

CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

ZUBEE KHANAM
M.A., UGC-NET (POLITICAL SCIENCE)
JHANSI (U.P.)

ABSTRACT:- In modern India, the socio-economic status of women in Muslim communities, along with their political participation ratio and the need for legal reform, has raised serious apprehensions and demand immediate attention. Government reports suggest that Muslim women are among the poorest, educationally disenfranchised, economically vulnerable, politically marginalized groups in the country. The present paper highlights the status of Muslim women in India. They are inherently disadvantageous and marginal in all field of social living since long period of time although among all the state population of India, about are occupied by Muslim women. After passing seventy glorious years of independence the major portion of Muslim women belong to the economically penurious and politically marginalized sections in Indian society and is in the most disadvantage condition with the least literacy rate. Islam ideology gives coequal right for women with acknowledge her and recognizes her independent personality factually although there is so far difference between Islam Ideology and present practices about the women.

KEYWORDS:- India, Muslim, women, Minority, Rights

INTRODUCTION:-

Today Muslims- at 14.2% (according to 2011 census) of the country's population, are the India's largest minority. India is also a country with the second largest number Muslims in the world. The majority of Indian Muslim (over 85%) belong to the Sunni branch of Islam while a substantial minority (over 13%) belong to the Shia branch. There are also tiny minorities Ahmadiyya and Quranists across the country. There were four major Sunni schools of law- Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi. Shias follow their own codified laws, which differ from Sunni interpretation. Islam came to the Indian sub

continent at different periods of time and was observed in a variety of ways. Yet Muslims rule lasted for almost eight centuries, leaving an indelible impression on the history, culture, politics and administration of India. Muslims are not a single homogenous community in India. According to Anthropological Survey of India over 350 regional or ethnolinguistic Muslim groups exist in India. Cultural diversity among Muslims, including attitude, habits, language and traditions and a non uniform diffusion of Islam over the centuries has resulted in a variety of Muslim laws and customary practices within Muslim communities in India.

METHODOLOGY:-

The study is based on secondary sources of data primarily obtained from National Family Health Survey-IV (NFHS-4), conducted, by the Ministry of the Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; Census of India, 2011, and Election Commission's Statistics, India.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:-

In general Muslim families are influenced by Muslim laws or Sharia. This implies that Muslim families and communities are in some way uniquely different from non-Muslims. As we talk about the era of post independence of India, Indian constitution redefined the relationship between the state and its citizens, the notion of the individuals as citizens with fundamental rights, including the right to universal adult suffrage was a break with post authoritarian structures. The secular discourse of a multilayered past and a common future for all Indians in the wake of partition's bitterness evoked a powerful appeal Yet it was difficult even painful to identify with a secular, Indian identity while their religious identity was still suspected, while they remained targets of communal violence, for the most uneducated, economically deprived

Muslim communities. While Muslim women faced additional disadvantage of being women within a minority community with most uneducated and economically deprived community.

Personal law (i.e. laws covering family relations, marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody rights etc.) is a contesting arena for the women’s movement as well as for Hindus & Muslims conservatives. It is not only defines the relationship between men & women in marriage and family relation but also mark the relationship between women & the state. While civil and criminal laws in post independent India are secular , but personal laws are governed by the respective religious laws. Muslim women come under the purview of Muslim Personal Law. Several laws were passed in 1950 in Hindu Code Bill , that aimed to codify and reform Hindu Personal law in India and abolishing religious law in favour of common law code , while Muslim Personal law were not amended. We believe there is a need for reform in Muslim personal law and there is a need for a codified law- just like the Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act or the Christian Marriage Act and Divorce Act, which are acts based on religion but which, by and large, enable gender justice. As of Muslim personal law, which was drafted in 1937, it has never been amended. It does not talk about pertinent issues like polygamy and age of marriage.

But in recent time government of India taken several steps to strengthen Muslim women in India. One of the major step is to bringing the law against triple talaq. The

government introduced the Muslim Women (Protection of rights on marriage) Bill in Parliament. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha but was stalled by the opposition in the Rajya Sabha. The bill was reintroduced and passed by the House of Parliament in July, 2019. Consequently, the bill received assent from the President Ram Nath Kovind. The legislation, which allows instant triple talaq, sets three years jail for violations and also make the violator liable to pay a fine. According to Sachar Committee report, literacy rate of Muslims in 2001 was 59.16% which is below the national average (64.8%) with gap greatest in urban areas. Due to this illiteracy, Muslims were not understood the Sharia law and as a result triple talaq became a evil law to the Muslim women in India. So through this step government should uphold the status of Muslim women and this step was very appreciated by Muslim women in India.

Through these initiatives the education status of Indian Muslim women were slightly improvised. Statistics shows significant rise in the number of Muslims girls going to schools and college across the country. Although, the number as a share of their population are still lower than that of non-muslims. The increase is significant. The Indian Express noted that, between 2007-08 and 2017-18, the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) of Muslim women in higher education in India increased from 6.7% to 13.5%. Attendance Ratio in Higher education doubled since 2008. Here data shows significant improvement in education sector of Muslim women.

Uptick in Muslim Women’s Education

Women(18-23 years)	2007-08	2014	2017-18
Hindus	13.4%	25.7%	24.3%
Muslims	6.7%	13%	13.5%
Christians	27.9%	38.9%	35.4%
Sikhs	15.4%	38.3%	31.9%

Source- National Sample Survey

While the educational status were slightly improvise in Muslim women groups but some acts which happened recently in India were questioned the initiatives which were taken by our government previously. Recently Sulli Deals and Bulli Bai deals apps put up the photos of Muslim women in a fake online auction. These women

were all vocal muslims, including journalist, activists, artists and researchers. These women were the voice of uneducated and oppressed women in their community. If these women were pointed out than how these marginalized section of the group were uplifted. These are the role model of the community and they were

encourage to their works but some of these acts were exception of the efforts which were taken by our government to uplift the status of Muslim women. But our government is very concerned about the upliftment of Muslim women.

On the completion of 75 years of independence, women in Muslim community face considerable challenges as citizens of India and as a member of India's largest minority. To uplift the status of Muslim women, it is also necessary to place the reservation for Muslim women in Parliament. Through this, these women has been become a voice of Muslim women and have concern for Muslim women's welfare in terms of education, employment, health or family law. But while looking at past data we find some very disturbing statistics-

- 1- Currently only four Muslim women in the Parliament. (Ms. Nusrat Jahan & Smt. Sajda Sultan Ahmed in Lok Sabha and Dr. Fauzia Khan & Smt. Mausam Noor in Rajya Sabha)
- 2- Since independence around 612 women have been elected to Loksabha , out of them 21 have been Muslim women.
- 3- The picture is not much different at the state level – less than 8% women are represented in the state assemblies. Muslim are almost negligible.
- 4- So far as states are concerned of 28 States and 8 Union Territories., but none of them is a Muslim women out of the Governors and Lt. Governors/Administrators of 28 states and 8 UT's. None of them is Muslim women.
- 5- Of the, 17th Loksabha we never saw a Muslim women speaker and in Rajya Sabha also, no Muslim women occupied the post of Chaimanship. Only Najma Heptullah served the post of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha for sixteen years when she was the member of Congress.

Nevertheless, we do have some stories of Muslim women in politics that inspire and pave the way towards a more inclusive society, like Shamina Shafiq who is the General Secretary of All India Mahila Congress (AIMC). She belongs to a middle class Muslim family in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh. In 2009 she decided to see change in Indian politics, and she wants, Muslim women have chosen to enter politics despite religious and socio-

economic barriers. The need of the hour is to have more Muslim women in the Parliament which will ensure greater say that this minority group will have.

If we talking about the participation of Muslim women in India's workforce so we have seen that the lack of women leaders is even starker and India's Muslim women are practically invisible in the country's workforce. There are approximately 70 million educated Muslim women in the country, but there Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is falling. Any conversation around Indian Muslim women is need to take into account the larger external ecosystem as well as certain internal factors. External factors include systemic issues, such as the slew of Legislations passed by the government that are leading to further marginalization of the community as a whole. Internal factors include lack of education, social norms and more, that keep women out of the public space and away from leadership roles in the workforce. Internal factors too require systemic changes and are limited until external factors are corrected. Work participation among Muslim women in 2001 is 14.10% and in 2011 is 14.80%, which shows that the participation rate is almost negligible. Women discrimination in developmental opportunities is an old problem in India. However previously we have seen that the educational status were slightly improvised in Muslim women groups, although the numbers are still lower. Through education young Indian Muslim women create space in India's workspace. Additionally it becomes essential for organizations to follow Equal Opportunities Policy. The Indian constitution mandates the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of religion, caste, creed, community and sex, and mandates equal opportunities in matter of public employment. Therefore, to create a work environment free of discrimination and harassment for these employees.

The proper utilization of the capacities of the people of all sections is necessary for achieving the full potential level of socio economic development of a country. The prevalence of socio economic backwardness increases the chances of restriction to live full and active lives. The quality of life of the Muslim community in India is poor compared to other religious communities. The participation of Muslim women is limited in household decision making. Muslim men check women's

participation in public life and restrict their social mobility. In many Muslim families, women are not considered as a primary economic agent. Therefore, there is an urgent need for active intervention by government and non-governmental organizations to ensure Muslim's full and equal participation in socio economic activities as Indian citizens. In modern India, there is an urgent need to uplift the socio economic status of Muslim women and also a need for legal reform. This point cannot be overstated in a context where in 1983, the Gopal Singh Committee instituted by the government declared Muslims as a "Backward Community" in India. A central feature of backwardness is the appalling educational and socio economic status of Muslim in India, particularly Muslim women. On the completion of 75 years of Independence, women in Muslim community face considerable challenges as a citizen of India and as a member of India's largest minority. In this context, it is utmost important to ensure that women asserting their rights are not silenced, such silencing would make acceptable spurious claims that women's rights and gender equality are alien and illegitimate Muslim contexts and would condone the use of violence as a mechanism of control over women. It is more important than ever before to amplify women's voices and give support to them. This will promote the rights to gender equality as the inalienable right of the Muslim women. Additionally there is an urgent need to make visible initiatives for gender equality and education for Muslim women's context. So that the fallacious ideas and rumours were not effect the rights of Muslim women in India.

CONCLUSION:-

To conclude, Muslim women are in a worrisome position. They are still locked in the cages of religious orthodoxy that takes away from them their education, employment, and all other sources of liberation and seeking autonomy. Besides this, the polarized environment of our country where extremist groups have threatened the secular nature of our nation has made Muslim women the "easy targets". Thus, they not only have to suffer because of belonging to a particular religion but also because of their sex. More and more women should come forward and spread awareness among their fellow women who have been suffering in silence giving in to their fate. Feminist circles should assimilate the issue of Muslim women and work for their upliftment. Diffusion of education and knowledge seems to be a silver bullet for Muslim women.

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