



# Education And Employment Of Muslim Women In Assam

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**Abstract:** This study especially focus on the status of Muslim women in Assam. Here we would investigate two key parameters education and labour force participation. The census data of 2001 and 2011 have been analyzed to investigate the religion wise educational status and also religion wise workers and non-workers status of women in Assam. From the result of the analysis it is found that Muslim women are sadly lagging behind women of all other religions in terms of both education and employment. The reasons behind this are primarily financial weakness, lack of good quality schools, illiteracy and ignorance of parents, conservative thinking etc.

Keywords: Education, Employment, Muslim Women, Assam.

## Introduction:

The status of women usually means that the women are able to access all kinds of goods or services in society and also in terms of knowledge, respect etc. in the family or in society at large. In modern day time the improvement of women status are cause for concern and need attention in almost all religions; it is no exception for Muslim women. Instead, the challenges faced by Muslim women may larger than those faced by women of other religions due to their pitiable socio economic status. Muslims are more backward in both education and employment compared to their counterparts. As per Sachar committee report, 2006, the percentage of women Muslim workers undertaking work within their own homes is much larger at 70 percent compared to all workers at 51 percent. According to Basant (2007), in his analysis of Sachar committee report, the school dropout rates are the highest among Muslims and this seems to go up significantly after middle school. Primary education and higher- secondary attainment levels are also among the lowest for Muslims. Saeed (2005) explain in his studies that the Muslim women are among the poorest, educationally disenfranchised, economically vulnerable, politically marginalized group in India. The religious orthodoxy is another important reason for the backwardness of Muslim women. According to Ohlan (2020) is that in many Muslim families, women are not considered as a primary economic agent. These acts affect women economic self-sufficiency.

In the present study an attempt has been made to examine the status of Muslim women in Assam. To improve the quality of life, key measures, especially education, finances and decision-making ability, must be improved. Here we would investigate two key parameters education and labour force participation of Muslim women in Assam. So far the population proportion of religious community in Assam Muslim is the second largest population after Hindu. According to 2011 census 34.2 percent population is Muslim in Assam. As sex ratio is 958 female in 1000 male therefore 48.9 % population are Muslim women i.e almost half of the Muslim population are female which indicates that 17% population of Assam are Muslim women. The family size also has an impact on economic and education status of the family. As the number of children increases, households

spend more of their income on current consumption, and per capita income falls. According to fifth National Family Health Survey, 2019-2021, the TFR of Muslim women in Assam are 2.4 and it is 1.6 for Hindu women. The growth rate of Muslim population in Assam is also high in comparison to Hindu population. The population growth rate of Muslim between 2001 and 2011 is 29.6% where as for Hindu it is 10.9 % according to the census data.

So far the education of Muslim women in Assam they are lagging behind women of all other religions in education. The reasons behind this are primarily financial weakness, lack of good quality schools, illiteracy and ignorance of parents, conservative thinking etc. Limited access to good quality schools is a major problem that affects female students more adversely. Discrimination and “communalization” of reading material and school atmosphere adds to this problem (Basant, 2012). According to All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) report 2020-21 the representation of Muslim students in higher education in India is only 4.6 % where as in Assam it is 12.6 %. In Assam the percentage of female Muslim students among all female are 12.1 %.

Following two tables presenting the religion wise woman education based on census data of 2001 and 2011 respectively. It has been seen from the table that illiteracy is highest among Muslim women in both the census. In 2001 percentage of illiterate Muslim women is 69% that is only 31% Muslim women are literate. There are 39, 87920 Muslim women in Assam according to 2001 census data and among this 27, 51665 women are illiterate. In 2011 it is falling from 69 % to 54% but still more than half of these women populations are illiterate.

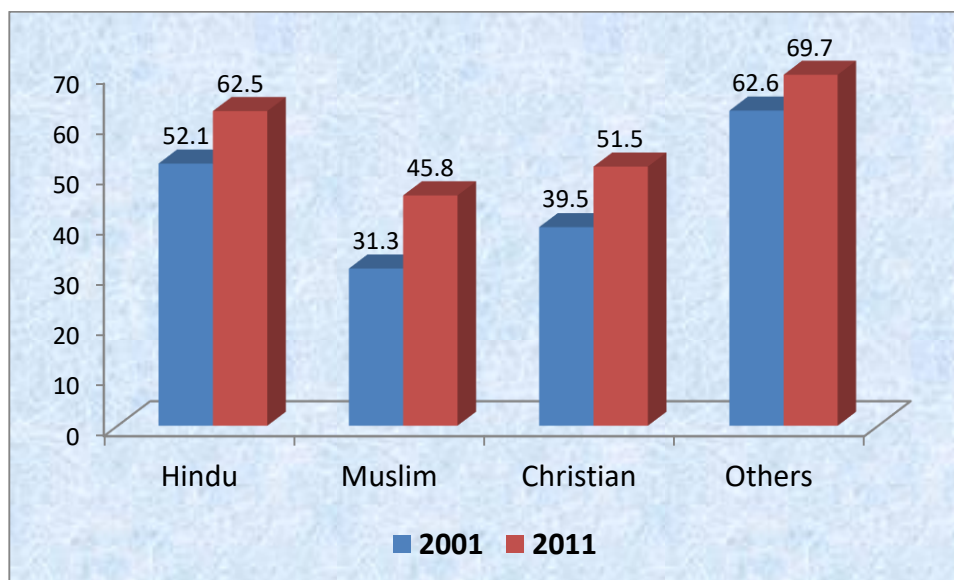
Table1: EDUCATION LEVEL OF WOMEN BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN 2001 AND 2011 CENSUS

Religion	Illiterate		Literate but below middle		Middle but below metric		Matric but below graduate		Graduate & above		Unclassified	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
All Religion	54.8	43.6	25.3	29.5	8.8	13.3	9.6	11.1	1.6	2.4	0	0.1
Hindu	47.9	37.5	26.9	29	10.7	15.7	12.4	14.3	2.2	3.4	0	0.1
Muslim	68.7	54.2	21.7	30.2	5.2	9.3	4	5.4	0.4	0.8	0	0.1
Christian	60.5	48.5	27.1	31.2	6.4	11.4	5.5	7.7	0.6	1	0	0.1
Others	37.4	30.3	27.9	26.6	12.3	15.7	18.1	20.1	4.2	7.3	0	0.1

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011 Table C-9

After independence Government of India has been implementing various educational programme to improve the education level of the people. Through this program government has trying to provide free and compulsory education to all the children. In most of the national education policies special importance has been given on women education. With these education policies from 1951 to 2011 the women literacy rate in Assam is increased from 8.86 % to 65.46% percent. But due to various reasons the literacy rate for Muslim women in Assam is extra ordinarily low i.e after 64 years of independence which is only 46 %. Following figure shows the percentage of literacy by different religion in 2001 and 2011 census.

FIGURE: RELIGION WISE WOMEN LITERACY PERCENTAGE IN 2001 AND 2011 CENSUS.



It is also clear from the above tables that the share of Muslim women in the literate population is the lowest in all educational categories. Surprisingly, in both the census years, the number of Muslim women with educational qualification graduate and above is considerably low which is less than 1%. In the 2001 and 2011 census, the percentage of Muslim women under this educational category was 0.4 and 0.8 per cent respectively and the percentage share that increased during this 10-year period is quite small which only 0.4 percent. The reasons behind this poor educational status of Muslim women in Assam are mainly the poor financial situation of the family and also may the lack in proper implementation of government educational policies.

In Assam most of the population of Muslim community lives in rural area. The agriculture and fishing are their main occupations. Many of them also work as laborer in construction and manufacturing industries. Muslim women are mainly involved in domestic work and also earn their living by working as domestic helper. Their earning are relatively low than other regular worker. The proportion of Muslim women working in regular job at government and private sector organization is comparatively very low. Basant (2007) in his analytical study in Sachar Committee Report said that a detailed analysis of employment in different government departments also revealed that Muslim representation is very low and very often they are located in low-end jobs. Moreover, the participation of Muslims in government jobs which involve provision of public services like healthcare (nursing), security (police), etc, is extremely low. Female labour force engagement and development are intricately linked, involving change in the economic growth, literacy, fertility rates, and social norms, among other variables. Female labour force participation is an important parameter for women empowerment and this is related to other important factor such as economic growth, education, fertility etc. working women are economically more valuable to their families and to society. Further it may have long term benefit for women to participate in future in the top level position of various sectors like academy, industry and Government etc.

This paper seeks to investigate the economic status of Muslim women in Assam. The census base economic table is used where indicating the working status of the population by age and sex. Here the populations are divided in to three main categories such as 'Main workers', 'Marginal workers' and Non Workers. Those who worked for more than 6 months during last year were categorized as 'Main workers' whereas those who worked less than 6 months were categorized as 'Marginal Workers' and the "Non-workers" were those who had not worked any time at all in the year preceding the date of enumeration.

Table2: WORKING WOMEN STATUS BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN 2001 AND 2011

Religion	Age Group	Main workers		Marginal workers		Non-workers	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
All religious	15-59	16.0	16.4	17.2	17.3	66.7	66.2
Hindu	15-59	18.8	19.1	19.5	18.9	61.7	62.0
Muslim	15-59	7.0	8.9	10.3	13.1	82.7	78.0
Christian	15-59	31.9	30.4	25.3	23.9	42.8	45.7
Other religious	15-59	15.1	17.1	18.9	17.5	65.9	65.4

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011 Table B-2

The above table is the descriptive analysis of religion wise working categories of women in Assam with age group 15-59. It is observed from the table that percentage share of Muslim women main workers are the lowest among all other religion which is even less than the half percent in comparison of Hindu women in both the census year 2001 and 2011. Similarly in case of marginal workers also the percentage share of Muslim women is lowest among all other religion. So far the non working population is concerned Muslim non working women is the highest among all other religion which is 83% and 78% respectively in 2001 and 2011 census respectively.

The following table shows the scenario of female workers for Muslim and non Muslim in state and national level in 2001 and 2011 census. It is seen that in case of female main workers the state average is much lower than the national average for both all religion and Muslim religion. This is an indication that female unemployment is higher in Assam in comparison to national level.

Religion	India/State	Census year	Age Group	Main workers	Marginal Workers	Non Workers
All Religion	India	2001	15-59	23.3	16.7	60
		2011	15-59	22.6	14.8	62.6
	Assam	2001	15-59	16	17.2	66.7
		2011	15-59	16.4	17.3	66.2
Muslim	India	2001	15-59	11.9	11.3	76.8
		2011	15-59	12.1	10.5	77.4
	Assam	2001	15-59	7	10.3	82.7
		2011	15-59	8.9	13.1	78

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011 Table B-2

From this study we can infer that Muslim women are sadly lagging behind women of all other religions in terms of both education and employment. It has been seen that the number of Muslim women who passed the degree is less than one percent according to 2011 census and it is clearly indicates the poor state of education of Muslim women in Assam. Due to not having adequate skill they do not get a well-paid stable job and whatever they able to earn for their low education is very low and continuous low or no income leads to poverty and faces many problems. They are unable to provide a good education to their future generations for their poverty. After growing up, most of the children have to help their parents earn a living due to financial difficulties and drop out of school. According to Hossain (2013), the backwardness of the Muslims women like other backward communities in India is a national crisis which should be recognized as a setback of the entire province and so that the nation as a whole must proceed together to get rid of this hazard.

In order to achieve the advancement of Muslim women in Assam one important step is to focus on education. More investment in the education sector should be made to ensure quality education. Providing vocational education opportunities will enable them to gain employment opportunities. In addition, improving health services and eliminating gender inequality are also important issues.

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