

Indian Muslim Women and Education-Status, Issues and Remedies

Allarahamali¹

(Ph.D. Research Scholar)

Christ (Deemed To Be) University, Delhi Ncr Campus, India

Dr. Ramesh kumar²

Head Of The Department, School Of Law, Christ (Deemed To Be) University, Delhi Ncr Campus

Praveen Kumar Maurya³

Research Scholar (Ph.D.), Department of Law, Central University Of Haryana

Ch. Bashir Ali Market Plot No.46 Knowledge Park -I Near Parichowk Greater Noida District

Gautam Budh Nagar U.P -201308

Contact No:-9310015015

Abstract

Considering Indian situation, women in India enjoys special status. Post Independent India made several attempts to raise level of education in general and for the women in particular it was considered to be instrumental to bring overall development, i.e. social, economic, cultural and political development, of the society. Many commissions and committees were set up to improve the status of women education during Post Independence in India. Many positive steps were taken by the state to enhance the participation of women at all levels of education. Constitutional provisions also guaranteed the education of girls and made special provisions for the state to require appropriate and social action for his or her education. However it seems that the Muslim women in India haven't taken full advantage of the advantages of such schemes and provisions. Muslims in India are the largest minority comprising 14% of the total population of the country and the literacy rate of Muslims is the lowest among all the religious groups and the literacy rate of Muslim women is less than their counterparts and therefore the worse among all the ladies groups within the country. In most fields of education the condition of Muslim women is deplorable and may be a subject of grave concern for the oldsters, Muslim intellectuals, educationists and therefore the policy makers because the development of the state might not be achieved ignoring education of such large section of the society. Hence, the present paper will examine the issues involved in Muslim women education, approach of the state and the religious intellect and the role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). The paper will also suggest the measures to overcome such a plight so that the women may shoulder educational, economic and political responsibilities with their counterparts in an equal manner.

Key Words: Muslim Women Education, Literacy Rate, Minority Communities.

Introduction

Although education in general is important but women education is all the more important, not only because the women constitutes half the population but also due to

its farreaching effects on the society at large. Pt. JawaharLal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India once said that if a man is educated an individual is educated but if a woman is educated entire family gets educated⁴. Researchers have shown that

¹ Research scholar (Ph.D.), Christ (deemed to be) university, Delhi NCR Campus

² Head of the Department, School of Law, Christ (deemed to be) university, Delhi NCR Campus

³ Research scholar (Ph.D.), Department of Law, Central University of Haryana.

⁴ Ali, ZeenatShaukat (2014): The Cultivation of Knowledge and Learning in Islam (with special reference to the Education of Muslim Women) in Education of Muslims-Islamic Perspective of Knowledge and Education-

educated girls become more effective mothers⁵. Education liberates women from ignorance, increases self-esteem and helps them take control over their lives and guide the progress of their families.

Many commissions and committees were set up to improve the status of girl's education in India. Considering Indian situation, women in India enjoy special status. Almost all policies and schemes have made special provisions for ladies education. At the time of framing the constitution Article 45 made provision under Directive Principles of State Policy that the state shall endeavour to supply free and compulsory education to children until they complete the age of 14 years, which include girls also. Consequent upon that massive financial allocations were made to full fill the target. Article 15(3) made special provision for the state to take appropriate and social action for women education. Article 42 provides that the state shall make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. The first commission appointed one education was The University Education Commission (1948-49) under the chairmanship of Prof. Radha Krishnan, and its report has a complete chapter on women's education. The report says "the mother who is enquiring and alert, is going to be the simplest teacher within the world..." The commission recommended that there should be educational guidance, by qualified men and women, to help the women to understand their real educational interest. Setting up of The National Committee on Women's Education under the chairmanship of Durga Bai Deshmukh is taken into account to be a land mark for women's education. The committee very categorically laid emphasis that highest priority be given to schemes prepared for this purpose to scale back the gap between men and women education and separate funds be created for that. It also recommended that a National Council for the Education of Girls and

Women be made. Another milestone in women's education was 'Hansa Mehta Committee' (1962-64), which suggested co-education in general at the elementary stage however also mentioned to make separate primary and middle schools wherever necessary. It also recommended special facilities for girls and curriculum at different levels. It also recommended to adopt co-education up to elementary stage and even to appoint women teachers in boys' school also to encourage girls to hitch such schools. National Education Commission (1964-66) was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari which considered being the most important initiative and a great landmark in the history of education after Independence. It forcefully recommended education of women a serious programme and reiterated state and centre to line up separate machinery to require care of girls' education. It recommended special schemes be made to enhance women education and funds be made available on priority basis to implement such schemes. The commission also stressed to start out part time vocational courses for ladies and make necessary arrangements for his or her training and employment. The National Policy on Education 1986 was the milestone within the field of education which gave recommendations of far reaching consequences. The policy stated to ensure equal access to education for women and girls and special measures be adopted to eradicate illiteracy and make gender sensitive educational system and increasing the enrolment and retention of girls to eliminate discrimination of any kind. The policy emphasized the participation of girls in vocational and technical professions and a policy of non-discrimination be followed to discard stereotyping in such programmes to encourage women participation in unconventional occupations. It also suggested the appointment of a minimum of one female teacher in primary school under Operation Blackboard. The policy laid emphasis on

Indian Context, New Delhi, Shipra Publications. Bano Firdaus (2017): Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: An Overview, in IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 22, Issue 6, Ver.3, cv June. 2017.

⁵Datta, Karubaki (2009): Universal Women's Education In India: Government Policies and Challenges Ahead, in Women Education and development-Perspectivs, Issues and Concerns Edited by Rajarshi Roy, Delhi, Shipra Publications

equal access of women and girls to reduce the gender gap in secondary and better educational also. Targets should be set to achieve the outcome of the schemes particularly related to weaker sections including SCs/ STs/ OBCs and minorities. It also reiterated to promote Women's studies as a part of various courses. Scheme of Universalisation of Elementary Education also emphasized to reduce gender gap at primary and elementary stage within definite period of your time. Through RTE Act 2009, the government guaranteed free and compulsory education of the youngsters within the age bracket of 6-14 years and act made elementary education a fundamental right for the children including girls in the relevant age bracket. However, in spite of the various constitutional provisions for the education of women and girls, Muslim women are far behind in all stages of education in comparison to the Muslim males also as other religious groups within the country. Islam does not debar women from education. When Allah said 'Read.', it equally applies to men and women. There is a saying of Prophet Mohammad (BPUH) 'acquisition of knowledge is incumbent upon all the faithful men and women'. However the boundaries drawn by the fundamentalists have created a situation that the uneducated families and fogeyes have drawn a line for his or her female children to not cross certain limits. Masses of the Muslim families in India confine their women to stop their studies after Quran and most of those women study (recite) Quran even without understanding its meaning which hardly broadens their vision, approach and attitude towards Islam and the world. Disconcerting consequence of this is that they cannot use the great Knowledge of Quran and Islam in nurturing their children especially and therefore the neighbouring society generally also as their own development. The women who have entered the schools and universities have always been a soft target of criticism by the so called Ulemas (learned religious people).

Even these women are not welcomed by a large liberal section of the society in that they are considered to be the persons to seem after

their children and families within the boundaries of their homes. So much so these women are exploited in the educational institutions variedly via; economically, socially and sexually. These women in turn, although may be academically intelligent, generally do not deliver according to their intellectual capacity, as they most of the time need to protect themselves from the interior and external threats. However, a number of the women who get an opportunity to excel in different walks of life. Violence against women in one form or the opposite is additionally one among the foremost significant reasons of lesser visibility of girls within the schools, universities and offices. Even the state does not seem to be very encouraging in its true letter and spirit to promote women education. This is evident from the fact that various weaker sections of the society such as scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, disabled persons and backward communities in India are provided reservation in education also as within the employment, but women haven't been considered for such a reservation for any purpose. Therefore, the participation of women in almost all walks of life is very disheartening. The situation is same although among all the religious communities but status of Muslim women seems to be more discouraging. Muslims are largest minority in India and constitute approximately 14% of the entire population. The important progress of the state i.e. economic, social or political might not be possible ignoring educational development of the Muslim women which roughly account for 7%. One of the foremost important incontrovertible fact that prevails is that Muslim community is that the most backward among all the religious communities of India (Sachar Committee Report 2006). They're not conscious of the importance of education generally and therefore the education of Muslim girls. "Parents of Muslim girls generally are illiterate and ignorant about importance of education of

their girl child⁶. Along with the very fact that the Muslims are financially and educationally as backwards has been stated by the Sachar committee report, the fact has been corroborated by Radhika Kapoor (2019) stating that “the Muslims are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness, they need severe financial problems due to which they're unable to afford education for his or her children”. Bano indicates educational status of Muslim women in India is worse as compared to Muslim men, and women of other communities. They have the lowest work participation rate and most of them engage in the self-employment activities. This goes without saying that in the early stage the women are sent to nearby located maktab and madrasahs and in general it becomes terminal stage of education for most of the Muslim girls. Able it the oldsters want them to send to the faculties, they are not available in the nearby locality. The fact has been reported by⁷ in her research saying that “schools are not available within walking distance and closer to the place of dwelling and that is why the parents are a bit reluctant due to the sensation of insecurity”. Poor financial condition however is the dominant factor which is an excellent hurdle for the girls' education⁸. Points out that “the financial burden is one among the main factors that affect the continuation of female education”. It is true that poor financial condition is especially liable for the status of girls' education, parents' apathy and their negative attitude is additionally one among the most important barrier to women education, the very fact has been reported in his research findings “it has also been observed that there's a negative attitude towards girls' education among Muslims”. There are several instances where it has been found that in general Muslim parents prefer madrasah for the education of their daughters”. The author has gone through a

vast literature on women education but is unable to find a concrete and practical suggestion(s) to overcome the plight of women education. Hence, the present paper will make an attempt to highlight the status of Muslim women education in India. The author will also analyse the causes of low participation of Muslim women at various stage of education and employment. The author will offer certain suggestions to bring reforms in women education for Muslims.

Literacy among various minority communities

This is the foremost unfortunate state of affairs that the literacy rate of Muslim women isn't only less than the Muslim males but also among the women of other communities in India. The above table highlights the literacy rate of minority groups alongside their male counterparts. The data indicate that male members from Jain, Buddhist and Christian communities are doing fairly well in literacy, while Muslim males are lagging behind and are much below the National average i.e. 74.13%. If we critically analyse the above figures, we find that the Muslim women, are not only much below than their Muslim counterparts, but their literacy rate is worse among all other communities. This is very unfortunate that an outsized population of Muslim female i.e. approximately 48% is totally illiterate and it seems that apart from many reasons, religious orthodoxy and cultural ethos of Muslims lead them to believe that modern education is a threat to Islamic values. Moreover, “the traditional Islamic injunction restricting girls to go in for education in public place or institutions—especially higher coeducation institutions still seem to guide the minds of most of the Muslim parents⁹”. So “there is little doubt that Muslim women are among the most

⁶Dutta, Amit Kumar (2016): The Role of Education in Empowering Muslim Women in South Asia in Girl Education in India. Vol. III, Delhi, Kalpaz Publications GOI (2006):

⁷Hussain Manzoor, Khan Manzoor Ahmad and Khan, Farooq Ahmad (2018): Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: Issues and Challenges in Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social

Sciences Feb 2018; 6(2): 311-316 ISSN 2347-5374 (Online)

⁸Kapoor Radhika (2019): ‘Problems and Educational Needs of Muslim Women’ in ACTA, Scientific Women's Health, Volume 1 Issue 7 December 2019

⁹Ruhela, S.P. (Ed.) (1998): Empowerment of the Indian Muslim Women, New Delhi, MD Publications.

underprivileged, least literate, most indigent and politically marginalized sections of Indian society.¹⁰ This state of affairs does not match with Article 53 (3), which made a special provision enabling the state to form affirmative discrimination in favour of women. The difficulty is serious particularly for Muslim women which must be taken care of by the government also because the community itself. It is obvious that the national development is linked with the expansion of all the sections of the society and Muslim women also constitute a sizable proportion of population of the country. It is also very important that educated women might not only be an honest citizen but also a good mother. On the other hand, women are most vulnerable to trafficking when they are under educated and poor, says the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP). While approximate 48% Muslim women are totally illiterate, the safety of women is at the stake which is matter of grave concern.

In general, whilst the issues of girls are many and customary to most of them, it is Muslim women who are the worst sufferers in our society.¹¹ The above table (2) depicts the status of the male and feminine of marginalized communities who have never been enrolled. The Muslim male percentage is the highest among those who haven't been enrolled. The condition of other marginalized group is however better than Muslim males where the table shows that 15% scheduled caste and 13% scheduled tribe were never enrolled. The status of Muslim women is worst during this dimension where the info reveal that 22% Muslim women within the age bracket of 3-35 years were never enrolled. This seems to be the clear cut violation of United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women which of course includes Muslim women. The National Policy on

Education (1986) also recommended empowering women through education in the section 'Education for Women's Equality. The policy clearly states that education is going to be used as agent of social change in bringing about an improvement within the status of women and ladies education. If the figures of the above table are critically analysed it's revealed that even the powerful scheme of Universalization of education which determined to bring everyone in school has not yielded fruitful results. The schemes of Adult and Continuing education and Education for All have also not attracted the adult Muslim women towards educational programmes

Work participation among minority communities

Muslim women participation rate (WPR) among all the communities is very low. That describes the status of work participation of females of Muslim community alongside other minority groups in India. Census defines the work participation as the percentage of total workers including main and marginal workers to the total participation. Census also defines "main workers as those that work for a minimum of 6 months and therefore the marginal workers as those who work for less than 6 months during a year"¹². Work participation is an important indicator of the economic condition of any community. It includes part time workers, family business or any economic activity. The above table is that the indicator of labour participation of males and females among the entire minority groups within the country. Table indicates that Muslim females have the low work participation as compared to Muslim female and gap is too large which is 50% lesser than their total participation itself. More

¹⁰Sudhir Maddela¹, Pradeep M (2019): Problems of Women Education in India (A Case Study of Mangalagiri Mandal in Guntur District of A.P.) in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD), Volume: 3 | Issue: 3 | Mar-Apr 2019

¹¹Sciences Sachar Committee Report-2006, New Delhi Goswamee G. & Barbhuyan, N.I (2015): An Analytical Study of the Problems of Muslim

Women in Higher Education, An International Peer-Reviewed Journal on Humanities & Social, 1(2). 59-62.

¹². Sukhpreet Singh & Ravinder Kaur (2017): Spatial Dimensions of Literacy Among Religious Minorities in Indian Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language, Aug-Sep. 2017, Vol. 4/23, UGC Approved Online ISSN 2348-3083

alarming is that there is almost negligible improvement of merely .7% in 10 years comparing it with an equivalent within the year 2021 (Calculated from Census 2011). Moreover it is disheartening to note that their work participation is not only lower than the females of other communities but much less than the national average of labour participation among females in 2011. This is most unfortunate state of affairs related to work participation of girls generally and Muslims in particular while National Policy on Education 1986 laid great emphasis on the ladies employment.

Causes of Low performance of Muslim Women in Education

Since Independence many research studies and surveys have been conducted and some of the favoured findings have listed the following many causes of low status of education and the work participation of Muslim women in India are as follows:

- Poor financial condition of Muslim parents
- Lack of awareness of oldsters about modern education
- Girls not allowed to exit after the puberty
- Household responsibilities
- Traditional apathy
- Lack of dedicated leadership among Muslims to guide and encourage girls
- School not available within walking distance
- Shortage of girl's teachers in school
- Lack of infrastructural facilities
- Curriculum not matching with the requirements of Muslim girls.

The reasons of low status of Muslim women as mentioned above have been the outcome of the researches conducted in past. Sachar committee (2006) has described Muslim community the most backward

economically, socially, culturally and educationally and the Muslim women are even more underprivileged as compared to not only Muslim males but among all religious communities in India, because the majority of the Muslim parents reside within the rural areas hence lack of Muslim women enrolment in schools seems to be due to their engagement within the agricultural activities. This view point has been supported by Maddela and Pradeep M (2019)¹³ who point out that many parents, especially among the poor, do not send their daughter to school because their daughters are needed for agricultural and household production tasks also as for domestic chores like cooking and searching after younger siblings.

Suggestions

The above principal causes of low performance of Muslim women in the field of education can be divided into two broader categories. First, those which relate to the individual women of Muslim community and secondly those which relate to the education providing agencies including constitutional provisions. The author after having presented the status of women education and her own view point regarding the reasons of their low status of education is of the firm opinion that apart from many causes of backwardness of Muslim women, the prime factor is lack of genuine and dedicated leadership. The reason of lack of awareness of parents towards the importance of education though is additionally a crucial reason for the poor educational status but is additionally thanks to either no or little guidance available to the oldsters. There are many constitutional provisions to support educational efforts for the women alongside plenty of philanthropic schemes which may cover the financial burden of the parents but the question as to how to take the benefits of these provisions and financial schemes still remain unanswered. The answer to avail such assistance is devoted leadership which can guide from time to time to avail such schemes. Another important dimension is

¹³Misra, R. C. (2011): Women Education, New Delhi, A P H Publishing Corporation

that the motivation and encouragement which can also boost the morale of the girls. The community needs to strengthen its own capacity building efforts to develop leadership skills among the educated persons and create a team of leaders. This team may be entrusted the task of organizing orientation programmes for the Muslim parents to guide and encourage the oldsters also because the Muslim girls to return forward to urge enrolled in the schools. However, it has to be kept in mind while training people for leadership role a flair test of such persons is tested. These leaders may also orient those girls who are in the terminal stage of the schooling to go for various vocational and professional educational programmes. The group of leaders may also guide these girls to avail financial schemes offered by the govt also as philanthropic agencies. Here the role of the NGOs may not be ignored, in this endeavour, which should assume the responsibilities to make a team of leaders. The assistance of NGOs is additionally required to encourage women participation in private and public sector employment. Awareness programmes related to employment opportunities may also be organized along with their preparation for various such positions by NGOs¹⁴.

Conclusion

Under RTE Act 2009, the state has the responsibility to supply free education and related infrastructure upto elementary level but everything may not be left to the govt only. The community may seek the assistance of philanthropic groups for financial assistance. Moreover the Muslim community leaders may negotiate on the issue of appropriateness of curriculum also because the required infrastructure for the women and also the supply of girls teachers to ensure safety and security of the women. The role of NGOs is also very important who may also intervene in the curricular changes and its appropriateness from the point of view of

Muslim girls. NGOs may also full fill necessary financial needs of the schools as well as of the Muslim girls also. These NGOs need to organize orientation programmes for the parents inviting leaders created for this purpose. The NGOs and other social groups may also involve youths who may volunteer themselves in organizing awareness campaign on war footing basis. Some programmes to motivate the women to travel for education particularly professional courses are also the need of the hour. The women's work participation in formal informal sectors needs to be taken care.

¹⁴Zeb, Khushboo (2019): Education of Muslim Women in India: An Overview in International Journal of Research in Social Sciences Vol. 9 Issue