CHAPTER – VI

SOCIO–ECONOMIC CHANGES AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE MUSLIMS
Education is the cornerstone upon which the entire structure of action and thought of a nation is based. The society is claimed to be more civilized only when it has literary development. Islam recognized the extraordinary significance of education. Education has a vital role to play in the socio-economic life of the people. A discussion on the socio-economic changes took place in Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts in particular and all over the Muslim community of Tamil Nadu in general and also Muslim female education and their empowerment forms the main focus of this chapter.

In a plural society such as that of India, the State generally faces demands from various castes, tribal, religious and gender groups for social Justice. Amongst such groups in India, the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes are treated as deserving castes for concessions for historical reasons and on this a national consensus has emerged. Next to these schedule castes and schedule tribes, the most deserving group of people deserving such concessions is Muslims, because of their educational and economic backwardness. Amongst the population of India 15 to 20 per cent of people are living under poverty line in other than the Muslim community, whereas in Muslim community nearly 50 per cent of the people are living under poverty line. Moreover, in India especially in Tamil Nadu the Muslim population has converts mostly from the backward classes of people only. The reason that can be laid for the less literacy rate among the Muslims at par with the Christians can be attributed to the Missionaries whose vision and mission helped the Christians to rise amidst all odds in live.
The people who converted to Islam or to Christianity belonged to the same Indian stock. There are no such missionary activities as found in the Christian community in the Muslim community to uplift their creed. Those missionaries not only gave them education but also made the Christians to follow the culture and style of living of the Englishmen. But Muslims had a strong aversion for the English education because of the fear psychosis that this education may teach them activities against their religious faith and fervour. They were patriotic too because of their denial to imitate or follow the Englishmen, as they wanted to stick to “Indianism” and “Islamism”.

If there had been such activities of the missionaries among the Muslim community, then it would have been a major turn among the Muslims and the literacy rate sure would have surely increased as it has in the Christian community. Therefore the Muslims’ educational and economic development should be placed at par with social Justice Groups.

Generally education has got its social and economic significance. Any society, however backward, always possessed some scientific knowledge and technical advancement. Likewise Muslims also had such background, but it was not so developed like that of the Westerners. “How could an education system (Madrasa educational system of the medieval period) that served the changing socio-economic and political needs of India for over six centuries (1206 – 1857) become so irrelevant in the contemporary times? If the education and the method of education were faulty, as observed by Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, how could their products bring about such revolutions to reach the highest officials under
the king? Where were Abul Fazl and Faizi educated? And Nizam-ul-Mulk Tusi? Were not these people holding the reins of administration so much as to leave an abiding stamp on it? Can we ignore the land survey and settlement systems started under Sher Shah Suri and completed in Akbar's reign, which still serve as basis of our land settlement? It produced scientists and planners many other talented people, not only in arts and literature, but also in the secular administration of this country.* From the above-mentioned statement, the Indians or the Muslims were no way inferior to any body in their intellectual activities. The further advancement in the intellectual field stagnated during the transitional period 'i.e. from medieval period to modern period.' What efforts to be taken to remove this state of condition? First of all the Muslims' basic misconception on the Westerners should be removed and that was achieved because of the introduction of English language. On reading the far advanced English literature, the Muslims developed a fashion and passion for reading. The British thought that the introduction of English education was the best way to introduce Western culture. But it was a wrong belief. One cannot give up his faith and his culture just because of reading English. This misbelief was also in the minds of the Muslims, which made them refuse the western education.

The social and historical factors speak about the Muslims' attitude towards Modern education based on religious ground and the Muslims of Tamil Nadu were not an exception to this. The objective of a young Hindu was to obtain education, which would fit him for a Government job or a professional career whereas a young Muslim on the other hand was not allowed to turn his mind to the secular instruction, until he had
acquired sacred learning of Quran. Therefore, a Muslim boy enters school later than the Hindu boy. But this practice among the Muslims was modified by the efforts taken by the elites and the educationists of the society. This is a turning point in the educational development of the Muslims. Educational development of the Muslims in Tamil Nadu has not only given shape to their political, socio-economic and cultural institutions, but also moulded their character and outlook on life.

The introduction of Modern Education in India effected revolutionary changes in the socio economic and political life of Indian people. It brought rationalistic ideas and non-religious values among the Indian masses. The introduction of western medical service, population control, growth of technical education, industrial development, agricultural development and growth of trade and commerce were some of the benefits of introduction of modern education in India. It checked the backward ideas of the conservative and orthodox Hindu and Muslim people. The changes effected due to the introduction of Modern education among the Hindus are applicable to the Muslims also, except one or two exemptions. The very introduction of Modern education was a revolutionary one because it was introduced against the will of the Ulema and the conservative Muslims. It put an end to the domination of the Ulema in the socio economic and educational activities, opened new vistas of life and initiated modernisation in the life of the Muslims.

Regarding the socio economic changes as a sequel to the spread of Modern education among the Muslims of Tamil Nadu especially of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts are concerned, a very useful comparative analysis of the conditions present some 50 years ago with the conditions prevailing now has been made.
Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts come under the fertile Kavery Delta region. So, most of the Muslims in these districts are agriculturists. Next to agriculture, trading is the main occupation of the Muslims. Besides this the Muslims are seeking their fortunes in foreign countries mostly as petty shopkeepers and menial servants. Government jobs were not preferable among the Muslims of these regions. Apart from this majority of the Muslim people are working in farms, tanneries, beedi industries and other industries as labourers. In coastal areas, the Muslims engage themselves in fishing profession also. Due to their poverty the Muslims even work on daily wage basis and do all sorts of works. Some 30 years back illiteracy was widespread and very common among the Muslims of this area. Even though Thanjavur always stood first in literacy among the other districts of the State, the literacy of the Muslims of this region was in a pitiable condition and Female education had no place among them. The Muslim parents considered that it was a sin to send their daughters to schools and colleges for learning. It was very rare to see a girl with eighth standard qualification and a boy with S.S.L.C qualification. Their economic condition also was very poor. Thanks to the efforts taken by the elites and the philanthropists of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts, the modern education has gradually spread among the Muslims and brought many changes in their life. The common Muslim people also understood the indispensability of the Modern Education and began to learn it. In due course they very well realized that without education, the future of their children will be miserable and the illiteracy prevailing among them will jeopardize their socio-economic and political activities. To testify the changes effected among the Muslims of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts, Adirampattinam, a majority Muslim town in this region has been taken as a case study. The researcher had conducted a survey and personal interviews with people of the town to understand the real conditions of the Muslims of this area.
First of all, the spread of Modern education has brought an appreciable change in the life style and status of the Muslims of Adirampattinam, contrary to that of prevailing three decades ago. Their dress and manners got refined. One could see distinctly the difference between an educated Muslim and an illiterate Muslim in his way of approach and behaviors. The Muslims of this locality both women and men used to wear lungies as their common dress. Now these lungies were replaced by modern dresses like Pants and Chudidars. Even the purdah system has received a modification. The Women used to wear a very big white cloth as purdah, which was most uncomfortable one. Now they are using modern ‘burkhas’, which is a comfortable long coat.

As a result of their progress of education and improved economic condition the Adirampattinam Muslims began to derive the utility of the modern household things and equipments. The recent survey conducted by Adirai Educational Trust, a social welfare organization which is running a Matriculation school, reveals that nearly 41 percent of the families have Telephone facility, 46 percent of the houses have Televisions and 28 percent of the houses have Fridge facilities and 8 percent of the families have computers at their home. The data collected reveals that the above-mentioned facilities are found with families of good educational background.

The spread of Modern education has increased the average marriage age of the Muslim boys and girls. Previously girls got married in the age of fifteen or sixteen and boys in the age of twenty. Now the educated girls and boys do marry only after their studies, at the age of twenty and twenty-six respectively. Because of their education the young generation of Adirampattinam received an enlightenment
regarding male and female relationship. As a consequence the dowry evil has considerably declined. An educated girl is most preferred than an uneducated girl in the marriage market. Some twenty or twenty five years back the Muslim parents considered that it was a sin to send their daughters to schools and Colleges after attaining the age of puberty. Now this opinion has tremendously changed; most of the parents are sending their daughters to schools and colleges for learning. Now only they have understood that an educated woman could look after her family in a better way than an uneducated woman.

Once the Muslims of Adirampattinam thought that the religious education (Madarasa education) alone was enough for their children. This attitude has been changed now; they realized the indispensability of the modern education and sending their daughters to educational institutions even outside their locality. A Muslim lady named Thahira Ammal contested in the local body election and became the chairperson of the local self-government (town panchayat) and another lady named Sabeera Banu who did her civil engineering course, now engaged herself in building construction and architect and earning equal to a male engineer. Another girl named Thasleema who obtained her M.A., M. Phil., in English literature is working as Lecturer in Khadir Mohideen College of Adirampattinam. More than a dozen ladies are working as teachers in Imam Shafi Matriculation and Higher Secondary School, Adirampattinam. These are all a few examples pointed out here for the empowerment attained by the ladies of this area. These kinds of situation or incidents were unimaginable some twenty years back in this region and this shows that the Muslim women have begun to involve themselves in political and administrative fields, which is mainly due to
the spread of education among them. In the survey conducted by the researcher a number of Muslim women enthusiastically expressed that their life became more meaningful after getting education. They also said that wide propagation through educational conferences and seminars to be conducted to make the Muslim women to understand the importance of education.

Even though Islam is a rational religion, some how or other irrational beliefs and practices crept in to the Muslim community in the name of religion. ‘Dargha’ (tomb of saints) worshiping cult is one of such unIslamic practices developed among the Muslims. This Dargha cult is against the monotheism of Islam. This practice is very common in Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts. As a result of the spread of the Modern education, scientific thinking and right religious understanding have sprang-up among the educated youth and they began to question the authenticity of the Dargha cult. Because of the opposition raised by the educated mass and well-learned religious scholars, now-a-days the Dargha worship is getting unpopular among the Muslims. Tamil Nadu Thouhit Jamath, led by P. Jainul Abidin, an Aalim (religious scholar) and Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam led by Professor Zawahirullah (Islamiah College, Vaniyambadi) are the two parties with their well-educated followers vehemently working for the above-mentioned cause. They have successfully drawn the attention of the political parties and the State Government towards them and their demands. Thus a political awakening has been evolved among the Muslims especially among the young generation. This is one of the impacts of spread of Modern education.
The spread of education among the Muslim youth has broadened their social outlook and we could see more young people engage themselves in social service activities. For example, a charity endowment, namely 'Adirai Baithulmal', has been established by the educated youth of Adirampattinam working in foreign countries to help the poor people of Adirampattinam region. They collect 'Jakkath' (religious tax) and alms from the Muslims working in the foreign countries and rich people and distribute it among the poor people. They also extend interest free loans to the needy people. The researcher himself was the Secretary of this Organization from 1992 to 1996. This kind of endowment is established also in more parts of Tamil Nadu.

The spread of Modern education has brought social reforms among the Muslims of Adirampattinam against the superstitious beliefs and practices prevailed among them in the name of religion. For example, previously the Maraikkayars of Adirampattinam kept themselves aloof from the rest of the Muslims of Tamil Nadu in marriage alliance and inter mingling. They strictly follow the Shafi school of thought (There are four school of thoughts found among the Muslims of the world) and do marriages among themselves only. The educated youth of this town has broken this barrier and do marriages outside and with people of other school of thoughts (the Researcher himself is an example to this; he has married a Marraikkayar girl from Adirampattinam). Moreover the Muslims of Adirampattinam followed unnecessary and un-Islamic rituals (which can not be described here in detail) during their marriage ceremony and the marriages were held for three consecutive days. These practices have disappeared now because of the efforts taken by the educated youth of this place. This sort of enlightenment, inquisitive mind and questioning the unreasonable practices are developed in them because of their growth of literacy.
The most appreciable social change brought by the Modern education is the literacy of women folk. Some twenty or twenty five years back it was very rare to see a girl with eighth standard qualification. An educated young female generation with scientific and rational approach towards the day-to-day life has come up now. A social awareness about the education has developed among the Muslim women of Adirampattinam. The Muslim students who studied at Khadir Mohideen Schools and College have brought laurels to their institutions. In the convocation conducted in Khadir Mohideen College, Adirampattinam in the year 2004, 101 Muslim boys 26 girls received their graduate degrees and 37 Muslim boys and 6 girls received their post graduate degrees. A Muslim student from Khadir Mohideen College got Russian Government scholarship, went to Russia and did his M.D., in medicine. To our surprise two ladies studied medicine and became Doctors, this state of affair is unimaginable some twenty five years ago. Thus, a social awareness about the education has noticeably increased among the Muslims is proved without any iota of doubt.

A survey conducted by the Adirai Educational Trust (the researcher himself was one of the members of the survey team) shows that the reasons for the dropouts from schools and colleges are due to ignorance, religious reason, attaining the age of puberty, housework, early marriage and poverty. Among the above said reasons, poverty still remains and stands first and foremost cause for the discontinuation of the students from the schools and colleges. In our survey, the people of Adirampattinam expressed that a college for women with affordable expense would induce and increase more families to educate their daughters.
As far as the economic changes are concerned the spread of education has got its special impact. Even though the Muslims of these regions are economically backward but when compared with their previous condition they are in a better status now; this credit goes to the spread of education among them only. Once the Muslims of these districts were working in the foreign countries for a meager salary, which vary from Rs.5000 to 8000/-. Now, their educational and professional qualifications gave them a raised economic status. Previously most of them went to Gulf and South East Asian countries as contract laborers. But now they are going to Western countries like USA, Canada, England and Australia to seek their fortunes because of their professional and technical qualifications.

The young educated people who are well settled in foreign countries have developed among them a farsightedness, philanthropic attitude and a social responsibility. To give an example to this, the alumni of Jamal Mohammed College who are working in foreign countries had donated large sum to their Alma mater. We could see some of the buildings in Jamal Mohammed College are built with their assistance. The Muslim students who obtained technical qualifications have become industrial owners and they are using modern technical development in their industries and are able to give employment opportunities to hundreds of young people. The industries especially the tanneries owned by the Muslims once had old methods of production. But after gaining modern technical know-how, their industries got modernized and the production increased so that their economic status has improved a lot.
Some 20 or 25 years ago only a very few Muslims were working in the government departments. Previously the Muslims had a dislike for the Government service. The education has changed their attitude and now the Muslims have developed a liking for Government jobs and they are competing in equal terms with others in public service examinations and occupying key administrative posts and high ranks in the police department too. The credit goes to the efforts of the philanthropists, Government attitude and in consequence of the spread of education.

A self financed college called Dawood Batcha College for Arts and Science has been founded at Rajagiri, a village near Thanjavur by a gentleman named Dawood Batcha. After obtaining his degree from Jamal Mohammed College Tiruchirappalli, he went to Singapore to seek his fortune and earned a lot of money there. He spent all his earnings for the establishment of this college. In Tirchy city a women college named AIMAN College for Women had been established in the year 2000 by the Abuthabi Indian Muslim Association is another mile stone in the educational development of the Muslims, especially in the women's education. Yet another college named Nainar Mohammed College for Arts and Science has been established recently at Aranthangi, a taluk head quarters. Like this there are Engineering colleges and polytechnics established by the Muslims all over Tamil Nadu. These developments and philanthropic munificence shows that the Muslims have come up from their old beliefs and began to make use of their wealth for the cause of education.
In the political field also the Muslims make their claims for due place. Political awareness has aroused among the Muslims in the recent years due to the spread of education. The Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (T.M.M.K) led by a learned Professor Zawahirullah of Islamiah college of Vaniyambadi and Tamil Nadu Thouhit Jamath (T.N.T.J) led by an Aalim (Religious Scholar) P.Jainul Abidin are the two movements working for the cause of the Muslim's empowerment in the political field in the recent years. Educated Muslim youth rallied under their leadership demanding reservation for the Muslim community in Government jobs, Legislative assembly and Parliament.

For a long time the Muslims had a wrong notion on the Family-planning scheme of the government. The educational progress has made them understand the advantages of small family norms and now-a-days they are co-operating and at the same time not deviating from the Islamic principles with the government. For example, previously in Adirampattinam, every family had four or five children but now-a-days they have one or two children only. In the year 2004, the total number of birth was 311 among this Muslims were 178, the total number of death was 115 among this Muslims were 76. For the last two decades as derived from the rough estimate of the records of the Town Panchayat and Directorate of Census Operations, the birth rate of Adirampattinam has decreased but at the same time the death rate has also decreased because of the advancement of medical facilities, due to this the population has increased. As a result of the observation of small family scheme their economic status and the educational condition have received an appreciable improvement.
The advantages of the knowledge of the English to the Muslims were almost immeasurable. Only after learning English, the Muslims came to know the wrong interpretations and distortion of the History of India. The Muslims tried to remove the biased views of the British and successfully rectified it. The Modern education has brought a revival in the thought process of the Muslims (i.e.) from medievalism to modernism. The Nationalist spirit of the Muslims went to a high proportion only after learning Modern education. The Muslims understood that their fear psychosis was quiet wrong, which was a result of their ignorance. To acquire knowledge the caste, creed, race and language should not be a barrier.

The Muslim's knowledge on modern democracy, science and arts was enriched because of the Modern education. The Indian literature of both Hindus and Muslims did not include any idea on nationalism but was known to them only after the introduction of the modern education. It was inevitable and can be historically explained by the fact that due to economic backwardness, the Muslims were not socially or politically integrated into a nation. The Muslims not only reinforced their knowledge enormously but also developed a broad outlook and perspective of the world. The Muslims involved themselves in the National freedom struggle in a better way because of the awareness they got from the learning of higher education. Even though the Muslims felt difficulties in the beginning to have English as the medium of instruction, but in due course they adapted themselves and got empowered in the English language.
FEMALE EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

The planned economic development envisaged an all around socio-economic progress without showing disparity to anybody. However, gender inequality and gender bias continue to exist in society especially in Muslim community. But Islam protects the rights of womanhood by giving economic liberty and other privileges to them. Inequality syndrome further manifests itself in the form of social indicators like sex ratios, low literacy, female infanticide, morbidity and mortality amongst a girl child, all these things brings down the status and the empowerment of women.

The propriety of making literacy was the soul test of education. It would be a monstrous error to consider the Muslim womanhood as uneducated because they were not given the opportunity for a long time to get educated themselves, so it is right to call them as non educated. When a man got education, the illiteracy in him is eradicated where as when a woman got education the illiteracy in her and of her family is eradicated. A woman’s part in her husbands avocation is at best small; and the higher her social rank, and easier her worldly circumstances, the smaller it becomes. The question of women’s education was the most serious and pressing problem that has to be tackled by the Muslim community with zeal and earnestness.

Islam gives equal emphasis and importance on the education of both the male and female. One half of the community consists of women and that they have every right against men, even as men have rights against the women. This phenomenon is not fully realized by the Muslim community, even at this late hour. One could not help a
suspicion that in many a case a daughter appears in school and returns merely as an advertisement of the liberalism of her parent. Even today, there are some conservative Muslims and Ulema who refused to give higher education to their Muslim girls. More than 95 percent of the Muslim women remain without education, what hope is there to them to solve the social and economic problems of the Muslim community? This state of condition is commonly prevailing among the Muslims of Tiruchirappalli and Thanjavur districts, which will be changed only by the efforts and self-realization of the Muslims of these regions.

The right of women and their empowerment within the Islamic framework is a recent topic. However, it will help one to have a clear idea when pertinently examine the packages of rights that Islam grants to the Muslim women. Although Islam grants women a comprehensive package of rights, ignorance of Islamic tenets and lack of education and insistence of the society on using outdated non-Islamic and discriminatory cultural practices has led to the oppression of Muslim women. This state of condition remains with Muslim women mainly due to the non-education. The Muslim Shariah declares that the women have the right to life and education, right to worship and spiritual development, right to self-respect and kind treatment, right to choose her husband, right to have economic independence, right to make stipulation in her marriage contract, right to retain her identity, right to consortium, consultation and expression, right to have property, protection against slander and physical abuse, right to shelter as a divorcee and widow’s maintenance right and remarriage.
It is a sad state that the Muslim women are not given the proper guidance and knowledge about the rights in Islam. All these rights are in theories, because the man being the breadwinner decides the way the woman has to lead her life. She is not aware of the rights that Islam has endowed her with. She is kept in darkness and ignorance. But according to Islam, rights and responsibilities of both sexes are equitable and balanced in their totality. Islam wishes to produce a woman who is not only independent in personality, but also one who does not feel deficient, because she is a female. Islam seeks to develop the personality, which gives women the confidence, security and esteem to deal with men as equals without having to play to their gallery or aspire to behave like them. Empowerment as the word denotes is linked to knowledge and making decisions that shape one’s life.

One can trace the historical precedents for Muslim women’s empowerment in the historical past. The Medina society being the first Islamic community set the tone for Muslim women’s empowerment because women played important roles in the development of Islam. Muslim women in Medina played important leadership roles and worked alongside their men to promote the Islamic state. They attended the mosques to pray and listened to the sermons, took lessons from the Prophet (Pbuh) and sought his advice in public and personal issues. Hafsa (Rali), the daughter of Caliph Umar was entrusted with the responsibility of collecting various items on which the Quran was compiled. Women in Medina performed the Hajj alongside the men, recited the Quran and were versatile in the Knowledge of Shariah. Aiysha (Rali), the Prophet’s wife was an expert in Hadith (traditions of the Prophet). To contradict the history, Muslim men of today’s world
argue that it is un-Islamic for women to work outside the house, some even deny women their right to education by prohibiting them from attending schools and colleges to acquire knowledge and Islam is cited as the basis of such restrictions. They do not appreciate the fact that education is essential for all Muslims be they, men, women, disabled and all.

There is a vital difference between a Muslim woman and a Hindu woman. A Muslim should follow ‘Purdah system’ as ordained by God. There will be no relaxation on it. But this should not stand as a hurdle in the empowerment of the Muslim women. Purdah will not stand as a curtain in acquiring education. Going to schools or colleges with purdah will not hinder their studies. Even today we could see so many Muslim girls practicing purdah and attending schools and colleges without any hesitation. Even today we could see so many Muslim girls practicing purdah and attending schools and colleges without any hesitation. Even today we could see Christian Nuns practicing purdah and doing their work. Purdah is taken wrongly as closing even the face of a girl, which is not correct. But some Muslim girls are practicing it without any proper knowledge of its purpose and its usage. Muslim girls are free to take up education because Islam stresses importance equally on both men and women in acquiring education.

Some twenty years back the Muslims of Adirampattinam rarely appreciates an educated Muslim woman and in turn she becomes only the cynosure of the society and not the asset of the community. But when compared to the previous generation the present educated young generation has become very much aware of the fact that Islam is not denying education to them; only some people in the society is enforcing it on them. The spread of education has emboldened them to raise
questions against the abuses on them. Though the Muslim girls of Adirampattinam have far advanced than their conditions some twenty or twenty-five years back, they have yet several miles to go! Even now their educational status and empowerment is below average only. There remain still a lot of girls without attaining the benefit of the education. The elites of Adirampattinam should take efforts to bring them under the main stream of education. The process has already started on this matter; there is a move among the elites and the philanthropists of Adirampattinam to establish a college for women.

To appreciate the upcoming awareness and sudden spurt in the search of education in the Muslim womanhood, all the pioneers who sowed the seed of interest and etiquette, should be gratefully remembered for their wonderful job. To our surprise the first Muslim school established in 1917 in Tiruchirappalli city was (Viscountes Corshan girls school) for the girls only. The one thing that should be considered as the need of the hour is that the religious heads or the Imams, Moulvis and the elites of the society need to come forward to make the community aware of their rights and duties. The various Islamic groups should organize seminars, workshops, paper presentation, awareness programmes, young men associations and women clubs to educate the people, so that they know their responsibilities and rights to make them capable of analyzing issues with the help of Shariah before making judgments.

Regarding the literacy of the Muslim women there was a wrong opinion prevailing. Literacy and education are two different things. We could see in Adirampattinam and Tiruchirappalli regions Muslim
women reciting Quran, reading Urdu and Arab-Tamil (Tamil version in
Arabic script). This could also be taken as a development of literacy. In
the opinion of the researcher, literacy means not just knowing, English,
Tamil or Western Science alone; it means to read and write in any
language or to have knowledge about things through some language. If it
is so then there are more people to be considered literate among
Muslims, because there is lot of people who could read ‘Quran’ (but
could not write). Among Urdu speaking people there are so many
women who could read and write Urdu. If we take this point in to
consideration, then there will be more literate men and women in the
Muslim community of Tamil Nadu.

As according to the census of 1891 in literacy rate, the Christians
came first and then the Mohammedans. Among the Hindus, who formed
of course the majority of the population, 85 percent out of every 100
males were unable to read and write. As regard to female education the
Christians were far ahead of the other creeds. The Musalman females
showed the next best results, though a long interval separated them from
their Christian sisters. But they were better than their Hindu sisters. It is
a common belief that Muslims are not as well educated as Hindus but
this is erroneous, when compared to these three religious groups,
Christians, Muslims and Hindus on the basis of population ratio. These
statistics however refer only to elementary education. When coming to
the point of higher education things are different. The Muslim women
opting for higher education are very low in those days as well as today.
But due to the encouragement and efforts taken by Muslim
educationalists the conditions are improving slowly.
The female education was for many years, as observed from the sketch history of education, almost entirely in the hands of the various Missionary societies. Of late, secular schools had sprung up in the various parts of the Madras Presidency. The Maharaja's schools which were established under the patronage of the rulers of Northern Circars were later changed over under the management of Madras branch of National Indian Association and they received aid from the state, and the rest though unaided were under inspection, and asked to furnish returns about 15 years ago, a Government normal school during its existence educated only 60 Hindus and no Muslim boys or girls and the native Christians were teachers. So, it was reorganized to fulfill the object for which it was originally started. The Government undertook the charge of few elementary schools for girls, which were established by some Local Fund Boards and Municipalities. After this measure, there was a considerable increase of strength of the girls of all religions, especially of Muhammadan girls. The Government took care, not to interfere with the efforts taken by the private bodies. Because of this policy, there were 35 such schools established at the close of 1884-85, 3 in South Arcot, 4 in North Arcot, 4 in Tanjore and others else were in Madras Presidency.

The British Government evinced an equally keen interest in the education of Muslim girls. In January 1875, a committee presided over by Lady Hobart discussed the question of the education of Muslim girls. It proposed to encourage the womenfolk by promoting the establishment of schools in which the girls were to be taught in their own language, needle work of every description and other industrial occupations. On 16th April, 1875 a school was opened at Royapettah, Madras by the prince of Arcot with 24 pupils. The news of the inauguration of the
school hit the headline in Muslim newspaper. They eulogized the services of Lady Hobart for the cause of Muslim women’s education. It pointed out that, because of her initiative there was ‘friendly intercourse between the native and European ladies’. The sensible ones among the Muslims sent in application for the admission for their daughters and the number of applications was disproportionate to the seats available.

Lord Hobart who took a keen and warm interest in Muslim education, died a few days later and the committee, as attribute to his memory and recognition of the role of Lady Hobart in the establishment of the school, called it ‘Hobart school’. Lady Hobart gave the school a donation of Rs 10,000/- and on 7th December 1875 the Princess of Tanjore visited the institution and donated RS 7000/- towards its support. Although most of the children belonged to the poorer class, their parents would not allow them to walk through the streets woven in Purdah and it was found necessary to hire five carts with female attendants to convey the students to and from the school. When a cart driver employed to convey the students, seduced a girl student then the school suffered loss of prestige and there was a sudden fall in the admission. To start with the school functioned only as an elementary school. In 1880 it was raised to a high school. In 1885 a training class was added with the help of additional aid from the Government. But, subsequently the committee managing the school found in difficult to meet its increasing expenditure with its limited income and proposed that the Government should take it over.

The role of the National Indian Association in the cause of Muslim women’s education was significant. The Madras branch of this
Association was established in 1875. The patron was the Governor, the vice president was T. Muthu Sammy Iyer, the secretary was Mrs. Brander, the treasurer was Mir Humayun Shah Bahadur. The chief means employed by this branch to encourage Muslim women’s education were grants to scholarships to Muslim girls, prizes to school girls and some special scholarships given to girls of Hobart schools.

An English woman, named Fowbr was engaged to give home tuition to Muslim girls. But despite the endeavour of a few enlightened persons to promote the cause of Muslim women’s education there was no interest from within to educate their children, particularly girls. The number of dropouts even from the few schools that existed was alarming. For instance two girls’ schools at Mayuram and Tanjore had to be closed for want of pupils. “The population mostly consists of Labbaïs who are most indifferent to education”, observed the frustrated Director of Public Instruction in his letter to the Government. But this was not the case everywhere. An educated Muslim Government official started a girls’ school at Wallajahpet on his own in 1889 with five girls. With in two years the strength grew to forty. When the strength grew unexpectedly the founder requested the Government to take over the school, as he was unable to manage it on his own. The Government also willingly took it over.

The Christian missionaries were also active in the field of education. Many Hindu and Muslim girls’ schools were established by them. They were referred to as Zenana schools. Naturally the syllabi and instruction were Christian oriented. There was much opposition in Muslim quarters in sending their girls to the Christian schools.
editor of Alhami, a popular Muslim newspaper advised the Muslims to start their own schools and said "it is such to regretted that native nobles and gentleman unhesitatingly spend thousands of rupees on debaucher but are reluctant to help in the establishment of useful institutions such as school." Another editor of a Muslim paper, giving expression to the typical attitude of Muslims, asserted that female education was unnecessary and educated females would not remain under Purdah.

Three female candidates appeared for the lower secondary examination and one passed. In the previous year one candidate appeared for the examination without success. At the primary examination 37 passed for certificates out of 46 entrants, against 19 out of 46 in 1899-1900 and 37 out of 78 in 1898-99. The results of the year were thus very satisfactory, not less than 80 percent of the entrants having qualified for certificates. Not taking into account the special schools, but including indigenous schools, the number of schools for girls was 120 with 4,547 pupils against 154 schools with 5,612 pupils in 1899-1900 and 163 schools with 5,550 pupils in the year before. The total number of girls in all classes and grades of schools fell from 17,854 to 17,329. Sixteen girls reached the lower secondary stage against nine in the previous year. In 1898-99, the girls' strength in lower secondary stage was 28.

The proportion of Mohammedan girls in schools is nearly one-fourth, which is distinctly higher than that of other girls in schools in general, and there has been little variation in this proportion throughout the Quinquennium. The number of girls in school has risen therefore equally with that of boys. There has been a total gain of 3,005. There
were, however, 3,524 girls in Quran schools in 1912 as against 2,317 in 1907. Girls were still almost entirely in the elementary stage of instruction, there being in 1912 only four in the secondary stage and one in the collegiate. There are now 42 Government Mohammedans Girls’ schools including two training schools for mistresses.26

Excluding schools for special education and including indigenous schools the number of schools for girls rose from 120 with 4,547 pupils in 1900-01 to 162 with 5,472 pupils. No female candidate appeared for the matriculation examination, but all the four pupils who appeared for the lower secondary examination were successful; in the previous year one candidate passed out of 3. At the primary level examination 27 passed out of 35 appeared, while 37 passed out of 46 in 1900-01.27

The tendency of Muslims borne out to female education can be gauged by an instance of event that occurred in a liberal institution such as Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College where Sheik Abdullah (Baba Mian) when put forth a proposal to establish a school for the girls. He was vehemently opposed. The English Principal of MAO College adjudged that the establishment of school for girls will be detrimental to the interest of the Aligarh College and counseled that the Women’s College is like the infectious and contagious diseases hospital be setup outside the premises of the Aligarh College. By the organized efforts of Shaik Abdullah a girls’ school was established in 1907, which is today a unique residential institution for the female education in the sub continent.28 More than four thousand girls from the primary to the higher level are receiving education.
The state of condition of the Mohammedan girls, as an example is taken from the Director of Public Instructions records of 1907, among 22,000 Mohammedan girls returned as receiving education 10,000 were reading in Quran schools, and 12,000 in public institutions. The later were almost entirely in the primary stage of instruction; of them nearly 5,000 were attending public schools for Mohammedan girls, and the remainder in other public schools.²⁹

There had been an increase of nearly 17 percent in the number of Mohammedan girls attending public and private institutions. The increase in the case of public institutions occurred mainly in the last year of quinquennium (1906). The Government maintains 35 schools for Mohammedan girls with strength of about 1,600. The Mohammedan girls who proceed beyond the fourth standard are numbered in tens: it stood at 29 at the beginning of the period and 57 at the end.³⁰ Begum Sultan Jahan, the former ruler of Bhopal, was one of the exponents who took efforts in popularizing female education among the Muslims. She also has the honour of being the first Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920.³¹ A certain number of Muslim Women’s institutions and the Anjuman-i-Islam in particular even prepared the plan for setting up a Muslim Women’s University in Maharashtra and Chennai.

A separate college for Muslim Women and a Hostel attached was a longstanding demand of the Muslim community, which was reiterated by them in 1941 especially from Madras. The need for the establishment of a separate college for Muslim women had already been conceded as a post war measure and the post war period had already started by the Government. The Muslims requested to expedite the establishment of a women’s college as early as possible. The Muslim community was very
anxious that the college should be functioned from the next academic year (i.e. 1946). The Muslims suggested that the college might be named after the name of the Governor’s wife. Further the Muslims requested for the immediate inauguration of the college, the office of the Inspector General of Police might be provided as a temporary accommodation. But this request was not fulfilled, instead the Government made facilities to accommodate Muslim women students in Mohammedan college of Madras. \[32\]

The action of the Government in making available the existing facilities for collegiate education in the Mohammedan College to Muslim women students was a step towards the advancement of women’s education, and the Muslim women students were deriving considerable advantage there from. There was no substance in the protests raised against this action; for the simple reason that no one was compelled by Government to resort to a mixed college. But this does not obviate the necessity for a separate college for Muslim women. Government was aware that, while the educated section of the Muslim community was not averse to Muslim women students taking advantage of such of the facilities as are now available in men’s colleges for university education, still there was a large body of opinion in the Muslims against the principle of co-education, not only in the high school stages but also in the degree classes. It was inevitable that so far as professional courses were concerned, in the absence of separate facilities, women students must seek admission to men’s Colleges, but that was not be a justification to refuse to afford, wherever possible, separate facilities, which were considered essential for women students from all points of view. It will be conceded that for the healthy
development of the mental and moral faculties of women students, a free atmosphere and a freedom of movement are most desirable and such a free atmosphere and freedom can be available only in a College exclusively intended for women. The establishment of the Queen Mary's College and the women's Xian College amply testify to this fact.\textsuperscript{33}

The establishment of Southern India Educational Trust College for Women was a further major step towards the promotion of Women's Education. In the beginning there were only 12 students joined in the college and its strength increased to 300 within few years.\textsuperscript{34} The establishment of the college itself furnished the needed impetus to the Muslim community to send larger numbers to the college. Therefore the lack of any big strength of Muslim women students to start with, cannot furnish any valid reason for the establishment of a separate college for Muslim women. The low strength of the Muslim women students in all the colleges, together with the large number of Muslim girls who do not take to higher and collegiate education on account of the absence of a separate college for women with an Islamic atmosphere and facilities for the development of Islamic culture, would be more than to justify the need for the establishment of a separate College for Muslim women. Another so called reason said was the lack of sufficient Muslim women staff to run the separate College for Muslim women could not also stand in the way because the Muslim community expressed that it had no objection to the employment of non-Muslim women staff for the College. The purpose mentioned above was fulfilled by the establishment of South Indian Educational Trust College for women which was renamed afterwards as Basheer Ahamed Sayeed College for women.
Tamil Nadu has a minuscule Muslim minority, i.e. merely 5.75 per cent of the population. Even the Christians have with 6.5 per cent population out number the Muslims. Yet the community has invested considerable in education in order to stay on par with others in the race for development. The Organization of Muslim Educational Institutions and Association in Tamil Nadu (OMEIAT) have been striving to give a central focus to the educational struggle of the Muslims in the state. The OMEIAT Directory of Muslim Educational Institutions in Tamil Nadu is the first solid outcome in this direction. In the demise of the various measures taken in the Madras Presidency during the British rule and the formation of secular India after independence the education of the Muslims stagnated without further development. The Muslim philanthropic efforts rose to the occasion and served the need of the community.

The Muslim community of Tamil Nadu has a unique characteristic feature of maintaining a humble façade with solid infrastructure in the field of education. Though the underbelly of the community still drips with poverty and educational backwardness, some philanthropists, and of late, the ones who use education for commerce, erected enough number of monuments of their munificence and enterprise respectively. No wonder than 35 lakhs strong community runs as many as 22 colleges (self-financed Arts and Science colleges are not included), a dozen Engineering Colleges and Industrial Technical Institutes, half that many Poly-techniques, 125 High Schools 152 Primary Schools and several other institutions. These statistics may be impressive, but show that the pattern is top-heavy i.e., the number of schools almost competing with those of colleges and professional
educational institutions. This somewhat skewed pattern does not exactly help the community to attain a balanced profile of literacy, education, skills and professionalism. There could be more useful conclusions from the data available at present.

The OMEIAT Directory fulfils the long-standing need of such a guide for the seekers of opportunities in the field of education. The Directory is though poorly edited, useful in several ways as the data is assiduously collected over several months and reflects the painstaking efforts of the minority. The flashes from an official survey provided at the end are astonishing in that it puts only two percent of the states Muslims in the upper income bracket. There are some private philanthropic associations helping the poor Muslim students by giving scholarships and loans. 'Abudhabi Indian Muslim Association (AIMAN) and Indian Muslim Association (IMAN) are the two appreciable associations functioning in Tamil Nadu. AIMAN is extending free scholarships amounting Rs.30,00,000 per annum to the poor Muslim girls and boys of various parts of Tamil Nadu. The poor Muslim students of Khadir Mohideen College, Adirampattinam had received Rupees 44,000 as scholarship from IMAN during the academic year 2000-01. The AIMAN has founded a self-financed women's college in the city of Tiruchirapalli, which caters the needs of higher education of hundreds of Muslim girls.
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