Chapter - V

Higher Education of Muslim Women
(i) Upto 1947
(ii) After 1947
This chapter is divided into two parts for better focus - (i) Upto 1947 (ii) After 1947. The first division upto 1947 focusses on the education of Muslim women in its early phase during the Muslim rule and the Colonial rule, and the Causes for their educational backwardness. The second division after 1947 focusses on the need for the higher education of Muslim women, for the development of their personality, the society and the nation. As education is the most important instrument for human resource development, the education of muslim women occupies the top most priority in the policies of the state. But, due to various reasons the progress of education among muslim women was / is very slow. As a result illiteracy persists in the muslim society.

Very scarce information is available for reconstructing a historical overview of Muslim women’s education during the period of Muslim rule in India. Infact, the establishment of Muslim rule in India was a great turning point in Indian History. The Muslim rulers (with the exception of Syeds, Lodis and Surs were of Turkish or Mongol origin) brought with them a rich cultural heritage not only from Arabia but also from various other places of West Asia which influenced their economic, political and socio, cultural processes in India. Muslim rulers played a pivotal role in the development of education in this country. The fundamental role of education during this time was for purification of soul and for preparation of life. The history of Islamic learning in India can be traced back to the period of the first Arab contacts with India. The Arab soldiers and commanders in Sind were not only fighters, but teachers and preachers as well. Besides, a band of muslims led by Malik-Ibn-i-Dinar reached Cannanore in Kerala, and settled down on the Western Coast of the State.

When sind acquired prominence, a large number of men of learning and erudition migrated to this land from Arabia and made it their permanent home. Within a short period of time Sind, Debal, Mansura and Multan became important Centres of Islamic
Culture in India. Multan was the most important Center of Islamic learning after Mansura. The Islamic system of education was introduced and promoted by the muslim rulers after the establishment of their rule in India. As a result of this, Two types of muslim educational institutions came into existence-Maktabs and Madrasas. These institutions were mostly attached to Mosques and were called as Mosque Schools. The Maktab was a Primary school and the Madrasa was a centre of Higher learning. Arabic learning was compulsory in these two. These schools were supervised by the Maulavis. Persian was the medium of instruction.

The Content of education in these two institutions was directed towards the goal of perpetuating the Islamic way of life, which was the goal of muslim society. Hence, the content of education necessarily had to reflect the basic tenets of Islam. This, perhaps, was the basic principles, which guided muslim educationists of the past. This was probably, why they did not formulate the courses in the manner of the modern educationists. At all times they were conscious of the fact, that the students both boys and girls have to mould their life in accordance with the basic tenets of Islam.

Primary education was imparted through the maktabs where pupils were sent to learn the fundamentals of religious education from, writing the alphabet to sentence making and other ingredients so that they could perform their devotion and other functions in accordance with the principles of Islam. In large number of cases, students committed the whole of the Holy Qur’an to memory with a view to preserving it through the ages. Besides this reading, writing and arithmetic were also taught. The contents of education imparted in the maktabs, however, varied from place to place.

The madrasas were the higher centers of learning, where advanced knowledge of Arabic, Islamic philosophy and Islamic laws were imparted to students by learned scholars and experts. Teaching of arts and crafts, agriculture, unani, medicine, commerce, logic, astronomy, astrology and other subjects of practical use were included in the courses. It is interesting to note that Madrasas became the centers of both the sacred
and secular education. The medium of instruction was Persian, the language of the Muslim court and study of Arabic, the language of the Qur'an was compulsory for the Muslims. Students did not have to appear for any monthly, terminal or annual examinations for promotion to a higher class in the maktab and the madrasa. No tuition fees was charged from the students in the maktabs and madrasas. Thus, there was free boarding and lodging along with free instructions.

Education of Muslim Women Early Phase:
Islam permits the right education of women. It has set a high ideal of education and learning principally aiming at a right way of thinking, proper understanding of what makes or mars the human soul and building up a healthy mind free from mundane desires. Accordingly, education amongst Muslim women was mainly religious. So the traditional educational pattern was largely religious in character. It included initiation of the children in the reading of the Holy Book, Qur'an. Women's initial education begins with the fundamental principles of Islam, starting from “Kalima” which says “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet” (PBUH). Bismillah is the ceremony which formally marks the beginning of the education of a person. The age fixed for the ceremony is 4 years, 4 months and 4 days. At that particular age every child of the household undergoes this ceremony. It is conducted in a simple manner. Nashra or Amin marks the completion of reading the Qur'an. Thus, the parents laid more emphasis on this type of traditional education. The time taken to complete the Qur'an lessons is 4 to 6 years approximately, at the age of 8 years to 11 years. In exceptional cases, the child finishes reading Qur'an even within 6 months time.

Since the Qur'an is written in Arabic, the children were first taught the Arabic alphabet. The main emphasis was laid on the pronunciation of the words. After, they finished learning Arabic alphabet the children were made to read the Qur'an. The verses from the Qur'an were memorised by the children. To this learning of Arabic was added the basic fundamentals of Urdu and some elementary knowledge of Arithmetic.
This was all that a girl could acquire in her childhood under the name of education. The few, who went to school did so after completing the Qur’an that was beyond seven years of age. Thus, education reached them at a late age.¹⁵

The majority of Indian muslim girls were taught the rudiments of religion. They were also taught to read the Qur’an. They received primary education in maktabs where they studied with the boys up to the age of nine. After that they were shut up within the four walls of the house¹⁶ and married off as soon as they attained the age of puberty. Numerous schools were maintained in private houses for the instruction of girls and the services of muslim widows were utilised. The muslim widows considered it their sacred duty to impart religious education to girls and teach them to read the Holy Qur’an¹⁷. In some families, if the tutoresses were not available, girls were taught either by their mothers or by their grand parents at home¹⁸.

Women’s education during Sultanate period was, though not at the desired level, however, it was not neglected¹⁹. Ibn Batuta reported about the existence of 13 madrasas, exclusively for the girls in the Muslim state of Hannur on the west coast of India as early as 1333 A.D.²⁰ There was a madrasa, meant only for girls, named Madrasa Banat at Fatehpur Sikri near the royal palace²¹.

Education as an institution did not percolate to the common women though indoor education of muslim girls through tutoresses or aged imams remained in vogue for the upper strata of muslim society²². Thus, the princesses and noble women because of their privileged position, were taught various subjects, ranging from religious and secular subjects by the private tutoresses,²³ for instance Ilutmish gave good education to his daughter Raziya, who after became the ruler of Delhi encouraged the development of education. The existence of the Muizzi madrasa, founded by her father, in a flourishing condition is an evidence of her interest in the spread of education²⁴ The ruler of Malwa, Ghiasud-din, had appointed school mistresses for the royal women in the late 15th century. The Mughal rulers continued the pattern of education in harems²⁵. In consequence
of this, inspite of their strict seclusion, however some muslim women continued to make their mark in Politics as well as in Literature. Raziya, the daughter of Iltutmish was able to become a ruler at that crucial period, when chaotic conditions prevailed, but she managed to establish peace and order in the kingdom, because of her knowledge in the art of administration and warfare. Raziya's accession to the masnad of Delhi in 1236 was an event of great significance. She was able to command loyalty and support through a deliberate policy of direct and assertive administration. The qualities, we noticed in Raziya belong to an able and astute ruler and are not the prerogative of any particular sex. Maham Anaga, the chief nurse of the emperor Akbar gained an unprecedented ascendency, and the young Emperor took two years to free himself from her baneful influence. Perhaps, it is too much to say that it was a period of 'petticoat government of the worst kind', but the predominant influence of the harem party on administration cannot be denied. At first Maham Anaga and her relative Shihab-ud-din Ahmad Khan were appointed as joint-Prime Ministers but this arrangement was unworkable. Then, according to Abul Fazl, Maham Anaga took charge of affairs', and on her recommendation Bahadur Khan Uzbeg was appointed as Prime Minister. Nurjahan ruled India as co-regent of her husband Emperor Jehangir. Like Raziya, Nurjahan left an indelible mark on mughul politics. Her tremendous ambition and personality aided her in politics to be the main power behind the throne. Firmans were issued in her name and her name was struck on coins together with that of the Emperor Jehangir.

Chand Bibi of Ahmad Nagar and Makhduma-U-Jahan ruled Deccan as regent, on behalf of Nizam Shah of the Bahmani family. Sahibji, the daughter of Ali Mardan was the actual ruler of Kabul during her husband's viceroyalty and, after his death, ruled over the turbulent Afghans without any serious oppositions. Apart from this, many mughal princesses were excellent biographers and poetesses of distinctions. Gulbadan Begum, the famous authoress of her brother's biography Humayun - Nama and JahanAra the biographer of Shiblyah and Munisal Arwah held an enviable position
among the literary figures of that age. Salima Sultana, Nurjahan, Sitn-un-Nisa, the tutoress of Jahan Ara and Zib-un-Nisa, the eldest daughter of Aurangazeb were the poetesses of distinctions.\textsuperscript{30}

The madrasa education of this period was also promoted by the private, individual muslim woman of this period. The most important among them were, a madrasa called Khair-ul-Manzil built by Maham Anaga, opposite to the Western gate of Purana Qilah in the year 1561 was a residential madarasa. It was called by Badauni as Madrasa-i-Begam\textsuperscript{31}. The madrasa founded by Jahan Ara Begum the elder daughter of Shah Jahan, in the mosque of Agra achieved great importance and continued to function and prosper even in later times.\textsuperscript{32}

About the middle of the fifteenth century Bibi Raji, the wife of Mahmud Shah (son of sultan Ibrahim, the ruler of Jaunpur) built Jami Mosque, a madrasa and a monastery under the name of Namazgah. She also awarded stipends to students and teachers.\textsuperscript{33}

Libraries existed during the mughal period. Every madrasa possessed a library big or small attached to it. The mughal princesses Salima Sultana, Zib-un-Nisa possessed libraries of their own. The example of the royalty was followed by the Nobles and Courtiers who had their own libraries\textsuperscript{34}

Very little information about the curriculum, then, in vogue is available. The courses of study in muslim institutions usually comprised grammar, rhetoric, logic, theology, metaphysics, literature and jurisprudence, astronomy, mathematics and medicine were included under hindu influence. The Arabic curriculum included, besides grammar, syntax, rhetoric, philosophy, logic, tafsir, ahadis, scholasticism and other subjects. The persian texts included Ruqqat-i-Abu-I-Fazl, Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi, Akbar Nama of Abu-I-Fazl and other texts.\textsuperscript{35}
In South India the Nawabs of Carnatic were the patrons of women’s education. There existed a separate maktab to promote the education of girls with the boys up to primary level. The daughters of the royal household and nobles received education through learned women and distinguished old scholars. Many books were written to cater to the special needs of women. Moulana Baqir Agah wrote religious works in Urdu for the enlightenment of women. His daughter Kaneez Fathima was a distinguished scholar, who mastered several disciplines. His work Rauzatul Islam was composed for his daughter in particular and for the women in general. Agah may be considered as one of the pioneers of women’s education in our country. Riaz-ul-Niswan in Urdu, the work of Qazi Badruddowlah, deals with the legal and religious problems relating to women. Risala-i-dur Ahkam-e-Iddat was specially written on widows. Thus, the moral, material and the intellectual needs of the women were not altogether ignored.36

The system of education in medieval times was still at a rudimentary stage. There was no printed primer, but the children were made to write the letters of the alphabet and figures on wooden boards or on the dust of the ground with their fingers. Usually the students had their lessons under the shade of a tree. Combined letters were practised and difficult words selected from a standard book like the Qur’an were dictated. Great importance was attached to calligraphy and students were instructed to imitate and practise the style of the best calligraphists of the day. Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Jaunpur, Gujarat, Sialkot and Ahmedabad were some of the main centres of Islamic learning.37

The courses of study usually varied from 10-16 years for graduation. No regular examinations were held in those days. No regular degrees were awarded. The Post-collegiate studies were invariably completed under a specialist. For still higher studies eager scholars visited the chief places of Islamic learning in Western and Central Asia such as Mecca, Medina, Basra, Kofa, Yemen, Cairo, Nishapur (Iran) Baghdad, Hijaz, Khurasan, and other places.38 Women lectured on history and belles lettres at the University of Baghdad.39
Thus, the education of Muslim women was not completely ignored, though it was mostly confined to the Qur'an school or at the primary stage. There was no regular separate school seemed to have existed for imparting education to girls. As a result of this, the girls had their lessons usually from their parents at home. Very few went up to the secondary stage. But even this was mostly in the house and was confined to the girls of rich and noble families. So, by the beginning of 19th century, there was only illiteracy among the Muslim women. This is because the Qur'an school was a useful institution from a purely religious point of view.\(^4\)

Among Muslims there were no two opinions regarding the value of religious instructions. It was regarded as a natural and an essential portion of education, as a bulwark, both of individual character and of national well being. The Muslims hesitated to send their children to a school, where religious instruction was unattainable and this hesitation together with the fact, that for this community the lessons of the mosque must precede those of the classroom, no doubt, accounts to a large extent, for the backwardness displayed among Muslims in taking advantage of Higher education\(^4\)

**Colonial Phase:**

The British who came to rule over India, initially did not show any interest in the Education of women. But the missionaries took the initiative and tried to promote women education. For this purpose the missionary women entered the Zenana to impart secular or western modern education to Muslim girls. It was only in 1854 in the Wood’s Despatch that the British government accepted the responsibility for promoting women education. But they did not want to interfere with local customs and traditions and they were also particular that the education the British government imparted was to be strictly secular. So, they said “Every girl must be taught fundamental doctrines of her religion, in a clear, single and rational method”. Accordingly, girls belonging to the Islamic faith should be imparted in accordance with their religious principles. They should read their own religious books.\(^4\)
The British realised the importance of the indigenous (Qur'an Schools) schools in the life of the muslims. They also understood their conservative and orthodox nature. The British did not want to hurt the sentiments or the feelings of the muslims in any way. So, when they did accept the responsibility of promoting the female education, they decided to do so through the indigenous schools as far as possible. So they said, that “where indigenous schools exist, the principle of aiding and improving them be recognised as an important means of extending elementary education”.43

“That indigenous muslim schools be liberally encouraged to add purely secular subjects to their curriculum of instruction”.44

Till 1858, the muslim women education was mostly religious education of the Qur'an schools. There were very few zenana schools to promote secondary education and none at the higher education or collegiate level. Muslim women education was mostly a knowledge of Arabic, the recitation of Qur'an, the knowledge of 3R's, a little mathematics, domestic economics and plain needle work.

In the early years of the British rule, there was no consistent policy towards education. Still, primary education made good progress because of the encouragement of the government.

**Primary Education:**

Wood's Despatch in 1854 was the first clear enunciation of the British government's educational policy. The Despatch suggested the improvement of indigenous school opening of new government schools and providing of grant-in-aid to private agencies for the expansion of primary education. The Despatch also said that the medium of instruction at the primary stage should be the vernacular language as far as possible. However, in practice, officials continued to concentrate on promoting English education.
There were primary schools under private and public management. Nearly half the number of primary schools were under the management of the Christian missionaries. Some schools were managed by the Board. About one seventh were managed by the government and the rest were managed by the private agencies other than missionary bodies. These agencies included local committees, individuals who maintained girls schools from philanthropic motives and teachers who obtained their living from these schools.\(^{45}\)

In 1859, when the Crown, took over the Indian administration\(^{46}\) the Secretary of State for India in his Despatch of 7th April 1859, resolved to implement the principles laid down in the Despatch of 1854.\(^{47}\) The Despatch of 1859 fully recognised the impediments, which stood in the way of rapid extension and the risk which would attend official attempts to force on a sudden change in the native customs with regard to the education of girls.

Since 1859-60 Women education did not make considerable progress in the Madras Presidency due to the existence of difficulties. The policy of the Government was to limit the provision of purely state education and to give encouragement to the Grant-in-aid system. But there was no improvement in the education of Muslim women because it was not looked upon as a want.\(^{48}\)

The education of women came under the serious consideration of the Government only in 1866, though prior to this year several missions had taken practical steps towards the establishment of elementary schools for girls. The statistics received from Non-departmental schools, which were mostly under Mission management, showed 4295 girls under instruction, of which 29 were Muslims.\(^{49}\) This shows that inspite of many inducements, women's education did not progress to a considerable extent.

In 1871, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Ameer Ali drew the attention of the Government to the backwardness of muslim women in Education. Lord Mayo, the Viceroy,
admitted that the prevailing system of education did not suit muslims and therefore, it had failed to attract them. Consequently, a Resolution was adopted on August 19, 1871 which recommended the appointment of muslim teachers, the encouragement of Classical languages and the preparation of Vernacular literature for muslim students. These recommendations were implemented.50

In 1872-73, special action was taken with the object of advancing Education among the Muslim community. In connection with this His excellency the Governor Mr. E.B. Powell, consulted some leading and influential muslims. Their views were ascertained and elementary schools were established. Hindustani and English were to be the mediums of instruction in order to qualify the pupils for admission into the higher classes.51

Table - 5.1

The following Table shows the strength of Muslim girls under Instruction in Primary schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Strength of girls in Primary Schools</th>
<th>Number of Muslim girls under Instruction in Primary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865-66</td>
<td>4111 girls</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-67</td>
<td>4638 girls</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868-69</td>
<td>8099 girls</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869-70</td>
<td>9421 girls</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-71</td>
<td>10,185 girls</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows that there was no consistency in their strength.

The following table compares the work done by Missionary and other religious bodies in the way of Muslim Women Education with that performed by others for the years 1871-72, 72-73, 73-74 and 1874-75.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Missionary schools and Religious charities Muslim girls</th>
<th>Other Schools (Government, Board, Private agencies other than missionary bodies) Muslim girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871-72</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-74</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows the fluctuation in the number of Muslim girls attending religious schools.

Source: Reports on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, Madras, for the years:

- 1871-72, p. 73
- 1873-74, p. 74
- 1874-75, p. 82

The Education Commission of 1882 emphasised the encouragement and the extension of the Primary education of the Muslims. It is said that “The primary education be regarded as the Instruction of the Masses through the Vernacular is such subjects as will best-fit them for their position in life and not necessarily regarded as a portion of instruction leading up to the University.”

The commission recommended that “Hindustani be the Principal medium for imparting instruction to Muslims in primary and middle schools, except in localities where the Muslims desire that some other language be adopted.”
Another landmark was created by the Education Commission of 1882, which recommended the expansion of girls’ education by means of much easier terms for grants-in-aid girls’ schools. It did not favour mixed schools other than infant schools, because mixed schools were “not generally suited to the conditions of this country”. The Syllabie of girls school were to be “drawn up with special reference to the requirements of home life, and to the occupations open to women”. There was also to be “a gradual suppression of male by female teachers in all girls’ schools”. Some of the recommendations of the commission were implemented by the Government Posts of the Inspectresses of girls’ schools were created and a few training schools for women teachers were also established. It was felt that “the chief purpose of girls’ school was to impart primary education”.

The primary education of the Muslims was encouraged in Madras presidency by the special primary standards laid down for Muslim schools. In these schools Hindustani was recognised as the Vernacular language and the other subjects were taught and examined in Hindustani. In the 3rd and 4th standards an optional language was introduced and the following rules were applied to these standards:

“The Second language in the case of Hindustani speaking Muslims to be either English, Persian or the Hindu vernacular of the District in which the school was situated, only one language was to be accepted”. “If the Muslims speak a Hindu vernacular, they were to be allowed to adopt either English, Hindustani or Persian as their school language”.

From time to time the Government of Madras took stock of the progress of muslim education and devised means to further its extension.

The facilities offered to the Muslims by the Government with a view to promote their education were:

In order to encourage the education of Muslim women the Government gave
them inducements in the form of scholarships, exemption from fees and modifications in the curriculum. They were frequently admitted to schools on easy terms and when the numbers were very few this was desirable or feasible. In Madras they were allowed to read at half fees and in some cases free. Special scholarships were reserved for Muslim women and there were also a number of private scholarships.\textsuperscript{57} The rate of grant for Muslims was raised by 25\% in consideration of the late age at which they begin their secular instruction.\textsuperscript{58}

With a view to encourage the establishment of private schools for Muslim girls on the results system the average minimum attendance required in Municipalities was reduced to 4.\textsuperscript{59}

All these means helped to increase the number of Muslim women seeking western education by nearly 10\%. It was noted that one seventy-fifth of the Muslim population was under instruction.\textsuperscript{60}

There was an increase in the number and strength of primary schools intended mainly for Muslim girls during the year 1888-89. There were 68 schools in which the Muslim girls' strength was 2045.\textsuperscript{61}

On the contrary, the struggle for the formal education of Muslim women began only towards the closing years of the 19th century. The pioneer of Muslim women education Maulana Hali, a great friend and supporter of Sir Syed, continued to speak up for the cause of Muslim women's education. He even started a small primary school for the daughters of his family and his friends in Panipat around 1894. It was with great difficulty that a Muslim Woman teacher was appointed from Delhi. Within a few months, the students knew as much as the teacher. The school had to be closed after a few years in all probability due to the non-availability of a suitable teacher.\textsuperscript{62}

Sir Syed also founded the Muslim Educational Conference in 1887 apart from the M.A.O. College for the furtherance of modern education amongst the Muslims in
the subcontinent of India. In the year 1896, a resolution was passed in its annual session by Khwaja Ghulamus Saqlain that some attention may be paid to the education of Muslim women also. It was supported by Altab Ahmad Khan and Mumtaz Ali but opposed by Sir Syed and his close supporters. However, a women’s branch was setup with Mumtaz Ali as the Secretary but nothing was done concretely until 1902. In that year Sheik Abdullah became the Secretary of the women’s branch at the Annual Session of the Muslim Educational Conference in Delhi. The general opinion at this time was that a Normal school for training Muslim women teachers should be setup so that these teachers could provide instruction to Muslim girls of high class families in their homes. Sheikh Abdullah did not agree with this view, because he said that there had to be a sufficient number of Middle-school passed Muslim girls first and only then they could be trained as teachers.

The period from 1902 to 1918 witnessed great changes in the outlook of the people on the education of Women. The parents realised the importance of girls’ education and the Education department formulated policies and drew out plans for the promotion of women’s education. The educational policy in 1904 reviewed the progress of Women education. After discussing and reviewing the defects of education, it recommended that primary education should be entrusted to private enterprise and that the government should spend more on women education. It also recommended that, a major portion of the revenue should be spent on it. The local boards were ordered to spend the educational funds on primary education only. Method of teaching was to be made more simple and more practical. Based on this resolution, new educational rules were introduced in 1906 for reorganising primary education.

The great woman Pioneer of Muslim women Education Sultan Jehan, the Begum of Bhopal started the Sultania School for Girls in 1903. Being the ruler of the state her orders could not be flouted, however, she faced opposition from the orthodox people of the community. In the very first year, 140 girls below the age of ten were enrolled in the
school. There were complete arrangements for “purdah” in the school. If women teachers were not available for any subject, then male teachers were appointed, but they taught from behind a curtain. There was a great emphasis on religious education apart from urdu, english, arithmetic, geography and domestic economy, because she believed that education divorced from religion was a thing of no value.

The Begum herself observed “purdah”. She travelled to Europe and England in a “Burqa”, but she believed in the emancipation of women through education. Her generosity in giving regular grants to the girls’ school in Aligarh and subsequently to the school in Lucknow showed her deep commitment to the cause of Muslim women education.65

In 1903, the annual session of the Muslim Educational Conference was held in Bombay, and for the first time, women were allowed to listen to the proceedings from behind a screen. Again, objections were raised to the setting up of a girls’ school in Aligarh and it was decided to establish a school in Lahore, but this idea was not materialised, as no one was found willing to take up the responsibility.

Sheikh Abdullah writes in his autobiography that the year 1904, was a lucky year for his struggle to start a girls’ school in Aligarh. He succeeded in bringing out a monthly magazine, “khatoon” to popularize the idea of a school for Muslim girls in Aligarh. Then, the Begum of Bhopal promised to give an annual grant of Rs. 1,200 for the school and lastly, during the annual Muslim Educational Conference Session at Lucknow, a resolution was passed with Mian Shah Din of Lahore in the chair to establish a girls’ school in Aligarh. So finally, the school was opened in 1906, with just six girls and the teaching was conducted in the beginning by the wife of Sheikh Abdullah and her two sisters. Opposition from conservative elements continued to plague the school for many years, inspite of the very strict arrangements for “purdah” and the emphasis on religious education.66
The educational rules and grant-in-aid code, which came into force in 1906, the use of the ambiguous word 'primary' was given up and replaced by 'elementary'. The separation of primary from secondary education permitted a number of changes to be made, which were designed to adapt elementary schools more closely to their object of instructing the masses by stimulating their intelligence and fitting them for their position in life.67

Another important salient feature of this period was, the reorganisation of existing Government girls’ schools, the opening of new Government schools and the consequent expansion of the budget allotment. The scheme of reorganisation comprised an increase in the staff and increase in the pay of teachers and the provision of better accommodation and equipment.68

Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain was the founder of the Sakhawat Memorial English Girls’ High School in Calcutta in 1911.

Other Pioneers in the field of education for Muslim women were Maulana Karamat Hussain and the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, who founded the Muslim Girls’ school in Lucknow in 1912. In Bombay the family of Badruddin Tyabji and the two sisters of Begum Janjeera, Atia Faizi and Zohra Faizi were also great supporters of Muslim women’s education.

In Hyderabad State, Salar Jung educated his daughters with the help of a French governess in the 1860’s. Girls’ schools were started in his time by Christian Missions and Hindu Philanthropists, but muslim girls began going to School after 1890, with the establishment of the Nampalli Zenana School and later, the very elitist Mahboobia School in the early years of the 20th century.69

The Government policy of encouraging mixed schools initiated in 1906, by opening elementary mixed schools for boys and girls did not command universal approval. It was economical, but Indian social conditions did not favour the co-education
of the sexes. This was partly true, but the government felt that the mixed schools for young children were harmless. The very fact that many girls were sent to boys’ schools proved, that feeling was not very strong against co-education. Upto a certain point, the presence of girls in boys’ schools was a very valuable means of extending women education at little cost.  

There was a noteworthy progress in the expansion of elementary education of women. Subsidies were sanctioned by the Government towards the opening of additional elementary schools and employment of additional teachers in the schools. In order to provide qualified teachers for girls’ schools additional training sections or schools were also opened.

In 1931-32, there were 583 elementary schools for girls. The number of Muslim girls reading in all classes of elementary schools rose from 54,442 to 79,742 or by 47%. Two important features concerning these figures were, that there was most rapid increase in the number of girls under instruction and that more than 50% of the total number of girls under instruction were reading in schools intended for boys.

The most depressing features of muslim elementary schools for both boys and girls continued to be the high wastage and the comparatively greater stagnation of pupils and the poor qualifications of the teachers employed in them. So far as the girls’ schools were concerned, the difficulties for finding qualified Muslim women teachers and of providing a satisfactory solution to the problem of conveyances continued to be an acute and hampered progress materially. In 1944-45, there were 541 Elementary schools for Muslim girls with a total strength of 42,713 pupils.

During the period of the British rule, progress in primary education was good and steady as the following table shows. Their strength in public elementary schools follows:
Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Strength of Muslim Girls in public elementary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887-88</td>
<td>1,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>10,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>12,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>28,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>59,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>93,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>1,47,653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports on public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, Madras, for the years:

- 1887-88, p. 76.
- 1897-98, p. 11.
- 1917-18, Vol. II, p. 64.

Primary education progressed, because the British tried to introduce measures to suit the conservative and orthodox community. They utilised the indigenous Qur'an schools as much as possible. These schools authorities were persuaded to introduce one or two secular subjects, so that they could be provided with Government support under Grant-in-aid. In Government schools it was provided that religious education could be given outside class hours. They also tried to appoint as far as possible, women teachers and superintending agency. Training colleges to train women as teachers were set up. The curriculum in the primary schools was intune with the needs and wishes of the community and the medium of instruction was vernacular.

Secondary Education:

Secondary Education is the middle stage between the primary stage and the
university stage. Prior to the advent of English, there was no secondary education. So it was their innovation which they incorporated in their system of education. The history of this is to be traced to the early 19th century, when the English began to govern. The initiative in the Secondary Education was taken by the missionaries, who played a very prominent role in the Secondary Education of women in general and Muslim women in particular. The other agencies were philanthropic agencies and Government managed institutions. Girls, whether Hindu or Muslim were not sent to school after they had finished the primary stage. A few enlightened and rich persons had their daughters coached at home. This was usually called as the “Zenana system” or “Home education”. The missionary women devoted themselves to the work of teaching secular subjects to the students in the homes of such native families, Hindu as well as Muslims because they were willing to receive them. So till 1854, it was the secular Zenana Agencies, which were responsible for imparting secular and secondary education to women. There were only three agencies, the National Indian Association, the Free Church Mission and the Church of England Zenana Mission who undertook the Zenana education in the town of Madras. Under this system missionary women entered the Zenana, and by tact, courtesy and wise moderation these Women tried to impart secular education to the women in their homes. Their instruction was based on Christian teaching, but extended to secular subjects. The degree in which the two classes of instruction were given varied in different Zenana missions, but in almost every case secular teaching formed part of the scheme.

The Zenana system was not a great success. This was partly because the very conservative and orthodox Muslims felt that once they had won the confidence of the Muslim women, the missionary women would stop secular education and concentrate on conversion. The British rulers were also not much in favour of the zenana system. The British felt that the secondary education for Muslim women should be undertaken by the government as well as by private agencies. The Muslims considered the missionaries as hostile to their faith. But a number of Indians and the British realised
the importance of women education. So a new class of zenana agencies on a secular basis sprang up. This was conducted by committees of local gentlemen or by mixed committees of Indians and Europeans with the object of imparting zenana system of education without any elements of religious teaching and by periodical testing of the teaching by authorities. The 1882 Hunter Commission of Education acknowledged the work of these agencies. The commission suggested the encouraging of such agencies through the grants-in-aid for increased salaries to qualified women teachers of Muslim girls pursuing their studies in private houses. They engaged in zenana work in the town of Madras, received aid from the Department. There were several mission agencies at work both in Madras and in Mofussil towns. The authorities, at the same time were conscious of the fact, that these home education classes were not permanent part of the education system. The zenana or home education movement made some progress during the year 1889-90. Four agencies were aided from provincial funds namely the National Indian Association, Madras, The Free Church Mission, the Church of England Zenana Mission and a branch of the National Indian Association at Coimbatore. Mrs. Brander, the Inspectress of Girls Schools examined all these classes, the results being very fair. The classes under the National Indian Association, Madras, contained for the first time one Muslim pupil and two pupils in the High Department.

The Zenana system was good, but it did not produce good result. Muslim women education did not progress much.

Woods Despatch of 1854 gave further impetus to secondary education. Considered as the Magna Carta of Indian Education, it deals with every aspect. It was the first attempt of the British to lay the foundation of education on a sound footing. The Despatch clearly laid down, that women education was the responsibility of the British government. To further secondary education, it recommended;

a) The system of Grant-in-aid;
b) The setting up of Departments of Public Instruction under the Director of Education or D.P.I.,

c) The High Schools should be set up in large numbers to promote secondary education and

d) The Universities should be set up in the country.

These recommendations were adopted. In Madras, the Department of Public Instruction was setup and the University of Madras was set up in 1857.

The Universities paved the way for Higher education and dominated and controlled secondary education through the Matriculation Examination. The secondary education was dominated in content, range, pattern and scope by the University.

Initially, there were two classes of Secondary schools—Upper Secondary or High Schools and Lower Secondary or Middle schools. Each class contained 2 divisions—English and Vernacular schools. The distinction between these schools had a more definite meaning than in the case of boys’ schools.

The sole aim of Secondary education was the preparation of students for the Matriculation Examination conducted by the University and began aiming only at College Preparation.

In the secondary school education, the lower secondary education progressed well, but higher secondary education did not make much progress. The first muslim girl appeared for the matriculation examination only in 1897. From this, it was evident, that there would not be progress until the muslims themselves showed more signs or awakening to a sense of the true interests of their women.

In 1919, the government of India took up this problem seriously. Their action was based on the Report of the Calcutta University Commission of 1917. There was a great diversity of opinion over the Character of secondary education one school of
thought believed, that the girls should be given the same type of education as boys, and prepare them for a university career. The other school wanted the system to prepare girls primarily for home life and that women should be educated in all that concerns enlightened motherhood, upbringing of children, hygiene and child health, good sanitary environment and other matters of domestic concern. The commission realised the need for two types of secondary schools. One catering to the needs of the majority, who spend their life time in the zenana and the other catering to the needs of the small, but important minority, who needed a different type of education to equip them to take up professional service or play a part in the progressive section of Indian society. The commission recommended the organisation of two types of secondary education for women. One for the orthodox majority which they called as the Pardanishin schools and the other type of schools were to have a similar pattern as the boys' secondary schools. Both the types of schools were to be under the control of the Board of Secondary Intermediate Education. For the pardanishin schools the commission recommended a special body acting under the board, but consisting mostly of women. The commission also said, that care also should be taken to see that there was not too much of difference between the pardanishin and non-pardanishin schools. The commission recommended the creation of a standing committee on girls' education to serve in an advisory capacity to the Secondary and Intermediate Board and would frame the curriculum and conduct the Examinations for these schools.  

The Government of India felt that the creation of pardanishin schools would be difficult and very expensive. They were something like zenana classes. The government of India accepted the two principles namely modification of curriculum to suit the needs of Women of different classes and secondly, the utilisation of the advice of women in formulating a suitable system of instruction. The pardanishin schools were to be mostly maintained by enlightened Indians. It was decided that in the case of the pardanishin schools there should be an examination at the end of the course. But it was not compulsory and it was different from the pattern of examination of boy's secondary
examination. It was to be partly through oral tests to be conducted by competent women visiting examiners. In the non-pardanishin schools the standards were to be maintained to those of the boys' schools. Examination need not be identical, and oral tests or weightage for records of school work could be introduced due to the small strength in girls' schools.85

Inspite of, all the efforts made by different agencies - Missionary, Private and Government Secondary education of Muslim Women did not make much progress.

In 1888, there were 3 secondary schools for girls. One in Madras, one in Ellore and one in Godavari District86 The number increased to 9 in 1947-48.87 As regards curriculum in the secondary school it was generally, believed that an appropriate curriculum for girls schools was not of much importance in this country, because very few girls progressed in education beyond the primary school stage. At the primary stage both girls and boys had the same curriculum.88

The curriculum in the secondary schools continued unchanged till 1906. When new rules were introduced, a clear distinction was made between elementary and secondary schools. It was laid down, that only trained teachers should be appointed in secondary schools. For classes upto 3rd standards (forms) the teachers should have passed atleast Matriculation, while for higher forms the teachers should be graduates.89 The rules also prescribed that the medium of instruction upto the 3rd form should be the vernacular and later it should be English.90 A better improved system of grant-in-code was introduced as a result of which, the Girls' Secondary schools were based on an equality basis with that of boys' schools. While a number of people felt that there would be a set back in girls education, but infact, the strength in girls schools improved. This was, because Indians were becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of education of girls. While children of wealthy parents attended school to gain knowledge, poorer girls were attracted by the scholarships offered.91
By 1912, Muslim girls were still almost entirely in the elementary stage, because there were only 4 girls in the secondary stage.\(^{92}\)

**Higher education:**

Higher education is an important part of the educational system. Still there was not much progress in the field of Collegiate and Professional education. Muslim women were doubly handicapped. First, Muslim's progress in education was very slow and secondly, women's education had not kept up with the men's education.

At the time of Independence, in Madras Presidency there were 8 colleges with 1773 women students. 1829 women were studying in Men's colleges. Thus, there were 3602 women studying in colleges as against 34,433 men students in 48 colleges. Thus, the wide gap between men and women in higher education was clearly evident.\(^{93}\)

While this was the condition of education of women in general, the condition of Muslim women was worse. Muslims, in general, had not taken to the English system of secular education for a long time, when they accepted it after a lot of propaganda, persuasion and incentives like scholarships, fee concessions etc., the progress was very slow. In the case of women, they were mostly in the elementary stage of instruction. Very few entered the field of higher education. As late as 1912, Muslim girls were still almost entirely in the elementary stage of Instruction, as only 4 girls were in the secondary stage and one in the college.\(^{94}\)
The following table shows the number of Muslim Girls in each stage of Instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslim Girls in each Stage of Instruction</th>
<th>Strength of Muslim Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Stage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Stage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle stage</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Primary stage</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Primary stage</td>
<td>30,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institutions</td>
<td>12,483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By early 1930s, the number of muslim women in colleges had increased from 4 to 11. By 1940s, there were 68 women studying in Arts and Science colleges. As regards the professional colleges, in 1931-32, the first muslim girl entered the Medical college. By 1940s, 20 muslim girls were studying in Professional colleges.

By 1940s, the strength of muslim women had not reached even 100. Still, the muslims felt.grieved that justice had not been done to them and that muslim education especially of women was neglected by the government. Majority of the muslims felt, that the cause of muslim women was not being adequately, represented. Their demand was, a separate college for muslim women. In the Legislature, the muslim members were vociferous. Abdul Hameed Khan Sahib Bahadur said, in the Legislative Assembly, that the higher education of muslim girls was in such bad shape, that there was not even one separate college for them. The British government almost in the stage of
winding up their rule and leaving India, yielded to this grievance in their last year of rule and in 1946-47 started a Separate college for Muslim women in the premises of Hobart Secondary and Training School for Muslim girls.  

Despite the best efforts of the Muslim community to motivate their women to join the college started for them, they were unsuccessful within a year, the college was closed, as the new Indian government felt, that the demand was not large enough to maintain a separate college for them.

There was a strong protest in the Presidency against the closure of the college. In the Legislative assembly Begum Sultan-Mir-Amiruddin declared that the closure of the college would hinder Muslim women's higher education. The Minister of Education, T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar assured in the Assembly, that Muslim students would be shown all consideration and would be granted entry in to all colleges.

The dream of the Muslims of having a separate college for their women was fulfilled in 1955-56, when the rich and enlightened Muslims established the South India Educational Trust to help the progress of Muslim women in education and started the S.I.E.T College. The government had not been able to cater to their request, because of the small number of their girls entering the portals of a college. Such constraints did not apply to private effort, Hence, the starting of the S.I.E.T. by the Muslim Trust.

Vocational Education:

Vocational courses for Muslim girls were thought of quite early, during the British rule. It was done more to help the poor and destitute Muslim girls, and widows to eke out a decent living for themselves and their dependents. It is, for this purpose that industrial schools were started. Another popular professional course was teachers' training. For this purpose first Normal schools and later Training schools were started for training teachers. These were, more vocational courses which appealed to the poorer classes and middle classes, as it would provide them with livelihood within their social
and religious setup. While Teachers' training helped them to get jobs as teachers in Girls' Schools, the training in Industrial schools also helped them to do embroidery, stitching and other tailoring works to earn their livelihood. While there was some response for the vocational courses, there was not much response for secondary or higher education. Under this circumstances, the Teachers’ Training course was started in Hobart school. This was done partly to provide a livelihood to poor muslim girls and widows and partly to further the Progress of education of women. So there was an urgent need of good, trained teachers. It was generally felt, that widows, who had to be settled in someway or other would be suited for the teaching profession. Further, the British authorities had realised quite early, that if education had to progress, local teachers trained for the purpose was a necessity.

In Wood's Despatch, 1854, it was suggested that Normal class should be opened in Madras. Accordingly, a normal class was opened towards the close of the year 1885 in the Hobart Muslim Girl’s school, Madras. It ranked as a departmental school, because the government assured the management of the entire school. Throughout the British period the muslim women’s education did not make satisfactory or impressive progress in any aspect of education-primary, secondary, higher or collegiate or professional, inspite of all the efforts of the British government. This situation was not due to apathy or dearth of encouragement. From the time, the British Crown had taken over the responsibility of ruling India, the British rulers and policy makers were very keen in promoting women education in general and muslim women education in particular by introducing a number of incentives by way of scholarships, fee concessions, starting of schools to suite their convenience, establishing female superintending agency, and other incentives. They appointed commissions and committees periodically, and tried to implement their suggestion to promote Women education. They also advised the local governments and authorities to setup Advisory committees consisting of enlightened muslims, women and others for promoting muslim women education. Inspite of all their efforts at the end of their rule in 1947 muslim girls had made great
progress only in elementary or primary education and in lower secondary stage. There was not much progress in higher secondary or collegiate and professional education.

**Causes for the Educational backwardness of Muslim women:**

An analysis reveals that several factors social, economic historical, religious, political were responsible for the educational backwardness of Muslim women.

The policy of the British to promote English at the expense of oriental languages created a wide-spread resentment among the Muslims. They considered it an encroachment on their “Shariah”, which debars them from the study of other languages “except for the purpose of answering letters or combating religions of other people”. They feared, that the aim of this policy was to encourage conversions and discourage oriental studies. But the curriculum in the schools was such it did not provide them with training for such domestic duties. So the majority of the Muslims felt, that there was no need of such an education for girls.

Most muslims wished their children to learn the linguafranca of muslims -Urdu, often called Hindustani all over India. Sometimes, the muslim students experienced real difficulty owing to their ignorance of the vernacular or if his own vernacular was urdu or if he has learned only urdu. And there were very few institutions where Urdu was the Medium.

The supply of teachers for girls’ schools was more scanty in quantity and less satisfactory in quality than the supply of teachers for boys’ schools. The State system of education was conducted in a large measure by a male staff. The direction and inspection remains in the hands of male officers. To the conservative and orthodox muslims the lack of women teachers and superintending agency proved to be a real obstacle for educating their daughters.

Women’s education rests on the claim, that education is not the privilege of one sex, but equally, the right of both, and that neither one sex nor the other could advance
by itself without a strain on the social and national system and injury to itself. But this realisation did not down upon the muslims until the middle of 20th century. So the educational progress of the muslim women remained very slow and unsatisfactory throughout the British rule of India. Government efforts and missionary zeal did not make much impact. The efforts of a few enlightened muslims to promote women education were equally unsuccessful. The failure of the government missionary and enlightened peoples' efforts was more, due to a multiplicity of factors concerning muslim women's education. These multiplicity of factors were, the apathy and resistance and unfavourable attitudes of parents to co-education, poverty of parents, shortage of schools medium of instruction, general quality of instruction and other short comings. The shortage of qualified women teachers and the refusal to recognise the administrative necessity of accepting the reality of the problem also accentuated the differences.

The sad plight of the muslim community after partition was that only about 10% of the boys of the muslim population were educated and less than half a percent of muslim women were educated.
References


6. Ibid., p. 91.


13. The Fundamental Principles of Islam are,
   a) Kalima or Faith in Allah, b) Five times Prayer daily, c) Fasting in the month of Ramzan d) Zakkat or Alms giving in the name of Allah e) Performance of Haj or Going on a Pilgrimage to Mecca.


15. Ibid., pp. 51-52.


17. Jaffar, S.M., Education in Muslim India, Mohammad Ahmad for Idarah - I Adbiyat - I, Delhi, 1972, pp. 191-192.


31. Ibid., p. 705.


33. Ibid., p. 29.


35. Ibid., p. 707.


38. Ibid., pp. 706-707.


41. Ibid


44. Ibid., p. 242.


48. Government Order No. 37, Educational, dated 17.4.1868.


53. Ibid., p. 242.


56. Ibid., p. 269.


63. Ibid., p. 39.
66. Ibid
68. Ibid., p. 44.
73. Ibid
76. Ibid
82. Ibid., p. 46.


85. Ibid


90. Ibid., p. 21.


92. Ibid., p. 56.


100. "Normal Schools are confined almost exclusively to those for vernacular teachers. Most of which are intended to supply teachers for Anglo Vernacular and for Vernacular schools" Satthianadhan, S., Op. cit., Appendix - D.


105. **Ibid.**, p. 46.


India's emergence on the 15th of August, 1947, as the largest democracy on the face of earth, was itself a great political achievement, but by its very nature of the fact, Democracy was a great challenge to education to train an unprecedented mass of people in the art of democratic living, that is, educating people for democratic citizenship, equalizing of educational opportunities in Indian society which has been suffering from class discrimination and caste disabilities and Indianising of the medium of education.¹

In the arduous task of democratizing education in India, the most serious impediment was, the wide-spread illiteracy among her masses, estimated to be 85% of the population, on the eve of Independence. With a view to liquidating this mass illiteracy of unprecedented proportions, which made a mockery of democracy. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister and an effective member of the Nehru cabinet for over a decade (from 15th January 1947 to 22nd February 1957) endeavoured to promote a new educational outlook, intune with the fresh national objectives such as

1. Democratization of Education,
2. Maintenance of Educational Standards,
3. Broadening of Educational outlook and
4. Promotion of Mutual understanding. Thus, he wanted to make education a vanguard of the democratic life in the country²

Illiteracy as a mass phenomenon in India not only blocks economic and social progress, but also affects economic productivity population control, improvement in health and sanitation, security and national integration. To achieve an economic development, social transformation and an effective social security of India, it is necessary to educate its citizens to participate in its development programmes willingly, intelligently and efficiently. This is particularly urgent in our country, in which masses of people have missed schooling and in which the education given has been irrelevant to the
functional and developmental needs to a large extent to the national security and development, depends upon the education of citizens, their knowledge of affairs, their character and sense of discipline and their ability to participate effectively in development measures.³

In order to achieve this, a national planning commission has been setup in India after independence, to ensure that our material and human resources are put to the best use in the development of the country. Such a commission can indicate the objectives and prepare the blue prints, but the fulfillment of the programme will depend upon the quality and character of our people. This quality and character can be improved only through a system of creative education, in which all individuals are given the opportunity of developing their capacities to the fullest extent. Therefore, national planning must aim not merely at the utilisation of our existing resources, but at the creation of a new type of mind. We want in India of the future, men and women of vision, courage and honesty of purpose, who will be able to play their part worthily, in every field of national activity.⁴

In the history of mankind, education has always played a very important role leading to the development of attitudes, values and capabilities both of knowledge and skills. However, to enable the education system to play its role effectively in the process of national development, it is essential, besides, ensuring that all people get the benefit of education, it should also be arranged that the level of educational attainment among people would not be too disparate between sexes.⁵

Since independence, there has been a growing consciousness of the place of Women's education in promoting the development of the country⁶. This has been proved from the fact, that prior to independence, education was the gateway for employment and generally the urban population and the higher classes took to it in large numbers. In the post-Independence period, the progress of literacy has been comparatively faster. At all India level, it went up from 16.67 in 1951 to 29.45 in 1971.
As far as women are concerned, the literacy rate has more than doubled itself during this period from 7.93 to 18.70 at all India level. The various steps taken by Free India in the field of education like compulsory and free education upto the age of 14, adult literacy drive and other measures are responsible for an improvement in the literacy level from what it was prior to Independence.⁷

Development is a dual process, which helps conserve women power at home and facilitates its use in more productive activities outside the home. The main purpose of all developmental planning is to guide the process of transformation, in such a way, that efficient use is made of all human resources including women power. Women have a distinctive contribution to make towards national progress.⁸

A developing country needs varied human resources, such as skills, abilities, potentialities and motivation to achieve rapid economic and social transformation. Women power constitutes 49% of the population in India. Women are capable of undertaking all types of jobs, even heavy manual work such as, carrying stones and water, transplanting paddy, construction, pounding and road building with a high degree of endurance. Intellectually too, women are as capable as men. Their ability in making decisions and executing them cannot be questioned.⁹

Higher Education: Need

The need for Higher Education among women assumes all the more important for the Third World Countries, where colonialism has remained a great force hindering education for the general masses and for the Muslim women in particular. The colonial powers dominated every realm of human life. The common people remained buried en masse in ignorance. With the overthrow of colonial domination, the third world countries have taken up the task of Higher Education for women, which had been neglected for them for centuries¹⁰
Since, higher education occupies an important place in the process of nation building, like the other Third world countries, India is also engaged in building the nation right from the grass roots. Out of a number of variables of development, education in general and Higher education in particular should be deemed as one of the powerful factors of development. Women, who remained buried in illiteracy and the consequent exploitation for centuries, have received a new definition and dimensions to their traditional social position and role in the emerging indian society. The aftermath of independence puts a heavy premium on women's higher education. The problems of higher education among women is, precisely, the problem of assigning an equal status to women in a society, which is to be an egalitarian, an ideal of the constitution of India.

Higher education of women has gained a wider role and responsibility all over the world. Today, on the threshold of 21st century, we cannot afford to ignore the importance of Higher education for women any longer, because Higher education is a highly ambitious and sophisticated entity. It remains the principal avenue through which a developing country like India can attain an all round progress. As problems grow more complicated in a society, higher education becomes more important, not less as a resource for solution of difficulties.

Meaning:
Higher education has been interpreted in various ways, as the education of the upper ranks of society, as preparation for the elite professions, as the study of higher subjects and as the final stage in the process of formal schooling.

Higher education can be used in many different connotations. It can be used for any one of the following: Post-secondary, Advanced, Excellent, Further, Continuing, etc.

Whatever be its connotations and interpretations, Tertiary education, which follows the 12 years of primary and secondary schooling is popularly referred to as “Higher Education”.
Higher education is intended in the way in which it is structured, for only a minority of students, who have demonstrated their ability and interest in academic work and, who wish to get acquainted with a broad spectrum of knowledge with specialisation in a discipline. It is expected, that the education would also equip the graduate with life skills. The link between education and preparation for making a living is perceived as central by many, who consider higher education to be a ladder which helps one to move upwards in social status, through one’s employability in a highly paid position.\(^\text{17}\)

Higher (or Post-secondary) education is the system, in which the inputs are the secondary students and the outputs are the graduates and post-graduates. The university structure is determined by the thinking, aims and ambition of its faculty, by the goals of its patrons, namely the Society and the Government by the needs of its consumers, viz., the students, by its own inertia or resistance to change and by the inner logic or need for consistency in its curricula and its programmes. The university system must be acceptable to the society as such.\(^\text{18}\)

**Role and Scope:**

It is important to define the comparative role and scope of higher education in India. We have our levels in education (a) elementary (1-8 standard) (b) Secondary (10-12 Standard) (c) Under graduate college (13-15 years of education in general) and (d) University stage (Post-graduate and research programmes). It is a widely accepted fact, that elementary education is the most important and essential stage. Then, in order of preference, it should be naturally followed by the secondary stage and then higher education (including college and university education). In higher education too, the college ‘sector’ merits greater attention. In advanced countries the terms university and college are interchangeable and synonymous. However, in India, colleges even those, which are considered first rate are looked up as ‘minors’, just colleges.\(^\text{19}\)
Education upto the age of 14 years (elementary stage) was to be made available to all is also a constitutional obligation. In fact, elementary education deserves greater attention and financial inputs. Thereafter, secondary education merits consideration. Higher education has to be selective and should be allowed to fend for itself. Quality and social relevance alone can make it economically viable. The sooner we realise this, the better.20

It is generally believed, that the first degree should be quite comprehensive. This calls for greater stress on under graduate studies. The first degree should have all the ingredients of the national educational policy: Excellence, Social relevance and Employability. If quality and meaningful education is ensured, money, should not be a great problem. Users, parents and the public can (and do) pay for it to a large extent.21

Amongst the various stages of education, University education is most vitally concerned with the preparation of high level technical and professional manpower. The university graduates also provide the administrative and managerial personnel. Any improvement in the standard of higher education, therefore, has a direct impact on the productive capacity of men and women in the country and thereby, accelerates the pace of national development.22

In the changing social and economic environment women have a vital role to play not only as traditional homemakers but also as innovative leaders and initiators of change. The first degree, at the university level should equip them with better skills and greater understanding, so that they may perform their tasks more efficiently.23

Higher education is essential for women in general and Muslim women in particular because 50% of the Nation's resources are women including the Muslim women. Educated women play a strategic role in the development of the future citizens of the country and in improving the human quality of living. It should prepare women, not only for motherhood and worthy family membership, but also for service to the country and humanity at large. Women are equal partners in development. It should
also help them to be economically independent and efficient in planning, decision making and better family living. The more educated, enlightened and cultured the mothers are, the better will be the intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual stimulations. Their children receive, which in turn, will influence favourably the formation of their character and enhance the quality of their living, citizenship and leadership.24

In most developed countries, not many students go beyond the school. School level education in those countries is very satisfactory as well as comprehensive. Most people, who finish schooling are competent enough to handle middle level jobs. An average typist or a bank clerk in any one of those countries has usually finished his schooling and not gone on to college25.

In our country, secondary schooling is so unsatisfactory, that unless a student cannot afford to join college, he feels obliged to do so. In other words, under graduate education is some kind of compensatory education. What could not be done at school is sought to be done at college. This being so, the level cannot be what it is expected to be. In this sense, what is learnt at college is an attempt to learn what should have been learnt at school. This inevitably affects the quality of learning at the undergraduate level. As was noted by the Education commission in 1966, when a degree holder from India goes to any other developed countries, he is not treated at par with a degree holder in that country. On the contrary, he is sometime treated as having finished his schooling and sometime as having done only a part of the degree course.26

It is a truism, that higher education is a crucial factor for our survival. It is at the apex of the educational pyramid and has to be dynamic27 in order to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the Indian society.

The Commission on Higher Education for women, University of Madras in 1979, rightly observed: “For women and men college education is necessary for character formation, ability to earn, creative self-expression and personal development” Similar
feelings were recorded in the Report of Education Commission, 1964-66. This would lead to healthy, social, economic and political changes that are indispensable for improvement of the position of women in the society. It would enable them to utilize their full potentials to play constructive roles in the family and in the community. The aim of higher education for women is, to raise their status and bring them at par with men. The constitutional provision makes it obvious, that the women have equal rights with men in all spheres of life assuring them of equal opportunity in matters of public appointment.

There are conflicting views amongst the educationists about the relative importance of School versus Higher Education. However, it is widely believed that the single most important indicator of a country’s future may well be the state of its higher education. The First Prime Minister of India Pandit Nehru, who laid the foundation of the process of India’s modernisation, declared that “If all is well with the universities, all would be well with the nation”.

Objectives:

The objectives of Higher Education are not different from the objectives of education in general and the nation in particular. Similarly, the objectives of higher education for women cannot differ from the objectives of higher education for men except that they may have to accommodate the special needs and social roles of women in the context of the prevailing culture. The objectives of education must be arrived at, after comprehensive deliberation of the Nation’s needs, aspirations and problems.

Higher education should aim at working for social justice and for producing an egalitarian society with complete equality of opportunity for every citizen, irrespective of, caste, religion, colour and sex.

The objectives of higher education may be, to study a discipline in some depth, to acquire specific areas of competence, to hone one’s intellectual faculties, to ask
questions fearlessly and to seek answers with persistence, to find out how knowledge is constructed and reconstructed, to have a sense of shared humanity and the living earth, to develop individuality and conviviality, learning to work for a collective good. All these can be achieved only through higher education.\textsuperscript{32}

Interest in higher education has greatly increased all around the world, during the last 25 years. Developing countries see in higher education the most important means of scientific, technological and industrial progress so vital for them for the removal of poverty and for developing affluent societies. Higher education is also the means for them of modernising their societies and for producing highly educated leaders in all walks of life, who will be imbued with their highest ethical and moral ideals\textsuperscript{33} and it provides equal opportunity to all to seek and acquire knowledge and provides the society with competent persons in different professions.\textsuperscript{34} Developed post-industrial societies find themselves moving rapidly from the elitistic system of higher education of the past to the mass higher education of the immediate future and to the universal higher education of a more distant future.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Policies of the State}:

In recognition to the fact, that education is vitally linked with the totality of the development process, the reform and restructuring of the educational system was accepted as an important area of State intervention\textsuperscript{36}.

Accordingly, the goals and objectives of higher education are derived from a number of sources including the Constitution of India, Reports of the Commissions and Review Committees appointed by the Government from time to time and the National Policy on Education\textsuperscript{37} and a large number of committees appointed by the state governments whose reports are of local as well as of national significance. Moreover, numerous Advisory bodies have made innumerable recommendations on almost every aspect of education.\textsuperscript{38}
Constitution embodies the legal framework of a Nation state. It constitutes and establishes the high institutions of the national life and does the structuring of the government of the State.  

The Constitution of India came into force on 26th January, 1950. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution secures to all its citizens:

Justice, Social economic and political;
Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
Equality of status and of opportunity;
and to promote among them all
Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.

The Articles 14, 15 and 16 under Part-III, the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India secure for all citizens Equality before law, Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; and the Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Article 15 (4) states, Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally Backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16 (4) states, Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 45, under Part-IV, the chapter on the Directive Principles of State policy in the Constitution of India states "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years".
Under the constitution as originally enacted, Education was primarily a state subject. The relevant entry (Entry-11) in the state's list read "Education including Universities subject to the provisions of entries 63, 64, 65 and 66 List I and entry 25 of List III". Thus, education was exclusively a responsibility of the states, and the Union government was concerned directly with certain areas like co-ordination, and determination. In 1976, by constitutional amendment, education became the joint responsibility of the Union and State governments. The Constitution (Forty - Second Amendment) Act, omitted Entry-11 from the state's List and amplified Entry 25 in the Concurrent List. Entry 25 of the Concurrent List, which as so amplified, now reads:

Education, including technical education, medical education and universities subject to the provisions of entries 63, 64, 65 and 66 of List I, Vocational and Technical training of labour.

The implication of this amendment is that education has become a Concurrent subject, which enables the Union government to legislate in such fields as, for example, school education. Thus, the centre and the state are responsible for the growth and the progress of education.

To safeguard the interests of the minorities Article 29(2) of the Constitution states that "No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them".

An Article 30(1) states "All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice" and an Article 30 (2) states: "The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution, on the ground, that it is under the management of minority, whether based on religion or language".
Education is of basic importance in the planned development of a nation. In a democratic setup, the role of education becomes crucial, since it can function effectively, only, if there is an intelligent participation of the masses in the affairs of the country. Thus, education forms an important area of development, for which the responsibility devolves on the planning commission.

Several commissions and committees setup during post-independent India examined the higher education system in the country and recommended several innovations towards making it more effective and responsive to the needs of the society.

The Report of the University Education Commission (1948-49) was the first document, which mentioned the objectives of higher education in India. These objectives included, that higher education provides an integrated way of life, wisdom and knowledge. In fact, the report insisted, that university education should help in building the society according to our social philosophy which is based on the fundamental principles of Democracy - Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

The Report of the Commission is a unique document of great importance as it has guided the development of University education in India till the formulation of National Policy on Education in 1968. The commission report included, a short chapter on women's education, but did not mention any special issues relating to it. Regarding higher education it observed, women's and men's education should have many elements in common, but should not generally be identical in all respects. The report was only a countrywide survey. The main task of the commission (1964-66) was to advise the government on the national pattern of education and on the general policies for the development of education at all stages - ranging from the primary to post-graduate stage and in all its aspects besides examining a host of educational problems in their social and economic context. The basic task of these commissions were, to provide data to the educational planners for formulating an educational policy for the country.
The government's policy of subsidising higher education is not without its benefits. It has enabled a broad spectrum of people to avail of the courses. With the help of formal education, some of the young have moved from economic marginality to a modern standard of living. Nevertheless, the large minority of those, who have taken advantage of the low costs are not in need of a subsidised education. One way of rationalising the system is to have a graded fee structure, according to the economic level.

The co-ordination and determination of standard of higher education, a subject of the Union List and as a special responsibility of the Central government, is discharged mainly through University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC was established in 1956 under an Act of Parliament to take measures for promotion and co-ordination of university education and determination and maintenance of standards in teaching, examination and research in universities. To fulfill its objectives, the Commission can enquire, among other things, into financial needs of universities, allocate and disburse grants to them, establish and maintain common services and facilities; recommend measures for improvement of university education and give advice on allocation of grants and establishment of new universities. UGC has approved 111 colleges for autonomous status, 23 in Andhra Pradesh, 44 in Tamilnadu, 30 in Madhya Pradesh, five each in Rajasthan and Orissa, two each in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

The University Grants Commission introduced in 1984, a coaching scheme to prepare students belonging to educationally backward minorities for various competitive examinations. As part of implementation of the 15 Point Programme, by the end of financial year 1990-91, all the 41 minority concentration districts had been covered by community polytechnics or their extension centres. NCERT has been organising seminars and training programmes for Principals/Teachers of minority managed schools, in subject areas of English, Science, Mathematics, Vocationalisation of education and Educational evaluation.
For the promotion of research, a number of bodies like the Indian Council of Medical Research, Indian Council of Social Science Research have been created.\textsuperscript{54}

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), setup during the pre-Independence period in 1935, continues to play a leading role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programmes, the most notable of which are the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, Programme of Action (POA), 1986 and a revised NPE and POA (1992).\textsuperscript{55}

The New Educational policy of 1986 emphasised the creation of a National System of Education and removing the imbalances and disparities in the field of education. Significant changes have been envisaged in the areas of Higher and Technical education of Minorities according to the needs of the Nation.\textsuperscript{56}

The Chapter “Education for Equality” of NPE 1986 reads “the new policy will lay emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize the educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those, who have been denied equality so far”.\textsuperscript{57}

POA commits itself to eradicate illiteracy among women belonging to 15-35 years of age by 2000 A.D. through mass education and adult education programmes. Government is providing incentives in the form of mid-day meals, free books and dress, for increasing enrolment and retention of girls in schools especially in rural areas, where dropouts is quite high.

In pursuance of the revised Programme of Action (POA) 1992, two new Central schemes i.e. (i) scheme of Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities and (ii) scheme of Financial Assistance for Modernisation of Madrasa Education were launched during 1993-94.

The basic objective of the scheme of Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities is to provide basic educational infra structure and facilities in areas
of concentration of educationally backward minorities which do not have adequate provision for elementary and secondary schools. Under the scheme centpercent assistance is given for (i) establishment of new primary and upper primary schools, non-formal education centres where such a need if felt and viable on the basis of a school mapping exercise; (ii) strengthening of educational infrastructure and physical facilities in the primary and upper primary schools; and (iii) opening of multi-stream residential higher secondary schools for girls where science, commerce, humanities and vocational courses are taught to the educationally backward minorities.

The scheme of Financial Assistance for Modernisation of Madrasa Education is being implemented with a view to encourage traditional institutions like Madrasas and Maktabs to introduce science, mathematics, social studies, hindi and english in their curriculum. Under the scheme, centpercent assistance is given to such institutions for appointment of qualified teachers for teaching the new subjects to be introduced.58

The National Policy on Education (NPE) envisages that education would be used as a strategy for achieving a basic change in the status of women. The national education system would (i) play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women; The main feature of the target and implementation strategy will consist of (i) to gear the entire education system to play a positive role in the empowerment of women through collective reflection decision making and economic independence and (ii) to widen the access of women in programs of vocational, technical and professional education.59

Higher education is rapidly becoming an international commodity. A present, even India is, in some sense, in the stage of mass higher education. We had an elitistic system of higher education in the past but we are rapidly transforming it into an egalitarian system with our open admission policies in most Universities and with reservation of seats for backward sections of the community in important institutions. Infact, in this respect we are ahead of some of the developed countries.60
Growth of higher education in our country after independence has been phenomenal. The number of universities, the number of colleges and the number of student population are increasing. The relevance of University education to the national need and its basic structure has been considered at length by the Education commissions and further considered thereafter by a number of committees setup from time to time. A number of structures and designs are also being tried out.\(^6\)

With regard to the enrolment of women in general and professional courses in India, the number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys in higher education between 1947-48 was 12 in general and 7 in professional. Between 1960-61 it was 23 in general and 13 in professional. Between 1970-71 it was 36 in general and 15 in professional. This requires a lot of attention. There were however, wide variations in the growth of women's education at the university stage in the different states of India for example, the growth of enrolment of girls when compared to boys in 1973-74 was very high in Kerala, Punjab and Union territory of Tripura. In Tamilnadu, Gujarat and Assam also the growth has been considerable\(^6\). If this was the case for women in general, we could easily imagine the educational position of Muslim women.

To tackle this problem, the central and state governments had planned ways to stimulate the education of girls in general and muslim girls in particular. Separate cells in their State Directorate of Education had been established to look after programs for girls education, polytechnics had been established for women staff quarters and girls' hostels had been established in rural areas. Condensed educational courses had been established. Help had been rendered to voluntary organisations working in the field of women's education. However, these incentives were inadequate.\(^6\)

In the pre-Independence period, it was considered essential to have separate curriculum for boys and girls, because society had assigned to women home making as their major responsibility. Women were considered intellectually inferior to men and therefore, prescription of easier and shorter courses of study was felt necessary.
These myths had been exploded because women had been found to be as competent as men in all fields. Taking note of these changes, the National Committee on Women's Education (1959) recommended a common curriculum for boys and girls. The Committee on Differentiation of Curriculum for Boys and Girls (1964) also emphasized the same. These recommendations had been taken up by the Education Commission of 1966. However, many states continued to prescribe different curriculum for boys and girls at the school level. The ultimate result was that girls were handicapped, when they reached the stage of higher education.

The Education Commission, Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966, stated, that it is the responsibility of the educational system to bring different social classes and groups together to promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. But unfortunately, the educational development is very poor in India though various efforts had been taken in the post-Independent period to spread education among the masses. But the result was not very satisfactory, specially in the SCs and STs, Minorities and other Backward communities or Weaker sections.

Focus on the Higher Education of Muslim Women:

It is very unfortunate, that for various reasons the Muslims all over the globe have been generally found conservative in their outlook so far as the education of women is concerned.

Hyder (1969) observed that the majority of Indian muslim girls were taught the rudiments of the religion. They were also taught to read the Qur’an. They received the primary education in maktabs, where they study with boys upto the age of nine. After that they were shut up within four walls of the house.

According to Lokhand walla (1971) Seclusion of women, their subordination to fathers, husbands and brothers, early marriage and their assigned tasks of being domestic, additional labour, procreation of children were sufficient cause to exclude women from any education.
According to Elizabeth H. White (1978) "In comparison with other major culture areas, the Muslim majority nations of the world have low rate of reported economic activity of women, low female literacy and school enrolment at all levels" (quoted by Peer 1991).

Roy (1979) noted that in North India modern education was beyond the reach of the average muslim women who remained enveloped in the traditional set-up. Education reached them only after partition. The increase of educational facilities did not necessarily increase the number of literate women among the muslims. This was mainly due to the opposition, the women received from the family members. Menon (1981) pointed out that, inspite of the encouragement provided by the Government in the form of fee concessions and grants, the muslim girls attending the vernacular schools, were very small in number in Kerala.

It is an undeniable fact, that after India attained its Independence, women's education made considerable progress. The number of girls schools and colleges increased. Under this changing circumstances, the muslim girls also started to attend schools and colleges. But it is to be confessed, that on the whole the muslim women react very slowly to these new influences (Menon 1981).

Siddiqui (1987) pointed out, that no one can deny the existence of wide spread illiteracy among muslim women, which can only be described as a shameful gap between the existing reality and Islamic ideals. Muslim community is, perhaps, the most educationally backward at present and so far as women are concerned it seems that the Qur'anic principles and orders have been completely neglected.

Peer (1991) stated, muslims think that bestowing education on women is a sheer waste as their activities are confined to the four walls of the house. From various sample surveys all over India it is estimated, that there are around 30 percent literate muslim women in the country and which is roughly 10 percent behind the general women (Agwan, 1992).
Rokiya Begam (1992) observed that in West Bengal there is a steady increase in the number of Muslim boys in the schools, but the proportion of girls attending school is still disappointing.

It is pointed out that Muslims have concentrated on Urdu as the medium of education. Muslim girls are discriminated on this ground and sent to Urdu medium school, whereas boys are sent to private English medium school. Moreover, lack of knowledge of English affects the confidence of young girls, where they join College / University for Higher education.

It is a fact, that Muslim women have not had enough exposure to, and freedom of, considering the issue of higher Education for themselves. They are also so ignorant of the fact, that every woman deserves a chance to seek and receive education which may provide her opportunities to develop as a person and enable her to cope better with the responsibilities she has to bear alone or with others.

Many Muslim women’s problems are on account of illiteracy. But here too, it must be emphasized that Islam has never proscribed literacy for women. According to Qur'an both Muslim men as well as women are required to pray, "My Lord increase me in knowledge." Also, the Prophet has said, 'Acquisition of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim man and Muslim woman.' Here the Prophet has specifically mentioned Muslim woman ('Musalimatin'). He also could have used the word 'Muslimin', which would have included both men and women, but he did not do so and specifically used the word 'Muslim woman' so that men do not find any excuse for depriving her of education.

Yet we see that traditional society tried to keep women uneducated or gave them only an elementary religious education, so, that they could perform certain religious duties and nothing more. However, this is more a sociological than religious or, ideological problem. Our attitudes are determined as much by social factors as by religious
or ideological ones. At time social aspects prevail, overriding religious or ideological aspects. In feudal ages women were completely confined to domestic chores (with some honourable exceptions, of course) and hence it was thought quite unnecessary to give them advanced education which would not have been of much use. The feudal traditions persist and social attitudes remain hardened. Also, poverty and illiteracy go hand in hand. It is an unchallenged fact that muslims in India are relatively poorer. Some economic indices even indicate that their plight is worse than that of the scheduled castes. If female literacy is comparatively low among muslims to-day, the cause is socio-economic rather than religious. There is an erroneous impression among many scholars that lower rate of female literacy is on account of Islamic teachings. Nothing could be further from the truth.74

Syed Mehdi Hussain in his Paper Muslim Women and Higher Education - A case study of Hyderabad rightly said, “It may be pointed out that education and socio-economic status are closely related. But it is also conditioned by the value system prevalent in a given society”. He then goes onto point out, 'It is evident that despite higher levels of per capita income in Saudi Arabia and other Petrol producing Sheikdoms, the rate of literacy is quite low in the population in general and among females in particular'. This is undoubtedly so, but with the acquisition of a great deal of wealth, attitudes in the Arab countries are fast changing and female literacy is shooting up, social traditions born in the past have their own resistance to change and it takes a great deal of struggle to bring about changes in attitudes. Hence, many traditions persist for long even after there is no social basis for them. Those who suddenly acquired wealth cannot give up their old attitudes. Thus, socio-economic status and social change should not be linked up mechanically. It is a complex and tortuous relationship and needs to be studied carefully.75

Mehdi Hussain’s survey of Muslim girls’ education establishes that if the parents, particularly the father, is educated children have a much better chance of education. In
the vast majority of cases fathers are poor and illiterate-coolies, rickshaw pullers, mechanics and vendors and therefore, there is not much motivation for female literacy let alone education. A large section of the muslim population comprises artisans, who see no benefit in sending their children to schools. Also, among these backward sections of society there is a common belief, that girls have to mind their homes and hence education is unnecessary. This is called for in all communities. However, there is a bright side to this. Among muslims too, a new Middle class and even a entrepreneurial class is emerging, which recognizes the value of not only male but also female education. Some field surveys establish beyond doubt, that muslim girls from among these classes are seeking modern education in substantial numbers, due to economic pressures and joint-family system to augment/supplement the family income. Numerically speaking, these classes are still far too few.

According to Sekh Rahim Mondal, the educational backwardness of the Muslims is a historical development. They were far off from modern education during British rule, a period, when necessity of education was felt with due importance. Inspite of the enormous efforts taken by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Abdul Latif, Kazi Abdul Basri and Syed Amir Ali, the muslim women were lagging behind in primary and secondary education, which was a stepping stone to Higher education. There was a setback in Muslim educational upliftment immediately after the partition of the country. In 1947, most of the Muslim intelligentsia and the economic elite migrated to Pakistan, leaving behind a huge mass of unskilled, illiterate, assetless artisan class. As a result, the muslim masses lost their ambitions and entered into conservative shell once again.

There has been varying assessment on the state of Muslim women education in India some found it alarming while others observe a satisfactory trend. Shah (1981) reported that the rate of literacy among the Muslim males in 1971 was about 10% and that among females was only about 0.5%. Hamid (1985) pointed out from the sample survey that the Muslims in India is only about 34% (males 48% and females 19%).
In the absence of any community wise data, we cannot say anything about the educational status of persons, both men and women belonging to any particular community. Under this situation, the Hamdard Education Society has conducted an All India Education Survey on 430 Muslim managed schools. The percentage of Muslim girls among total Muslim student was 34.12. The survey indicates that the rate of the participation of Muslim girls studying in Muslim managed schools falls sharply from the primary to the middle levels and many Muslim girls keep dropping out after 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th classes (See also Appendix - IV). As a result, there are fewer graduates and post-graduate Muslim women.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) carried out by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and International Institute for Population Sciences Bombay, gives the percentage of the level of education attained by religion for India and different states. It has categorised women's level of education into 6 groups: illiterate, literate but less than primary complete, primary school complete, middle school complete, high school complete, and above high school. For the present study, only three categories have been chosen - illiterate, high school complete and above high school. The category illiterate is chosen, because having 100 percent literacy would be the cherished goal of any community. Completion of high school and above high school categories are important for women to qualify for jobs in an organized sector.

According to the report of the survey, very few Muslim women have completed above high school education. For India as a whole, only one percent of the Muslim women have studied above high school (See also Appendix V).
Reasons for the Drop-outs of Muslim Girls may be the following:

- Financial problems due to the poverty of the parents and the non-availability of Scholarships.

- High tuition fees, enormous expenditure on the purchase of text books, Bus fees, Hostel fees and other expenses.

- Early marriages still prevent many muslim girls from undertaking higher education. Many muslim parents are more interested in getting their daughters married off at tender ages rather than giving them higher education. It is also believed that the chances of marriage are ruined by educating a girl.

- Safety and Security of girls causes Hesitation on the part of parents to send their girls to far away places for studies or for jobs, and to co-education institutions.

- Lack of motivation is perhaps the most widespread problems. Girls themselves, parents, husbands and society at large do little to motivate women either to continue their education or to take up careers. This is true in the case of muslim parents, who adopt an attitude of indifference towards their daughters' education. Majority of them being illiterate and ignorant of the importance of higher education think, that education upto primary or secondary level is more than sufficient. Some of them think that it is more wiser to spend the money at the time of their marriage than to spend it on their collegiate/university education, which is very expensive now a days.

- First priority is given to the education of boys because most of the parents see the education of boys as an investment for it prepares them for their potential roles as bread winners and education is not viewed either by the women themselves or by their parents as a productive investment. It is rather an expenditure, a consumption luxury, which is often the first victim of an axe of economy.
- Lack of facilities for women students in the colleges.

- A considerable number of girls relinquish higher education by considering it incompatible with harmonious and peaceful family life.

- Girls will have to work as child labour to augment the family income or to take care of siblings, when their mothers are away at work.

- More children within a family increase the cost of education for the parents.

- Harassment and ill-treatment by the teachers.

- Illiteracy and poor education among the parents.

- Lack of number of separate school for the girls.

- Parents hesitate to send their girls to school on account of long inconvenient school hours.

- Inegalitarian characteristic of our educational policy. Promotes elitist culture. English is made a compulsory language in all the states. Children of upper strata of society who get education in expensive English medium schools, can reach to select institutions of higher education and then to leading institutions of power, technology and management. This creates a situation of elitist educational culture which is creating or alienating masses from the elites. The poor Muslim girls cannot afford to have such costly education.

- Higher education in India is characterized by an urban bias. Most colleges, universities and other institutions of higher education are located in the urban areas and drawn students mostly from the urban elite although the urban population is small in comparison to the rural. This urban biased character of higher education affects very much the educational progress of Muslim girls in the rural areas. This is evident from the data obtained from Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women,
Chennai - 18, and Thassim Beevi Abdul Kader College for women, Kilakarai, Ramanathapuram District, that the response of Muslim girls to higher education is more in urban area, Chennai than in rural area, Keelakarai. (See also Appendix - VI).

- Lack of varieties in vocations, lack of interest, inability to cope with the studies, difficulties of the medium, fear of examinations, ill-health, transfer of parents, bad company, occupation of the parents and the lack of relevance of school curriculum.

- The un-islamic practice of giving dowry to the bridegroom in the muslim community discourages the education of muslim girls because the parents cannot afford to spend money on their education and marriage.

To improve the Educational conditions of Muslim Women the following Steps may be taken into consideration:

- Due publicity that Education alone can help to remove or mitigate ignorance; illiteracy and poverty among women should be given in order to change the view that women's higher education is a secondary consideration.

- The plus 2 stage of Higher Secondary Education including the Vocational courses be made meaningful and attractive, so that a large number of girls can opt for them. It is encouraging to observe that muslim girls are entering the vocational and professional fields of education with the mainstream. In the professional education most of the girls in general and muslim girls in particular prefer the teaching profession. This is essential, at least for muslim girls, because lack of muslim women teachers in the formal as well as non-formal centres in the muslim dominated locality or in schools managed by the Muslims caused the dropout of girls before they reach class V.

In Delhi, the institutions, which provide pre-service training for teachers of primary and secondary schools are Central Institute of Education - a department of Delhi University, District Institutes for Elementary Teachers (DIETs) and Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) earlier known as Teachers' College of Jamia Millia Islamia.
CIE provides training for secondary school teachers, DIETs give training to primary school teachers and IASE Jamia provide training to both Primary as well as Secondary school teachers through its Diploma in Basic Training (two years) and B.Ed. courses.

Most of the muslim girls come to IASE, Jamia for their Teachers' Training courses.

The performance of Muslim girls at the examinations of DBT and B.Ed. of IASE for the last five years show that the performance of Muslim girls in theory papers is very poor as compared to non-Muslim girls. Performance of Muslim girls is slightly better in 1996 as compared to their performance in previous years but still they are lagging behind non-Muslim girls. Every year the number of Muslim girls, who have failed is also more than that of non-Muslim girls. Six out of forty-five Muslim girls have failed at least one of the theory papers in 1996 whereas only one non-Muslim girl was not able to pass one of the papers.97 (See also Appendix - VII)

Similar is the case in Teaching Practice and Practical work. Here also performance of non-Muslim girls is better than that of Muslim girls.

Performance of Muslim girls is slightly better in Diploma course. In this course Muslim girls outnumber non-Muslim girls.98 (See also Appendix - VIII)

In theory papers the results are not very encouraging but in practice teaching the percentage of Muslim girls getting 1st division is improving steadily since 1993.

The data shows that the number of Muslim girls who either opt for or compete for B.Ed., course is less as compared to the number of Muslim girls entering into the Diploma course, as a result we have more Muslim female trained teachers for primary schools than for secondary schools.99

Ghousia Polytechnic for Women seems to be a great step to improve the backwardness of muslim women in technical education because this must be the only institution meant for imparting technical skills to muslim girls together with the facility
for Juma prayer and weekly Deeniyyath classes. The institution came up in 1986, on a plot of land on Hosur Road, in southern Karnataka, gifted by late Nabi Sheriff Sahib. The institution offers diploma courses in computer science, electronics and communication, commercial practices, fashion technology and Interior designing and decoration, travel and tourism, journalism and jewellery design.

Several of its alumni today occupy responsible position in Bangalore industries. For instance, Umme Sadiqa is an analyst in the multinational computer firm, Novell and is now receiving a salary of five digits. Saira, another diploma holder from here is an Engineer in Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Naveen, who completed a diploma in Cad-cam (computer aided designing and computer aided manufacturing) is a known name in a public sector industry. Salma Yasmeen from here teaches at the Ghousia College of Engineering in Ramanagaram, 45 kms from Bangalore.

Ever since the Ghousia Polytechnic came up in 1986, it had made progress in all spheres, except for the fact, that it could not attract muslim girls in an adequate numbers, inspite of the best efforts made by the institutional authorities and the scholarship sponsored by a number of muslim charitable endowments and foundations for muslim girl students. In order to improve the strength of Ghousia polytechnic the muslims of bangalore have to setup number of boys and girls schools in order to have more feeder institutions for professional institutions like the Ghousia group of colleges and polytechnics and the muslim girls have to shed the tendency of avoiding technical courses.100

It is understood from the data obtained from Crescent Engineering College, Chennai-48, the enrolment of muslim girls in B.E / B.Tech Courses show their entry into professional technical institution, though it is a co-educational one.101 (See also Appendix - IX)
Distance Education / Open University:

The most important step to improve the educational backwardness of the Muslim women is the introduction of Distance education by the Ministry of Education, Government of India in 1962. According to the Recommendation of the Government, the University of Delhi established its School of correspondence and Continuing Education, the first of its kind in the country in 1962, offering courses at the first degree level.\(^{102}\)

The Objectives of Distance Education are the following:

- to provide educational opportunities to those - who have the desire to educate themselves further but cannot do so on a full time basis,

- who had to discontinue formal education due to various reasons, those who were in remote areas,

- who could not get enrolled in the institutions of formal higher education,

- who like to either refresh their knowledge in one’s own discipline or acquire knowledge in a new area.\(^ {103}\)

- who cannot for one reason or another leave their homes or jobs and attend regular formal institutions,

- to meet critical situation and to satisfy the growing demands of the people,

- to solve the financial and the hostel problems of the girls and the problem of fear and anxieties of the parents by sending their daughters to schools situated far away or sending them to hostels,

- to change the urban bias and elitist system of education, and inadequate formal education into affordability and availability of education to all masses living in the nook and corner of India irrespective of socio-economic, religious, cultural and gender distinctions,
to remove the financial handicap of the Government to open many separate educational institutions for girls for the promotion of their education,

- Emancipation of women in the field of education is possible only through this system and convert the ideal of women's education into reality.

**INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY**

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) the first open university in the country was established by an Act of Parliament in September 1985 for the introduction and promotion of open university and distance education system in the educational pattern of the country and for the co-ordination and determination of standards in such systems. The major objectives of the University include widening access to higher education to larger segments of the population, organising programmes of continuing education and initiating special programmes of higher education for specific targets group like women, people living in backward regions, hilly areas, etc. Thus, it is an instrument of democratising education.

The Open university is a great opportunity for the muslim women candidates, who are desirous of getting admission for science courses, MBA, MCA and other job oriented Diploma and Certificate courses can opt for admission in distance education courses without any difficulty. It also provides tremendous opportunities to Muslim housewives and drop-outs also. It is high time to think and act urgently to motivate the Muslim women to continue their higher studies through Distance Education system.

It is quite an alarming fact, that the Muslim women's response to Distance Education / Open University course is not only Negligible but also Nil and very Poor also. For example their enrolment in B.Ed., programmes is Negligible, in MBA., and MCA., courses there enrolment is almost Nil and in degree and post-graduate courses there enrolment is very Poor. (See also Appendix - X). Under this situation, it is quite essential to create awareness among the muslim community to highlight the importance of Distance Education for muslim women. The awareness campaign
should be conducted by the educated muslims and muslim Jamath also should come forward to publicise the programmes through speeches and distributing leaflets. The Imams, during congregational prayer may explain the salient features of correspondence courses. Muslim voluntary associations should conduct Counselling sessions for muslim women. Muslim journals may release special issues on distance education programmes offered by the universities but these measures will go a long way in increasing the enrolment of muslim women in foundation courses, diploma and certificate courses and degree programmes\[107\]. So the immediate step to solve the problem is within the community itself-the muslim girls, their parents and family members should realise the importance of higher education for muslim women.

To conclude, the muslim women were/are backward in education for various reasons, inspite of the desire and the efforts of the Colonial administration the Government of independent India and the Muslim society. The educational institutions - occasional professional and technical institutions under muslim managements and the introduction of distance education / open university system, did not improve their educational backwardness. As a result, illiteracy persists in the muslim society. So the community should realise this weakness and take efforts with the co-operation of the government to improve the educational backwardness of muslim women for the development of the Nation. More than that in the present scenario of socio-economic, scientific and technological changes, higher education alone would Empower muslim women to play her role - as a mother, a wife and a citizen effectively and efficiently in the Indian society.
References


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11. Ibid., p. IX.


17. Ibid


20. Ibid., p. 6.
21. Ibid., p. 4.
24. Ibid., pp. 166 - 167.
29. Ibid
41. Ibid., p. 6 -7.
42. Ibid., p. 18.


57. Ibid., pp. 205, 202 and 206.
59. Ibid., p. 98.


71. Holy Qur'an, Surah 20, Ayat 114.
74. Ibid
75. Ibid., pp. XVI - XVII.
76. Ibid., p. XVII.
78. www.indiatogether.org/

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106. All India Muslim Women's Education Conference, Op. cit., p. 204.

107. Ibid