

# Religious Life Of Contemporary Muslim Women At Work

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**Abstract.** This work surveys the basic socio-ethical and cultural life of Muslims women in Malaysia since colonial era. It brought to light their encouraging works that help to realize many social, political, religious and economic potential in facing global problems and its highly sophisticated challenge and predicament. Their social presence had largely facilitated effort toward social cohesion and enriching fundamental discourse on modernity, religious and democratic values. The study takes particular interest in the horizon of their religious life and its significance in enriching the cultural fabric of civil society and its societal make-up and spiritual foundation. By looking at Muslims woman in Malaysia it tries to look for the moral framework that guide their shared worldviews in common life in Malaysia. They have demonstrated lasting ethical and moral standard in maintaining religious norms and principles in the spirit of dialogue and religious Convivencia. This work also looks into how this essentially affect their work in dealing with difference ideology in the context of social interaction and different worldview they have with each other.

## 1. Introduction

This work provides the basic socio-ethical analysis of the underlying background of modern Muslims women in Malaysia in terms of their social and religious life and connection that contribute towards ordinary pattern of highly spiritual and ethical norm of lifestyle. It brought to light their encouraging works of national important by taking into account the tradition and identity of Malays and their history that essentially help to realize the growing social, political, religious and economic potentials and interest. Knowing the current predicament and challenges in society will largely facilitate national effort toward social cohesion and improvement in addressing various problems and issues at stakes. By looking at Muslims woman at work in Malaysia it tries to look for more option they could acquire to generate a better life and solidify the unity of nationhood and interaction among the people in this region and for new ways of the nation among the Malay women working class in addressing their current malaise and predicament. The study take particular interest in the horizon of their religious life and its significance in the cultural and societal make up of Malaysian fabric with shared values and interest.

## 2. Methods

The study is based on qualitative survey of literatures that provide the principle framework and insight of the substantive spiritual-moral role of Muslims women in developing nation's identity. It looks into their wide-ranging political, cultural, religious and social role in Malaysia, focusing on their position to addressing religious challenge and uplifting the standard of living of working class people. This having lasting ethical and moral impact in common life in Malaysia through their hard work and voluntary participation in raising national consciousness and sustained ethical norm. This has wide implication in the establishment of civil society that promoted the spirit of dialogue and religious Convivencia which has contributed to enrich national discourse on modernity, religion and democratic value.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### Historical Background

This work concerns about the life of Muslims woman in Malaysia. It looks into the context of their work that has practically contributed to ensuring sustainable growth and progress of the nation and rising standard of life. It emphasized on the context of their life and the different nature of their works that had meaningful and wide-ranging implication in diverse situation and context. By investigating the very

nature of their live it look at different ways of how they positively inspired the enhancement of the quality of life of Muslim community and people of diverse context and global significance.

Their presence was crucial in addressing social and political unrest in various contours of life be it as teacher, councillor, educator, nurse, activist, advocator, politician or judge. Thanks to their struggle to raise consciousness of the masses to embark on spiritual and moral upliftment and sophistication with new meaning, hope and consciousness.

Throughout history, women have always aimed for a recognized place in society. Guided by their own field of knowledge and expertise, women like Siti Aisyah (rad) in religious sciences, Rabiatul Adawiyah (rad) in sufi practice and movement, Siti Maryam (rad) in theological debate, and Umm Sulaim (rad) in medicine, to name a few, have brought about an awareness of the role of women in any walks of life. Debates and concern leading to the ordination of women within a local community or globally, as well as debates and initiatives leading to the reassertion of traditional gender role or to new models of family reflect the seriousness of the message in furthering the role of women in society and to the expanding spiritual-moral role of women in generating religious activities while also maintaining responsibility over family nutrition, food security and child-care.

The position of women in Islam relate directly to the primary activities of humankind focusing on those strategies for positioning women into contact with a wide variety of people that enables her to lead a meaningful and satisfying lives through participation in various aspects of Islamic culture, values and perspectives. Islam has made it possible for Muslims women to regard themselves as belonging to a community that was divinely constituted and brought important advantages to its members, and to become familiar with the different theories that underpin various challenges in live.

Islam is committed to widening participation and inspiring women to explore the possibilities and challenges of many forms of participatory in developing a new community and continues to produce high quality Muslims who are the next generation of scholars, inventors, entrepreneurs, and civic leaders. This research seeks to learn how women in Islam who have sought social change throughout history have appropriated their role to conceptualize themselves as an aspirant that is unique in the formation of Quranic generation and to justify their public activism that is essential to develop in child their religious ideas, values, systems, beliefs, rituals, and traditions as well as their role in moulding religious ideas, institutions and practices.

### **Religiosity**

Woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey Allah (swt). Their insights and enthusiasm in various aspects of society and culture embrace a wide range of cultural and intellectual tradition that has impacted, and continues to impact, all aspects of human experience. Muslims women are eminently benefiting from an extraordinarily diverse culture of Ummah to generate direct investment in people through participation in community building initiatives, human regeneration program and the personal development projects.

Muslims women are creating a new focus of meaning that promised a significant role for the ummah to cater for almost every interest in community and become a major contributor to the world's stock of advanced human capital at religious scale. Their involvement is now recognized by many as a vitally important factor in the creation of a socially sustainable community and that make a positive, enduring difference to the lives of children and young adults.

There was a new sense of confidence and a reassertion of Muslims women identity who are expected to demonstrate their expertise to fulfil the highest hopes of the ummah with the responsibility of family management, performing over and above all duties that pertain to family care and household maintenance and personal development in today's environment and tomorrow's global society. A new consciousness began to take root amongst the youth bearing the burden of religious duties, guided by ethical and social concern to move from a position of marginality to centre stage in world affairs experiencing the wide range of cultural and social progress and found its intellectual articulation in intellectual development of the time.

Muslims women continue to play an active role in shaping public values, personal identity, and group affiliations in key areas of special relevance to the spiritual need of their community and has inspired a generation of youth to embark on a renewed quest for the meaning of traditional values and religious messages, that permeates all levels of understanding to the Quran and the notion of holistic development and growth.

The future role of Muslimah can be looked at more optimistically to continue to meet the growing needs of people and the demands of the future and to take up the challenge of the rapidly changing world that has seen innovation and excellence of women achieving outstanding success in every field of endeavour. Islam gives women great social value, freedom and comfort particularly in domain of her specific household while offering all the benefits through membership of Muslim community, since it was divinely founded and was living in accordance with divinely-given mores.

In many fields Muslims women have come a long way from just their role as mothers and homemakers to earn a life time premium in which their function remain a paramount concern to create a vibrant new cohort and equipped themselves with a new and better ways to prepare young people for tomorrow's world. The changing role of women today and a commitment to form the ambitious generation is gaining wider acceptance and hold a special place in the hearts of all those fascinate generations of Muslims that helps to develop a critical appreciation of the value of women's and their importance in regulating the development of humanity while having a profound impact on the lives of children and members of their families.

Islam is unique for the emphasis it places on the social position of women ensuring her strength to champion the interest of Muslim society as a whole and produce generations who are responsible global citizens as well as highly competitive on the world stage.

### **Exemplary Role**

The progress and development of Malaysian nation since independence has been geared by the laborious works and unceasing efforts of women in inspiring change in this country. This was reflected from the sustained efforts and dynamic works of women in many important industries such as international trade, science and technological invention, information technology, political economy, Islamic banking and finance, herbal medicine, chemistry, grammar and linguistic. The outstanding contributions of high-profile figures such as Tan Sri Dato' Rafidah Aziz (former Minister of International Trade and Industry 1987-2008, and chairman of MATRADE [Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation] since 1991), Tun Dr. Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali (medical doctor and former chancellor of the Multimedia University Malaysia), Dato' Prof. Dr. Hj. Asmah Hj. Omar (holder of the prestigious Za'ba Chair of Malay Civilization and former Director of Institute of Malay Civilization, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris UPSI), Senator Dato Dr. Mashitah Ibrahim (former Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister Department), Prof. Faridah Abdul Rashid (biologist and chemist and Professor of Medical IT at Universiti Sains Malaysia), and etc. had inspired unprecedented and effective development and future breakthrough in the industry.

In this regard, this work discusses the place of women in Malaysia's strategic developmental policy and its relevancy to national educational's philosophy - analysing their ideology and movement and impact in generating new paradigm in the working sector, educational, religious and literature's field in Malaysia. This was viewed from the crucial development they brought to these fields and its impact in strengthening the religious and Islamic consciousness in Malay society. Their works had significance bearing in improving Islamic education and promoting mutual understanding regardless of religious faith and belief. The paper is expected to highlight the outstanding work of prominent figures of women actively espousing the ideas of development and their resolute effort and principal contributions toward this direction particularly in the burgeoning sector of education, religion and literature and the ecumenical benefit of the working class.

Illustrating their commitment and critical role in empowering the sectors as well as enabling its continuous march and progress in Malaysia, it focuses on their contributions in articulating their religious position, whose ideas was instrumental in making significant impact for the progress of Islam and its inclusive ideology and intellectual tradition. It particularly helps to develop Islamic perspective and contributing significantly for the betterment of the Ummah. The paper seeks to highlight the works they strive forth in the fields of education, socio-ethical, legal and literature and its impact in strengthening the working sector and enabling its continuous march and progress in Malaysia. The outstanding works of a range of activist and prominent women figures actively advocating the ideas of development illustrates their resolute effort and spirit that contribute to these fields. The study is expected to highlight such rigorous and important role in empowering and improving these dynamic sectors in Malaysia.

Their participation had arguably brought tremendous and significant improvement and critical progress in driving its activity and geared to project and reclaim their formidable role in society in gearing and supporting the overall development of the country. In his opening speech of United Malays National Organization (UMNO)'s party's Youth and Women's Wings annual delegates conference, held at Kuala Lumpur in 23 November 1995, DS Anwar Ibrahim convincingly argued this remarkable contributions and efforts of women at unprecedented scale in sustaining national development and progress: "Wanita Malaysia telah mencapai satu taraf yang tinggi dalam semua lapangan: politik, pendidikan, ekonomi dan budaya. Di kalangan negara-negara Islam dan negara-negara membangun kedudukan wanita Melayu adalah di antara yang paling progresif dan ke hadapan" [Malaysian women had achieved high standard in every fields: politics, education, economy and culture. Among the Islamic countries and developing countries the ranking and position of Malay women were the most progressive and advance].

Toward this aim, we endeavour to discuss significant contributions of women in three selected areas, *i.e.*, education, literature and religion, and analysing its impact in improving the fundamental sector of labour, working class advantage, moral education and national consciousness in Malay society. It will focus on the works of Tan Sri Hajjah Zainon binti Munshi Sulaiman 1903-1989 (Ibu Zain), Prof. Emeritus Dato' Dr. Asmah Haji Omar (b. 1940), and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sharifah Hayati Syed Ismail, emphasizing on their instrumental role and impact in realizing the aspiration for national development in their respective fields, and its immense important in improving Qur'anic and Islamic learning in society.

The designation of modern education has made tremendous impact in philosophical enquiry concerning the meaning and purpose of education, projecting it as an important tool of development, essentially describing and arguing that "education is the driver for development." This argument is perfectly illustrated by the increasing participation of women in education that sustains its movement and stimulates national development at greater pace. In the struggle to advocate fairer education for women in pre-independence Malaya, Ibu Zain or Hajjah Zainun binti Munshi Sulaiman (22 January 1903 – 2 April 1989) has stood out as its greatest champion and advocate. Born in Nyalas, Melaka into 8 siblings, she was taught to read the Qur'an and basic religious text from her father, himself a religious teacher and an expert in Malay language. Trained in such high tradition of scholarship, it was instrumental in developing her interest to pursue future career and struggle in education. In Melaka, she enrolled at Methodist Girls School, Tengkeru (1909-1912) for primary education and later at Tengkeru School (1913-1915) where she pursue and pass her Junior Cambridge. In her effort to defend and espouse education for women and their civil right, she established a school in Pasuh Jaya, Negeri Sembilan at the age of 17, to educate women and abolished illiteracy among them.

After moving to Muar in 1921, she served at Sekolah Perempuan Bandar Maharani and quickly promoted as Head Mistress in 1924. For her outstanding performance, she was promoted as Visiting Teacher/Instructor for Girl school in the vicinity of Muar and Batu Pahat and later to supervise the whole school in the state of Johor. There, she instituted the first evening religious school and served as its principle supervisor, which also became the first religious girl school in Johor.

She was also responsible for initiating Persatuan Guru-Guru Sekolah Melayu and Sekolah Agama Negeri Johor. In 1930 she was elected as its president and served as the Yang Dipertua Persekutuan Guru-Guru Perempuan Melayu for 19 years. In March 1963 she was elected as Principle of Kolej Puteri Tuanku Ampuan Mariam.

Between 1929-1941 she published a newspaper for women, "Bulan Melayu" (Malay Moon) as strategic move to propagate the aspiration for reform and to improve the intellectual base for kaum ibu (women folks). Her resolute aspiration and struggle to propagate national interest has led to significance movement in the formation of UMNO that positioned her as Ketua Kaum Ibu UMNO (Head of Women's Wings in UMNO's party). To confront Japan occupation and British colonies, she registered as voluntary army to halt the communist influence resulting in her struggle to fight communist in the jungle.

For her resolute work and effort and significant role as women leaders and activist she was granted with many distinguished titles such as Pingat Sultan Ibrahim (1947), Johan Mangku Negara (1958), medal of Lady of Myanmar from Myanmar Government, pingat Tun Fatimah (1974), Tokoh Guru Kebangsaan, honorary degree in literature from University Malaya (1975), Darjah Panglima Setia Mahkota that brought the title of Tan Sri (1979) and anugerah Suluh Budiman (1980) by UPSI. In May 1996 UKM founded Ibu Zain International Student House (Kolej Antarabangsa Ibu Zain) to



“commemorate her contributions in fighting for women’s education affair” and to retain her legacy in nation’s history as leading advocate for national struggle of independence and the development of education.

Ibu Zain was blessed with a daughter, Khalidah Adibah bt Amin who stand out as apparent heir to her struggle for greater improvement in education and carrying her legacy in arguing for better provision for women and empowerment of kaum Ibu.

Her effort to bring forth religious education to the masses had greatly benefited the nation in gaining insight into the Qur’an, acquiring basic learning and instruction in school, and developing elemental understanding of Arabic and Qur’anic text. Assuming the task to educate the ummah on Islamic ideal and ethical conduct, she had profoundly articulated religious ideas based on Qur’anic teaching, and improved the moral consciousness in society.

In Malaysia, women stand prominently as advocate of shariahization and the worldview of Islam, contributing their ideas to advance and promulgate the ideas of shariah, ethics, sufism, theology and law. Their principle works and research in comparative religion, interreligious dialogue, Islamic thought, democracy and politics, classical and modern Qur’an exegesis, Islamic mysticism, economy and management, philosophy and ethics and women’s right had encouraged and sustained its incisive thought and discourse in society. One of this noted scholar was Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sharifah Hayati Syed Ismail. Hailed from Johor Bahru, she gained her first degree in Shariah from University of Malaya before continuing for Masters in Comparative Law (MCL) at International Islamic University Malaysia and awarded with PhD from University of Bristol, England in Comparative Management.

She started her career in UM and served as Head of Department of Siyasah Syar’iyyah in Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. She had produced highly important works in religious (shariah) law, and contributing articles in reputed journals that present many critical ideas on siyasah shar’iyyah (Islamic governance), principle of Islamic management, public administration, Islamic modernity, the position of women, Islamic leadership and civil rights, analyzing its contemporary relevance in modern term.

She also actively involved in mass media program, hosting *Tijarah Ramadan* and *al-Tijarah* on TV1, RTM and acting as panelist for *Forum Perdana Ehwat Islam* TV1, and *Halaqah* TV3, giving *ceramah* and talk for *Iktibar Tsunami* and *Iktibar Hijrah*, in *Astro Oasis*. She passionately participated in intellectual discourse, leading and carrying works on Islam, shariah and law, and affiliated to many professional bodies and recognized institutions such as *Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)* Panel Member, 2013-2015; *University Technology Mara (UiTM)*, Editorial Advisory Board Member 2013-2013; *University Malaya Editorial Board* Member 2013-2014; *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia*, Article Reviewer 2012-2012; *Kementerian Belia & Sukan*, Advisory Committee 2011-2011; *Asian Institute of Management Manila*, Resource Person for *Islamic Leadership Conference*, 2010-2010; *Genesee University Community College, Batavia, West new York, USA*, Fellow Visitors 2007-2007; *Panel Penerangan Amanah Raya Bhd*, Panel, 2006-2007; *Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri Selangor*, Committee Member [Bahagian Dakwah] 2005-2010; *Lembaga Zakat Selangor [MAIS]*, Committee 2005-2010 and was an expert for *Penggubalan Dasar Wanita Negara [National Women Policy]*, and referee for *Jurnal Syariah*.

Sharifah’s monumental works in shariah, politics and governance includes *Pengurusan Kualiti Menurut Perspektif Islam* (co-authored with Ilhaamie Abd. Ghani, and Siti Arni Basir), University of Malaya Press, 2013; *Etika Penjawat Awam Dari Perspektif Islam*, DBP 2010; *Efektif Governan Di Malaysia Menurut Perspektif Islam*, Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2004; ‘Teras Pengurusan Islam’ (2012); ‘Memahami Konsep Adil dan Amanah dalam Pemerintahan Kerajaan Ke Arah Umat Hadhari’ (2009); ‘Government Agencies and Public Services’ (2009); ‘Pemikiran Pelayanan Masyarakat Dalam Islam: Membangun Sistem Penyampaian Informasi Berkualitas di Malaysia dalam Metodologi Pengkajian Islam’ (2008); ‘Budaya & Etika Kerja Tempatan: Pengaruhnya Terhadap perubahan Hukum’ (2006) and etc.

She had boldly articulated her ideas on many Qur’anic themes such as Islamic leadership, politics, professional work ethics and values, management, military, environment, human capital, Muslim society, *maqasid syariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) and *wasatiyyah* (Islamic moderation) from Qur’anic standpoint. Her works can help to transform contemporary Muslim into a balance community - *ummah wasata* – (or a community of the middle way) that derived their inspiration and work ethics from Qur’anic prescriptions and to implement it in civil life in modern context.

The monumental contribution of Prof. Dr Asmah Haji Omar in the shaping of the foundational framework of Malay Literature and towards modern development of Malay language and literature was highly recognized from her prolific writings and original works in this field. Asmah was born in 5 March 1940 in Jitra into a family of strong tradition in high level education. She pursued her early and secondary school in Kedah, before furthering study in Universitas Indonesia for her Bachelor's and Master's degree in literature. In 1969 she was conferred with PhD in 'General Linguistics' from University of London for her dissertation 'The Iban Language of Sarawak: A Grammatical Description'. In 2000 the University of Malaya conferred her the title Doktor Persuratan (D. Litt) for her "immense contributions in the field of linguistics in Malaysia."

Asmah started her career in 1963 as an academician at University Malaya and served as Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, and member of the Standing Committee of the Malay Language and finally retired as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya.

She had published 45 academic books on linguistic and language planning imprinted by Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka, University Malaya Press and Academy of Malay Studies, University Malaya. She had also translated the 'Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary' into Malay for 5 years and frequently contributing articles to various academic journals presenting her views and expertise and critics on significant topics of linguistic.

She had also carried extensive research on several branch of linguistics planning, with specialization on aboriginal language, especially bahasa Kentakbong (Baling, Kedah) and bahasa Mah Meri (Sepang, Selangor); and investigating the sociolinguistic, ethnolinguistic, and linguistic history of Malay Archipelago. Her research did not confine to Malay Peninsula but extended to aboriginal language in Sabah and Sarawak, with several important publication, especially two outstanding achievement: *The Iban Language of Sarawak: A Grammatical Description* (Bahasa Iban Sarawak: Huraian Kenahuan), a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of London in 1969 and published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 1981; and *The Malay Peoples of Malaysia and Their Languages* (Orang Melayu Malaysia dan Bahasa-Bahasanya). She had also head a research team for two television series of *Jejak Bahasa*, [Language Trail] a collaborative effort of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and TV3.

Among her leading works in linguistics were: (1) *Perangai Bergantung pada Diri Sendiri / Za'ba*; [Habit of Self Reliance] with introduction by Asmah Haji Omar; DBP, 2009 (2) *Rahsia Ejaan Jawi / Za'ba*, transliterated and introduced by Asmah Haji Omar; DBP, 2009 (3) *Panduan Wacana Akademik: Teori dan Penerapan*; DBP, 2009 (4) *Nahu Melayu Mutakhir*; DBP, 2008 (5) *Nahu Kemas Kini: Panduan Bahasa yang Baik dan Betul*; PTS, 2008 (6) *Ensiklopedia Bahasa Melayu*; DBP 2008 (7) *The Malay in Australia: Language, Culture, Religion*; DBP, 2008 (8) *Pengembaraan ke Kedah, Perlis dan Kelantan / Za'ba*; with introduction by Asmah Haji Omar; DBP, 2008 (9) Oxford Compact Advance Learner's English-Malay Dictionary / A.S. Hornby; translated by Asmah Haji Omar, Oxford Fajar, 2007 (10) Kesantunan Bahasa dalam Pengurusan Pentadbiran dan Media; DBP, 2007 (11) Susur Galur Bahasa Melayu; DBP, 2007 (12) Bahasa Mah Meri, UM Publication, 2006 (13) Bahasa Melayu di Samudera: Benih yang Baik Menjadi Pulau, DBP, 2006 (14) Bahasa Diraja, DBP, 2004 (15) The Encyclopedia of Malaysia vol. 9: Language and Literature/ vol. editor Asmah Haji Omar; Singapore: Archipelago, 2004 (16) Setia dan Santun Bahasa; Penerbit UPSI, 2002 (17) Wacana Perbincangan, Perbahasan, dan Perundingan; DBP, 1996 (18) Bahasa Kesusasteraan Klasik Kedah; DBP, 1995 (19) Rekonstruksi Kata dalam Bahasa Melayu Induk; DBP, 1995 (20) Rekonstruksi Fonologi Bahasa Melayu Induk; DBP, 1995 (21) The Linguistic Scenery in Malaysia; DBP, 1992 (22) Kajian dan Perkembangan Bahasa Melayu; DBP, 1992 (23) Bahasa Melayu Abad ke 16: Satu Analisis Berdasarkan Teks Melayu 'Aqa'id al-Nasafi; DBP, 1991 (24) Kamus Amali: Malay-English, Arenabuku, 1998 (25) Malay in its Sociocultural Context; DBP, 1987 (26) Bahasa dan Alam Pemikiran Melayu; DBP, 1986 (27) Kamus Ayat: Eastview Productions, 1985 and etc.

In appreciation for her services and contributions, she was awarded with many excellent and distinguished honours including Ahli Mangku Negara (A.M.N.) (1973), Dato Setia DiRaja Kedah (D.S.D.K.) (1983), the ASANAL Awards (1979), the 'Orde Des Palmas Academique France' (1989), the Grata Home Nagem from Institute Portugese Do Oriente, Macau (1990), the 'Boss of the Year' from Society of Secretaries, Malaysia, (1992/93), the 'Charter of Appreciation' from MABBIM Indonesia (1993), Certificate of Appreciation from Ministry of Education, Malaysia for promoting MABBIM and MABBIM in 1995, the first Raja Nazrin Shah Language Award from society of Modern language (1996), the 'Women of the Year 1998' Award from American Biographical Institute (1999), the '20<sup>th</sup>

CAA Silver Medal of Honor' Award from International Biographical Center (1999) and was selected as Holder of Za'ba Malay Civilization Chair at University Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjung Malim, Perak.

Certainly, the expertise and mastery of Asmah in linguistic discipline and the reformative ideas of Za'ba can contribute to explaining classical Malay religious text and linguistic part of the Qur'an. Analyzing the linguistic aspect of the Qur'an and its metaphorical and figurative meaning can broaden our understanding of the hermeneutical and epistemological rule alluded in the text. Besides, studying the works of Za'ba can significantly help Malays to understand their current predicament and the intellectual crisis that deprived them of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as advocated in the Qur'an.

#### 4. Conclusions

From this brief exposition, the study had critically expounded the contributions of three prominent women in post-modern era, i.e., Tan Sri Zainon Sulaiman (Ibu Zain), Prof. Asmah Hj. Omar and Dr. Sharifah Hayati, and their profound impact in improving religious education of contemporary Muslim women and working class society. It had revealed the significant role and special contribution they made to promote and encourage the critical reform and creative development and enhanced scope of those industries of education, religion and literature, and the Qur'anic and Islamic sector. The encouraging works and broad activities they projected had brought significant reform in these fields at national stage inspiring more dynamic undertaking and significant endeavours in the future. By sponsoring and providing intensive training and specialized course for women to upgrade their skill, the government could positively increase more human capital in education, religion, and Qur'anic literature and further the cause and aim of national development in the country.

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