Education of Muslim Minority Girls

Status and Problems

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Dr. Prasamita Mohanty

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Preface

Getting girls into schooling system presents a host of complex and persistent issues, but it may be one of the wisest investments developing countries can make. The fundamental importance of female education and benefits of girls' education is beyond question. Girls' education, as an issue, has special significance in the context of country's planned development and has been an important sector of any society. "Growing evidences indicate that educating girls in general and muslim girls in particular brings a number of benefits to girls, their families and their societies at large. Economic productivity, social development, desirable child care and social equity are the outcomes of education in general; whereas transferring education from one generation to another is possible only through educated girls and women" (Das and Mohanty, 2009). The growing concern which needs to be addressed not only in India but also in most developing countries, if "Universalization of Elementary Education" is to be realised, is the education of girls (Das and Mohanty, 1995). If education of Muslim girls is to be discussed in Indian context, the nine educationally backward states, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, represent almost a similar kind of picture. Educational problems of minority girls in any part of country are different in nature and magnitude. Education of girl child has always been a major concern for the policy makers, thinkers and reformers of our society. Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and discrimination are significant impediments for which such

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children are unable to join the mainstream of education. Being born as girl and that to in a deprived condition brings innumerable problems to the sight of educational planners. Factors, such as, non-availability of school/non-formal education centres, lack of provision of segregated schools for girls, lack of women teachers in rural sector, and unsuitable school timings are responsible for non-participation of rural girls in education. Poor socio-economic status does not allow parents to afford girls education.

Researches in the context of equity and equality of education and Education for all is relatively difficult since many of our social processes/phenomena are not well defined and those defined are found to be practiced in deviated form. Therefore, interest of educational researchers to have high impact research gets affected. One of the guest speakers at ASSOCHAM's 11th Higher Education Summit questioned—"Are social policies well informed by our researches?" Education as a powerful agent of social change is well recognised yet what makes education meaningful is difficult to derive at. Similarly, why children don't participate well in elementary and secondary schooling has remained elusive while it remains the same for girls across castes, religions and localities. In order to give a fillip to the existing knowledge , the present study was designed with need for exploring factors responsible for low participation of Muslim girls at primary stage in Uttar Pradesh (in the districts of Barabanki, Behraich Ghaziabad, Lucknow and Rampur). My sincere gratitude to Prof.(Dr.) S. K. Das, Vice Chancellor (Shri Khushal Das University Rajasthan) for his notable support from conceptualization to finalization of report. The present piece of research transformed to the shape of this report is attributed contribution of research fellow Ms. Tabassum, students, teachers and principals selected schools, District and State Administration of Education, Shri Rajpaljee, Smt. Vimlajee Shri Anoop, Office Executive cum Computer operator. Any

organization can seldom have milestones on innovations without support and blissful attitude of a legend in higher education and my heartfelt thanks to Prof. (Dr.) Sanjay Singh Vice Chancellor for his kind support and constant inspiration and motivation. Without research grants, the present research would not have come to the stage of dissemination and therefore credit goes to authority and Officer of Research Division of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.

DR. PRASAMITA MOHANTY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Incredible India is attributed to our treasures within and are behind every success of the nation; be it intellectual pursuit or hard working nature, its enriched social structure, or its participation at global level. There are no limitations since natural and human resources abundantly available and current state of utilization is far behind from desired level of utilization. What makes us to be known in the galaxy of intellectuals is our cohesive social structure guaranteed by the Constitution that has inherited diversity in terms of castes, religion, language, and cultural beliefs and practices---known to be **world's largest democratic & secular republic.** Despite of Constitutional guarantees, we notice substantial gaps between constitutional norms and practices that have placed cohesiveness under a big question mark—being a nation it has to address to all sorts of needs of every citizen irrespective of castes, religions, genders, regions and languages. Education as a powerful agent of social change is well recognised yet what makes education meaningful is difficult to derive at. Similarly, why children don't participate well in elementary and secondary schooling has remained elusive while it maintains the same for girls across castes, religions and localities. Report of the National Seminar "School Education in the 1990s: Problems and Perspectives" documented by the NCERT indicate that ".....Within elementary education there is urgent need identify special groups and geographical areas which require provision of compensatory allocation of resources. In this context, the rural girl child; and the rural as well as urban poor constitute priority

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target groups" (1992). Ironically we are not able to achieve goals cited in the educational Policies and priority target groups though benefitted substantially yet they are away from mainstream of education. While caste system comes first as exclusive factor, gender and religion comes next.

Gender as a demographic variable has been well studied across all disciplines including education, sociology and psychology. Conclusions of such studies revealed that no significant improvement is noticed among girls and women, and state of girls continues to be debatable. What do prohibit development imperatives on girls has been explored but unfortunately all of these stumbling blocks have not been redressed since these demand joint efforts. Some of these stumbling blocks before development imperatives include perception of parents and community on bearing, rearing and educating girls; social taboo of having girl child as raising her for in-laws; social risks on girl child. These factors are associated with each girl child irrespective of their economic, social and religious status. When problems and challenges of girl children of Muslim religion are concerned, it appears to be more difficult for policy planners and educationists. Being born to a (minority) religion each Muslim girl child is bound to adopt religious ethics and norms and to survive in retaliation with family and social norms---these becomes pulling factors for Muslim girls to struggle significantly to get into primary schooling. School related factors are not so encouraging (especially in government schools) for girls in general and Muslim girls in particular and there are factors responsible for Muslim girls at personal level. Keeping above cited context at the back drop, attempt was made to examine status with regard to enrolment, retention, and achievement of Muslim girls at primary stage and exploring problems and factors responsible for their low participation at primary stage in selected districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The present study is designed to influence the existing insights on inclusion of excluded groups within the framework of democratic-secular- and social structure and to influence policies on education for children of minority (religious) communities. Two major dimensions are critical in the present study-- (a) exploring existing status educational participation of Muslim Gils at primary stage and (b) recommending corrective measures and supporting policy formulation for bringing equality and parity in the education sector. Universal accessibility, enrolment and retention should include few emerging issues---- nurturing talents of individual minority girl, supporting them to exhibit sustained interest in further education. In order to realize the goals enshrined in the Constitution and priorities areas reiterated in several policy documents, the present study will shed lights on the pertinent issues of educating girls in general and Muslim girls in particular. As mentioned above, studies focusing on the problems of Muslim girls are scant in Indian context. The present study has been designed not only to explore the enrolment and retention among Muslim girls; rather it will go a long way in exploring the impediments that are responsible for education of Muslim girls. Descriptive survey methodology is employed to collect data on selected (purposive sampling -- based on Muslim female literacy rate) five districts, i.e, Barabanki, Behraich, Ghaziabad, Lucknow and Rampur districts of Uttar Pradesh. In these selected districts, 2 blocks each and a total no. of 10 blocks were selected. From these 10 blocks, 100 villages, 100 schools and 1000 Muslim girls were to be contacted for the primary research. For the study, field work was carried out in 100 villages from 10 blocks and 05 districts; covering approximately 497 households in all villages. Apart from these 497 households, 147 Muslim Primary school teachers, 97 Primary School Principals were also consulted. Further Block Education Officers and village Education Officers were interviewed for cross

validation of various data. Results of the study revealed progressive trends in existing status of enrolment in terms of chronological age (as six) and class of admission (class I), possession of birth certificate, provision of round- the -year admission, enrolment rate. While enrolment demonstrated upward trend, retention of Muslim girls is found to be below satisfactory that is attributed parental attitude and economic condition of the family as single most factor. It is interesting to note that Muslim girls are getting benefits under provision of SSA. Low literacy level of parents, low wage based occupation of parents and large family are found to be major impediments before education of Muslim girls.

It is worth mentioning that if results on dynamics of enrolment, retention and achievement of girls in Muslim Concentrated Districts(MCDs)are not that encouraging then it has become necessary to examine(in the form of suggestions for future research) existing status of Muslim Girls in districts other than MCDs. The study has aptly yielded valid results and has successfully generated wider scope for promotion of Muslim Girl students in particular and children of all communities in general. In order for education to be socially responsive to generate a cohesive society that will be meaningful and exciting for educational experience of girls in general and to be re-prioritised in the national education plans/policies of the nation.

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CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

Treasures within India are behind the every success of the nation; be it intellectual pursuit or its hard working population, its enriched social structure, or its participation at global level. There are no limitations since natural and human resources abundantly available and current state of utilization though substantial yet further initiatives are warranted. What makes us to be known in the galaxy of intellectuals is our cohesive social structure that has inherited diversity in terms of religion, language, and cultural beliefs and practices---known to be largest democratic & secular republic. Despite of Constitutional guarantees, we notice substantial gaps between constitutional norms and practices that have placed cohesiveness under a big question mark—being a nation it has to address to all sorts of needs of every citizen irrespective of castes, religions, genders, regions and languages.

Education as a powerful agent of social change is well recognised yet what makes education meaningful is difficult

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to derive at. Similarly, why children don't participate well in elementary and secondary schooling has remained elusive while it maintains the same for girls across castes, religions and localities. Report of the National Seminar "School Education in the 1990s: Problems and Perspectives" documented by the NCERT indicate that ".....Within elementary education there is urgent need identify special groups and geographical areas which require provision of compensatory allocation of resources. In this context, the rural girl child; and the rural as well as urban poor constitute priority target groups" (1992). This recommendation is the outcomes of researches carried out by the NCERT and other apex level institutions of the country. Gender as a demographic variable has been well studied across all disciplines including education, sociology and psychology. Conclusions of such studies revealed that no significant improvement is noticed among girls and women, and state of girls continues to be debatable. What do prohibit development imperatives on girls has been explored but unfortunately all of these stumbling blocks have not been redressed since these demand joint efforts. Some of these stumbling blocks before development imperatives include perception of parents and community on bearing, rearing and educating girls; social taboo of having girl child as raising her for in-laws; social risks on girl child. These factors are associated with each girl child irrespective of their economic, social and religious status. When problems and challenges of girl children of Muslim religion are concerned, it appears to be more difficult for policy planners and educationists. Being born to a (minority) religion each Muslim girl child is bound to adopt religious ethics and norms and to survive in retaliation with family and social norms---these becomes pulling factors for Muslim girls to struggle significantly to get into primary schooling. School related factors are not so encouraging (especially in government schools) for girls in general and Muslim

girls in particular and there are factors responsible for Muslim girls at personal level.

Genetically girls and women are born with more diseases than men, structurally boys are longer and stronger, and functionally girls are soft, tender and beautiful than boys. Genders vary significantly each other in bio-physiological characteristics and abilities, but complementary and supplementary to each other in many ways. What makes girls to be devalued before males? A boy child is born in a similar manner as a girl child to the same parents? What makes girl to be of less worth to parents and in-laws? Unlike other progressive nations where both parents are equally responsible for rearing children, Indian society has inherited the mother centered child rearing practices. Boys and girls are raised and reared for equal amount of time during baby and childhood by their mothers. Why and how do women discriminate girl child and give highest preference to boy? Within--home practices have appeared to be critical and responsible fuelling factor for uneven ratio between males and females with the belief that girls are born to get married and live with husband and in-laws. On the other hand, researchers currently explored that social and ethical crimes against women and girls is the most fear factors for parents to have and rear girl children in India, after all recent incidents on gang rape are sufficient to justify how parents having girl children are terrorized.

Despite of the fact that the source of growth, development, maturation and learning is the same, it is ironical that males pick up tendencies to dominate females and females find themselves less superior to males. Is this difference attributed to within home factors? Or, is it attributed to socio-cultural factors? Is this because of the low impact of ethical norms in Indian society? It needs to be resolved in the first century of this new millennium; otherwise

gender exclusion will be more cancerous for social stratification process. It may further aggravate Indian economy because of delimiting about half of population to reach at zone of proximal development.

Contributing substantially toward the prosperity of families (in and in-laws) since childhood till death, each girl is socially useful and constructive, economically productive, and above all an effective human resource. Girls learn informally many things efficiently within the family and neighborhood and such informal functional knowledge help them to grow within society and nation at large. "Nor negligible in terms of number, nor less in capabilities, women continue to survive with their identity parallel to the patriarchic social structure prevailing in the societies across nations for ages. History could ever explain; scientific insights and technological inventions could ever prove; humanities could ever discover; researchers and practioners could ever establish that girls are less potential than the boys" (Mohanty, 2013). Scholars having keen interest on the issue of gender equality have been widely examined and explored through interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches and found that gender equality is critical and central to the national development. "Gender parity is the affordable social intervention that could yield much more returns to the society; thereby the need has been felt for bridging the gaps between boys and girls" (Mohanty, 2013).

Girls contribute much more than boys not only at school stage but also in the entire ladder of education. Girls' social and professional roles are symmetrical and progressive across all ages, though they are accorded low socio-metric status. Girls are supportive to their mothers at young age while at the later stage they shoulder the responsibilities of family, neighborhood and society. Bringing girls at par with the boys could fuel the

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economies of the developing countries to extremes. Ironically, gender disparities exist and significantly prevalent in many of the countries in Asia & Pacific and Africa. Besides poverty, gender disparity is the most powerful and independent factor that lags nations reaching the proximity in inclusive growth and development. Most powerful instrument that helps in mitigating gender disparity is education that empowers girls and women to be productive at par with their counter parts.

1.2 Historical Background of Uttar Pradesh

The history of Uttar Pradesh is very much associated with the broad history of India. It dates back to 4000 years. Formerly the area of Uttar Pradesh was occupied by Aryans or the Dasas and their main occupation was agriculture. The Aryans through conquests occupied the adjoining areas. They laid the foundations of its civilisation in the region. During the Aryan inhabitation in the region that epics of Mahabharata, Ramayana, Brahmanas and Puranas were written. The state was the heart of Mahabharata war. The Kosala Kingdom of Ayodhya is said to have been incarnated in the city of Mathura. It was sometime around the middle of the 1st millennium BC that Uttar Pradesh saw the advent of Lord Buddha and the spread of Buddhism. Around the time Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon at Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh was under the Magadh rule. The Chaukhandi Stupa here marks the spot where Lord Buddha met his disciples. Besides Kuru, Panchalas, Vatsas, and Videhas etc. formed the early region of the state. These regions were known as Madhyadesa. During Ashoka`s role, several public welfare works was taken up. During the rule of Magadha Empire, Buddhism and Jainism developed into this region. It was a period of administrative and economic advancement. The power was subsequently shifted to the Nanda dynasty and then to the Mauryas. However the city reached

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its pinnacle of glory during the reign of Harshavardhana. The historical background of Uttar Pradesh has a lot to do with the advent of the Muslim rule. The period witnessed the subjugation of the Rajputs whose power was confined to the a few pockets of Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh reached the peak of prosperity during the Mughal rule, and particularly during the rule of emperor Akber.

The British East India Company came into contact with the Awadh rulers during the reign of third Nawab of Awadh. There is no doubt that the history of Uttar Pradesh has run concurrently with the history of the country during and after the British rule, but it is also well-known that the contribution of the people of the state in the national freedom movement had been significant. Uttar Pradesh also played a key role in the 1857. From the rule of Rama to the rule of British, Uttar Pradesh has seen it all. Uttar Pradesh is bounded by Bihar in the east, Madhya Pradesh in the south, Rajasthan, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana in the west and Uttarakhand in the north and Nepal touches the northern border of Uttar Pradesh. As this state shares an international boundary it assumes strategic importance as far as its defense is concerned. The major part of Indo-Gangetic plain or the north fertile plain forms Uttar Pradesh. Geographically, Uttar Pradesh is endowed with natural wealth in abundance. This wealth lies hidden below a variety of rocks of different ages found in lofty mountain ranges of the Himalaya Mountains in the north and Vindhya Mountain Range in the south. The plains of Uttar Pradesh have been very rich in natural vegetation which has, however, diminished due to wide-ranging needs of the people. Only a few patches of natural forest are now found scattered here and there in the plains, while such forests are extensively found on a very large scale in sub-mountain and mountain regions which is in Uttarakhand now. About 12.8 percent of the geographical areas of Uttar Pradesh are under forests.

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The transitional belt running along the entire length of the state is called the Terai and Bhabhar area. It has rich forests, cutting across it are innumerable streams which swell into raging torrents during the monsoon. The Bhabhar tract gives place to the Terai area which is covered with tall elephant grass and thick forests interspersed with marshes and swamps. The sluggish rivers of the Bhabhar deepen in this area, their course running through a tangled mass of thick under growth. The main crops are wheat, rice, and sugar cane. Jute also is grown. The most important area for the economy of the state is the Gangetic plain which stretches across the entire length of the state from east to west. The entire alluvial plain can be divided into three sub-regions. The first in the eastern tract consisting of 14 districts which are subject to periodical floods and droughts and have been classified as scarcity areas. These districts have the highest density of population which gives the lowest per capita land. The other two regions, the central and the western are comparatively better with a well-developed irrigation system. They suffer from water logging and large-scale user tracts. The Gangetic plain is watered by the Yamuna, the Ganga and its major tributaries, the Ramganga, the Gomati, the Ghaghra and Gandak. The whole plain is alluvial and very fertile. The chief crops cultivated here are rice, wheat, pearl millet, gram, and barley. Sugar cane is the chief cash crop of the region.

The Southern fringe of the Gangetic is demarcated by the Vindhya Hills and plateau. It comprises the four districts of Jhansi, Jalaun, Banda, and Hamirpur in Bundelkhand division, Meja and Karchhana tehsils of Allahabad district, the whole of Mirzapur District south of Ganges and Chakia tehsil of Varanasi District. The ground is strong with low hills. The Betwa and Ken rivers join the Jamuna from the south-west in this region. It has four distinct kinds of soil, two of which are agriculturally difficult to manage. They are black cotton soil. Rainfall is scanty and erratic

and water-resources are scare. Dry farming is practical on a large scale. The climate of the state is tropical monsoon, but variations exist because of difference in altitudes. The Himalayan region is cold. The average temperature varies in the plains from 3 to 4 °C in January to 43 to 45 °C in May and June. There are three distinct seasons - winter from October to February, summer from March to mid-June, and the rainy season from June to September. Since the Himalayan region has about 1000 to 2000 mm of rain fall, in the plains it is heaviest in the east and decreases towards the north-east. Floods are a recurring problem in the state, causing damage to crops, life and property. The eastern districts are the most vulnerable to floods, the western districts slightly less and the central region markedly less. The eastern districts susceptibility to floods is ascribed, among other things, to heavy rainfall, low flat country, high subsoil water level and the silting of beds which causes river levels to rise. The problem in the western districts is mainly poor drainage caused by the obstruction of roads, railways, canals, new built-up areas etc. The major flood-prone rivers are the Ganga, Yamuna, Gomti, Ghaghara, Rapti, Sarda and Ramganga.

Forests constitute about 12.8% of the total geographical area of the state. The Himalayan region and the terai and bhabhar area in the Gangetic plain have most of the forests. The Vindhyan forests consists mostly of scrub. Near the snow line there are forests of rhododendrons and Betula utilis (Bhojpatra). Below them are forests of silver fir, spruce, deodar, chir and oak. On the foothills and in the terai-bhabhar area grows the sal and gigantic haldu. Along river courses the shisham grows in abundance. The Vindhyan forests have dhak, teak, mahua, salai, chironji and tendu. The hill forests also have a large variety of medicinal herbs. Sal, Chir, Deodar and sain yield building timber and railway sleepers. Chir also yield resin, the chief source of resin and turpentine. Sisso is mostly used for furniture while Khair yields Kattha, which