

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Women's issues have received a lot of attention in post independence period and the nation is party to all international covenants and conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), CEDAW (1979), Protection of Rights of Children (1959, 1989) etc., Besides this the rights of women are guaranteed through the law of the land i.e. the Constitution through Right to Equality (Articles 14, 15, 16,), Fundamental Duties, Directive Principles of State Policy, etc., Apart from this, number of Commissions and Committees are also constituted to protect the rights of women and specially the Commission of Minorities, SC/ST etc., However, in spite of these pro active measures initiated by the state, we find that the position of women in general and minorities especially the Muslim women are in a deplorable position.

The sharp disparities and inequalities present in the Indian society are not free from the influence of caste, creed, religion and gender. *Gender gaps across all these layers make women and girls the most disadvantaged groups and deprived members of our society.* Any discussion on the present situation of minority women would be incomplete without looking at the situation of women in general and specifically among the minorities and the disadvantaged sections of population

Muslims constitute India's largest minority as well as the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. Educationally, Muslims constitute one of the most backward communities in the country causing concern. Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities. Muslims in Karnataka constitute about 12.23% in Karnataka.¹ Muslims and neo-Buddhists are considered as most backward in education. The 2001 census corroborates this. At the All India basis Jains have the highest literacy rate of 94.1%, followed by Christians (80.3%); Buddhists (72.7%); Sikhs (69.4%); Hindus (65.1%) and Muslims at 59.1%. The SC/ST who constitute 24.4% of the country's population have literacy rate of 52.2%.² In order to identify the socio-economic status of the minority community in the country, the Sachar Committee was constituted which made startling revelations on the conditions of the minorities in the country especially their social, economical and educational status and recommended for a 15 point program for their overall development.

“According to an ORG-Marg Muslim Women's Survey — commissioned by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi — conducted in 2000-2001 in 40 districts spanning 12 states, the enrolment percentage of Muslim girl children is a mere 40.66 per cent. As a consequence, the proportion of Muslim women in higher education is a mere 3.56 per cent, lower even than that of scheduled castes (4.25 per cent).

On all-India basis, 66 per cent Muslim women are stated to be illiterate. The illiteracy is most widespread in Haryana while Kerala has least illiteracy among Muslim women closely followed by Tamil Nadu. Muslim women are

found to be more literate than their Hindu counterparts in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Most of the northern states are in urgent need of vigorous and sustained literacy campaigns”³

Educational and economic backwardness is not confined to any one particular religion. No religion gives equal status for women and this is true in case of Muslim women also and we find that Muslim women and girls are the most affected in terms of educational attainment when compared to all other minority sections. The reasons may be extreme poverty, educationally backwardness, religious bigotry etc. This paper hence analyses these fundamental rights of Muslim women and their educational and social status in Karnataka.

- Dr. Abdul Aziz, Socio-Economic Status of Muslim Women in Karnataka, 2011
- An Analytical Study of Muslim Women and Girls in India, Ministry of Women & Child Development
- Educating Muslim women in India-Problems and Prospects article by Rakshanda Jalil

KEYWORDS: Fundamental Duties, Startling Revelations

INTRODUCTION

The Pre-Independence period had witnessed a dark scenario so far as the educational status of women was concerned. It was only due to the concerted efforts of the Renaissance movement that was initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and later by Eshwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyothibha Phule that women’s educational, social conditions gradually underwent changes. According to the 1931 census the literacy rate for men was 11.7% and women a mere 1.9%. For Muslim women it was just 1.2%.⁴ As the participation of women in education was very low, the constitutional framers made some provision through the various articles. After Independence, much emphasis was given to women’s education also including Muslim women. Articles 45, 21-A of 86th constitutional amendment mentions that the State is required to provide free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years without any discrimination based on caste, creed, religion and gender.⁵ The National Educational Policy (NPE’86), Right to Education Act, 2009 have substantiated this view of the constitution.

Similarly a number of constitutional provisions exist for protection and promotion of the interests of these minority groups. “Article 29 (1) & (2) of the Constitution grant citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script and culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same and no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. Article 30 (1) & (2) grants right to all minorities, whether based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and the State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language. Article 30 (3) states it shall be the endeavor of every State and every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother - tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President of India may issue such directions to any State as he/she considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities”.⁶

In order to comply with the aspirations mentioned above, many measures were taken up the governments both at the center as well as at the states. A large number of schools were opened during the post independent era and accordingly the literacy rate has gone from 18.33% in 1950-51 to 65.38% in 2001 and according to 2011 census it has gone up to 74.04%. The female literacy rate has also increased from 8.33% in 1950-51 to 54% in 2001 and further to 65.46% in 2011. Thus a 9% overall increase in the literacy rate in the last 10 years.⁷ (literacy rate in India in 2013, census report of 2011)

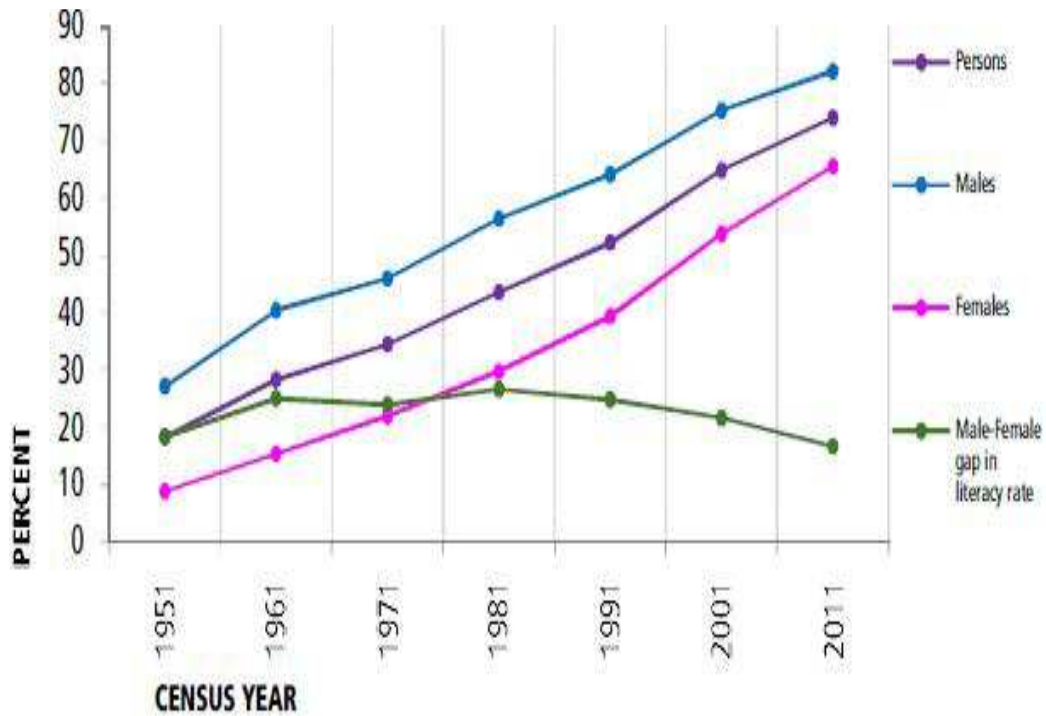


Figure 1

Table 1

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1	2	3	4	5
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

In Karnataka it is 82.8% of males when compared to 68.1% of females and the total literacy rate of 75.6%.⁸

Educational Status of Muslim Women in the Country

There has been a great concern about the lack of educational scope for Muslims in India, especially the women community. Though the available statistics reveal that the educational and socio-economic conditions of the Muslim women are far less than the national average, for the first time the Census of India 2001 provides this data which is further substantiated by the Sachar Committee Report.

The India Today in its report had also mentioned that on an average, Muslim men and women are far less educationally accomplished than their non-Muslim community

- In 2001, only 55% of India’s 71 million Muslim males were literate compared to 64.5% of country’s 461 non-Muslim men. Similarly less than 41% of country’s 67 million Muslim females were literate when compared to 430 non-Muslim women.

- Far more serious was the difference between Muslim women and Non-Muslim women. In urban areas a 11% difference increased to 19% over the years.
- At the basic level of being 'literate', Muslim women were proportionately 11 per cent worse off than non-Muslims. The difference widened to 19 per cent for those educated up to middle school; to 35 per cent for those who studied up to Class X; 45 per cent for those who learnt up to Class XII; and 63 per cent for those who were graduates and above.
- A Muslim child attends school for three years and four months as against a National average of 4 years.
- Less than 4% of Muslims graduate from school compared to 6% of total population.
- 6% of girl students are forced to stop their education as parents think that education is not required for them.⁹
- Only five per cent Muslim women manage higher education.
- Muslim women have it worse. With only four per cent taking up medicine at the undergraduate level and just 1.5 per cent for Muslim women at the postgraduate level says Member Secretary of Sachar Panel, Dr Abu Saleh Sherriff. ¹⁰

Position in Karnataka

When it comes to participation of Muslims in school education, Karnataka has earned a distinction in the country with the state recording a significant rise in their enrollment right from elementary to upper primary level during 2009-10. According to a government report on the status of elementary education in India, recently released by Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Kapil Sibal here, there was an increase in the enrollment of Muslim children across the country during 2009-10. The number, however, went up more than double in Karnataka during the period compared to the figures recorded in previous years.

Sharp Rise

In the state, where 14.67 per cent Muslim children of total Muslim population were enrolled in primary classes and 13.81 per cent in upper primary classes during 2008-09, witnessed a sharp increase of 35.52 per cent and 37.13 per cent respectively in them during 2009-10, the report prepared by National University of Educational Planning and Education (NUEPA) noted. The enrollment at elementary level too rose to 35.99 percent of the total Muslim population in the state during 2009-10 from 14.42 per cent recorded in 2008-09. "The analysis of data suggests improvement in participation of Muslim minority children in elementary education programmes," the report said. The data compiled from across 13 lakh recognized schools offering elementary education across 635 districts spread over 35 states and union territories reveals that Muslim children enrollment rose to 13.48 per cent in 2009-10 across the country from 10.49 per cent in 2008-09.

Girls Ahead

Of the total 5,44,70,000 enrollments in upper primary classes in the country in 2009-10, Muslim enrollment was 64.8 lakhs across India and the percentage of Muslim girls to total Muslim enrollment in upper primary classes was about 50 per cent which is above the national average of girls enrollment in upper primary classes, the report said. Of the total Muslim enrollment in primary classes, the percentage of Muslim girls stood at 48.96 during the same period which was quite similar to the share of girls in overall primary enrollment (48.38 per cent), it added.

The NUEPA report noted that the enrollment data for the year 2009-10 also reveals that there are certain pockets in the country which have got high percentage of Muslim enrollment.

“There are about 1,07,945 schools which have got more than 25 per cent Muslim enrollment (to total enrollment in elementary classes) which is 8.28 percent of the total schools that impart elementary education in the country,” it said.

- Numbers of Muslim children enrolled in Karnataka schools more than double the figures for the entire country during 2009-10.
- State witnessed sharp increase of 35.52 per cent and 37.13 per cent in primary and elementary class enrollment respectively.
- During 2008-9, the figures were 14.67 per cent and 13.81 per cent respectively.
- Enrollment figures rose to 13.48 per cent in 2009-10 across the country from 10.49 per cent in 2008-09.
- Percentage of Muslim girls’ enrollment 50% above the national average in primary class enrollment.
- Certain pockets in the country also reported high percentage of Muslim enrollment.¹¹

(Source: Deccan Herald, Nov 5th, 2013 issue)

Though the above facts are a bit positive and bring a sigh of relief, we cannot be overwhelmed because this is only a marginal increase when compared to the vast majority who are still kept in dark. The Karnataka State has also implemented certain socio-economic measures for the overall welfare of the minority community.

CONCLUSIONS

In the country with a multi lingual, multi religious diversity, what is essential is to provide the basic necessities to all the citizens irrespective of their religious inclination. Not just during elections to lure the minority community by announcing heaps of assurances but practically implementing them without delay and in the real interest of the progress of the society. The Karnataka Government’s recently introduced ‘Shadi Bhagya Yogana’ is just an eye wash. Instead of giving cash at the time of marriage to economically backward women, let the governments take dare steps to provide education & employment to all. Only then the Muslim women will be able to contribute their might to the society.

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