

Gender Discrimination among Rural Muslim Societies of Bihar

Ganga Nath Jha, University Department of Anthropology, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand. email:- gangajharkhand@gmail.com

Nishat Ashrafi, University Department of Anthropology, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand. email:- ashrafi.nishat@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses the gender biasness and its effect on women among rural Muslim societies of Bihar. The social status, religious factors and traditional practices are also responsible for gender discrimination and its effect on women health. Illiteracy, ignorance about rights of women, desire of boy child, traditional barriers related birth control is noticed as major causes among these societies. Gender inequity reflects its presence in women's health in rural Muslim societies of Bihar. Research is mainly based upon the Schedule, interview, case study and focus group Discussion in data collection. For secondary data, intensive library work is done. Newspapers, Blogs, Net, and archives are the main source.

In last five years change has been noticed. Level of education has increased where women of rural areas were very little matriculated now they are up to graduate. Now women are working outdoors in rural areas as teachers, doctors, nurses etc. Education, health plans and especially electronic media has played an important and successful role in upliftment of women especially in rural areas. Change in educational status and in health status is very slow due to cultural barriers in these societies. This paper focuses gender discrimination and changing perception among rural Muslim society of Gaya district of Bihar.

Key words: Gender discrimination, Women, health, Muslim society

Introduction

Gender is defined as distinct from sex in that it refers to the social and cultural constructs which, while based on the biological sex of a person, defines his or her roles in society (Mosse, 1993). India own men dominant society. Gender discrimination is warm issue throughout world. From early time women are misguided related to their rights not only in India but in several countries of world. Women are prescribed to stay in some limits. Muslim women also own these traditional values. In these societies women and girls are prescribed to stay at home. They are encouraged to engage in household works. In rural societies Muslim women are in back foot of modern world. They are very little educated in both perspective

(Religious and universal education system). Absence of facilities for girls and infertility are important issues affecting women's lives but are not prioritised by health programmes & policy (Glasier et al).

The Beijing Platform for Action, created at the United Nation (UN) fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995, Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) CEDAW was adopted on 18, 1979, which came to enforcement on September 3, 1981.

The convention states that the discrimination against women, violates the principles of equality of rights and human dignity, and is an obstacle in the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in social, economical, political and cultural right.

The Platform identified 12 critical areas of concern.

1. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
2. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
3. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
4. Violence against women
5. The effect of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
6. Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
7. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
8. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
9. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
10. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media
11. gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
12. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

Gender norms in most societies tend to make men macho, women passive, and transgender people marginalized. Women are often economically dependent on men, and have limited power. It is also often culturally unacceptable for women to express sexuality. Violence against women has direct effects (Amnesty International, 2005).

Economically they depend on their male family members at the various stage of life like – father, husband and son. Women in particular may have to deal with pressure from their families to have or not have children. Gender inequality also effect health status among women. Rural areas are in poor condition than urban area. But now a day's mostly women know about their rights.

In each critical area of concern, strategic objectives were proposed with concrete actions to be taken by various actors in order to achieve those objectives. The Platform for Action requires its signers to take immediate and concerted action to 'create a peaceful, just and humane world based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principle of equality, and to this end, recognizes that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice'.

The Platform for Action was aimed at establishing a basic group of priority actions that should be carried out during the following five years (the success of which was evaluated at Beijing+5). The Platform addressed the effects on women of excessive military expenditures, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, environmental degradation, harmful structural adjustment policies, economic and political instability, and the armed conflict in countries in transition that leads to human rights abuses.

It called for gendered solutions to these problems, which incorporated the unique needs and situations of women, as well as equal rights legislation.

Review of literature

Centre for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), USA is a research and advocacy organisation that seeks to integrate concern for gender equity and social justice into international health policy and practice. Research areas include violence and health, men's roles in reproductive health and rights.

Hirve SS, 2004. 'Abortion law, policy and services in India: a critical review'. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 12, 114-121. Describes the lack of access to abortion services in India.

Smith E, Murray SF, Yousafzai AK & Kasonka L, 2004. 'Barriers to accessing safe motherhood and reproductive health services: the situation of women with disabilities in Lusaka, Zambia', *Disability &*

Rehabilitation, 26(2), 121-127. In-depth interviews were carried out with women with disabilities and with service providers, revealing significant social, attitudinal and physical barriers to women with disabilities accessing services.

Vlassoff 2004. Some study reveals unsafe abortion causes an estimated 13% of all maternal deaths globally, and 20-30% result in RTIs, many of which result in infertility (WHO 2004); an estimated 220,000 children lose their mothers each year due to unsafe abortions.

Amnesty International, 2005. 'Women, violence and health'. London. Available online at www.amnesty.org/actforwomen. This report reviews different forms of violence and the consequences they can have on women's health, based on reports and studies from across the world.

Berger, 2005. Another major factor contributing to unequal access to services is stigma and marginalisation. People with alternative sexual identities, or who in some way do not conform to societal norms, face stigma, discrimination and violence, often backed up by repressive laws. This can limit their access to services, for example for fear of persecution or abuse, or by pushing groups underground so that it is hard to access them with programmes.

Hessine L, 2005. 'Global progress in abortion advocacy and policy: an assessment of the decade since ICPD'. Reproductive Health Matters, 13, 88-100. Advocacy efforts to increase access to unsafe abortion including examples from Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda.

Matthews, 2005. Many studies have documented how traditional practices and beliefs also affect access to services. For example, in many countries it is standard practice to seek the services of traditional healers over public health service providers, in particular for SRH issues; a study in India found that many pregnant women preferred services of a lay attendant to those of a midwife.

Objective

To study the status of women in society.

To know the factor related gender discrimination.

The study also analyzes the change in Muslim society.

Methodology

In this research Etic and Emic approach has been applied. This research followed both qualitative and quantitative technique of research. For data collection, mostly qualitative technique has been used to explore social and family behaviour towards the women which has helped to know their status in society and in family. However, quantitative technique has been used to identify the income, education and livelihood status of Muslim Women in the study area.

This study is based on primary sources of data that has taken from study area, through schedule, focus group discussion, case study, key informants interview. Village, household and women schedule are used for collecting data. Change in society was measured by observation technique. Interview has been taken among 203 respondents between 15-49 aged groups of ever married Muslim women.

Secondary data has been taken from the institution like: Block office, Anganwadi centre, Primary health centre, Ministry of women and children, UNICEF, and Journals published by different researchers.

Area of research

The study has made the target area to three villages Karmain, Maduka and Bham of Tinderi Panchayat under the Konch Block, of Gaya district of Bihar. These villages are Muslim majority villages of Tinderi panchayat. Only two religions are resident in these villages Hindu & Muslim. Overall 67.98% of these villages cover Muslim population from total population and very little work has been done on Muslim women.

Factors of Gender Discrimination

It has been observed that men are less bias then women. Educational status, economic status, lack of knowledge about religion and socio – cultural environment they grow in are the main factors of gender discrimination. While Islamic feminism is a vehicle to bring about gender equality within Islam, many Muslim women hesitate to participate in this pacifist movement for various reasons that include the family system one resides within, individualism versus the larger organization, differentiation of sex roles, and separate legal status for Muslim women (Badran, 2002).

Socio - cultural factors

Religions have a patriarchal view of the relationship between genders; the problem regarding gender inequality within Islam is indicative of cultural practices and traditional patriarchal and male-dominated religious interpretations used to subjugate Muslim women for centuries (Al Hibri 1982).

Educational institutes of research area

Table no. 1

Name of institutes	Villages								
	Karmain	Nearest place	Km	Maduka	Nearest place	Km	Bham	Nearest place	Km
Anganwadi centre	1	Karmain	0	1	Maduka	0	2	Bham	0
Madarsa	1	Karmain	0	1	Maduka	0	1	Bham	0
Primary school	1	Karmain	0	1	Maduka	0	1	Bham	0
Secondary school	0	Anti	3	1	Maduka	0	1	Bham	0
High school	0	Rafigunj	9	0	Rafigunj	7	0	Rafigunj	5
College	0	Rafigunj	9	0	Rafigunj	7	0	Rafigunj	5

Source: - Ph.D. research field Survey 2011 – 13

Table no. 6 shows the educational infrastructure of the research area. There are no facilities for higher education in any selected villages. In Karmain village one Anganwadi centre, one Madarsa, and one primary school is available. For further education they go to Anti (9 km) and Rafigunj (9 km). In Maduka village one Anganwadi centre, one Madarsa, one primary school and one secondary school is available. For further education they go to Rafigunj (7 km). In Bham village two Anganwadi centre, one Madarsa, one primary school and one secondary school is available. For further education they go to Rafigunj (5 km).

This causes dropout of girls in higher education. Illiterate women do not know the importance of education. They do not think its important to educate girls.

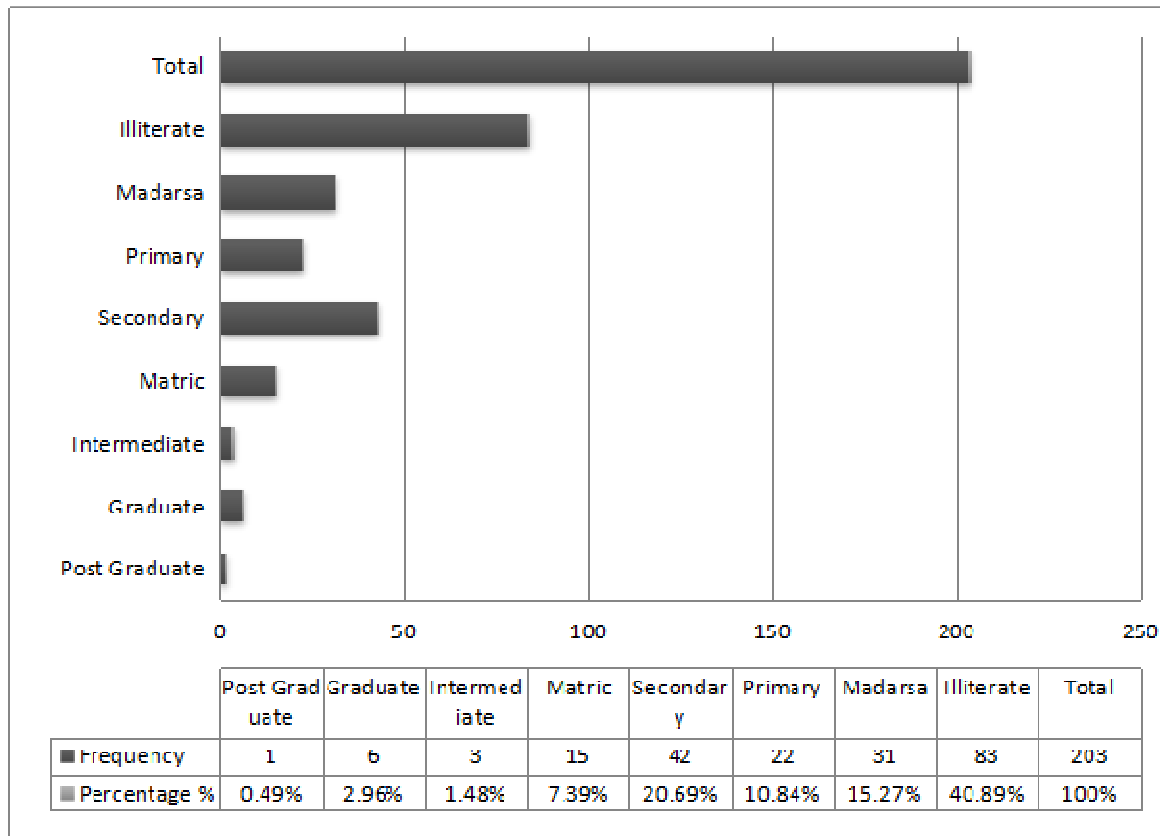


Figure 1: Educational status of Respondents

Majority of total respondents are illiterate. Secondary pass are > then illiterate. Respondents read in madarsa are > then secondary pass. Primary pass are > then madarsa read respondents. Only 7% are matriculated. Graduate are > then matriculated. Intermediate are > then graduate. Only one respondent is post graduate.

Economic factors

There is no restriction in Islamic law that says a woman cannot work nor have a profession that her only place is in the home. In fact, by definition, in a truly Islamic society, there must be women physicians, women nurses, women teachers, because it's preferable also to separate teenagers in the volatile years in high school education. And if she chooses to work, or if she's married with the consent of her husband,

she's entitled to equal pay, not for equal work, but for work of equal worth. (Islam's Women Jewel of Islam)

In Britain, perhaps the first country to give women some property rights, laws were passed in 1860's known as "Married Women Property Act." More than 1300 years earlier, that right was clearly established in Islamic law.

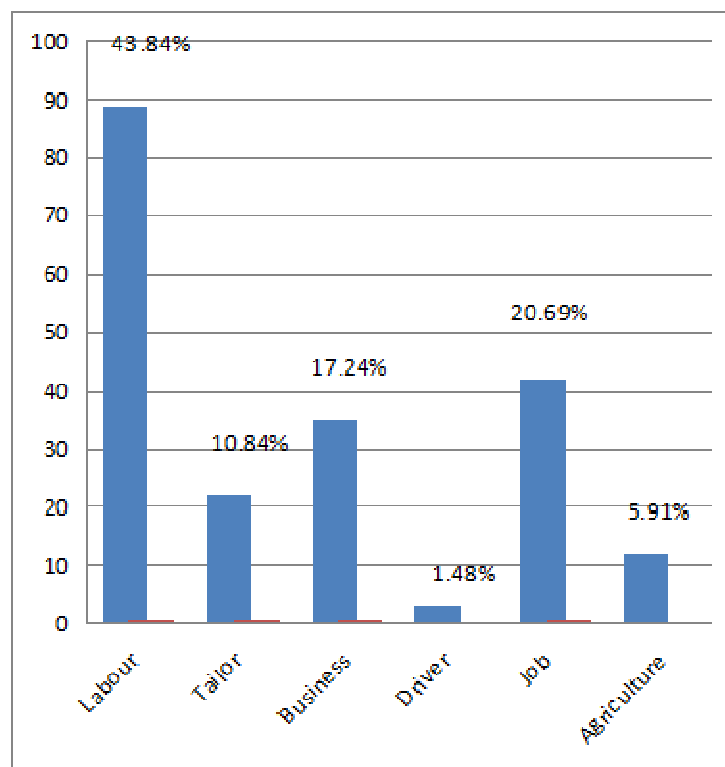


Figure 2: Economic status of household of respondents of research area

43.84% of respondents are of labour group. They earn 1000 – 8000 Rs. Per month. 20.69% of total respondents are in jobs in private company and only 2 are in government jobs. They earn 12000 – 40,000 per month. 17.24% of total are of Business group. Only 1 of total has big business (bag factory). Others are involved in small business. They earn 8,000 – 40,000 per month. 10.84% are tailor they do not have their agriculture land. They earn 2,000 – 5,000 per month. 5.91% are involved in agriculture work. They fulfill their all basic needs from their agriculture products. They sell agriculture products as their need. 1.48% are working as drivers. They earn 2,000 – 8,000 per month. 2 of them have their own vehicle.

Importance of bearing son and daughter

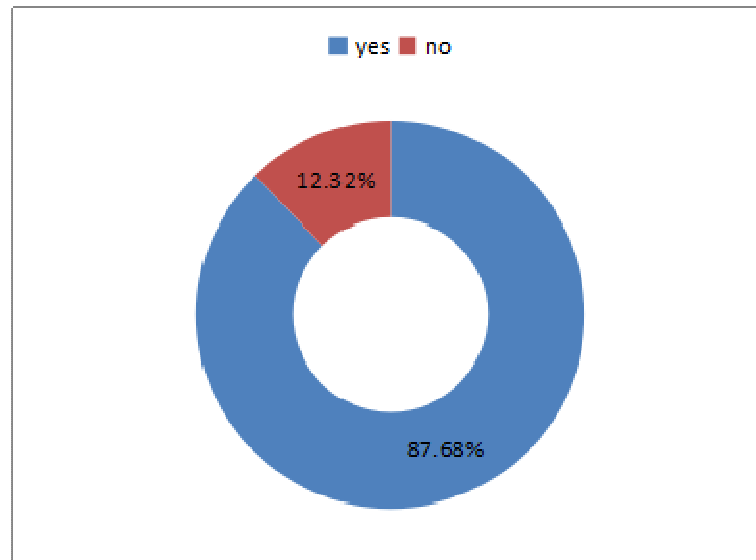


Figure No 3: Importance of Boy Child in family (status of respondents)

Importance of bearing son in a family is dominant belief among the society. 87.68% said it is important to have a son in a family to improve their economic status and for supporting them in their old age. 12.32% agreed that it is important to have educated and well-mannered children not a boy or a girl. Majority of respondents are from agricultural economic group. They believe that boys are responsible to work at farm not the girls. For farmers it is important to take care of farm land otherwise, all land will get barren. Girls are not recommended to work on farm.

View of Islam towards women

The Islamic culture is based on the Holy book Qur'an and Hadith as an avoidable constitution for the Human beings as a guidance and direction to be followed practically in his/her practical life as a Momin (who believe in one and only Allah Almighty the master care take of the universe).

Islam has held in high esteem those parents who nurture daughters and has made the undertaking of this task a means of entering Jannah (paradise). Rasulallah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) has given glad tidings of his closeness and proximity to the parents who bring up daughters.

Hazrat Anas (radiyallahu anhu) reports Rasulallah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) said, "The person who successfully brings up two daughters until they reach maturity, then on the day of Qiyamah (Judgement)

Myself and that person will be like this (Rasulullah) indicated closeness by bringing together his index and middle fingers” (Sahih Muslim)

It has been recorded in Abu Dawood, the famous compilation of Hadith, the person who brings up three daughters, gets them married, and thereafter maintains affable relationship with them; will enter Jannah (paradise).

Generally, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) used to discourage his followers from taking even this measure. He never hit any female, and he used to say that the best of men are those who do not hit their wives. In one Hadith he expressed his extreme repulsion from this behavior and said, "How does anyone of you beat his wife as he beats the stallion camel and then embrace (sleep with) her?" (Al-Bukhari, English Translation, vol. 8, Hadith 68, pp. 42-43)

It is the girl's right to make a decision concerning her marriage, and her father or guardian is not permitted to override her objections or ignore her wishes. The Prophet said, a woman who has been previously married has more right concerning her person than her guardian, and a virgin's consent must be asked about herself, her consent being her silence. (al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

With regards to kindness and fairness Islam has ensured that boys and girls are treated equally. We should not unjustly discriminate between our children on the basis of their gender.

Need of modern education in Muslim society

Education gives knowledge and changes the perception of individuals. Literate women are aware of legal provision. As change goes in different directions in Islam, it must take place at all levels: individual, group, community, societal and universal, but mostly at the level of the individuals. The reason is that individuals are the active agents of change. Any change in them will cause subsequent changes at the other levels. In the case of individuals, Islam emphasizes to change their inner beings; their awareness and consciousness, their attitudes, beliefs, motivations and morality and spirituality. As a result of this inner change, society will also change from one stage of perfection to another, both materially and nonmaterially. It is quite clear from the following ayah of the Qur’ān. **“Verily never will Allāh change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)”**. (Sumaya Mohamed and Shadiya Baqutayan, 2011).

Need of religious education in Muslim society - Religious beliefs and practices are deeply rooted in the life of the villagers. Many cultural practices associated with Islam and criticized as oppressive to women

are misidentified as “Islamic.” Controversial or egregious practices such as female circumcision, polygamy, early marriage, and honour killings are not limited to Muslim populations, and among Muslims such practices are geographically specific or otherwise far from universal.

Impact of Modern Institutional Culture on Muslim society

Character of competition and suspicion has been observed among the people of village. These characters are also responsible for change in societies of these villages. They send their children to school “because some of them those who are educated their living standard is high from them and they treat them as inferior. Education is important for boys to earn money and for girls to get married.

Some respondents agreed that they use oral pills without informing their husbands due to their orthodox views about contraceptives.

Education and mass media is playing an important role in regarding awareness among people. Girls (daughters) are interested in higher education and increasing their education level. The data shows 63% increase in the education level from 2008.

Importance of bearing son in a family is dominant belief among the society. But 12.32% respondents of age group 18 – 25 believe it is not important to have a son in a family.

Conclusion

- Educational status of women shows 40.89% are illiterate. They don't know about their rights. They don't know that they are gender bias or they are been discriminated.
- The problems presented here are not the problems of Islam. They are problems of a lack of commitment, lack of application, or misapplication of Islamic teachings by Muslims themselves.
- These women think this is the way to treat with girls. Women and girls have some limits. Like to stay at home, look after house hold works, take care of children. They have no right to go out to work. They should put on Hijab or veil if they go out for any reason.
- Now a day's mostly women are working outdoors in rural areas as Anganwadi Sevika, Sahaiyka, Asha, school teachers, doctors, nurses etc. Education, health plans and especially electronic media has played an important and successful role in upliftment of women especially in rural areas. Now they are more conscious about their health.

- Majority of population depends on farming and they spend their livelihood on agricultural products. Families depend on farm products face crisis of farm products in last two three months of year. This causes lack of nutrition and it causes health problems.
- The social status, religious factors and traditional practices are also responsible for effecting reproductive health of women. Economic factor is the most important factor responsible for health, nutrition, social status and many other factors. Government is also working in the field of adolescent and women for the betterment of their health and to control health problems of women.
- Awareness programs telecast by television is now too much responsible in breaking cultural barriers

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