



Muslim Women Education: Perspective and Challenges

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Introduction:

The paper is dealing on access to education of Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. Census 2011 of India on educational level by religious community and gender has shown that 42.7% of Muslims in India are illiterate. Similarly, more than half of the total Muslim women are illiterate. This is the highest illiteracy rate for any single religious community in the country, while the illiteracy rate for the entire population taken together is 36.9%. Muslims are the only community to have an illiteracy rate higher than the national rate among all communities. For Hindus, the figure stands at 36.3%, the second highest proportion of illiterate people. Literacy rates are highest among Jains, at 84.7%, followed by Christians (74.3%), Buddhists (71.8%) and Sikhs (67.5%). The purpose of the study is to highlight the measures and schemes for Muslims women education in particular and Muslims in general. Though there have been many studies on the Madrasa education in India; however, there are very few who focus exclusively upon the Girls' Madrasas in India. The reasons are manifold – patriarchal mindset of the society and scant regard to the girls' education by the parents in particular and Muslim society in general. In addition to these factors, as there are few Muslim women who are engaged in higher education and research, the issue of gender-disaggregated Madrasas.

A landscape of literacy among the Muslim Women in India

'Gender inequality in education is one important aspect of educational disparity. Inequality and differences between communities is another critical aspect of this broader phenomenon of disparity in India' (Hasan and Menon: 2006: 47). Post Sachar Evaluating Committee Report (2013) Exclusively focusing on Chapter fourth, 'Education', the

chapter has provided a comparative analysis of its finding and of Sachar Committee Report. The Report finds that Muslim children in primary school was higher, and reduced with higher levels of education. That is, the Muslim community irrespective of gender and rural-urban residence were less likely to attain Secondary and Higher Secondary level of education. The OBC Muslims were the most deprived at all levels of education. The proportionate improvements in educational attainment during 2004-05 and 2011-12 do not alter this pattern. Muslim community also had lower graduate in technical education. The report also observe that the primary level attainment of Muslim education is higher than any other community.

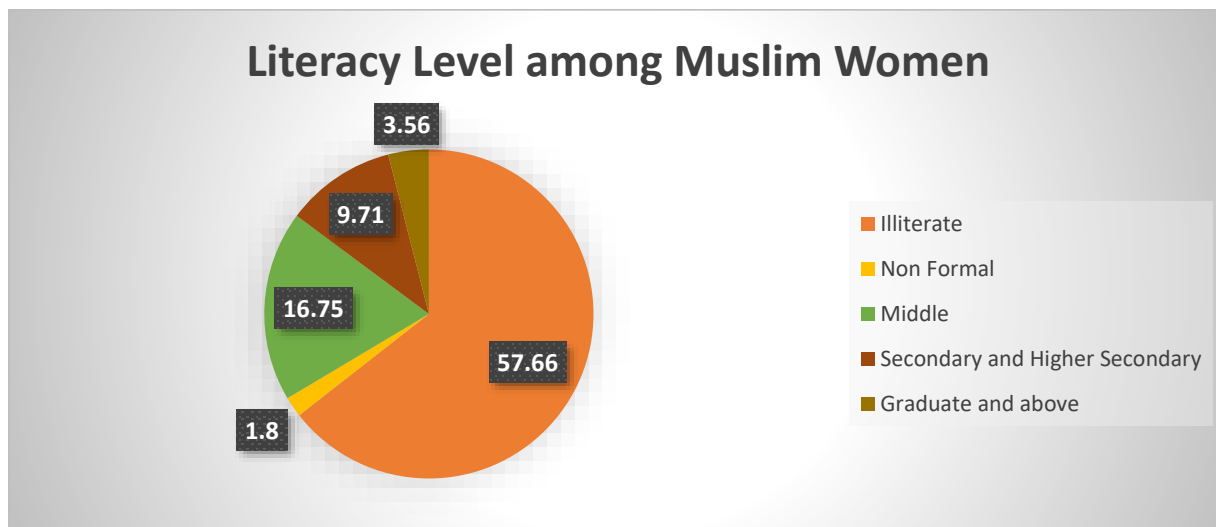
Similarly, gender disparity is less among the Muslim community children's than other socio religious communities. In contrast, particularly Muslim OBC's conditions extremely down in comparison of other community sand classes. This is apparent to be highly suitable for providing employment and, thereby, improving the quality of life. 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 (ibid).

According to the census 2011, it is seen that the literacy rate of Muslim females is only 51.9% which is lower than all other religious communities and it is even lower than the national average of females i.e. 65.46%. 71st Round NSS Report data, assess the gap between gender literacy rate and observe that female literacy rates out of total population of country from the age 5 year and above, 7th year and above and 15 and above are; 68.1%, 67.1%, 60.8%, 62.0% respectively. Whereas male followed by 83.6%, 83.2%, 79.8% and 75.7% respectively. The data highlight the gap among the gender on the whole and Muslim women distinctly.

Unified District Information System of Education (U-DISE) data of the year of 2016-17, has shown that Muslim students drop-outs are more severe even more diminish for the female students.

Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon Work (2004) 'Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India' based on Muslim Women Survey, conduct in 2000-2001, in 40th districts of 12th state of the country. the survey finds that more than half of the Muslim women are illiterate. It also reveals that schooling of Muslim women is badly off.

Literacy Level among Muslim Women in India



Source; Hasan and Menon. 2004. Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India.

Hasan and Menon (2004: p.74) stated that ‘gender, class inequality, and community biases persist across the board and combine and reinforce one another to put a brake on Muslim women’s education, and, consequently, on their overall development and inclusion in the social mainstream’.

The above chart shows that more than 60 per cent of Muslim women are illiterate. Whereas one fourth of women are attained school at primary level education. This survey highlighted that highest rate of illiteracy found among the Muslim women in northern region of the country.

State Initiatives/ Measures

Government of India have introduced several policies and programmes to upgrade the existing situation of Muslim women in particular and Muslims in general. Indian state also establishes certain commission and committee to implement, monitor and examine the policies related to Muslim Community. Article 46 of the Constitution states that, “The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation.” Similarly, Articles 30 (1) provides for the rights of the Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. National Policy on Education (NPE) adopted the concept of national system of education, implying that up to a certain level all students irrespective of caste, creed, language or gender have access to education of comparable quality.

National Knowledge Commission (2005), 'there is a need to ensure that minorities are not discriminated against in attending schools, that enabling conditions are created in the general school system for Muslim children and that there is a need to reorient official strategies for ensuring the better access of Muslim children to schooling'. As Indian constitution put the education as a fundamental right and protect it by budgetary provision through state government. States has launched various schemes since independence.

In this regard National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) also stablish under the Act of Parliament. 'Under the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for Welfare of Minorities, there will be definite goals which are to be achieved in specific time frame. On high priority of enhancing opportunity for Education'. NCMEI has power to advise the government on issues related to education of minorities.

Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for Welfare of Minorities was having a greater emphasis on educational attainment, under which Government of India implementing all minorities related educational policies and programmes. Starting from the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) under which, project centre of the scheme will be located to the substantial population of minorities community in a certain percentage. Improving access to school Education, introduce under the certain schemes; such as, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), scheme covers 15 percent of minority shares, and support Madrasa and Maktab (Muslim Educational Institution). SSA also covers Mid-Day Meal Scheme; with the objective, 'to enhance the enrollment, retention and Attendance and simultaneously improve nutritional levels among school going children'.

Similarly, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), it also ensures that 20 per cent institute must be open in minority concentrated areas, 9071 new primary schools and 1475 upper primary school have been open with the construction of 21559 additional classrooms recruitment of 29180 teachers, in 121 districts (Mohiuddin:2008). Saakshar Bharat under National Literacy Mission on with an objective to make 70 million non-literate adults literate by the end of the 11th five year plan. The scheme has a special focus on women belonging to minorities. It is proposed to cover 12 Million Muslims (10 million women+ 2 Million men) under the programme. It implemented in 410 districts where female literacy is less than 50 per cent. Jan Shikshsan Sansthan (JSS) propose to impart vocational training in 33 out of 90 minority concentrated districts in the country. 'An expert committee of the National Monitoring Committee on Minority Education was constituted to look into the Modernization of Madrasa (An Islamic institution to provide education of religious knowledge as well secular and modern knowledge). It suggested

linkages with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for accreditation of madrasa degree. NIOS in selected states also conducts examination for madrasa students. In 2006, NIOS open a minority cell to assist madrasas with accreditation and facilitate linkages between madrasas and mainstream institution. NCMEI also recommended setting up a Central Madrasa Board to standardize, mainstream, and modernize madrasa education in its report to the Union government based on nationwide consultations (Borker, 2018: 257).

Prime Minister 15 point programme for the welfare of minorities in 1983, mooted the frame of madrasa modernization by approaching entitle of modern subject in madrasa curriculum. This become a witness to extension consideration of 'madrasa reform'. Before the concept of madrasa reform, 'the educational concerns of Muslim are clubbed with those of other educationally backward communities. Policy document emphasize identification educationally backward groups, which require special emphasis like Schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribe (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and minorities including Muslims, with gender represented as a crosscutting concern' (ibid). Madrasa modernization was included under National Policy on education (1986) and Programme of action 1992. In 1994 invoke the Area Intensive Madrasa Modernization Programme put forward for consideration to initiate English, Science, Mathematics, Hindi as subjects on optional basis.

The Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas (SPQEM) was started in 1993 by government order. In 2006, SPQEM became the "fourth" scheme under Prime Minister's 15 Points Programmes for minorities announced in 2006 after the submission of the 2006 Sachar Committee Report. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Human Resource Development from the year 2008-09. It seeks to bring about qualitative improvement in Madrasas to enable Muslim children attain standards of the national education system in formal education subjects. The highest number of madrasas covered under the scheme in 2015-16 is in Uttar Pradesh (14,974), followed by Madhya Pradesh (3,288) and Bihar (1,127). Them aims & objectives of the SPQEM is to 'encourage traditional institutions like Madrasas and Maktabas by giving financial assistance to introduce science, mathematics, social studies, Hindi and English in their curriculum.

However, the process of modernization of traditional Madrasas and Maktabas will be voluntary, 'to provide opportunities to students of these institutions to acquire education comparable to the National Education System especially for secondary and senior secondary levels and to 'strengthen State Madrasa Boards opting for assistance, by enabling them to monitor the Madrasa modernization programme and enhance awareness about education among the Muslim community' (Government of India:2009). In the context of Scheme for Providing Quality Education in

Madrasas (SPQEM). Similarly, other schemes have also been initiated by the state like Maulana Azad National Fellowship, it is a centre sector scheme started in 2009 for Minority Students (MANF), Padho Pardesh, Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship for girl students belonging to the minority communities, Naya Savera launched in 2007 to provide free coaching and allied scheme for minority communities' students among others. MANF and Naya Savera embarked 30 per cent scholarship for the girl's student.

Sachar Committee Report 2006

It is important to note the observations made by Sachar Committee Report wherein it states that “The solution in such cases is not only to modernize Madrasas, but also to provide good quality, subsidized ‘mainstream’ education and create an adequate infrastructure for education” (pp. 78). Sachar committee report is a landmark to recognize status of Muslims in India. Consequently, it also described the data of the educational data at all States of India, including identify the educational status and attainments, like: literacy rate, proportion of population completing specified level of education, Mean year of schooling and enrollments rate.

Draft National Education Policy 2019

National Education policy 2019 also focused on to strengthen minorities institution like Madrasa and makhtabs, among others to emphasis on modernise their curriculum and also underline to integrate prescribed syllabus according to National Framework of India in order to decrease and erase underrepresentation of students from these institution in higher education. NEP also include to provide financial support to minority institution to introduce modern subject ‘allowed and indeed encouraged to appear for State Board Examinations and assessments by the National Testing Agency in order to enroll in higher education institutions.’ The draft also infers to enhance the capacities of teacher by providing training to teach modern subject with help of available teaching learning material, upgraded libraries and laboratories.

Challenges

In India, Muslims are the larger community among minorities. Besides, this is also large in terms of illiteracy among other minority communities. It is below in terms of all grounds of development. India Human Development Report “Widening Gaps: India Inequality 2018” highlighted that, ‘religious identities too play a role in the individual’s access to basic services. Furthermore, report added that smaller minorities such as Christian have a larger share of income/consumption than their population share, but this is not the case with Muslim’. Sachar Committee Report 2006 observe that the enrollment rate was low at primary level education of Muslim girls’ than boys, but their enrollment was higher in higher level of education in comparison of boys among the community. ‘The educational backwardness of Muslim women is a particular concern, specially the high drop-out rate, resulting in substantially fewer proportions of them managing to complete high school, and even less availing of higher education’. Following table assessing the status and condition of women in terms of development and growth on four basic indicators to measure the current situation of women in throughout the country.

Global Gender Gap index; India

	Indicators	Year	Year	Year	Year
		2016	2017	2018	2020
1.	Economic Participation	136	139	142	149
2.	Educational Attainment	113	112	114	112
3.	Health and Survival	142	141	147	150
4.	Political Empowerment	9	15	19	18

The above table contain the data of Global Gender Gap Index from its report released by IMF. India placed on 98th position out of the 153 country in its *Global Gender Gap Index 2020* report. The continuous fourth years of data is shown that there is no achievement in educational attainment during of last years. The data shows precarious condition of the women’s Development in country. And its 2020 report also stated that the country will take hundred years to be improve its present condition. The table reflect importance on the responsibility to respond the social educational policy transformation according to the needy areas to basic development. The necessity to assert the

table herein is important to shows the present status of women in Indian society in general. And to guess the status of Muslim women's who can termed as 'Double Marginalized' section or group of the country. Denoting the Muslim Community women as 'double marginalized' is therefore that being women and women under marginalized community. Improvement in the above indicators by the women will also increase the status of Muslim women in particularly.

Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India Education NSS 71ST Round NSSO 2015

The Report, data primarily related to literacy rates, current attendance, Participation in education, educational expenditure, drop-outs and discontinuance, access and ability to operate computer. According to 71st Round NSS Report data 'reveals wide disparity not only in the proportion of literates across genders, but also in the completed educational levels among literates with the increase in level of education. The adult literate females of the country were about 61% compared to 80% males and about 25% of adult females among the female literates had completed at least higher secondary (excluding diploma). For males it was about 27%'.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 admits that Muslim community students are underrepresented among other minority community. NEP further adds that 'though there have been significant improvements in the enrolment and retention of Muslim children in school education, the gap between Muslims and other population groups continues to remain high. Muslim students have primary enrolment rates that are lower than the national average, and this gap only increases at the middle, secondary and higher education levels.

Lack of instrumentality of Education

As most of Muslim students access their education form their religious institution, Madrasa. Madrasa eventually doesn't meet the criteria of modern education, therefore its educational quality collapse in front of other boards and convent school. Most of authors also stated that madrasa is also provide part time education for those children who are engaged in child labour, the paper of Nita Kumar has elaborated on it. The highest educational degree provided by madrasa is only religious, and modern subject it teaches as a secondary knowledge which doesn't consist emphasis on secular knowledge or modern education. As education linked with development and development measure by the increase chances of employment and self-worth, both Muslims educational institution as well due to

lack of government effort, quality education is still so far from the Muslim community to increase their chances of modern livelihood.

Contemporary Discourse

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) can be interpreted as the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions. The 2010 HDR introduced the GII, which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labor market participation rate for women and men. The above criteria Health, Empowerment and economic activity is a long journey to achieve by Muslim women.

Exclusion of Muslim women from modern education

'Framed in isolated silos of 'education', and 'religious minorities', Indian policy-making remains divorced from the way in which these categories fused in real lives. An exploration of policy discussions on the education of Muslim women requires us to step out of the realm of education into the policy domain of gender. Here we policy document, for instance, the report of the NCMEI committee on girls education; Eleventh (2007-12) and the twelfth Five Year Plan (2017), Prime Minister New 15-point program, in undated with recommendation or the educational empowerment of Muslim women, to address the educational marginalization of Muslims'(Borker:2018). factor and attitude which are responsible for exclusion of women, that, the first consideration is, lack of financial condition to attain convent school as well lack of government intervene in convent school to provide free education at least for Muslim girls on behalf of state sponsorship. second is, policy failure, due to lack of proper policy Implementation, not decentralized scheme from Muslim concentrated areas. As well a major responsible attitude not only denoting the causes of exclusion, but a medium towards partial inclusion, is that in traditional Madrasa and maktabas are emphasizing education of religious knowledge and seldomly focuses on modern education. If these religious institutions add the modern education in an extensive way then it can become docilely to increase literacy rate of Muslim woman. One of the vital roles also played by the infrastructure and facilities to promote the quality education. But in case religious specific institution often found lack of facilities in terms of educational tools and

instrument as well as there is also scarcity of trained teacher in such institution. Simultaneously, governmental primary and secondary schools' conditions are also poor.

Responsible Factors for dismal Representation of Muslim Women

'The social status of Muslim Women underwent many changes as a result of their interaction with Indian environment' (Sharma: 2016: p.44). Social construction of gender, according to religions and cultural role, I.e. what role should hold or play by the male and female in the particular community. Gender biasness, patriarchal mindset, radical perspective, community differences and biasness, as well policy failures are the main responsible factors of educational backwardness among Muslim community in India. The inter community discrimination among the boys and girls are also the cause of low literacy rate of Muslim women. The main basic reason of low is also caused by lack of community support. Cultural difference in society also play the role in girls upbringing, the pedagogy method for girls is varied from the boys according to cultural and religious role and position establish to perform by genders. Following two reasons are dominantly affect the women condition in all the society.

(i) Inability of State Mechanism

Though many steps have been taken so far to improve the education level of women in India but the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has been a commendable step in this regard. Under this act elementary education was made free and compulsory for the children belonging to the age group of 6-14 years. This initiated SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA). SSA is the main programme to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. Currently, there is underutilization of funds, unmet targets and delays in completion of public sector projects compounded by corruption (Bano: June,2017).

Recently released report by NITI Aayog, SDG India Index on Dashboard 2019-20 measures the improving condition and performance of each states and Union territory on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as no poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, among others. It covers 54 targets and 100 indicators. Reports data highlight that all front runner states (states those ranked between 65 to 99) from the top, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana very well improved approximately among all the goals impressively. In contrast, the five bottom states such as; Bihar, Jharkhand Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh and Assam (both took the same position). SDG #4 quality education, Himachal Pradesh ranked highest (81 out of 100), in contrast, Bihar ranked most bottom (19 out of 100).

Whereas, for SDG #5 gender equality, Himachal Pradesh ranked top with the 52 score. In opposite to this, Telangana ranked lowest (26 out of hundred).

There is no front runner state in India to achieve SDG of gender equality. For SDG #quality education, India have many aspirant category (score below 49). The above differences measures that a long challenge for the achievement is still required greater attention in the areas of quality education and gender equality, because the country comes under the aspirant's category (score below 50).

(ii) Gender Segregation in Educational Institution

Gender Inequality Index (2018) report issued by United Nation Development Programme, stated that 'the disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, labour market, etc.- with negative consequences for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice. Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development'. A historical discussion on difference and discrimination between the roles and right of men and women enhanced by the consequence of lack slide attitude of agency of socialization that also resulting low literacy rate among Muslim girls. In such a way, social institution is created barrier and hurdles to achieve educational goals, i.e. poor economic condition of the parents, young siblings and old ailing ones, teaching and learning procedure in the schools are not attractive and effective, failing to enjoy individual attention of teacher due to poor student-teacher ratio. Interest of the girl's education is subdued by that of marriage at early age. Lack of female teacher in a school, engaged in wage earning activities to help their parents, Parents are illiterate and ignorant about importance of education of their girl child, schools are not available within walking distance and closer to the place of dwelling, parents are a bit reluctant due to the feeling of insecurity and Parents also do not see the value of educating daughter who would get married and remain a housewife.

Discussion and Findings

Although there are schemes to enhance the quality education among the minorities but when the literacy level is not achieved in satisfactory manner by national level how it can be easily improved for a marginalize community exclusively for women. Specific community gender policies are not proposed in manner to dispose the low-level literacy among Muslim women. It is found that household socio economic condition of Muslim women can be improve through instrumentality in education but it's not possible without proper interventions.

Weakness in policy implementation resulting to remain the condition of educational status of Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. Inefficiency of states schemes and unable to reach to the corner areas and unable to fulfil state schools in Muslim concentrated areas. The next factor is found that due to unequal distribution of resources and imbalance utilization of funds, and schemes by state, doesn't hegemonize the madrasa curriculum in align frame.

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be observed that to include Muslim women in modern educational attainment, State should connect with convent school, to enroll Muslim women on zero fee basis in highly backward Muslim concentrated areas and rest of the burden sponsor by the State. As most of the Muslim girls' and boys' join madrasas, curriculum of madrasa education is need to be comprehend and must be equal in proportion of modern educational subjects and also include some creative or artistic subject for future reference to self-worth. Socioeconomic backwardness indicator thereof should be organized properly and considered before framing educational policy or providing subsidy, rather than basing it on religion. This would enhance the overall development effort currently gaining momentum in the country. Challenges are going to remain to forthwith development and progress in women condition. Indicators which used to assess the status, policy must be centered to achieve the improvements in indicators respectively.

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