



Empowerment of Muslim Women

Dr. Shivendra Pratap Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Education V. B. College of Education, Bhagalpur

ABSTRACT

Empowerment of women as described in National Policy of Empowerment of women 2002 takes Economic empowerment and social empowerment as its basic parameters. Economic empowerment includes poverty eradication and income generation and social empowerment includes education, health and nutrition etc. Apart from these parameters other aspects which determine women's empowerment are mobility, self esteem and choice of career. In the case of Muslim women the state of empowerment is still not clear hence a study about their actual status is required. In many cases we find a number of myths related to their rights being propagated by various extremist groups (both Hindu and Muslim). It is by and large observed that while the outsiders carry a very biased view of Muslim women and are generally not aware of the reality, Muslim women also tend to not realize their actual status.

Most of them are not clear about the rights given to them by Islam as a religion as well as the Indian constitution. This paper aims at bringing about general awareness among the Muslim women about their status, rights and duties.

KEYWORDS

Women Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment, Mobility, Self Esteem,

Paper

The issues of women and Islam among masses have for quite some time attracted the interest of the intellectual and politicians. But much of this interest is caught up in misconception-Religion is seen to be the primary force influencing every aspect of their lives. They are still viewed as being out of the world where every move of their life is controlled by men and religious dogmas issued from time to time by various religious leaders and scholars. The spotlight is always on the role of religion in their life. It is normally believed that they are strictly controlled by Muslim personal law.

The social status of Muslim women as projected in the outside world is the result of select cases of Muslim women passionately discussed in media. It has resulted in identifying the Muslim religion as a sole locus of gender in justice in the country.

According to the Sachar Committee report as a result of such biased propaganda the civil society and the state locate Muslim women's deprivation not in terms of the 'objective' reality of societal discrimination and faulty development policies, but in the religious community space.

Furthermore when the community identity is under siege it affects women in a dramatic ways. Women sometimes out of their will, sometimes under community pressure adopt visible markers of community identity on their person and in their behavior. Such behavior generally hampers the serial, educational and economic growth of Muslim women.

The morality of women and movement in public spaces are under constant scrutiny and control. A gender based fear of the 'public' experienced to some degree by all women, is magnified manifold in the case of Muslim women. A rigid line is drawn between safe and unsafe places. The community and its women seem to withdraw into the safety of familiar orthodoxies, reluctant to participate in the project of modernity. Many of the community feel that the only 'safe' place for women is within the boundaries of home and community.

This hampers the development of women and reduces their opportunities. This study aims at studying the social status of Muslim women and suggests ways for their social enlistment.

Muslims in general have a poor representation in employment market. This number is poorly represented in public employ-

ment. Displacement from traditional occupation has contributed to Muslims being deprived of their means of livelihood and has led to economic backwardness. Muslims by large are engaged in the unorganized sector of the economy which rarely enjoys protection of any kind.

Muslims are overwhelmingly self employed (engaged in home based work). Sewing, embroidery, Zari work, chikan work, readymade garments, agarbatti and beedi rolling are some of the occupations in which Muslim women are concentrated. Their work conditions are characterized by low income, poor work conditions.

The distinct pattern of Muslim women's employment in home-based work is in part due to discrimination in formal employment. In part it is due to vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education and technical skills etc. Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions because much of work they do is subcontracted. This restriction of mobility restricts their employment opportunities and wages. Many home based workers are so low down in the assembly line of production that they operate entirely through middlemen and do not even know who their employer is.

Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular generally lag behind in most of the spheres of life in India. The causes are multi-faceted and have been discussed above in detail. It is commonly perceived that the problems of the Muslim women are much different and more complex than their counterparts belonging to other religions. In a way it is correct also, Muslims since independence have lived in a fear of attack, they have been ignored by successive Governments and sometimes they have been targeted in the name of avenging some wrong doings in the past which have also been supported by various political parties and government. Such movements have targeted the community and women being the most vulnerable have been exposed to all sort of violence. Without proper education and knowledge they are not even able to take up their cases and obtain justice. Present paper aims to bring Muslim women at par with other women who are able to defend themselves and their families in times of distress and raise their voices against any injustice that is meted out to them.

All the men have to do is support their wives and children. Since girls are not born knowing how to do all these things, they need to learn not only these practical skills but also re-

religious and ethical principles. If men want future generations to succeed in the world, it is as just important to educate their daughters as their sons; indeed, it is probably more important to educate the daughters. Keeping women ignorant meant that neither their sons nor their daughters will receive any basic education at home. The superstitions and useless customs that have crept into the culture will disappear only with proper education and enlightenment. Opponents of women's education feel that sending girls to school will render them disrespectful but the opposite is true. If they learn the precepts of their religion, they will be better wives, mothers, guides to their children and better Muslims.

In addition, sending girls to school as opposed to instructing them at home is much better, because a school can afford better teacher and broader curricular offerings than any home instruction. As a basic curriculum, he noted the need to teach reading, writing, mathematics, and a basic knowledge of the world, he then listed practical subjects, health and cleanliness, household accounting and management, cooking, sewing, child care, gardening and exercise for bodily health."

In conclusion it is emphasized that people who wish to keep women in ignorance are sinning against God's wishes. They are the worst enemies of humankind, assuring the decline of future generations. If the women of the community are backward, he reiterated. The men of that community can never advance.

REFERENCES

- Agrawal, B. (1990). *A Field on one's own: gender and land right in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chaube, S. P. (1974). *Recent philosophies of education in India*. Agra: Ram Prasad & Sons. Government of India (1948-1949). *University Education Commission Report*. New Delhi: Ministry of Education. Government of India (1959). *Development Programmes sponsored by Zakir Hussain Educational Reconstruction in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Government of India (1999). *Aims and objectives of University Education in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Education. Hasan, Z. & Menon, R. (2005). *Unequal citizens*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. UNESCO (1955). *Education for international understanding*. Paris.