



MUSLIM WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

AKHTAR HOSSAIN AND BIRBAL SAHA

Assistant Teacher & Research Scholar, Manikchak High Madrasah, Murshidabad, W.B. India
Associate Professor in Education, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, W.B. India

Abstract:

Female literacy is one of the significant indicators of educational development for any society. In case of Muslim religion it found that at all India level the literacy rate of Muslim is very low, particularly female literacy rate. This article used the districts and state 2001 census hand book data for the present discussion. Simple percentage method has been used to show the variation of literacy rate and Muslim population distribution across the districts.

KEYWORDS:

Muslim Women, Empowerment, Education, 2001 census, Literacy rate.

INTRODUCTION:

"If you educate a man, you educate a person, but if you educate a women, you educate a nation". Education is the spinal cord of all development. It is real hidden treasure in a man. It is education which teaches purity of mind, righteousness of conduct and truthfulness of soul and prowess to assert for right. It is prerequisite for equality, dignity and lasting peace. Although the universal declaration of human rights affirms that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights without distinction of any kind including distinction based on sex. It has taken considerable time and effort for the world community to accept women's right as an integral part of human rights. Discrimination against women in access to food, healthcare, education training and employment opportunities still exists in a substantial way. Pernicious social practices such as dowry and dowry related crimes, female feticides, female infanticides, child marriages, discrimination against girl child is still prevalent.

Education is the weapon which strengthens the personality and makes one confident. Education in earlier days had the privileged of boys and men but now education has been spread all over breaking up the sex-barrier and concerned about girl education as education is an investment not an expense which gives its returns in long run in a positive way acknowledging the status of women in family which is the first step of progress and development.

Although a women had been very strong patient, large hearted, intelligent, a good motivator and backbone of a healthy family in the olden days despite being uneducated, now in the present day with education she can realise her potential and have her own standing and establish her capabilities along with these qualities.

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPOWERING WOMEN:

An educated woman can be of immense help in different ways for the family. How does education enhance the women empowerment?

1. Education gives power to a woman to become strong physically by giving her knowledge about sports,

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- exercise, health-related aspects, and good physical health; this will definitely benefit her mental health.
2. It helps in the mental development women and a mentally satisfied and contented woman is an asset to a family, society and nation and she can her efficiency and potential in right manner. She can maintain a proper balance between physical health and mental health with good education.
 3. It promotes team work rather than making a woman individualistic. It develops the we feeling among women.
 4. It provides financial and economic security to a woman and a secured woman can do anything that she is capable of feeling of security always motivates a person to do constructive activities and with that she can prove her worthiness.
 5. Every woman has got her own aspiration which may be high or low but education helps to maintain a balanced aspiration knowing her interest, ability and potential which further helps her to choose a correct field of her work so that she can become a contributing factor to the family, society.
 6. Education helps balanced personality development by giving due weight to various aspects of personality. Education also plays an important role in teaching her expression of feeling or through effective communication which can solve disputes and adjustment problems of any level.
 7. Education helps in making her competitive in a positive way without having jealousy or ill-feeling towards the competitor education is the input which a women grasps and with the behaviour comes the output.
 8. An educated woman is a guiding light for the children, family members, society and nation. She knows how to have a happy family and balanced and health relation with others. As it is rightly said, "there is a woman behind the success of every man".
 9. Education gives knowledge about values of life; it teaches us about how to accept and face the challenges of life.
 10. An educated woman can solve many problems of the society. It makes her self-disciplined and gives her vision.
 11. An education woman can bring change in the attitude of family members and society by questioning the conservative thoughts of the people and blind faith. It helps in removing mal-tradition like sati-pratha, dowry, early marriage etc.
 12. It helps women to play a leading role in decision making process at family level, and social, political and economic fronts.
 13. It makes her economically strong by giving her an opportunity to choose a career which is best suited for her.
 14. It plays an important role in removing economic poverty by opening various job avenues for her so that she can work hand in hand with man and give support to the family which in the long run strengthens the economy.
 15. It has played an important role in solving the problem of gender bias; it helps women in the time management.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY:

The paper used the districts and state 2001 census hand book data for the present discussion. Simple percentage method has been used to show the variation of literacy rate and Muslim population distribution across the districts.

FLR = Total literate female population/ Total 6+ and above female population *100 (Of that particular districts/ state of that particular time)

FLR= Female literacy Rate

Percentage of Muslim population = Total Muslim population/Total population of that regions *100

DISCUSSION:

Education is often considered as the good indicator of socio economic development of any society. In many cases it was seen that our society is gender biased and patriarchal in nature. The available education facilities for women and higher female literacy rate indicates the existing societal norms that how they are treating girls. It was seen in many literature that many scholar had criticised particular religious norms for lower level of literacy rate. As in case of Muslim religion it found that at all India level the literacy rate of Muslim is very low, particularly female literacy rate. But at the same time if we see the Muslim literacy rate of Kerala, particularly female it is much higher than the national average and than any other states of India. So the present study is the attempt to see the variation of literacy rate in west Bengal across

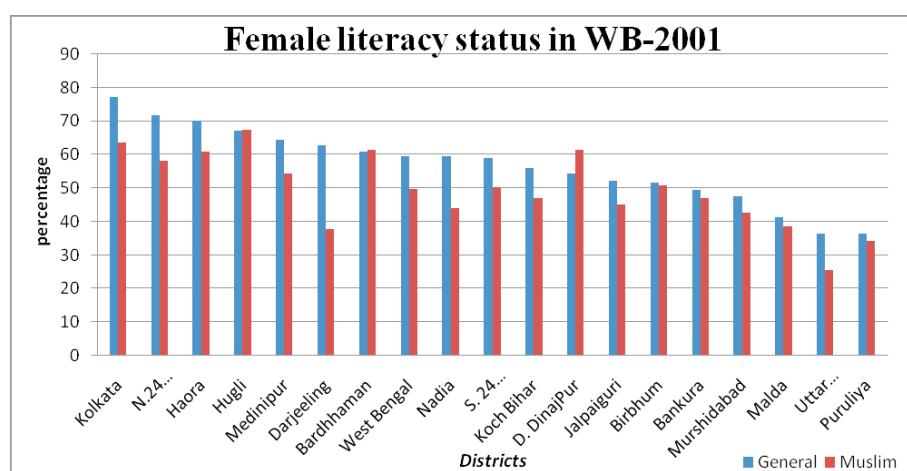
the districts with special focus on Muslim female literacy rate.

West Bengal is the fourth most populous state in the Eastern Region of India accounting for 2.7 % of India's total area, 7.8 % of the country's population and ranks second in terms of density of population which is 1029 per square km in 2011 census. Muslims are the dominant minority and account for 27 % of the total population of the State. With 72% of people living in rural areas, the State of West Bengal is primarily an agrarian state with the main produce being rice and jute. About 31.8% of the total population live below the poverty line. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community primarily dealt with the question of whether different socio-religious categories in India have had an equal chance to reap the benefits of development with a particular emphasis on Muslims in India. It was seen that districts such as Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Koch Behar, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur in the north, Murshidabad, Bankura, Birbhum in the west and the two 24 Parganas (north and south) stretching across the Sunderbans are relatively more backward socio-economically than the rest of the districts in West Bengal. But the interesting is that most of the districts are Muslim dominated and near about more than 50 % population are of this community. Of the above-mentioned districts, Malda and Murshidabad have a higher concentration of Muslim minorities that outnumbers the state average. It is equally worth noting that the concentration of Muslim minority in the state of West Bengal is higher than the national average, (SCR, 30, 2006).

In India, the Muslim literacy rate accounts for 59.1 percent in 2001 census which is far below than the national average (65.38 per cent). In West Bengal it is 57.47 percent among Muslims which is about 10 per cent points less than that of the state average (68.64 per cent). Rural literacy rate in West Bengal is 63.42 per cent and its counterpart urban area had literacy rate 81.25 per cent. There is also inter-religious inequality in literacy level (Waheed, 2006). Table below shows the literacy status of west Bengal in 2001 census, across the districts. A comparative analysis was done between the Muslim female literacy rate and general female literacy rate. The table shows that the Muslim female literacy level (49.75 per cent) is lower than the general female literacy (59.61 per cent) by 9.86 percentage points. If we see the rank of the state in term of female literacy rate it ranked 8th but in case of Muslim female literacy rate the downed to 10th. That indicates a kind of gap existed among the female literacy rate of Muslim and general population.

Female literacy is one of the important indicators of educational development for any society. The diagram shows that the Muslim female literacy level (49.75 per cent) is lower than the general female literacy (59.61 per cent) by 9.86 percentage points. In case of state average also, Muslim female literacy rate is accounted for only 49.75 per cent which is much less than the Muslim male literacy rate (64.61). It is an interesting feature that the gap between general literacy rate of the district and Muslim literacy rate of the district varies significantly. It is clear from the table 4 that the gap between Muslim and general level of literacy is highest in Darjeeling (21.41), where the general literacy rate is 71.79 percent, wherein only 50.38 percent of Muslims are literate. From the same table it can be inferred that as far as major districts are concerned Muslims are most backward in Darjeeling followed by Nadia (16.73), North 24 Parganas (13.02), Uttar Dinajpur (11.85) and Koch Bihar (10.23). The state government needs to pay special attention towards the Muslim education of these districts in particular and in the state in general.

Fig: 1



This above diagram really depicts very interesting things that there is no districts except Dakshin Dinajpur where Muslim female literacy rate (61.33) exceeds the general population female literacy rate in 2001 census. The district like Hugli stands top in term of Muslim female literacy rate (67.31) but general literacy rate is more or less same to Muslim female literacy rate. The district Kolkata ranked topped in term of highest female literacy rate (77.3) in the State but at the same time its counterpart Muslim female literacy rate (63.63%) is lower than that. But at the same time if we see the distribution of Muslim population, Kolkata contributed 20.27% followed by Hugli.

The gap between literacy rate among Muslim female population and general female is highest in Darjeeling, followed by Nadia Districts. On the other hand if we see the distribution of Muslim population across the districts Darjeeling had lowest percentage while Murshidabad has highest 63.67%. But if we see the general female literacy rate and Muslim female literacy rate in the Murshidabad district the existing gap is less even female literacy rate is very low as compare to Darjeeling.

Table: 1

Rank	Female Literacy Rate		Rank	Districts/ state	Muslim Population (%)	
	Districts/state	General				Muslim
1	Kolkata	77.3	63.61	1	Murshidabad	63.67
2	N.24 Parganas	71.72	58.13	2	Malda	49.72
3	Howrah	70.11	60.78	3	U. Dinajpur	47.36
4	Hooghly	67.21	67.31	4	Birbhum	35.08
5	Medinipur	64.42	54.36	5	S. 24 Parganas	33.24
6	Darjeeling	62.94	37.92	6	Nadia	25.41
7	Bardhaman	60.95	61.39	7	West Bengal	25.25
8	West Bengal	59.61	49.75	8	Howrah	24.44
9	Nadia	59.58	44.03	9	Kooch Bihar	24.24
10	S. 24 Parganas	59.01	50.27	10	N 24 Parganas	24.22
11	Kooch Bihar	56.12	47.11	11	D. Dinajpur	24.02
12	D. Dinajpur	54.28	61.33	12	Kolkata	20.27
13	Jalpaiguri	52.21	45.01	13	Bardhaman	19.78
14	Birbhum	51.55	50.97	14	Hooghly	15.14
15	Bankura	49.43	46.96	15	Mednipore	11.33
16	Murshidabad	47.63	42.76	16	Jalpaiguri	10.85
17	Malda	41.25	38.68	17	Bankura	7.51
18	Uttar Dinajpur	36.51	25.5	18	Purulia	7.12
19	Purulia	36.5	34.14	19	Darjeeling	5.31

Source: Census of India, 2001.

CONCLUSION:

From the above analysis it may be inferred that Muslims are the most backward section of society, standing at bottom position in the educational field and also socio-economic development when compared to the general population of West Bengal. Raising the level of literacy is only solution to bring social consciousness among them. No doubt, socio-economic development of Muslim community might diminish the existing human group disparities. It was seen that Muslim dominated regions are bound to remain in low level of development may be due to the irrational allocation resource for and negligence of planners and policy makers towards these regions. Even there is an also societal norm and mind set of the parents that if we higher educate our daughter, we may have to arrange give much dowry at the time of her marriage because she will prefer to go higher educated laws house. Even in some extent Parda system in Islam leads to lower Female literacy rate in West Bengal. One thing we should have to mention here that when a girl born in a family, parents started thinking her as burden. So they do not care for her education or other kind of personal development. Last but not least the major reason for lagging behind of Female literacy rate among Muslim women is the poor socio-economic conditions. Most of the Muslim family

spends their on hand to mouth.

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