

## Women and Employment: A Sociological Analysis of Indian Muslims

MD. MAINUDDIN

Assistant Professor in Sociology  
School of Social Sciences & Humanities  
B. S. Abdur Rahman University, Chennai  
India

### Abstract:

*Traditionally, women in India were members of stratified society characterized by the ideology and practice of inequality. There is no society in this universe where inequality is not existed and India is not an exception. It is perceived and also revealed by the research studies that women are oppressed and suppressed by the male members in the society. To some extent it is true but there is a need to explore what are the agents of this inequality. Inequality persists across all the religious communities in terms of gender, caste and class. This paper mainly concern with the varied dimension of inequality among women as a Muslim. It is said that minority identities are fixed; Muslims women are often forced to enter social and political spaces with the religious notion. Such restraints make it hard to create a place of progressive change for themselves as well as for the community. Currently this paper attempts to explore the employment situation of Muslim women and existing gender inequality. It is found that work participation rate of Muslim women is low across all religions and as compare to male members within the community. Why there is inequality in terms of Muslim women's employment? What are the socio-economic and religious factors hinders them to participate in the economic activities of the country? To support the above discussed Muslim women's employment inequality, it has been analysed female work participation rate and educational status in 35 states including Union territories of India. This paper is based on the data of census of*

*India 2001. Finally, I shall conclude with my own observations and suggestions.*

**Key words:** women, employment, Indian Muslims

## **Introduction**

One of the major indexes of development of any society is the status of its women in comparison to men. The more balanced the opportunity structure for men and women, the larger the role women have in society and consequently the higher will be their status.<sup>1</sup> In developing society like India, it is essential that both men and women play equal and important role in the development effort. Hence, economic participation is one of the critical factors in the improvement of the status of women. In the context of an emerging democratic polity and the ideal of an egalitarian social order, the constitution makers were acutely conscious of the hierarchical nature of Indian society, the cumulative disadvantages suffered by certain sections of society and the collective nature of the social affiliations. In order to eliminate these disadvantages, there is need of holistic economic development to support the process of social change, individual mobility and social equality for all social groups through social justice and of integration and mainstreaming.<sup>2</sup> Women are the discriminated and ignored in the society by their male counterpart. Here is a need to bring them into the main stream and without their contribution national development will be mere a dream.

Gender inequality refers to the obvious or hidden disparity between individuals due to gender. Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; binary gender systems may reflect onto the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically

grounded or socially constructed (Wikipedia). The burden of hardship often falls disproportionately on women within every community, nationality, caste and class. The afflicted world in which we live is characterized by inequality between men and women. Gender inequality exists in most parts of the world and India is not an exception. It can take different form. “Gender inequality is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but collection of disparate and inter-linked problems” Sen.<sup>3</sup>

In the pre-independence period it was the sub-committee of the National Planning Committee which emphasised in its report the importance of independent economic means for women, and the significance of the economic value of women’s work. It is unfortunate that this important report was lost in the avalanche of events and issues following Independence. After Independence, it was the historic report ‘towards Equality’ (Report of the Committee on the status of Women in India, 1974) which highlighted the neglect of women’s contribution to economic activities especially in the unorganized sector.<sup>4</sup> Of course women are the silent contributors in the economic activities. They must be given the recognition of their work in the society. Women, on the other hand, deserved equality.

The paper aims on the women’s work and their contribution in the economic activities of the society or the state without ignoring the complexity of the issue. It is often believed that “women’s work in the private sphere cannot be recognized as a contribution to the national economy as it is not paid”, that “women are neither producers; nor capable of hard physical labour”, that “women’s economic status is linked to their family’s economic status”, and that “men are the breadwinners, so they and not the women are heads of the households”. This perception is also valid for Muslim women. This paper is based on the census of India 2001 data. The data has been calculated by us for 35 states including union territories, pertaining to

work participation rate across sex and residence, main workers and marginal workers, and categories of economic activities.

## **Muslim Women in Indian Society**

India has the second largest Muslims population in the world. It is well documented that Indian women who enjoyed a higher status during the Vedic and Buddhistic period suffered a reversal in their status during later times. The position of women got further deteriorated in later years. When the Muslims ruler came to establish their rule over India, they found that the position of women in Hindu society is more or less similar. There is rhetoric that the position of women in Muslim society is low as compare to the male members of the society. There are many phenomenon where their role is ignored like settlement of marriage is totally concern of the parents, dowry system is borrowed from the Hindu society, practice of divorce was a common phenomenon at earlier times. But the ruler like Akbar prohibited these practices by law. Another practice which is generally prevalent among the Muslims women was the '*Purdah*' or seclusion. It is more prevalent among higher caste and class. However, the poor women were not practiced *purdah* like their sisters in upper class as they had to go outside to work. On this background of isolation of the women in the Muslim community, the work participation rate of the community as a whole is low as compare to the women of other community. This raises many questions like Do Muslim women contribute in the economic activities in the country? Why there is imposition of *fatwas* on working women in India? The paper shall engage these questions by the following objectives:

- (i) To analyses the Muslim women's status in larger society.
- (ii) To examine the contribution of Muslim women in the economic activities.

- (iii) To measure the gender gap in the work participation and the reasons of this gap.
- (iv) To explore the employment situation of Muslim women and existing gender inequality.
- (v) To analyse the existing inequality as a Muslim women in the light of recent debate and *fatwas* declared by the Darul-Uloom, Deoband School of Islamic Thought in Indian context.

### **Religious Distribution of Population**

India is a country with significant religions like Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain and other religions. Hindu religion has been noticed as the major religion which constituted around 80.5% out of total population (in which male constitutes 80.6% & female constitutes 80.3%). Muslim constituted 13.4% of the total population, religions like Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains and other accounted extremely nominal share i.e. 2.3%, 1.9%, 0.8%, 0.4% & 0.6% respectively as per census of India 2001. Additionally, 0.1% population fall under the category of religion not stated. Hindus constitute 73.9% of rural population of the country and 74.4% Hindu woman are living in rural areas. While 64.3% Muslims lives in rural areas and the total Muslim women population of rural area is 65%.

### **Work Participation Rate**

The national average of work participation rate is 39.10 per cent. The male (51.68%) participation in work is higher than the female (25.68%).

**Table: 1 Work Participaion Rate of Religious Communities across Sex and Residence**

Religious Communities	Residence	Persons	Male	Female
All Religions	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.25	50.60	11.88
Hindus	Total	40.36	52.37	27.45
	Rural	42.96	52.74	32.59
	Urban	33.02	51.34	12.52
Muslims	Total	31.33	47.48	14.08
	Rural	32.83	47.41	17.52
	Urban	28.64	47.59	7.74
Christians	Total	39.67	50.71	28.72
	Rural	41.96	51.30	32.63
	Urban	35.20	49.56	21.21
Sikhs	Total	37.69	53.29	20.23
	Rural	39.89	54.19	23.93
	Urban	31.62	50.82	9.96
Buddhists	Total	40.64	49.16	31.70
	Rural	46.85	51.32	42.19
	Urban	30.72	45.73	14.81
Jains	Total	32.90	55.19	9.20
	Rural	38.81	56.36	20.07
	Urban	31.04	54.82	5.79
Others	Total	48.36	52.50	44.19
	Rural	50.13	53.50	46.75
	Urban	31.68	43.25	19.71
Religion not stated	Total	41.55	50.42	31.69
	Rural	45.26	52.41	37.43
	Urban	31.83	45.37	16.16

Among all the religious communities the highest percentage of women workers are found among the Buddhists and Lowest among the Jains. Whereas among Muslims the work participation rate of women is 14.08% which is much lower than the male members of the society. Lower work participation rate of Muslim women is one of the reasons for overall work participation rate among Muslim. There is a sizable gap exists among all the religious communities between male to female work participation. This indicates that there is some underline patterns hinder the women’s mobility outside home and restrict

their contribution in the work participation. Moreover, it is well documented that the contribution of women in the economic sphere is not recognised by the society within the household as well. This paper mainly concerned with the contribution of Muslim women in the economic sphere because it is rhetoric that Muslim women are excluded from the participation in the economy by the male members of the society and manifested religious norms. As the gap is persists across all states the data has been analysed of Muslims to set a pattern so that it can easily led to conclude what are the actual condition of the women in the economic sphere.

### **State wise Work Participation Rate of All Religions & Muslims**

There have been a number of studies on female work participation and its determinants from the census of 1961 and 1971. The studies found that participation of women in the working force is low and mostly concentrated in the agriculture and cultivation in the rural areas.<sup>5</sup> Recently there are few studies have come up on the basis of census 2001 data. This being the backdrop, analysis of women participation in the working force of India reveals that there is a variation in the women's work participation rate across the state and union territories. Among the union territories and states the lowest work participation rate are in Pondicherry (1.98%) and Kerala (15.38%). And the states with highest WPR are Dadra and Nagar Haveli (38.74%) and Mizoram (47.54%). The analysis for general women WPR shows the lower rate of participation in the work. In addition to it, there is a gender gap prevails as far as the participation of women in work is concerned. The same trend is observed across the religious communities.

According to census 2001 data, it has been examined that the average Muslim WPR is around 35%, which is only 5% less from the national WPR (i.e. 40.4%). If we analyze across

states/UTs, it is accounted that Mizoram is the state where the Muslim WPR is highest for both the sexes, i.e. 86.5% for male and 37.9% for female. After Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh occupies second position for having maximum Muslim women WPR which is 32.9% and for male it is 56.3 %. There are around 13 states where Muslim women WPR varies between 15% to 30%, these states are J&K, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, M.P, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. While, Muslim women WPR in remaining 20 States/UTs are found even to be below the average rate of Muslim women WPR, out of which Pondicherry is the worst having merely 4.2% but in such state Muslim Male WPR has been observed as 46.5% which is 11 times more than the Muslim women WPR. Whereas Muslim male WPR is 51.8% which is 0.3% high from national male WPR (i.e. 51.5%) but Muslim women WPR reported as 15% which is extremely low as 11.5% from national female WPR (i.e. 26.5%). The broad analysis indicates that Muslim female WPR is found to be very low across all states and UTs. Also Muslim women participation in work is low as compared to Muslim male across all states/UTs lead to lower participation of Muslims in economic activities. It is thought that women are at home and they are not engaged in work. Because the work they are engaged in is not recognized by the male member of the family or by the society. In fact, women's work sustains society. Women run households, rear children, care for the aged and the sick, and toil on farms and in factories, but most times, their working hands remain invisible. Their work is taken as their duty and their contribution to the betterment of the family and society is regarded a natural outcome of their caring, nurturing and self-effacing nature.<sup>6</sup>



**Table: 2 State wise Work Participation Rate of All Religions & Muslims by Gender**

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Work Participation Rate (In %)					
		All Religions			Muslims		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
0	India	39.1	51.68	25.63	31.3	47.5	14.1
1	Jammu & Kashmir	37.01	49.99	22.45	35.1	47.2	22.0
2	Himachal Pradesh	49.24	54.62	43.67	45.9	56.3	32.9
3	Punjab	37.47	53.6	19.05	40.3	56.7	19.7
4	Chandigarh	37.8	56.11	14.22	39.6	60.6	7.3
5	Uttaranchal	36.92	46.14	27.33	27.5	46.0	6.4
6	Haryana	39.62	50.3	27.22	37.8	45.2	29.4
7	Delhi	32.82	52.06	9.37	30.9	51.3	4.8
8	Rajasthan	42.06	49.95	33.49	34.7	46.7	21.7
9	Uttar Pradesh	32.48	46.8	16.54	29.1	44.6	12.4
10	Bihar	33.7	47.37	18.84	30.9	45.8	15.1
11	Sikkim	48.64	57.44	38.57	53.4	70.9	13.6
12	Arunachal Pradesh	43.98	50.63	36.54	45.0	61.6	18.4
13	Nagaland	42.6	46.7	38.06	43.6	60.5	16.2
14	Manipur (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	43.62	48.12	39.02	36.8	43.7	29.6
15	Mizoram	52.57	57.29	47.54	76.1	86.5	37.9
16	Tripura	36.25	50.62	21.08	29.2	46.2	11.2
17	Meghalaya	41.84	48.34	35.15	31.4	48.9	11.8
18	Assam	35.78	49.87	20.71	29.1	47.2	9.7
19	West Bengal	36.77	53.99	18.32	32.9	50.5	14.0
20	Jharkhand	37.52	47.96	26.41	31.6	43.5	18.8
21	Orissa	38.79	52.53	24.66	26.9	45.9	6.8
22	Chhattisgarh	46.46	52.81	40.04	32.3	48.5	15.0
23	Madhya Pradesh	42.74	51.5	33.21	32.8	47.6	16.9
24	Gujarat	41.95	54.87	27.91	32.7	51.1	13.0
25	Daman & Diu	46.01	65.47	18.61	37.5	61.6	7.3
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	51.76	62.33	38.74	42.5	64.3	11.0
27	Maharashtra	42.5	53.28	30.81	32.4	50.0	12.7
28	Andhra Pradesh	45.79	56.23	35.11	33.8	50.1	16.8
29	Karnataka	44.53	56.64	31.98	36.4	52.1	19.9
30	Goa	38.8	54.6	22.36	34.3	54.6	10.9
31	Lakshadweep	25.32	42.41	7.28	23.0	38.9	7.1
32	Kerala	32.3	50.2	15.38	23.2	42.0	5.9
33	Tamil Nadu	44.67	57.64	31.54	31.8	52.0	11.9
34	Pondicherry	35.17	17.25	1.98	24.4	46.5	4.2
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	38.26	56.57	16.6	34.5	53.8	12.1
	Average	40.4	51.5	26.5	35.3	51.8	15.0

Source: Census of India 2001

## **Disparity between Male & Female Work Participation Rate**

India has made commendable progress in the economic sphere but it has not trickled down to the masses as a result we find inequality in the society. As an outcome, women's are lag behind in different sectors of employment but a significant part of Muslim women among all religion are recorded as inefficient labour source in the country. At the national level WPR of women's stands at 26 percentage point less than the male members, while the gap for Muslim women increased by 33.4 percentage point. Among all the states and union territories the largest gap of WPR between female and male is found in the state of Daman & Diu with 46 percentage point, Delhi with 42 percentage point and also the gap is evident in Northern states. Where, among the Muslim community the largest gap has been examined in the four states, namely Sikkim (largest gap), Daman Diu, Chandigarh and Dadra Nagar Haveli, calculated at the percentage of 57.3%, 54.3% & 53.3% respectively( where 53.3% has been observed for Chandigarh & DNH). The lowest gap has been observed across in the state of Nagaland i.e. 8.6% while among Muslims it is 14.1% in the state of Manipur. Although, the average of gender gap of WPR for general population is 25% across the States/UTs. The gender gap is unexpectedly high among Muslim community i.e. 36.9%, which is 11.9% higher the national average. Here the question arises, why the gender gap in work is sharp among the Muslims in India? This shows the need for further micro level study to explore the socio-cultural and religious factors of the present low contribution of Muslim women in economic activities in India.

**Table: 3 State wise distribution of Gender Gap in Economic Participation of All Religion & Muslim**

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Gap in Male-Female WPR ( In%)	
		All Religions	Muslims
0	India	26.05	33.4
1	Jammu & Kashmir	27.54	25.1
2	Himachal Pradesh	10.95	23.4
3	Punjab	34.55	37.0
4	Chandigarh	41.89	53.3
5	Uttaranchal	18.81	39.7
6	Haryana	23.08	15.9
7	Delhi	42.69	46.5
8	Rajasthan	16.46	25.0
9	Uttar Pradesh	30.26	32.2
10	Bihar	28.53	30.7
11	Sikkim	18.87	57.3
12	Arunachal Pradesh	14.09	43.1
13	Nagaland	8.64	44.3
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	9.1	14.1
15	Mizoram	9.75	48.7
16	Tripura	29.54	35.0
17	Meghalaya	13.19	37.2
18	Assam	29.16	37.5
19	West Bengal	35.67	36.5
20	Jharkhand	21.55	24.7
21	Orissa	27.87	39.0
22	Chhattisgarh	12.77	33.4
23	Madhya Pradesh	18.29	30.7
24	Gujarat	26.96	38.1
25	Daman & Diu	46.86	54.3
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23.59	53.3
27	Maharashtra	22.47	37.3
28	Andhra Pradesh	21.12	33.3
29	Karnataka	24.66	32.1
30	Goa	32.24	43.7
31	Lakshadweep	35.13	31.8
32	Kerala	34.82	36.0
33	Tamil Nadu	26.1	40.0
34	Pondicherry	15.27	42.3
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	39.97	41.7
	<b>Average</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>36.9</b>

Source: Census of India 2001

## **State wise Status of Muslim woman in India**

India is a solitary country where we can find unity in diversity, diversity related to ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religion. Though the diversity persists, but there is the notion of decline unity. Muslims are one of them who comprise the largest minority of the nation. However, it has been examined by many studies that the participation of Muslims in India's economy is low. Likely, they have been also deprived of the benefits of the economic growth of the country. And one of the major reasons behind it is the low participation of Muslim women in economy compare to women in other religion .So, before analysing the reasons of having low economic contribution of Muslim woman in India, it's imperative to know about the status of Muslim woman in such society.

In India the population of woman in general is 48.3% out of total population and the population of Muslim woman constitutes only 13.5%. The average population of Woman is 47.9% and the average of Muslim woman is 13%. Moreover, 53.7% women are literate in India out of which Muslim women comprises 12%. If we stress on the economy of India, the proportion of women's contribution has been observed as 25.63% and out of which 7.4% has been calculated for Muslim woman which is near to the ground. On the other hand, percentage of non working Muslim woman is calculated as 15.5% out of the total non working woman i.e. 74.4%. Average of Muslim working woman is low as they share 9.2% only in comparison to non working Muslim woman. Across the states/UTs, Lakshadweep is a single state where the highest rate of Muslim population, Muslim literacy rate, Muslim working & non working woman have been reported, rate in percentages are 98.2%, 97.7%, 95.9% & 98.4% correspondingly. It means majority of Muslims is in Lakshadweep and the economic contribution of Muslim woman is also very remarkable. Then the majority of Muslim woman has been

observed in Jammu & Kashmir, where Muslim woman constitutes around 68% out of the total woman population in Jammu & Kashmir, and more than half share is of educated Muslim woman. Out of 35 states/UTs, there are 25 states/UTs where literacy rate of Muslim woman out of literacy of total woman has been examined below the average literacy rate of Muslim woman (i.e. 11.7%). While, the lowest literacy rate of Muslim woman is 0.3% found in Mizoram. Mizoram is found as the highest women contributor in the economic activities (i.e. 47.5%). In Contrary, the contribution of Muslim women is minimum i.e., 0.4%. There are only 8 states/UTs where the allocation of working woman is high from the average (9.2%) and in 6 states Muslim women WPR ranges between 9.6% to 19.3%. In addition to this, 9 states have been recorded for occupying high rate from average of 14.2% of non working Muslim woman. In summary, this section proves that though there are some states/UTs where the contribution of women is high in general but as far as the Muslim women's WPR is concern they perform very badly in those states where the bulk of women from other community in work are large.

**Table: 4 State wise Status of Muslim woman in India by Population, Literacy, Working & Non working woman**

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Status of Woman (In %)							
		Population of Woman		Literacy of Woman		Working woman		Non working Woman	
		Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim
0	India	48.3	13.5	53.7	12.1	25.63	7.4	74.4	15.5
1	Jammu & Kashmir	47.15	68.32	43.0	55.0	22.45	67.0	77.5	68.7
2	Himachal Pradesh	49.19	1.78	67.4	1.2	43.67	1.3	56.3	2.1
3	Punjab	46.69	1.49	63.4	1.0	19.05	1.5	80.9	1.5
4	Chandigarh	43.71	3.56	76.5	2.4	14.22	1.8	85.8	3.8
5	Uttaranchal	49.04	11.35	59.6	7.1	27.33	2.6	72.7	14.6
6	Haryana	46.26	5.82	55.7	2.0	27.22	6.3	72.8	5.6
7	Delhi	45.08	11.41	74.7	8.5	9.37	5.8	90.6	12.0
8	Rajasthan	47.94	8.51	43.9	7.7	33.49	5.5	66.5	10.0
9	Uttar Pradesh	47.31	18.71	42.2	16.2	16.54	14.0	83.5	19.6
10	Bihar	47.90	16.75	33.1	15.6	18.84	13.4	81.2	17.5
11	Sikkim	46.66	0.93	60.4	0.8	38.57	0.3	61.4	1.3
12	Arunachal Pradesh	47.18	1.53	43.5	0.6	36.54	0.8	63.5	2.0
13	Nagaland	47.38	1.41	61.5	0.7	38.06	0.6	61.9	1.9
14	MANIPUR	49.44	8.79	60.5	5.6	39.02	6.7	61.0	10.1

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S.No.	India/States/UTs	Status of Woman (In %)							
		Population of Woman		Literacy of Woman		Working woman		Non working Woman	
		Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim
	(Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)								
15	Mizoram	48.33	0.50	86.7	0.3	47.54	0.4	52.5	0.6
16	Tripura	48.67	7.94	64.9	5.9	21.08	4.2	78.9	8.9
17	Meghalaya	49.28	4.09	59.6	2.4	35.15	1.4	64.9	5.6
18	Assam	48.31	30.97	54.6	21.4	20.71	14.6	79.3	35.2
19	West Bengal	48.28	25.24	59.6	19.9	18.32	19.3	81.7	26.6
20	Jharkhand	48.47	13.83	38.9	14.6	26.41	9.9	73.6	15.3
21	Orissa	49.30	2.04	50.5	2.5	24.66	0.6	75.3	2.5
22	Chhattisgarh	49.72	1.92	51.9	2.8	40.04	0.7	60.0	2.7
23	Madhya Pradesh	47.90	6.40	50.3	7.7	33.21	3.3	66.8	8.0
24	Gujarat	47.93	9.15	57.8	9.9	27.91	4.3	72.1	11.0
25	Daman & Diu	41.52	8.30	65.6	9.3	18.61	3.3	81.4	9.5
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	44.82	2.70	40.2	5.0	38.74	0.8	61.3	3.9
27	Maharashtra	47.98	10.40	67.0	10.6	30.81	4.3	69.2	13.1
28	Andhra Pradesh	49.45	9.09	50.4	10.5	35.11	4.3	64.9	11.7
29	Karnataka	49.10	12.18	56.9	13.1	31.98	7.6	68.0	14.3
30	Goa	49.00	6.48	75.4	5.7	22.36	3.2	77.6	7.4
31	Lakshadweep	48.67	98.18	80.5	97.7	7.28	95.9	92.7	98.4
32	Kerala	51.42	24.97	87.7	23.6	15.38	9.6	84.6	27.7
33	Tamil Nadu	49.68	5.65	64.4	6.6	31.54	2.1	68.5	7.3
34	Pondicherry	50.02	6.37	73.9	7.1	1.98	1.6	82.8	7.4
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	45.82	8.29	75.2	9.7	16.6	6.0	83.4	8.7
	Average	47.9	13.0	59.8	11.7	26.5	9.2	73.0	14.2

Source: Census of India 2001

## Participation of Muslim Woman in Economic Activities

Division of work force or economically active population into various occupational compositions is a primary aspect of economic development. The regional variation in the work participation under occupational group is quite notable to determine the work participation. Economic activities or occupational structures are classified into four categories i.e., Cultivators, Agricultural workers, Household industry workers and other workers. The following sections discussed Muslim women's WPR in four categories of workers:-

### Cultivators

It is found that there is a close relationship between the occupation of cultivation and Muslim women work

participation. In states where agriculture is a major source of capital generation Muslim women tend to engage themselves in the production process of agricultural products. State like Himachal Pradesh (77.9%), Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Dara & Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Meghalaya are found to have high Muslim women work participation than the average which is accounted as 20.3%. However, Lakshadweep is a particular state where there are no Muslim woman cultivators; it is because of geographical location of the place.

### **Agricultural Workers**

Muslim agricultural women workers are found in each and every state except Lakshadweep but their percentage differs from state to state. The highest percentage exists in the state of Bihar (63.8%). While the average rate of Muslim agricultural woman is 21.3% and total 17 states are counted as the states which have high share than average after Bihar. However, low concentration of Muslim women i.e. less than 5%, in agriculture, are found in the Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Sikkim, Daman Diu, Goa, Puducherry and Andman & Nicobar excluding Lakshadweep. It is of interest to note that this is the reverse of the position in most developed countries, where agriculture is primarily a male activity and the proportion of workers in the non-agricultural sector is much higher than females.<sup>7</sup> The higher rate of presence of Muslim women in agricultural sector can be explained with a number of factors. One of the factors is that Muslim women are allow to work in the field and in rural areas most of the women are involved in agricultural activities in the field and allied activities at home. In contrary, once women want to work in urban sector job of high status they are discouraged to go outside of the house with the support of religious obligation like

*purdah* and sometime *fatwas* has been imposed forcefully to confine women with the four walls of the house.

### **Household Industry Worker**

The concentration of Muslim women in the Household work is low in most of the states. Average rate of Muslim woman in HHI (Household Industry) is 11.8% which is being the lowest among the economic activities. The highest concentration in this category has been seen in the state of West Bengal (38.9%) and lowest in Mizoram (1.5%). Such forms of engagement are generally small scale in nature and are located in the home or in an around the home. This being the reason most of the work forces are constituted by the members of the family or the extended kin. As these works act as an extended work of the family or the social relationship the workers themselves never consider it important to inform the data collectors. Hence, the participation of Muslim women has been not reported at the time of data collection. This is one of reasons of their low contribution in the economic activities instead they are the main contributors in this sector, but their contribution is silently excluded.

### **Other Workers**

All those workers other than cultivators or agricultural labourers or household industry workers are 'Other Workers'. This type of work includes medical, engineering, works related to academic and research. In most of the states the concentration of the Muslim women's worker in this category is high comparative to other sectors of occupational structure. However, average rate of Muslim woman workers has been reported as the highest as 46%. In 'other workers' the contribution of Muslim women worker is significant in Goa (i.e.92.5%) and Bihar is the state where concentration of other work is lowest (i.e. 9.3%). In the category of other work contribution of Muslim women ranges from 1% to 30% in 9



states and union territories including Bihar. There are 26 states and union territories with 'other workers' in the ranges of 30% to 90% including Goa. As shown higher participation of women in this sector are found in maximum states. Probably, reason for Muslim women's increased participation in this sector may be due to the modernization of women and change in the attitude and increase social security.

**Table: 5 State wise distribution of Muslim Woman Participation in Economic Activities**

S.No.	India/States/UTS	Participation of Muslim woman in Economic Activities (%)				
		Main Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural workers	Household Industry Workers	Other Workers
0	India	14.1	21.99	30.8	19.3	2.1
1	Jammu & Kashmir	22.0	49.03	5.9	14.1	30.9
2	Himachal Pradesh	32.9	77.90	3.7	2.8	15.6
3	Punjab	19.7	7.03	14.0	9.9	69.0
4	Chandigarh	7.3	1.18	0.4	13.2	85.2
5	Uttaranchal	6.4	1.18	21.4	12.9	48.9
6	Haryana	29.4	16.82	25.8	2.5	32.9
7	Delhi	4.8	38.78	1.0	14.7	83.5
8	Rajasthan	21.7	0.78	13.7	8.8	20.7
9	Uttar Pradesh	12.4	56.86	31.2	23.3	20.9
10	Bihar	15.1	24.65	63.8	11.2	9.3
11	Sikkim	13.6	15.66	3.8	5.6	76.5
12	Arunachal Pradesh	18.4	14.11	12.4	3.1	47.3
13	Nagaland	16.2	37.16	21.5	4.9	38.4
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	29.6	35.28	32.9	15.6	25.4
15	Mizoram	37.9	26.09	29.1	1.5	28.5
16	Tripura	11.2	40.98	37.0	4.9	36.2
17	Meghalaya	11.8	21.88	27.6	8.8	30.4
18	Assam	9.7	33.19	23.5	11.4	37.2
19	West Bengal	14.0	27.89	19.2	38.9	30.8
20	Jharkhand	18.8	11.01	36.8	13.4	19.2
21	Orissa	6.8	30.47	31.1	14.5	42.3
22	Chhattisgarh	15.0	12.12	32.6	3.9	38.5
23	Madhya Pradesh	16.9	23.53	32.4	20.1	24.0
24	Gujarat	13.0	15.86	33.9	10.1	40.2
25	Daman & Diu	7.3	1.75	1.5	6.8	90.0
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	11.0	32.76	11.6	4.4	51.2
27	Maharashtra	12.7	15.70	43.8	8.0	32.5
28	Andhra Pradesh	16.8	9.05	46.0	15.4	29.6
29	Karnataka	19.9	8.53	33.3	25.3	32.9
30	Goa	10.9	1.63	1.4	4.5	92.5
31	Lakshadweep	7.1	0.00	0.0	17.7	82.3
32	Kerala	5.9	6.21	17.0	10.2	66.5
33	Tamil Nadu	11.9	8.10	14.3	31.8	45.8

S.No.	India/States/UTS	Participation of Muslim woman in Economic Activities (%)				
		Main	Cultivators	Agricultural	Household	Other
34	Pondicherry	4.2	2.29	4.7	6.6	86.4
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	12.1	4.90	1.7	5.3	88.2
	<b>Average</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>46.0</b>

Source: Census of India 2001

### **Reasons of Low Muslim Women WPR:**

1. Women's Economic Activity not reported in government statistics
2. Lack of reservation of Muslim women in government employment.
3. Low confidence of Muslim women.
4. Women face Wage discrimination
5. Lack of higher and professional education among Muslim women.
6. Low penetration of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) among the Muslim women.
7. Culture of the Muslim community:
  - Practice of 'Purdah' system.
  - Symbol of Morality (women confined to home as a demonstration of the family's morality and a symbol of its financial security.)
  - Muslim male dominating society.
  - Economic dependency on male members of their family.

### **Debate and Discussion**

The data reveals that the share of contribution of Muslim women in economic activities is low India. In other words we can say that the participation of Muslim women in India and its states and Indian territories is low as compare to the women of the other religious community. Their share in the high status work is also low. Their participation in agricultural sector is more in those states where Muslim share in population is

significant and economically poor. There are many socio-cultural, economic and religious factors responsible for the low contribution of women in economic activities. Instead of the discrimination practice on the basis of religion and culture, they are not allowed to go outside of the home for work. In addition to it, *fatwas* has been pronounced against the Muslim women from time to time to restrict their mobility and participation in the economic activities. Instead, the participation of this large section of the population is compulsory for the development of the community or the nation. However, it is not at all problematic for the male members as far as their women's work is confined within the four walls of the house and agricultural and menial works. Recently, The Dar ul-Uloom, Deoband, India's largest seminary pronounced fatwa on Muslim women working outside the home and a host of other women-related fatwas close almost all sources of employment. The fatwa reads by a bench of three clerics as:

“It is unlawful (under the Sharia law) for Muslim women to work in the government or private sector where men and women work together and women have to talk with men frankly and without a veil”.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, the fatwa implies that women can work only those places where they can be fully veiled and where they do not need to talk “frankly” (whatever that might mean) with men. These would presumably be jobs which involve an all-women staff, with only women clients and which hermetically seal off women from any contact with males. This is next to impossible phenomenon in this country. The fatwa indirectly suggests the women to work inside the home only. At a time when there is a rising clamour for job quotas for Muslims in India and a yearning for progress in the community that sees itself as neglected, the fatwa, although unlikely to be heeded, is clearly detrimental. Even the most conservative Islamic countries, which restrict activities of women, including preventing them from driving, do not bar women from working.

Practically, thus the fatwa limits the opportunity for jobs for Muslim women to just a few girls' schools and *maktabs*, tailoring centres and the like, where they can work fully covered and where they need not to interact with male colleagues or clients. Hence, although later clarifications in response to criticism of the fatwa and protest from the many corners of the society especially Muslim women, it is said that the fatwa does not explicitly ban women from working outside their homes, in effect it does rule out most jobs, and certainly the well-paying ones.

Muslims in India is a heterogeneous community and the impact of fatwa varies of course. Also, the community is economically backward and many are living under poverty line. Muslim families whose economic conditions are so pathetic that their womenfolk are compelled, by sheer economic necessity, to toil outside their homes – such as agricultural workers, labourers, petty retailers, construction worker and so on. Remaining completely covered and confined within their homes is not an option for them at all. The fatwa, however, drew flak among other clerics. In response many Islamic scholar found the fatwa is not right. Rasheed, the Naib Imam of Lucknow's main Eidgah Mosque in Aishbagh said that "Men and women in Sharia are entitled to equal rights. If men follow the Sharia, there is no reason why women can't work with them,"<sup>9</sup> and in another response Mufti Maulana Khalid Rasheed of Darul Ifta Firangi Meheli -- another radical Islamic body which also issues fatwas - criticized the Deoband fatwa as a retrograde restriction on Muslim women.<sup>10</sup> This paper argues that there is need to look into details the permissibility of women in the domain of the holy Quran and Sharia. Because it is evident from this study and other research studies that Muslim woman are not contributing or participating in the economic activities as desired. There are many Muslim women with higher education engaged in the household work because it is thought that the social status will be low if women went to work outside. Though

there is few research studies addressed these issues which has immense importance. But the things have changed in the recent past as this study found that there is significant number of women engaged in 'other workers' workers category. This category comprises the jobs of high social status.

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion leads us to conclude that the participation or the contribution of women in the economic sphere of the country is low. In some of the states and union territories it is less than 10% and varies from one state to another. Moreover, there is a sharp gap in the contribution of women as compare to male members in the community. As far as social status of Muslim women is concerned they are rated as low because they are illiterate population of the community. Even there is restrictions and fatwa on access of Muslim women education. As it is thought that education is one of the important indexes of development they are also deprived from the only tool to come in the mainstream. Their participation in occupational categories is largely varies from one category to another. Their contribution in all the categories is low. For example, it is well known that Muslims were engaged in traditional small scale work in the household like carpet making, zari work, embroidery, bangle making, lock industry carpet industry in various parts of the country. Women are actively contributing in this sector but their work is not recognized by the male members as well as not reported at the time of data collection in various government reports. Hence, Muslims women are *doubly excluded* in the economic sphere. One, by discouraging them to join works and secondly, if they work their work is not visible. Pathetically, they have been targeted by the various religious institutions and religious leaders by pronouncing fatwa against them and pushed them to more dark side from the practicality and reality of life to the extent that they

perceived that their duty is only to look after the husband, their children and caring of the old age people in the family. But there is a paradigm shift among the women in the most parts of the world in recent past and in response; many movement starts by the women and also Muslim women are not lag behind. Now they come to many forms and participate in these movements to curb their right based demand. Here, the paper suggests liberal approach for the women as far as the issue of work is concerned. Khan<sup>11</sup> pinpoints three sets of women as a Muslim in his ethnographic account and it is found worth to mention here. The first set of women is those who, although they self identify as Muslim, have largely disavowed Islam. However, they are still forced to negotiate their identity as “Muslim.” As a result, they are at odds with their families and communities, as well as with a wider society that forces them into a category with which they may not wish to be identified. The second set, there are women who have managed to construct hybrid identities and negotiate their lives in such hybrid spaces. At the same time, however, they accept the authority of monolithic notions of Islamic views regarding what the Muslim woman is supposed to be. Finally, the third set of women accepts their identities as Muslim and strives to conduct their lives within what their communities consider to be Islamically appropriate behaviour. Thus, these women choose to focus on the more spiritual and internal side of Islamic practice. In rejecting all manifestations of unjust treatment by others while still trying to perfect an ideal kind of Islamic spiritual practice, they have been able to negotiate and establish their own Muslim identities. Thus, finally the improvement in the traditional status of women, therefore, is a necessary first step to empower them in all societies across caste and communities.

<sup>1</sup> Menon, M Indu. 1981. *Status of Muslim Women in India: A Case Study of Kerala*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House.

<sup>2</sup> Chanana, Karuna. 1993. "Accessing Higher Education: The Dilemma of Schooling Women, Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Contemporary India." In *Higher Education reform in India: Experience and Perspectives*, edited by Philip G. Altbach and Suma Chitnis, 115-154. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

<sup>3</sup> Sen, Amartya. 2001. "Many Faces of Gender Inequality." *The New Republic*.

<sup>4</sup> Desai, Neera & Usha Thakkar. 2001. *Women in Indian Society*. India: National Book Trust.

<sup>5</sup> Nath, Kamla. 1968. "Women in the Working Force in India." *Economic & Political Weekly* 3(31): 1205-1213.

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<sup>6</sup> Desai, Neera & Usha Thakkar (2001): *Women in India*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust)

<sup>7</sup> Nath, Kamla. 1968. "Women in the Working Force in India." *Economic & Political Weekly* 3(31): 1205-1213.

<sup>8</sup> (TOI, 2010) [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-05-12/india/28280924\\_1\\_fatwa-muslim-women-darul-uloom-deoband](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-05-12/india/28280924_1_fatwa-muslim-women-darul-uloom-deoband), Accessed on 23.5.2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Khan, Shanaz. 2002. *Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora*. United Kingdom: Women's Press, Ltd. 152 pages.