



EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN WEST BENGAL: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITY.

Samsujjaman¹ | Mosira Parvin²

¹ Student, Department of Education, University of Kalyani.

² Student, Department of Education, University of Kalyani.

ABSTRACT

Muslims are the largest Minority and second largest religious group in West Bengal. Muslim constitutes 26 percent (census 2011) of total population of the state. In terms of education generally Muslim girls lag behind than their male counterparts and other communities. If Muslims girls continue to lag behind in educational and economic spheres, it will have the effect of pulling down the general growth rate. In the basis of census 2001 in West Bengal, Muslim literacy rate stands 57.47 percent. The rate of literacy among Muslim girls is 49.75 percent and male literacy 64.61 percent. According to DISE 2012-13 Flash statistics Muslim girls enrolment in West Bengal is 50.04 percent. Education plays a significant role in the dissemination of modern attitudes, values, approach and rational outlook. It is universally accepted facts that education is the most potent and effective tool to achieve empowerment of any section of society. Education ensures a position of dignity for the individual and the community which instils a sense of confidence and self-worth. Evolution of social and economic status is usually natural outcomes of good education. After independence the government has taken up various extensive welfare schemes for educational advancement for Minority girls.

Keywords: Education, Equality and Islam; Literacy status, Backwardness, Problems, Government initiative.

Introduction

Among all the religious communities Muslim Females are in the least educated section of present society. The objective of the paper is to highlight the educational picture of Muslim girls in West Bengal. The backwardness among Muslim girls in comparison with non-Muslim girls has become a matter of concern at present. There are several reasons for backwardness of Muslim girls such as wide spread illiteracy, large family size, lack of link between Madrasah Education and Modern Education, economic poverty, negative attitude towards girls' education, child marriage, unsuitable social environment etc. Because of these Muslim women and girls tend to lag behind. This condition may be changed if we collectively strive to rid of the problems irrespective of caste, religion, sex, region, language, ethnicity and social status. As we know that education is the only mechanism that enhances the process of social, economic and cultural development. So, steps needs to be taken to improve the literacy status of Muslim girls.

Education, Equality and Islam:

Islam was the most revolutionary faith which transformed the lives of women of Arabia who were earlier leading a life of degradation and were victims of female infanticide. The Prophet, Muhammad (sallal-lahu-alaihi-wa-sallam) cleared the way for their development and complete freedom. The Prophet's presence inspired women to play an important role in every field. The Prophet's wife Khadeja (rajiallahtalaanha) was an expert trader while Ayesha (rajiallahtalaanha) was a learned Mufti and commanded an army later in a battle after him. He turned women as the "Queen of the house" and a delicate crystal while the Quran said, "women shall have rights similar to rights against them, according to what is equitable".

There is a general stereotype that the principles of Islam are the

responsible for educational backwardness of the Muslim but according to Islam acquisition of knowledge is compulsory for all men and women. The first word revealed of the Quran was 'Iqra' which mean 'Read' and seek knowledge! Educate yourself, be educated. The Prophet said, "to listen to words of the learned and to in still unto others the lessons of science is better than religious exercise". He also states that "seek knowledge even though it is China". So, it is clear that education is the topmost priority in Islam and Islam does not stand against girl's education.

Literacy status of Muslim Girls in West Bengal :

As per 2001, the total literacy rate of Muslim in India stands close to 59.1% and rate of literacy among Hindu is 65.1%. In West Bengal total Muslim literacy rate is 57.5% and Hindu literacy rate is 72.4% whereas Muslim Female literacy rate is 49.75% and Muslim Male is 64.61%. So, we can see that in West Bengal the gender gap in literacy among Muslim was 14.9%.

Table -1

Rate of literacy and illiteracy among the Muslims in West Bengal:

Place of Residence	Literacy Rate		Illiteracy Rate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
West Bengal	64.61%	49.75%	35.39%	50.25%
Urban (W.B)	72.04%	59.23%	27.97%	40.77%
Rural(W.B)	62.92%	47.87%	37.08%	52.13%

Source: Government of India Census 2001.

Table-2**Percentage of Muslim Enrolment in West Bengal**

Area	% of Muslim Population 2011	% of Muslim Enrollment			% of Muslim Girls Enrollment		
		2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
		-11	-12	-13	-11	-12	-13
W. B	25.25	31.67	32.22	32.33	49.89	50.24	50.04
India	13.43	13.04	13.31	14.20	49.06	49.17	49.22

Source: DISE 2012-13: Flash Statistics.

Census report 2001 shows that in West Bengal rate of Muslim Female in urban area was 40.77% and in rural it was 52.13%. But according to DISE 2012-13 Flash Statistics report in the year 2010-11 the percentage of Muslim girls' enrollment in West Bengal is 49.89, in India it is 49.06 and in the year 2012-13 in West Bengal the percentage of Muslim Girls is 50.04 and in India it is 49.22. So, the data indicates that Muslim Girls enrolment in West Bengal is steps forward in comparison to the National enrolment rate. In West Bengal the gender gap and illiteracy rate has been reducing and rate of Muslim Female literacy has been increasing every decade but the gap between the genders and other communities exists. A lot of factors are responsible for the low rate of literacy among Muslim girls in West Bengal.

Problems of Muslim's Education:

Muslims are among most backwards in India as well as in West Bengal. They are not taking care of their educational advancement by the advantage of constitutional provision. There are various reasons for Muslim being educationally backward which are –the anti-Muslim attitude towards Muslims has pushed them in more backwardness, the riots, communal violence and insecurity, absent of vocational education to improve their development through education, negative attitude towards girl's education among Muslims. Madrasah and Maktabas are still running at the traditional pattern. The most important reason is that there is difficulty in finding educated groom if the girls become highly educated. That's why Muslims are far behind in achieving the literacy. The problem of backwardness is a long term process. Muslims are far lagging behind than the other communities in term of education. For Muslim being educationally backward which are–

- **Poverty:** Poverty is one of the main causes of educational backwardness of Muslim Community. Here most of teenage boys go to other states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu for earning money to save their family from this poverty. Even mostly teenage girls are also engaged either in household works or in many works such as tailoring and making Biri (Smocking) to support their family. So very least number of them go to school in this ages.

- **Lack of Awareness about the Importance of Education:** Due to prevalent illiteracy among the Muslims, they don't know the importance of education in their life. They even don't know that only education can change their educational, social and economic status. Most of them think that education is only needed for maintaining their life, not for getting good jobs. They consider that higher education means wasting of time. Therefore they favour to send their children for earning money. It is only due to their ignorance about education.
- **Unsuitable Social Environment for Education:** According to S. K. Mangal children's 70% intelligence depend on the social environment. So if the family's social environment is suitable for education, their children will be automatically motivated for education. But in West Bengal most of the children are engaged in works other than education and this has a great impact on other children of the society. So they are not getting proper motivation from others for their education.
- **Lack of Physical Facilities in Schools for Muslim Girls:** After many recommendations of the Commissions the physical facilities such as toilets in the educational institutions are not adequate for girls. Therefore many parents feel insecure to send their daughters for education to the institutions. Even many parents think that sending their daughters to such schools is against the fundamentals of their religion. So they have negligence to send their daughters for education.
- **Lack of Job Opportunities due to less Industrialization:** We know that industrialization is one of the important tools for giving job security as well as the economic development of a Country. Due to some Governmental problems industries were not developed in adequate numbers in west Bengal. Job opportunities are very less in Governmental sectors. Therefore there is lack of job opportunities and due to this problem people are not too much interested for education.
- **Negative Attitudes of the Government towards Muslims:** Though Sachchar Committee Report formed in 2006 has said that, the Government did not give adequate attention for the development of educational status of Muslim concentrated area in West Bengal. So due to Governmental negligence towards Muslims the educational status is not changing in a proper way as needed.
- **Shortage of adequate Educational Institutions:** National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 has already said that there should be one primary school in every one km. But even still now there is lack of primary schools in West Bengal. Therefore the children do not get schools in their easy reach. Due to the shortage of educational institutions, the educational status of Muslims is not developed in adequate way.
- **Child Marriage:** Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar fought for the eradication child marriage from the Indian

society in 19th Century. But in 21st Century this evil is still existed in Indian society. Among the Muslims of West Bengal this dogma is available not only for the girls but also for the boys. So for this child marriage their education has to be stopped in the middle of study.

- **Illiterate Parents:** 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.
- **Negative Attitude towards Girls 'Education:** There is negative attitude towards girls 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 travelled abroad. The most important reason is that there is difficulty in finding educated groom if the girl becomes highly educated.
- **Lack of Up-gradation in the Syllabus of Madrasa and Makhtabs:** Madarsa and Makhtabs 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 modern education. Those students who study in Madrasah and Makhtabs are detached from the mainstream of education. So they are not getting proper education. There is no up-gradation in the syllabus of Madrasah and Makhtabs.

Possible Solutions:

Educational development of Muslims is a gradual phenomenon. The emergence of some premier Muslim educational institutions across the country such as Darryl Ulyoom Deyband, U.P, Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Malaga Juana Ali University, Osmania University etc. have tremendously improved the prospects of the community in the sphere of both streams of education. Some suggestions are given below regarding the educational upliftment:

- ❖ We have to increase in awareness among Muslims about the importance of education, various employment opportunities, self employment schemes as well as resultant economic well being through it.
- ❖ Governmental initiatives and scholarships are also necessary for poor and deprived Muslims. Muslims should be provided reservation in higher education and elite institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. Thus access to higher education in general and the need for offering it to all at affordable cost is required.
- ❖ Modernization of Madarsa education to raise the educational status of traditional Muslims and there should be integration of vocational education with

religious instruction in Madaras. There is also need to link madaras with higher secondary school board.

- ❖ There is need to develop more girls' school to minimize the problem of accessibility of schools. Parents should develop positive attitude towards girl's higher education.
- ❖ Government should developed strong organizations for improving the condition of all centers of primary, secondary and higher learning in India. Various educational schemes chalked out for implementation of recognition of minority education, coaching classes for competitive examination etc.
- ❖ The parents should think that child marriage is a hindrance in the path higher education of their children. So they should eradicate this dogma from the society.
- ❖ The Government should implement the recommendations given by Sachchar Committee for the upliftment of educational status of Muslims.
- ❖ The community people should be cooperative for educational upliftment of Muslims in West Bengal. Those who know the importance of education should motivate other children as well as guardians so that even illiterate parents can also be interested for their children's education and in this way the educational status of the whole community can be changed.
- ❖ Sufficient industries should be established to secure job security for the students so that the students can feel that acquiring higher education can be very fruitful for getting good jobs. It also develops the economic problems of Muslims.
- ❖ The government should established adequate higher education institute so that the students can easily access higher education.

Government Initiatives:

The government of India has adopted suitable policies and measures for the promotion of girl's education in the country including that of the minorities. These policies are reflected in the provision of the constitution of India. The constitution of India ensures equal opportunities for all sections of citizens without any discrimination on the basis of belief, caste, creed, race, region, or gender. In the light of constitutional provision, girls hailing from any minority community enjoy, at least in principle, equal rights in education, employment and other fruits of the national progress.

To address the low participation of the minorities especially Muslims, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has taken several significant initiatives. Which are as follow:-

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) – Sarva Siksha Mission
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
- Sakshar Bharat—this mission provides comprehensive opportunities of Adult education, primarily to women with focus on disadvantaged group.
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan are imparting vocational training in 33 out of 90 minority concentrated districts in the country.

- Scheme for providing Quality Education in Madrasah.
- Right to education act-2009.
- Mahila Samahkya Programme.
- Scholarship scheme for Minority students.
- National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL)
- The scheme of Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)

Conclusion:

The overall situation and status of education of Muslim Female in West Bengal has improved to some extent. However this improvement cannot be called extraordinary. The government, policymakers, educationists and the community leaders need to take serious notice of this grim situation. Though various scheme and proposals are redressing the obtained conditions of minority women in general and that of the Muslim women in particular, yet none of them proved to be effective. Taking into consideration the above discussion on education, it can be conclude that Muslim Female at the prevailing circumstances should demand for special facilities for them to get education.

REFERENCES

1. Siddiqui, M.H. (2012). *Status of Muslim Education in India*. New Delhi.
2. Hussain, N., Abbasid, Md Zahir & Owais, S. (2012). *Islam and Muslim Societies: a social science journal*, vol.5.
3. Nayar, Usha. (2007). *an Analytical Study of Education of Muslim Women in India*. New Delhi.
4. Nasrin. (2013) *.Education of Muslim Women- A Journey from Past to Present: International Journal of Management and Social Science Research*, volume 2, no1.
5. *Government of India, Sachar Committee Report (2006)*.
6. Tasneen, Shazle & Sana Asma. (2015). *Educational Vision of Muslims in India: Problems and Concern. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science invention*, vol 4, issue 3.
7. Mondal, S.R. (1989). "Human Resource Development, Observation on Muslims in India", *Occasional Paper, No 3, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of North Bengal*.