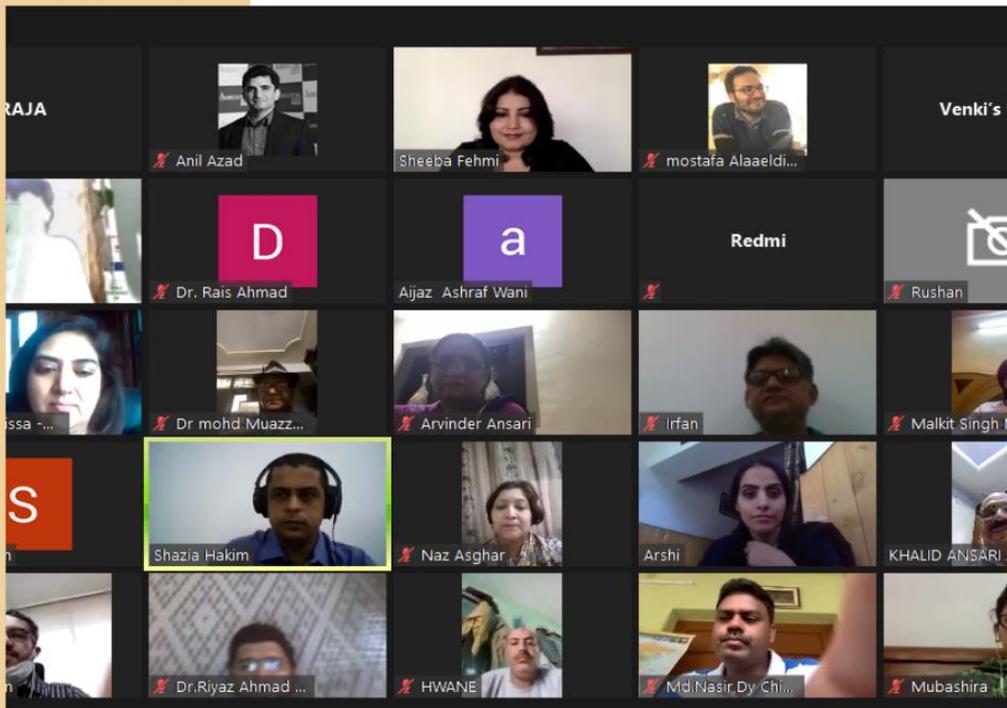
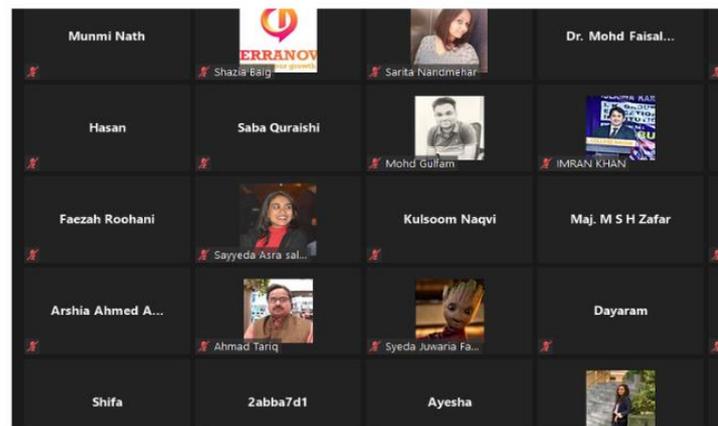


REPORT ON WEBINAR



MUSLIM WOMEN AND HIGHER EDUCATION



Saturday | July 04 2020 | 02:30 PM
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Professor Arvinder Ansari
Head of Department Sociology
Jamia Millia Islamia

The speaker discussed how it is very important to come and talk about Muslim women and education. And this could not be done without keeping Muslim women's identity and location in mind as she has unique socio-economic circumstances to negotiate with.

Religion has also played a very important role in the education of women as Islam plays down certain kind of perspective. She shared what does Islam say about education? It asks an individual to seek knowledge regardless of age, location etc. In fact, seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. To know, to learn and to act are embedded in Islamic conception of education.

She has suggested it is very important to talk about what has led to the educational backwardness of Muslim community in general and Muslim women in particular. Intersectionality of culture and patriarchy holds true for all religions so what makes the case of Muslim women different. The context of Muslim women here makes them triple disadvantaged-they are poor, they are Muslim and they are women. So, they have to negotiate further for their right to be educated.

Here another point that needs to be noted is that culture influences the interpretation of religion and vice versa. But Muslim women have not meekly given in to these inhibitors but resisted it resiliently. It is important to know what is the empirical reality as to why Muslim women are lacking. She noted that Muslim women cannot be treated as a homogenous category, irrespective of dimensions of caste, location, class. All these dimensions add to her difficulties'. Important studies which add to our knowledge of Muslim women are Sachar Committee report which significantly discussed the educational status of Muslim women. Another land mark study is the study conducted by Zoya Hassan and Ritu Menon wherein they interviewed more than 10,000 women across five states and concluded very few Muslim women could continue education beyond the age of 15.

The speaker noted that the major cause of educational backwardness is economic impoverishment. Poorer households are less likely to send their daughters to school, non-availability of education in vernacular languages becomes another barrier, non-proximity of schools to residences of Muslim population all become the socio-cultural barriers.

Another very important point that Dr Arvinder made was about how the dimension of purdah has not been a barrier in Muslim women's education. In fact, veil has worked as enhancer of agency.

The speaker noted that a major barrier for Muslims women's education is the heightened atmosphere of communalisation, ghettoization of the community which has made parents fearful of girl's safety. The family is desirous of educating the girls but they are scared of heightened communal atmosphere, so many times they end up sending them to madrassas. Additionally, participatory developmental schemes have not reached Muslim women and there has been no analysis of the already existing schemes.



Ms Khair un Nissa
Executive Director
World Trade Centre

The speaker said that Muslim Women in India face the oppression of being women and also being Muslim. Much scope lies in educational and economic empowerment of Muslim women. Infact the first word revealed in Quran was Iqra meaning to study. The speaker used her insights from Kashmir for making a case of education for Muslim women. She compared her experience of working in different states and talked about the gap between the education and generating revenue.

She focussed on capacity development of Baitul Maal and how development of community in terms of education and sustainability should be encouraged. She gave examples of initiatives like homemade in India, wherein the skilled women did not have to come out and were upscaled with micro-financing.

Dr Venkatesh Sundaram
Economist at World Bank

Dr Sundaram shared his insights of working of education in MENA, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. He also informed that he is trying to set up South Asia regional network on education and women.

He significantly pointed out that changes are taking place in higher education in terms of gender. In OIC countries, men used to dominate the education, however it has been changing from 1990's. The second important point he addressed is the cultural aspect. He informed that roughly about 43% adult Muslim population have seen formal education and roughly 8% Muslim adults have seen secondary education. He also added that positive cultural enforcements should be brought on. Like the World Bank

has focussed on number of strategies to build on the education of Muslim women on incentivisation of education, conditional cash transfers, unconditional cash transfers.

His emphasis was also on how girl learning outcomes are fast in Middle east and North Africa, but the transition to labour market is difficult. He particularly pointed out how the issue of distance of schools from the communities plays an important role and how necessary it was to create safe and inclusive learning environments, where there were abundant female teachers. These steps are very important as affectability of school education paves a way for higher education.



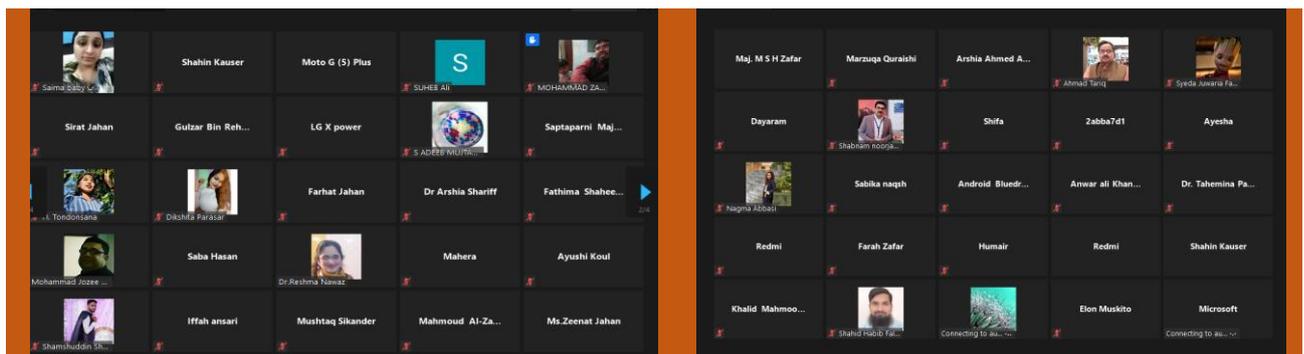
Dr Amina Mirza
Assistant Professor of Political
Science, Delhi University

The speaker said she would try to answer the question of Muslim women and Higher education through the global perspective. At the outset there is nothing called as homogeneity of women. Women are different in terms of economic background, educational background, regional affiliations etc.

She pointed out that the issue here is of the narrative, which narrative is at play. Women are put back everywhere but why does patriarchy become political when we are talking about the Muslim community. Education is crucial to the larger aspect. But we need to identify who forms the narrative and who are trying to lead it. To be precise issues of representation have to be dealt in. She quoted a research that shows issues of education arise not because of community, but because of economic avenue. Because since the sensational portrayal of the community serves vested

interests, all the problems get related to our religion. Muslim women will have to outright question and reject such narratives.

The speaker talked about how a progress Muslim woman is seen as anti-thesis of religion and made a strong case for integration with mainstream society whereby economic avenues should be kept at front. There should be a dialogue of better understanding of what is the majoritarian perspective is. She also said that we need to cater to internal differences, develop a sense of introspection and deliberation, ask ourselves why the governmental schemes have not reached the desired outcome. In totality we need a meticulous structural engineering to put an empowered self of ours for a larger dialogue, and to put the country in the integrated framework.





Dr Arshia Sharif
Professor and Pharma
consultant

The speaker shared her experiences of working in multiple countries in the area of higher education. She noted that the economic empowerment by ways of government incentive is insufficient to motivate women to go in the field of higher education. Women go through the barriers of patriarchy, family, but the non-availability or non-awareness of economic incentives disrupts the journey

The other problem she identifies is the problem of nepotism and corruption in colleges whereby the benefits don't reach the students. The speaker specifically focussed on handholding support should be provided by educationists and teachers for girl students. It is an important duty of a teacher to identify good students, hand hold and mentor them



Ms Sheeba Aslam Fehmi
Journalist and India head at
indiatimes.live

The speaker discussed how the urdu medium of education has hampered the development of Muslim girls as the study material for higher education is not available in urdu. She further discussed the policy driven ghettoization, of how Muslim areas have been provided with urdu medium schools where the learning outcomes are restricted and employability of students also becomes a major issue.

The speaker also focussed on a major multicultural deficit that exists in schools in Muslim majority areas. As these schools impart urdu medium education most of the times only Muslim students go to these schools. The third area speaker touched on is victimhood aspect-inspite of whatever is happening Muslims are joining civil services, elite service and as a community we need not to fall into the victimhood discourse.

She also raised an important issue of how education should not be relegated to charity or donations and should be kept in the domain of basic common good.

About IMPAR - Indian Muslims for Progress and Reforms

Promoted by 300 plus most prominent Muslims from different walks of life, IMPAR is a national forum, which aims to work in making a meaningful difference to the community's engagement with the society and the nation. The Forum is comprised of the eminent persons from politics, bureaucracy, corporate, business, academia, science, economy, journalism, policy making, art and culture and philanthropy etc. As the national think tank and apex coordination body IMPAR is mobilizing the voice of progressive and modern Muslims to collectively express their constructive views to the media and the nation. IMPAR is also working on promoting education and awareness, national ethos, rationale thinking and scientific temperament and reforms in the community. Like Mahatma Gandhi said, let's be the change that we wish to see in the world, IMPAR is committed to bring about a positive change in the community and to meaningfully contribute to the social and economic development of the nation

Indian Muslims for Progress and Reforms

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