

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN MUSLIM SOCIETY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Education is the birth right of every people. It is considered as one of the most important indicators of social development. Islam gave some rights to women regarding education, self-realization, property rights and digni The Glorious Quran emphasized the need and importance of education. But in India, it is notable that people in Muslim community are economically impoverished, undereducated, and politically disempowered, particularly in rural areas. Education is one of the most important tools for empowering a woman. The government policy tries to eradicate illiteracy, tries to spread universal education and a gender-oriented education. It develops women's occupational and practical skills and helps women to work and become financially independent. In India, women have a low level of education in general. The Govt. of India provides some efforts to enhance the education levels of Muslim Women. This paper tries to explore the educational status of Indian women in Muslim society and what is the condition of them in the present days.

KEYWORDS: *Muslim Women, Education, Purdon System, Development, Employment, Government Schemes*

“Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization.” Mahatma Gandhi

According to Prophet Muhammad “education is more sacred, than a blood of Shamed in the battle.”

INTRODUCTION

For development of people, education is the key factor and its importance increasing day by day. India has a great learning source through much years. The number of educated people and the quality of education- both factors should improve for development of the society, because education is an important factor for living after food, cloth and shelter. In Indian society, still gender inequality is extreme, especially in education.

Several studies have shown that education has contributed significantly to enhance the women's status. Education helps both men and women to be aware of their rights. Women's education is an effective means to eliminate inequalities between men and women. It guarantees the extreme participation of women in the development programs because it is the basis for development, and it helps in eradicating poverty.

Constitutional Status of Education in India

At the time when our Constitution was adopted, the State had committed to providing primary education which is under Art. 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy in India This Art stated that the State shall endeavor to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 within ten years of the entry into force of this Constitution. Later, in 2002, the 86th amendment of the Indian Constitution confirmed education as a fundamental right. As of Art. 21-A -

the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years in such a way as the State may, by law, determine. Art. 45 stated that the state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years.

The Govt. included education as a fundamental right because the Govt. wanted to spread it equally among all living in this country. For this Sarva Shish Abhiyan (SSA) programmed was launched in 2000. The 10th Plan try to merge the development, advancement made in women's education in order to achieve the stated goal of "Education for Women's Equality" set out by the National Education Policy in 1986 (revised in 1992) by reducing gender disparities in education at the secondary and higher educational level

Education and Muslim Women in India

Muslim women still find themselves isolated and neglected in Indian society, especially in rural parts. Which hinders their overall development. Women in Islam begin with several advantages but the feudal values and patriarchy subordinated the Islamic values. Women's inability to step into the public place is symbolized by the Purdah (veil). This hampered education of women in big a way. For the Muslim girls who were barred from going out in public after the age of 12, the progress from Maktab or Madrasha could not take place.

The main obstacles faced by Muslim women were, the conservative patriarchal pressure. Despite the traditional and conservative dominance of Muslim society, nowadays Muslim women have improved themselves a lot by getting education. As a result, their thinking, perception, outlook gradually changed which brought a change also in the Muslim society.

Education and Purdah were to a large extent income patible. Since educated Muslim women participated more and more in public sphere, the power of purdah was no longer enough to hold them back. In the middle of the 19th century an educational system called Zenana System was introduced, where house to house teaching system was introduced. Educated Muslim women tried to change the traditional belief of the Muslim Society.

After 1857 the government make special efforts to promote the education of Muslim girls. The 4th Quinquennial Review of Education cited indifference, even resistance on the part of the Muslim community as the cause of slow progress of female education. A new era began regarding Muslim women's education in the late 19th Century when Nawab Faizunnesa established a modern school for purdanasin girls in Coomilla in 1873.

But, since India's independence in 1947, no overall developmental change was observed among Muslim women. To find out the reasons of the educational and economic underdevelopment of the Muslim community, the Govt. of India had appointed various committees in many times. Some committees reported that poverty is the main reason of illiteracy among the Muslims in India. According to the reports of some committees, Muslims are educationally, politically, socially, economically backward and alienated from the mainstream of Indian society. In 1993, they are recognized as the "National Educationally Backward Minority" by the Indian Govt. The Sachar Committee reported that 5% of all children in the Muslim community are enrolled in such schools which are recognized and overall, 10% are in both- recognized and unrecognized school and 91% have no school to take part. Those enrolled rarely complete education in school and 90% of those enrolled get dropped out.

The book "Educating Muslim Girls: A Campaign of Five Indian Cities" by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon (2005) which critically describes the position of female education in Indian Muslim community. Md. Intekhab Hossain (2013) describes the pathetic condition of Muslim women in West Bengal in his article named "Socio-economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Comparative Outlook".

There is a common belief among parents in Muslim society that education is not important for girls. If they are registered in school, they are removed early for marriage which leads to a higher dropout percentage among the girls in Muslim community. The other reason behind that is the unavailability of easily accessible schools for girls in education at secondary level, the lack of dormitories for girls, the lack of female teachers and the unavailability of scholarships.

Some women's movement emerged for women education and raising the marriage age of women, and for the abolition of the veil in the early 20th century. The practice of veiling was observed among women in all communities. In 1929, a resolution against the veil was passed. In 1930, the Muslim Educational Conference found that the practice of veiling was in decrease and figures such as Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Nizam of Hyderabad publicly opposed the veil system.

However, in the context of the present century, it is undeniable that the practice of veiling women in Muslim society is no longer a barrier to education. In many countries of the world, veiled Muslim women are now far ahead in educational attainment. Not only in Muslim community but women in different communities in the society are still lagging behind in the field of education. Some of the reasons behind this is poverty and economic backwardness of family and in some cases, the patriarchal structure, perspective of the society. These problems are more common in the rural areas of developing and underdeveloped countries of the third world, than in the rich, developed countries of the world.

Educational Achievement of Indian Muslim Women after Independence

Even though the Constitution of India has been amended many times with regard to the right to education at primary level (I-VIII), after independence it has been seen that Muslim women are still far behind in terms of literacy compared to women of other communities. Women from other communities such as Sikhs (65%), Christians (75%), Buddhists (63%), Jains (92%) are more educated. Muslim women are not particularly well represented in higher education. Many times, it has been seen that Muslim women (3.58%) lag behind Scheduled Castes (4.27%) in higher education.

However, according to the data (2016) of the Minority Affairs Ministry, educational achievement among Muslim women has increased significantly from what it was in 2001. The National Education Survey reports that in higher education Muslim women are seven times behind Hindu women and nine times behind Hindu women in post-high school education.

According to 2011 Census Report, India has the third largest Muslim population in the world. India's largest Muslim population lives in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. The three districts of West Bengal named Murshidabad, Malda and Uttar Dinajpur have the largest population of Muslims. Below is the table showing the educational status of Murshidabad district according to last census report.

Table 1

District	The Area in Square Km./Hectares	No. of Households	Total Population (Including Institutional & Houseless Population)			Literates		Illiterates	
			Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Females	Persons	Females
Murshidabad (Total)	5,324.00	1,570,79	7,103,07	3,627,564	3,476,243	4,055,834	1,878,647	3,047,973	1,597,596
Murshidabad (Rura)	5,048.06	1,286,20	5,703,115	2,917,822	2,785,293	3,193,502	1,479,817	2,509,613	1,305,476
Murshidabad (Urbn)	275.94	2,84,559	1,400,692	709,742	6,90,950	862,332	398,830	538,360	292,120

Source: District Primary Census Abstract 2011

The position of women in higher educational level cannot be considered in separation from the general status of women in society. The broad goals are social and economic progress. Daud Sharifa Khanum, the founder of 'Steps' - which is a women's empowerment group in rural Tamil Nadu said that without the presence of women, the lives of women were discussed and problems were addressed. According to some reports Muslim women are the most educated in Kerala, a south Indian state. However, as of survey, young Muslim girls' early marriage and school drop-out even is seen in Kerala. But its number is less compared to other states in India.

Due to certain religious and social pressures, many Muslim families still prevent their girls from pursuing higher education. Many people have the idea that Muslim women cannot get an education. However, in Islam, women's education is emphasized and there is never a distinction between men and women.

Govt. Policies and Schemes

During 11th Five Year Plan, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has taken an important role for spreading education in Muslims and providing Quality Education in Madrassas (SPQEM). Some other schemes initiated by Govt. are extension of Mid-Day Meals scheme to Madrassas and Maqtabas, Infrastructure Development of Private Minority Institutions Scheme, establishment of the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, and establishment of the National Council which will promote the Urdu language.

In addition, many scholarship schemes, free Coaching and allied Schemes are introduced by the Human Resource Development Ministry. Some of such schemes are, Central Govt. Scholarship (Pre-Matric) for Minority students, Merit - Cum-Mean Scholarship for students belonging to Minority Communities, National Maulana Azad Scholarship Program for girls from Minority Communities especially for Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and Buddhists only, who are pass 10th exam. in 2008 and are admitted to the 11th, 'Nai Roshni' - The Leadership Program for Minority Women, 'Seekho aur Kamao (Learn and Earn)' -The Scheme for Minority Skills Development. 'Padho Pardesh' - Interest Subsidy Scheme for Education Loans for study abroad for Minority Students. These Govt. policies have helped tremendously for the development of Muslim women. However, the number of Muslim women in urban areas showing interest in higher education is comparatively high than that in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Women in India still lag far behind in terms of educational attainment. Especially in Muslim society, women still do not get the proper opportunity to get higher education. This is particularly noticeable in rural India. Because there is a tendency to marry girls at a young age in Muslim society. As a result, they get busy with their family before they understand what they deserve. As a result, they fall far behind in society. Various Govt. policies and schemes adopted at present are helping women development in different ways. In particular, there are some policies that help to empower women even if they are less educated. Many women have become financially self-independent through self-help group activities.

Nowadays Muslim women are seen to be involved in various types of work like teaching, medicine and even judiciary. However, there is still no overall development in the educational field of Muslim women. India's National Policy on education places great emphasis on equal educational opportunities for all. However, it is not reflected in reality. However, a little awareness about importance of modern education can be observed among the middle-class Muslim society. The Govt. has taken many initiatives to increase the participation of Muslim girls in schools. The Government and NGOs come together to achieve quality of education and improve the number of Muslim girls attending schools. To make education more useful and attractive to them, they can start various vocational, technical and professional courses like teaching, typing, nursing etc. It helps to increase their family income which improve their status in society.

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