



SACHAR REPORT AND MUSLIM BACKWARDNESS - AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract : Sachar committee is the first systematic study of the Muslim community in independent India earlier commissions including Dr. Gopal Singh committee looked into issues relating to the Muslim community along with those relating to other segments of the societies, such as Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other weaker sections. But Sachar committee has given an enhanced focus on the Muslim community. This article tries to highlight the Muslim backwardness and the deprivation in various sectors of the Indian Society, which is quite clear from the report that the socio-economic condition of Muslim community is abysmal. This article brought light the different views of Scholars in the wake of Sachar community report in terms of finding certain drastic measures to make the public domain more inclusive especially for the empowerment of the community. This article focuses on the development deficit and the underrepresentation of the Muslims across the regions in India.

Keywords:- Sachar committee, Marginalization, Deprivation, Development deficit.

INTRODUCTION

Sachar Committee Report of 2006 presented a sorry tale of Muslim deprivation and development deficit in India. Government of India constituted a high level committee under the leadership of Justice Rajinder Sachar to probe into the scale of deprivation and neglect of Muslims in a great depth. We can observe a very gloomy remarks in the concluding chapter of the report.

“Muslim community exhibits deficits and deprivation practically in all dimensions of development. In fact, by and large Muslims rank some what above Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) but below Hindu other backward classes (Hindu OBCs), other minorities and Hindu general in almost all indicators considered.”¹

The United National’s Millennium Summit which was held in 2000 framed a set of development goals under 18 targets and 48 measurable indicators to fight poverty, hunger, illiteracy, gender inequality, disease and environmental degradation. The millennium development goals deadline is 2015 and the assessment of its progress is quite significant to know the directions of the development agenda of a nation. The millennium development goals have been observed that it has not been able to cover the specific disadvantages facing the minorities in terms of discrimination, insecurity and the lack of empowerment. It has been also criticized for not concentrating on the social hierarchy and complex cultural diversity. The goals and principles enshrined in the millennium development goals found reflection in India’s development goals and priorities. They have been specially incorporated in the 11th plan moving a step ahead in adopting “inclusive growth” as a new slogan in the economic development of India.

The central vision of the 11th plan is to build on our strengths to trigger a development process which guarantees broad-based improvement in India. With regard to the quality of life of the people, particularly the poor, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), other backward classes (OBCs), minorities and women.² The inclusive growth strategy covered 27 targets at the national level that were placed in six major categories namely (i) income and poverty, (ii) education, (iii) health, (iv) women and children, (v) infrastructure and (vi) environment.³

The UN’s Millennium Declaration (2000) stated that their mission to strengthen the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and to give due respect to human rights, including minority rights. But the study by United Nation’s Independent Expert on Minority issues observed that of the 50 millennium development goal countries report reviewed only 19 discussed on minorities and only four reports specifically mentioned religious minorities and their disadvantages. So it is quite serious to observe that the millennium development goals fail to take stock of the cumulative deprivation that adversely affect the material life like access to welfare schemes, modern education, employment opportunities and political powers.⁴

The persistent argument that drawn from study and assessment on millennium development goals shows that the current situation of injustice, insecurity and social exclusion against religious minorities might produce negative impact on country’s capability to reach out to millennium development goals.

D.L. Seth talks about the paradigm shift from secularism to pluralism just to focus more on community centred politics or identity politics. According to D.L. Sheth consolidation of majority v/s minority political discourses resulting in sharp

polarization and competitive politics will end up in creating serious implications for the smooth functioning and survival of India's democratic structure⁵.

Amir Ali's view in the wake of Sachar Committee Report was to look into drastic measures to make the public domain more inclusive. But Javed Alam argues for 'citizen politics' - the way to bring the Muslim into the mainstream of nation through politics of empowerment shared religion and past experiences may be a criterion to identify a sense of common identity but the problem will be in conceiving the entire community as a whole which makes it problematic in attending the needs of marginalized groups within the communities.

In this context Javed Alam proposed that policies should not concentrate on communities but districts and more specifically villages consist of high percentage of Muslims lacking basic infrastructure. In other words the government should focus on most backward districts identified in the Sachar Committee Report having larger Muslim population so that it would benefit the poorest in almost all the communities. As it was pointed out in the Sachar Committee Report, high percentage of Muslim dominated villages are facing acute shortage of infrastructure, but Sachar Committee Report could not come out with any explanation for that. Communal riots cannot be universal reason behind the exclusion of Muslim community because West Bengal, remarkably free of communal violence is not the exception for marginalization of the community.

In states like Uttar Pradesh, political parties compete for the Muslim votes and over the last couple of years the governments have been attentive to the needs of Muslim community. This attentiveness must be translated into the improvement of basic infrastructure.

The Sachar Committee makes a significant case for the Muslim community on the grounds that it is facing development deficit and it is very precarious when compared to other social and religious communities including the SCs and STs.⁶

In the government services and the public sector the representation of the SCs, unlike the Muslim community, is closer to their share in the total population but it also shows that a much smaller percentage of SCs/STs, live in a pucca houses in urban India compared to Muslims. Same trend can be seen in the rural areas. Even among people with pucca houses the SC/ST population has the highest incidence of houses without a toilet facility.⁷

Education figures of the Muslims in the age group 7-16 are lagging behind than the SCs. When we take the age group of 18- 24years, there is not much difference between the two communities in 2004/05. This shows that youth literacy in all communities is increasing at a faster rate than for the entire population.

The backwardness is quite common in those regions where the Muslim population has a sizeable presence. This is to be examined in connection with the availability of housing, tap water, schools, medical facilities and roads. Sachar report has mentioned it as 'infrastructural variables'. According to 2001 census 11 districts where Muslim population is above 50 percent and 38 districts where it is above 25 percent approximately. One-third of the Muslim population lives in these areas. There are another 182 districts where the Muslim population is between 10 and 25 percent and about 47 percent of Muslim population live in these areas. Apart from these districts, there are a large number of small and medium sized towns with a sizeable Muslim population. All these areas are poorly provided with urban infrastructure and other civic amenities.⁸

Different communities face various kinds of challenges. The Sikh community is largely self employed, engaged in small trades. Muslims are mainly engaged in textile work, metal handicrafts and household industry. Sikhs send their children to schools run by the community, which are affiliated to State Boards of Examination. Sikh religious institutions also provide free dispensaries in many areas.

Rudolph Heredia adds another dimension to this discussion by focusing on the way development has been understood and redefined within Christian religious discourse.⁹ The Church always embodies the principle of charity, mercy and helping the weak and the destitute. The Church has continuously been thinking its vision and mission keeping in view the developments owing to science and modernity to rearticulate its role and position in the society. Christian community leaders began to encounter with the ground realities of their community which helped to a great extent to have a holistic understanding of religion where charity, development and justice stand together. The Christian experience tells us that community discourse and self-understanding of different communities cannot be ignored in the process of discussing the concept of 'development deficit' raised by the Sachar Committee Report. Therefore, community discourse and self-understanding will provide space for crucial range of issues that need to be addressed and also to evolve nuanced understanding of what the tasks of developmental agenda needs to be implemented.

Muslim presence in government services and the public sector is very small when compared to other communities. Since Muslim presence is very less in the public sector and state services, they enjoy very less social security benefits. Sachar report reveals that a very small percentage of Muslims appear for the civil service examination. Only 40 percent of the Muslim population is engaged in the field of agriculture, live-stock, forestry, etc. More than 20 percent are in the field of manufacturing and 16.8 percent of the Muslim population is concentrated in wholesale and retail trade as compared to 8.1 percent of Hindu population engaged in these sectors. Three percent of the Muslim population are in the professional, technical fields when compared to 4.1 percent of Hindus occupy these fields. Muslims with 4.7 percent strength are involved in the administrative, executive and managerial sectors when compared to 3.9 percent of Hindu population occupied their share in these sectors.¹⁰ Muslim interface with other communities in other areas of work such as trading, sales personnel, hotel, transport related work, machine fitters, assemblers, etc.

POVERTY

Poverty among Muslims in 2004-05 was at 31 percent, just better than that of the SCs/STs. It was more serious in urban areas where 44 percent of the Muslims counted amongst the poorest compared to the national average of 29 percent. Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal comprising the poorest sections of the population. In the rural areas also Muslims lagged behind the national average poverty ratio 33 percent against 28 percent overall. Poverty among the Muslims is high in urban areas as per the Human Development Report 2011. There are other indicators of poverty that show similar trend like the relative deprivation of Muslims along with SCs/STs was proved by the ownership of assets as well. Asset ownership access among

social groups was very poor for SCs and it was the lowest among Muslims. Similarly the monthly percapita expenditure was very low amongst the Muslims as per the National Sample Survey 2009-10.¹¹

Malnutrition is another indicator that shows the quantum of hunger and reflects the precarious level of people's health. International Food Policy Research Institute report indicates that 12 states of India figure in the alarming category of position of hunger and malnutrition.¹² The condition of women and children is again miserable. India has the large chunk of malnourished children in the world as per the Nutrition Report 2009. Female malnutrition and children suffering from anaemia was above the national average among the Muslims, especially in UP, Bihar and other states. But overall health indicators are improving and these indicators are converging with the national average with regard to the SCs/STs and Muslims. In spite of public investment in health, health facilities and human resources, sanitation, potable drinking water, Muslims and SCs/STs did not completely out of the risk zone in these arena.

WORK PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The work participation rate for all religious communities was 39.1 percent in the census of 2001. Buddhists had 40.6 percent, World Participation Rate (31.7 percent for women), Christians 39.7 percent (28.7 percent for women), Sikhs 53.3 percent (20.2 percent for women) and Muslims 31.3 percent (14.1 percent for women). The gender gap in the work participation rate is 26.1 percent at the national level.¹³

The high level committee reveals that the participation of Muslims in salaried jobs is low at only 13 percent. In urban areas, less than 8 percent are employed in the formal sector against a national average of 21 percent. More than 12 percent of Muslim male workers are engaged in street vending as compared to the national average of less than 8 percent. Muslim workers are also found to be in a majority in the industrial sector of tobacco (41 percent), wearing apparel (30 percent) and textiles (21 percent).

The data gives the picture that, Muslim workers are largely concentrated in the informal sector which is characterized by low wages, low working conditions and having no social security. Muslims are excluded from the mainstream employment pattern.

Muslim share in government jobs

States	Muslims in total population (%)	Muslim representation in Government jobs (%)
Assam	30.9	11.2
West Bengal	25.2	4.2
Kerala	24.7	10.4
Uttar Pradesh	18.5	5.4
Bihar	16.5	7.6
Jharkand	13.8	6.7
Karnataka	12.2	8.5
Delhi	11.7	3.2
Maharashtra	10.6	4.4
Andhra Pradesh	9.2	8.8
Gujarat	9.1	5.4
Tamilnadu	5.6	3.2
Total	15.4	6.4

Source: Sachar Committee Report, 2006.

The above table shows that the share of Muslims in Government jobs is merely 6.4 percent. The situation is worse in states with a greater share of Muslim population. For example, in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Assam, while the Muslims population is 25.2 percent, 18.5 percent and 30.9 percent respectively. Their representation in government jobs are 4.7 percent, 7.5 percent and 10.9 percent respectively. Muslim share is only 4.5 percent in railways and of these 98.7 percent occupy lower level positions. India's elite civil service has only 3.2 percent of Muslims.¹⁴

EDUCATION

The report reveals that the socio-economic marginalization and deprivation is fuelled by their lack of education and representation in governance structures. The literacy rate according to the 2001 census data in Sachar Committee Report is 59.1% which is quite below the national average of 65.1%.¹⁵ Muslims fare even lesser levels of higher education, that is only 4% of the Muslim population has achieved a graduate degree or a diploma, constituting less than 7% of the total degree/diploma holding population¹⁶ which is very low than the percentage share of Muslims in the total population of India at 13.4% according to the 2001 census. There are only 63 students out of the 4,743 studying in the Indian Institute of Management and 894 out of the 27,161 in Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) are Muslims.¹⁷

The report further reveals that only 2% of the students enrolled in post-graduate courses are Muslims, which is considerably less compared even to the figures for the OBCs (24%) and SCs and STs (13%).¹⁸

The report also observes that Muslim parents are not against to modern education and they too prefer the regular school education which is available to any other child in India. Non-availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower levels of education, girls hostels and scholarships are the other reason for the backwardness of Muslim education in India.¹⁹ Since Muslims are highly deprived of quality education further led to their poor representation in regular salaried jobs in the public and private sectors.

According to 2001 census, Muslim literacy level was the least among all religious communities. As per NSSO 2007-08 survey shows that high proportions of Muslims are illiterate. This was similar with that of SCs/STs and higher than for OBCs. Muslim women figures among the most illiterate sections of society that is 47.3 percent compare to SC/ST women (53.2%) it was low. Eighteen percent male and 15.4 percent female population of Muslims had secured only primary education. Muslim literacy rate at the upper primary and above levels was significantly lower than that among all other groups including SCs.²⁰ Enrolment ratio and net attendance ratio at all levels of education both in rural and urban area was the lowest among the Muslims.²¹

Data also shows that the net attendance ratio in both rural and urban areas is the biggest drop. The major concern with education among Muslims remains the high drop out rates and poor transition rate. Muslim children constitute 16.6 percent of total national enrolment in Grade I, but this decreases to 8.4 percent at Grade VIII.²² Transition to upper primary level is another hurdle in the education of Muslim children.²³

According to Human Development Report 2011 incidence of drop out among Muslims is associated with poverty. Financial constraints become the main hurdle to continue the education forcing children into child labour.²⁴ The literacy problem among the Muslims is worst in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.

CIVIL SERVICE

Another important concern expressed by the Muslim community is their poor representation in the civil services. Naseema A. Zaidi argues that there is something wrong with the system of selection and also attributed to the design of the people in power to keep the second largest community of the country backward by depriving them of a fair share in the corridors of power. Community's apathy and shortcomings in this area are another reason for the poor performance of the Muslims in civil services.²⁵

The annual reports of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) gives the detailed profiles of candidates belonging to the SCs, STs, OBCs and the general category but it does not give a separate data on Muslim candidates. But the university or institutionwise data for the candidates appearing in the main examinations and who are finally selected for the services.

Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir University, Srinagar and Calicut University, Kerala are the educational hubs for Muslim students. The performance of the candidates from these universities can be compared with the candidates of other selected universities (Group A) like Allahabad, Lucknow, Banaras Hindu University and the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.²⁶

Comparative information of the success ratio of each university is shown in the following tables.

Table 4.2: Success ratio of the sample in civil services examination (%)

University	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average 2006-10
Group A						
(1) Aligarh Muslim University	5.9	16.7	7.1	10.3	7.7	9.3
(2) Jamia Millia Islamia	-	18.5	7.3	6.9	5.4	8.8
(3) Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar	50.0	-	9.1	8.2	8.3	9.5
(4) Calicut	5.9	7.7	13.5	14.3	16.2	12.5
Average of the group						10.2
Group B						
(1) Allahabad	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.5
(2) Lucknow	3.9	7.0	7.1	7.4	4.4	6.0
(3) BHU, Varanasi	2.1	4.0	1.7	2.9	3.7	2.9
(4) Rajasthan University	4.2	5.7	14.4	7.8	6.2	6.0
Average of the group						4.3
National average	6.3	7.2	7.0	7.6	7.8	7.2

Source: UPSC, New Delhi, Annual Reports, 58th to 62nd, Appendices 14 and 15.

* Calculated on the basis of total number of candidates selected out of total number that appeared in the main examination.

Table 4.3: Average success ratio of social groups during 2006-10 (%)

(A) Social Groups	SCs	STs	OBCs	General	All	Group A Universities
(B) Success ratio	7.6	7.5	5.9	8.0	7.2	10.2

Source: UPSC, Annual Reports, Appendices 13 and 14, Profiles of Candidates, Table 2.

Table 4.4: Number of candidates appeared in civil services (main) examinations (2006-10)

University	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Average 2006-10
Group A						
(1) Aligarh Muslim University	17	18	28	29	26	23.6
(2) Jamia Millia Islamia	-	27	41	43	37	29.6
(3) Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar	2	-	11	49	12	14.8
(4) Calicut	17	26	37	35	37	30.4
Average of the group						24.6
Group B						
(1) Allahabad	741	779	1,059	878	837	859.0

(2) Lucknow	255	243	323	296	247	273.0
(3) BHU, Varanasi	139	150	236	205	214	188.8
(4) Rajasthan University	420	471	166	611	615	533.0
Average of the group						444.2

Source: UPSC, New Delhi, Annual Reports, 58th to 62nd, Appendices 14 and 15.

* Calculated on the basis of total number of candidates selected out of total number that appeared in the main examination.

Table 4.5: Key findings of the Sachar Committee Report

Variables	Muslims (%)	National Average
Share in population (2001)	13.4	-
Share in total OBC population	15.7	-
Urban population	36	28
Literacy (2001)	59.1	64.4
Total drop out of children	25	-
Graduates	3.6	6.7
Diploma	0.4	0.7
Street vending	12	4
Worker-Population ratio	54.9	64.4
IAS	3	-
IPS	1.8	-
IFS	4	-
Poverty (2004-05)	31	22.7
Infant Mortality Rate	59	73

Source: Sachar Committee Report, 2006.

With almost seven years having been elapsed, the process of implementation of those policies is still tardy with important areas of intervention for welfare of Muslims. The areas such as employment and economic opportunities are not getting due attention of the policy implementation agencies. Added to that low-budgetary support to the minority related programmes are not up to the mark.

Educational backwardness of Muslims is often observed to be the major reason for their low participation in civil or other public service examinations, lack of motivation, low level competitive spirit, poverty are the other dimensions to be understood in this regard.

Though female education among the Muslims is improving in medicine, computer science, engineering and law, but they are not encouraged to take up civil service examinations. In 2012, civil service examination, out of 25 top positions, 12 were women candidates (6.8%), the success ratio of females in all the social groups (14.3%) was more than double in the 2010 civil service examination.²⁷

Muslims are forced to live in large ghettos in the big and small cities. Atmosphere in these places are not conducive to educational excellence. Majority of them are engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, petty business. A large section is caught in the vicious cycle of poor education. Governmental or Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) could not break this vicious cycle.²⁸ Therefore quality education is confined to only creamy layer of Muslim students.

Though Muslim community has NGOs of religious nature, the community yet to produce NGOs which work for the upliftment of socio-economic and educational status of the community. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has proposed 900 scholarships and the Moulana Azad fellowship programme but the community fail to utilize it. By March 2014 as per the statement of the Minority Affairs Minister, Rs. 50 crores left in the budget but has not received applications for University Grants Commission (UGC). During rule of previous government Ministry of Minority Affairs (MMA) proposed 53 Government of Karnataka Morarji Desai Residential Schools, 310 women's hostels and 84 Government of Karnataka minority hostels for boys and 76 for girls in Karnataka.²⁹

Multi Sectoral Development Programme (MSDP) was launched in minority concentrated taluks which include Bidar, Humnabad, Chitapur and in towns like Jamkandi, Bagalkot, Raichur, Sindhanur, Gangavati, Koppal, Haveri and Hospet.³⁰

The Area Intensive and Madarasa Modernization Programme has two schemes. (1) To provide quality education, (2) to develop infrastructure facilities. The government has allocated Rs. 182 crores for education and Rs. 28 crores for infrastructure. In Karnataka, 80 Madarasas have been sanctioned out of which only 8 Madarasas have got coverage. Reserve Bank of India issues master circular yearly on Priority Sector Lending (PSL) by Scheduled Commercial Banks for improving credit facilities for minorities. Ministry of Minority Affairs also proposed to set up a National Institute at Bangalore for training of minorities in Waqf management, administration, women empowerment, publicity and media, human resource management, gender issues, entrepreneurship, etc.³¹

CONCLUSION

Sachar Committee recognized that Muslims like other minorities faced multifaceted problems and challenges related to security, identity and equity. The report examined the differentials between Muslims and socio-religious categories in relation to their demographic features, level of education, employment status, credit flows, participation in public programmes and access to infrastructure. Muslim community remained backward in education and other developments when compared to other communities owing to various reasons. Ministry of Minority Affairs has come up with different schemes but lack of publicity and awareness among the community have failed to reach its beneficiaries. NGOs, Muslim intellectuals, political and religious leaders are also equally responsible to promote it.

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