new Islamic discourse and, in general terms, of the appropriation of the religious. However, Keddie & Baron (1993) write that despite this, Islamic fundamentalists have continuously sought to "recuperate traditional norms and codes, including patriarchal laws and family rules for women, put pressure on states to enforce public morality, increase religious observances and tighten controls over women.

Ahmad (1992, 2006) presents a balanced view of the issue in Islam. She mentions that there are two different and equally cogent interpretations of the nature of early Islam, both inspired by the character known as "Muhammad'. Regarding the issue of the women, she maintains that the two interpretations turn on, first, one that seems clearly to endorse the notion that the moral and spiritual equality of all humans was an ethical imperative for the Ummah. On the other hand, there are more than hints to be found in the inspirational writings of hierarchy that relegates women to an inferior status to be enjoyed by men (Lovet et al. 2013). Talking about contemporary times, Muslim womanhood has remerged as a site for different political, cultural, and even military conflicts (Shah and Khurshid, 2019). By narrating the stories of empowerment of two educated Muslim women from Pakistan and India to examine what empowerment means for them. They were particularly interested in examining how these participants employ their distinct educated status to construct what it means to be empowered Muslim women in their contexts. By their narratives they found out how Islam is one of the multiple institutions that these women refer to explain their identities and experiences. They further ass that their experiences give them a concrete way to consider how being Muslim, being educated, and being empowered are context specific phenomena, rather than universal experiences.

Kirmani (2009) writes that the category of 'Muslim women in India' is constructed through various discursive channels including the (local, national and international) media, the state and academia, as well as in the discourse of religious groups and leaders and national and transnational women's organisations. She also adds that the scholarly interest in Muslim women has its foundations in the Orientalist fascination with the veil and the harem, which helped to construct a picture of Muslim women as symbols of the brutishness of colonised peoples and the symbolic 'Other' to Europe's rational civilisation. It can also be said that Much of the discourse surrounding Muslim women in India is related to the issue of

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personal laws, which are those laws related to marriage and the family, the application of which are determined by one's religious identity (Singh 1992, Banamusa 1995, Larson 2001). Hasan and Menon (2004) also state that often misinterpretations stems from the weight given to Muslim personal Law in defining women's status, resulting in a disproportionate emphasis being placed on it, and a great deal of heated discussions about the gender bias of personal law and the appeasement of Muslims. However, Kishwar (1998) also argues that in reality, veryfew women in India, whether Hindu or Muslim, can even approach the courts due to their social and economic constraints, and therefore the impact of personal laws on their realities is negligible.

The identity of Muslim women echoes multiple rhymes. They are contextual and some of the literature reviewed here try to capture the sub themes of these contexts.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

'Where are the men'? I asked her.

'In their proper places, where they ought to be.'

[The Sultana tells her that in her country it is women who are secluded]

'But, dear Sultana, how unfair it is to shut in the harmless women and let loose the men..

Suppose some lunatics escape from asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men,

horses, and other creatures: in that case what will your countrymen do?'

'They will try to capture then and put them back into their asylum.'

'And you do not think it wise to keep sane people inside the asylum and let loose the insane?'

'Of course not!? Said I, laughing lightly.

'As a matter of fact, in your country this very thing is done! Men, who do or at least are

capable of doing no end of mischief, are let loose and the innocent women shut up in the

zanana!... You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves, and you have lost your natural

rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests.'

Above lines were quoted by Nussbaum (2000) originally written by Muslim feminist Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain in her fantasy The Sultana's Dream (1905) mocking the seclusion of women. This authenticates the long history of contestations for gender equality within the Muslim paradigm. But the contestations aren't over yet, even after more than 100 years of Rokeya's writing. For today's Muslim women, the dilemmas are much more complex- to redefine the norms of being so called 'pure Islamic women' within the Islamic discourse and being her own identity and defy all the stereotyping which makes them tied just with veiling and seclusion.

4.1 Reasons for choosing engineering (Deliberate or Persuasion)

Iqra calls herself very rebellious. Married for the last 22 years, in her mid-40s she however failed to recall any instances where she disagreed with the decisions of her parents and then her husband. History was her favourite subject. During childhood, one of the family friends gifted her history encyclopaedia. The book inspired her to become an archaeologist. But her father who was a professor of chemistry told her if she really takes up that career then he will not be able to guide and help in her studies. Her mother too nodded her approval in

agreement with father. So, they came up with a solution. They asked her to give science a try in high school just for two months. And then if she still wants to be an archaeologist, she can change her stream back to history. But this never happened. After two months, she did not feel like leaving the science stream and once again started from scratch. So now her next ambition was to be a doctor! But she failed to qualify the medical entrance examination. So, the fear of not wasting an academic year, she filled the forms for engineering in Jamia Millia Islamia on her father's insistence. That is how she ended up taking engineering for the rest of her life. She tells that her father had a way of coaxing her and making her agree to all his decisions. So, even calling herself as rebellious, Iqra never rebelled for anything- be it career or marriage.

Heena and her brother who is two years older to her, studied in the same class in school. It was her brother who had ambition to be an engineer. She was not sure what to do after her high school. Though medical was in her mind but she was not as focussed as her brother. She did not join any coaching centre like him for medical entrance exams. Many girls like her never attend any coaching classes which are required to clear tough entrance exams like engineering. Singh & Pathak, (2010) found that more women than men are not being given professional coaching for these examinations. Coaching centres are expensive, so parents sometimes don't feel it is feasible to invest additional amounts for preparation. Though parents want them to get into engineering college, they do not prepare them for the top engineering colleges. The reason for families not aspiring to the best colleges for their daughters could be patrifocal (Gupta, 2012). Patrifocality means centred around patriarchy.

When Heena's brother was filling forms for engineering entrance exams, he subsequently filled in for her too. Her father initially told her to give the medical entrance exams for Aligarh Muslim University but later asked her to focus on engineering entrance exams for Jamia Milia Islamia. He wanted her to be with her brother throughout her college for her own safety. She scored a lower ranking in the entrance exam as compared to her brother. His high rank got him a computer science branch and she got into architecture engineering. She never thought that she would end up taking her career as an architecture engineer. But neither she was happy nor sad as being one. In fact, she was happy seeing her family happier by her brother's achievement. That is what she ever wanted!

In both the cases of Iqra and Heena, their father insisted on them for doing engineering. In the Indian labour market, professional degrees like engineering have high employability

value. Individuals tend to choose it because of expected higher returns as compared to investment in education. It is one of the most sought courses in India. According to All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) there are 2,11,022 girls who were enrolled in 2018-19 into engineering and technology and the proportion of women enrolled in engineering and technology courses was 0.2 percent in 1950– 1951, a figure which rose to 3.8 percent in 1980–1981, 16 percent in 1995, and to 23 percent in 2005–2006. In 2017 UNESCO came up with 'UNESCO Science Report: towards 2030' where they mentioned that there is substantial increase in women undergraduates in engineering in India. It is also a product of interest on the part of parents, since their daughters will be assured of employment as the field expands, as well as an advantageous marriage. Gupta (2012) writes that the reason for more girls getting enrolled in engineering is not due to radical shift in the patrifocal ideology, the notion of the "masculine" image of science and engineering appears to have undergone a change. However, it has to be understood in a culture-specific and a constantly changing social and economic context. Parents think that having an engineering degree for her daughter will ease her marriage and also ensure her employability in the future. Dalmia (2004) points out that marriage and career issues for women are interrelated. Having a degree in higher education increases her value in the marriage market. Her earning potential is treated as an asset in the marriage alliance due to the high cost of urban living and the desire of potential husbands for an economically "independent" wife (Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Potential husbands prefer wives who are earning so that they get a helping hand in managing the family expenses.

So, for parents encouraging their daughters for a professional degree like engineering has more to do with social context rather than economic context. They do want their daughters to be financially independent. However, getting her married is still their primary concern which sometimes overpowers the former one.

Nazboo and Basma have similar stories for choosing engineering after their high school. They both belong to the lower middle-class families and both were persuaded by their fathers to go for engineering. Nazboo is originally from Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh. Her family migrated to Delhi when she was twelve years old. They started living in Jamia Nagar, southeast part of Delhi. The university, Jamia Millia Islamia lies at a very central position in the area. Basma recalls that her father often mentioned the name of the university when she was a child. So, when she came Delhi for the time, while crossing facade of the university, her father proudly said that

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"Nazbooyahi se padhkerbadi babu banegi"
(Nazboo will get success from this university only)

So, engineering was pretty much decided for her even at the time she can barely understand what it is all about. Her father owns a shop of carpets in the same locality where they live. After her studies, she often helped her father in maintaining daily accounts of his shop. She had been doing this from the time she was in class 9th. She says that she wanted to take commerce after her 10th standard. In fact, she tells me that she was so inspired to be a chartered accountant. But her father wanted her to take science as he believed, it offers more career options. He told her that chartered accountant exams are really tough, and it takes ages to become one. She never argued on this with her father as she fully trusted his father's decisions. When she finally got admission in the Deptt. of Engineering, Jamia Millia Islamia, his father was on cloud nine. She couldn't have asked more seeing her father's happiness!

Basma was Nazboo's batchmate in her college. She hailed from Etawah, a small town from the state of Uttar Pradesh. Her father was a schoolteacher in a secondary school in the town. He did his graduation from Jamia University and he wished that all his children including Basma get their education from Jamia only. Basma wished to be a doctor when she was in school. After reaching 10th standard she took PCM (physics, chemistry maths) on her father's insistence so engineering was the only option left for her. She gave an entrance exam for B.Tech but didn't qualify it. She then got admission in B.E in engineering. Her father was supportive to her all throughout her admission process.

Most of the parents like in the case Basma, Nazboo, Heena and many others, there is a contradiction between their desire to enrol them for engineering and yet not to prepare them for top engineering colleges. Their preference for Jamia is for so many reasons. It is a public university and a fee for engineering is far less as compared to private engineering colleges. Other reason is Jamia Milia Islamia being a Muslim minority institution they feel it is safer for their daughters as well as for their sons undoubtedly. But they do not encourage their daughters to appear in the different entrance examinations like JEE and AIEEE like their sons. Gupta (2012) says that the reason for families not aspiring to the best colleges for their daughters could be patrifocal. Since colleges affiliated to AIEEE are spread all over India, there may be patrifocal concerns about daughters travelling long distances by themselves. There are also

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social and reputational risks which have been mentioned by Mukhopadhyay (1994) like risk of studying in male-dominated colleges, and difficulty in finding a more qualified groom. When the girls get more qualifications, their parents find it difficult to find a suitable groom for them. But in case of their sons, they engage all their efforts to get their sons as many as resources which may be required for their career success. Sometimes, they put all their money savings in order to educate their sons but in the case of daughters, it would be an exceedingly rare instance.

Zaira is a 26-year-old software professional from Ladakh. She was young when her family left their village and settled in a more urban region. After giving her 10th board exams, she shifted to Jammu for her high school. While living in Jammu only, she prepared for her engineering entrance exams. She wasn't too sure where she would be getting admission, so she filled the form for multiple universities in different states However, Punjab and Delhi were her more preferred states as it was comparatively more accessible and near to her state. She finally made it to engineering in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Zaira tells that for her family, education is everything. Her parents never interfered in her career decisions at any educational level. Her father was overly concerned when she moved from Jammu to Delhi for her education. But her mother was confident in sending her even to faraway places to get her education done and do something good in her life. Zaira was given liberty to choose her career and make decisions regarding her education. Though her father wanted her to be a doctor, she told him that she is not good enough to make it to medical. So, her father supported her decision to go for engineering.

Zaira tells that in Ladakh, women are significant decision makers in the family. They have a tribal society and unlike most north-Indian states, Ladakh has not so obvious signs of patriarchy. Historically men and women, both were equal sharers of agricultural works. This gave women an equal status as compared to men. Chhewang (2006) writes that in Ladakh, no patriarchal structure exists as women play not only an important part in the economy but also lead the economy. They work in agricultural farms, look after the animals and work like any other men of their tribal society. So, they are the equal decision makers like men of the family. However, there are some contradictory views with this proponent of equality. Dawa (2006) points out that "a large number of Ladakhi men are serving in the army, engaged in tourism, absorbed with monastery affairs as monks." In the process women are left alone, alienated, secluded from their families and "overburdened and neglected as an agent of social change".

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Therefore, even not too significant, yet subtle signs of patriarchy can be seen in Ladakhi society. Ladol (2013) also writes that the proponents of equality in Ladakhi society forget that women are allowed to control their households as well as their fields not because women are believed to be better skilled or capable but because men go out of the villages.

Though Zaira was free to choose her career or what kind of educational degree she wanted to have, she made sure that she always appeases her father with whatsoever decisions she ever takes. She knew what her parents will approve or what they will disapprove therefore she never went beyond that unsaid line. She knew her father's wish for her to be a doctor. But she also knew that she won't be able to pursue medical studies. So, maybe in order to fix her father's happiness, she chose engineering which is next best to medical according to her father. Any of the girls interviewed, had even an iota of doubts regarding their father's intention other than their self-independence. They believed that it was in their best of interest that their father decided them to be engineers. All of them rhymed in sync that qualified engineering degrees and highly paid jobs earned them good husbands, what all their families ever wished! Zaira is not married yet. But her family is looking for one. Though her father gave her freedom to choose a partner for herself, she didn't find any. She was always too shy to get close with boys, she tells. She was afraid that her father may not like it!

4.2 Engineering as a tool of empowerment (myth Vs reality)

Women engineers in India attract some kind of social aura which enhances their status in the society (Shanker, 2008). She embarks upon the highest social approval of the society for freedom and other choices as well. When a women has a good career, it transforms her gender relation as it breaks down the traditional division of labour in family into public and private spheres and offers scope for greater women's agency by enhancing their bargaining power within the households (Kelkar et al., 2002)

Iqra works as an assistant professor in the Deptt. of Mechanical Engineering, Jamia Millia Islamia. Her husband has been working in Bahrain since the last 7 years. She has two sons who are also studying in the same university. She tells that when she got married, she was already an MTech. Within a year of her marriage, she got her first teaching job in Jamia Milia as a temporary faculty in the engineering deptt. Therefore, from the beginning of her marriage,

she was never dependent on her husband for any monetary support. Every time they would make any big expenses, her husband always consulted her. She believes that her husband or her in laws treated her differently because of her job! She was getting equally paid as her husband; therefore she was owed the same respect in the family as him. In case of disagreements with her husband, she told him that he would try to deliberate the conversation to make her agree but he never imposed his decisions in a despotic manner. She explains that those women who don't have a job are the worst sufferers. Giving example of her sister in law, she explains how women are churned out from their own individuality if they do not have a career. Even though they work more, have more responsibilities, have to take care of everyone in the family, yet they are deprived of the same respect and power to make their own decisions. But just because she has a respectable career, good salary and professional skills, she does not have to suffer like her sister in law. However, she also believes that the men still have greater degree of power and respect for having similar kinds of jobs as compared to women. She explains it as 'first among the equals'. Talking about her maid, she jokingly points out that the maid would always ask her husband what he would like to eat for dinner but very rarely asks her, even though she is the one actually paying her.

Heena started her job with Batra Associates in Noida as an architectural engineer. Though, her salary was below her expectations but still she was happy for her job finally. She believes that financial independence is the most important component of empowerment. No one pays attention to you or listens to you if you don't have money. In other words, money begets power and respect both. She got married after two years of her job. Her husband wanted a wife like her who is also a working professional. After her marriage, she never asked money for any of the expenses from her husband. They both make equal expenses in the daily expenditures of the household. She spends the money the way she wants, and her husband never interferes into that. She believes having a good job is the greatest blessing for her. Her belief becomes stronger by looking at her cousin who is of the same age and also married at the same time around her. Her cousin is a housewife and educated just till graduation in arts. They both live in the same building in different flats after their marriage. She tells that her cousin often complains regarding the way he treats her. The husband of her cousin wants her to take care of everything in his household- like cooking, cleaning, taking care of his elderly parents as well as bringing grocery or medicines from outside. Just because he has a job and brings money in the family, he shrugs off all the household responsibilities. The most important

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thing that her cousin misses is respect from her husband. Heena feels happy that just because of her job, she doesn't have to through the hardships that her cousin is going through.

Resource entitlements are crucial for survival and securing livelihoods, and for women's status and agency (Agarwal, 1994). In absence of any resource- economic or social, deprives women from their basic rights like right to live with dignity. Despite being able to act, speak out and make decisions, women continue to be represented as subordinate, their rights and obligations shaped by the ideas and workings of marriage and kinship systems rather than contributions to production (Moore, 1988). In case of Heena's cousin, though she works all day at her home, yet her value is never recognised as the social constructs of marriage makes women assigned to these roles subordinate to men.

Nazboo is working in a private company in Gurgaon. She explains how her life changed after having the job. She says that earning money is the most important aspect of empowerment. So, when she got her degree completed and had her first job, she had her first sense of being empowered. Money gives a lot of power to make your own decisions. When you are bringing money in the family, the family starts treating you differently. She also said that she can notice now that her mother takes care of the things she likes or dislikes. They do not interrupt in everything she does, and they give some privacy too. She remembers that when she was even in fourth year of engineering, her mother used to put a lot of restrictions on her for going outside of home. But very next year when she had her first job, things changed and now she was allowed to go outside as she wished. She takes the examples of her cousins who were also graduates but didn't have any professional degrees like hers. So, when they completed their degrees, their family never allowed them to have a job or pursue any other career. They were just married off by their parent's choice. But, in her case, she had an engineering degree. So, she was allowed to have a job and wait for marriage.

There are a number of theorists like Foucault (1989), Giddens (1994), Fraser (1989) and Hartsock (1998) who explained power dynamics and their relationships. They analysed how the institutions of societies establish systematic inequalities in power based on gender, class, race and other characteristics. For Nazboo, society is biased against women. So, in order to gain your position back, earning money is the only way to establish power relations at an equal status with men.

Basma works in Noida as a consultant. She is a young girl aged 25 and stays with her parents. Belonging from the lower middle-class family, she had lots of aspirations to fulfil after doing engineering. So, when she finally got her job, she was on cloud nine. Though her father never asked her to contribute to household expenses, she always did as her responsibility towards her family. She tells that by doing so she felt empowered and proud of herself. The job changed the life of Basma in many ways. She felt that her family now respects her more! She is now heard, and her decisions matter to her family. Her father sometimes even asks his sons to consult Basma for anything related to their education. Her mother also takes care of her likes and dislikes and doesn't impose restrictions on her like talking to her male friends on the phone. She also says that her father sometimes tells her brother to clean her rooms or make tea for her when she is back from office.

Zaira, just like Basma, also thinks that having a professional degree like engineering and a good job gives them a sense of empowerment. Zaira is working as a software professional in a private company in south Delhi. In her own words Zaira tells that "when you have a job then you can simply move out and live their own life if you have any issues. If you have money, you have the power. You are mighty again! Otherwise, women feel helplessness. If you don't have the money, you have no option but stick to your husband whatever he says. When you are earning, then automatically that vibes come that makes you feel empowered. You own the power of living your life in your own way". To support her argument, Zaira gives an example of her neighbour named Nimra from her village in Ladakh. Nimra is in her late 30s and she is govt. schoolteacher. After two years of bad marriage where her husband was violent with her, Nimra ended her marriage and moved out of her husband's home. She started living alone as she was financially independent and started living her life with much peace and happiness. Zaira tells that Nimra never looked back and went for even 'Umrah' alone. She became an example of women empowerment among all the women in her area. She also inspired lots of women to get financially independent to have a dignified life.

Iqra, Nazboo, Heena or Zaira all these women think financial independence is the most important sense of empowerment. They think financial empowerment reproduces and recreates other forms of empowerment. Sen (1999) provides a complex account of the interconnectedness of various kinds of freedom which is integral for empowerment. He argues that increasing women's freedom to work outside the home is crucial for increasing their freedom in domains such as home, healthcare, education, reproductive control, and social and

political life. Financial stability enables women to bring changes through access to resources and other material well- being. They are able to remove the constraints which blocks their way to freedom. However, the idea of empowerment for every individual is subjective. Therefore, for these women too empowerment can have different objectives for different women.

Sen (1999) defined empowerment as the expansion of agency of an individual. An agency approach takes women to be active agents of the family. This is also the means by which women can achieve social and political transformation to better their lives. It is vital not only for improving the economic and social power of women, but for challenging and changing entrenched values and social practices that support gender bias in the distribution of basic necessities of life. Kabeer (1999) conceptualized empowerment in terms of 'strategic life choices'", comprising three interrelated components which are resources, that is, conditions under which choices are made; agency, through which choices are made and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices. However, Gram, Morrison, and Skordis-Worrall (2018) points at how Kabeer's definition of empowerment leaves open how complex processes of 'bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance should be classified in terms of women's ability to 'make strategic life choices. Similarly, the women in this narrative through the agency of financial empowerment tried to promote and achieve transformations that would make their life better. Heena is proud that she doesn't have to suffer like her cousin who is deprived of both- dignity to have a respectful life and also resources to transform her life. Heena's husband respects her because he understands her worth as an individual to grow and prosper on her own even in his absence. Similarly, whether it's Iqra, Nazboo, Basma or Zaira, these women possess financial autonomy and also seek reciprocity with their husband. This gives these women power to make choices and ability to take their own decisions.

4.3 Empowerment as Decision-Making

Empowerment and development are closely related concepts. Both can be 'means and end' of each other. O'Neill and Domingo (2015) have defined the power to make decision-making as ability to influence decisions that affect one's life in both private and public. They mention three things which enable or constrain women's decision-making power and leadership which are- Institutions, Structures and Capabilities. Institutions are rules and norms that shape people's behaviour and interactions in social, political and economic life. Structures

are the deeper social, economic and political endowments, groupings and patterns that shape a society. Capabilities to be drawn by women to take advantage of the opportunities available through the institutional and structural changes.

For the last 7 years, Iqra has been living on her own with her two sons in 2BHK flat in a posh locality of south-east Delhi. Her husband is in Bahrain and visits twice in a year to meet his wife, Iqra and his sons. Iqra says that in absence of her husband, she is the one who is the decision maker of the family. Her husband trusts her decisions completely and has full faith in her capabilities. She thinks that, it's just because of educational abilities that she has been able to look after her family so well. The university job pays her a decent salary, so she is able to look after her family's needs when her husband is not around. Decisions like which home equipment they need to buy, how much they need to spend during festivals and marriage functions in families, decorating and furnishing of their home, appointment of kitchen helps etc are entirely taken by Iqra. Her husband never interfered in her decisions on these issues. She always managed her finances alone and she proudly tells that her husband never questioned her anything regarding her salary. She spent the money the way she liked but never answerable to anyone. Iqra believes this power came to her just because of her own financial stability. When you are earning your own money, nobody questions your decisions the way you are spending it.

However, Iqra was still not so empowered to independently take decisions whenever her children were in question. From decisions like which school they would go to, what career they would pursue and from which university and which laptops they would buy, all these decisions were mostly on her husband's discretion. Though he surely discussed it with Iqra but he still was a dominant sharer in decisions. Iqra also chose to remain a passive sharer as she thought her husband would be the one who will take more responsible decisions. Basma doesn't think that her qualification as an engineer has drastically enhanced her power to take decisions on every matter. But she agrees that education has taught her the way of living like a civilised citizen. Having an engineering degree has given her a certain sense of respect from others. And the condition of those girls who don't have a technical degree are worse than those who have some source of income. She adds that being a doctor or an engineer, you do have some kind of privileged status. But even then, you are not fully empowered in a true sense. She thinks that men most of the time try to crush the voice of women which is quite a general phenomenon. Men in the family think that women by birth are incapable of taking important

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decisions. They do not have that brain to think critically and are not able to take decisions in difficult situations- especially in matters of finances and business. They think the way men think, women cannot think in the same manner. Basma adds in her own words that:

"In my family, my brothers who are younger to me still think they are better decision makers as they know more about the outside world. They are more exposed to the outside world, so they have better understanding as compared to me. But again, they have more knowledge about the outside world because there aren't any restrictions for them to go out, whether it's day or night. So, it's quite obvious for them to have more understanding about the outside world than us. There are too many restrictions on us from the family regarding going out from home. For example, if we have a class at 9 them at only 8.30, we are supposed to leave our home so that we reach exactly at 9 to attend the class. But then my brothers do not need to follow this rule, they aren't even expected to ask for permission regarding going out. They just tell my mother that they are going out but never tell when they would be coming back, and no one even asks them. We cannot change the mentality of the people. Even after getting so much education and living in the 21st century we cannot change the thinking of our parents. I don't know when this will change."

For Basma, an engineering degree has not changed much of her life. Though some restrictions have been relaxed for her and she is allowed to take some of her decisions however she call it's too less to name it empowerment of any sort.

Women like Basma or Iqra have bargained with norms of patriarchy in their family for the hopes of gender equality. Iqra is happy with the share of decisions she is free to make and let her husband his share of decision making. Similar way, Basma is happy with some kind of freedom which her family has allowed her. Now when she is earning, she can buy whatever she wants and also go out and meet her friends without her brother accompanying her everywhere. In all patriarchal societies, but particularly in extremely conservative societies, women who wish to advance gender equality need to convince potential male allies, make deals and compromises and frame issues in ways that minimise hard opposition (O'Neil and Domingo, 2015). Women try to strategize and bargain with their patriarchy to fight with their constraints which may differ according to variations in class, caste and ethnicity. These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also

influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Heena says that she has never really given a thought whether her own decisions matter to her family or not. She grew up with an elder brother who was very stubborn in nature. Though her father loved and cared for both of them in the same way however, Heena tells her that her brother was pushier in his demands from his parents. So, most of the time Heena let his brother decide for anything they needed from their parents. She never enforced her decisions on her parents like her brother. She says that because of her introverted nature, her parents were very concerned for her and never let her on her own. She was most of the time accompanied by her brother whenever she had to go outside. She feels that may be because of this, she gets uncomfortable sometimes in the public sphere when she is alone. After her marriage, her husband discusses everything before taking any major decisions. In the household expenditure, she spends more than her husband. She tells that her husband let her take all the decisions on that matter. Since, her husband's income is not enough for their living expenses in Gurgaon, so she also has to contribute from her income. She does it willingly and she believes that is what purpose of her qualification is.

Nazboo Does not have any brother like Heena where she could have compared how much decisions matter in her family. When she was studying it was her father who used to take most of the decisions. But he never enforced his decisions on her or her sister. She proudly tells that her father always treated them like his sons and gave equal importance to their wishes too. Nazboo believes that no matter what, it is a man's world and women just learn to live with that. Even if women get professionally qualified, they are still not fully empowered to take all the decisions of their life. In fact, they don't even have opinions of their own on matters related to finances, investing money or buying any property because they have never seen any women doing that in their family. For these decisions, there has always been a man. Now, though she says that she is very good with numbers, she is too scared to take her decisions on these matters. Women like Heena or Nazboo, belong to families which are traditional and extended in nature. All these women belong to lower-middle class with deep-rooted patriarchal norms. Growing into these kinds of families, they have never seen women in their families independent to take any decisions without the approval of male members of their families. Patricia Jeffery (1986) writes that house-hold structures affect the status of women in their families at different levels. In extended households which are associated with wealthy urban or land-owning rural families,

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the power of women in the home is likely to be circumscribed within a hierarchical structure and their power outside the home is virtually non-existent. Besides, working outside of the home does not guarantee power at home for women. Therefore, women like Heena, Nazboo or Iqra have been conditioned in their families, not to exercise power beyond the reach of their home.

Zaira has a little different story to share when it comes to making her own decisions. She proudly boasts about her place that unlike northern states, in Ladakh women have more power to take their own decisions. She says that being from a tribal society, she always saw females of the families having equal status in the family decisions. In fact, it was her mother's decision to send her to far places like Delhi to get her education and career. Her father was quite apprehensive regarding her safety in big cities however, it was her mother who stood still with her decisions to send her children to big cities for education. So Zaira believes that though she is not married yet she believes that she has the power to take her own decisions even after her marriage. Zaira in her own words explains that

'When you have money, you are mighty again! Otherwise, women feel helplessness. If you do not have the money, you have no option but stick to your husband whatever he says. When you are earning money, then automatically that vibes come to that makes you feel empowered. You own the power of living your life in your own way'

All the women interviewed, agreed that they have more autonomy in household decision making. They use their professional skills and abilities within that autonomy to exercise their new empowered status. Exercising their power without any preconditions has some limitations. They are too conditioned to have a voice on subjects which are supposed to be 'important' and have serious repercussions. They themselves choose not to take decisions independently as they are not sure what if it doesn't work!

4.4 Work-Place Mobility- Expansion of freedom or extension of restrictions

Men and women have significantly different career-path. Women tend to leave their career either temporarily or permanently because of their familial reasons (Huang et al., 2007). Even working in the IT sector, women professionals have undergone very limited change in terms of challenging social norms. They are burdened with the responsibility of

children which hinders their frequency of job changes which is necessary for career advancement in this sector (Kelkar et al., 2002).

Iqra has a lot to share when it comes to work-place mobility. She tells that she was never given that freedom- neither by her father nor by her husband. Before her marriage, her father was too concerned for her safety. He believed that it would be best in interest of Iqra to complete her studies while living with her family. After her marriage, she found it too difficult to relocate to a different city even if it is a good job opportunity. She recalls that when she was working as a temporary faculty in Jamia Millia, she got a job as a permanent faculty from an engineering college in Aligarh. However, her family, especially her husband told her not to take that job as her children were too young and they needed the physical presence of both the parents. She says that there were a number of instances where she had to sacrifice a lot of good opportunities in order to stay with her children and her family. Being a mother sometimes has a price to pay if you are a working woman. Many women in India find a lot of difficulty in managing the dual roles of workers, mothers and wives (Gupta, 1998). Women like Iqra have to make hard choices   to balance out their professional and personal life. But for men, its mobility is much easier as compared to men. Iqra believes that it is now more than seven years that her husband is in Bahrain all because she sacrificed a lot of good opportunities to be with her children. As a result of this, her husband's earning is manifold better than her.

In a study by Singh and Pandey (2005) they found that a large number of women employees had not attained any promotion, having quit their jobs due to marriage and household responsibilities by the time they were likely to be promoted and grow in their career. Their study also found that most of the women who joined the IT Industry are concentrated at lower and middle level jobs. By the time they reach a point where they may get promoted to senior level, they have to leave either for pregnancy or for children. Heena has a similar story which also coincides with their study. She started her career with a very reputed firm in Noida as a low-level executive. After three years of working she finally became the senior executive in her firm. Just after five months in a new role and she got married. Though she got married in Delhi only however, her husband was working in Manesar and commuting from Manesar to Noida everyday was very difficult for her. As a result, she resigned and started looking for a new job in either Gurgaon or Manesar. After three months of struggle she finally got a job in a firm in Gurgaon. It wasn't as big as her previous organization, but she needed anything needed to start. Because of some break in her career, she wasn't getting a lower salary as compared to

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her last one. Her designation too was lower to the last position she held in her previous organisation.

Heena also thinks that she has less chances of promotion or salary increment in her new job as the organisation isn't that big. Therefore, she hopes that may be in some time she gets a good job offer from some other organisation. Meantime she plans to continue with this job only. She regrets a lot leaving her previous job, but she says that that is the sacrifice that women across the world have to make. Marriage is a big thing and requires a lot of adjustments which obviously have to be done by women only.

Basma has been working in the corporate sector for the last four years. In these four years, she has changed her job twice. She tells that in these four years, her parents have been quite supportive of her decisions all throughout. They took care about her likes and dislikes and respected and were not so restrictive regarding her mobility. There were some instances where she had to do night shifts for the meeting with foreign clients. She initially thought that her father would never allow her to have night shifts, but he understood that it's a part of her job as she is working in a big multinational company. When it comes to working in a different city if she gets a more lucrative offer, Basma is not sure whether her father allows her or not. Basma believes that since her parents have been quite supportive in her career decisions, then they may not impose any restrictions of mobility to the new city for better job prospects. However, she cannot say this with certainty what would be the ultimate decision of her father.

Tanwar (2018) did a study on inter firm mobility of married women in the Indian IT sector in Delhi and found that women stay significantly longer in firms if they become mothers. Children significantly slow down women's inter firm mobility. Marriage and children are the two important reasons which have limited women's labour force participation which continues to be a bigger challenge for India to achieve gender equality. Women are burdened with childcare and family responsibilities which makes them work for longer hours and which in turns, lower their mobility rate.

Nazboo believes that moving into a new city for a girl is always a complex decision. Apart from the increase in salary or position, there are a number of other factors which are involved. Like women safety in that new city, cost of living and transportation are some important factors which have to be looked out while moving to a new city for a job. Nazboo

tells her that some time back she got a good offer from Bangalore. She wanted to take that job offer but then her father told her that Bangalore is an expensive city where cost of living is very high. Beside this, she will have cultural differences too where she will find it difficult to adjust. Then she let go of the offer as she thought that maybe her father was giving a logical explanation. She still thinks that if she gets that much salary offer where she will be able to manage her expenses then maybe her father would allow her to take that job offer in a new city. She agrees that moving into a new city after marriage is quite difficult as all the women are expected to stay with their husband only. Only the wives have to make all the adjustments in accordance with the priorities of their husband.

Zaira, just like Heena, believes that changing cities for the purpose of a job is not so easy for a girl. She tells that her father gets very apprehensive whenever Ziara talks about taking up a new job role in a new city. He is very concerned about her wellbeing in a new city. Already being far from Ladakh in Delhi, he is scared about her safety, so when Zaira thinks of taking a new job in south Indian cities, her parents ask her to look for the new job in Delhi only. Citing an example from Ladakh, Zaira tells that some very educated women are forced to work at an exceptionally low salary in Ladakh itself rather than migrating to Jammu and get a good remuneration for the work. She says that once you are married and have children it is next to impossible to take jobs in different cities. "It's a norm kind of thing. Women have kids and they are more emotional with their family. So, sometimes, they themselves do not want to relocate even if any good job offers come to them. Though I am not married yet, I have seen my cousins who are married. They are well qualified and have good jobs, but they still have to live where their husbands are working. Sometimes, even if you get a very good offer yet you are forced to work at a low salary at a place where your husband is working."

4.5 Stories of Discriminations (Women centric or Religious Based)

Women face discriminations even in the most progressive societies. Gender based discriminations are deeply rooted in the traditional Indian society and people have got accustomed with it. Many workplaces exhibit certain discriminatory characteristics which reproduce inequalities on the basis of gender stereotypes and parental roles that significantly affect the professional career choices of women and mothers and less the careers of men (Albiston 2007; Acker 1990; Budig and Hodges 2010; Correll et al. 2007; Thornton and Bagust 2007). Women's increased participation in the labour force creates challenges for women to

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balance out family and family obligations. In patriarchal societies, women's stereotypical domestic roles, religious prescriptions as well as cultural norms and values makes it further complicated for women (Rehman and Azam, 2012). In Islamic societies, Muslim women face multitude of discrimination on multiple grounds like gender and religion. It is difficult for them to exist free of pressures from the wider Islamic community and constraints on their roles outside the community as a mechanism for asserting community identity (Bouma et al., 2013). When they wear Hijab to workplace than they are often perceived with discrimination which limits their career opportunities.

Talking about discriminations, Iqra feels that being a woman, sometimes men try to pull you down and make you feel that "ap toh lady Hai, apke liye to badamushkilhoga". She worked in Jamia Milia University where most of her colleagues were Muslim, so she didn't feel discriminated because her religion. However, she doesn't deny that people don't get discriminated against on grounds of religion. She recalls that many of her students who joined big multinationals have often told her about some discomforts which they feel sometime being a Muslim. Adding one example, she tells that last year only, one girl from her department got placed in some big company in Pune but she left that company only after 1 month only as she was the only hijabi girl there and was treated by her colleagues in a very unpleasant manner. She further adds that she works for a government university so is in a better position as compared to those who work in the corporate sector. Remembering about the time when she was doing her MTech she tells that she met some women engineers and they told her how pressurised their life was. They have to manage their home and work simultaneously which makes their life traumatised. Iqra tells that she is happy to god that at least her job doesn't require this much pressure.

Basma wears a Hijab even in her office. She has been wearing it after high school. But she had to sacrifice her Hijab during the time of her campus placement. She was afraid that she might not get selected in the job interview because of her Hijab. It was after a year of working she decided to wear it back in her office. She recalls that her co-workers started asking so many questions whether she is donning Hijab forcibly by parents' decision. But then she explained to them that it was completely her decision. Basma feels that many times Hijabi women are discriminated against because people think they are too assistive of their religious identity which is actually not true. There were many instances where Basma was not called during the client's visit in her office because of her Hijab. She also felt that her senior doubted her

capability to give a presentation during conference-call to clients because of her modest clothing. Her office colleagues sometimes tease her by calling her 'too much Muslim' because of her hijab. However, she just laughs at them all and does not take their comment seriously. She says that it is hard to explain to people that wearing Hijab is her own choice and not anyone else. Hijab gives her own sense of empowerment and of assertion of own identity being a proud Muslim woman. She feels safer and confident after wearing a hijab.

In a study by Hana-Meksem (2012) on how stereotypes influence hiring of Muslim women, they listed views which recruiters hold about Muslim women wearing the hijab, with five main themes which were identified: (a) fear of Muslims, (b) hijab appearance vs. hijab functionality, (c) impact of cultural and religious differences, (d) stereotypes, and (e) discrimination in the states. Girls like Heena who wear Hijab are often subjected to the kinds of discriminations which was found in this study.

Nazboo tells that since she works in a big MNC, it is very rare that she feels discriminated against. She thinks that if you are working in multinationals companies then we feel less discriminated against because people working there are broad minded. They have travelled across many places, so they are more tolerant and accepting towards cultural and religious diversity. But when you are working in small companies' chances of discriminations are much higher. She gives examples of some of her friends and some family members who are working with small companies and they often complain about the discriminations which they feel. One of male cousins was not selected in a company as the owner of the company told him that he will have issues like going every Friday for prayers and fasts during Ramadan which are not so productive in the office hours so they cannot hire him. Sharing her own experience of Hijab in office, she tells that her colleagues were quite shy and hesitant while talking to her as they presumed her conservative from her Hijab. But after some time, they became familiar with her and started treating her just like any other office colleague. Muslim women do not view their hijab as a restriction to their potential but more as a symbol of empowerment. They attend colleges and universities, work in various professions, have families and friends and enjoy life, all the while wearing hijab (Hyder, N., Parrington, C. A., & Hussain, M. ,2015). For Heena and Nazboo both, wearing hijab at their workplace is a sign of empowerment. They feel safer and more comfortable while donning it in public space.

Heena, just like Basma, was too afraid to appear with her hijab in the job interview. Her seniors advised her not to wear hijab in the HR rounds during the campus placements. Heena wanted the job desperately so she listened to their advice and went for an interview without hijab. After working for some time during her first job, she decides to put it back again. Heena tells that in her first job, she was assigned a desk job. She was very rarely asked by her employers to go to the client site. She believes that they did it intentionally due to her conservative nature and hijab. However, she never felt extreme reactions during her first job either from her colleagues or from her employer. It was during her second job that she felt different because of her religion. Heena says that she was the only Muslim woman there and it was a small company. Everyone knew everybody and they had lot of questions regarding her being a Muslim. She tells that they sometimes had very stupid questions for her like 'why Muslim men can marry four times, but a woman can't, why Muslim fasts for a month etc. Sometimes she used to tell it in a lighter moment and just laugh at them but sometimes she used to get a little offensive with the way these questions were asked. Heena adds that she won't say these were not good people, but they were full of apprehensions regarding Muslims, so sometimes she felt little annoyed or discriminated against because of her religion.

Zaira too shares stories of discriminations quite similar to Heena. She is quite an introverted girl and a hijabi too. She does not like socialising much, but people think that she is conservative and doesn't like talking much because of her deep association with religion. Zaira thinks that talking and socialising much is not a sign of empowerment. She can dress in a modest way, be an introvert and still do everything that others can.

Ahmad (2011) has made a distinction between Muslim women's choice of wearing hijab in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. He suggested that wearing hijab does not represent a step toward repression for US Muslim women, unlike the situation of women in predominately Muslim countries (Syed, 2010). For US women, wearing hijab was a step toward a new Islamic activism focussed on social justice of all sorts in all situations, not just equality for Muslim women. Hijab represented greater empowerment and greater freedom in public space. All the women interviewed narratives fall in synchrony with this finding.

4.6 Conditioned to Discrimination (Discrimination within the family)

Desai and Temsah (2014) write that women often carry the burden of community identity under the condition where religion forms the axis of polarization. Their study found that when it comes to the symbols such as veiling, not going on family outings, and not participating in wage labor then Hindu and Muslim women differ substantially but there are few differences between them in areas that are not publicly visible. The day to day actions that create the disadvantages for women can be rarely visible from outside. Similarly, the women in these narratives may look very empowering and successful however there is a myriad of invisible discriminatory treatments by their families which from outside look invisible, but these are very much present. They have been so conditioned to these discriminations they no longer even acknowledge it as discrimination.

Iqra belongs to an elite Muslim family. Her grandparents were professors, her parents were professors and she too joined as an assistant professor in a renowned university. She was married in a well-off family and her husband too was a first-grade government employee. But did this elitism help her countering gender biases in her family? Iqra after thinking for a while nodded in negative. Though her parents did their best to make Iqra whatever she is today but when but when she compares it to her brother, she feels that he was given more freedom-freedom to choose and freedom to say no! Iqra tells her that her father always coaxed her to do things he wanted, and she never refused him. She always trusted her father's decision for her and never questioned it back and now in her mid-40s she thinks that whatever she is today, it is because of her parents. Summing up upon discrimination she tells that

'My father knew it's a man's world after all and that's why he prepared me for life like that. Girls have to get married and adjust in someone else's family. So, parents have to be very careful while taking any decision for their daughter. So, even if you have a 9 to 5 job, children and home is always a woman's responsibility.'

Iqra believes that sometimes parents put unnecessary restrictions on their daughter because they are too concerned for her safety. Sometimes parents also start judging their daughters according to societal norms and end up in curtailment of the basic right to have a choice and freedom to do what she really wants. Even the elite background families like Iqra's, parents get perturbed by what others have to say regarding their daughters. This is the reason why her

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father did not allow her to have her first corporate job after her MTech rather, he wanted her to get married as soon as possible. Looking back at the time, Iqra feels that maybe she got so habitual with the discriminations that she no more felt it like one. She had so much trust in her father's decision that she never had an iota of doubts on his intention. She feels that maybe their technique was not good but at the end it was just to help deal with this patriarchal world. They were just preparing her for her future world.

Nazboo tells that her parents have daughters only, so they treat everyone alike, they don't feel discriminated against among themselves. But she believes that if they would have a son, then maybe they would have given extra freedom to him. She thinks that this is how the society works. Citing an example from her extended family she shares the story of her aunt. Her aunt wanted to complete her graduation before she gets married, but she was forcibly married during her second year in graduation only as a good proposal came for her. With a grim face Nazia adds that her aunt was never able to complete her graduation degree. Within her family also she can see how her mother always has a secondary role in every decision of the family. She recalls that in her childhood whenever she asked for permission from her mother even for small things, her mother would simply tell her to ask from her father. Then after some point of time, she stopped asking her mother for anything because she already knew her response. So, shewould directly ask from his father.

Heena, just like Nazboo and Iqra, shares similar experience. She calls herself a very introverted and shy kind of person. So, she was happy and content with whatsoever her father chose for her. She rarely made any demands from him. She has a year older brother who unlike her is very demanding in his nature. She says that unlike her, his brother is quite ambitious, and he knows what he wants. Sometimes he becomes very stubborn if he needs anything and at last her father has to fulfil his demand. She believes that because of introverted nature she sometimes is unable to express her needs from her parents. Though they studied in the same class in the same school and later did engineering from the same college, yet there was a big difference in the way they grew up. Her brother was too determined to take engineering while she was too confused. That's why her brother took the coaching class for entrance exams and she didn't. She further adds that being a girl she always knew there are some limitations and she always made sure never to go beyond that invisible and unwritten parameter.

Hasan and Menon (2004) write that stereotypes of Muslim women, entrenched by the trinity of multiple marriages, triple talaq, and purdah have held them hostage for so long that they have become difficult to dislodge. However, they also write that the dichotomy between public and private life exists the same in gender relation irrespective of religion. Similar, women in these narratives also mention about women who are not Muslim, but their stories too are parallel with them. Only the difference comes in the level of extent and degree of resistance. Zaira belongs to a society where patriarchal knots are not so strong. Women are also entitled to have their own voice and their own discretion. So, does that mean Zaira has the same privilege just like her brother? Zaira answers that she doesn't know how to put it, but she and her sister studied in a government school in Ladakh but her younger brother years later was sent to a private school. She tells that in a way she felt it's a kind of discrimination where parents are choosing different school for their own children. Apart from that Zaira tells that there were very instances where she felt discriminated against in the family. She thinks that it was because of her introverted nature that her parents never imposed any restrictions on her. She likes to be at home and keep things in herself and not to socialise much. Therefore, her parents seldom had any trouble with her. She has been living on her own in a different city for a long time. Yet she carried her culture and the gender rules of her society wherever she went. Now, when she is equally empowered to live the way she wants, yet she never detracts herself. Keeping in her mind the things which her family will approve or disapprove, she always drew her boundaries. Zaira thinks that women across all societies are subjected to discrimination in one way or other. The education and her degree do save them from it clutches however, even then you can feel it is an overdue course of time. However, Zaira is hopeful that time is changing, and education is playing a big role in dismantling discriminatory rules and norms for women. All the women in the narratives also sync with hopes of Zaira. They all feel that the future holds a better and equal status for them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

"While the relationship between education and empowerment is axiomatic in a theoretical sense, the relationship at the empirical level is not straightforward. Several questions arise. What kind of education leads to empowerment? Should education be different for different people in order to truly empower? Is gender a factor in determining the contours of empowering? To what extent is self-determination by the disempowered critical in the education decision-making process? There is no definitive answer to these questions!''

(R. Govinda, 2015)

As the lines mentioned above explains, the term 'empowerment' has multiple interpretations, analyses and answers to it are purely contextual. Estimating the outcome of education in terms of empowerment among the marginalised social groups brings forth various discussions related to justice, equity, equality and also education as an instrument to remove social inequality. Discussions on outcomes of education in a stratified society like India often divulges into a dichotomous situation. Some have viewed education as the 'catalyst of social change' (Dreze and Sen, 1995) which enforces dignity to human life, and which is invaluable to human capital theory. The capability to take decisions in accordance to life goals is valuable to human life (Sen, 2006) and education empowers that capability. Education also affects the level of productivity as educated people tend to innovate which leads to higher productivity (Lucas Jr, R. E., 1988). Contrary to this, it is also viewed that educational systems in a stratified society further reproduces social differences (Singh, A.K, 2015). Social inequalities are further reinforced on subaltern groups while the hegemony of elites remains constant. Jeffery et al (2008) highlighted the fact that no doubt education has a potential to transform people's lives, but power and culture can mediate people' access to the freedoms that education provides. Critically analysing Sen's theoretical emphasis on education as a driver for change, the writers argue that it might divert attention away from social struggles over the value and use of education in situations of economic uncertainty.

Thus, we can see that there are multiple theoretical perspectives in determining the relationship between education and empowerment. Socio-economic conditions, culture, traditions, customs and class etc are various explanatory factors in these perspectives. So, when we talk about analysing the relation between the two, context matters the most. The outcomes of education in determining the level of empowerment in a given society cannot be

universalised across all the cultures. Also, the normative theories which are put to explain only the binary relationship between education and empowerment while categorically avoiding exogenous factors need to be addressed. Nussbaum (2001) has also argued that theorists often impose on people their own ideas of what is right and proper which can be called out for one more exercise of class domination. Concepts that originate in one culture cannot describe and assess realties in the other. Likewise, the propensity of education towards empowerment cannot be counted in homogeneity everywhere. Also, its nature and form can take distinct and different characteristics at an individual level. The present research has explained very well the differential effects in spite of the same degree and educational qualification of the women participant. Detailed narratives try to through light on these processes.

The gender discourses on empowerment have been both explicitly and implicitly discussed by various feminist, economist and political theorists time and again. Feminists have often criticised the male centred conceptualisation of various developmental discourse which are intrinsic to the theory of empowerment. Their critique was on the ground that women hadn't been treated as equal contributors to development and neither had they been equal recipients of the benefits to development (McIlwaine et al. 2003). The gradual shift from Women and Development Approach (WAD) to Gender and Development Approach (GAD) in the developmental theories regarding women is a consequential effect of that critique. Under GAD approach gender is believed to be shaped not only to be a multiple interaction of time- and place- contingent influences like culture, mode of production, legal and political institutions but it further mediated by men's and women's insertion into other socially generated categories such as class, age and race (Cornwall, 2000). However, the gender approach to both men and men which lies in the principle of GAD is rarely put into practise. Wherever the term 'gender' is mentioned, it is mostly referring to women (Chant, 2000) and this 'women to women' approach has failed to address critical issues relating to women. For example, Chant and Gutmann (2002) criticised this 'women-only' approach to gender planning as insufficient to overturn the patriarchal structures embedded in development institutions and to redress gender imbalances at the grassroots in any fundamental way. They called for 'mainstreaming gender' so that instead of integrating gender into pre-existing policy concerns, the attempt should be made to transform mainstream policy agendas from gender perspectives.

Something that really intrigues here is the question whether education fosters a sense of empowerment differently between men and women? And also, how men perceive women's

idea of empowerment and what is the role of gender in empowering each other. The positive connotations between education and empowerment in the developmental theories are widely accepted however such theories fail to address the discrepancies in the degree of empowerment. This research study tries to answer some of the questions raised here through the narratives of the women in this study. The five women interviewed in this study were engineering degree holders and graduated from the same university. However, all these women came from different socio-economic backgrounds and different geographical locations. But they all responded differently with the sense of empowerment they achieved with their degree and qualification. So, this study tries to focus on the discrepancies and gender differences in the sense of empowerment with the same level of educational qualification. The women in this study are also peculiar for multiple reasons. All these women were Muslim, which is a marginalised, educationally backward and deeply conservative community of Indian society. As Jawaid et al. (2007) notes most of the Muslim in Indian society are placed at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder, in terms of civic amenities, consumption patterns, education, income and job opportunities. On many occasions and accounts, their socio-economic conditions have been found to be worse than scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (See Rajinder Sachar Committee Report, 2006). From this, conditions of Muslim women can be inculcated who have a history of subjugation, deprivation even in the most advanced society. Under such grim reality, it becomes mandatory to introspect the degree of empowerment of these women and how they have exercised this empowerment to better their lives with their education.

5.1 Making it to Engineering Colleges- Juxtaposition of Empowerment and Subjugation

Engineering is considered to be one of the most qualified and reputed professions. With the onset of foreign companies offshoring in India after globalisation, the demand for engineers has been soaring high. Their rate of employability as well as remuneration is much higher which makes it the most sought course among the students. According to AICTE (2018-19), there are more than 3,000 undergraduate engineering colleges in India. AISHE Report (2018-19) suggests that undergraduate enrolment rate for girls in engineering is 28.87 percent out of total while their pass-out rate is 31.41 percent. The gender difference in the enrolments is not surprising. Engineering is basically a 'men's-sphere' and girls are stereotypically considered as 'not good with numbers'. However, in recent years, this perception has taken a downward trend and more girls are being encouraged to take engineering, though with a slower rate. The

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proportion of women enrolled in engineering and technology courses was 0.2 percent in 1950–1951, a figure which rose to 3.8 percent in 1980–1981, 16 percent in 1995, and to 23 percent in 2005–2006. In 2017 UNESCO came up with 'UNESCO Science Report: towards 2030' where they mentioned that there is substantial increase in women undergraduates in engineering in India.

What makes girls choose engineering after their high school? The answer to this is not straight. Many scholars have pointed out that education for women in India is 'Patrifocal' (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour, 1994). Patrifocality is based on an ideology that gives preference to men as compared to a woman in the family. There are definite gender roles in the family where women take subordinate positions. Therefore, educational decisions in these families are not taken by the individuals but by the families. Since most decisions in such families are taken by men, consequently all the decisions related to education are made by men of the family. Writing about education of girls in such families, Subrahmanyam (1995) notes that a patrifocal family structure and ideology affect decisions regarding women's entry into education in both ways: negatively, by creating obstacles to their progress, but also under special circumstances very positively. Their findings go well with the observation of this research as none of the women in the study had an individual choice to join engineering. All the women were motivated or asked by their father to do engineering after their high school. Though some of them had a different career choice but they were convinced or coaxed by their families to choose engineering. Now, the question is what makes parents ask their daughters to go for degrees like engineering. Some of the researches have also stated that some parents don't want their daughters to go for such degrees as these are expensive courses and they don't want to invest in the education of their daughters as an additional burden beside her marriage expenses. The answer for previously asked questions would be again related to patrifocal. The most important reason for families to ask their daughters to go for courses like engineering is future expectation of her getting married into a good family. As the women in their narrative shared that though they were not sure about selection of their future career, but their families were quite encouraging them to go for engineering. As these women think that it was the effort of the families to make them independent and empowered in the future, but this may not be totally true. Though their parents wanted them to be engineers yet, they were not prepared for high ranking engineering colleges. None of them joined any coaching classes or even appeared in the entrance examinations of JEE or even AEEE. Statistics reveal that 11 lacs students appeared for JEE Main exam in 2017 and out of which 72 percent were boys. The reason for

families not aspiring to the best colleges for their daughters could be patrifocal (Gupta, 2012). Since colleges affiliated to AIEEE are spread all over India, there may be patrifocal concerns about daughters traveling long distances by themselves. There are also social and reputational risks which have been mentioned by Mukhopadhyay (1994) like risk of studying in male-dominated colleges, and difficulty in finding a more qualified groom. When the girl gets more qualified, their parents find it very difficult to find a suitable groom for them. But in case of their sons, they engage all their efforts to get their sons as many as resources which may be required for their career success. Sometimes, they put all their money savings in order to educate their sons but in the case of daughters, it would be a very rare instance.

Parents think that having an engineering degree for her daughter will ease her marriage and also ensure her employability in the future. As women in the study narrated, marriage is something which is most important for their parents. No doubt, they also wanted a good future for them, but it was equally important to ensure good husbands for them. Dalmia (2004) points out that marriage and career issues for women are interrelated. Having a degree in higher education increases her value in the marriage market. Her earning potential is treated as an asset in the marriage alliance due to the high cost of urban living and the desire of potential husbands for an economically "independent" wife (Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Potential husbands prefer wives who are earning so that they get a helping hand in managing the family expenses. So, for parents encouraging their daughters for a professional degree like engineering has more to do with social context rather than economic context. They do want their daughters to be financially independent; however, getting her married is still their primary concern which sometimes overpowers the former one.

Whatever motives of the parents are, but getting their daughters enrolled in engineering colleges surely guarantees them a better future. The four years of technical knowledge in colleges helps these women in developing reasoning and ability to question the deeply embedded patriarchal systems in their society. They also learn how to break stereotypes which women everywhere encounter. The notion that 'women are not good with numbers' proves baseless here. These women even when they have not passed out of the engineering colleges can feel the difference and their newly empowered status in the society. As one of the women in this study narrates that while she was in the college itself, she can feel how she was respected among her relatives for pursuing engineering. In fact, she adds that it helped in delaying her marriage process. Her family were hopeful of her bright career ahead and they gave her

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freedom to continue her studies and then focus on getting a job rather than getting married like many girls of the same age in her family. So, we can see that choosing a career in engineering can be a juxtaposition of empowerment and subjugation. The degree is definitely going to empower them in all senses in their future however, even this is decided through their subjugation to the choice of their families to the career they want her to do. As discussed above, the education of the girls in such families is purely patrifocal and signs of patriarchy shadow every educational decision taken for them. Even with so much empowerment, signs of hierarchy are still present which predominates every social setting. It was patrifocality which discouraged women to have such degrees and again as time changes, it was again patrofocality which encouraged women to go for such degrees.

1.2 Analysing the Discrepancies- Linking engineering degree with empowerment (Meaning of empowerment and power of decision making)

Jeffrey et al (2005) have pointed that education is a contradictory resource: opening certain opportunities to undermine established structures of power while also often drawing marginalised young people more tightly into structures and ideologies of dominance. Many theorists (For example, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Jeffery et al, 2008, Giroux, 2001; Mclaren, 1999) have also recognised the role of education in reproducing inequalities and maintaining the status quo by further reinforcing it for a subordinate class. Muslim women being from one of the most subordinate class may not realise the full potential of their empowerment which they acquire from their engineering degrees. The socio-economic context also determines their degree of empowerment which they would capitalise from their education.

The women in this narrative belonged from different socio-economic strata. Most of them belonged from northern parts of India while one woman from the narrative was from Ladakh. Talking about Ladakh, it is a tribal community and has different cultures and traditions as compared to northern parts of India. Though, belonging from same Muslim community, yet there are lot of culture heterogeneity between the two. While the societies in the northern part are more patriarchal, Ladakh has not so obvious signs of patriarchy. Chhewang (2006) writes that in Ladakh, no patriarchal structures exist as women play not only an important part in the economy but also lead the economy. They work in agricultural farms, look after the animals and work like any other men of their tribal society. So, they are the equal decision makers like

men of the family. However, there are some contradictory views with this proponent of equality. Dawa (2006) points out that "a large number of Ladakhi men are serving in the army, engaged in tourism, absorbed with monastery affairs as monks." In the process women are left alone, alienated, secluded from their families and "overburdened and neglected as an agent of social change". While in the northern part, control of economic resources by women is non-existent and the influence of patriarchy is persistent and pervasive, and women here are socially invisible, a social burden, and more than a value for society. (Condorelli, 2015).

Apart from the difference in the level of patriarchy in their society, the women in this study also had different economic backgrounds. Most of them belonged from lower middle-class families, but some of them were from elite families. This economical difference was quite evidently reflected from their thought process, social and mental conditioning, their perception about the outer world and their own sense of empowerment. Those women who belonged from lower-middle class families were more conditioned to accept any prejudice or any biases against them- both, personal and professional. They were of the opinion that at least their lives are better than other girls in their surroundings who don't have technical degrees like them. So, even if they are not able to live their life completely on their own, they are happy that they still have some degree of control over their lives. Those women who belonged from elite families had more control over their lives. There were very less instances where they were pressured to do something against their will, either by their parents or husbands. They had a better sense of understanding regarding their level of empowerment and they had some ambitions regarding their future career which they wanted to pursue. However, like all the other girls in this study, they too were coaxed by their parents to choose a course they wanted for her. Beside this, women in these families were more open to changes which would make their lives better off and they also had less resistance to any prejudice or biases against them.

How their educational qualification has helped them? The women may differ regarding the level of their social empowerment, but they all agree that an engineering degree surely makes them financially independent. They not only get control over some decisions of lives, but engineering degrees also help them in acquiring equal status in the family. Earning money empowers them to better their lives and not depend on others for financial support. All the women in the study agreed in coherence that being an engineer, they feel empowered and better than those women who aren't earning. These women believe that financial independence is the most important component of empowerment and no one pays attention to you or listens to you

if you don't have money. In other words, money begets power and respect both. Engineering degrees also help them in defeating the stereotypes that all women are subjected to. They are consulted by their family members even in the financial matters which are purely assumed to be in the domain of men because of the high value of their profession. Shanker (2008) writes that women engineers in India attract some kind of social aura which enhances their status in the society. She embarks upon the highest social approval of the society for freedom and other choices as well. When a woman has a good career, it transforms her gender relation as it breaks down the traditional division of labour in family into public and private spheres and offers scope for greater women's agency by enhancing their bargaining power within the households (Kelkar et al., 2002). So, in the case of women in this study, their educational degree helped them in bargaining their power and enhanced their level of freedom to make decisions which would better their lives. In absence of any resource- economic or social, deprives women from their basic rights like right to live with dignity. Despite being able to act, speak out and make decisions, women continue to be represented as subordinate, their rights and obligations shaped by the ideas and workings of marriage and kinship systems rather than contributions to production (Moore, 1988). But when they get financially independent, it helps them in breaking these barriers. They feel more confident as they know that they can take their own decisions as they are not dependent on others for any support.

Decision-making is a crucial part of empowerment. O'Neill and Domingo (2015) have defined the power to make decisions as the ability to influence decisions that affect one's life in both private and public. They mention three things which enable or constrain women's decision-making power and leadership which are- Institutions, Structures and Capabilities. Institutions are rules and norms that shape people's behaviour and interactions in social, political and economic life. Structures are the deeper social, economic and political endowments, groupings and patterns that shape a society. Capabilities to be drawn by women to take advantage of the opportunities institutional and structural changes which are available to them. Educational degrees like engineering make women capable of making decisions which are for their own good and it helps then in exercising control of their life. Another important thing is 'bargaining' here. Women with their newly gained empowerment bargained with the obstructions like patriarchy to maximise their level of freedom and power. Women try to strategize and bargain with their patriarchy to fight with their constraints which may differ according to variations in class, caste and ethnicity. These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender

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ideology in different contexts. They also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression (Kandiyoti, 1988). Women in this study expressed how their financial independence helped then in bargaining with patriarchy in their families. Though they never went against their father or husband's decisions, yet they tried to exercise their control with the things which were under their control. One of the most important things regarding these women are negotiations and dialogue rather than resistance and struggle.

Next thing which brings the discussion is the role of religion in the lives of these women. How do they view their religion in empowering or disempowering them? All the women interviewed in this study were first believers in their faith in religion. Though they accepted that many of the impositions of Islam which are put for women often hinders their path of development like not socialising much with opposite gender, not to work beyond daylight and give priority to their husbands and children etc. They believe Islam gives equal status to both men and women however, during Islamic discourse, men gave themselves more preference as compared to women, thereby reducing the status of women. They believe religion empowers them and most of the commands which the religion holds for them is for their own good. For example, putting hijab on their body helps them avoid male-gaze and also, they feel empowered in asserting their religious identity and by not socialising too much with the other gender, they are able to protect their privacy. Their faith in religion is however questionable. For example, Redfurn and Aume (2010) explain that religious women 'apparently chose patriarchy over liberation'. And also, Muslim women do not view their hijab as a restriction to their potential but more as a symbol of empowerment. Desai and Temsah (2014) write that women often carry the burden of community identity under the condition where religion forms the axis of polarization. Their study found that when it comes to the symbols such as veiling, not going on family outings, and not participating in wage labor then Hindu and Muslim women differ substantially but there are few differences between them in areas that are not publicly visible. The day to day actions that create the disadvantages for women can be rarely visible from outside. Similarly, the women in these narratives may look very empowering and successful however there are a myriad of invisible discriminatory treatments both in the family and outside the family, which from outside look invisible, but these are very much present. They have been so conditioned to these discriminations they no longer even acknowledge it as discrimination.

Now talking particularly about Hijab, as discussed above, women in this study find it empowering to assert their religious identity. However, various discourses and rhetoric have visualised it as embodiment of gender oppression and subjugation to the patriarchy but these women different on these views. Muslim women do not view their hijab as a restriction to their potential but more as a symbol of empowerment. They attend colleges and universities, work in various professions, have families and friends and enjoy life, all the while wearing hijab (Hyder, N., Parrington, C. A., & Hussain, M. ,2015). They find themselves safer, more secured and control over their individuality by wearing Hijab. In a study by Ahmad (2011), he made a distinction between Muslim women's choice of wearing hijab in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. He suggested that wearing hijab does not represent a step toward repression for US Muslim women, unlike the situation of women in predominately Muslim countries (Syed, 2010). For US women, wearing hijab was a step toward a new Islamic activism focussed on social justice of all sorts in all situations, not just equality for Muslim women. Hijab represented greater empowerment and greater freedom in public space. All the women interviewed narratives fall in synchrony with this finding.

Thus, we can see how hijab helps in developing a sense of dignity and pride in them rather than a sign of oppression and subjugation. However, the condition again comes here that Hijab is a matter of personal choice rather than force or coercion.

1.3 Debunking the Myth – Truth Vs Reality (Are they empowered for work-place mobility)

The availability of employment opportunities largely depends on the spatial configuration of suitable employment relative to the location where one lives (Van Ham et al., 2001). Workers have different levels of specialisation and only a subset of that job within reach can be suitable for them. However, the issue of spatial mismatch is always there. In the case of female workers, these geographical barriers in their careers are a major issue. When it is a known fact that changing jobs allows individuals to try out several jobs to ascertain their comparative advantages (Johnson, 1978), restriction in mobility on women disadvantages their position. This poses a question that even when women engineers are financially empowered and have some power of decision making then what obstructs their work-place mobility.

Most of the women in this study had restrictions one way or the other in changing cities for job changes. Most of them were married and had children, so for them relocating to any other city even for a lucrative offer was next to impossible. They believe taking care of children and family have been the job of the women traditionally and everyone in the society expects this from them. Beside this, women have intrinsically a caring nature, so they also sometimes give a priority to their children and family over their career. It is also said that men and women have significantly different career-path as women tend to leave their career either temporarily or permanently because of their family and children's reasons (See Huang et al., 2007). Even if they don't leave their career, it is quite impossible for them to move to a different city if they get a good job opportunity. Sometimes they do this willing fully but even if they do not have children, they are allowed by their families to relocate. Women professionals in even in the fast-moving IT sector, they have undergone very limited changes in terms of challenging social norms. They are burdened with the responsibility of children which hinders their frequency of job changes which is necessary for career advancement in this sector (Kelkar et al., 2002). As one the interviewed women from Ladakh shared that

"A married woman from Ladakh, even if she gets much better paid in cities like Jammu, still she would be asked to work in Ladakh only.."

It is not the story of just one woman. Irrespective of any religious or ethnic identity, women across the world face such restrictions on workplace mobility. As far as Muslim women are concerned, they find it even more difficult because of patriarchal as well as religious obligations. Many women in this study shared that most of the time when they are going out, they are expected to be accompanied by a male member of the family. Even if they are going for their work, then also someone from her family will accompany her to the cab or bus to her office. So, relocating to a new city for a job no matter how lucrative, is completely out of the equation. All the women of this study shared that every day they have to make hard choices in order to balance out their professional and personal life, but for men, both the lives are not as struggling as a woman. Women everyday struggle hard in managing the dual roles of workers, mothers and wives (See, Gupta, 1998). Their choice can never be independent of linear factors whether its family, children, job, husband or religion. Career breaks for marriage or children often force them to compromise with their professional commitments. This includes working for a longer period of time at the same job without any increment of promotion. As Singh and Pandey (2005) have pointed out that a large number of women employees had not attained any

promotion, having quit their jobs due to marriage and household responsibilities by the time they were likely to be promoted and grow in their career. Their study also found that most of the women who joined the IT Industry are concentrated at lower and middle level jobs. By the time they reach a point where they may get promoted to senior level, they have to leave either for pregnancy or for children.

The above discussion puts an important question on how empowered these women are in the real sense. Taking crucial decisions of life which are necessary for the development of an individual is the true meaning of empowerment. As these women are working as the most reputed professionals like engineers, so how much their profession is empowering them to take crucial decisions of life? This brings the argument that the relation between education and empowerment has to be studied involving these kinds of divergences and discrepancies.

1.4 Stereotyping and Discrimination- Stories of Gender and Religious Bigotry

Gender discriminations are cross-culture prejudices while religious discrimination are culture specific prejudices. Muslim women are subjected to discriminations in both the contexts. Misogynistic and sectarian views are deeply embedded in our societal system which goes cross-culture, applying to every woman on earth. So, those women belonging to the minority communities often face this dual form of discriminations. Writing about discrimination against the Muslim women, Hasan and Menon (2004) wrote that the stereotypes of Muslim women, entrenched by the trinity of multiple marriages, triple talaq, and purdah have held them hostage for so long that they have become difficult to dislodge. They further wrote that the condition of Muslim women in India are not equal to a women of Hindu counterparts in some key areas and the difference can be seen sharply in the socio-economic status of Muslim households, occupational distributions, education, asset structures and standard of living which is even below than a woman of Hindu OBC.

Gender prejudice against a woman, most often starts from the family itself. In most of the cases, they are made to carry the burden of community identity and the day to day actions that create the disadvantages for women can be rarely visible from outside. For example, Desai and Temsah (2014) have argued that because communal identities are expressed through externally visible behaviours, greater religious differences are expected in external markers of gendered behaviours and family norms. The study found out that Muslim women are more

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likely to engage in veiling and less likely to venture outside the home for recreation and employment however, religious differences are absent when attention is directed at private behaviours such as household decision making power, gender segregation within households, and discrimination against daughters. Results underscore the multidimensionality of gender.

Similarly, the women in their narratives in this study may look very empowering and successful however there are a myriad of invisible discriminatory treatments by their families which from outside look invisible. They have been so conditioned to these discriminations they no longer even acknowledge it as discrimination. They think whatever restrictions their families put on them, were for their own good. They have seen men taking control over things in their families, in their societies and wherever they go. So, they no longer feel any discomfort in subjugating their power to men as they believe this is how the society works. They have bargained their power within the realms of patriarchy to maximise their sense of empowerment without going the way of any struggle or resistance. They believe this is the power of their educational qualification in empowering them.

The more challenging arena for discriminations according to these women is related to their professional lives. Gender biasness at the workplace is very common- whether it is unconscious or implicit. Such prejudices affect a women's career disproportionately by their inferior treatment in a professional set-up. There has already been a number of researches in the past which have argued how some workplace exhibits certain discriminatory characteristics which reproduce inequalities for a woman. A woman's professional career is often presumed secondary while focussing on women's reproductive role as primary. In patriarchal societies, women's stereotypical domestic roles, religious prescriptions as well as cultural norms and values makes it further complicated for women (Rehman and Azam, 2012). In Islamic societies, Muslim women face multitude of discrimination on multiple grounds like gender and religion. It is difficult for them to exist free of pressures from the wider Islamic community and constraints on their roles outside the community as a mechanism for asserting community identity (Bouma et al., 2013). When they wear Hijab to workplace than they are often perceived with discrimination which limits their career opportunities. The findings of this study collaborate with the above arguments. The women feel that because of their dressing and Hijab, they are often treated as conservatives and not so much encouraged for senior positions in their companies which requires client's interaction. Though, things are changing, and people are getting more open in accepting diversities, however, still there is a long way to go!

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Researcher's Perspective and concluding remarks

It has been correctly stated by Nussbaum (2001) that women in much of the world lose out by being women. Their capabilities as a rational human being remain abridge due to the societal expectations that they must adhere to. When the choices and voices are thwarted by patriarchal conditioning and negotiations, identity of the women is just reduced to adjuncts. Society creates a web of restraints on freedom of women through the moral expectations from them. Women in turn, thrive to negotiate between their identity to exercise control of their own life and servants of the ends of the others as Nussbaum calls it. When the choices, decisions and freedom are the presupposed conditions of empowerment, how far it would be correct to call these educated women truly empowered when their freedom and choice are totally constrained. The narratives of the women in this study are no different than millions of other women who are jousting the way for equality on one hand and bargaining with the rules of patriarchy on the other. They optimise their opportunities under the constraints which society puts for them and going beyond those constraints is an idea which is totally absurd and utopian for these women. Their social conditioning and imbibed values in them make this idea as unrealistic and undesired.

Gender based inequalities are a reality even in the most developed part of societies and it has a consensus for that. The state laws which make an obligation for equal rights of the women are a proof of that consensus. However, the important thing to note here is the question of equity v/s equality. Women are often put into analogous situations where their choices are deformed because of their matriarchal priorities. And also, in most developing countries women are not informed about their legal rights in quest for equality as these laws are never popularised. These put a question on credibility of the laws in ensuring justice to these women. Sometimes, women also face discriminations which are beyond the ambit of the state definitions to discriminations. The kind of discriminations which are narrated by the women in this study lies in the outpost areas of any legal boundary. Therefore, their inability to compete for equality under these circumstances is also a problem of justice.

Women in this study are conditioned to various gender discriminations. They are so conditioned that they fail to acknowledge even its existence. In the myriad of their everyday life, the restrictions which are meant for them are so invisible that their own eyes skip. When

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they are told that speaking less and smiling more makes them a godly woman, little they know that this godly attribute will lose her sense of having her own voice someday. From her youth to the day she gets married, every day is a preparatory class to perform better and keep her husband happy in married life. But, in the midst of all these lessons, she is seldom taught how to make herself a priority, focus on her career and do what she really wants. With her educational qualification, families expect her to ease the lives of other people surrounding her rather than her own. She follows a trajectory which has been designed to serve the needs of patrifocality and her disbelief to acknowledge or normalise discriminations further strengthens that trajectory. Technical degrees like engineering for these women are like blessings. It is a way for them towards economic empowerment which according to these women is a true sense of empowerment. They have seen in their family how men are treated superior for being breadwinners for the family. So, think earning money in the family begets power and respect both, therefore economic empowerment is all they need. However, their statement that degrees have different outcomes on men and women in their society is a proof that there is something more yet to achieve to derive empowerment in real sense.

The notions of empowerment are relational in nature and always context based. So, there can never be a universal set of parameters to determine levels of empowerment for different individuals. Similarly, education also accrues different outcomes on different individuals. Irrespective of the same cognitive skills, different socio-cultural backgrounds and family upbringings can be reason for such variations in educational outcomes. Therefore, empowering outcomes of education should never be prerogatively defined. The variations as it has been narrated by the women of this study should also be considered to make concepts of empowerment mutually inclusive to include both equity and equality. The meaning of empowerment for women should be freedom to make her own choices and decisions without anyone else telling what her choices should be. As Nussbaum has also explained that a capability approach for the empowerment of women is the systemisation and theorization of plural thoughts and plans. She calls it plural because what women strive for contains a plurality of irreducibly distinct components. The ideas of human dignity, diversity and pluralism should also be explicitly underlying in the arguments which are linked to the list of capabilities. She greatly emphasizes the need for a political approach based on ideas of human capability and functionings as a good basis of the problems faced by women (like in this study) and there is a need to construct basic political principles that can serve as the foundation for constitutional guarantees to which nations should be held by their citizens.

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Chapter 6: Recommendations and Scope for Further Research

The aim of the study was to generate an informed discourse through the narratives of the women of the study so that more enabling trajectories for education for marginalised women can be created which would lead to empowerment without any constraints for these women. After the thematically interpretation of these narratives, a number of observations were made which could be brought under educational policy domain to help these women realise their actual potential and way towards empowerment.

Based on these observations, the most important recommendation would be to encourage more number of women from these communities to take professional courses. The enrolment of Muslim women in higher education has already increased over the time however, now the focus should be shifted to getting these women into specialised courses to make them more employable. As more and more women from these communities will get into these professions, the norms of gender stereotyping will get bleak over time. More representation in the public sphere will make women more confident and encourage them to aim for bigger and challenging roles. Austerity that these women face in their families will also get ousted over the time as these women will realise their actual potential and their true sense of empowerment. They will strengthen their voices against any discriminatory practices both in professional and personal lives.

The second recommendation would be to provide extra coaching classes by the school to the girls from these communities who aspire to join professional courses after their high school. Many girls who want to pursue degrees like medical, astronomy, science and technological research and so forth are not not able to compete with others because of lack of preparation and proper guidance required to crack entrance exams. Therefore, the school should take efforts to help these girls qualify these difficult entrance exams. The schools should also counsel all its students regarding different career options available to them so that they can make their own decisions regarding a career which they wish to pursue in future without any parental pressure or peer pressure.

Third, professional courses are more often too much data-drenched and mechanised in nature. Therefore, combining life lessons in their curriculum can be an answer. This will give

them insights to develop diverse thoughts, inquisitive minds to question and argue and better understanding of the things which matter to them. Information from diverse sources help students develop socially robust knowledge and provide them with new perspectives in navigating their course of life in future. They would be able to make better decisions because of their inquisitiveness which will also allow them to analyse repercussions of their decisions.

Fourth, the classroom curricular activities at all levels like planning, processing and participation should ensure gender parity. These activities equip assessment avenues for students to streamline their personality development along with their academic knowledge. The aim of these activities is to develop critical thinking and better decision making. Therefore, these activities are a great platform for girls to develop their empowering skills. When they are a part of planning and processing such activities, it helps in boosting their morale and confidence to accomplish bigger things in their life.

The scope for further research

This study implores various nuances which are intricately woven between the theoretical implications of education and empowerment. Specially, when these theories are tested against the vulnerable sections, they reveal many discrepancies which are yet to be discovered and acknowledged. The narratives of these women concede several discrepancies which can be implicated as informed discourse in educational practices. The scope of this research goes further to examine more such discrepancies between different vulnerable groups. Education as a contradictory resource between different social groups is a known theoretical fact however, it is yet to explore the level variations in these contradictions between groups. Without knowing the level of variations, the twin principle of equity and equality cannot be served- hence it is a problem of justice. Therefore, it is necessary to divulge further into this research to implore more into cross-culture variations.

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Appendix

Some relevant news clippings from recent online articles

Link to the article: https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/indian-it-industry-attracts-more-women-but-many-exit-within-first-5-years-in-the-job/368504/
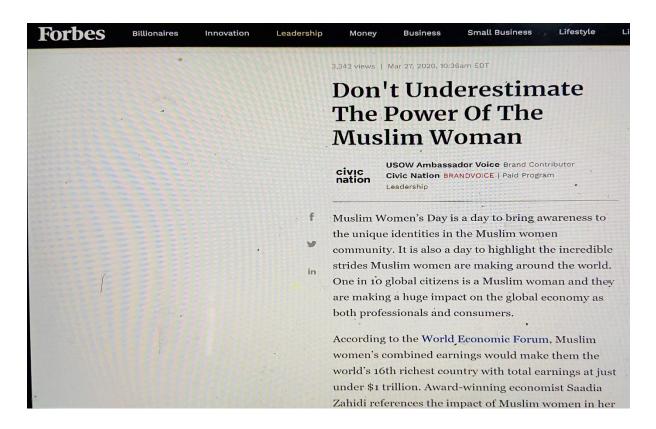

Link to the article: https://www.hindustantimes.com/pune-news/monday-musings-women-s-empowerment-must-begin-in-our-homes/story-bGiGPNjSx6UoOMSJhLFHhP.html

'Bust The Patriarchy Masquerading As Religion': Women Rights Activists Shatter Taboos About Female Sexuality

The subjugation and domination owing to women's body is a passé, said Zakia Soman, women rights activist.
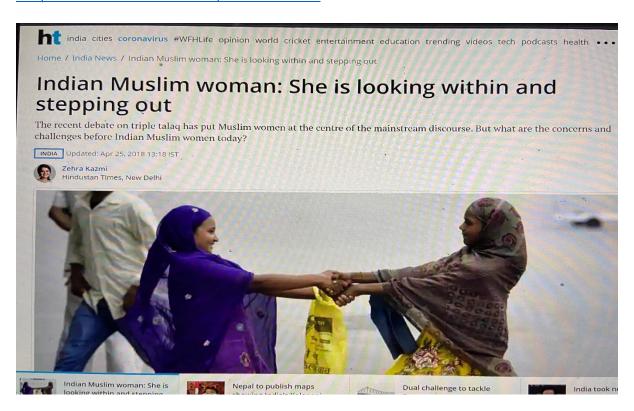
Outlook Web Bureau
19 October 2019

Link to the article: https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-bust-the-patriarchy-masquedaring-as-religion-women-activists-shatter-taboos-about-female-sexuality/340784
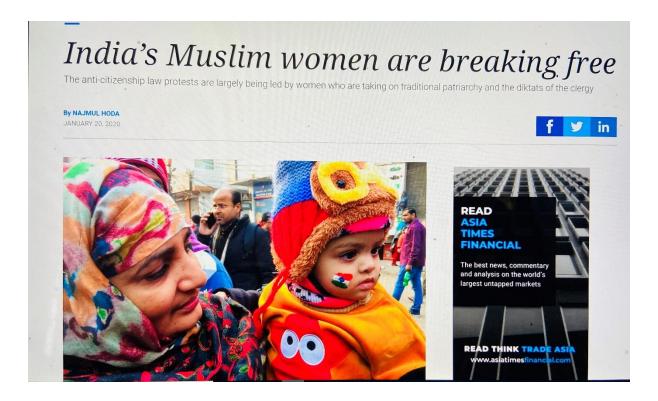

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PageTurner   Book Excerpts

Muslim women enjoyed greater freedom during Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule than now

Many royal women were known to have built imperial mosques; many mosques, from Delhi to Bengal, had secti reserved for women to come and pray.

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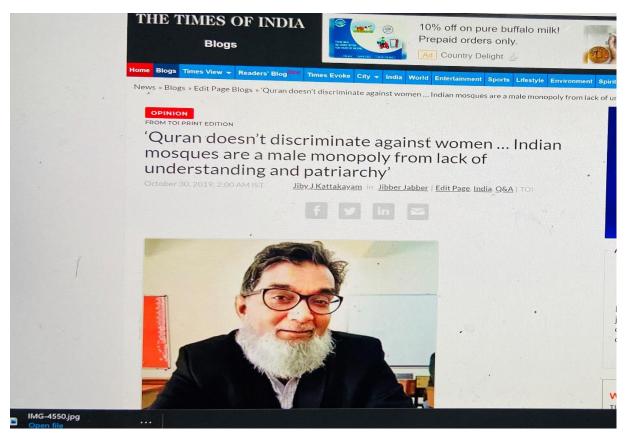
Link to the article: https://www.forbes.com/sites/civicnation/2020/03/27/dont-underestimate-the-power-of-the-muslim-woman/#431bd3d79069

`**Link to the article:** https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indian-muslim-woman-she-is-looking-within-and-stepping-out/story-An71J4AcWnfxYI5X67nIzN.html

India's Muslim women are breaking free

The anti-citizenship law protests are largely being led by women who are taking on traditional patriarchy and the diktats of the clergy

By NAJMUL HODA
JANUARY 20, 2020

Link to the article: https://asiatimes.com/2020/01/indias-muslim-women-are-breaking-free/

Link to the article: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/jibber-jabber/quran-doesnt-discriminate-against-women-indian-mosques-are-a-male-monopoly-from-lack-of-understanding-and-patriarchy/

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