

THE STATUS OF MUSLIM GIRL'S EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Education is the basis for creativity and foresightedness that triggers change; it helps in economic growth, quality of life and quality of human resource. Education takes us away from traditional ideas, backwardness, darkness, poverty, misery and overpopulation to enlightenment, prosperity and happiness. India is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic country. People belonging to much religious faith live side by side. Muslims constitute the largest minority of the country and one of the largest Muslim communities in the world. The Muslims occupies an important position in Indian society and civilization. India has the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. There is widely held belief that Muslims have remained largely unaffected by the process of economic development and social change that have been taking place in the country and their general economic condition has been deteriorating progressively. The present paper is an effort to understand the current status of Muslim women in India.

Key Words: *Muslim, status, girls education, deplorable*

INTRODUCTION

If we look at the medieval period, we find several traces of girl's education having been emphasized by Muslims during that period. Though this was confined to ruling class, yet there were many instances of initiatives taken by rulers for the education of common Muslim girls, which shows that these rulers were interested in empowering women in their social, religious and cultural spheres of life through means of education.

Education remains a top priority in India and education of girls has become further important in the country where women constitute fifty percent of human resources and play a pivotal role in shaping the economic, social, cultural and political fabric of the society. The Indian constitution assures equality in spite of differences based on gender, caste, religion, age, Background etc. The constitution of India provides special provisions to protect the interest of women and minorities. Yet the available data indicates that equality in educational opportunities merely exists at ground level.

Muslims, who constitute 13.4% of the population and are also socially and educationally backward. They are socially excluded group. This social exclusion can be seen in the form of segregation socially, politically, economically, culturally and educationally in Indian society. The majority of Indian Muslims suffer grave deprivation in social opportunity because of lack of access to education, health care and other public services, and to employment. The educational backwardness of Muslim women is a matter of particular concern, especially the high dropout rate, resulting in subsequently fewer proportions of them managing to complete high school, and even less availing of higher education. Not surprisingly, Muslim women account for the lowest levels of educational attainment. They lag behind in each and every field. This educational disadvantage of women in Muslim communities mandates attention. The Indian government has failed to secure primary and

secondary education for most of its citizens and its policies have deprived people of their right to education. It could also be assumed that Muslim girls' schooling is not always encouraged. The female literacy rate is an appalling 28.1 per cent. An improvement in the overall literacy rates for Muslims would not just lead to a corresponding increase in Muslim enrolment in universities and professional courses but also ensure more social opportunity for Muslim women (and men). This initial disadvantage, i.e. Muslim women's poor literacy rates, completely precludes the possibility of their entering institutions of higher education. Due to this reason the Aligarh Muslim University and the Jamia Millia Islamia – minority institutions in northern India with the specific aim of furthering education among Muslims (male and female) in India –are unable to have a majority of Muslim students in their professional schools.

The cultural traditions do not allow Muslim girls to take advantage of co-educational schools, especially if they are far away from their homes. In Islam women have equal rights as men, Historically, while there has always been a gap between education of boys and girls in India in the case of Muslims, the gap has been a yawning chasm. 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. Muslim educationists and thinkers themselves, and as a consequence the state and central government, have been tardy in redressing this imbalance. While there are numerous instances of minority-run institutions among Christians, Sikhs and Parsis that have made special efforts to provide free education to their girls, among Muslims faith based organizations this consciousness has been late in coming.

The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, constituted its committee on Girls Education in 2007 to formulate and submit recommendations on ways and means to ameliorate the grave situation of girls of minority communities in general and that of Muslim girls in particular.. The education of girl child is found to be as one of the area that has received least focus in the development process till recently.

Islam gives both females and males equal opportunity in matters of acquisition of knowledge, skill and values in this life, Islam places a very high value on learning and education and it is every Muslims duty whether a man or women to study as much as he or she can gain more understanding. There is no difference in this respect between boys and girls. The education of girls has, in fact, special importance because of their later role as wives and mother. However when it comes to education, Muslim women face several problems. These problems result in low enrolment and retention. In this dismal scenario there is one big ray of hope, while the educational system appears to have given up on Muslim girls, the girls themselves have not given up on education. There is a strong desire and enthusiasm for education among Muslim women and girls across the board. They do not enjoy the status the Quran has given them in Muslim society. Women should be treated as equal to men, and said that people who support an unjust order, or remain silent in view of gross injustices were not religious people.

Poverty, was not the sole cause for the plight of Muslim women, as there were poor families in other religion too. What seemed to distinguish Muslim women from those of other

Key Words: Minority, poverty, plight

communities included the rigidity in the community, patriarchy, religious leaders and the community's fear that they will lose their Islamic identity if they allowed their children to take up secular education and attempt, especially, to prevent their girls from exposure to modernity. Illiteracy among women and lack of exposure to the realities adversely affected the socio-economic status of the community pushing it further deeper into poverty.

II. CONCLUSION

The status of women in Indian society is a much-debated subject. There are points of view put forth defending or condemning the position occupied by or imposed upon women in the Indian subcontinent. The position of women under Islam has been the subject of repeated controversies among educated Muslims ever since they came under the impact of western liberalization. The controversial subject of women's rights has assumed great importance in the Islamic world and is a burning issue. The problems of Muslim women are many sided and closely related to the problems of the Muslim society as a whole. Hence the approach to bettering the lot of Muslim women depends mainly on the approach towards solving the problems of the Muslim society.

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