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Education, A Poweful Weapon to Empower Muslim Women: A Study in Purba Bardhaman District (W.B)

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Abstract- Human Resource is the key to the success of any nation. Without women literacy and empowerment, Human Resource development of a nation cannot achieve its goals. Hence women literacy as well as empowerment is equally important. For sustainable development of the Indian economy, women empowerments are highly prioritized. According to the census of 2011, women constitute 48.2% of the total population of India. Though many women of our country are empowering themselves, but still there are some Muslim women of our country who remain backward in education and development. Muslim women always remained socially and economically backward in our country. Their low participation in education becomes a barrier in the path of achieving the goal of universal education. Even within the context of education in general, there is a wide gap between the Muslim women and the women belonging to other religions and communities. The problems of the Muslim women are much different and more complex than their counterparts belonging to other religions. Indian Muslims women are far behind in achieving the literacy status because of their poor economic conditions and patriarchy society, religious superstitions.

Keywords: *empowerment, education, development, minorities, muslim women.*

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Education, A Poweful Weapon to Empower Muslim Women: A Study in Purba Bardhaman District (W.B)

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Abstract- Human Resource is the key to the success of any nation. Without women literacy and empowerment, Human Resource development of a nation cannot achieve its goals. Hence women literacy as well as empowerment is equally important. For sustainable development of the Indian economy, women empowerments are highly prioritized. According to the census of 2011, women constitute 48.2% of the total population of India. Though many women of our country are empowering themselves, but still there are some Muslim women of our country who remain backward in education and development. Muslim women always remained socially and economically backward in our country. Their low participation in education becomes a barrier in the path of achieving the goal of universal education. Even within the context of education in general, there is a wide gap between the Muslim women and the women belonging to other religions and communities. The problems of the Muslim women are much different and more complex than their counterparts belonging to other religions. Indian Muslims women are far behind in achieving the literacy status because of their poor economic conditions and patriarchy society, religious superstitions. The Constitution of India grants the right to Equality and Right to Freedom of Religion and Protection of Interests of Minorities in regard to educational right. Besides providing all the facility, Muslim girls and women are still lagging behind in the entire sphere and are deprived of all the opportunities especially in the state West Bengal. The problem is , the legal provisions are not only the solution. Our Patriarchy society is still not relaxed enough to accept women's' equality to their men counterparts. In this perspective, education is the perfect ladder for Muslim women empowerment which is one of the pivotal issue while addressing Muslim women's right and development. This paper highlights the educational development and empowerment of Muslim women in West Bengal with special reference to Purba Bardhaman district.

Keywords: empowerment, education, development, minorities, muslim women.

I. Introduction

The future of a nation is dependent on all round development and the activities of its citizens. In the contemporary age of globalization, women empowerment becomes an important issue. Women Empowerment is empowering women. Empowerment can be defined in many ways. Empowerment means to increase the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individual and communities by developing confidence in their own capacities. Empowerment refers the right to determine choices, right to have access to opportunities and resources for taking proper decision. Women empowerment becomes a great challenge, which aims at increasing women's self-reliance, self-confidence and internal strength to determine their own choice in their life. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women by giving them proper knowledge, skills and self confidence. From years Muslim women are being exploited in all sphere of life. So, it's the duty of a nation to make the Muslim women educationally empowered. Women's education and empowerment is not only essential to economic development, but it will also have a transformative effect on the goals of both economic and social development. Women's participation, thus, does not mean simply increasing women members or integrating them into existing development models, rather it is part of the process of employment policies and programmes more people-oriented.

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II. Review of Related Literature

Review of related literature in the area of enquiry is a crucial component of the research process. A review of related literature and previous researches in the present study is attempted below:

Hossain Md. I. (2012) made a study on, "Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority Status". The study is to examine the socio-economic situation of the largest religious minority population compared to other religious minorities of the state and the status of Muslim women of West Bengal in particular. From this study I have acquainted with the socio-economic status of Muslims in various district of West Bengal and the factors which remain barriers in their development and social change and the situation of Muslim women of West Bengal.

Rahaman, H. & Barman, H. (2015) conducted a study on, "Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism". The main objective of the study was to highlight the educational status of Muslims of Bengal. It was a sociological study and the study mainly based upon the secondary data. From the conclusion of the study I have acquainted that, for the socio-economical development of Muslims of West Bengal, the government and NGOs have to focus on their educational development.

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Mukhopadhyay, H. (2008) conducted a study on, "The Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in a District of West Bengal, India: Reflections on a Survey of Women". The objective of the study was to find out the role of education in the empowerment of women in the district of Malda in West Bengal. The study was done by survey method. From the conclusion of this study I have acquainted that, women's status was inferior to men's status in Malda district of West Bengal.

Kumar, S. S. and Palanisamy, M. (2013), conducted a study on, "Impact of Education on Women Empowerment in India". Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. This studies the impact of education on women empowerment and also aims to find out the effect of Indian Women Education during Vedic Period, Buddhist Period, Muslim Period, Indian Women Impact of Education during British Period, and Indian Women Impact of Education during Modern Period. This study tries to find out the Reform in Women Education, Status of Women in India and etc.

III. Statement of the Problem

The main objective of the study is to find out the level of empowerment of Muslim women in West Bengal with special reference to Purba Bardhaman district. The study also intends to find out the level of literacy among Muslim women in Purba Bardhaman districts of West Bengal. So researcher entitle the "*Education, a Powerful Weapon to Empower Muslim Women: A Study in Purba Bardhaman District"*

IV. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this paper are:

- To find out the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district at primary, secondary and higher education level.
- To estimate the extent of participation of Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district in Political, economic and social Spheres of development.
- To estimate the levels of empowerment among Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal.

V. Research Questions

Following research questions were laid down by the researcher for conducting the study:-

- What are the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district at the Primary, Secondary and Higher education level?
- To what extent the participation of Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district in Political, economic and social spheres of development?
- What are the levels of empowerment among Muslim women in the Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal?

VI. Methodology

Method: This paper is theoretical and descriptive in nature. More specifically it is a social survey type of research study. House to house survey was conducted for collection of data. In this study, a self constructed questionnaire was used by the researcher for collection of data.

Tools: The tool used in this research study named as, 'The Scale of Empowerment'. The primary data for this research study were collected with the help of questionnaire from Muslim married women and some widow of Purba Bardhaman districts in West Bengal. Secondary data were collected from various books, journals and from different websites of the Internet. Some simple calculation like percentage and average are used in the present study.

Population and Sample: The population of the study is the women of the district, Purba Bardhaman and Total 400 Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district has been selected as sample for the study.

VII. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -1-

To find out the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district at primary, secondary and higher education level.

Purba Bardhaman District: (400 Samples)-

Table 1: Showing the Rate of Literacy among Muslim Women in Purba Bardhaman District of West Bengal.

Muslim women	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
No. of sample	11	192	140	57	400
Percentage	2.75%	48%	35%	14.25%	100%

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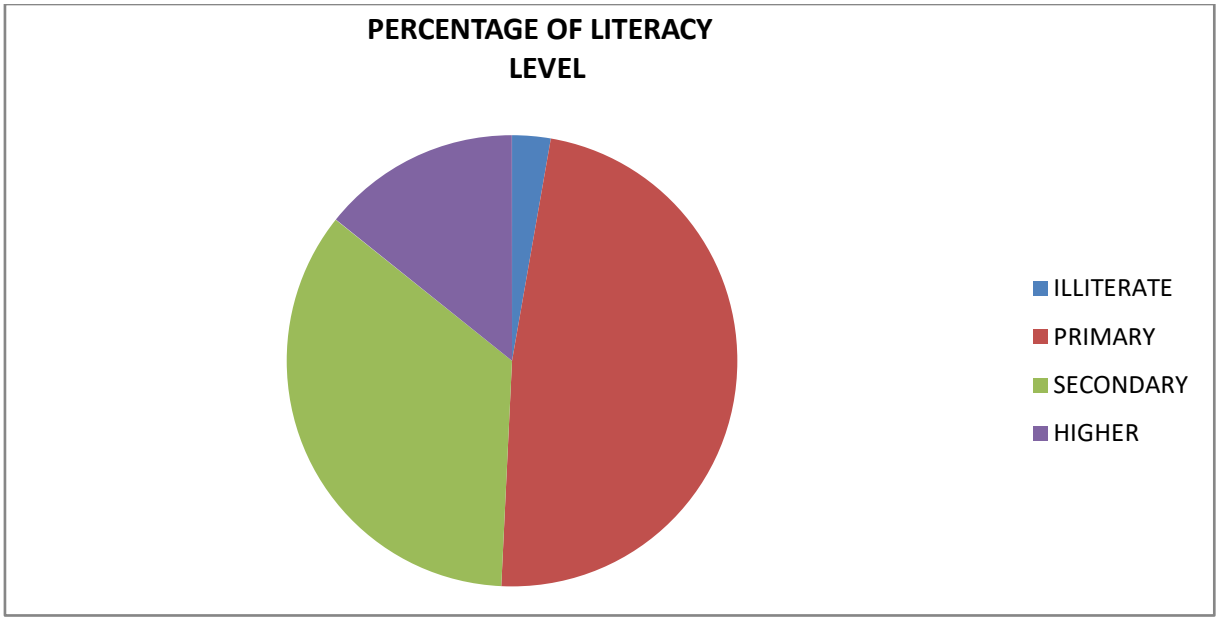

Figure 1: Clearly Indicates the Literacy Rate among Muslim Women of Purba Bardhaman District in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education Level.

Interpretation:

Results indicate that most of the selected Muslim women belong to primary education level, but it is interesting to note that only 2.75% women belong to illiterate category. A significant trend has been found in the rate of literacy in the Purba Bardhaman district. Therefore it may be clearly mention that the Muslim women of the study area are aware of education and its importance.

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -2

To estimate the extent of participation of Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district in Political, economic and social spheres of development.

Purba Bardhaman District: (400 samples)

Table 2: Showing the Extent of Participation of Muslim Women in Different Occupations in Purba Bardhaman District of West Bengal

Muslim Women	Political	Economical	Social Worker	House Wife	Total
No. of sample	30	79	49	242	400
Percentage	7.5%	19.75%	12.25%	60.5%	100%

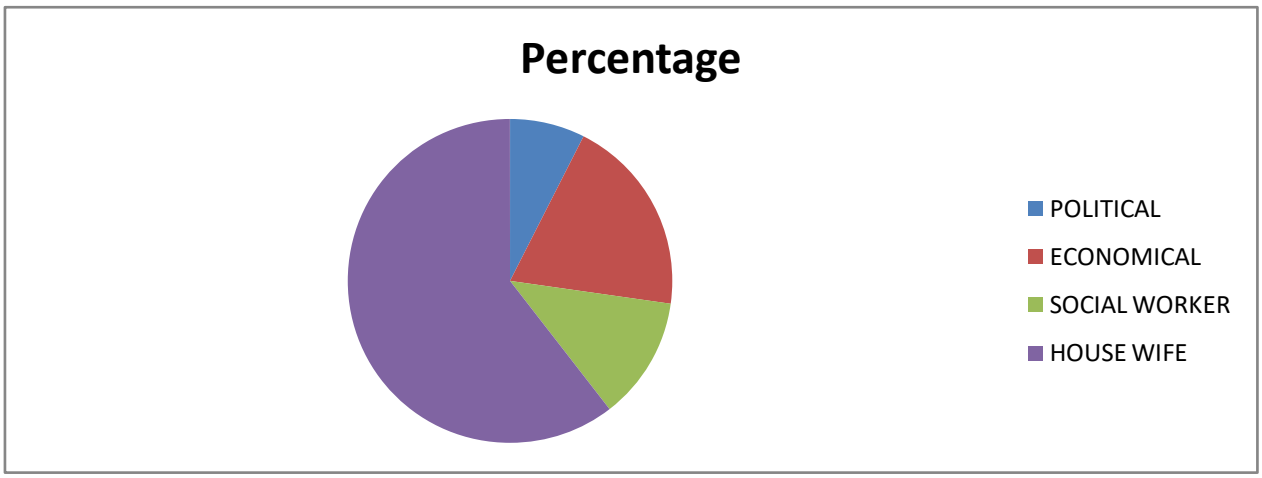

Figure 2: Reveals the Trends of Activities Carried Out by the Muslim Women Selected for the Study.

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Interpretation-

Results indicate that the occupations of most of the Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district are nothing but household activities. More than 60% women working as house wives, where as very less percentage of women were participating in political activities.

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -3

To estimate the levels of empowerment among Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district of West Bengal.

Purba Bardhaman District: (400 samples)

Projected Score:-

Max projected score- 10×3=30

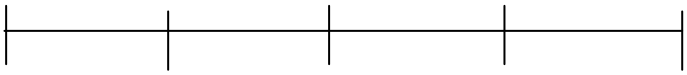
Average projected score- 10×2=20

Min projected score- 10×1=10

Total no. of items = 10

Rating point = 3

Scale:



30-25: Highly empowered

25-20: Empowered

20-15: Low empowered

15-10: Very poor empowered

Average Level of Empowerment among Muslim women in Purba Bardhaman District

Table 3: Showing the Level of Empowerment among Muslim Women in Purba Bardhaman District of West Bengal

Empowerment No. of Muslim Women Average

Empowerment	No. of Muslim Women	Average of Empowerment Score	Trend
SOCIAL	400	18.65	Low Empowered
ECONOMICAL	400	20.11	Empowered
EDUCATIONAL	400	23.25	Empowered
POLITICAL	400	19.43	Low Empowered

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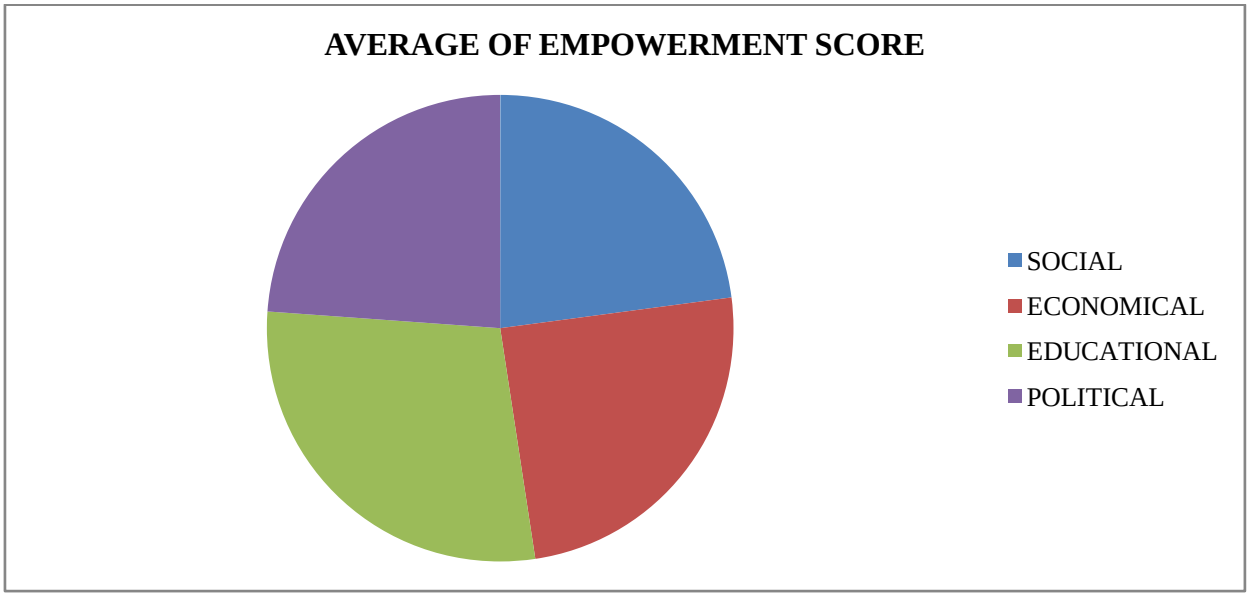

Figure 3: Clearly Indicates the Level of Empowerment among Muslim Women in Purba Bardhaman District of West Bengal.

Interpretation

To estimate the level of empowerment among Muslim women in the study area, an empowerment scale was used. Based on the number of items and the rating score, projected value of empowerment was estimated. The scale reveals that the person who has obtained the score as per category mentioned in the scale to be taken as his degree of empowerment. Accordingly empowerment in four categories of 400 Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district was estimated. Result reveals that, the average rate of social empowerment of Muslim women in the study area is not satisfactory. They belong to low empowered category with reference to social areas. But the Muslim women are economically empowered. In case of educational empowerment, they secure maximum score. However, the Muslim women in the district of Purba Bardhaman are not highly empowered about education. Muslim women in the study area are least interested about political activities.

VIII. Findings

Findings Pertaining to Objective 1

The levels of education of Muslim women selected for the study have been estimated in four categories, i.e. illiterate, primary, and secondary and higher education level. Most of the selected women belong to primary education level, but it is interesting to note that only 2.75% Muslim women in Purba Bardhaman district belong to illiterate category. Significant advancement has been found in the trends of education levels.

Findings Pertaining to Objective 2

The survey on Muslim women in the study area concludes that, the occupation of most of the Muslim women is household activities. More than 60% Muslim women working as house wives, where as very less percentage of women have active participation in political activities. Less than 20% Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district are engaged in economical activities and services.

Findings Pertaining to Objective 3

The objective concludes that, the average rate of social empowerment of Muslim women in the study area is not satisfactory. They belong to low empowered category with reference to social areas. However the Muslim women of Purba Bardhaman district are economically empowered. They are not highly empowered in education. Another issue has comes out i.e., the Muslim women are least interested about political activities as they are not properly empowered in political issues.

IX. Discussion and Conclusions

Education is the basic and fundamental requirement of a person to survive in the world. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family". It means education not only empower the women but empower the whole society. From the study I can sum up that the Indian Muslims women are far behind in achieving the literacy status because of their poor economical conditions and religious superstition. The education and empowerment of Muslim women has become one of the most important and modern phenomenon of 21st century not

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only at National level but also International level. The government of India trying hard for improving the educational status of Muslim women. To improve the education level of women in India, the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002) have taken a true step of giving free and compulsory education for the children belonging to the age group of 6-14 years. This initiated Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in our country. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but empowers the government to take special steps for the betterment of Muslim women. Now it's the duty of the Muslim women also to participate in the educational process of our country then only the educational status of Muslim women will improve in future.

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