

# Educational Status Of Muslim Women In Jammu And Kashmir

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*Abstract: Education is the main factor resulting in social change. Modern education plays a key role in changing the status and process of social mobility. It not only helps an individual in adapting to emerging social situation but also play creative role in liberating minds from the clutches of the established culture. Education among the Muslim women has been treated under two heads, that of religious and secular training. The traditional education pattern which is largely religious includes initiation of the children in the reading of the holy book. Traditional educational institutions were Maktabas and Madrassa where religious education was given to children's. Secular education is imparted in two ways, either at home or at school. (Roy, 1979) In Islam there is no priority for men over women to acquire education both are equally encouraged to acquire knowledge and always considered learning an important source to become a good Muslim and as a necessary condition which helps to develop their faith. Islam encourages its followers to enlighten themselves with the knowledge of their religion as well as other branches of knowledge. It holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and has exalted his position (Yadav, 2003). Poor literacy and low level of education among Muslim women in India is due to social conditions rather religion as Islam emphasise on learning irrespective of gender. But due to purdha system among Muslims, male members and religious heads discourage girl education and also girls not allowed to study along with boys in educational institutions. But today the situation is changing in Muslim community in India and they are allowing and encouraging formal education for girls. The present paper explores the Educational status of the Muslim women in Jammu and Kashmir. The sources of data collection are secondary which involve previous studies, newspapers, books etc.*

**Keywords:** Purdah, Maktabas, Madrassa, Gender, Literacy

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Muslim societies education of child begins with the reading of the Quran. Children are made to memorise the Quran and is the first land mark in the life of a Muslim irrespective of their sex. For teaching Quran and other religious scriptures either a tutor is hired at home or children are send to madrassa or local mosque. In most of the cases the tutors are male but for female children female tutors are preferred. In Jammu and Kashmir most of the cases local moulvi (moazem) of the local mosque of the locality teaches children. Yadav (2003) writes that, as per Islamic perspective, in dealing with women's education, it is recognised that wider issues pertaining to a modern Islamic curriculum have not been addressed. As long as the education system is governed by the spirit of Islam throughout, there will be a harmony

between these two modes of social activity, permitting women to express themselves in accordance with their natural dispositions and to be given the respect and honour which is so central to the real social message of Islam. Knowledge and education are, highly emphasised in Islam. Both are integral parts of the Islam. Islam encourages its followers to enlighten themselves with the knowledge of their religion as well as other branches of knowledge. It holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and has exalted his position.

According to Singh (2003) Islam has always considered learning useful accessory to become a good Muslim, and as a necessary condition which helps to develop their faith. The Quran says: they are losers who besottedly have slain their children by keeping them in ignorance'. Neither the Quran nor the sayings of the Prophet prohibit or prevent women from seeking knowledge and having an education. Prophet was the

forerunner in this regard, in declaring that seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim man and women. So, like men each woman is under a moral and religious obligation to seek knowledge, develop her intellect, broaden her outlook, cultivate her talents and then utilise her potential to the benefit of her soul and of her society. Early Islamic history is replete with examples of Muslim women who showed a remarkable ability to compete with men, religious studies was the favourite subject for Muslim women in early Islam, and a considerable number of Muslim women managed to become notable figures among traditionists and jurists and proved their ability to master in literature and achieved a high reputation among their contemporaries.

The educational status of Muslim women deteriorated due to the foreign invasion and with the decline of Islamic civilization. Under these conditions Muslim women became less and less part of social life in general. They assumed heavy veiling and confined to their small circle of women folk and four walls of their house and no outside contact. They were neglected and prevented from participating in the public life and not allowed to worship in the mosque and deprived of their right of education. It was believed that basic awareness of the religious rites and learning Quran was sufficient for women and prevented from having further knowledge and education. Yadav (2003), states that education for women came to be viewed as being of secondary importance to keeping the home and the family. Later, when female education became available, women were denied access to it and only schools for boys were initially developed. Female education was constrained by inherited social customs. The Islamic ideal of women's education and intellectual development was thus distorted, confused and actively opposed. Illiteracy of Muslim women reached a peak and became a widespread phenomenon in the world of Islam and consequently women throughout the Muslim world became ignorant not only of outside affairs, but also of their legal rights in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance. The gap between female and male literacy rates in several places is increasing and the overall level of illiteracy is extremely high.

## II. EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

The emergence and spread of women's education in pre-independent India was the result of British colonialism and reform movements among Hindus and Muslims. During British period education for women was first introduced in presidencies of Bombay, madras and Calcutta and subsequently in other provinces. Christian missionaries, social groups, private agencies and British government opened several schools and colleges across the country. With the steady development of an educational infrastructure in the late nineteenth century female school rose significantly but a gap between male and female education remained there as the majority of the girls did not receive formal schooling inspite of opening of many girl schools (Hassan and Menon, 2005). The spread of education during British period was uneven due to unequal access to facilities, and lack of interest and schooling remaining an urban monopoly (Vatuk, 1994). Muslims had been kept out of the educational system

established by the British officials and missionaries in the nineteenth century with very few very few Muslim girls receiving education. Muslim women were given education at home and there was an intense opposition to Muslim girl receiving school education. The aspects like maintaining purdha, only girl schools and preference of schools that inculcated Islamic ethos were given importance (Hassan and Menon, 2005). Influenced by the secular and modern western education system of the British, Syed Ahmed Khan started the movement by advocating western education for the Indian Muslim as it would lead to advancement of the Muslim community, would help them getting employment in government jobs and other professions and continued access to power. Regarding female education maintained that education for women was premature and should be undertaken only after Muslim boys had been educated (Saiyid, 1998).

Women were viewed as repository of tradition, culture and morality and giving women a central place in the construction, maintenance and preservation of community identity. Consequently women education was confined to the home imparting basic skills and religious instructor (Hassan and Menon, 2005). Women group of the Mohammadan education conference established in 1896 did not agree with this conservative stand and passed a resolution in favour of girl's education and subsequently girl schools were opened in different part of India. Reformers like Sheikh Abdullah and his wife and Begum of Bhopal supported the formal education for girls.

The number of schools and the number of girls enrolled grew rapidly the period from the 1880 to 1930s saw an eight fold increase in women's education (Minault, 1998) but the Punjab Primary Education Bill, 1919, made primary education compulsory for boys and included a clause that made it applicable to girl's, but it was omitted due to opposition and this proved a major setback to female education which was overcome by the introduction of zenana teaching (Hasan and Menon, 2005).

The debate on educating girls at home in preference to schools had been settled. Purdha was to be maintained. The initial opposition to women's education was overcome; the main issues remained the preference for all girl schools and the perception that education had no utility for the community since they were unlikely to get government jobs (Minault, 1998).

After the partition of India and migration of middle class and leaders who had been in the forefront in the drive for women's education to Pakistan. The debate for Muslim women's education shifted to the new arena where it became the responsibility of the state to provide educational opportunities to educational backward group.

In India Muslim women are educationally lagging behind and are the main reason of their poor economic condition. The literacy rate of India is 74% and female literacy level is 65% and the literacy rate of Muslim women is 51.89% which is lower than literacy rate of women in other communities in India. Literacy rate of Muslim women in rural areas is 54.43% but urban women are better placed with 61.48% literacy rate. Literacy rate of Jammu and Kashmir is 67.16 percent and female literacy rate is 56.43%.

In India the major reason behind the educational backwardness of the Muslim women are that the Muslims are alien from modern education due to anti- British feeling and also for traditional conservatism and all these created serious problems to Muslim women's education. Backwardness of Muslim society has created a social atmosphere, which is not at all favourable for the growth of education among the women (chaturvedi, 2003). The practice of purdha system among Muslim society, lack of separate educational institutions in the locality and most important lack of awareness among men regarding the importance of women education for the development of Muslim society. The social reformers before independence emphasise that for bringing education among women it is important to educate Muslim men first by providing modern education to men only than the perception regarding women education would change.

### III. EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

In Jammu and Kashmir also the situation was same but through educational reforms in the state the situation is different in present scenario as we can see Muslim women working in every department and also rise in women literacy rate. Through different studies it is found that Muslim women in Jammu and Kashmir are better educationally and socially as compared to women in other parts of the country. Barring the period of militancy in the state during which not only women but men also suffered.

Independence opened new doors for education of women in general the modern education reached Muslim women mainly after partition as before partition the orthodoxy of Islam led to practice of some social evil which caused the deterioration of the social condition and oppression of women amongst the Muslims and the deprivation of their basic rights and modern education was beyond the reach of the average Muslim women who remained in the traditional set up of Muslim society (Roy, 1979). Through the efforts of social reformer Aligarh Muslim university was established where modern education is being imparted. But in this mainly Muslim men and few privileged Muslim women were benefited. After independence the increased educational facilities did not increase the Muslim women literate as they received opposition from the family as women were married early and parents did not consider education for their daughter as important as focus was only to impart religious education of reading Quran. At present there is an increase in women literate among Muslims. Hassan and Menon (2004) point out that owing to several factors, not least, the deeply-rooted patriarchal traditions, Muslim women, on the whole, suffer from, various disabilities, some that are specific to them. According to a survey conducted by them in 2000-01 in 40 districts in 12 states of India, it was found that roughly 60% of Muslim women report themselves to be illiterate while the school enrolment rate for Muslim girls is 40-66 percent. The proportion of illiterate Muslim women is substantially higher for the rural north than it is for the rest of India where more than 85% women in the North report themselves to be illiterate. Less than 17% of Muslim women enrolled in schools

completed eight years of schooling and less than 10% completed higher secondary schooling, which is below the national average. The educational status of Muslim girls in north India is particularly abysmal, resulting in substantially lower enrolment rates at the middle school and higher secondary levels. The proportion of Muslim women in higher education is only 3.56%, lower even than that of the SCs, which is 4.25%. The overwhelming majority of women reported themselves as not working. The average work participation rate for Muslim women is 14%, which is lower than for Hindus, SCs, and other backward classes. Few Muslim women are employed in the formal sector. Muslim women had very little awareness of government schemes, and like many Hindu sisters, had little power of decision-making in their homes. The authors point out that contrary to prevalent stereotypes about forces of conservatism being the cause for low levels of education among Muslim girls; financial constraints outweigh parental opposition as chief obstacle to girls continuing their studies. In the north zone, financial constraints are much more important for Muslims than they are for Hindus, underlining once again the poverty of Muslim households in this part of the country and this provides the most powerful explanation for the poor levels of Women's education in the north as a whole. The south presents a different picture. Girls belonging to lower socioeconomic classes have as good a prospect of continuing in school as girls from higher classes. This is because of higher levels of state investment in education, a larger percentage of female teachers, extensive network of roads and good transport facilities that enable easy access to schools. This is a critical determining factor for both girls and female teachers.

Hassan and Menon (2005) look at the condition of Muslim women's education in five cities in India: Delhi, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Calicut. They argue that given the poor conditions of Muslim women's education there is a special need for the state to take a pro- active role in this regard in order to remove the barriers that systematically reinforce their marginalization. Muslim girls are characterised by a high dropout rate from the formal school system. today, the authors argue, there is a growing enthusiasm among many Muslims for educating their daughters, although this is hindered by growing anxiety to preserve their cultural identity in the face of the Hindutva onslaught and what they term as a widely 'widely- shared lack of confidence in being employed by the government. In recent years a number a number of Muslim- managed girl's school have been setup that impart both modern as well as religious education which make them more culturally relevant and acceptable to many Muslim families. Muslim men changed their mentality regarding educating their daughters because man prefer marrying educated women as educated woman can look after the house in a better way and upbringing of children in good way . Educating women is not only for employment educating women means educating the whole family and also the probability of finding good life partner increase. Men being more educated and well versed with changing trend of the society understand the importance of formal education for daughters and also the education of daughter leads to economic independence.

Jammu and Kashmir at the time of India's independence was a princely state and acceded with India on 26 October 1947 and enjoys the special status under article 370 of Indian constitution. Muslim rule was established in 1349 with the conquest of Kashmir by Uzbek. Akbar annexed Kashmir in 1548 and remained part of Mughal Empire until Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh captured it in 1780. In 1846 British government sold Kashmir to Dogra ruler Maharaja Gulab Singh. The educational system was traditional. The ruling class had opened Makhtabs and madrasa to the people. In these Makhtabs religious education was given and in some cases reading writing and arithmetic was taught to students. The courses in madrasa included grammar, logic, theology and literature and jurisprudence was included. During sikh rule there was no advancement in educational system it was only under the Dogra rulers the educational system was established in the state.

The sharp committee was constituted in 1916 with efforts of Kashmir Muslim Conference and the Maharaja Pratap Singh. This committee lamented the low literacy among the Muslims and gave recommendations for improving the educational status of the people of the state including improving women education. Bazaz (1959) states that the first effort to educate women in Kashmir who were living in suppression and oppression come from the missionaries, they realised the need to dispel ignorance for improvement in the condition in which Kashmiri women were living. It was sometime between 1893 and 1895 that a missionary school for girls was started by the church missionary society. They feared that in the school the minds of their women would be polluted by the impure ideas from foreign lands which would lead them astray so there was strong opposition to this school. (Khan 2005) states that after some initial opposition the school managed to establish itself and to get the students enrolled in the school. A majority of these students were Muslim.

Keeping into consideration the people's attitudes and the mode of their thinking, the state council adopted a very cautious policy and did not take any step towards the opening of schools for the education of girls. However, it favoured helping private efforts. In 1904, for the first the state council provide funds for the establishment of two girl's schools at Srinagar, one for Hindu girls and the other for Muslim girls. It was in 1912, that the first attempt was witnessed at imparting secondary education to women. A few of the primary schools were raised to the secondary level. The instructions given in these schools were virtually confined to reading of literary and religious books, writing, some arithmetic, needle and other minor house hold work. During this period the state council's initiative was limited. With the result female education still remained far from satisfactory. Om (1986). Khan (2005) The Education Reorganization committee (1938-39) was set up which made important recommendations regarding basic education formulated under the wardha scheme. With regards to girl's education, the committee recommended the opening of more primary and middle schools, an increase in scholarships and distribution of free books as incentives. Other recommendations, included the appointment of two women inspectors one for each region, reorganization of the curriculum for girls and provision of accommodation for women teachers.

Khurshid (2013) states that Educational status of Muslim women in the state of Jammu and Kashmir like their counterpart elsewhere in the country is also depressing and quite dismal. The studies on education of Muslim women in the state of Jammu and Kashmir are very negligible. There is a scarcity of comprehensive sociological studies based on empirical field data and covering the various aspects of Muslim women's life in particular. The 2001 and 20011 census reveals that literacy rate among women in Jammu and Kashmir has increased. And we found large number of girls got enrolled in schools, colleges and in universities. The literacy rate in the state has made substantial progress. The literacy level rose from 12.95 percent in 1961 to 68.74 percent in 2011. The male and female literacy rates reveal that the male literacy rate is still higher than female literacy rate in all the years the male literacy rate increased from 19.75 percent in 1961 to 78.26 percent and female literacy rate increased from 5.05 percent in 1961 to 58.01. There is a continuous rise in the literacy rate of females. The progress made in the literacy rate is not uniform and it varies across rural and urban areas. The first women college was established in 1950. The number of girls in the college including Muslims gradually increased (Mattu, 2002). The first university of Jammu and Kashmir was established in 1948 and was later bifurcated in 1969 to form separate university of jammu and university of Kashmir. Two central universities have opened one each in Kashmir and Jammu. The number of Muslim women in these educational institutions has increased significantly. Education is regarded as a major factor for improving the status of women. In spite of all efforts Muslim women still face a lot of barriers both cultural and religious. Despite all efforts for improving educational status of Muslim women, Patriarchal norms poor economic condition of the community, purdha system, early marriage and religious pressure and educational institutional barriers like co-education are major hindrances in the educational and social development of Muslim women these factors are found across the country and also in Jammu and Kashmir. Lack of financial sources is also a main constraint in girls withdraw from the school than boys therefore in Muslim community also boys education is given preference over girls education and this is also prevalent in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Education is considered as the one of main factor of social change. In spite of high efforts and various schemes for upgrading the education of women the situation is still alarming. As far as the Muslim women are considered their education become must for their social, economic as well as political liberation. Today Muslim men want to educate their daughters to make them self reliant and employable so that they can look after their family after marriage in a good way. Women have also shown more favourable attitude towards women's education. Muslim male are supporting formal education for Muslim women. Along with religious education importance is given to formal education for girls.

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