



Research Paper

Socio-economic status of Muslim Minority in 21st century India: Special Reference to Karnataka

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Abstract

"The Muslims are the largest minority group in India and Karnataka, as per census 2011, nearly 15% of Indian population and 13% of Karnataka population comprised of Muslims. We cannot imagine the development of India without the development of this religious group. Many governments sponsored and privately funded researches are conducted to know about the socio-economic conditions in India. My further effort is to understand their position and relevance in the 21st century AD. So, I adopted the primary data collection method and analytical method to understand the actual condition of this religious group based on presently available sources. The Sachar Committee report and consequent committees appointed by the Union and state government of India provide detail information about the concerned issue. Major findings in this paper are, though the policy matter of government is good and friendly to the community, the bureaucratic hurdle, ignorance of Muslim community is the main reason for their backwardness in the socio-economic arena."

Key words: Muslim, minority, Government Committees, Education, Ethnic

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I. Introduction

The promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live". (UNO, 1948)⁽¹⁾ Almost all States have one or more minority groups within their national territories, characterized by their own ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity which differs from that of the majority population. The harmonious relationship of one minority with the other and between the minorities and majorities is a great asset to the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural diversity of global society. It is of prime importance that each citizen has respect for an individual group's identity. Meeting the aspirations of national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and ensuring the rights of persons belonging to minorities acknowledges the dignity and equality of all individuals.

Objective: The main objective of this paper is to know about the condition of the Muslim minority in Karnataka state.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study uses both primary and secondary sources.

RESEARCH GAP

The study of minorities particularly Muslims from their socio-economic condition is done with a limited approach.

1.1. **Concept of Minority**, The expression "minority" has been derived from the Latin word "minor" and the suffix 'ity', which means "small in number". According to Encyclopaedia Britannica minority means "group held together by ties of common descent, language or religious faith and feeling different in these respects from the inhabitants of a given political entity". Louis

Wirth, who pioneered the study of Minority problems offered a definition and classification, defines a Minority as, "A group of people who, because of physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others. The Constitution of India uses the word 'minority' in some Articles (Article 20 to 30 and 350 A to 350 B) but does

not define this word. "any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same. Supreme Court held that the scope of this article is not necessarily restricted to minorities only, as it is commonly assumed to be. This is because of the use of the words 'section of citizens' that include minority and majority as well. Besides this, there is no internationally agreed definition as to which groups constitute minorities. However, Supreme Court, in one of its judgments define minority at the state level in term of protection under Article 30. It held that a minority either linguistic or religious is determinable only by reference to the demography of the State and not by taking into consideration the population of the country as a whole. (MAEF, 2018).⁽²⁾

As regards religious minorities at the national level, all those who profess a religion other than Hinduism are considered minorities. Muslims are the largest religious minority followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain and Parsis in India. For the welfare of this religious and racial minority, the government of India and many state governments created the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The Ministry of Minority Affairs is a ministry of the Government of India that was carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and created on 29 January 2006. It is the apex body for the central government's regulatory and developmental programs for the minority religious communities in India, which include Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains notified as minority communities in The Gazette of India under Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. (GOI C. c., 2011)⁽³⁾ As per the census of 2011, Muslims are the biggest minority in India, they comprised, The Muslims professing Islam are in the majority in Lakshadweep and Jammu & Kashmir. The percentage of Muslims is sizeable in Assam (30.9%), West Bengal (25.2%), Kerala (24.7%), Uttar Pradesh (18.5%) and Bihar (16.5%).

Christianity has emerged as the major religion in three Northeastern states, namely, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. Among other states/Uts, Manipur (34.0%), Goa (26.7%), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (21.7%), Kerala (19.0%), and Arunachal Pradesh (18.7%) have considerable percentages of Christian population to the total population of the State/UT.

Punjab is the stronghold of Sikhism. The Sikh population of Punjab accounts for more than 75 % of the total Sikh population in the country. Chandigarh (16.1%), Haryana (5.5%), Delhi (4.0%), Uttaranchal (2.5%) and Jammu & Kashmir (2.0%) are other important States/Uts having Sikh populations. These six states/Uts together account for nearly 90 percent Sikh population in the country. Other minority religious groups are Janins and Buddhists. In Karnataka, Muslims comprised 12.92%, Christians 1.87, Sikhs 0.05% and Jains 0.72%. (Gandhi, 1921)⁽⁴⁾

When we try to compare different religious minorities in parameters of education, economy and polity, the Muslim minority is the most backward economically, politically and educationally. Our main intention in this paper is to understand the actual condition of these minority groups in India in the 21st century AD.

III. Economic condition of Muslims

2.1 Philosophical Background: Broadly peaking the condition of South Indian Muslims, if we compare different parameters with north Indian Muslim communities here condition of Muslims in

the south is much better. When we compare their conditions with the South Indian majority or even with other minority groups, they are much behind them. About the responsibility of Govt and other communities towards them I like to code this statement. "If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want faith in one's cause. (Narayana, 1968)⁽⁵⁾ One of the speakers said again that "the true solution of the Asiatic question lay in the application of the maxim, 'the greatest good for the greatest number. " We must confess that we are not blind believers in that maxim; we think it has worked untold mischief in many cases and is yet likely to do so in the history of the world's progress. (Kumar, 2018)⁽⁶⁾ Dr. BR Ambedkar strongly believed that the proper handling of minorities and their rights is the true test of a democratic state and society. For this reason, he fought with his contemporaries for a 'substantive equality' rather than just 'formal equality', meaning that minorities be given more weightage than their numerical strength, in 'inverse proportion' to the strength of the majority. His memorandum titled 'States and Minorities' is a document that brings out this aspect. "The second principle is that, as a king has no divine right to rule, so also a majority has no divine right to rule. The majority rule is tolerated only because it is for a limited period and subject to the right to have it changed and secondly, because it is a rule of a political majority, i.e., the majority which has submitted itself to the suffrage of a minority and not a communal majority. If such is the limited scope of authority permissible to a political majority over a political minority, how can a minority of one community be placed under the perpetual subjection of a majority of another community? To allow a majority of one community to rule a minority of another community without requiring the majority to submit itself to the suffrage of the minority, especially when the minority demands it, is to enact a perversion of democratic principle and to show callous disregard for the safety and security of the Hindu minorities." (Sacharr)⁽⁷⁾

2.2. First effort in providing equality : The 21st century started for minorities in India with so many political and existential problems and so Dr. Manmohan Singh government center to understand the actual condition of Muslims in India appointed Sachar Commission under the leadership of Rajinder Sachar, Sri Saiyid Hamid, Dr. TK Ooman, Sri MA Basit, Dr. Rakesh Basant, Dr. Akhater Majeedas members and Dr. Abu Saleha Sharrieff as the member secretary to study the social, economic and educational condition of Muslims in India. The committee submitted its report in 2006 and the report was available in the public domain on November 30, 2006. The 403-page report had suggestions and solutions for the inclusive development of Muslims in India. (Times, 2015)⁽⁸⁾ Their thorough study of Muslim minority condition and their relevance in the twenty-first century give us a strong medium to understand. In continuation to this as follow-up efforts, later many subcommittees were appointed to evaluate the effects of government measures.

IV. PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

When we try to study their representation as sector-wise or department-wise, their representation is very minimal if compared to their percentage of population. Among the minorities of India, Muslim's role in the organized sector is listed as per the different surveys conducted by different agencies. In the private organized sector, their participation is not crossing the 3% mark, which is far behind the demographic percentage of 14% of the total population.

3.1. In corporate sector as per Economic Times Intelligence Group analysis indicates Muslims constitute a mere 2.67% of directors and senior executives — 62 of the 2,324 executives — among the BSE/NSE 0.37 % of 500 companies. These top executives took home 3.14% of the total remuneration drawn by this group. The BSE 500 corresponds to almost 93% of the mid-cap on the stock exchange. The Muslim employment figure in senior management for BSE-100 companies, in comparison, goes up slightly to 4.60% — 27 of 587 total directors and senior executives, though the remuneration drops to 2.56%. Data on blue-collar employment of Muslims, who constitute 14.2% of the population, in the private sector is scarce. (K, 2007)⁽⁹⁾ It is a matter of concern that 15% population's representation is not crossing 4% of corporate executive management. The majority of the Muslim workforce is in the unorganized sector which is very difficult to assess in numbers and with very meagre remuneration.

3.2. (Sengupta, 2007)⁽¹⁰⁾ As per the report the SC, ST, OBC and Muslim workforce is listed far below the workforce in organised sector. There is a keen public interest in and a public debate on affirmative action. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been guaranteed affirmative action through Constitutional protection. For Other Backward Classes, both central and state governments have adopted different norms and kinds of affirmative action. A recent report (Sachar), on the socio-economic conditions of Muslims, has brought out the relative backwardness of this community in several states as well as on an all-India level. In this report, we have noted that social status, along with education and gender, has also contributed to the vulnerability of unorganized workers.

3.3. Illiteracy: The literacy rate among Muslims as per the 2001 census was 59.1% which grows to 68.5% as per the census of 2011. But when we try to see all workers outside agriculture had, on average, 6.5 years of schooling. Among the social groups, the STs had the lowest average years of schooling, 3.8 years, followed by Muslim OBCs, Hindu SCs and Muslim Others with only slightly higher achievements.

3.4. The Incidence of Poverty: The incidence of poverty again is highest among all social-religious groups. The percentage of persons below the poverty line (headcount ratio) during 1999-2000 as estimated by the Planning Commission based on NSSO 55th Round Consumer Expenditure Survey was about 26.1 percent for the country as a whole, 27.1 percent for the rural population and 23.6 percent for the urban population. The poverty ratio of the Muslim OBC workers is closer to the Hindu SCs, about 40 percent in urban areas. In rural areas, the Muslim Others have a slightly lower poverty ratio of 21.5 percent compared to the Hindu SCs. (11) Among Muslims, the work participation rate, another key determinant of socio-economic well-being, representing the workforce per 1,000 population, was the lowest of all the major religions—536, below Sikhs (568), Christians (540), Hindus (563) and Others (573), also according to 2010 report.

V. Social challenges of Muslim

The empirical data provided by the Post-Sachar Evaluation Committee Report (2014), Report of the Expert Group on Diversity Index (2008), India Exclusion Report (2013-14), 2011 Census and the latest NSSO reports suggest that Indian Muslims are a socio-economically backward community.

The sex ratio among Muslims is a bit better compared to the national average, which is 951, and the literacy rate is much less than the national level which is 57.9 percent as per the 2011 census. In Karnataka state majority of Muslims are in the unorganized sector. The government sector also even with the provision of 4% reservation they are very less in numbers.

Status of Muslim women as per the Government of India report (1974) defined status as: “a position in a social system or subsystem which is distinguishable from and at the same time related to other positions through its designated rights and obligations. (GOI, 1974) ⁽¹²⁾ In discussing the position of women in Muslim society, rights granted by the Islamic doctrine and the actual present conditions are taken into account. The teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith), constitute an important source of the status and position of Muslim women. Religion in its true spirit is deeply concerned with the spiritual development of its followers and this development cannot occur in a socially stagnant situation. In India and Karnataka, Muslims are not only a minority but also a tradition-bound and economic-educationally backward community. For various reasons, Muslim women do not enthusiastically utilize the development facilities available to them. Therefore, the enhancement of women’s social position as well as the transformation of Muslim society depends much upon the modification of community behaviour. (Chaturvedi, 2005) ⁽¹³⁾ Muslim women were slow to adopt new reforms and policies after independence due to various cultural and religious factors. Muslim society is also patriarchal. Individual families were normally set up on patriarchal bases, with the husband and father being the sole authority and making the key decisions and women with humble obedience owed to their male authority. The minority position of Muslims in India further discouraged them from accepting modern culture and values. They were scared of imbibing democratic culture for the reasons of losing their identity and maintaining ancient customs and traditions, backed by the support of religious ulemas. This attitude affected the development of Muslim women. They sanctioned ancient restrictions on them. They restricted their women from reaping the fruits of modern education and employment. The autonomy of Muslim women has been severely eroded. (Sachar) ⁽¹⁴⁾ 80% of women in the Muslim community marry at the age of 25 and 20% marry before the age of 20. As per the 2011 census, 68.9% is the literacy rate among the Muslim community against the national average of 74%. The worst literacy rate among women is in the Muslim community at 51.89 percent followed by Hindus at 55.97 percent.

VI. Education:

The literacy rate among Muslims as of the 2001 census was 59.1% which grows to 68.5% as per the census of 2011. Despite almost trebling in the decade ending 2010 – from 5.2% to 13.8% – the rate of Muslim enrolment in higher education trailed the national figure of 23.6% and that of other backward classes (22.1%) and scheduled castes (18.5%). Scheduled tribes lagged Muslims by 0.5%. The rate of enrolment is a measure of the number of enrolments in higher education, regardless of age, in a given academic year compared to the 18- to 23-year-old population eligible for higher education in that year.

The dropout rate among Muslims is 17.6%, higher than the all-India average of 13.2%, according to this 2014 study based on 2005-06 National Family Health Survey data. The worst literacy rate among women is in the Muslim community at 51.89 percent followed by Hindus at 55.97 percent. (Herald, 2016, p. 18) ⁽¹⁵⁾ Karnataka ranks 23rd in terms of literacy rate with 75.60%. as per the 2001 census and 21st as per 2011 census with 82.25% of literacy rate. The female literacy rate in the same period is 68.13%. Though the government is providing all types of help to these communities, it is a big question why they developing at par with others.

VII. Conclusion

Religious minorities particularly Muslims face two challenges internal challenges which are my orthodox ideology which influences the life of women, liberals and rationalists and external challenges which may be in the form of demonization of the community, fake propaganda in an organized way and lock of economic opportunities. Though the Sachar Committee recommended the betterment of the minority community but no full-hearted efforts were made by the successive Government and the community concerned has not taken it seriously on its own to develop at par with others. If the authorities worked on the five key dimensions which The Sachar Commission recommended may be the overall upgradation of this group was possible. They were 1. Mainstreaming and inclusiveness should be the cornerstone of any policy initiative. 2. There is an urgent need to enhance diversity in residential, work and educational spaces. 3. More equality would reduce the sense of discrimination that the community perceives. 4. Availability of detailed information can facilitate action and monitoring especially when combined with the Right to information act. The focus should be on general rather than community-specific initiatives. All these measures are assimilative but due to later development in India feel difficult to bring them into practice. The effort of the government to provide extra care to the Muslim community is working positively if we see the literacy rate change in the past 20 years. The literacy rate among Muslims as per the 2001 census was 59.1% which grows to 68.5% as per the census of 2011. When we come to employment and social security issues this community is a highly neglected group, SC/ST groups are legally affirmative groups but this provision is not applied to Muslim minority social groups. In many states, even to this day, there are no minority affairs ministries because it is not constitutionally mandated. Government should be proactive in issues of suppressed communities in India. There are many issues of minorities, which only

sovereign governments can solve. All efforts of the government will be null and void if fake propaganda is carried out without any checks against not only Muslims but of other communities. Some print and electronic media are playing the role of spoilers in the way of assimilative efforts of the government in favour of religious minorities. Even though both the state Government of Karnataka and the union government started many welfare measures, the bureaucratic tendency curbs the beneficiaries' numbers. We need to look towards the holistic approach to protecting every person who stays within the boundaries of the nation.

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