



Research Article

EDUCATION AS A WEAPON FOR MUSLIM WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”

- Dr. B R Ambedkar

The word ‘women’ is a manifestation and a creation connoting itself into a different forms, roles and various expression. A women is the producer of a new generation and also a transformer of the vast society. Unfortunately, women are suppressed socially and economically in this patriarchal society for years. Muslim community is the largest minority community in India. In our country Muslim women are still now remain in darkness. We know that Constitution of India have tried a lot to give equality of educational opportunities and socio economic status to the Muslims and other Minority communities in India. But Muslim women feel that they are deprived of such advantage and are still lagging behind in all aspects of life as compared to the other minority and majority groups. Education is the only fundamental prerequisite for empowering women of Muslim community. Equality and empowerment of women are necessary to bring about an egalitarian human society. Empowerment is one of the pivotal concerns while addressing human right and development. Women empowerment means empowering women socially, economically, educationally and also politically so that they can break the male domination society and claim their rights equally. This paper will discuss the role of education as a weapon for empowering Muslim women in our country.

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INTRODUCTION

Now in 21st century Women Empowerment is a great challenge, which aims at increasing women’s self-reliance, self-confidence and internal strength to determine their own choice in their life. Education is one of the most important means of empowering Muslim women by giving them proper knowledge, skills and self confidence. It is also a powerful tool for reducing inequality and makes any person independent. Empowerment is concerned with power and it is a process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into required outcomes. From years Muslim women are being exploited in all sphere of life. Muslim minority community is the largest minority community in our country. So, it’s the duty of our nation to make the Muslim women educationally empowered.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To define and discuss the term ‘Women Empowerment’.

2. To define the term, ‘Education’.
3. To explore various issues related to Muslim Women Empowerment in India.
4. To identify various barriers in the path of Muslim Women Empowerment.
5. To specify the needs of Muslim Women Empowerment in our Indian society.
6. To discuss the role of education for Muslim Women Empowerment.
7. To find out various governmental initiatives for the empowerment of Muslim women in our country.

Methodology

This paper is theoretical and descriptive in nature. The source used in this paper are purely secondary source of data, which is appropriate for this study.

Importance of the Study

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said: *“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”*.

In our country women contribute almost half of the population. By empowering women it will automatically strengthen the national economy. Empowerment of women is imperative as

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women continue to be the victims of traditional social structure of the community. Education is a vital factor of empowering women. This study is important to me as a citizen of my country and also of my state which are still not developed in all the aspects for human being and specially for girls and women in our society. A country's development depends on the participation of womenfolk in the process of development. So, education of girls and women is an area of major national concern both as a development imperative and as a human right. Education is the only way to empower women in our patriarchal society. The study is mainly focused on Muslim women of our country. It is a matter of concern for me to explore the various issues related to Muslim Women Empowerment and also to find out various governmental initiatives which are being taken for the empowerment of Muslim women in our country. The study shows, the role of education as a weapon for Muslim women empowerment in India.

Women Empowerment

The Oxford American Dictionary defines, "empowerment" as "to make (someone) stronger and more confident, esp. in controlling their life and claiming their rights". The term 'Empowerment' also means, 'the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance'. Thus, empowerment is a multifaceted, multidimensional and multi-layered concept. Women empowerment means to increase and improve the social, economical, political and educational strength of any women in our society. According to the UN definition, Women's empowerment has five components:

- Women's Sense of self-worth.
- Right to have and to determine choices.
- Right to have access to opportunities and resources.
- Right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home.
- Ability to influence the direction of social change to create more social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Education

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or acquisition of knowledge, skills values, beliefs, and habits. Education methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and lecturing. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal, informal or non-formal settings. The formal education can be divided into primary, secondary, higher secondary, etc. There are also non-formal educational ways of receiving education from families, environment, etc. Thus, education is an art of imparting knowledge to others for betterment of their life and preparing a person to attain the aims in their life.

Needs of Muslim Women Empowerment

The needs of Muslim women empowerment in our present society are as follows:

- Empowerment enables Muslim women to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques for their betterment of life.
- Women Empowerment means to have their own decision-making power.

- Women Empowerment helps in gender equity and equality in every community.
- Empowerment gives Muslim women the economical strength to strive their own life.
- It helps in having positive thinking on the ability to make social change.
- It helps in increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming all stigma of our society.
- It also helps to change others' perceptions by democratic means.
- Empowerment also helps to access to information for taking proper decision by the Muslim women.
- Empowerment gives power to the Muslim women in all spheres of life for the survival of mankind.

Education as a powerful weapon for Muslim Women Empowerment

The empowerment of women has become one of the most important and modern phenomena of 21st century. Education can only raise a woman's status in our modern society and it can bring remarkable changes in a woman's life. The role and function of education in empowering Muslim women are as follows:-

1. Education helps to increase self-confidence within Muslim women.
2. It helps to raise the status of Muslim women in the social infrastructure.
3. Helps in increasing self-efficacy among Muslim women in our country.
4. Helps in upward social mobility of the Muslim women in the society.
5. Education brings awareness among the Muslim women, about their rights and duties in the society.
6. Enlarged the Muslim women's career opportunities for future.
7. Increase their independency and autonomy in the society.
8. Changing the mindset of all Muslim individuals in the society.
9. Bringing awareness of gender equity and equality in the Muslim community.
10. Education helps to develop ability for critical thinking and logical reasoning among Muslim women.
11. Developing leadership qualities among Muslim women.

Barriers in the path of Muslim Women Empowerment

Various barriers in the path of Muslim Women Empowerment are as follows -

- In the Muslim community, gender inequality is one of the major obstacles of Muslim Women Empowerment.
- Family restrictions to children to get higher education.
- Violence is one prime factor which opposes Muslim women empowerment in our country.
- Financial constraints from government and also from other organizations is also a barrier in the path of women empowerment.
- Low need of achievement to get higher education among Muslim women in rural sector of our country.
- Low mobility among Muslim women.

- Absence of ambition among Muslim girls to get educated.
- Lack of motivation among Muslim women to learn.
- Poverty in many rural Muslim families.
- First generation learners in the Muslim family.
- Low ability among Muslim women to bear risk.
- Early marriage of Muslim women in our society.

Role of NGOs in Muslim Women Empowerment in India

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Muslim women Empowerment is mainly depend on economic and educational empowerment. NGOs are playing significant role in promoting Muslim women empowerment in the rural areas of our country. NGOs help to empower them in the following activities:

- Educating and growing consciousness among Muslim women especially in the rural areas.
- Supplements efforts of government in Muslim women empowerment of our country.
- Educate in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for empowering Muslim women in the modern society.
- Inculcate the leadership qualities among Muslim women and ensures their participation in various activities.
- NGOs always promote Mahila mandals, Yuvathi mandals and various village based committees with adequate representation of Muslim women.
- NGOs can act as an agent or catalyst of various activities like micro credit system, Muslim education and encouraging Muslim women for political participation, etc.
- For gender equality and women empowerment in the Muslim community, the NGOs continue their constant and unwavering efforts and fights to secure Muslim women's rights in all sphere of life like social, educational, economic, household, etc.
- Promoting rural leadership for empowering rural Muslim women in the country.
- Educating the rural Muslim women in higher education.
- Utilizing optimum resources for the upliftment of Muslim women empowerment.

Governmental initiatives for promoting Muslim Women Empowerment in India

Various governmental initiatives were taken by the central and state government to uplift Muslim women education as well as Muslim women empowerment in our country were as follows:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an Indian flagship programme of the central government aimed at 'Universalisation of Elementary Education'. The programme was mandated by the 86th Amendment of the Indian Constitution, making free and compulsory education to all the children between the ages of 6 to 14 years irrespective of sex, caste, creed, etc. Education should be made a fundamental rights to all citizen of our country. With the help of this programme government try to empower the girls of every community including the Muslim by giving them free education.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme was introduced by the central government in 2004 and later integrated with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. It is a scheme to provide education for girls belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Other Backward Classes (OBC) and also minority communities. The main objective of this programme is to give quality education to the girls of disadvantaged section of the society.

Saakshar Bharat

It is a central government programme to form a literate society through a variety of teaching learning programmes for non-literate and also neo-literate of the age group of 15 years and above. The programme mainly focused on literacy of women of all community in our country. It is also a useful initiative for Muslim women empowerment of our country.

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan

The scheme was launched in march, 2009 with the objective to give quality secondary education to all children irrespective of their sex, caste, creed, religion etc. With the success of SSA, this programme was launched for the improvement of secondary education students in our country.

Mahila Samakhya Programme

The National Policy on Education of 1986 recognized that participation of girls and women in the educational process is very much necessary for women empowerment in our society. The Mahila Samakhya Programme of 1988 was launched with the objective to empower women in our country. It recognized that education is the only weapon to empower the women in our patriarchal society. This programme also helps to empower the Muslim women in our country.

Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

It is also a centrally sponsored scheme for all-round development of adolescent girls in our country. The main objective of this scheme is to make girls self-reliant by improving their health and nutrition.

Kanyasree Scheme

Kanyasree scheme is the West Bengal flagship programme for the girl child. 'Kanyashree Prakalpa' is an initiative taken by the Government of West Bengal to improve the life and the status of the girls by helping economically backward families with cash so that families do not arrange the marriage of their girl child before eighteen years because of economic problem. The scheme has gained national and international recognitions from the whole world. It is a conditional cash transfer scheme launched by our West Bengal government in 2013 to improve the socio-economic status of the girl child in the society. The scheme has earned recognition from UK's Department for International Development. Kanyasree scheme is a vital step to empower girl child educationally in our state. This is also a initiative for empowering Muslim girls in our country.

Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao Scheme

It is also a central government scheme to improve the welfare service for girls. It is launched on 22nd of January of 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The scheme is a social campaign of the government of India that aims to generate awareness for all girls. It ensured education of the girl child

and also survival of a girl child in the society. This is also a successful initiative for the empowerment of Muslim women in our country.

National Mission for Empowerment of Women

This is an initiative taken by Indian government for empowering women of all community holistically in the society. It was launched in the year 2011. The programme aimed to implement the women centric programmes in the country. The mission was named as, 'Poorna Shakti' for the holistic empowerment of women in our country.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment:

The word 'gender' describes the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that society consider appropriate for men and women. Gender equality means where women and men enjoy the same opportunities and rights in every sphere of life. Equality between men and women exist when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is women Empowerment. The importance of gender equality and women's empowerment particularly women's economic empowerment, is the core concept of *United Nations Industrial Development Organization* (UNIDO). Targeting gender equality and women's economic empowerment is not only important from the perspective of realizing women's rights but is also smart economics in the whole world. Among the 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) of 2016 'Gender Equality' is in the goal 5 which depicts that, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

CONCLUSION

From the discussion we can conclude that, education is very much essential for empowering Muslim women in our society. Muslim women education is a powerful tool for the change of any society. Higher education plays a significant role for improving the status of Muslim women in the family and society. Education is the only tool for empowering Muslim women in our country. Muslim women empowerment is an initiative to develop our nation.

The Government of India thus came up in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as, 'Women Empowerment Year' focus on making gender equality in our country. The 'Udaan' program of CBSE is dedicated to the girl child education. This type of scheme should be implemented nationwide to bring a remarkable change in our society. This is a true empowerment. Thus, education becomes the only fundamental prerequisite for empowering women of Muslim community.

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