

IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: Education is one of the significant social indicators having bearing on the achievement and the growth of an individual as well as community. A large number of literature on education of women clearly suggest that educating a woman is equal to educating a family and that women are worth training more than their counterparts, men, in many respects. However, despite the fact that positive contribution of women education to the economy and society has long been known, education of women in many nations, particularly in developing countries, needs to attract more attention.

The contributions of educated women in an economy are threefold. First of this is that increasing the level of human capital, correspondingly, decreasing the fertility rate of the women. Second argument is that infant mortality rate might decline by virtue of decreasing the fertility rate of the women. Thirdly, increasing women education level may affect the education level of next generation positively.

This study tries to bring out the problems being faced by Muslim women serially related to education and its impact on their development. This study aims at studying this condition and trying to improve their education condition so that they have better education opportunities.

Keyword: Muslim Women Education, Socio-economic, Development, Inequality, Muslim status, backwardness, problems, way forward.

Introduction: Education is one of the significant social indicators has been bearing on the achievement and the growth of an individual as well as community. This is perceived to be highly suitable for providing employment and, thereby, improving the quality of life, the level of human well-being and access to basic social services. The progress and around development of a country depends upon harnessing the skills and abilities of all sections of society, regardless of caste, creed, religion and sex. Women have been discriminated against for ages and they have not been given equal opportunities in many social, economic and cultural spheres. If we do not involve women in development activities, it not merely obstructs their own development, but also affects the progress of the entire nation. The status of women could be the best indicator of a nation's progress. Women's active role is regarded as an integral part of a progressive social system.

Islam, Women and Education: Education is the birth right of every Muslim and Muslimah. Islam puts considerable emphasis on its followers to acquire knowledge. Investment in education is the best investment one can make, because it eventually leads to intellectual property.

To seek knowledge is a sacred duty in Islam, The first word revealed of the Quran was "Iqra" which mean "Read" and Seek knowledge! Educate yourselves! Be educated. There is a general stereotype that the principles of Islam are responsible for educational backwardness of the Muslims. But there is no empirical basis of such a stereotype. Actually Islam does not stand against the acquisition of knowledge and education among its believers. Islam has given

proper emphasis on attainment of education and has provided many guidelines for it.

Islam has a very clear notion towards the status of women in the society. The attitude of Quran and Hadith bear witness to the fact that women is, at least, as vital to the life and society as man himself, and is not inferior to him. The Islam has given women the rights and privileges. The question of status of women in Islam cannot be properly understood without taking social situation into account. As Islam had its roots and beginnings in the folk society of the Arabs, thus it is necessary to find out the position of women in Arabia, just before the advent of Islam.

Educational Status of Muslim Women in India:

Educationally, Muslims comprise one of the most backward communities in the country. Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities. According to Census 2001, the literacy rate among Muslims (59.1%) was far below the National average (65.1%) and other socio-religious-communities (70.8%). The Muslim female literacy rate was 50.1 per cent below the Muslim male literacy rate (Census, 2001). As many as 25 per cent of Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 year have either never attended school or have dropped out. Muslims have the highest dropout rate in the country. Only one out of the 25 undergraduate students and one out of the 50 post-graduate students is a Muslim in premier colleges. The share of Muslims in all courses is low, particularly at the PG level and marginal in the science stream. The NSSO 2007-08 education round further confirmed a high proportion of Muslims as illiterates. The proportion

of illiterates among Muslims males is at par with the SCs/STs and higher than the OBCs. Muslim women (47.3%) count amongst the most illiterate segments of the society, their status comparable only with SC/ST (53.2 per cent) women.

Pre Independent status: Education had always been important to the Muslim community, not as a distributor of life chances but for the propagation of Islamic values .

Sikandar Lodhi was noted for the general patronage of education and knowledge. The ruler of Malwa, Ghiasuddin had appointed school mistresses for the royal women. But education as an institution did not percolate to the common women though indoor education of Muslim girls through lady tutor or aged Imams remained in vogue for the women of upper strata of society. Just after the uprising of 1857, the general Muslim desperation caused a serious setback to Muslim women's education, and women's isolation in education became complete.

Modern education began for men with the passing of the East India Company Act of 1813. But the conservative officials of the Company refused to take any direct action in the case of women's education on account of the strict policy of social and religions neutrality and for not wanting to create any commotion by flaunting the existing norms of strict privacy and segregation of women.

The introduction of new political and economic institutions under the British rule in India made traditional education and learning redundant. At the same time Muslim education itself was raised to the level of an issue by the publication of W.S. Hunter's report "The Indian Mussalmans", in 1871. In the words of Education Commission 1880, there is no demand in case of girls/women for education as a means of livelihood and thus the most effective stimulus to the spread of education is removed. The system of child marriage necessitates the seclusion of girls at an age when their education has scarcely begun. The supply of teachers for girls' school is both insufficient in quantity and inferior in quality. The school system of instruction needs modification to meet the needs of girls.

According to the 1881 Census Returns, however, for every 1000 boys in schools, the number of girls under instruction was 46, and while one adult male out of 16 could read and write, only one adult woman in 434 could do so. Education of girls as we have noted earlier was spreading largely on account of private effort and only 616 out of 2,697 girl's institutions were conducted by the Department in 1882. The number of girl's institutions rose from 2,697 in 1881-81 to 5,801 in 1901.

The social status of women was low and women of the middle and upper classes led a life of seclusion under the dominance of family males and interaction

with non family males was prohibited. Among upper class Muslim families girls were taught only to read the Quran in Arabic and incidentally to read Urdu and Persian. Many parents disallowed their daughters to go to schools as this was considered violation of the Islamic rules. The struggle for formal education of Muslim women began at the end of nineteenth century. Sir Mulana Hali and Sheikh Abdullah took the lead to fight of the cause of education for Muslim women. Sir Hali started a small primary school in 1894 for the daughters of his family and friends in Panipat.

Education of girls and women has transited from extreme opposition to total acceptance by the end of the last century. In 1904, Sheikh Abdullah started bringing out a montlily magazine, Khatoon, to popularize tie idea of a school for Muslim girls in Aligarh. The Begum of Bhopal, sultan Jahan immediately started giving regular grants to the girl's school in Aligarh. She promised to give annual grant of Rupees 1,200 for the school. Fortunately, a resolution was passed in the annual Muslim Education conference session at Lucknow to establish a girl's school in Aligarh and the school was opened in 1906. In the beginning there was only 6 girls in the school. In 1911, Sakhawat Memorial Girls High School started in Bengal by Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain. Maulana Karamat Hussain and the Raja of Mahmudabad also supported for girl's education and started a girl's school in Lucknow in 1912.

After Independence Period: With Independence, time came to review the whole educational process. The Constitution accordingly included a provision making education compulsory for all children up to the age of 14. The Muslim community was unable to take the maximum advantage of the opportunity provided by the state, because of an unsympathetic official attitude, communally surcharged national climate and its own confusion in fixing up priorities. Therefore, the Muslim community was left with the only choice of extensive voluntary efforts for elevating their educational status. Southern States realized the hard reality first. Besides societies and associations which promoted education among Muslims, there were the same philanthropists that were responsible for giving a fillip to education. Donors to the cause of education like Kaka Omar (Sr.), Nawab C. Abdul Hamim, Jamal Mohammad, Karutha Rawther Kadar Mahideen, Anaikar Abdul Shukoor and the doyen of women's education Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed set up or caused to be set up institutions which are standing monuments to their glory.

Recognizing the fact that the application of science and technology is vital for the advancement of women and technology, the tenth plan (2002-2007) encouraged women to participate in science and

technology activities, especially in rural areas as it reduces the drudgery of household chores and provides a better quality of life. These will include measures to motivate girls to take up subjects of science and technology in higher education and ensure that development projects with scientific and technical inputs involve women fully. Efforts to develop a scientific temper and awareness will also be stepped up special measures will be taken to train women in areas where they have special skills like communication and information technology. Effects to develop appropriate technologies suited to women's needs as well as to reduce their drudgery will be made through the on-going programme of science and technology project for women. Also, special efforts/provisions will be made to cover the existing gap in disseminating and reaching the technologies to rural women for whose benefit these were designed. Further, to encourage were and more girls to enter into the mainstream of higher education, the eleventh plan (2007-2012) endeavors to put into action the governmental commitment of providing free education for girls upto the college level, including professional courses, so as to quicken the process of empowerment of women. All these efforts will continue during the eleventh plan (2007-2012) with the strength and support of the national policy on education, as it extends the most positive interventionist role in empowering women we may not be pessimistic. We should hope that the present momentum of women study centers built-up by UGC would continue.

The education of girls has always demanded higher investment in terms of more facilities, more women teachers, separate schools, transport and scholarships to provide the much-needed incentives. Despite pressures of religious orthodoxies, social prejudice and class/gender bias, Muslim women at the start of the twentieth century successfully emerged from the isolation of traditional roles as self-aware individuals, determined to claim a greater role in public affairs. The theme of women's education was taken up by all communities including Muslims.

Impact on Socio-Economic Development: Being a plural community, social organizations and economic conditions, Indian Muslims differ from region to region and within a region from one social group to another. However, as a religious or minority community they are found most backward and poor at national level by individual researchers and government agencies. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and social justice and socio-economic and educational development in the country, large number of Muslims either unemployed or associated with manual low paid occupations both in villages and cities. The participation of Muslims in salaried jobs, both in the public and the private

sectors, is quite low. The presence of Muslims was found to be only three per cent in the IAS, 1.8 per cent in the IFS and four per cent in the IPS. A large number of them engaged in self employment activity. The main reason behind this is lack of education. India's Planning Commission's India Human Development Report 2011 findings shows improvement on a few indicators like poverty, education, health, etc., as regards Muslims but the rate of growth much lower than for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The situation has improved little after the Sachar Committee Report. According to the 2011 report, urban poverty is highest amongst Muslims, rural poverty amongst Muslims is also higher than that of other religious groups and, indeed, than that of other backward classes (OBCs). One-third of the Muslims in the country were living below the poverty line. The rate of decline in poverty has also been slowest in the Muslim community (Human Development Report, 2011). Muslim women have the lowest Work Participation Rate (WPR) among all the three religious categories (Hindus, Muslims and Christians). Sixty per cent of Muslim women are self-employed--the highest percentage among all three categories. Muslim women employment as regular workers in urban areas is 15.7 per cent as compared to 27.7 per cent for Hindu women and 51.5 per cent for Christian women highlight their marginal presence in salaried jobs. In rural areas the employment status for Hindu is 3.6 per cent and for Muslim 3.0 per cent. The distinct pattern of Muslim women's employment in home based work is in part due to discrimination in formal employment. In part, it is due to the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education and technical skills, leading to low-skilled, low income work, and back again to poverty. Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions because much of the work they do is sub-contracted.

Problems of Muslim's Education in India: To emphasized through this discussion the problem of the educational backwardness of Muslim women. There are various reasons for Muslim women being educationally backward which include economic, social and cultural causes.

☞ The Riots, communal violence and insecurity, have become the norm and a sad reality in Modern India. The majority of the victims of riots in India are Muslims. This situation is affecting their economic as well as social condition. Muslims are facing socio-economic poverty from past. Their vision is blurring towards education because majority of Muslim parents are illiterate, they are unaware about the importance of modern education. They live in large family size and give greater importance to early marriages. There is absent of vocation education to improve their image to develop through education.

There is negative attitude towards girl's education among Muslims. Due to hurdles from family they lose the zeal to achieve something through education and thus they themselves do not have academic interest. If at all they are fortunate enough to go to a good school, they are often discouraged to go for higher education, especially overseas. There is often misconception regarding the "purity" of girls if they have studied in Universities, or have traveled abroad. The most important reason is that there is difficulty in finding educated groom if the girl becomes highly educated.

As identified by Sachar Committee that normally Muslim Settlements are systematically deprived of access to infrastructure and public services like power, piped water supplies and sewerage. Muslim community is living in low income, filthy and poor living conditions.

Muslims are having poor facilities in their schools as well as proper education is also absent. Most of the schools are traditional, having problem of medium. The education is also not linked with employment opportunities.

Madarsa and Maktabas are still running at the traditional pattern. There is no influence of modern education in their syllabus. Students of Madarsa are having low level of knowledge regarding commerce and computer etc.

There is absence of committed and genuine Muslim leadership (both social and political) in pre and post independent India.

Conclusions and Suggestions: Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Hence, to think harmonious development of the country without educating women is impossibility. Moreover, it has been rightly said that to educate a

woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizen, housewife, mother, and contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation (Sonowal, 2013). Recognizing the fact that the educational backwardness of Muslim women is part of the overall educational lag of women in India especially those belonging to rural areas, backward regions, historically disadvantaged groups like the SC, ST and the BPL households, what is the need of the hour is an overall plan of action for bringing the female half at par with the males. There is also meager study on Muslim's educational condition; it is the duty of social Anthropologists and Sociologists to find out the educational status and to analyze the state of education among the Muslims of various parts of the country to explore the constraints of educational upliftment among them. It is the need of the hour that Government should move on and do something for development of Muslims. Their Madarsa are following traditional and old syllabus in the time of globalization and information technology. Their syllabus is far away from scientific and commercial knowledge. Madarsas should transform into modern educational centers where both religious and vocational studies may be imparted. Thus there is need to change the vision of Muslims from traditional to modern education. State governments needs to make special provisions over and above the normal, for drawing and retaining Muslims girls in school till class 8th as a fundamental right, and for improving their participation in secondary and higher technical education and professional education. There is a need of a comprehensive and inclusive national programme of action for advancement of education of Muslim women (to include all level and types of education) with a sharp focus on removal of rural-urban disparities in general and the continued educational backwardness of Muslim women in particular.

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