

The Condition of Muslim Women In Nuh And Palwal Districts: An Emphasis On Socio-Economic Spheres in The 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

LPG reforms which are also known as Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization reforms, which occurred in 1991, had brought major socio-economic reforms for the people of India including women. However, muslim community living in Nuh district, especially women have not been benefitted as compared to the non-Muslim women living in urban areas of Nuh and women of the rest of Haryana. The backwardness of muslim women in all spheres is still continuously in existence, though, with some improvement in basic amenities. This paper examines the socio-economic status of muslim women and constraints impeding the betterment efforts taken by the government for Muslim women in Nuh. This study built on primary and primary empirical data as well as secondary data. For reaching the desired results, both random and non-random sampling were also used. In doing so, the demographic characteristics, health, education and livelihood status of women, violation with women, Islamic education impacts on the social economic status of women and consequences of government projects regarding the empowerment of women, in Nuh district have been assessed. The study locale is found to be suffering from a plethora of impediments and unavailability of a futuristic approach for the improvement in social-economic status of muslim women in Nuh. The paper thus attempts to offer important insights into the main arenas of policy making and implementation of the same for mitigation of derogatory socio-economic status of women and to improve the overall status of muslim women and disclose the Pandora box of multiple opportunities for empowering the muslim women in all domains in Nuh district.

Keywords: Backward Region, Equality, Globalization, Nuh, Socio-Economic status, Women

INTRODUCTION

Nuh is a most backward district of Haryana, inhabited highly (85 percent) by Meo Community. women constitute almost equal number of 47.54 percent, data taken from, District Census Handbook Mewat, 2011¹. Their origin is traced back to early Aryan invasions. They embraced Islam in the 14th and 17th century². The improvement in socio-economic conditions of women is an indicator of the development and progress of any society and the country². The social status of women means the access to education, health services and other basic amenities like homes, latrines, kitchens etc. Economic status of women means a measurement of their participation in and benefit from the economy as well as their ability to control resources and make decisions. Socio-economic status of muslim women in Nuh have constantly been remained so worse for the centuries, since large number of muslim women do not study beyond primary class, so, muslim female literacy rate is below 5 percent out of 36 percent of total female literacy rate in Nuh District (Census 2011)⁴. Muslim women in Nuh are among the most affected by poverty, unemployment, Gender inequality, patriarchal societal attitude, absence of decision making power and dependence on their children or others after being widowed etc. Child marriages, high birth-death rate, makes the situation so deplorable in the Nuh district. 11.39 percent of the total population living in Nuh District resides in towns. This population comprises the people who usually enjoy the services of government jobs, jobs, self businesses and in villages population largely depend on agricultural income, wages and self employment.

Urban muslim women somehow, have a positive edge regarding the various opportunities of health, education, employment, however, not at par as the women of rest of the districts of Haryana. Total urban and rural literacy rate in Nuh is 69.94 percent and 51.99 percent respectively, in general and for Muslim women it is below 20 percent. The condition in rural regions is much worse as there are just 60 senior secondary schools in the entire Nuh District. Only 6 CHC's (Community Health Centers), 1 Civil Hospital, 1 medical College are established in Nuh till now. There is only one PHC (Primary Health centre) on every 10 villages. 1 CHC for average 1.75 lakhs population⁸. The Deficiency of

school and medical staff especially women staff is consistently prevailed as was earlier. There are absence of factories, companies at all except Rozka Meo industrial area, IMT Sohna, that are geographically the parts of Nuh District but presently known as the part of Gurgaon district in economic context. Due to this, no job opportunities are there even for boys then how women could expect to get jobs here. That's why, Nuh is enlisted as the least developed district across India in "aspirational districts list of India, 2018 released by NITI Ayog"¹⁰. Urban Muslim women who are mostly housewife also work like teachers, wage workers, labour workers. Urban housewife contained more freedom in respect of better standard of life, participation in decision making due to nuclear families, having property on their name while compared with rural Muslim women who take care entire work of homes, child's caring, old age people caring, agriculture work like sowing, cultivation, cutting the crops, carry fodders for cattle etc. All these work are done unpaid by women considering these works as their duty. Moreover, physical and sexual assaults also occurred with them even in entire District. (Saddiq Meo, Khurshid Ahmad, Nuh resident, 25/12/2024). This study needs to bring the attention of state and central governments towards the different types of assaults frequently happening with them even in the entire District. (Saddiq Meo, Khurshid Ahmad, Nuh resident, 25/12/2024). This study needs to bring the attention of state and central governments towards backwardness, lack of basic amenities, absence of job opportunities, social deprivation of women in Nuh region especially Muslim women. So that, proper budget allocation through various projects and schemes and proper monitoring and implementation of these projects could be taken place.

METHODOLOGY

This study covers the entire Nuh District and examines the socio economic status of Muslim women in the 21st century up to present time. This study builds on primary data obtained from interviews, surveys, government bills, schemes and secondary data taken from books, census reports, government-non government reports, research papers etc. Along with empirical data being used since being a resident of Nuh, the researcher has conceived enormous knowledge about the on goings in the society of Nuh District. This research is composed by adopting the simple random and convenience, purposive and snowball samplings. A total of 316 people were made respondents. Out of these, 142 were female respondents. Indicators of development were identified and grouped into various indices like Health, education, standard of living, agriculture index. These methods helped in putting together detailed information within the limited time. The data presented in this research is mostly (but not entirely) qualitative.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF MUSLIM WOMEN OF NUH DISTRICT

Majority of muslims especially Meo muslims depend on agriculture and dairy farming, self businesses, in which women play a greater role but return gifts are taken over by their male relatives. The Socio-economic status of muslim women is even inferior to Hindu women in all sectors in the Nuh district.¹¹

Demographic Characteristics

Nuh is predominantly resided by the muslims (IHD, 2008), and the females constitute approximately half of the total population (47.54 percent). Out of the total population, muslims are 82.02 percent and the rest are Hindus. On an average 6.75 members lived in muslim family. Sex ratio in muslims was 912/1000 as per census 2011, in Nuh. Muslim women who have majority of meo women lived in the entire Nuh District, as per the data of census 2011. The urban population was 11.39 percent and rural 88.61 percent but in 2024, it raised to 15 percent of total population (District Census Handbook, Mewat, 2011. Mewat Kal Aaj Kal, Magazine).¹²

Educational Status

Nuh district is suffering from the deficiency in educational infrastructure especially for the muslim girls. These deficiencies are related to the lack of female staff in schools, absence of girls schools, colleges and unavailability of public transportation for girls, and the shortcoming of separate girls toilets inside the school premises. This data from the census of India, 2011 and by empirical study, it is found that around the period of 1st decade of 21st century, only three colleges, one polytechnic and none women college were in Nuh district which shows precarious situation of women education in Nuh. However, up to 2024, 1 medical college, 1 engineering college and 4 girls college have been established by the government of Haryana.¹³ The presence of Primary, middle, High and Senior Secondary School was 78.14 percent, 9.30 percent, 6.91 percent, 3.77 percent in villages respectively (Census, 2011). So, muslim girls' formal education suffered highly since parents did not allow them to go to far flung areas. Instead, muslim girls prefer to attain religious education in Madarasas. The Madarasas are safe and secure places. However, some urban residents allow their daughters to go abroad for medical and other studies there¹⁴. Among the muslims, 8.65 percent students of the total students who are attaining informal education in which 50 percent constitutes girls population, where as 1.61 percent of Hindu students found in informal schools.¹⁵

Literacy Status

Total literacy rate in Nuh is 54.08 percent, Male and Female Literacy rate is 69.94 percent and 36.6 percent respectively. The resultant gap between male and female literacy is 33.34 percent in rural regions. The Nuh District remained lowest in literacy across Haryana. Muslim girls maintain their literacy rate below 10 percent, as per the census, 2011. The female literacy in urban areas is 57.71 percent and in rural areas it is 33.71 percent. In case of muslim

women it is around five percent literacy in rural areas and just above ten percent in urban areas and this data is only up to primary classes. In secondary or above classes literacy rate of females has reduced to 2.71 percent and nearly five percent in rural and urban areas respectively (Census of GoI, 2011, and DCHM, 2011).¹⁶ A study was conducted by in 2023, which revealed that Muslim girls school enrollment ratio is above 80 percent and 60 percent in urban and rural areas respectively, but just up to elementary level. Above it, the dropout rate has increased drastically.

Health Condition

The Nuh District is again the lowest in health infrastructure across Haryana. Primary Health centers cover just 10 percent of total population while the sub-centre, which are suffering from a lack of trained medical staff, female staff, lack of medicine and equipment and cover just 64 percent of population. Thus, institutional deliveries of women are not promoted in Nuh District. 85 percent deliveries did take place at homes in Nuh (DLHS 3, GOI). Maternal mortality rate in Nuh was 275 as compared to 212 in India at the beginning of 21st century (SRS, GOI).¹⁷ Subsequently, aforementioned shortcomings have given birth to the quacks who have extended their business in villages and flourished enormously. Anti Natal Care (ANC) is lowest in Nuh (54.2 percent).¹⁸ 90 percent of villages do not have basic maternity and child welfare centers in Nuh district. The coverage of full immunization of children is below 50 percent in Nuh. The contraceptive use rate of any method is below 30 percent. Family planning does not dwell in a muslim women's culture in Nuh since child birth is considered as God's gift. Women consent for physical relationship is not viewed as mandatory, sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy cases have been reported since earlier times. Moreover, Muslim women need the company of male relatives while visiting doctors. Among Muslim women there is a tradition of using a cloth as a guard during the menstrual cycle instead of a sanitary pad since the pad is hygienic in terms of health. Although, cloth is unhygienic but it is compulsion of women to use it due to lacking of women to purchase sanitary pads due to not access to shops alone, unawareness about the benefits of sanitary pad and harmful impact of cloth, financially depend on males, workload during menstrual cycle is similar as of normal days etc.¹⁹ (Noornisha, Anisha, Ahmadnisha and some college girls were interviewed in Punhana, November 2024).

Drinking Water Facilities

Nearly 90 percent of the households have access to drinking water currently but the earlier situation was precarious. About 66 percent Hindus and 58.12 percent of muslims relied on the public sources of water. Muslims around 31.30 percent do private arrangements of water which are usually being polluted water sources. Still, 75 percent of Muslim women fetched water for drinking purposes from water supply pumps, installed at a particular place in villages and from public wells etc.²⁰ In many villages, still women carry the water pots up to 2 K.M. in villages on their heads. That's why Muslim women avoid using latrines in their houses for defecation and head to fields, also taking bath on the gap of 3-4 days. This discourse led women to suffer with various diseases like diarrhea, plague. Water supply connections are well installed in towns and some villages but this water is too polluted, fewer households could afford RO purifiers used for drinking water. Most of the villagers, especially women used the water without purifying it. So again women are suffered with various diseases like Cholera, plague.²¹

Water Closet Latrines And Uses

It remains the most critical gap in Nuh District. Nearly 86.40 percent muslims defecate in the open in the villages. According to a survey conducted in Pema Khera village, out of 800 houses, 785 houses had latrines. So, the number of people who defecate in the open has reduced to 20 percent there. But in cities it is above 90 percent of people who use latrines. In villages, open spaces are available so women also went to fields to take walks for physical fitness too. Secondly, it is a myth that latrines unleashed various diseases in the houses. Only 14 percent muslims have in house latrine (Census, 2011).²²

Houses With Pucca Walls And Kitchen Facilities

Almost all the households in the surveyed villages have their own houses, whereas in towns 60 percent households owned the houses. 15 years ago, approximately 50 percent people had pucca houses but currently above 90 percent people living in pucca houses. Muslim women faced numerous problems in Kuccha houses but also suffered in pucca houses too since houses have 2 to 3 rooms but family size is 10 to 15 members in villages. So, privacy is absent for even brides in the villages in above 90 percent of households. Sometime women is forced to sleep under the open sky whereas condition is somewhat better in towns as 100 percent houses made with bricks and cement and 90 percent houses have enough space to sleep for family members due to short size of families.²³ However, in 2015, central government had launched the scheme named "Bhartiya Awas Yojna" rural and urban both. Under these, financial support is given to construct pucca houses, so, now onwards, pucca houses are being constructed even in villages.

Violence Against Women

Although the Constitution of India guarantees equal rights for all citizens including women, despite it, women continue to face violence and denial of basic rights. The level of women empowerment is lowest in Nuh district. The culture of Meo-Muslims is traditional and patriarchal, and women are generally perceived as inferior to men even at present time. Therefore, women face inequality in almost all the spheres of life in this region.²⁴ Rape cases in Nuh - 68, Cruelty by Husband or his relatives - 198, Insult of the Modesty of women - 4, Assault on women with intent to Outrage her modesty - 46, Dowry death - 10, Kidnapping and Abduction of women and Girls - 33 in numbers in 2014, as per the

data of national crime report bureau.²⁵ Situation is even more worst presently, as per some random interviews in January, 2025. For domestic violence, women have been viewed as responsible and those who commit violence, who are men, are not made responsible for their actions. Generally women don't leave her husband's home and stay there because of family and social pressures. She does not have a secure place to go and has pressure from parents, friends and family.

Family members are not ready to keep her at their homes for long or even force her to go back to her husband's home. She does not have adequate financial resources to manage alone. Religious and cultural obligations force her to stay with an abusive husband. Being a predominant Muslim society, females are usually given a status of secondary to men.²⁶ Purdha is a common practice and the customs are largely traditional in nature. Females are most frequently confined to the four walls and have lesser economic and social independence. Girls often consider themselves as the subordinate to men²⁷ (empirical data and interviews conducted with researchers, professors, social activists, in targeted villages and towns in January, 2025). Child marriage is a major issue as 80 percent girls get married before attaining the age of 18 years in 2010. Conditions in villages are still similar, however, in towns, the average age of girls marriage is 21 (Data was collected from a survey held in Punhana and Nuh town by adopting a random sampling, in September, 2024). Children who get married early are subject to violence and abuse, various medical complications which are resultant into high MMR(Maternal Mortality Rate), IMR(Infant Mortality Rate) and general ailments in Nuh.²⁸ Another cause of make Muslim girls situation so pathetic is rising trend of "Triple Talaq" on Petty issues like if food is not cooked tasty, and if women are unable to produce child especially male child, if women interfere in the household matters and if not obey the instructions of her husband and inlaws (Group interviews with old aged persons, educationists, women in targeted villages).

Agricultural Income

Muslim women do hard work in the fields whether on the owned land or as agricultural laborers. Mewat is a rain fed region and soil is infertile, so agricultural production is low in comparison to the rest of Haryana. So, the standard of living is affected more by women due to it. Earlier (till 15-20 years ago), almost all landowners did field work themselves, mostly women. So, agricultural labourers were less required and their earnings suffered. Now, landowners are less interested in fieldwork, so labourers opportunities have increased but actually, it is not, since mechanization is gradually taking over the field work. Thus, their economic interests are suffering again. Thus, labour class of women has remained more vulnerable in terms of economic empowerment in Nuh district.²⁹

GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

Many Governments have initiated several schemes during their respective tenure for the improvement in socio-economic conditions of Muslim women.

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (2005), in which legal guarantee of employment is given and 33 percent of employment reservation is given for women.
- Promoting women's Health and Education in Nuh: An initiative of IRRAD.
- Promoting Health and Education among Muslim women using Information and Communication Technology.
- Taruni Program: It aims to provide basic literacy and developing life skills among adolescent girls.
- Improving Access to Formal Education program to women
- Delivery Huts program: to provide safe delivery services in a clean, hygienic women friendly environment.
- Mid Day Meal scheme in schools to enhance enrollment and deprive dropout rate of students including Muslim girls in Nuh.³⁰
- Right To Education Act, 2009: It guarantees the free and compulsory education for children between the age of 6 and 14.

There are several other national, state level schemes that are directly providing socio-economic benefits to the women of Nuh district including Muslim women (Identifying Backwardness in Mewat region, a report of S.M. Sehgal Foundation).³¹

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PRESENT CONDITION (2024)

The design of this study covers the period of the 21st century. Here, I would discuss the changes that have occurred or are occurring in the socio-economic status of Muslim women in Nuh district. As per census 2011, literacy rate was very low in Nuh, especially of Muslim women due to the lack of access to schools, poor enrollments and high dropout rate etc. The literacy rate of muslims in Nuh, in March 2024 was 56.10 percent with 73 percent of males and 37.60 percent of females. Reasons behind rising it are continue growth of urban population which has been nearly 15 percent of total population of Nuh in 2024, awareness about the importance of education, government has opened several schools in villages, increment and diversification in the earning of people apart of agriculture but still, adequate number of schools, staff, proper transportation is missing out but some government buses are now used for picking and dropping the girls students from their residents to the schools. Numerous private hospitals are opened who have MBBS, BAMS doctors. But government efforts are stagnant on the matter of opening new hospitals, recruiting new skilled staff in

existing hospitals and schools. Lack of adequate, qualified doctors and equipment in Al-Afiya hospital, SHKM government college are its fresh examples. The Nuh district is still suffering more or less with all existing problems which persisted earlier (interviews conducted with educationists, old aged people including women and Sarpanchs in targeted habitations in October, 2024). Institutional deliveries now, have raised to 90 percent and 95 percent in rural and urban areas respectively up to 2024. Sex ratio in Nuh has reached to 928 girls out of 1000 boys (surveys conducted in Shadipur, Pema Khera, Chandeni, Durenchi villages and data taken from municipal committees of Punhana, Tauru, Nuh Block). Maternal Mortality rate, Infant Mortality rate are definitely reduced to a high level. Out of 100 cases, just 10-12 cases are being so serious due to Anemia, tetanus, and a lack of nutrition in the body. Earlier women suffered less from these diseases due to a healthy diet and physical exercise. Today, diseases are more since fast and junk food have been included in the diet and physical movement has been lesser than earlier. (Dr. Tasneem Khan, MBBS, in Al-Afiya hospital, Mandikhera, 01/01/2025).

Now girls are travelling up to Gurugram, Sohna to attend the colleges but these are very few girls in number. Few Muslim girls have also been selected in judiciary as a Judge, TGT, PGT teachers and being appointed as MBBS, BAMS doctors in private and Government hospitals. But still girls do not do private jobs in factories and companies which are situated Gurgaon, Faridabad, Delhi. Almost 100 percent houses have pucca walls even in villages and latrines were also constructed in almost all the houses with or without support of the government. The PM Awas Yojna (Urban-Rural) was the significant schemes to relieve the resident from the Kuccha houses and open defecation in the fields, roadside including Muslim women. Now, along with urban muslim women, village women also enjoying property rights, participation in decision making and being financially empowered but to a very low extent. Government launches various schemes like PM Jan Dhan Yojna, Ujjawala Scheme where female considered as a head of the family, if someone wants to take benefits of these schemes. Secondly, raising the culture of nuclear families in Nuh also giving to women an opportunity for being empowered socially and economically. As the education level of males being spike up gradually, the cases of domestic violence, child marriage reduced to some extent especially in urban areas. The Participation of muslim in economic activities is improving while we compare with the data found in the census of GoI, 2011. Across the Nuh District 41.67 percent muslim women were cultivators, 29.11 percent were agricultural female labourers, 3.34 percent were household industry female workers, according the data taken from census of India, 2011. But now, Muslim women are persistent towards achieving education, migrating towards towns and presence of various facilities in villages such as machines that chop the crops. Do animals are reducing to a large extent, lowering better, fresh quality of milk, butter, curd etc., and force to use adulterated available material of the market. So, manual labour of women is reducing. Muslim women as cultivators and agriculture labourers who are now, lesser in number even in villages. But, MGNREGA female Workers are increasing year by year, land holding by muslim women is now seen in Nuh district but ancestral land holding is not given to women at all. (District Census Handbook Mewat, 2011).

CONCLUSION

It is evident that Muslim women lagged behind in almost all sectors, while compared with the non Muslim women of Nuh and women of rest of Haryana. Socio-economic status of Muslim women is far behind even from Hindu women in towns. However, the situation in villages is similar to both Hindu and Muslim women. As the large Muslim women population is illiterate, they do not know about their constitutional, statutory, legal, social and religious rights. So, women have always been subordinate to men since ages. This kind of absolute backwardness persisted up to 2010. Later on, situation was started better but gradually in terms of education (Formal education), Health, Property rights, alleviation of patriarchal mindset, understand the value of education by male and female, reduction in domestic violence especially physical assaults but all such improvisation is very low and large amount of many social evils still are persisted. On the other hand, some social crimes are rising such as rape cases, eloping, murders, dowry tortures to female, false allegations of rape, molestation, attempt to murder etc.

There is an urgent need for reformation of the socio-economic status of muslim women. Primarily the government should come out of its apathetic attitude towards muslims community. The High standard Schools in every village and Senior Secondary schools in every village should be opened, separate girls colleges in every block of Nuh must be opened with sufficient female staff. PHCs, CHCs, must be opened on the 5000 and 20000 population respectively. Mohalla clinics should also be established in every large village, so that MMR, IMR, other diseases could be reduced up to its minimum level and institutional deliveries could be reached up to 100 percent in July. Skilled, qualified, adequate female staff and faculty in schools, hospitals must be recruited for better service delivery to muslim women. The public must itself be aware about their rights including women because self awareness is a must for reformation. Sarpanchs should be held accountable for child marriage, domestic violence in villages. People should focus on enhancement of girls enrollment in schools and should reduce dropout rate because it is said in Haryana that “Mahari Chhori Chhoron Se Kam he ke” (our girls are not lesser than boys) a dialogue of Amir Khan starrer “Dangal Movie”. Gandhi said “If half of the population is uneducated then a nation could not be developed”. So, Muslim women’s education is the only solution to improve their socio-economic status and it is necessary for their inclusion in the mainstream society of Haryana as well as India.

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