

## **National Seminar**

On

### **Challenges of Muslim Girls in Higher Education: Patriarchy, Policy or Poverty**

7-8 February, 2018

Organized by

Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi 110025

#### **Concept Note**

Education serves as one of the important parameters in defining the development of the country and so does the status of its women. Thus, persistent efforts are made by the Governmental and Non-Governmental institutions to ensure that all the citizens (including women) get equal access to educational facilities. Yet, certain inequalities arise among the citizens as they belong to different socio-religious communities. These inequalities exacerbate as gender inequalities are considered within these socio-religious groups. Hence, it becomes important to understand the social, economic and cultural basis of this disparity to create more equal opportunities for education for all and contribute towards development of the country.

Focusing specifically on the educational status of Muslim women, we find that only 50% of them are literate in India (Census 2011). This is 17.5 percentage points lower than the male literacy rate among Muslims and 3.6 percentage points lower than national average of female literacy rates. Moreover, as we move up the educational ladder, the gap widens. Around 9.07% of total Muslim females enrolled in higher secondary schools in 2014-15 (which decreased to 8% in 2015-16) while only 4.7% of total female enrolments in universities were Muslim females. The number of Muslim females in universities was also found to be way lower than their male counterparts. (AISHE 2015-16 and DISE 2014-15). There is also a significant rural-urban divide between these rates. Moreover, the dropout rates are one of the highest among Muslim women as compared to other socio-religious groups. According to Census data of 2011, only 2.07% Muslim women in total were graduates.

Though poverty has been regarded in many studies as the primary reason for dropout of Muslim girls from school, more reasons that are specific to them are required to be acknowledged for lower rates of enrolment of women from Muslim community in higher education as compared to women from other communities belonging to the same socioeconomic background. According to Post-Sachar Committee Report, educational levels of parents and local development are more important factors for the higher enrolment of children in schools. Some of these concerns have been taken up by Government of India and it has taken several steps to bridge the gaps in the education of Muslim girls. However, the gender aspect of education has not been addressed adequately.

However, as Post-Sachar Committee report suggests, the scale of Government interventions have not been able to make significant impression due to 'the large number of marginalized and the depth of their social, economic and educational deprivations.' (Kundu Committee Report, 2008).

It also posited that the Government lagged in strengthening community institutions of women to enable them to reach out to government programmes. While the committee mentioned that there is need to make higher education accessible to women by opening training centers for them, it did not point out the major challenges that women face in attaining higher education, especially the cultural and traditional barriers that prevent them from enrolling in higher studies and ways in which these can be addressed. The report also did not specifically discuss the educational needs and status of Muslim OBC women.

The conference aims to:

- Provide a space to diverse range of Governmental and Non-Governmental stakeholders to discuss their perspectives and define the social, economic and cultural issues that women from Muslim community face in pursuing higher education.
- Discuss the role of class, caste, region, religion and gender in restricting higher educational needs of women.
- Discuss and reflect upon the achievements and failures of higher learning institutes in ensuring non-discriminative and equal opportunity of participation in educational activities to Muslim girls.
- Facilitate voice opinions, analysis, aspirations and concerns in the implementation of existing schemes, policies and programmes for the promotion of higher education of minority women.
- Discuss and develop some tangible solutions for the defined problems and consequently, generate some policy recommendations.

The Academicians, Young Researchers and Professionals working with NGOs are encouraged to send in the title and a 200-word abstract to [shussain1@jmi.ac.in](mailto:shussain1@jmi.ac.in) or [shahalamamu@gmail.com](mailto:shahalamamu@gmail.com) latest by 28 January 2018

Confirmation of acceptance: 2 February, 2018

Last date for submission of full paper: 5 February, 2018

**Prof. Sabiha Hussian**

Director

(Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies)