Glossary

Angrezi shariat – A term used in legal academia, the word roughly translates as British Muslim law. It denotes the use of both Muslim law and the English law by Muslims in the UK. This term, coined by renowned legal academic Werner Menski, stresses the fact that people often negotiate multiple forms of the law in a society that consists of diverse cultures and religious affiliations. Scholars who stress the need for recognizing cultural differences in the law argue that there are ways of doing the same within the framework of the British legal system.

Burkini – A burkini is a form of swimsuit designed for Muslim women interested in sports. It was designed by Aheda Zanetti, a fashion designer of Lebanese origin based in Australia. In an article published in the Guardian, Zanetti states that the idea behind the concept was to design a form of modest sportswear for religious Muslim women who were interested in taking part in sports activities.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/24/i-created-the-burkini-to-give-women-freedom-not-to-take-it-away

She recalls that she was inspired to create the burkini when she saw her niece struggling to play netball in a hijab. (a traditional veil worn by Muslim women)

Constitution - A constitution is a document that envisages a framework of rights for citizens as well as lays down a structure for government. Constitutions are based on the idea that an individual has rights that the state needs to protect and safeguard. The rights enshrined in a Constitution are a guarantee against the excessive use of state power by a government elected by a majority.

Laïcité – This term is used to denote a French model of secularism which implies a strict separation between the church and the state. This model of secularism is strictly opposed to any form of religious influence in the affairs of the state. The idea originated in the Third Republic as the state attempted to redefine the boundaries of education by introducing non-
religious schools. A more recent example of this form of secularism is the French
government’s ban on ostentatious religious symbols in public schools in 2004. Further, in
2007, veils worn by Muslim women covering the entire face were banned in public places.

**Secular** – The word secular was originally used to denote a boundary between the religious
and the worldly or temporal in medieval Europe. It has come to be used in modern times as
a way of understanding the relationship between religion and politics. The term secular has
come to acquire different connotations across Europe and the United States, which denote
very different ways of organising the relationship of the state and religion. In the United
States of America, a secular polity has come to denote a rule of strict separation between
the Church and the state which has allowed religion to proliferate. In the case of France, a
model of secularism has necessitated strict control by the state of the Church, leading to a
ban of religious symbols in public places in recent times. There are other instances of
secularism where states have attempted to manage religious diversity while interfering with
religion in some instances to reform existing practices.

**Triple talaq** – A form of divorce accepted in some schools of Islamic law which allows the
instant dissolution of marriage when the husband pronounces the word ‘talaq’, meaning
divorce, three times. There are many popular misconceptions about the triple talaq. Many
people cite the triple talaq as an instance of the backwardness of the Muslims and the
incompatibility of Islam with modernity. Scholars of Islam have however outlined how the
talaq was not a practice encouraged by Islam and the triple talq especially was considered
the most morally reprehensible of all the practices permitted in Islam.

**Sharia** – This term used to designate Islamic law literally means ‘path’ based on the
teachings of the Quran, the religious text of Muslims, and the hadith, examples set by the
conduct of the Prophet in his life time. There is a lot of misinterpretation about the sharia as
a fixed code of rules reified in time. Several Islamic law scholars have stressed the practice
of ijtihad, or reasoned interpretation, whereby considerable leeway is allowed to interpreters
to creatively interpret religious texts in a reasonable fashion.