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## **Muslim Education in Murshidabad District of West Bengal: Problems and Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is the only mechanism that enhances the process of social, economic, and cultural development of communities. Among all the religious communities, Muslims are in the least educated section of Indian Society. In West Bengal this condition is more pathetic than other states. Among the all districts of West Bengal the status of Muslims in Murshidabad is greatly noticeable to all. Their percentage in Primary Education Level is not too much worse. But their educational fate starts deteriorating after the completion their primary education. In higher education they become Microscopic Minority. There are several reasons for backwardness of Muslims in Murshidabad such as poverty, negative attitude towards girl's education, lack awareness among guardians, child marriage, unsuitable social environment etc. The education condition of Muslims in Murshidabad may be changed if we collectively strive to rid of the problems irrespective of caste, religion, sex, region, language, ethnicity and social status.*

***Key Words: Muslim Education, Murshidabad, West Bengal, Problem, Solution.***

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**Introduction:** Education plays a significant role in the dissemination of modern attitudes, values, approach and rational outlook. It is universally accepted facts that education is the most potent and effective tool to achieve empowerment of any section of society. Education ensures a position of dignity for the individual and the community which instills a sense of confidence and self-worth. Evolution of social and economic status is usually natural outcomes of good education. Generally, Muslims lag behind in educational attainment, their prospects of going beyond primary rather lower than that of Hindus and completing school even lower. Enrolling girls in school is only half the battle, because it is meaningful only if they complete the minimum of 8 years of schooling-which requires that their families be able to resist the pressures of income generation and work in the home. Neglecting women education any community as well as the nation cannot be developed. Muslim community is most backward community in India. One of the important reasons of this backwardness is giving less importance to women education.

**Educational Status of Muslim Population in Murshidabad:** Both the household survey data and village survey data show poor condition of education in villages of Murshidabad especially among minorities. According to the Census 2011 the literacy rate of Muslim population in Murshidabad is 66.59% whereas male literacy is 69.95% and female literacy rate is 63.09%. From the survey at the household level it can be observed that about 35 percent of Muslim general population is illiterate whereas Non Muslim illiteracy rate is about 25 percent. Household survey data shows that about 43

percent of Muslim (sum of 16 male female) children attend primary school but only about 3 percent of Muslim students completes higher secondary. While most of the villages have primary schools the average number of teachers per primary school is 3.02. This readily implies that only the presence of school is not enough. The number of secondary and higher secondary schools per village is abysmally low. Percentage of dropouts is higher below eighth standard than below primary level for Muslim households and the major reasons being work and high cost of education. This is the area where attention needs to be drawn for policy suggestions. We believe that if the households that choose to send their children to school will be provided with additional income support during school years then dropout rate might get lessened. It is worth mentioning that almost in all villages dropout rates are higher for women once they reach the eighth standard. About 2% of the Muslim households are graduates. A significant percentage of Muslim students take vocational training such as tailoring, computer training, driving training, automobile labour, electronics and electrical, handicrafts etc and demand for such training is high.

**Problems of Muslim's Education in Murshidabad:** Muslims are among most backwards in Murshidabad as well as in India. They are not taking care of their educational advancement by the advantage of constitutional provision. The problem of backwardness is a long term process. Muslims are far lagging behind than the other communities in term of education. There are various reasons for Muslim being educationally backward which are–

**Poverty:** Poverty is one of the main causes of educational backwardness of Muslim Community in Murshidabad. Here most of teenage boys go to other states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu for earning money to save their family from this poverty. Even mostly teenage girls are also engaged either in household works or in many works such as tailoring and making Biri (Smocking) to support their family. So very least number of them go to school in this ages.

**Lack of Awareness about the Importance of Education:** Due to prevalent illiteracy among the Muslims in Murshidabad, they don't know the importance of education in their life. They even don't know that only education can change their educational, social and economic status. Most of them think that education is only needed for maintaining their life, not for getting good jobs. They consider that higher education means wasting of time. Therefore they favour to send their children for earning money. It is only due to their ignorance about education.

**Unsuitable Social Environment for Education:** According to S. K. Mangal children's 70% intelligence depend on the social environment. So if the family's social environment is suitable for education, their children will be automatically motivated for education. But in Murshidabad most of the children are engaged in works other than education and this has a great impact on other children of the society. So they are not getting proper motivation from others for their education.

**Lack of Physical Facilities in Schools for Muslim Girls:** After many recommendations of the Commissions the physical facilities such as toilets in the educational institutions are not adequate for girls. Therefore many parents feel insecure to send their daughters for education to the institutions. Even many parents think that sending their daughters to such schools is against the fundamentals of their religion. So they have negligence to send their daughters for education.

**Lack of Job Opportunities due to less Industrialization:** We know that industrialization is one of the important tools for giving job security as well as the economic development of a Country. Due to some Governmental problems industries were not developed in adequate numbers in Murshidabad District. Even some sugar mills and jute mills were there. But they were closed by the

Government. Job opportunities in the district are very less in Governmental sectors. Therefore there is lack of job opportunities in the district and due to this problem people are not too much interested for education.

**Negative Attitudes of the Government towards Muslims:** Though Sachchar Committee Report formed in 2006 has said that Murshidabad District is one of the educationally backward districts in the Country, the Government did not give adequate attention for the development of educational status of the district because Murshidabad is Muslim concentrated district in the Country. So due to Governmental negligence towards Muslims the educational status is not changing in a proper way as needed.

**Shortage of adequate Educational Institutions:** National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 has already said that there should be one primary school in every one km. But even still now there is lack of primary schools in the Murshidabad district. Therefore the children do not get schools in their easy reach. Besides though Murshidabad constitutes around 7% of the total population of the state, there is no University in the district for higher education. So due to the shortage of educational institutions, the educational status of Muslims is not developed in adequate way.

**Child Marriage:** Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar fought for the eradication child marriage from the Indian society in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. But in 21<sup>st</sup> Century this evil is still existed in Indian society. Among the Muslims of Murshidabad this dogma is available not only for the girls but also for the boys. So for this child marriage their education has to be stopped in the middle of study.

**Illiterate Parents:** Muslims are facing socio-economic poverty from past. Their vision is blurring towards education because majority of Muslim parents are illiterate, they are unaware about the importance of modern education. They live in large family size and give greater importance to early marriages. There is absent of vocation education to improve their image to develop through education.

**Negative Attitude towards Girls 'Education:** There is negative attitude towards girls education among Muslims. Due to hurdles from family they lose the zeal to achieve something through education and thus they themselves do not have academic interest. If at all they are fortunate enough to go to a good school, they are often discouraged to go for higher education, especially overseas. There is often misconception regarding the "purity" of girls if they have studied in Universities, or have traveled abroad. The most important reason is that there is difficulty in finding educated groom if the girl becomes highly educated.

**Lack of Up-gradation in the Syllabus of Madrasah and Makhtabs:** Madarsa and Makhtabs are still running at the traditional pattern. There is no influence of modern education in their syllabus. Students of Madarsa are having low level of knowledge regarding modern education. Those students who study in Madrasah and Makhtabs are detached from the mainstream of education. So they are not getting proper education. There is no up-gradation in the syllabus of Madrasah and Makhtabs.

**Possible Solutions:** Educational development of Muslims is a gradual phenomenon. The emergence of some premier Muslim educational institutions across the country such as Darul Ulyoom Dwyband, U.P, Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Maulana Jauhar Ali University, Osmania University etc. have tremendously improved the prospects of the community in the sphere of both streams of education. Some suggestions are given below regarding the educational upliftment:

- We have to increase in awareness among Muslims about the importance of education, various employment opportunities, self employment schemes as well as resultant economic well being through it.
- Governmental incentives and scholarships are also necessary for the poor and deprived Muslims. Muslims should be provided reservation in higher education and elite institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. Thus access to higher education in general and the need for offering it to all at affordable cost is required.
- Modernization of Madarsa education to raise the educational status of traditional Muslims and there should be integration of vocational education with religious instruction in Madarasas. There is also need to link madarasas with higher secondary school board.
- There is need to develop more girls' school to minimize the problem of accessibility of schools. Parents should develop positive attitude towards girl's higher education.
- Government should develop Strong organization for improving the condition of all centers of primary, secondary and higher learning in India. Various educational schemes chalked out for implementation of recognition of minority education, coaching classes for competitive examination etc.
- The parents should think that child marriage is a hindrance in the path of higher education of their children. So they should eradicate this dogma from the society.
- The Government should establish adequate higher education institute such as colleges and universities in Murshidabad so that the students can easily access higher education in the district.
- Sufficient industries should be established to secure job security for the students in the district so that the students can feel that acquiring higher education can be very fruitful for getting good jobs. It also develops the economic problems of Muslims.
- The Government should implement the recommendations given by Sachchar Committee for the upliftment of educational status of Muslims in Murshidabad.
- The community people should be cooperative for educational upliftment of Muslims in Murshidabad. Those who know the importance of education should motivate other children as well as guardians so that even illiterate parents can also be interested for their children's education and in this way the educational status of the whole community can be changed.

**Conclusion:** Taking into consideration the above discussion it can be concluded that Muslims in Murshidabad are far behind than the other communities. They don't want to give higher education to their daughters due to many reasons, at present somehow they are now coming up for education and improving day by day for the last two decades and are learning to stand on their own feet, but this effort is just a drop in the ocean. Their Madarsa are following traditional and old syllabus in the time of globalization and information technology. Their syllabus is far away from scientific and commercial knowledge. Madrasah should transform into modern educational centers where both religious and vocational studies may be imparted. Thus there is need to change the vision of Muslims from traditional to modern education. There is also meager study on Muslim's educational condition; it is the duty of social Anthropologists and Sociologists to find out the educational status and to analyze the state of education among the Muslims of Murshidabad to explore the constraints of educational upliftment among them. It is the need of the hour, that Government should move on and do something for development of Muslims.

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