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ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN, MUSLIMS AND EDUCATION IN BHAGWANGOLA II, MURSHIDABAD, WEST BENGAL

Mou Bhattacharya

Research Scholar, Geography, Eklavya University, Damoh

Dr. Yogendra Raidas

Supervisor, Eklavya University, Damoh

ABSTRACT

Attitudes towards women, Muslims, and education, are mixed as it is negative and positive both. Positive attitude keepers are less as compared to negative attitude. These attitudes align with the notions possessed by patriarchal systems, which state the women are expected to be confined within four walls of the house, and look after the well-being of the family members. But now, with schemes, these notions have changed. Evidence of this lies in Kanyashree Prakalpa, which ensures equal access for women to the basic educational services. Need is more of these schemes, so that girls from Muslim communities and others, get security while availing the educational services.

Key words: Attitudes, women, Muslims, education, Bhagwangola II, Murshidabad, West Bengal

1. INTRODUCTION

Attitudes toward women, since ages, are directed towards confinement within four walls of house, looking after children, and wellbeing of family members. When it comes to Muslims, attitudes are insecurity, terrorism, and looked down upon. Education in Bhagwangola II (Murshidabad) evolves from the notions surrounding poverty, gender norms, religious identity, rural conditions, and access, which people have towards the services provided by the institutions (Biswas, 2019). As Bhagwangola II is a Muslim-majority rural block, discussions about attitudes goes beyond generalizations on oppositions towards education or discouragement of women from studying. Researches are directed towards structural and socio-economic barriers, which alters aspirations and local variation.

1.1 Attitudes toward Women

Researches on Murshidabad indicates that most of the families revolve within a patriarchal social structure. This structure consists of stereotypical notions, according to which women are expected to prioritize household chores, responsibilities, marriage, and caregiving as compared to education or profession. Decisions regarding girls' mobility, higher education, or employment influence the notions possessed by family elders and social constructs, class and expectations. Poverty affirms the conservative choices, as investments seem insecure for the families in terms of resource utilization and implementation for daughters' academic establishment (Khatun, Biswas & Miah, 2024). Real scenario is something different, as evidences and records have reflected growing aspirations to dream higher and achieve success among the girls and women. Now they are no longer submissive to the restrictions and boundaries set by patriarchy. But obstructions are imposed by families, where delayed marriage impedes education as a path to dignity, employment. Women's access to media, schooling, and welfare schemes has altered, rather, taken shape, which was not even thought of, in the earlier times. Now, it has attained greater autonomy with higher educational

participation in Murshidabad.

1.2 Attitudes toward Muslims and Education

Bhagwangola II achieves accolades and glory as Muslim-majority district, so the key issue is the attitudes which outsiders have *toward Muslims*. Educational attitudes within Muslim communities and the socio-economic conditions surrounding them are negative. In workplaces, Muslims are warned about the stereotypical notions, which are opposed to education. Low educational outcomes are associated with poverty, access to school resources, high costs of courses, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of nearby institutions (Salam, 2019). As compared to religious oppositions to learning, many Muslim families are aspirant towards educational courses, which includes vocational and higher studies, but economic limitations are there. According to studies, Muslim guardians favor children's secondary, higher secondary, or even graduate education, though affordability is not assured. Poverty and the cost of education are the major causes behind this, which results in dropout.

1.3 Attitudes toward Women's Education

Women's education in Bhagwangola II is mixed, comprising of encouragement and restriction. Commonly, many families' perceptions on primary and secondary education for girls have changed. Now, the scenario has become socially desirable and seems useful for these girls. Government incentives and scholarship schemes have helped these girls to get used to the systems of schooling (Hossain & Das, 2023). There are concerns seen in the level of higher education. Families hesitate to send the daughters to distant places, as costs are high, inadequate transports are there. Parents are concerned about safety of daughters. They are prepared for marriage and household role. Sometimes, early marriages are conducted, which impedes schooling for these girls. When their perceptions are studied, then preference for respectable education emerges. In some households, education is supported, when it fulfils the

social expectations. For example, teaching, nursing, or local employment, which are preferred as compared to migration or independent mobility. According to the modern perceptions, changes are reflected among the younger generations. Female literacy and school participation have gradually improved with time. Researches have reflected increase in girls willing to pursue the basic education, amidst obstacles.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Certain factors influence attitudes towards education in the district of Bhagwangola II, Murshidabad, West Bengal. One of these factors is poverty, which increases unaffordability of the parents to ensure tuition, transport, digital access, or coaching for the children. For parents, education is more important than ideology. Within the society, Sarkar, (2021) was of the view that gender norms are stereotypical towards marriage, domestic work, and family honour. These notions form girls' educational opportunities. There are no schools and colleges nearby, which reduces continuity in their education. Some girls do not even get to see the first look of school, as their parents are opposed to their education, and prefer to marry off their girls. Government has taken initiatives, in the form of schemes, which has assisted girls and minority students to witness improvements in enrolment and retention.

Changes have been reflected in the form of increased awareness among the women. Evidence of this lies in the increased media exposure, who aspire to gradually shift towards empowering in the form of education. According to Yesmin and Roy, (2023), this exposure reflected changed approach to Muslim women and their education within the district. Being a rural area, social attitude towards women, who are Muslim, are mostly negative. The lifestyle of the community people is such, which reflects conglomeration of women, religion, and education within the social clauses, aspects, processes, and systems. Notions on these aspects shapes the community life. Education, gender relations, religious values, and socio-economic

conditions are the relevant issues, which interplays within the functioning of the area. Although significant changes have been noticed, traditionalism prevails within the influences which are exerted on educational opportunities, among Muslim women and marginalized communities.

Social attitudes towards women in Bhagwangola II, west Bengal is influenced by rural traditions, family structures, religious practices, and economic conditions. These aspects are interconnected, which is seen among the households. Here, Sultana, Mondal, and Chattopadhyay, (2025) argued that stereotypical notions around women are affirmed, as they relate to the patriarchal domination exerted in the form of childcare, cooking, and household management. Traditionalism is reflected in the encouragement provided to the Muslim girls towards family duties and not on career development. In some families, investment in boys' education is mostly seen, as they are the future earners. Consequently, girls are restricted in terms of mobility, educational continuation, and employment opportunities. However, these attitudes are gradually changing, as government has initiated several means of making these women aware of the developmental means, government schemes, self-help groups, and exposure to media. Islam, R. (2019) argued that more women have been encouraged to support girls' schooling. These families have learned the harmful effects of early marriage. Programs such as Kanyashree Prakalpa, women's self-help initiatives, and scholarship programs have altered perceptions regarding female education and empowerment.

Muslim society and educational perspectives, according to traditional notions, do not go side by side. This is because women were not allowed to study, and were confined to household chores and responsibilities. The district has a predominantly Muslim area. Education among Muslims is historically affected by poverty, rural underdevelopment, and limited institutional access, as compared to religion individually. Economic constraints, parental illiteracy, and

lack of educational facilities contributes to educational outcomes, which seems to be low among sections of the Muslim population. Within the community, Chowdhury and Hoque, (2018) attitudes toward education of the Muslim women are diverse. Many Muslim families increasingly have recognized education as an agent to receive success in employment, social mobility, for embracing improvements in the standards of living. Parents are now showing greater maturity in assuming gender equality towards educating the children and preparing them for professional institutions. Conservative attitudes still prevail among households, influencing decisions on ensuring higher education for girls. Here, influences are exerted in the form of safety, distance of institutions, co-educational environments, or social reputation. These concerns impede studies after secondary education. Researches have proved the necessity to avoid generalizations, which are directed towards educational participation among Muslims in Bhagwangola II varies by income level, parental education, occupation, and locality ().

In Bhagwangola II, Murshidabad, West Bengal, education is perceived as an agent of economic security and social advancement. Many families are willing to provide formal education to their children, recognizing the benefits received from being literate, being a government employment, and skilled worker. Economic realities are shaped from the realities which people have towards education and the services provided by the institutions. Practicality of this lies in laying emphasis on income generation as compared to long-term educational investment. Parents expect children to contribute to agricultural work, bidi work, household labor, or family occupations. Private tuition culture and competition create barriers for economically weaker students in terms of continuing higher education (Salam, 2019). Girls' education is mixed, as primary education for girls is accepted according to the social norms. However, continuation into higher secondary or higher education depends on affordability, transport access, family approval, and marital expectations.

Poverty strongly influences attitudes of Muslim toward women and education in Bhagwangola II, Murshidabad, West Bengal. Families facing financial hardships think education as costly and uncertain, as employment outcomes become positive. This economic pressure evokes conservative gender roles, which limit educational opportunities. Rural infrastructural problems like inadequate transport, limit higher educational institutions, which are in the close proximity to the students. These institutions are those which bear the issues of digital inequality, and school resources are inadequate (Khatun, Biswas & Miah, 2024). The shortages affect educational attitudes and participation, which demarcate the changed trends, transforming the social attitudes, constructs, systems, and processes. Evidence of this lies in increased enrollment of girls in schools. Parents are also aware of the education and rights provided to the girls and women. Government welfare and scholarship schemes are the initiatives to increase awareness among these women. Muslim households have reflected rising interest towards higher education, competitive examinations, and skill development. Younger generations, now, support Muslim women's education, and their employment (Biswas, 2019). Their attitudes and perceptions are different from those who possess traditional viewpoints.

3. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the aspects, it can be concluded that in Bhagwangola II, attitudes toward women and education are not uniform, but consist of conservative thoughts. It is also not progressive. Here, one of the accurate scenarios is projected from transition, in thoughts towards Muslims, women, and education. Most of the men in families prefer education for women, who are someone's daughter, wife. Their education is intended to be secured so that their future becomes free from the pressures and obstacles. Many families value education

and want better futures for daughters. However, poverty, patriarchal expectations, school access, and early marriage are matters of serious concerns, which impedes the path of the women and their families towards availing the educational opportunities. Educational disadvantages among Muslim women in Murshidabad is explained better through conglomeration of social and economic barriers which prevails in the district. Along with this, attitudes toward women, Muslims, and education in Bhagwangola II, Murshidabad, are shaped by culture, religion, poverty, gender norms, and rural socio-economic realities. While traditionalism prevails in affecting female mobility and educational participation in some contexts. Substantial changes have occurred increasing awareness, through government interventions. Also, educational aspirations have flown high, helping students to dream higher. In future, development of Bhagwangola II is dependent significantly on strengthening inclusive education, which will promote gender equality, improve infrastructure, and expand opportunities for women in marginalized communities. A balanced understanding is needed for recognizing both the challenges and the ongoing social changes within the region.

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Mou Bhattacharya

Dr.Yogendra Raidas