Introduction
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This thesis on the basis of the analysis and examination of data, statistical as well as descriptive, available in official Reports and academic works tries to argue that a gradual transformation came in the approach of the community towards their women’s education during the colonial and postcolonial period. The transition from traditional and religious education to the modern education based on secular and scientific learning though took long. The Muslim community has tried to come out of its regressive mindset, and is heading towards adopting modern secular education. The data regarding increase in the literacy rate of Muslim women at upper primary level and the preference given by the Muslims to school over madrasas for sending their girls, well brought out by NEUPA reports of 2008-09 and 2010-11 prove it convincingly.

Tracing this shift from second half of the nineteenth century, one finds that the colonial state hardly took any initiatives for the development of women’s education in general, neither any attention has been witnessed for the cause of Muslim women’s education.

The content of women’s education throughout the colonial period aimed to make women suitable for the future role as wives and mothers. Muslims were more reluctant to accept the western education and preferred private schools with the traditional Islamic syllabus even for boys what to say about girls with their mindset inherently dominated by patriarchal norms. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Muslim reformers, both male and female, started realizing the importance of modern education and values. Consequently many reformers took up the issue of Muslim women’s education. The concern of male reformers with few exceptions was largely based on the idea of welfare of the society through creating ‘good mothers’ rather than intellectual development of women. On the other hand women reformers raised the issue of modernization of Muslim women’s education, and demanded rights, freedom and equality, though, on a limited scale.

After independence, it appears that initially the concern for Muslim girls education remain neglected though attention was paid to the educational development of STs, SCs and backward classes by the Indian government in the early phase of
planning. It is only during the last few decades that the issue of minorities’ educational backwardness received state’s attention.

In late twentieth century, we do come across some of the initiatives taken by state for the welfare of Muslims like the establishment of Maulana Azad Educational Foundation (MAEF), in 1989 and National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NDMFC) in 1994 but hardly any especial attempt for the education of Muslim women.

The subject of Muslim women education in modern India has already drawn the interest of scholars, Indian as well as foreign:

Gail Minault’s work ‘Secluded Scholars Women’s Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India’\(^1\) is pioneer in the field of Muslim women’s education in colonial India. It provides a detailed account of efforts of Muslim reformers for the cause of education. She also highlighted that how organizations and institutions were established for raising the issue of Muslim women’s education in that period. Further, she also highlighted the efforts of Muslim women reformers for their own rights. But it covers only colonial period.

Geraldine Forbes, in her work ‘The New Cambridge History of India, IV-2, Women in Modern India’,\(^2\) traces women’s history from colonial to post independent India. Although, she did not directly deal with the Muslim women’s education but cursorily touched the educational trends within the Muslim community. She also highlighted the prevalent prejudices regarding women’s education. Dealing with the efforts of reformers, she also focuses on how education brought change into their lives and enabled them to participate in public sphere. However, its scope is too wide and the coverage of Muslim women education is expectedly limited.

Seema Kazi in her report, ‘Muslim Women in India Minority Rights Group International Report’\(^3\) traces the status of Muslim women from late nineteenth century to the present time. The partition and its related consequential effects on the

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Muslim Community are well described by the author. Nevertheless, the voluminous quantitative data available in official and semi-official sources have not been utilized.

*Unequal Citizen A Study of Muslim Women in India* by Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, is a survey based study presenting difference in the opinion among Hindu and Muslim women regarding various issues of women’s life including education. The survey relates to 2000-01 with a sample of 10,000 comprising of Hindu(20%) and Muslim(80%) women (18+ years age group) from 40 districts of 12 Indian cities. The sample is admittedly bias, the targeted population being predominantly Muslims (80%) is small in nature to be random. Here only women’s experiences and opinions have been considered leaving the males out and hence renders the study more subjective. In another study by the same author titled, *Educating Muslim Girls a Comparison of Five Indian Cities* presents regional differences and highlight certain factors affecting the educational status of Muslim women in contemporary scenario. It’s a valuable work but is confined to big cities and the source-base is largely descriptive and more subjective in nature. This highlight the educational condition of Muslim women in selected cities, namely Delhi, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Calicut at the beginning of the 20th century. This study too is mainly based on personal interviews with the teachers and the heads of educational institutions of Muslim girls. It is interesting but covering only big cities samples even if large, lacks full representation and the methodology of personal interviews, no doubt, cannot avoid element of subjectivity.

Shahida Lateef in her book *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities*, conceptualizes the complex realities of Muslim women’s lives through education, socio-cultural factors, political and legal struggles. The study is primarily based on survey of nine major Indian cities in different states. With regard to education among Muslims, she further highlights that a definite co-relation exists between education and class, and while the education is often seen as means of employment and upward mobility, the lack of economic opportunities and discrimination results in poor performance of Muslims at higher educational level. Her study also brings out an encouraging fact that the attitudinal discrimination

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among parents regarding their sons' and daughters' education has been declined in recent times. In order to improve future employment opportunities parents preferred secular education for their children. Nevertheless, it too takes into account only the situation in big cities only, neglecting the majority residing in rural India. However, it broadly revolves around a survey of 1332 Muslim women living in the cities of Delhi, Madras, Cochin, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Srinagar. Her survey brings out the fact that Muslim women too desire for greater opportunities for education and employment. But she did not cover a comparative statistics about the other co-locational women of other communities; a comparison between Muslim women of other communities is not been possible.

Few other scholars such as Asghar Ali Engineer⁶, Sabiha Hussain⁷ etc. have also pointed out the educational deprivation of Muslim women in India. The scope, however, remain narrow and education is not the focus.

This study specifically attempts first to cover the status of Muslim women's education in the pre-independent India, framing the question of education around the conflict between tradition and modernity, and then extends the scope to examine the status of Muslim women's education in post independent India at all levels, viz, elementary, secondary and higher, focusing on urban/rural divide and regional variation within the selected states of Northern India. The states covered under this research are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, and Jammu & Kashmir. The state's initiatives in forms of Five Year Plans, policies, and programs, and the change in the approach of the state towards Muslim women's education and their impact have also been analyzed in detail. A case study of Aligarh Muslim University has also been undertaken as an illustration of the problems and prospect of Muslim women's education in Northern India.

This thesis thus is an attempt to fill as far as possible the lacunae of existing research and cover the period from late 19th to early 21st century to help contribute further in

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the understanding of issues of Muslim women's education in the contemporary period.

This study attempts to present the complete picture (male-female) of the socio-economic and educational status with a comparative analysis of Muslims along with all religious groups in Northern India. It also provides the caste disparities within the communities at higher educational level, especially in case of Muslims not covered under previous studies. The sample of the study includes all age groups based on the information provided in the reports from primary to higher education. The study covers twelve states of northern India. On the basis of statistical and descriptive data regarding educational status provided in the study covering the period since independence to 2010 (NSSO 66th round and NUEPA reports 2010). It was found that as per the data of 2011 census, the gender gap in the educational status is decreasing and in the last decade, the lowest gender gap has been noticed. (See Table 1of Chapter III). The recent data reflects a change in the attitude of the Muslim community towards girls' education, as the enrollment rate has improved at primary level reflecting that the desire of learning has increased among the community, but as the level increases the enrollment rate falls down mainly due to the financial constraints.

The methodology used in this research is based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis through both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources for the post-independence period are reports such as Census of India, NEUPA reports, NSS data, Sachar Committee Report etc. While for the colonial period memoirs, biographies, novels and short stories have been used. The strength of these reports lies in the fact that they provide a detailed statistical data and a fairly objective analysis. It also needs to be underlined that the findings of these reports seem to have an impact on the policy formulation and implementation. Even though these Reports are generally based on sample studies, the samples are sufficiently large and random and the survey being done under the experts made them reliable.

Due to the absence of detail official as well as private accounts of Muslim women's education during colonial period, the information is curtailed mainly from biographies, memoirs, novels etc. of that period, with the objective to explore the status of Muslim women's education in the larger perspective and to trace the growth of Muslim women's education during colonial period and to link it with the present
time. Whereas in the post-independence period we have plethora of official and private accounts to collate the status of Muslim women's education and, therefore, for the study of this period largely these accounts have been taken into consideration. Contemporary fictions, especially novels offer insights and perspectives of reforms during colonial India. Novels by Altaf Husain Hali (Majalis-un-Nisah), Nazir Ahmad (Mirat-ul-Arus and Banat-un-Naashi), Modh. Hussain Azad (Nasihat ke Karn Phool) and Short Stories by Meeneer Sayyid Muneer (Taaleem-e-Niswan Ladkyon ki Taaleem) reflect the attitude of community towards modern education, especially the elite perspective and thus the tone of further reform. It appears that community, by and large, was not getting conscious about reform and education. These works reinforce and strengthen the patriarchal norms as the objective to educate women. Education was needed to acquaint them with basic essentials so that they can run the households in better manner.

This study also attempts to investigate the realities of Muslim women's lives within the framework of intersectional perspective, where it needs to be explored that how various axis of identity formation, such as, caste, class, religion, sex, forms alternate experiences. Feminist standpoint theory enunciates and also demands that how the location of researcher could contribute to the formation of alternate experiences, thus influencing the research findings and analysis.

It is to be underlined here that the studies of non-Indian scholars such as Gail Minault and Geraldine Forbes' squarely and broadly explore the status of women's education in the nineteenth and twentieth century. These are insightful and quite objective in nature. However, the present thesis cover the issues of Muslim women's education linking it the past with present till 2011-12.

Here an endeavor has also been made to examine the status of Muslim women's education with a view to feminist standpoint epistemological framework. Feminist standpoint epistemology is an innovative approach of knowledge building that keeps into account the social positioning of women as oppressed class as well as the heterogeneity of women's lived experiences. Although the social positioning of researcher provides a powerful lens to examine the society, however, in this work, a careful attempt has been made that this analysis too remain objective as far as possible.

and personal factor should not come into play to undermine the academic norms as far as possible.

The objective of this study is to identify the factors constraining the development of Muslim women’s education. The thesis examines the status of Muslim women’s education and aims to explore the historicity of this issue. It probes whether it is religious and cultural paradigm manifested in ‘purdah’ controlling women’s mobility and their choices; or the prejudiced attitude of the community itself towards modernity and modern education for women; or the backward socio-economic condition of Muslims resulting in low literacy level of Muslim women. The study has also analyzed the initiatives taken by the state. An attempt has been made to find out the approach or the attitude of the state towards the larger concerns of the community. One of the focal point would be to examine how far state’s policies have included Muslim women’s voices and concerns into policy making and its implementation. Through this research an attempt has been also made to reinvestigate and re-conceptualize the above stated issues, by looking at the evidence with gendered perspective and reformulation of the existing knowledge.