

## EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT AMONG MUSLIMS IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** *The Indian Constitution is committed to the equality of the citizens and the responsibility of the state to preserve, protect and assure the rights of minorities in matters of language, religion and culture. Since Independence, India has achieved significant growth and development. It has also been successful in reducing poverty and improving human development indicators. However, the benefits of development have not percolated among all the social groups and religious communities. The Muslims, being the largest minority community in the country, constituting 14 per cent of the population are seriously lagging behind in terms of human development indicators. While the perception of deprivation is wide spread among Muslims and even there has been no serious efforts to analyze the conditions of religious minorities in the country, except the Formation of Sachar Committee. Muslims carry a double burden of being labeled as anti-national and as being appeased by the government at the same time. They face identity related crisis while on the other hand, their participation in development process has shown deprivation and backwardness. Muslims live with an inferiority complex are being discriminated. The social boycott of Muslims in certain parts of the country has forced them to migrate from places where they lived for centuries. Even the communal tension in certain parts of the country has forced Muslims to migrate. Even the communal conflicts in certain regions have totally destroyed the economy of the Muslim minority and it has resulted in marginalization of the community. Despite the economic boom, the Muslims have to bear the brunt of so called competitive forces unleashed by economic liberalization. Muslims also could not avail the economic opportunities unleashed by the globalization and liberalization due to their poor educational background and entrepreneurial skills. The traditional educational system among the Muslim community appears to be more culturally*

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*rooted rather than providing modern education to them. The poor representation of Muslims in the public sector has caused a concern while the displacement from the traditional occupations has contributed to Muslims being deprived of their means of livelihood. The present paper highlights the educational status of Muslims in India and its implications on their development.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indian society is an agglomeration of diverse cultures. There are numerous castes, tribes and ethnic and religious groups. "It is, therefore, Indian society is called a multicultural society. Every group has its own cultural specialty" (Linton, 1936). We find caste cultural, tribal cultural, linguistic cultural, ethnic cultures and regional cultures etc. Every religious group has its own historical tradition and custom. Interestingly, among the Muslim, religion regulates the sacred and the secular practices. The Muslim, by and large, accepts their religion as unalterable and resists any major innovation. Singh (2007) while discussing the "Modernization of Indian Tradition" points out that Islamic tradition is an exogenous source of change of Indian tradition but it has become a part of Indian tradition and has greatly influenced the revolution and the growth of Indian tradition in medieval times. The contact of India with Islam is one thousand years old. It started with Arab conquest of the Sind in the beginning of the eighth century. Historically as well as in magnitude, Islam is an important and sociologically very meaningful cultural tradition in India.

Education is undoubtedly the most powerful tool to ignite the young minds and guide the young generation. It is sound education that builds the young generation with knowledge and values and empowers them to dream big. Development and education go hand in hand; no society can make progress and transform itself without investing in educating its citizens. Since the independence, education has been one of the main sectors the Indian policy focused upon. However, despite investments and special programs for education, the situation still remains unsatisfying: with an enrolment rate close to the 95 percent, indicators concerning drop-out rate, out of school, schools' infrastructures, provision of secondary schools, rural-urban inequalities, gender inequalities, social inequality in education and

recent tests on learning level describe a situation in which quality of education is still far from reach. The demand of a quality education is high and concerns also the most disadvantaged groups of the population. The Indian sector of education is highly diversified and in continuous transformation due to the role that private schools are now playing, filling the gap between the demand of a quality education and the low supply provided by the government. During the last decades, the role of education as a cornerstone for growth, development and social progress gained unanimous consensus. Universal education is one of the main objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and education is one of the three achievements being used by United Nations to compute the Human Development Index. Development of education is often accompanied by a changing perception and a major request of human rights which identifies fundamental for freedoms and dignity, basically covering food, water, health, housing, education, freedom of speech and religion. Education can also play a large role in reducing inequality and society stratification.

Among minorities Muslims are in the top in relation to the population. They constitute about 14 percent of the total population but they are more prone to the discrimination in the social institution. They are excluded from participation in the basic educational, political, social, and economic institution of the society (Waheed, 2007). As the largest minority Muslims in India are one of the most backward socio-religious communities, whose performance in the crucial Human Development Index such as level of literacy, education and health is far behind than other socio-religious communities (Faisal, 2013). The exclusion of Muslims is not a new phenomenon which developed after the independence of India but they were excluded before the independence as Hunter Commission mention in its report (Robinson, 1993). There was a "sense of discrimination prevailing among the minorities" and that it "must be eliminated, root and branch, if we want the minorities to form an effective part of the mainstream (Singh, 1983). This shows the Muslims formed an excluded community which required special measures to bring them into the mainstream of social, economic and educational life (Hassan, 2009). There have been efforts by

scholars for knowing the socio-economic conditions of excluded groups of Indian society such as Muslims. Committees and scholars have repeatedly said that the Muslims in India facing serious exclusion in all aspects of socio-economic life. These observations could not attract the attention of policy makers on the excluded condition of this community. Further, a high level committee appointed by the prime minister under the chairmanship of Justice Rajindra Sacchar, retired Chief justice of the Delhi high Court to study the socio-economic and educational status of Muslim Community in India gave a report (Chisti, 2007). This report was submitted by the committee in November 2006 and marked a turning point in documenting the exclusion of Muslims in India.

There is no denying the fact that Muslim constitute the majority among the minorities and are the second largest community in India. In view of their sheer number their role in the overall socio-economic development can hardly be over emphasized. However, the last five decades of planned development do not show very encouraging picture so far as the Muslim community in India is concerned. Their participation in the socio-economic and political process is considered of vital importance. The social structure of Indian Muslims has been largely composed of Turks, Afghan, Persian and Arab Emigrants and large numbers of natives had embraced Islam in different regions and circumstances. Their source of income has been limited and is confined to traditional occupations such as agriculture, handicrafts, small business and trade. Muslim artisans—embroiders, weavers, goldsmiths, masons had the potential to develop themselves as prosperous class. However, the system of exploitation and their lack of habit of thriftiness prevented them from building up their business. The ordinary artisans prefer to work as wage workers in unorganized sector of employment. However, the social structure of south Indian Muslims was different from north. It was composed of Arab traders and converts of other communities. Muslim society in southern India adopted trading and agriculture and thus, they are comparatively developed. However, overall Muslims have a fragile and weak economy; bulk of Indian Muslim workforce is self-employed in the unorganized sector,

constituting a fairly high majority of construction labour, rickshaw pullers, cart pullers, horse cart pullers, coolies, barbers, tailors, carpenters, footpath hawkers, fitters, electricians, welders and petty shopkeepers. They are the poorest community among all the religious communities of India.

The well being of people is unquestionably the ultimate object of all development efforts of a country and the basic quest of human endeavour is always to seek a better quality of life. The quality of life of citizens of a nation can be effectively improved only by raising the standards of living of the people on the street and in rural areas. Social empowerment in general and women empowerment in particular is very fundamental in achieving this goal. The institution of democracy provides a strong foundation for harmonizing social and economic objectives. Thus, within the broad democratic framework there are great opportunities for synergizing and economic growth programmes to deliver better quality of life in the shortest possible span of time. Due to the impact of modernization, westernization, globalization, democracy, socio-economic changes, legal enactment pertaining to Muslim society is advancing towards gender just and equates systems, giving the way to empowerment and advancement in India. However in India, the social structure of Muslim society seems to be considered of the core of the traditional cultural setup. With interplay of a number of exogenous forces which have affected its traditional cultural setup and internal indigenous developments some changes can be seen in the Muslim society. More precisely, modern education, secularization and increased communication have let to the genesis of a relatively open and progressive Muslim social structure.

### **EDUCATIONAL STATUS AMONG MUSLIMS**

Proportion of Muslims children in enrolment at elementary stage is shown in Table 1. About 13 per cent Muslim children were found enrolled at elementary stage in India during 2011-12. However, it was recorded significantly high in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Uttarakhand as Muslim population in these states have been found higher.

**Table 1**  
**Proportion of Muslim Children in Enrolment at Elementary Stage**

	2006-07	2009-10	2011-12	<i>Proportion of Muslims in 2001 Census (%)</i>
Andhra Pradesh	9.62	8.69	9.61	9.2
Assam	27.31	37.11	38.15	30.9
Bihar	8.73	13.63	14.73	16.5
Chhattisgarh	0.6	4	1.27	1.4 2
Gujarat	3.9	6.51	8.41	9.1
Haryana	0.51	5.69	8.18	5.8
Himachal Pradesh	1.15	1.38	1.69	2
J& K	60.8	67.52	67.66	67
Jharkhand	7.25	12.89	14.27	13.8
Karnataka	13.22	36.24	15.41	12.2
Kerala	9.71	31.77	30.44	24.7
Madhya Pradesh	2.31	4.08	4.73	6.4
Maharashtra	6.82	11.55	12.97	10.6
Orissa	7.14	1.73	1.5	2
Punjab	0.19	1.53	1.46	1.6
Rajasthan	2.1	6.26	7.66	8.5
Tamil Nadu	3.89	5.21	5.7	5.6
Uttar Pradesh	8.92	9.84	9.64	18.5
Uttaranchal	0.28	13.3	15.34	11.9
West Bengal	25.23	30.23	31.12	25.2
All India	8.84	13.05	12.79	13.4

*Source:* Prepared by NUEPA from DISE, Standing Committee of National Monitoring Committee for Minorities Education (NMCME), 2013

Educational levels of minorities in India are shown in Table 2. There has been significant increase in the educational levels among minority communities during the period of 1990-2000 to 2009-2010. However, educational levels among Muslims were reported to be poor as compared to educational levels among other minority communities. During 1990-2000, only 8 per cent minorities were graduates and above while it increased up to 13 per cent in 2009-

2010. Similarly, about 14.6 per cent minorities were having higher secondary education during 1990-2000 which increased to 22.1 per cent in 2009-2010. However, only 2.7 per cent Muslims were found graduates and above during 1990-2000 which increased 3.6 per cent in 2004-2005 and 4.1 per cent in 2009-2010. The illiteracy among Muslims has significantly declined from 36 per cent in 1990-2000 to 22.3 per cent in 2009-2010.

**Table 2**  
**Educational Levels of Minorities in India**

<i>Education Level / Years</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Other Minorities</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>1990-2000</b>			
Not Literate	36.0	18.8	30.9
Secondary and Below	55.5	58.7	54.0
Higher Secondary	5.8	14.6	9.5
Graduation and Above	2.7	8.0	5.5
<b>2004-2005</b>			
Not Literate	29.3	14.2	24.8
Secondary and Below	60.7	61.1	57.9
Higher Secondary	6.4	15.2	10.6
Graduation and Above	3.6	9.5	6.7
<b>2009-2010</b>			
Not Literate	22.3	8.8	17.1
Secondary and Below	63.8	56.2	58.2
Higher Secondary	9.8	22.1	15.5
Graduation and Above	4.1	13.0	9.2

*Source:* Observer Research Foundation, 2012.

Educational levels among Muslims were reported to be poor as compared to educational levels among other minority communities. The educational levels were found higher among Jains as compared to other religions. About 3.8 per cent Muslims were graduates and above as against 21.5 per cent Jains who were graduates and above (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Educational Levels by Religions in India**

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Sikh</i>	<i>Buddhist</i>	<i>Jain</i>
Up to Primary	54.9	65.3	45.8	46.2	54.7	1.5
Middle	16.1	15.1	17.1	16.9	17.5	12.2
Secondary	14.2	11.0	17.5	20.0	14.1	21.9
Senior Secondary	6.9	4.5	8.7	7.6	2.6	13.8
Diploma	0.7	0.4	2.19	0.9	0.3	1.0
Graduation and above	7.0	3.8	8.7	6.9	5.7	21.5

*Source:* Planning Commission, Government of India, 2013.

Educational attainment among Muslims in India is shown in Table 4. Slightly more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Muslims were found illiterate while about 15 per cent Muslims had primary level of education. About 18 per cent Muslims had education of secondary and higher secondary level while about 17 per cent Muslims had education of matriculation level. Thus, less than 5 per cent Muslims had attained higher education. The level of education among female Muslims was recorded low as compared to male Muslims.

**Table 4**  
**Educational Attainment Among Muslims in India**

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Not Literate	25.71	42.90	34.25
Literate and Below Primary	12.93	11.16	11.78
Primary	16.11	13.46	14.79
Middle	18.99	14.25	16.63
Secondary	12.67	9.78	11.73
Higher Secondary	6.98	5.09	6.04
Diploma / Certificate	1.02	0.38	0.70
Graduate	4.25	2.43	3.35
Post Graduate	0.88	0.56	0.72

*Source:* Computed from NSS 68th Round Unit Records (2011-12)



Muslim population is the second largest group and could be more rightly addressed as largest minority group. They are not only the largest minority group but their presence can be felt in all the districts of Indian states. Even then, this minority group often has to face problem of discrimination, social stagnation, illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. Such problems have cumulatively led to growing backwardness and marginalization of this socio religious (Sikand, 2007). The situation of Muslims has not improved much before and after independence. Muslims have negligible influence on the process of economic development (Beg, 1984). .” “In pre-Independent India, In this regard W. W. Hunter wrote, “earlier it was impossible for a well born Musalman to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue (Hunter,1969). There is widely held belief that Muslims have remained largely unaffected by the process of economic development and social change that have been taking place in independent India and their general economic condition has been deteriorating progressively ( Ahmed,1975). “Until recent time there were no reliable statistics to explore the situation of Muslims including other religious minorities in India. Whatever the literature available is based on the guesstimates and micro-level study ( Alam and Raju,2007). . “Realizing the need of the hour and lack of sufficient data, government gave a positive nod to setting up of a High Power panel under the chairmanship of Dr. Gopal Singh in early 1980 to enquire into the socio economic condition of such minorities in depth. The commission submitted the report concluding that the Muslims are not only backward but downtrodden too. After 23 years, again this is evident from the findings of the Prime Minister’s High Level Committee under the chairmanship of Justice Rajinder Sachar, constituted to enquire into socio-economic and educational status of Muslims”(GOI, 2006). There appears a substantial difference in the socio-economic and political representation of major religious communities in India.

The above analysis simply demonstrates that the minorities suffer from backwardness, poverty, exploitation and deprivation. The plight of minority communities is no better than other states. They are socially and economically backward and even their

empowerment though initiating' welfare and developmental programmes could not yield satisfactory results. Their representation in government jobs, business operations and politico-administrative elite is far behind their share in population. The fact remains that minority communities in the some of the states feel politically dumped and isolated and are seeking religious leadership for their empowerment, and enhancing their share in government jobs and business operations through easy access to opportunities and necessary inputs. There is no denying the fact that Muslim constitute the majority among the minorities and are the second largest community in India. In view of their sheer number their role in the overall socio-economic development can hardly be over emphasized. However, the planned development do not show very encouraging picture so far as the Muslim community in India is concerned. Their participation in the socio-economic and political process is considered of vital importance. The social structure of Indian Muslims has been largely composed of Turks, Afghan, Persian and Arab Emigrants and large numbers of natives had embraced Islam in different regions and circumstances. Their source of income has been limited and is confined to traditional occupations such as agriculture, handicrafts, small business and trade. Muslim artisans—embroiders, weavers, goldsmiths, masons had the potential to develop themselves as prosperous class. However, the system of exploitation and their lack of habit of thriftiness prevented them from building up their business. The ordinary artisans prefer to work as wage workers in unorganized sector of employment. However, the social structure of south Indian Muslims was different from north. It was composed of Arab traders and converts of other communities. Muslim society in southern India adopted trading and agriculture and thus, they are comparatively developed. However, overall Muslims have a fragile and weak economy; bulk of Indian Muslim workforce is self-employed in the unorganized sector, constituting a fairly high majority of construction labour, rickshaw pullers, cart pullers, horse cart pullers, coolies, barbers, tailors, carpenters, footpath hawkers, fitters, electricians, welders and petty shopkeepers. They are the poorest community among all the religious communities of India.

## CONCLUSION

The plight of Muslim women in India is not better than that of women belonging to other social groups. Moreover, majority of the Muslim women are illiterate, low educated living in absolute poverty. Importantly, most of the Muslim women are confined to four walls of house and have been assigned the domestic work caring and nourishing of children, performing household activities etc. Only a small segment of Muslim woman is engaged in economic activities for substantial income contribution to families. Moreover, the role conflict among such woman has been observed to be high since they are facing the problems of official tasks and orthodox family attitude. Through, education and other factors have significantly changed the environment and Muslim women have started enjoying the liberal and democratic advantages and benefits. Moreover, a significant number of Muslim women in developed status and areas has started peeping out their heads to participate in changed socio-economic factor. Importantly, the young generation is demanding more liberty and breaking the orthodox norms of Muslim community. This demands the concerted effort on the part of government and non-government for empowerment of women and making them crucial counterparts of society for social advancement.

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