

Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Case Study of Burdwan-I Block in Purba Bardhaman District in West Bengal

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Abstract

The Education of women is important for the development and welfare of a society. India is a country with diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious communities. As Muslims are the largest minority in the country, the majority of this community is educationally backward. The present paper highlights the educational status of Muslim women of Burdwan – I block of Purba Bardhaman District in particular. The Research paper attempts to explore the Muslim women's educational level, literacy rate and male-female literacy gap and highlights the different educational schemes available for women in education. The present paper is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. This paper analyses the main problems of the study and proposes solutions to improve education levels and promote harmonious development in Islamic societies.

Keyword: Muslim Women, Literacy, Educational Backwardness, Development, Empowerment

Introduction

Education is an important factor for improving women's status in society and is connected to many modern roles that not only ensures that they acquire the knowledge and skills required to advance in status but also to improve their intellectual capacity in comparison to men which helps them establish their position in society. Muslims are the country's largest minority and most of this community is educationally backward. In comparison with Muslims, other minorities are better positioned in terms of education and economic status. Different governments have created and investigated the cause of Muslims' education and economic backwardness, including the Hunter Commission (1983), and the Sachar Committee Report (2006). Educationally, Muslims are considered the most backward community in the country. Muslim girls and women fall beyond their male counterparts and women from all other communities. According to the census 2011, Muslims had a literacy rate of 59.1% which was far lower than the national average of 64.8% and the Non – Muslim community's 70.8%. The percentage of literate Muslim women was 50.1%, significantly lower than the percentage of literate Muslim men, which was 67.6%. Muslims are the largest minority in West Bengal, where their proportion of the overall population is 27.01%. In this state, Muslim women's conditions are miserable in almost every aspect of development, including educational achievement, progressive work participation, political and economic empowerment etc. Islam does not give men the right to prioritize education over that of women. Both are encouraged to gain knowledge. Islam does not give men the right to prioritize etc. Islam emphasizes the acquisition and expansion of knowledge. Muslim women are significantly less educated than non-Muslim women. There are several reasons for Muslim women's low literacy rates, but the most important issues include poverty, domestic work, preference for male children, child marriage etc.

Literature Review

Review of related literature in this area of interest is an important part of the research process. In the present study, a review of related literature and previous research is attempted as follows:

Rahaman, H., and Barman, H. (2015) made a study on "Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism". The main objective of the research was to highlight the educational status of Muslims

in Bengal. It was sociological research based mainly on secondary sources. According to the study's conclusion, the government and NGOs must focus on the educational development of Muslims in West Bengal to achieve Socio-economic development.

Mukhopadhyay, H. (2008) conducted a study on, "The Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in a District of West Bengal, India: Reflections on a Survey of Women". The study was to figure out the role of education in women's empowerment in the Malda district in West Bengal. The research was conducted through the survey method. According to the findings of this study, the status of women in the Malda district in West Bengal was lower than that of men.

Kumar, S. S. and Palanisamy, M. (2013), in their research paper "Impact of Education on women empowerment, in India" have highlighted, that education is crucial for women's empowerment, prosperity, welfare and development. This study focuses on how education affects women's empowerment and tries to understand the effects of Indian women's education during the Vedic, Buddhist and Muslim periods as well as the impact of Indian women's education during the British and Modern eras. This study attempts to find out the status of women in India, women's education reform etc.

Hossain, M.I (2013), in his research paper "Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Comparative Outlook" has described Muslims as the largest minority in West Bengal, with a special focus on Muslim women, who are lagging in all areas of development such as educational enrolment, socio-economic status and political participation due to a variety of factors affecting Muslim women. The author has collected data from both primary and secondary sources the census of the Government of India Report 2001 and relevant published literature.

Objective of the study

1. To examine the educational level of Muslim women in the Burdwan -I Block.
2. To find out the rate of literacy among Muslim women in the Burdwan-I Block of Purba Bardhaman District.
3. To find out West Bengal Government welfare schemes for education-related favour on Muslim women.

Methodology

The present research is quantitative in nature. The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data were collected in September 2023 using a well-designed questionnaire and census data in 2011. A total of 100 households were surveyed in the Burdwan -I Block of Purba Bardhaman District. The Muslim women were interviewed in both urban and rural areas. Secondary data were collected Books, Journals, and Newspapers etc.

Discussion

Educational backwardness is an important factor that contributes to the social, cultural, economic, and political backwardness of the Muslim community in West Bengal. This study area has 100 surveyed households, with 525 residents registered. The overall population consists of 250 female persons and 275 male persons. As per as the education of females is concerned, about 38 percent of females are not able to have at least a basic education. Moreover, about 18 per cent of female children are not enrolled yet. The Remaining 52 per cent of education consists of upper primary (26%), primary (8%), secondary (12%) and higher secondary (6%). Females represent only 2.4 per cent of graduation and 0.4 per cent of post-graduation.

Table 1: Education of Muslim Female and Male Population

Education	Female	Percentage	Male	Percentage
Illiterate	95	38	110	40
Primary	20	8	35	12.73
Upper Primary	65	26	72	26.19
Secondary	30	12	18	6.54
H.S / 10+2	15	6	12	4.37
Graduation	6	2.4	8	2.91
Post Graduation	1	0.4	5	1.81
Not Enrolled	18	7.2	15	5.45
Total	250	100	275	100

(Source: Primary Survey in Burdwan -I Block (September 2023))

The above table clearly shows that higher education among Muslim females is more miserable than males. In the Burdwan -I Block, the Muslim male population is mainly farmers, hence male illiteracy is 40 per cent, slightly higher than female illiteracy. Primary and upper primary levels of education are about equivalent, at 12.73 and 26.19 per cent respectively.

Educational Status of Muslim Women in Burdwan–I Block in Purba Bardhaman District: Most of the Muslim women in Burdwan-I Block in Purba Bardhaman District, do not have access to basic educational facilities. However, women’s education is essential for Muslim Communities' harmonious development. The present research analyses the states of Muslim women and provides information on the percentage of literacy rate. According to the 2011 census of India, in Burdwan -I Block in Purba Bardhaman District, the literacy rate of Muslim women is 51.2 per cent, whereas the Muslim male literacy rate is 62.18 per cent. In terms of Muslim educational status, it is obvious that in this census Muslim women in the Surveyed area have a lower literacy rate than Muslim men. The General literacy rate is 73.38 per cent for males and 62.1 per cent for females.

Table 2: Literacy Rate of Burdwan-I Block in Purba Bardhaman District

Category	Literacy Rate in % (2011)	
	Male	Female
General	73.38%	62.1%
Muslim	62.18%	51.2%

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

Initiated different educational schemes for Muslim women in education: The schemes available through the Government of West Bengal schemes for women's education are as follows:

1. Pre–Matric Scholarship Scheme and Post–Matric Scholarship Scheme: The Scheme’s main goals are to award scholarships to students (both male and female) from economically backward sections of the minority community to provide them with better opportunities to pursue higher education and improve their employability.
2. Scholarship for OBC students: The goal of the OBC scholarship is to provide financial support to OBC students (both male and female) pursuing post-secondary education and assisting them in completing their studies. Many girls in the Burdwan-I Block belong to the OBC category. As a result, they benefit from it.
3. Kanyashree Prakalpa: In 2013, the West Bengal Government introduced the Kanyashree Prakalpa, which aims to increase the percentage of girl students pursuing higher education. Prakalpa stated that the government will grant a stipend of RS 500 per year to women students from low-income

families (approximately RS. 50,000 per month). Prkalpa further claimed that after the age of 18, girls would receive RS. 25000 at a time. Most backward Muslim families were given the opportunity to improve their women's education.

4. Sabooj Sathi Bicycle Distribution Scheme: Sabooj sathi was inaugurated in September 2015. The West Bengal government declared that bicycles would be distributed to an estimated 40 lakh children in grades IX to XI who attend government-run and government-aided schools and Madrasahs. The main objective of the initiative is to empower students, especially the girls and reduce dropouts from higher education. Because of this initiative, many poor Muslim girls were able to improve their educational status.
5. Rupashree Prkalpa: This project was started in 2018 when the West Bengal state government decided to give a one-time financial grant of RS. 25000 to economically disadvantaged families, at the time of their daughter's marriage. The initiative has been implemented in all districts of West Bengal.

Findings of the Study

Since 2011, the West Bengal government has launched various schemes for women's education, among them the Kanyashree scheme, Shikashree, Sabooj Sathi, Minority scholarship, Oikyasree scholarship etc., in all these schemes women get a lot of financial help.

1. Here Muslim women are also getting all these benefits well, and for that, a large number of students are getting admission to schools, colleges and universities, some part of the scholarship help is being used for studies and some part is increasing the financial support of the family.
2. Surveyed on Burdwan-I Block showed that according to the 2011 census, the female literacy rate is 62.1%, according to 2021 it has increased to 72.3% out of which the Muslim female literacy rate is 60%.
3. But there is a problem everywhere that despite giving scholarships, education is limited to graduation for women, then most of them cannot proceed to higher education. A problem here is poverty. Because of this poverty, women are being married off without higher education.

Conclusion

The present topic highlights the education status of Muslim women in Burdwan-I Block in Purba Bardhaman District. In the Muslim community, the female literacy rate is lower than the male literacy rate and lower than the overall literacy rate. Actually, most families are unable to provide higher education for their daughters due to poor economic situations, gender biases, and religious beliefs. The government shows neglect towards the development of education for Muslims. Parents should take some initial steps to prevent child marriages. The government needs to promote "Education for All" among Muslim families. Free education for poor Muslim girls is required to improve their status and prepare them for further education as well as to their mainstreaming at par with their counterparts and others in the society. Education can only reduce atrocities on women and their compartmentalisation to a significant level. Amid poverty and social injustice, it is highly recommended that education must be provided to all especially the Muslim women to save and protect them from the abysmal dark of life deathtraps.

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