

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN Shopian, Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Muslim women in shopian enjoy religious rights. Purdah is observed by them, but is gradually decreasing among youth. Prayers are regularly performed by the majority of women. Generally the women go to the markets independently except elderly. There is seen impact of modernization and westernization on the dress code of young Muslim girls. usually the girls from shopian get firstly enrolled in general schools and attend local muktabas (religious centers) for religious teaching especially quran. Most of the womenfolk of shopian are able to read Quran. Many girls of shopian are having higher Islamic degrees like Hafiz, Aalima etc. Most of the Muslim women of shopian keep fast regularly during the month of Ramadan. The study was carried out in 2017, with the help of interview schedule. 400 respondents were interviewed through random sampling. The purpose of the paper was to find out the social and religious status of Muslim women in shopian.

Keywords . Muslim Women, Social Status, Religious Status.

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir is the north western UT of India. The UT has two distinct regions comprising Kashmir Valley and Jammu. Each region has a specific resource base. Except for Jammu and Kathua districts the entire UT is a mountainous region. The land of the UT is highly fertile and water resources are also abundant. Shopian in Kashmir, is a hill district with its administrative division in Shopian, located in the Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, since it is situated on the historical road commonly known as Mughal Road, most of its area is occupied by forests. Shopian district comes under the Pir Panjal Range which makes it very cold in winter. After partition of India, it was a tehsil of Pulwama district. In March, 2007, the district status was granted by the Government of India. The economy of the district depends on horticulture, particularly apple growing. Shopian is 22 km from Pulwama district. Shopian district is called "the apple bowl of Kashmir".

Sex Ratio in Shopian District in 2011 Census. (no. females per 1,000 males)

Religion (and population)	Sex Ratio
Muslim (pop 262,263)	968
Hindu (pop 3,116)	122
Other (pop 836)	779
Total (pop 266,215)	951

Marx had declared that “social progress can be measured with precision by the social position of the female sex” (Labour Bureau Report, 1953: 1). ‘Gustav Geiger, the Swedish sociologist, wrote, ‘the position of women in society provides an exact measure of the development of the society” (Sullerot, 1971-14). Social status is a function of economic opportunities and amenities. Though the erotically woman is recognized socially as an equal of man, the old institutions like patriarchal family religious mores and dominant social value system still reign with considerable vigour (Desai, 1977:289). The status of a woman in society is dependent, among other things, on the freedom she possesses in enjoying her social rights and privileges. As social status, to a great extent, depends on the degree of participation in social activities, we asked our respondents how many of them were members of cultural associations and what the extent of their participation in them was. The response of our respondents was that, except ten female respondents from the post-graduate group, no other women were member of any cultural association. Four women respondents were also connected with the Urdu Academy and arranged Mushieras and literary functions.

Review of literature

Mann, (1961) The position continues to the present day in respect of many Muslim women with some slight change. Many of the social activities have their focus outside one's home and hence we wanted to examine the freedom of movement which the Muslim women enjoyed outside their homes. Since it is believed that the Muslim women going out of the home for marketing, movies, visiting friends and going places is restricted due to purdah.

P. Thomous, (1964) The burqa has been a part of Muslims women's attire for quite a few centuries. Purdah, litterally, “curtain” has been an integral fact of Muslim life since

Islam came into India. In the earlier days of Islam, when the purdah was first introduced among the Arabs, spirited ladies objected to it.

Washim Ahmad (2005) focuses on the Maktabas and Madrasas of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The author argues that the sort of education that these institutions today impart must be understood in their historical context, particularly in relation to the British divide-and-rule policy that resulted in the increasing marginalisation of large numbers of Muslims, who, in the aftermath of the 1857 Revolt, were seen by the British as potentially subversive and hence, were cruelly suppressed. The author suggests that a radically reformed and modernized syllabus be tried out on an experimental basis in a small number of Madrasas willing to accept it, for which well-trained teachers should be employed. This experiment might enthuse other Madrasas to follow suit over time.

Noor Mohammad (2003) suggests that, while maintaining their religious character, the Maktabas can be transformed into non-formal education centers by employing additional teachers for subjects such as basic Hindi, English and Mathematics; so that after completing their basic education their students can go on to join government or private schools in the sixth grade. Likewise, he suggests similar curricular revision in the higher level Madrasas so that students who complete the ‘aim course can be considered on par with those who have passed the higher secondary examination and so can be enabled to join regular schools if they want.

Methodology

For the present study, primary data has been, collected though interview of 400 women respondents of shopian:-

1. This data was collected through a schedule and questionnaire devised by keeping in view the type of data required, which will be appropriate enough in analysing the changing status of women. The secondary data was collected from the published sources, which gives a clear idea and picture of the position of the Muslim women in different periods and at various places as well as their position in law and in practice. This data has facilitate the researcher to give a clear picture on comparing the present status and change.

2. The secondary data was also collected from few prominent persons, belonging to Muslim culture and welfare organizations, in order to know their views and compare or substantiate them with the findings under the study. Also the data was collected from Census and Government reports, reports by NGO's research and research cells as the background material to develop the context for the study.

Conclusion

The Muslim women of district shopian, irrespective of the fact whether they are illiterate, semi- educated or highly educated, enjoy plenty of freedom of movement outside the home, This shows that as the education of the respondents rises, the mobility of women also increases. About one-third of Muslim women in shopian district move without an escort. This shows their willingness to accept the need to adjust themselves to the prevailing socio-economic climate of the present day, their self-confidence, their independence of temperament, their shedding of inhibitions that the old practice of seclusion may have induced in them. About two-third of Muslim women in district shopian are accompanied by an escort when they move out of their home. The need for escort may be necessary on account of protection and security, particularly during late hours, or when the distance is long, or the destination is not known. The highest percentages of Muslim women in shopian are interested in embroidery, stitching, knitting, and cooking. The vast majority of Muslim women in shopian 89.21 % do not recognize the natural superiority of man. The illiterate and the semi-educated, perhaps, interpret man's natural superiority only in terms of his physical prowess and his role as the only or as the major, bread-winner in the family. Therefore, their attitude to the natural superiority of man 31.11 % such respondents is a little more strong than of those who have had the benefit of education (higher secondary educated 14.28 %).

Religious practices

The vast majority (five-sixths) of Muslim women in district shopian read the Quran, 36.31 of them daily and 50.52 % of them as and when they are able to find time for it from their daily chores. 339 out of 400 Muslim women of district shopian offer the obligatory prayers, 149 five times a day, 60 only on Fridays, 30 once a day and 100 occasionally. This shows that 37 percent of our respondents were punctual in the performance of the first essential element of Islam. Of the 400 Muslim women of district shopian included in our sample survey 78.3 % strictly adhered to fasting during the month of Ramzan. The women considered Ramzan a holy month and fasting as one of the essential functions of a good Muslim.

Suggestions

The parents should give their girls academic education, besides giving them religious education.

The Muslim girls should follow the modern dress code to a limit.

The people of other religions should respect the purdah system and stop criticizing it.

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