



GENDER INEQUALITY AMONG INDIAN MUSLIMS: MYTH AND REALITY

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Abstract: Gender inequalities exist in almost all societies and communities of the world. However, their nature, forms and causes are not similar everywhere. They differ from society to society and within a society from one social group to another. Hence, gender inequalities cannot properly be understood and explained if delinked from group inequalities. Logically group inequalities precede gender inequalities as social organizations and practices as well as material benefits and deprivations of a group are critical in creating and sustaining gender inequalities.

The significance of group inequality is very often underestimated in both public and academic discourses on Indian Muslim women whose status is being compared with women of other religious communities but not with men of their own community. Indeed, no meaningful empirical study about gender inequalities among Indian Muslims in comparative framework is available. This paper is an effort to present comparatively figures of the Indian census and findings of empirical studies relating to gender inequality in sex ratio, literacy rate, and elementary education among Hindus and Muslims of Uttar Pradesh. Results of this comparative analysis are contrary to widely prevalent stereotypical views about Muslims and Muslim women as gender inequality is found to be lower among them than among Hindus despite Muslims' marginalized status in the Indian society, economy, and polity.

Key words: Gender inequality, group inequality, sex ratio, literacy rate, Indian Muslim women