

# A Study on the Contribution of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain to the Upliftment of Muslim Women Education System at Present Scenario

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## Abstract:

**Objectives:** The Main purpose of the presents study an empirical study on Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, on women’s empowerment, and educational contributions, social reformation of West Bengal. This research presents an empirical study on Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a prominent figure in the social reformation of Bengal. She advocated for women’s education and challenged the conventional and restrictive roles imposed on women within the household. . She also raised concerns about the oppression of women and the lack of equal opportunities for them in both the political domain and social transformation.

**Subjective:** Rokeya is first Bengali Muslim women feminist writer who can be compared with Virginia Wolf.

**Methodology:** The present study follows in general the method of historical research. The data collected from primary and secondary sources have been analyzed qualitatively.

**Result:** Like Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar, and Rassundori Devi. Begum Rokeya was a Venus into the struggle for women education and against their deplorable condition. Her writings are the manifesto of women education.

**Keywords:** Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Women’s Empowerment, Transformative Women, Women’s Rights, Gender Equality, Female education.

## INTRODUCTION:

In the History of women education Begum Rokeya was a pole star. She was the first lady who dared to speak about the deplorable condition of women. Her voice was the first rebellious utterance for the Muslim women who belong to “Obordh Basini”. She was a social reformer like Vidyasagar, Raja Rammohan Roy. Prada was a prevalent custom back then, restricting women from venturing out and requiring them to remain veiled or hidden from public view. Traditionally, women were not allowed to appear in public or interact with men in certain cultures or communities (Mahmud 2016).

Begum Rokeya occupies a distinguished place in the history of women’s education and social reform. She emerged as a guiding light, often described as a “pole star,” who courageously raised her voice against the oppressed and marginalized condition of women, particularly within the Muslim community. At a time when the practice of purdah strictly confined women within the domestic sphere, she boldly challenged these rigid social norms. Women were expected to remain invisible in

public life and had little or no access to education or independence.

She was rebellious female writer who rebelled against the so called social “taboos” through her writings. She wants to change the condition of “Abodoch Basini” through Education. She is a guiding star for Muslim women education and a remarkable figure at the Renaissance period. On the perspective of women writer she is after Rassundari Devi and Savitri Bai Phule. She was surrounded by obstacles on her journey of women education but she wins an every level through her strong determination and hard-work. She did not get any help from her parents but her fathers and sister helped her secretly to learn English and Bengali. After her marriage her husband helped her a lot to be a female writer and social reformer. But she lost her husband at a very young age and she straggle alone thorough whole life to emancipate Muslim women from their all kinds of bondage, to educate them and to make them independent. After Shekhawat's death, Rukaiya's stepdaughter and her husband were evicted from the house (Roy, 2019).

### Objectives:

- Examining Begum Rokeya’s Role in the Evolution of Women’s Liberation Movements To
  - Fund other contribution for the upliftment of Muslim women education.
- To find out the Impact of Sakhawat Hossain thoughts on today’s Muslim educational system.
- To understand the concept of women empowerment.
  - Analysis of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s Contribution to Women’s Empowerment.

### Methodology:

The present study follows general the method of Historical research. The data collected from primary and secondary sources have been analyzed qualitatively. The primary sources of the study is The books written by Begum Rokeya are the primary sources like “Sultana’s Dream “Padma rang“Oborodh basini” “Motichur”,and the secondary data of the studyisThe books written on Begum Rokeya are the Secondary sources. These are Nari Pragati char Anannya. By Ahmed Rafik. “Nari Mukti Begum. Rokeya Abong Anyanyo” by Hasan Begam, “Nari Muktir Pathikrit” by Mofidul Hague,Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain ,Jibon OSahitya Karma by Md. Shamsul Alam, Begum Rokeya Jibon Sahitya by Motahar Hossain Sufi, “Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain Sahitya Charchay Nari Jagoron” by Rezwana Afroj, Nari Jageroner Agradnt byAnoan Hossain “Sei Meyatir Kotha” by Miratun Nahar.

### Findings:

#### A Biographical Précis of Begum Rokeya

Begum Rokeya was born into a traditional Bengali Muslim family. In the era of undivided Bengal, education wasn't prioritized for men, and even less so for women. Basic autonomy was a distant dream for women, who were confined to seclusion, especially i the presence of men and strangers. They lived veiled lives, hidden from the world. Despite these restrictions, Rokeya's older sister Karimun nisa and brother supported his pursuit of knowledge. She secretly learned Bengali and English (Mahmud, 2016), often studying by candlelight at night after the household had fallen asleep. At 16, Rokeya married Syed Sakhawat Hossain, a liberal and progressive man nearly 40 years old. He encouraged her education and championed her writing, playing a pivotal role in her development as a writer. Rokeya credited her husband for enabling

Her to publish her work. Defying societal norms and patriarchal rigidity, she pursued education and voiced feminist ideas through her writing, setting an inspiring example for Muslim women in Bengal. After his passing, she maintained her dignity despite adversity.

### **Literary Works and Legacy**

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's literary journey was deeply shaped by the encouragement of her husband, and she soon established herself as a remarkable voice in colonial Bengal. Her writings were frequently published in renowned journals such as Nabnoor, Sawgat, Masik Mohammadi, Nabprabha, Al- Islam, Nowroz, Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika, \*The Mussalman\*, and \*Indian Ladies Magazine\* (Hasan, 2018). Through her works, she explored diverse dimensions of women's social condition, their struggles, access to education, and fundamental rights. Her central objective was to promote a feminist outlook that critically analyzed the challenges encountered by women in a male-dominated society, with the goal of transforming their lives. Her literary career began in 1902 with a Bengali prose piece titled \*Pipasa\* (The Thirst) (Mahmud, 2016). In 1904, she authored the influential essay collection \*Motichur, Volume I\*, followed by \*Motichur, Volume II\* in 1922 (Quayum, 2016; Mahmud, 2016). In these writings, she strongly advocated gender equality and urged both men and women to actively participate in societal progress by ensuring equal rights and striving for women's economic, social, and political empowerment. She identified lack of education as the principal cause of women's backwardness and examined this issue from multiple perspectives. In 1905, she produced another groundbreaking work, the science fiction story *Sultana's Dream*, which marked a pivotal moment in feminist literature, not only in Bengali but across the world. Today, it is regarded as a landmark contribution to global feminist writing. In addition, she wrote essays such as \*God Gives, Man Robs\* (1927) and \*Educational Ideals for Indian Girls\* (1931), both published in \*The Mussalman\* magazine (Mahmud, 2016). Her novel *Padmarag* (1924) further demonstrated her literary excellence. In *Abarodhbasini* (1931), she critically examined the purdah system, presenting both its constructive and problematic aspects. Through her essays, fiction, and novels, Begum Rokeya consistently emphasized the importance of women's education and equality. Using a blend of wit and satire, she exposed the unequal position of women in patriarchal societies. Her writings sought to awaken social consciousness, challenge injustices carried out in the name of religion, and highlight that true empowerment of women is impossible without education and the freedom to pursue careers according to their own aspirations .

### **Defining women's education**

According to begum Rokeya, Muslim women's education means more than just learning to read and write- it is a path to awareness, self-respect, and freedom from oppression She believed that true education for Muslim women should empower them intellectually, socially, and morally, helping them to think critically, understand their rights, question social injustices, and contribute meaningfully to society. For Rokeya, education was not limited to religious instruction but included modern, secular knowledge that would enable women to participate equally in public and private life. H vision aimed to break traditional barriers and create a generation of educated Muslim women who could lead with confidence and dignity.

### **Educational Philosophy of Begum Rokeya**

According to Rokeya Begum, educational thought refers to a progressive and reformative approach to education that emphasizes liberation of the mind, equality of gender, and social upliftment. Her educational philosophy was rooted in the belief that education should awaken critical thinking, promote

moral values, and equip individuals- especially women- with the knowledge and confidence to challenge social injustices. She strongly advocated for a system that combined both modern scientific knowledge and moral development, enabling Muslim women to lead dignified and independent lives. Rokeya's educational thought was revolutionary for her time, as it aimed to transform society through the enlightenment and empowerment of women, rather than merely training them for domestic roles.

### **Education as the Key to Liberation**

She strongly believed that education is the only path to freedom and self-reliance for women. According to her, without education, women remain dependent and oppressed.

### **Emphasis on Female Education**

At a time when girls were denied schooling, she actively promoted girls' education and worked to remove social barriers that restricted them from learning.

### **Balance of Religious and Modern Education**

Rokeya supported a balanced curriculum that included both religious teachings and modern subjects like science, language, and practical knowledge.

### **Education for Economic Independence**

She believed education should make women economically self-sufficient, enabling them to stand on their own and contribute to society.

### **Criticism of Purdah System**

She argued that strict purdah (veil system) limited women's access to education and development, and she raised her voice against such practices.

### **Practical and Skill-Based Learning**

Rokeya emphasized that education should not be limited to theory but should include skills that help women in real life.

### **Begum Rokeyas speeches writing and public activity**

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, popularly known as Begum Rokeya, was a pioneering Bengali feminist writer, educationist, and social reformer of the early 20th century. Born in 1880 in British India (now Bangladesh), she dedicated her life to promoting \*\*gender equality, female upliftment, and social justice\*\*. Despite facing rigid societal restrictions, she used her speeches, writings, and public engagements as powerful tools to challenge patriarchal norms and advocate for women's advancement.

### **Promotion of Female Education**

One of her most significant strategies was highlighting the importance of education for women. She believed that education was the foundation of \*\*women's liberation and personal growth\*\*. To achieve this, she founded the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School in Kolkata in 1911, providing modern and progressive learning opportunities for girls.

### **Intellectual and Creative Writings**

Begum Rokeya used her literary talent to challenge social inequalities and advocate for \*\*female emancipation and intellectual independence\*\*. Her renowned work, *Sultana's Dream*, presents a visionary world where women lead society. Through such writings, she encouraged women to imagine freedom and question existing power structures.

### **Social Outreach and Public Address**

She actively participated in public platforms, delivering speeches to spread awareness about \*\*women's dignity, equality, and active participation in society\*\*. Her engagements in meetings and conferences helped in mobilizing public opinion against oppressive customs.

### **Demand for Institutional and Legal Changes**

Begum Rokeya strongly advocated for reforms to enhance **women's social and legal standing**. She emphasized rights such as access to education, property ownership, and involvement in governance. Her influence can be seen in platforms like the All-India Women's Conference, where issues of women's progress were widely discussed.

### **Encouragement of Independence and Self-Sufficiency**

She motivated women to become confident and self-reliant. By promoting skill development and economic independence, she worked towards building **empowered and self-sufficient individuals** capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

### **Interpretation within Religious and Cultural Framework:**

Begum Rokeya engaged deeply with religious and cultural traditions. While challenging patriarchal interpretations, she argued that **female empowerment and education align with Islamic principles**, making her ideas socially acceptable and impactful.

### **Rokeya's Mission for Women's Academic Awakening**

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain played a pioneering role in the upliftment of women's education, and her contribution remains deeply relevant even in today's world. She strongly believed that education is the foundation of women's empowerment, enabling them to become self-reliant and independent. In a time when women were confined within strict social boundaries, she courageously opposed practices like purdah and actively worked to change conservative mindset. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain not only advocated women's education in theory but also proved it through practical efforts and powerful writings. She established the **Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Kolkata in 1911**, which became a landmark institution for Muslim girls' education at a time when female literacy was extremely low. She also founded the **Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam**, an organization dedicated to women's welfare, education, and social upliftment. Through her bold publications like **Sultana's Dream**, where she imagined a society ruled by educated women, and **Padmarag**, she criticized gender inequality and highlighted the importance of education. Her essays in works like **Abarodh bashini** exposed the oppressive conditions of women and called for reform. In the present scenario, institutions for girls, women's colleges, and awareness campaigns reflect her legacy, showing how her schools, organizations, and writings together laid a strong foundation for modern women's education and empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

Begum Rokeya sakhawat Hossain stands as a pioneering figure in the field of women's education and empowerment, especially for Muslim women in India. Her belief that education leads to independence continues to remain highly relevant even today. Through her efforts in establishing Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School, she transformed her vision into reality despite strong social opposition. Her literary work **Sultana's Dream** reflects her progressive ideas of gender equality and women's potential. Not only a visionary thinker but also a dedicated activist, her contributions align with modern initiatives like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**. Her emphasis on science education, higher studies, and vocational training for women is still significant in the present context. Thus, her life and work remain a timeless source of inspiration for achieving true empowerment and equality in society.

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