

Problems of Muslim Women in Collegiate Education in West Bengal

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Abstract:

Education is the basic and fundamental requirement for the progress and development of individuals as well as society. Similarly gender disparities in education reflect the unequal position of women in highly male dominated society. This is true not only of under-developed societies but also for developing societies like India. Here, women are at a disadvantageous state, despite a series of educational programs and reforms. Among all the religious communities, Muslim women are the lowest educated section of Indian society in general and specifically in West Bengal. The backwardness among Muslim women in comparison with Non-Muslim women exists in relation to education. There are several social reasons for their backwardness such as large family size, poverty, negative attitude towards girl's education, lack of link between madrasa education and modern education, early marriage, and social customs and traditions etc. The study aims to highlight the problems faced by the Muslim Women in collegiate education and suggestions for the eradication of social evils and solving their problems.

Keywords : Indian Muslim Women , Collegiate Education , Customs and Traditions .

1. Introduction:

The term 'women' plays a significant role in every sphere of our life. She is the driving force in the creation and generation of human society. They constitute almost half of the world population. In our country the women comprises a large portion of workforce. But in this twenty first century, unfortunately they are suppressed socioeconomically in this male dominated society for years. In relation to present study among various Religious Community, Muslims are the largest Minority and second largest religious group in West Bengal consisting of 26% (census 2011)¹ of the total population. In terms of education, generally the Muslims are lag behind other religious groups and Muslims Women lag behind their male counterparts. If the Muslim Women continue to lag behind others, that would have directly affected the growth and development of the community in particular and humanity general.

No nation in the world can achieve their national goal without educating and empowering the women folk. Education is the only tool of create, manage and progress a new society based on logical value, high attitude and approach, rational outlook etc. education have a direct impact on socio-economic progress of a nation. For an inclusive growth and development of our society the Muslim Women needed to get higher education with a matching speed in nation to other community. By education they can get socio-economic status and financial independence.

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¹Census of India.(2011): Final Population Totals India. <https://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/pes/Pesreport.pdf>

Of course, the govt. of India, govt. of W.B. and various NGOs are providing administrative and financial support, but the social support is yet to be achieved up to desired level. There are so many socio-economic problems faced by Muslim Women in getting collegiate and higher education.

2. Literature Review:

A review of related literature and previous researches in present study is attempted below- Hossain Md. I. (2012)², made a study on, "Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority status." The study is to examine the socio-economic situation of the longest religious minority population compared to the other religious minorities of the state and the status of Muslim Women of West Bengal in particular. It is concluded that socio-economic status of Muslim in various district of West Bengal and the factors which remain barriers in their development and social change and the situation of Muslim Women of West Bengal.

Syed, W. A. Ashraf (2012)³, made a study on, "Muslim Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Aligarh (a case study)." It concludes that education of women is having supreme power for the development of individuality. It is also an instrument for strengthening socially useful skills, habits and attitudes of common citizenship. The study reveals that socio-economic conditions are the major determinants of women liberation than the religion.

Nasrin (2013)⁴, conducted a study on, "Education of Women – A Journey from past to present." Her objectives of the study were to highlight the progress of education of Muslim Women in education since independence and to suggest steps to empower them through education. She found that the number of girls' schools and colleges also increased slowly but steadily and the Muslim Parents are becoming anxious to educate their daughter along with their sons. She gave several suggestions like eradicating ill traditions, making girls more confident providing vocational and technical education and reservation for Muslim Women.

Islam, M.S. and Siddiqui, L. (2016)⁵, in their paper "Assessing the Educational status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A case study of Malda District" has represented the educational status of Muslim Women in Malda district. He emphasized on the percentage of drop-out of Muslim Women from literate to higher education like school, college and University. The authors have based their paper mainly on primary sources of data.

3. Objectives:

The objectives of the present study are -

²Hossain, M.I. (2013). In his paper "Socio-economic and educational status of Muslim Women: A comparative outlook", Journal of Education and Practices, vol-4, No.10.

³Syed, W., A. Ashraf and Ahmad, A. (2012). In his paper "Muslim Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Aligarh (A Case Study)", International Journal Of Scientific and Research Publications, Vol-2, No.4.

⁴Nasrin (2013), in her research paper "Education of Muslim Women – A Journey from past to present", International Journal of Management and Social Science Research (IJMSSR), Vol-2, No.1

⁵Islam, M.S. And Siddiqui, (2016). in their paper "Assessing the Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: a case study of Malda District", A Peer Reviewed Journal of Geography, vol-3, No.40-47

- (a) To discuss the necessity of higher education for Muslim Women.
- (b) To study the present educational status of Muslim Women in West Bengal.
- (c) To find out the problems faced by Muslim Women at higher education level.
- (d) To provide suggestions to solve the problems faced by Muslim Women at college education level.

4. Importance of education for Muslim Women:

- By educating themselves, the Muslim Women can increase their self-confidence and self-efficiency.
- Education can help them to raise the social status and economic empowerment.
- They may be made aware about their rights and duties by educating themselves.
- Muslim Women's career opportunity may be increased by specialized education to attain their self-dependency and autonomy in the society.
- Education may bring ability for critical thinking and pragmatic approach among Muslim Women.
- Education may develop a sense of leadership and empowerment.
- They need higher education for a better and healthy and prosperous family life as well as social life.

5. Methods of the study:

The present study is purely theoretical and descriptive in nature. The individual experiences have been analyzed thoroughly to get every aspect related to the given issue. This is such an issue about which we get a lot of experience in our surrounding society. The researcher has used data collected from the primary and secondary sources of data and also used for empirical analysis materials have been collected from newspaper, websites, journals, research paper, books census report and government reports.

6. Present Status:

Table – 1 : Percentage of total population in various educational levels in India⁶

Below Primary		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduation & Above	
M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %
10.27	8.96	13	11.11	10.17	7.37	8.35	5.52	0.57	0.43	5.51	3.43

Source - Govt. of India (Census-2011)

Table – 2: Percentage of Muslim population in various educational levels in India⁷

Below Primary		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduation & Above	
M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %
13.47	11.51	15.18	12.88	9.66	7.32	6.40	4.63	4.42	3.31	3.05	1.75

Source - Govt. of India (Census-2011)

⁶ Census of India.(2011): Final Population Totals India.

<https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/censusdata2011.html>

⁷ Ibid (Footnote-6)

Table – 3: Percentage of Total population in various educational levels in West Bengal⁸

Below Primary		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduation & Above	
M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %
13.71	12.13	12.83	11.47	10.86	9.41	5.12	3.70	5.29	3.81	5.02	2.83

Source - Govt. of India (Census-2011)

Table – 4 : Percentage of Muslim population in various educational levels in West Bengal⁹

Below Primary		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Graduation & Above	
M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %	M %	F %
19.12	15.60	15.16	14.09	9.09	8.72	3.36	2.68	3.33	2.4	1.89	0.68

Source - Govt. of India (Census-2011)

7. Problems of Muslim Women in higher education level:

The problems of Muslim Women in higher education level are discussed below:

- Lack of awareness among Muslim Women about the importance of education in their life.
- Impact of customs and traditions.
- Early/child marriage of Muslim Women folk which extinguishes their interest for higher education.
- Lack of Muslim Women teacher in higher educational institutes to attract Muslim Women students.
- Ignorance and lack of education of families hinders the participation of Muslim women in higher education.
- Lack of higher education institutes to attract Muslim women for education.
- Wastage and stagnation due to negative attitude of Muslim society.
- Unhealthy socio-economic condition of families also a problem of education for Muslim Women.
- Lack of sufficient governmental and non-governmental initiatives to attract Muslim women towards higher education.
- Last but not the least the entry level educational institutions such as madrassa running with old and traditional ideas and methods.

8. Suggestions:

Some suggestions are given below regarding the educational upliftment-

- Creating awareness in Muslim society about the importance of women education and eradicating social and religious taboos.
- Stopping early/child marriage according to laws of the land.
- Upholding the socio-economic status of Muslim families by educating them.

⁸ Ibid (Footnote-6)

⁹ Ibid (Footnote-6)

- Governmental initiatives should be taken to establish higher education institutes for women, especially Muslim dominated area.
- Recruitment of more women, especially Muslim women in higher educational institutes to attract more Muslim women students.
- Arrangements for vocational courses and modern skill development program should be made.
- Scholarships and fellowship for Muslim women students may be a great step in attracting them for higher education.
- Special provisions for Muslim women should be made for education, employment and development of leadership quality.
- The entry level educational institutions such as madrassas should adopt modern and scientific ideas and methods of teaching.
- At least the recommendations of Sachhar Committee 2006 may help to a great extent for the expansion of higher education among Muslim women.

9. Conclusion:

To conclude it can be said that considering the trends of Muslim Women's participation in higher education, special provision should be made to bring them into main stream education. This is the need of the hour for inclusive growth of Indian society, the Government, NGOs, social leaders and every stake-holder should come forward for this. The Muslim Women should be provided with every possible incentive to come out of the traditional social thinking and take active part in nation building. It should be the duty of our society to address their problems and take effective measures to solve these problems.

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