

A Comparative Study on Socio-Economic Conditions of Muslim and Hindu Women in India With Special Reference to Barpeta District of Assam

(During the period Between 2000 to 2017)

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I. Statement of the Problem

Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come to existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary skills. Socio-Economic development is partly based on education. Hence, to think harmonious development of the country without educating women is impossibility. Moreover, it has been rightly said that to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizen, housewife, mother, and contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation (Sonowal,2013). Recognizing the fact that the educational backwardness of women is part of the overall educational lag of women in India specially those belonging to rural areas, backward regions, historically disadvantaged groups like the SC, ST and the BPL households, what is the need of the hour is an overall plan of action for bringing the female half at par with the males. State governments needs to make special provisions over and above the normal, for drawing and retaining girls in school till class 8th as a fundamental right, and for improving their participation in secondary and higher technical education and professional education. There is a need of a comprehensive and inclusive national programme of action for advancement of

education of Muslim women (to include all level and types of education) with a sharp focus on removal of rural-urban disparities in general and the continued educational backwardness of Muslim women in Comparison to Hindu women. There is no doubt that comparatively Muslim women are educationally backward and their work participation rate is low than Hindu women. However, this reality cannot be understood in a limited way. There is a need to adopt a broader social, economic, political and programmatic perspective along with the prevailing heterogeneity in terms of sect, region, class and gender.

II. Review of Literature

Being a plural community, social organizations and economic conditions, Indian Muslims differ from region to region and within a region from one social group to another. However, as a religious or minority community they are found most backward and poor at national level by individual researchers and government agencies in Comparison to Hindu women Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and social justice and socio-economic and educational development in the country, large number of Muslims either unemployed or associated with manual low paid occupations both in villages and cities (Waheed, 2006). The participation of Muslims in salaried jobs, both in the public and the private sectors, is quite low when it compared with women of other community. The presence of Muslims was found to be only three per cent in the IAS, 1.8 per cent in the IFS and four per cent in the IPS. It is less participation rate than Hindu. A large number of them engaged in self-employment activity. The main reason behind this is lack of education (Sachar, 2006). India's Planning Commission's India Human Development Report 2011 findings shows improvement on a few indicators like poverty, education, health, etc., as regards Muslims but the rate of growth much lower than for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The situation has improved little after the Sachar Committee Report. According to the 2011 report, urban poverty is highest amongst Muslims, rural poverty amongst Muslims is also higher than that of other religious groups and, indeed, than that of other backward classes (OBCs). One-third of the Muslims in the country were living below the poverty line. The rate of decline in poverty has also been slowest in the Muslim community then other (Human Development Report, 2011) . Muslim women have the lowest Work Participation Rate (WPR)

among all the three religious categories (Hindus, Muslims and Christians). Sixty per cent of Muslim women are self-employed--the highest percentage among all three categories. Muslim women employment as regular workers in urban areas is 15.7 per cent as compared to 27.7 per cent for Hindu women and 51.5 per cent for Christian women highlight their marginal presence in salaried jobs. In rural areas the employment status for Hindu is 3.6 per cent and for Muslim 3.0 per cent (Kazi, 1991). Muslim women are overwhelmingly self-employed (engaged in home based work). Sewing, embroidery, zari work, chicane work, readymade garments, agarbatti rolling, beedi rolling are some of the occupations in which Muslim women workers are concentrated. Their work conditions are characterized by low income, poor work conditions, absence of toilet and crèche facilities, lack of social security benefits like health insurance and the absence of bargaining power. In several states home-based industry has virtually collapsed leaving poor Muslim women spiraling downwards to penury. The distinct pattern both of Muslim & Hindu women's employment in home based work is in part due to discrimination in formal employment. In part, it is due to the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education and technical skills, leading to low-skilled, low income work, and back again to poverty. Comparatively Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions than Hindu women because much of the work they do is sub-contracted. The restriction of mobility (based on social and cultural factors) restricts their employment opportunities and wages. They do not have independent access to credit facilities, opportunities for skill up gradation, or access to markets. There is active discrimination in giving women credit facilities it was pointed out. The increasing ghettorisation of both poor Muslims and Hindus leads to the seclusion of home-based female workers, cutting them off from channels of communication and hindering their ability to organize into collectives. 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. Muslim women have minimal participation in Government micro-finance programmes such as Self Help Groups (SHGs), Watershed Programmes and Panchayati Raj (Sachar, 2006) in comparison to Hindu women and their counterpart male.

*Government Initiatives to Improve the Educational Status of Muslim Women
Various efforts have been taken in the post independent period to spread*

education among the masses. Muslims and Neo-Buddhists have been identified as educationally backward at the national level by Dr. Gopal Singh Committee. The Committee recommended need for special efforts to bring the educationally backward minorities on par with the rest of the society and to make them participate fully in the national development activities. In May 1983, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi issued a 15-Point Directive on welfare of minorities. The National Policy on Education, 1986 and its Programme of Action (Revised in 1992) first took note of the existing programmes for the Muslim Minorities and suggested a large number of short-term, medium-term and long-term measures to promote education of minorities and led to the formulation of major programmes like the Area Intensive Educational Development and Modernization of Madrasas, Maulana Azad National Fellowship for Minority Students as Central Government Schemes of the MHRD. However, the implementation of this 15-point programme was far from satisfactory and the commitments contained in National Policy Resolutions on education have not brought the desired result. Often the recommendations and suggestions contained in these documents remain on paper only (Nayar, 2007). Sachar Committee felt to review and recast the 15-point programme for Minorities. The new 15-point programme was felt to be necessary because of the gaps in the previous programme with regard to amelioration of socio-economic and educational conditions of the minority groups. With a view to removing this lacuna and having a more comprehensive programme for minorities, the Prime Minister's new 15-point Programme for Welfare of Minorities was formulated, and approved by the Cabinet on 22 June 2006. The Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan has strong pro-Girl Child components with added emphasis on the Muslim girls as well as Hindu since Mid-Tenth Five Year Plan. The performance is uneven across states.

III. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of research work are drawn as follows:

- I. To create awareness among the Muslim and Hindu women (Specially SC, ST, OBC, MOBC etc.)
- II. To examine economic status of Muslim and Hindu Women in the Society

- III. *To highlight the Comparative educational level of women in Muslim and Hindu community*
- IV. *An Appraisal of govt. Policies in elevation of economic conditions of Muslim and Hindu Women*
- V. *To evaluate social hierarchy prevalent among Muslim and Hindu women.*
- VI. *To suggest some valuable measures to ameliorate socio-economic conditions of Muslim Women in Comparison to Hindu women.*

IV. Hypothesis of the Research Study

The Important hypotheses of the research study can be drawn as hereunder:

- I. *Muslim women and Hindu Women as SC, ST, OBC, MOBC, etc. are typically marginalized and backward in that particular society in comparison to general class Hindu women and their counterpart male.*
- II. *They have lesser accessibility of education other Hindu community.*
- III. *Muslim women don't have equal opportunity for gainful employment in comparison to Hindu women and their counterpart male.*
- IV. *The mobility of Muslim women based on some social and cultural factors is restricted in up gradation of their technical skill for gainful employment in comparison to Hindu Women and their counterpart male.*

V. Research Methodology of the Study

*The proposed research study is based on secondary as well as primary data. The secondary data will be collected from published sources such as books, reputed journals, reports, library and government agencies etc. The Secondary data will corroborate with primary data. The sampling method will be used for collecting primary data. The survey will be conducted on the basis of questionnaire and direct interview from the respondents of the study area. A comparative study on socio-economic conditions of Muslim women in comparison to Hindu women will be made in **Barpeta District** of Assam. **Mandia Development Block** has been selected for sampling study. Of the **Mandia** Block one village Namely **Jonia** (under Jonia LAC) which village is inhabited by mostly both Muslim and Hindu dominated and River affected area. From The village **Jonia** 300 households has been selected for sake of*

research study. A survey will be made of Village **Jonia** on the basis of formulated questionnaire and direct interview from the respondents. The collected data shall be analyzed with suitable statistical techniques.

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