

MUSLIM MINORITY EXCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: NEED FOR INCLUSIVE POLICY

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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 honoring difference. This is particularly true of our largest minority community, Muslims, who constitute 13.4 per cent of the population and also socially economically and educationally backward. Muslim minorities are socially excluded group.

Muslim Social exclusion can be seen in the form of segregation socially, politically, economically, culturally, educationally in Indian society. .

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 Daliths 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. 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 and educational representation to the Muslim minorities. Finally suggests for the inclusiveness of the Muslim minorities in the development agenda of the Government.

KEYWORDS: Muslim, minorities' socio economic and education, development.

I. INTRODUCTION

SECTION – I

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. Till then 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, Wakf properties and redressal of grievances of the Minorities.

Social exclusion keeps a social group outside power centers 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.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: MULTI DIMENSIONNEL CONCEPT.

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.

The Muslim community is another excluded group in India. There are more Muslims who live below the poverty line than any other group

Neither at the policy level nor in programme interventions do Muslims get their due share as citizens of this country.

II PRIVATE EFFORTS IN UPLIFTING THE MUSLIM MINORITIES ALONG WITH GOVT

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 equipments/ machinery/ furniture upto 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 Madarasas to Higher Secondary Board, recognition of the degrees from Madarasas for eligibility in competitive examinations, provision of financial and other support to Madarasas.

METHODOLOGY

A Descriptive and explorative methodology is followed. The secondary data based on various reports from Govt dept, and news papers. A critical analysis is made in this paper.

SECTION - 2

III. SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS

The majority of Indian Muslims suffer grave deprivation in social opportunity, because of lack of access to education, health care and other public services, and to employment. For the most part, they are even more disadvantaged than Dalits and are emerging as, if they have not already crystallized into, India's principal underclass. Forty-three per cent of them live below the official poverty line. Muslims are more likely to live in hovels without electricity than Dalits. Only 19 per cent have piped water supply, compared to 23 per cent Dalits.

Muslim men's work participation rate (48 per cent) is lower than Dalit males' (53 per cent). For Muslim women, it is just 9.6 per cent, less than half the Dalit women's 23 per cent. Muslims are less likely to use the public distribution system for food (22 per cent) than Dalits (32 per cent) or vaccinate their children (40 per cent) than Dalits (47 per cent).

IV. EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Until the mid-1970s, Muslims were typically less disadvantaged than Dalits, although clearly worse off than Other Backward Classes. Now, they have slipped to the bottom. Today, enrolment of urban Muslim boys in school is 10 percentage-point lesser than that of Dalits. For rural girls, the absolute gap is smaller (4 percentage-point), but huge in comparison to the 12 percentage-point lead they earlier had.

The literacy rate among Muslims is 59 per cent, below the national average (65 per cent). A half of rural Muslim children are illiterate, as are a third of urban children. One-eighth of Muslim children aged between 6 and 13 do not attend school. About 65 per cent of Muslim children in the 6-10 age groups are enrolled, but only about half as many in the next age-bracket (11-14) are.

Less than a sixth of the rural Muslim children enrolled in primary school make it to high school. For urban children, the high-school enrolment ratio is 28 per cent. An abysmal 1.3 per cent of Muslim men in rural areas, and an even lower 0.3 per cent of women, reach the graduate level. The percentages for urban areas are 5.1 and 2.5.

One reason for the widening difference in enrolment between Muslim, on the one hand, and Dalit and other Hindu children, on the other, is the low importance attributed to education by their parents - 23 per cent, 17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. This points to serious social backwardness.

The same dismal pattern is reproduced at the level of housing - marked by high and growing ghettoisation - employment and a range of social indicators, barring two. The sex-

ratio among Muslims is significantly less biased against women than amongst Hindus. The infant mortality rate is lower. Other indices too show that Muslims have far less "daughter aversion" than Hindus.

This should put paid to the widely held view, based on illegitimate extrapolation of the purdah hypothesis, that Muslim women invariably face greater discrimination than Hindu women. A two-volume study by Ritu Menon and Zoya Hasan based on the largest-ever survey of Indian Muslim women also presents a much more complex and differentiated picture (*Unequal Citizens and in a Minority*, Oxford University Press, 2004). So much for the Hindu communalists' crocodile tears over the "plight of Muslim women" - a stereotype which views Muslim men as inherently violent and fanatical carnivores.

V. EMPLOYMENT

A counterpart of the Indian Muslim's social status is his/her employment status. Nearly half of Muslim men between the ages 25 and 45 are self-employed, compared to 28 per cent of Dalits, and 40 per cent of Hindus. Only 18 per cent are in regular employment (Hindus, 25 per cent).

Muslim under-representation in government jobs is distressingly stark. Data compiled by the Sachar Committee from 12 States (where the Muslims' population share is 15.4 per cent), shows that they hold a tiny 5.7 per cent of government jobs. In States with a high Muslim population (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal), this ratio is less than a third of their population share. In Maharashtra, it is less than one-fifth!

In Kerala, Muslims account for a seemingly respectable 10.4 per cent of state employees. But this ratio is well under half their population share (24.7 per cent). In West Bengal, Muslims' share in state employment is an abysmal 4.2 per cent - a fraction of their population share (25.2 per cent). This shows how deep and pervasive is the systemic exclusion and under-representation of Muslims.

VI. PUBLIC SERVICES - AN EXCLUDED WAY

In the elite cadre services such as the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Foreign Service and the Indian Police Service, Muslim representation is dismal - respectively, 2.2 per cent, 1.6 per cent and 3.0 per cent.

Muslims are altogether barred from key "line" positions in the intelligence agencies, the Indian Space Research Organization, the National Security Guards and other VVIP protection forces. Their presence in paramilitary forces is nominal (1 to 5 per cent).

In the armed forces, Muslim representation is believed to be just 2 per cent. Recently, the military refused to confirm this on the specious ground that it would "communalise" the secular Army. This is a deplorable instance of denying the truth and of forfeiting the opportunity to take corrective action.

VII. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Equally disconcerting is the under-representation of Muslims in politics, in particular, legislatures. Professor Iqbal A. Ansari, author of numerous books on communalism and

secularism, has painstakingly documented this in Political Representation of Muslims in India 1952-2004 (Manak, 2006) for the Lok Sabha and 12 State Assemblies, including the six States (Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Maharashtra and Kerala), which account for over 60 per cent of India's Muslims.

The number of Muslim Lok Sabha MPs has varied between 21 and 49, or between just 4.3 and 6.6 of the strength of the House - less than one-half the Muslims' population share. The number reached a high of 40-plus only in the Seventh and Eighth Lok Sabhas (1980 and 1984). It has now fallen to 36. The average for the last three Lok Sabhas is just 6 per cent.

Even worse, cumulatively, there have been only 11 women Muslim MPs in all the 14 Lok Sabhas put together. Had Muslim women been represented in the House to the same extent as their share in the population.

The primary reason for Muslim under-representation is their under-nomination by political parties. In the first-past-the-post system, parties tend to favour the majority community. Under the growing influence of Hindutva, many parties have also been reluctant to nominate Muslims, although they might be strong candidates.

If Muslim "deprivation" or under-representation in the Lok Sabha is measured in relation to their population, it is pretty pervasive nationally (47 per cent). It is particularly high in Rajasthan (91 per cent), Gujarat (82 per cent), Delhi (86 per cent), Maharashtra (71 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (50 per cent), and Tamil Nadu (53 per cent). Even in Kerala and West Bengal, with a strong Muslim presence, the deprivation rate exceeds 40 per cent.

The situation in State legislatures is even more dismal. In Andhra Pradesh, Muslim under-representation in the Legislative Assembly is 61 per cent (much higher than in the Lok Sabha, 41 per cent), in Bihar 47 per cent, Gujarat 79 per cent, Karnataka 71 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 69 per cent, and Maharashtra 62 per cent. Rajasthan shows an improved index (56 per cent) over its Lok Sabha score. But Uttar Pradesh shows deterioration (from 39 to 46 per cent).

These figures speak of a total betrayal of the inclusive promise held out just after Independence. When the Constituent Assembly debated and rejected reservation of legislative seats for the religious minorities in 1949, Nehru called it "an act of faith above all for the majority community because they will have to show after this that they can behave to others in a generous, fair and just way [by keeping their representation commensurate with their population]. Let us live up to that faith." India has not lived up.

VIII. CONFRONTING ISSUES

One of the worst forms - but a good index - of discrimination against Muslims is their over-representation in prisons in all the States surveyed barring Assam. In Gujarat, Muslims are two-and-a-half times likelier to be in prison than Hindus in relation to their population. In Maharashtra, Muslims account for 10.6 per cent of the population, but for 40.6 per cent of all prisoners

Even in Tamil Nadu, the proportions are 5.6 per cent and 9.6 per cent. More than 60 per cent of this prison population consists of under trials - probable victims of the selective recent application of anti-terrorist measures to Muslims.

IX. NEED FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The present unacceptable situation cries for rectification through affirmative action. Muslims deserve affirmative action which has to be followed other disadvantaged groups, including Dalits and OBCs. Affirmative action need not take the form of reservations in jobs or school quotas although that too needs to be debated. It just will not do to dismiss the reservations argument if its rejection leads to inaction and perpetuation and aggravation of Muslim exclusion, as happened with the Gopal Singh report. We simply cannot afford further exclusion and alienation of Muslims - morally, politically, or in its implications for social disharmony, strife and violence.

Eventually, one must move towards a proportional representation-based electoral system. This system is far superior to the first-past-the-post system. But in the immediate future, some steps are necessary: The most underprivileged and the OBCs among Muslims must be given a share in the overall Dalit and OBC job and education quotas. And 15 per cent of all Plan expenditure must be set aside for the religious minorities, who constitute 18.4 per cent of the population. The lion's share must go to Muslims.

The MHRD has done well to start recording enrolment of Muslims in schools and to sanction 7,000 primary and upper primary schools in minority-dominated districts during 2006-07, and 32,250 centers under the Education Guarantee Scheme. It is focusing on the 93 districts that have more than a 20 per cent Muslims in the population. Much more must be done at all levels of education.

Measures such as these will help empower Muslims. But the problem of exclusion will still remain. It will need other forms of affirmative action, such as aggressive recruitment to "sensitive" positions in police, military and intelligence agencies - not through quotas, but as special, focused measures to be repeated until Muslim representation reaches an acceptable level.

It goes without saying that the government must simultaneously de-communalise its counter-terrorism strategy and bring the culprits of recent communal violence to book. This is essential to restoring the Muslim community's confidence in the state and the possibility of getting justice. At the end of the day, exclusion spells social disintegration. India's democracy will only be as strong as its pluralism and ability to be inclusive.

X. CONCLUSION

Muslim community of India has been kept deprived from the very beginning. Constitution fails to work where the concern is of Muslims. Policy makers neglect the Muslim as bigger minority of India. Indian government and public run day to day business based on social hatred and Prejudices. Key issue and policy implementation are not

transparent and mostly data is not available. Like Muslims Christians are also prey to Modi model terrorist activities, the world has not taken a serious notice of it. The stay of Dali lama in India was not just a stay rather it proved itself that it is part of a policy i.e. yet potential and hidden. As far as prime minister's 15 point programme is concerned, there is no mandatory powers there are only advisory in nature. Further it needs to have clear cut policy directions for its effective implementation which should have a strong political will among the states is essential because state minority commissions have no statutory powers to address religious minority issues. Recently parliament has passed amendment to give 15% reservation to religious minorities but the practical implication should carry the back log posts in government services has to be included due to the under representation of these excluded social groups which ensures the concept of inclusive growth approach

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