

An Analytical Study of the Problems of Muslim Women in Higher Education

¹Dr. Gayatree Goswamee , ²Md. Nazrul Islam Barbhuyan

¹ Prof. & Former Head, Dept. of Education, G.U., Assam

² Research Scholar, G.U., & Assistant Prof., Dept. of Education, Hojai College, Hojai, Assam

Introduction

Problems of women are based on different phenomena of our society. Although they have been present since the establishment of human society, yet from time to time the nature and genesis of the pivotal issues have been changing owing to the development of education. It is very unfortunate that problems of women still exist in the 21st century and in some cases they are worse than they were in the primitive age. As a result, it has become a very crucial global issue everywhere. It is also pertinent to note that both educated and uneducated women of every society have been facing numerous problems in their way of life. It is found that uneducated women are the worst sufferers in today's world. At the same time, it is observed that women of the developed countries face fewer problems than those of the underdeveloped countries. Even as the problems of women in general are many and common to most women, it is the Muslim women who are the worst sufferers in our society. Again, the problems of Muslim women are not same in all the Muslim countries. It varies from region to region. It is seen that the problems of Muslim women in India are hardly the same as in the other South East Asian countries.

India is a land of diversity with different linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups, and has a unique feature of unity amongst diversity. Indian culture is distinct and each ethnic group has the liberty to maintain its own religious identity. Among the different religious groups in India, Muslims constitute the largest of the minority groups. They constitute 13.4% of the India's total population. Muslim societies in India are very heterogeneous in nature because of the influence of diversified social systems. The socio-economic problems that Muslim women face today may be best understood in terms of their educational background. Islam is perhaps the first religion which has given greater significance to learning. *1(Syed Mehdi Hussain : "Muslim Women and Higher Education: A Case Study of Hyderabad"). A number of verses from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasize the acquiring of knowledge by Muslims, whether male or female. As many as 728 does the holy Qur'an refer directly or indirectly to the significance of education. But, unfortunately Muslims deviate from these religious injunctions, resulting in a tremendous gap between men and women with respect to knowledge. No one can cite a single instance where women have been discouraged

or given less importance by Islam in acquiring education.

Statement of the Problem

Women, in general are the most vulnerable in Indian society and Muslim women in particular are the ubiquitously backward owing to a host of different reasons. The patriarchal nature of our society is also held responsible for the pathetic condition of our women. Moreover, Muslim women suffer more because of the socio-cultural set-up. They are not given enough freedom and hardly have an access to higher education. A variety of reasons accounts for the economic, social, cultural and educational backwardness of Muslim. This study is an attempt to explore the truth behind it. It may also help the Government to take necessary strategies for the development of women education.

Objectives of the Study

Keeping in view the rationale of the studies conducted by the previous researchers, the prime objective of this study is to make an analytical study of the problems of Muslim women as well as to make a comparative study of Muslim women pursuing higher education. An attempt is also made to see the parental attitude towards the education of Muslim women. Efforts are made also to elucidate the role of the schemes offered by the Government and non-Government organisations for minimising the problems of Muslim women in higher education.

Hypotheses

In the light of the above objectives, the following hypotheses are framed:

1. There is no significant difference between the educational problems of urban and rural Muslim women pursuing higher education.
2. Muslim women face serious problems while pursuing higher education.
3. The schemes provided by the Govt. and non-Govt. organizations are not sufficient.

Period and Area of Study

This study covers a period of one year from August 2012 to August 2013. The data over six months were collected from the B.A. level Muslim girl students of the District of Nagaon in Assam. It is delimited to the provincialised colleges imparting only general education.

TABLE: SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL AND URBAN MUSLIM WOMEN PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

| Items | Area | | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Rural | | | Urban | | | |
| | Responses | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Socio-Economic & Cultural Aspects | Yes | 35 | 70 | 25 | 50 | 60 | 60 |
| | No | 05 | 10 | 15 | 30 | 20 | 20 |
| | Partially Agree | 07 | 14 | 06 | 12 | 13 | 13 |
| | Not at all | 03 | 6 | 04 | 08 | 07 | 07 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Socio-Cultural Values | Yes | 25 | 50 | 20 | 40 | 45 | 45 |
| | No | 05 | 10 | 15 | 30 | 20 | 20 |
| | Partially Agree | 15 | 30 | 05 | 10 | 20 | 20 |
| | Not at all | 05 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 15 | 15 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Educational Aspects | Yes | 27 | 54 | 30 | 60 | 57 | 57 |
| | No | 03 | 6 | 05 | 10 | 08 | 08 |
| | Partially Agree | 10 | 20 | 13 | 26 | 23 | 23 |
| | Not at all | 10 | 20 | 02 | 04 | 12 | 12 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Parental Attitudes and Awareness | Yes | 28 | 56 | 22 | 44 | 50 | 50 |
| | No | 07 | 14 | 08 | 16 | 15 | 15 |
| | Partially Agree | 10 | 20 | 10 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| | Not at all | 05 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 15 | 15 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Other Factors | Yes | 20 | 40 | 35 | 70 | 55 | 55 |
| | No | 10 | 20 | 05 | 10 | 15 | 15 |
| | Partially Agree | 13 | 26 | 07 | 14 | 20 | 20 |
| | Not at all | 07 | 14 | 03 | 06 | 10 | 10 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Methodology

A descriptive survey method has been followed in order to carry out the present investigation. Descriptive survey method is expected to be effective in determining the status of the present phenomena and also in drawing valid general conclusions wherever necessary from the facts discovered.

Population or universe in its precise explanation is the totality or whole quality whereas sample is a smaller representation of the whole or totality. It is the population or universe from where we get the sample, and it is the sample or particular inferences from where a logical conclusion or generalization is made. The population of this study comprises all the degree college-going Muslim women of Nagaon District of Assam. A convenient sampling method was followed in this regard. A major stratification comprised urban and rural students. The study was carried out in the selected rural and urban degree colleges covering 300 samples from the students and 100 from others.

For each type of research, certain tools and techniques are required to explore new facts and ideas. The selection of tools for a particular study depends upon certain factors such as the objectives of the study, the amount of time at the investigator's disposal and availability of suitable tests. The present investigator used Self-Structured Questionnaire and Interview Schedule for data collection.

Findings

While asked whether the foregoing parameters were up to the mark or not, this investigator received mixed responses which are detailed below.

1. Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects: A look at item No.1 reveals that 60% respondents say 'yes', 20% reply 'no', 13% agree partially and 07% do not agree at all.
2. Socio-Cultural Values: It is also observed that out of the total of a hundred respondents, 45% support item No. 2, 20% do not support,

another 20% partially support and the next 15% totally disagree.

3. Educational Aspects: It is found from the table that 57% respondents support item number 3, 08% do not support, and 23% partially agree while rest of the 12% totally disagree.
4. Parental Attitudes and Awareness: In case of item number 4, it is found that 57% respondents say 'Yes', 08% respond 'No', 23% respondents partially agree and rest of the 12% respondents totally disagree.
5. The Investigator observed that some of the factors are subjective and some are common to all. In most of the cases, differences exist between rural and urban respondents.
6. Some of the important factors which came to the notice of the Investigator were poverty, illiteracy, unavailability of educational institutions, shortage of educational institutions, insufficient teachers, lack of infrastructure in the existing educational institutions, and a very high figure of teacher-student ratio.
7. It has also been observed that Indian Muslims confront various socio-economic problems, which have to be understood in terms of their educational background.
8. Muslim women hardly have an access to higher education. Moreover, even the primary level of education is also not easily accessible to the greater bulk of the Muslim girls.
9. Many schools and colleges in the minority Muslim areas do not have the basic minimum requirements of the students, which directly affect their education.
10. A section of Muslims put greater emphasis on Qur'anic education which is given at home. Interestingly, however, they only learn the Qur'an by heart without knowing the meaning of the verses. If they could understand the meaning and significance, the status of Muslims could be better since the Holy Qur'an attaches great importance to education.
11. Marriages between near relatives create distraction among young girls, and they lose the zeal to achieve something through education, and thus they themselves do not have an academic interest.
12. Age-old traditions and unhealthy practices stand in the way of the wholesome development of society. excessive population growth, unhygienic living conditions,

alarming high infant mortality rate, exploitation, socio-political backwardness, child marriage, natural and man-made disasters, communal unrest were also found conspicuous.

13. The investigator also observed that negative attitude and stereotyped attitude of parents and members of society towards education of women were found responsible.
14. Although the holy Qur'an has given equal status and economic power to the women folk, women in reality are almost always deprived of them. Many a time, they fear to claim their rights. Thus, they always suffer from socio-economic insecurity.

Conclusion

It is a matter of regret that Muslim women in the state of Assam register an abysmally low share in higher education. Unless we start intensive educational and social movement everywhere in the state, we cannot hope to bring about a positive change. The matter calls for special and immediate attention, active cooperation and an initiative of the common people from all strata of society in the greater interests of our country. We should prepare our women in general and Muslim women in particular in such a way as they can be highly educated, skilled and innovative professionals, career-oriented leaders, and promoters of intercultural understanding and sustainable human and productive source of economic development of our state and country. We must redefine our Govt. policies, schemes, socio-cultural and political approaches. It is must to create intensive awareness of women's issues and a call for legal changes regarding the problems of women.

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