

THE ROLE OF STATE IN EMPOWERING MUSLIM GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract :

Since Independence state has shown special concern in uplifting the status of the country through education. Creating provision of the universalization of the elementary education in the country through article 45 under the directive principle of the constitution and various committees and commissions constituted in this regard left no doubt about the intention of the state in achieving major targets of development through education. For six decades, the nation has worked and moved towards building and sustaining a secular democracy and advancing the interests of the historically disadvantaged sections to include women, the Scheduled castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the minorities

But all these attempts by the state about the universalization of elementary education and secondary education respectively seemed to fail their goals due to prevailing socioeconomic, political and economic factors. Due to the overshadowing impact of these factors in one way or the other, one may witness discrepancy in the enrolled status of children of the different communities. According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rate of Muslim was found to be around 52%. But when it goes to girls, then the percentage goes further down. The reasons behind the relatively poor participation of the Muslim Girls at the different levels of education was found to be related with large family size, poverty, gender-role discrimination, social stereotypes and stigma along with lack of neighborhood schools, women teachers, purdah system etc.

While referring the thrust of the Right to education Act on the disadvantaged group and on inclusion, this paper aimed to study the participatory status of the Muslim girls in education followed by enlisting suggestions to enhance the participation.

The methodology of the paper was descriptive and entirely based on the review and analysis of the secondary sources related with education of the Muslim girls in India.

Key words: disadvantaged group, Muslim Girls, RTE 2009/10, inclusiveness.

INTRODUCTION

'The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all' Aung San Suu Kyi

Since Independence Indian state has shown special concern in uplifting the status of the people of different segments of society including women in the country through education. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but empowers the State to take special measures for protecting and advancing their interests in all walks of life and making necessary legal provisions to this effect. Creating provision of the universalization of the elementary education in the country through article 45 under the directive principle of the constitution and various Educational committees and commissions constituted in this regard left no doubt about the intention of the state in achieving major targets of development through education. For six decades, the nation has worked and moved towards building and sustaining a secular democracy and advancing the interests of the historically disadvantaged sections to include women, the Scheduled castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the minorities. The Constitution of India grants Muslims and other Minorities equality of status and opportunities with other citizens to accelerate the process of educational and socio-economic justice under the rights to Equality and Right to Freedom of Religion and Protection of Interest of Minorities in regard to educational rights. Concerted efforts have been made towards equality and removal of disparities. Major policy and programmatic inputs are being made to ameliorate the overall situation of the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of our society with a string focus on women and girls in the last two decades with special focus on education and empowerment.

But all these attempts by the state about the universalization of elementary education and secondary education respectively to the people of all walks of life seemed to get failed by witnessing the skewed participation. On the one hand, some groups have been successful in yielding comparatively major benefits from the state policies for the promotion of education at different levels, on the other some are crucially standing at the lower end due to various reasons. In the latter case, Muslim women can be chosen as an appropriate example who in comparison even to their male counterpart are lag behind in marking their presence in the educational endeavour.. The Nation is committed to educational advancement and empowerment of all Indian women in pursuance of the Constitutional commitment of equality and life with dignity as reflected in our several national documents like Indian Education Commission 1964-66, National Education Policy 1986 etc. According to the 2011 census, Indian literacy rates stand at 82.14 percent for males and 65.46 percent for females. The literacy rates for three socio-religious communities (SRCs), Muslims, Hindus, and Christians, stand at 59.1 percent, 65.1 percent, and 80.3 percent respectively. Among these SRCs, Muslim women have the lowest literacy rates, at 50.1 percent (in comparison with Hindu women, at 53.2 percent, and Christian women, at 76.2 percent). Muslim men, too, compare unfavorably (at 67.6 percent) with Hindu men (76.2 percent) and Christian men (84.4 percent) are found to be poor performers. The reasons behind the relatively poor participation of the Muslim Girls at the different levels of education was found to be related with large family size, poverty, gender-role discrimination, social stereotypes and stigma along with lack of neighborhood schools, women teachers, purdah system etc.

2. Reviewed Material

After making the comprehensive review of the related studies, some sample papers have been selected which helped in developing perspective about the status of Muslim girls in education.

Nayar U(2007) in her work titled '**An Analytical Study of Education of Muslim Women and Girls in India**' attempted to build an extensive data and information base on education of Muslim women and girls to facilitate the work of policy makers, planners and researchers and for generating better understanding of their present situation and specific needs, if any. The study has collated, interpreted and analyzed existing data on all relevant indicators available from primary and secondary sources in the form of official documents, reports and earlier studies on education of Muslim girls and women. The Study vindicated the overall educational backwardness of Muslims, particularly of Muslim women and girls and concluded with the finding that national aggregate picture hides more than what it reveal about the true education status of Muslims in the country.

Hossain M.I(2013) in his paper '**Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Comparative Outlook**' attempts to explore through secondary and primary sources the status of Muslim women in West Bengal to enquire the pattern of work participation, employment and inclusion of Muslim women in comparison to the women in other religious groups of West Bengal along with highlighting the factors which are operating as bottleneck in their social change and development and to provide some suggestions and way forward.

Narula M. (2014) in her study '**Educational Development of Muslim Minority: With Special Reference to Muslim Concentrated States of India**' through discussion of policies and programs implemented for the development of education of the Muslim minority attempted to portray the progress of school education in terms of access, participation, retention of Muslim children in the Muslim concentrated states. The paper ended up by giving strategies and measures to improve the status of education of Muslims in different parts of India.

Bano F. (2017) in her article '**Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: An Overview**' attempted to provide a brief overview of education status of Muslim women followed by exploring the future directions and strategies for integrating and galvanizing women of all walks of life for playing their role in building and sustaining the 21st Century and building an equitable social order where the women could live a dignified life.

Sengupta R.& Rooj D(2018) in their article on '**Factors Affecting Gender Disparity in Muslim Education in India**' aimed empirically to evaluate the effect of socio-economic and demographic variables; particularly household consumption expenditure as a proxy for household income, on current education attendance levels of Muslims along with examining the effect of these factors on the gender gap in education of Muslims. Results from the empirical analysis of this study showed that Muslims are less likely to attend any educational institution if they belong to the lower income status household and are more likely to attend if they belong to the upper income status household.

Hazra Moumita (2018) in her article 'An Overview of Educational Status of Muslim Women in India' through extensive analysis attempted to provide overview of educational status of Muslim women in India followed by discussing the factors and measures for improving the status.

Hussain M et al (2018) in their article on 'Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: Issues and Challenges' attempted to highlight the educational status of Muslim Women followed by providing responsible factors and the issues and challenges in the upliftment of their status. The paper in its conclusion gave suggestions in order to integrate the Muslim women with the mainstream society.

Zeb Khushboo(2019) in the article 'EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW' dealt with the educational status of Muslim women and its various provisions provided under the constitution of India by identified the educational backwardness of Muslim women and also discusses some measures for improving their status. The paper concluded by suggesting measures to improve the status.

3. Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of this study were

1. To explore role of state in empowering Muslim women through education since independence
2. To study policies and provisions made by the state in empowering Muslim women through education since independence
3. To identify gaps in the implementation of policies and provisions in empowering Muslim women through education
4. To suggest measures to bridge the gaps between policies and implementations to empower Muslim women through education

4. Research Methodology

While referring the thrust of the Right to education Act on the disadvantaged group and on inclusion, this paper aimed to study the participatory status of the Muslim girls in education followed by enlisting suggestions to enhance the participation.

The methodology of the paper was descriptive and entirely based on the review and analysis of the secondary sources, available online, related with education of the Muslim girls in India.

5. Role of State in Empowering Girls through Education Since Independence

Since Independence nation is continuously engaged in enhancing the accessibility of education to all the children irrespective of their affiliation to any cast, class, religion, region etc. The provision of universalization of elementary education under Article 45 of the constitution vindicates the stand of the state. Later on after making periodic observations and surveys, various Educational committees and commissions were created to enhance the participation, enrollment and contribution by suggesting national level frameworks, having universal appeal for participation for all the children of the country in ensuring their role in national development through education. The university Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education commission (1952-53), Indian Education Commission (1964-66), National Education Policy (1986) and its revised version in the form of Programme of Action (1992) and right to education act (2009/10) are some of the significant steps taken by state for the universalization of education at the different levels in the country.

In order to understand it better, in the following lines some of the excerpts, observations have been quoted in the context of girls' education from the different education committees/commission and frameworks formed after independence.

According to university education commission (1948-49) ' *There cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then it would most surely be passed on to next generation.* '

While discussing the problems of women education, Secondary education commission stated ' *The Commission feels that, at the present stage of our social evolution, there is no special justification to deal with women's education separately. Every type of education open to men should also be open to women. During the course of our visits to various institutions and universities we have noted that Women have found admission to practically all the faculties which a generation ago would have been considered as unsuitable for them or beyond their easy reach. It is a matter of gratification that many women have joined the Faculties of Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine* ' (MUDALIAR COMMISSION REPORT 41 Veterinary Science, Commerce, Law and Teaching as well as the Arts and Science and have taken to research and some have made their mark in it. (Source: p.44, https://www.educationforallinindia.com/1953%20Secondary_Education_Commission_Report.pdf),

National committee on women education (1958) " *A suitable committee should be appointed to go into the various aspects of the questions relating to the nature of education to the girls at the elementary, secondary and adult stages and*

to examine whether the present system was helping them to lead a happier and useful life.' (Source: https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/37990/9/09_chapter%202.pdf)

According to Smt. Hansa Meha committee report (1961-62) 'In the ultimate democratic and socialistic pattern of society education will be related to individual capacities aptitudes and interests which are not related to sex. There would, therefore, be no need in such a society to different curriculum on the basis of sex' (ibid)

Bhaktavasalam committee(1963) specifically recommended the enhancement of girls' participation in school education by creating awareness in the community, appointment of women teachers in rural areas, assisting voluntary organizations involved in girls' education, more recruitment of women teachers at the primary levels etc. (ibid)

While explaining the meaning of equalization of educational opportunities in chapter six , Indian education commission stated ' The education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation... The significance of the education of girls cannot be over- emphasized. For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men. As stated earlier, the education of women can assist greatly in reducing the fertility rate. In the modern world, the role of the woman goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equally with man the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects. This is the direction in which we shall have to move. In the struggle for freedom, Indian women fought side by side with men.

. (Source: <http://dise.in/Downloads/KothariCommissionVol.1pp.1-287.pdf>)

If one goes to the national education policy 1986, then one may find it difficult to ignore that in comparison to the previous policies and documents, this policy came out very comprehensively in support of the girls' education. In chapter four of this document, background, action plan and the elaboration of the hindrances lying in front of the girls' education have been covered very comprehensively. All these can be sensed in the statements like 'Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development. The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in, elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. Major emphasis will be laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereo-typing in vocational and professional courses and to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies.' (Source: P.9,Part IV, Education for Equality, http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/npe86.pdf.)

National perspective plan for women education (1988-2000) also gave strong emphasis on education of women by enunciating the objectives of complete elimination of illiteracy, ensuring equal opportunities to all girls, substantial vocationalization and diversification to create wide scope of employment to them, providing part time courses etc. by 2000AD.

Similarly in the five years plans also, women education was given due importance. In the first five year plans it was stated 'women must have the same opportunities as men for taking all kinds of work and this presupposes that they get equal facilities so that their entry into the professions and public services is in no way prejudiced.' It got continued and it received major impetus when in the sixth five years plan, first time the provision of attached Balwadies and crèches were introduced in order to help the girls responsible for care of their siblings could attend schools.

One may sense the concern when in the right to education act 2009/10 it was repeatedly mentioned that each child of the age of six to fourteen shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of elementary education.

The girls' education has its strong backing at the international level also. When in 1990,at Jomtien, the world declaration of Education for all was made, girls education was given major thrust and it got reflected in all the subsequent meetings like in Dakar 2000, Muskat agreement 2014, Education for all 2015 Global Monitoring report and finally in Millinium goal 2030 . Among eight millinium development goals, one goal is to ensure gender equality. (https://bice.org/app/uploads/2014/10/unesco_world_declaration_on_education_for_all_jomtien_thailand.pdf)

It has been stated 'We recognize the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gendersensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools.'

As far as the implementation level of these slogan programmes in India is concerned, since 2000-01, under the SSA, Indian government has consistently attempted to enhance the number of girls participation in education at different levels. Two noteworthy schemes were launched under SSA - (i) National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL2003), and (ii) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV). The former is specially launched in educationally backward blocks where girls are out of school and latter as a residential provision, specially meant for the girls of deprived sections like Scheduled cast, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim communities. The scheme under the ministry of women and

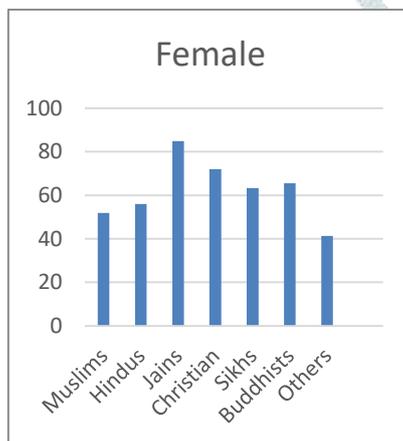
child development in 2010 for adolescent girls and later on in 2015, another important scheme ‘ Beti Bachao, Beti Padoo’ in 2015 are also noteworthy.

(MDG final report country of India, http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/MDG_Final_Country_report_of_India_27nov17.pdf, downloaded on 12th January 2020)

Empowering status of Muslim Girls in India since Independence

After describing the major state endeavours since independence to promote girls’ education, it is quite explicit that state expected all the girls to get equal benefits from education without any discrimination. While documentation, nowhere specific group of girls or women was given major attention. In the light of this, now if we turn out to find out the performance of girls in the education sector vis a vis the state formulated policies and framework, then it is difficult to ignore comparatively poor performance of Muslim girls in the education sector as has been given below-

	Female
Muslims	51.9
Hindus	55.98
Jains	84.93
Christian	71.97
Sikhs	63.29
Buddhists	65.6
Others	41.38



The reviewed material all where is indicating it by citing report of census 2011. The census 2011 clearly shows that in comparison to the girls of other religions, muslim girls are quite lagging behind. In the country where Muslims constitute 14.23% of the total population and 48% of them are women, it is a matter of serious concern that after seventy two years of independence, how does this large segment of Indian society could not avails the benefits of state sponsored policies and concerns. The researchers who worked on this area like Hazra Momita (2018), Khan M.(2018),Zeb Khushboo (2019) have cited numerous reasons for it like

1. Apathetic attitude of society towards girls education
2. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy
3. Lack of schools in the neighbourhood
4. Preference for Madarsa and Maktabas than to formal schools
5. Early marriage
6. Lack of communication
7. Lack of attractive teaching-learning environment
8. Lack of female teachers in schools
9. Lack of awareness amongst parents about the government schemes for girls’ education.
10. High dropout and stagnation
11. Religious superstitions
12. Seclusion or restricted mobility

6. Conclusion

At the concluding part of this paper, it is worth suggesting that Muslim girls, despite of several odds have been able to mark their niche in the education sector. However, their entry at the massive level is yet to be recognized. It is required that the society at the broad level should provide equal space for the Muslim girls to receive education and build capacity as per their need and interest. Similarly, though state has made consistently good attempts in increasing participation of girls' education, but still it has to evolve strategy to make the educational provision so much convincing and satisfactory which may attract the Muslim community to send their girls to school or to higher education without any apprehension.

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