



## DISCRIMINATION & SOCIAL EXCLUSION FOCUSING ON MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** *India has made a pledge six decades ago to build an inclusive, plural and secular society which would equitably integrate its religious minorities while respecting their distinct identities and honouring difference. This is particularly true of our largest minority community, despite Indian law that considers all men and women equal subjects; the Muslim religion does not treat them as such, Muslim women are the most notable Indian citizens for having their constitutional rights neglected and are denied equal protection of the law as citizens.*

*They are considered the most disadvantaged, impoverished and politically marginalized group within society as well as the most economically and socially vulnerable the majority of Muslim women are never employed outside the home, Muslims, who constitute 13.4 per cent of the population and also socially economically and educationally backward. In this back drop, the present paper briefly reviews the existing status of Muslim minorities in India. It further critically analyzes the status of socio economic representation to the Muslim minorities. India has one of the most diverse indigenous populations. People belonging to many religions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Christianity live in this country since time immemorial.*

*Muslims are not only the largest minority community, but their presence is visible in all the states and union territories. Nonetheless, discrimination, social stagnation and educational marginalization have cumulatively resulted in growing economic backwardness of the Muslims in large parts of the country. This largest minority community has been relegated to the lowest socio-economic stratum amongst all religious minorities in the post-independent India.*



## **INTRODUCTION**

A variety of factors have been identified to explain the observed relative deprivation among Muslims in India. These include differentials in endowments across social groups, actual or perceived discrimination, behaviour patterns or attitudes and supply of educational and employment opportunities. In the Indian context, economic conditions with community and caste affiliations present themselves as appropriate variables that should go into defining these groups. The Sachar Committee, socio-religious communities (SRCs) within both Muslim and non-Muslim population are sought to be defined in a fairly disaggregated manner.

Apart from education, employment is the other major concern. Low participation in government jobs is partly seen as a result of discrimination. The employment situation has deteriorated because globalization and liberalization processes appear to have affected Muslim occupations (mainly self-employment) more adversely than others, especially for women. This, coupled with low bargaining power of workers (especially home-based), results in low incomes. Non-availability of credit curtails the ability of the community to improve their economic status; Muslim concentration areas are designated as “red zones” where credit flows are virtually non-existent. Discrimination in the implementation of government programmes and in infrastructure provision adds to the problems in the economic sphere.

This discrimination in various economic areas coexists with low political participation. Here again discrimination is seen in the non-inclusion of Muslims in the voter lists and the unfair delimitation exercises wherein Muslim majority constituencies are reserved for the SC category, even when the latter have higher population shares in other constituencies in the states. Consequently, Muslim candidates are not able to contest from Muslim concentrated areas.

After the submission of the Sachar Committee Report, several studies have undertaken and data-based analysis of the socioeconomic and educational conditions of Muslims in India is traced. Many researchers, policy makers and, in fact, Muslims also believe that education can be the only mechanism to enhance their socioeconomic status and facilitate entry into better paid jobs. At the same time there are concerns about access to educational facilities



and possible discrimination in the formal labour market. The paper reviews the available evidence on the patterns of Muslim participation in education and employment.

Sachar Committee report was probably the first attempt to analyse the conditions of the Muslim community using large-scale empirical data. It clearly brought out the relative deprivation of Muslims in India in various dimensions including employment and education. The Sachar report highlighted the heterogeneity within the Community as well as the multi-dimensionality of issues that it faces. The multiple dimensions of the issues get reflected in two inter-related ways, like other minorities, Muslims simultaneously face, problems relating to security, identity and equity and the interplay of these dimensions is at the core of the socio-economic and political processes that the Community is exposed on to a daily basis. These problems vary across 'spaces' – education, employment, political and social – and probably over time. Conceptually, participation in one 'space' can be seen to be linked with participation in another 'space'.

The Muslim community's perceptions summarized above highlight a process wherein identity based discrimination reduces access, enhances inequity and adds to insecurity. Security problems also reduce access to schools, housing, infrastructure etc. (especially for women), which in turn contribute to inequities. As expected, literacy rates are much lower in rural areas as compared to urban areas but both for males and females, the rates have improved in the last decade, especially after 2004-05. Also, the patterns and trends are more or less the same as the aggregate trends described above, except that literacy rates have not improved very significantly for rural women belonging to Muslim-OBC households; The Sachar Committee suggested that the availability of Urdu schools is very limited. Such schools are important for the community in Urdu-speaking areas, especially at the primary level where education in the mother tongue is generally preferred. Madrasas are an important community initiative but their reach is very limited; less than 4 per cent school-going Muslim children go to madrasas. Consequently, mainstream schools are the only means to satisfy increasing demand for education in the Community. And the supply of such schools in the vicinity of Muslims habitats may be one of the reasons for lower educational attainments.



## **EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS OF MUSLIMS**

Muslims are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality education; their deprivation increases manifold as the level of education rises. In some instances the relative share for Muslims is lower than even the SCs who are victims of a long standing caste system. Such relative deprivation calls for a significant policy shift, in the recognition of the problem and in devising corrective measures, as well as in the allocation of resources.

The number of Urdu medium schools is very low in most States. This can be seen from the low percentage of children enrolled in Urdu medium. The Muslims in Karnataka, especially those living in its southern part, speak Urdu and prefer to get primary education in Urdu medium schools. The State of Karnataka has made provision for such education across Karnataka, even in its northern parts if there is a demand for Urdu education.

According to the 2001 Census there are 6.5 million Muslims in Karnataka comprising 12% of the population, and Muslim children aged 6-14 years were about 0.2 million in 2004, comprising 14% of all children in this age group. About 70% of Muslim children report Urdu as their mother tongue indicating that Urdu is an important medium of instruction in Karnataka schools. Data from the Department of Education in Karnataka reveals that a large proportion (77%) of institutions that impart primary level education in a minority languages are of Urdu medium. While this proportion falls for high schools, it is still significantly high. Speaking children are enrolled in Urdu-medium primary schools; while this proportion is lower for high schools, it is still significantly high at 60%. Interestingly, a greater proportion of girls are enrolled in Urdu-medium schools.

A consideration of the staffing pattern also reflects the adequacy of the Urdu medium schools to satisfy the demand for education in Urdu. Not only is the number of teachers in Urdu-medium schools high, but their gender break up corresponds to the gender structure of the Urdu-medium students.<sup>31</sup> This is an important aspect as literature has documented the preference for Muslim parents to send their daughters to schools staffed by women teachers. Even in high schools about 50% teachers are women. Further, there are even Teachers Training Schools at the D.Ed. (Diploma in Education) level in Urdu. Candidates who have passed PUC can apply for this course. After qualifying, they are eligible to teach in lower primary schools.



Welfare of minority has high on the agenda of the government ever since it adopted inclusive growth" as its guiding principle of the governance in the Democratic country like India. It's the duty of the state and as a corollary, responsibility of the majority community to ensure the welfare of minorities so that all sections of the society feel proud to be part of the democratic setup and thus contribute their best to the development of the nation. Specially in our historical context: where all communities and sections of people had marched shoulder to shoulder and led down there lives in the war of Independence, the concept of „Inclusive Growth" becomes sine qua non for the roadmap of development and progress.

It was in this context that the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, had appointed in March 2005 a high level committee under the leader ship of justices Rajindar sachar to prepare a report on social, economical and educational statues of the Muslim community of India. There was no authentic information on the social, economic and educational backwardness of this community, thereby hampering proper formulation and implementation of specific polices interventions and programmes to address the issues relating to its social-economic backwardness. This 7 members of High Level Committee, properly known has sachar committee, gave its report in November 2006 and it clearly found that the Muslim community was really "seriously lagging. A High Level Committee to study their conditions was set up in 1980 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Gopal Singh. The Committee, in its report, concluded that the poor among the Muslims could not avail the opportunities in education, employment and economic activities because of isolation and various historical factors. In view of this, in 1983, the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme was launched to provide a sense of security to minority communities and ensure their rapid socio-economic development. This Programme was based on a three-pronged approach, (i) to tackle the situation arising out of communal riots; (ii) to ensure adequate representation of the minority communities in employment under the Central and State Governments as well as Public Sector Undertakings; and (iii) other measures, such as, ensuring flow of benefits to the minority communities under various development programmes, maintenance and development of religious places, and redressal of grievances of the Minorities.

Social exclusion keeps a social group outside power centres and resources. It takes the form of segregation from the social, political, economic, cultural, educational and religious



domains of society. It thus imbues a sense of superiority and inferiority in members of a society or culture and results in a system of domination and subjugation. These processes ultimately lead to oppression and exploitation.

Socially excluded people are often denied the opportunities available to others to increase their income and escape from poverty by their own efforts. So, even though the economy may grow and general income levels may rise, excluded people are likely to be left behind, and make up an increasing proportion of those who remain in poverty. Exclusion does not cause poverty through a simple sorting of those who are in or out, those who can or cannot participate in society. Socially excluded groups often do participate in economic growth processes, but they do so on unequal terms. Labour markets illustrate this most clearly. The powerlessness of excluded groups is exploited and at the same time their disadvantaged position is reinforced. Amartya Sen describes as “unfavourable inclusion”, namely, through differential treatment in the terms and conditions of a contract, discrimination in the price charged and received by discriminated groups, in fees and services for water and electricity, rent on houses, and paying a higher price for goods bought.

## **PRIVATE EFFORTS IN UPLIFTING THE MUSLIM MINORITIES ALONG WITH GOVERNMENT**

Till the Seventh Five Year Plan, however, Minorities continued to get the Developmental benefits along with the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). In 1989, an Autonomous, non-political, non-profit organization, the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF), was set up to promote education amongst educationally backward Muslims in general and Muslim girls in particular. With a corpus of Rs 100 crore, it Undertook activities like establishing and expanding schools/residential schools/ Colleges/hostels; purchasing laboratory equipment and furniture etc; setting Up/strengthening vocational/technical training centre/institutes; providing Scholarships to Meritorious girl students; opening Maulana Azad Sadbhawana Kendras; (since Discontinued) and announcing Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Literacy Awards. In the final Year of the 10th Plan the corpus of Rs 100 crore with the Foundation was doubled. The interest accrued on the corpus was used for implementation of its educational schemes. It sanctioned a total grant in-aid of Rs. 91.81 crore, to 702 NGOs/Local Bodies located in 20 States and 2 UTs for construction/expansion of schools/colleges/ girls hostels/polytechnics/ and purchase of equipment's/ machinery/ furniture up to December,



2006. The Foundation also distributed scholarships amounting to Rs. 6.98 crore to 6986 girl students in 29 states/ UTs between-2003-04 to 2005-06. During the 8th Plan (1992-97), two exclusive schemes were introduced for their educational and economic development. In The Ninth Plan (1997-02), saw a new Central Sector Scheme for Pre-examination Coaching for Weaker Sections based on economic criteria. It assisted voluntary organizations to run coaching centres to prepare Minorities for various competitive and professional examinations. As few organizations came forward, this scheme along with the Pre-examination Coaching Scheme for OBCs was merged with the existing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Coaching Scheme for Scheduled Castes in 2001. It was renamed Coaching and Allied Scheme for Weaker Sections including Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities. During the Tenth Five Year Plan, the authorized share capital for NMDFC was raised to Rs.650 crore. Of this, the share of Govt. of India is Rs.422.50 crores (65%) and the share of State Govts. is Rs. 169 crores (26%). The remaining Rs. 58.50 crores (9%) is to be contributed by institutions/individuals interested in the well being and empowerment of Minorities. The task of the NMDFC is to extend loans at concessional rates to enable economically weak Minorities to take up income generating activities. Since its inception, NMDFC has given financial assistance to 2.16 lakh beneficiaries spread over 25 States and 3 Union Territories with an amount of Rs.827.00 crores. 1994, the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) was established Eleventh Five Year Plan 136 with an authorized share capital of Rs.500 crore.

Despite these schemes, till the end of 2005-06, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment continued to be the implementing agency for programmes for educational Development and economic empowerment of Minorities. Then on January 29, 2006, a Separate Ministry of Minority Affairs was created. It recommended setting up of an autonomous Assessment Monitoring Authority (AMA), creation of National Data Bank and constitution of an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC). It also suggested provision of hostels facilities at reasonable cost, inclusion of minority aspects in the general curriculum for teacher training, setting up and strengthening of state run Urdu medium schools, linkage of Madarsas to Higher Secondary Board, recognition of the degrees from Madarsas for eligibility in competitive examinations, provision of financial and other support to Madarsas.





## **PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

It is well recognised by demographers that the largest improvements in life expectancy can be achieved by focusing on infant mortality rather than mortality reduction at older ages. Saving the life of one child adds about 70 years to his/her life, saving that of a 60-year-old may only add another 15. Similarly, reduction in educational inequality at the primary education stage can have a long-lasting impact and could be the most leveraged investment a society can make. However, Indian public policies are excessively focused on reducing inequalities in college education, possibly because interventions at younger ages are harder to identify and implement. Nonetheless, for a substantial reduction in educational inequality, we must focus on primary education. In order to do this, four types of activities are needed:

**(a)** Ensuring that educational policies do not inadvertently exacerbate pre-existing inequalities: It is important to ensure that the RTE is implemented in a way that reduces the reliance on parental inputs or resources and increases the role of schools in providing education. In systems where a great deal of reliance is placed on homework and/or private tuitions, children whose parents are unable to provide the required supervision are likely to be left behind. A couple of RTE provisions may well have such unintended effects. First, the RTE requires that newly-enrolled children be placed in classes appropriate to their age, regardless of their skill level. Second, children cannot be retained in Classes I–VIII.

This places a tremendous burden on the teacher. When coupled with the fact that children who start school late are often from dalit, adivasi or Muslim backgrounds, this may lead to lower skill growth among those who start out later than their classmates. A number of studies have suggested that overambitious curricula without concomitant support to teachers lead to low levels of growth in learning outcomes (Pritchett and Beatty 2012) and inappropriate placement is likely to place too high a burden on teachers. One of the ways of dealing with this challenge may be to have remedial training.

**(b)** Special programmes for children from disadvantaged groups: Research suggests that children often lose ground during school vacations, particularly if they come from families where reading materials are not available. Having special programmes during summer vacations and other holidays for children who are in danger of falling behind or need remedial classes can help alleviate some of these problems. Rayat Schools, an interesting





programme in Maharashtra, has sub-schools attached to normal ones for children who have dropped out or fall behind. Additionally, programmes designed to keep girls in school that involve cash payment to parents on completion of Class XII could be extended to dalit, adivasi and Muslim children.

**(c) Identifying specific problems faced by disadvantaged children in school:** Many studies are underway to identify the specific reasons for lower learning of disadvantaged children at school. Recent studies have shown that:

- ✓ Teachers are being indifferent to teaching these children and checking their class/homework.
- ✓ In case of shortages and even otherwise these children do not receive free books and uniforms like other children;
- ✓ Other children in the class tease and trouble them discouraging them from attending school and teachers do not intervene most of the time; and
- ✓ These children are often made to sit separately in class, drink water from separate vessels or play in separate areas.

Such discriminatory and exclusionary practices are highly de-motivating and discouraging for the children and hence need to be identified and teachers and staff trained to not only be more sensitive but be pro-active in paying special attention to children from these groups.

**(d) Better monitoring of existing programmes:** A number of existing programmes (such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme) fail to deliver the intended benefits and services. The food distribution is found to be discriminatory with food not given or served in separate utensils or with separate seating arrangements (Thorat and Lee 2005). Increasing the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on dalit, adivasi or Muslim issues in programme monitoring may ensure that benefits are appropriately distributed while raising the awareness level in the community about its educational needs.

**(e) Research on school performance and teaching techniques:** Very little attention has been directed towards classroom processes that put some students at a disadvantage, or effective teaching techniques that can reduce the gap. For example, we know little about whether schools for only children from minority communities can remedy the educational disparity. A number of innovative programmes already exist. For example, schools have been set up by Navsarjan in Gujarat with specially designed curricula for dalit children.



Evaluation of these curricula and monitoring of outcome may help inform larger educational reforms.

Evidence suggests that there are clearly a set of factors specific to children from minority communities which unless explicitly understood, specified and made part of the educational reform process, would make this new initiative less effective in delivering to children from these groups and bridging the education, and eventually, income gap. In addition, the time and levels/standards at which these specific interventions are to be made is also important and need to be made part of the education reforms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present Muslim social exclusion needs rectification through affirmative action. Religious minorities are the most vulnerable section of the Indian society in general and Muslim Minorities in particular. Muslim minorities deserves social justice and equity as much as other disadvantaged groups including Dalit's and OBCs. There is a need for inclusion of Muslim minorities in the main stream of economic development of the Nation. The eleventh plan ensured the same. The present paper briefly reviews the existing status of Muslim minorities in India. Muslim Social exclusion can be seen in the form of segregation socially, politically, economically, culturally, educationally in Indian society, the status of socio economic and educational representation to the Muslim minorities. Finally suggests for the inclusiveness of the Muslim minorities.

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