Educational Backwardness of Muslim Women in India

Abstract

In every society education is the most effective agency for the socialization of its members. In this context education of women is more important and meaningful as greater exposure of women to education generally results in an increased level of awareness and confidence of women, more employment opportunities for them and greater participation in social activities which determines overall wellbeing of the family.

Values of education in Islam have very rightly emphasized its importance for both men and women. But unfortunately, it is evident that the Muslims women of India did not progress much in terms of modern education. Traditional outlook, poverty, violence, gender biasness, patriarchy, strict purdah system have been the primary reason for apathy of Muslims towards female education. It is also seen in many Muslim families that women are allowed only to perceive madarsa education. But now in present scenario societal changes and awareness about importance of education have brought attitudinal change towards education among Muslims.

The present paper on the basis of secondary data sources aims to understand the educational status of Muslim women in India and to explore the reasons for educational backwardness of Muslim women and attitude of their families towards providing modern education.

Keywords: Education, Muslim Women, Backwardness.

Yashmeen Tayyab
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Sociology,
Aligarh Muslim University,
Aligarh

Introduction

There is no denying the fact that the Muslim community in India has experienced extensive marginalization and disempowerment since independence. This is manifested in the grossly disproportionate representation of the community in Parliament and state legislatures, in the central and state governments, in the police and para-military forces, in the judiciary and beauracracy, in the public and private sectors, in the higher professions, and in institutions of higher learning. The disempowerment of the community is particularly evident in the abysmal level of poverty, illiteracy and economic backwardness. Muslims are at, a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality of education. The economic, social and educational backwardness of the Muslim community in India has been established and highlighted by a number of official reports such as the Gopal Singh Minority Panel Report, the Reports of the 43rd Round and the 55th Round of the National Sample Survey, and the programme of Action under the New educational policy (1986).The Sachar Committee (2006) report brings to light that Muslim face fairly high level of poverty. On the whole, their condition is only slightly better than that of SCs/STs and other backward sections of the country. A wide variety of policy initiatives and programmes have been launched by successive governments to promote the economic, social and educational development of the minority communities in India. However, while the Muslims have no doubt made some visible progress the perception remains that the economic and educational gap between the Muslim community and others has been widening. (Siddiqui, 2004)

Muslims in India do not constitute a homogeneous community; there are wide variations among Muslim in terms of region, class, caste, gender etc. Muslim women constitute an educationally backward section within Muslim community. They are the poorest, educationally disenfranchised, economically vulnerable, politically marginalized group in India. (S.Kazi, 1999). They face many problems both in their social and educational life like low enrollment, high dropout and poor access to schools in the vicinity. Perception of pubic security partly associated with increasing incidence of communal violence prevent parents from sending daughters to schools located at a distance where they would have to use public transport. This is particularly the case when they reach upper

primary and middle school and leads to high dropout rates among Muslim girls in this age group and parents are left with the unaffordable options of private schooling or Madarsa education. In the context of overall societal gender-bias, this has had a particularly deleterious effect on the education of Muslim girls with poor Muslim parents often opting to send only sons to private schools. Systematic discriminatory policies against Urdu are also counted among the reasons parents do not send girls to government schools. Since Urdu is no longer taught in most state schools some parents prefer to send their daughters to Madarsas. This is also in keeping with girls/women being seen more as repositories of tradition and less as wage earners or aspirants to salaried jobs. Urdu education is thus seen by some as more culturally appropriate and the preferred choice for girls. Besides, since mainstream education in any case does not usually lead to jobs, it is seen as an unproductive investment (Government of India, 2006:19).

Various academic researches concerning socio-economic and status of Muslim women in India have highlighted their poor economic and educational backwardness. Khan (1982), tried to find out the educational conditions of Muslim women. Educational conditions were assessed mainly with reference to enrolment, dropouts, illiteracy, levels and of literacy, adult education, levels of education desired for children. It was found that levels of education attained by women were mostly confined to the primary standard. There was none with college education. A large number of women had dropped out even at the lower primary level itself. Suma Chitnis (1983) while discussing discussing about the educational backwardness of Muslim women, particularly the notion as to why they were apathetic to education indicates that poverty rather than religion lies at root of the educational backwardness of Muslim women. H.Y.Siddiqui (1987) in his book seeks to examine the present socio-economic status of the Muslims and endeavors to assess their educational attainments and economic position. It was found that the higher educational achievements were almost entirely to be found among the higher socio-economic strata. The problem of illiteracy was not due to the religious orthodoxy of Muslims and their desire to keep their women in seclusion, but was largely determined by economic and social factors. Tabassum F.Sheikh (1991) examined the position of Indian Muslim women in the family and society and find out that they have to face many problems in their social life in relation to education due to religious orthodoxy, economic status and attitude of family. Most of them discontinue their studies due to various reasons like marriage, economic hardship, orthodoxy of their parents regarding purdah, drop out because of pregnancy after marriage. The study concluded that in spite of the restrictions, a number of educated Muslims girls were gainfully employed, demonstrating the benefits of formal education. Formal education for girls had become a proposition and the vast gap between the education of Muslim men and women was being considerably reduced. In spite of the several drawbacks and restraints, the position of Muslim women was changing for better. Sabiha Hussain

(2010) made an attempt to assess the trends of education among Muslim girls who were educated matric and onwards. It was found that there were four major obstacles for the educational backwardness of Muslim women. Economic obstacles, programmatic obstacles, social and cultural obstacles, feeling of insecurity and discrimination. Girls could not meet their aspirations due to the poor economy of the family. It was also found that lack of government's commitment was apparent in providing adequate infrastructure facilities. The low functional value attached to girls' education was an important reason at the societal level. At the social level the difficulty in getting suitable match for an educated and working girl from Muslim community was found to be another major obstacle in meeting girl's aspiration for higher education. Parents' lack of farsightedness to link girls' education to future employed was another reason. Observance of Purdah and parents reluctance to send their daughters to co-education institutions for any technical or job oriented course was another major factor found in the study.

Conclusion

In an effort to reduce gender discrimination, the government of India has imlemented various schemes and programmes providing ways and means towards women development and empowerment. Almost all five year plans stressed on women empowerment and recognized the greater importance of education for women as a major welfare strategy for women.

Beside five year plans some schemes also launched by government for their education like Indira Mahila Yojna (IMY) which was launched in August 1995 with the objective to give a forward thrust to the women education and various scholarships are also made available to girls to get a better education. (shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in).

An analysis of the available studies reveals that many efforts have been done to study the various aspects related to the Muslim women in India show some changes in the attitudes and perception of younger present generation due to awareness led by government' action, educated families and women themselves. It can easily be realized that education of Muslim women is in a very worst condition. they are not getting the benefit of these policies for improving their overall status in society. They are not able to get education even upto secondary or beyond secondary level due to various reasons like their poor economic condition, insecurity due to increased rate of crime in society, gender bias, patriarchal value system, early marriage, problem of suitable match, religious belief, purdah system and other cultural factors. Thus, it can be argued that, contrary to popular perception that religious conservatism among Muslims somehow militates against educating girls, current research indicates that patriarchal values along with poverty and financial constraints are the major causes that prevent Muslim girls from accessing modern or secular education despite a srong desire and enthusiasm among Muslim women to go for modern and higher education.in this dismal scenario, the hope for improvement in the educational status of women cen can be materialized through concrete and sincere efforts. More and more researches need to be

oriented towards this crucial issue of Muslim women's education. It will help in creating greater awareness regarding the educational status. Such knowledge and awareness will help in policy formulation in favour of this deprived section of Indian society.

It needs to be realized that constitutional provisions and governmental efforts alone cannot bring the required changes in the condition of Muslim women. Women themselves should be made aware about their rights and should take steps to improve their conditions. Attitudes of people at community level should get changed because every change comes through the combined efforts. So we can expect improvement in the educational status of Muslim women through combined efforts of government, community and women themselves.

References

1. Chitnis, Suma. (1983). Tenacy and luck: A story of bilquis. in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.). *Modernization and social changes among Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
2. Hussain, S. (1998). *The Changing Half: A Study of Indian Muslim Women.* New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company.
3. Kazi, S. (1999). *Muslim Women in India.* An MRG International Report.
4. Khan, M. A., and, & Noor, A. (1982). *Status of Women in India: A Study of Karnataka.* New Delhi: Uppal Publishing Hpuse.
5. Report, P. M. (2006). *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India.* New Delhi: Government of India. Retrieved November 04.01.2016.
6. Report, P. M. (2006). *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India.* New Delhi: Government of India.
7. Siddiqui, H. Y. (1987). *Muslim Women in Transition; A Social Profile.* New Delhi: Harnam Publications.
8. Siddiqui, M. A. (2004). *Empowerment of Muslims through Education.* New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies.