

Developed or Under-Developed India, Muslims-A Community Living in Denial

Md Tabrez Alam

PhD Scholar, IIDS, Delhi (India)

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*Corresponding Author

Email: [ktabrezshams\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:ktabrezshams[at]gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

India is a country of billion plus population with mixture of varieties of ethnic, religious, caste and class people live harmoniously from century past and this assimilation and amalgamation nourished a distinct Indian civilization which is called "Unity in Diversity". Over the period it developed as a strong nation. Despite so much upheaval people bound together in a singular nationhood. Post Nehruvian era, the lack of political manoeuvring created huge socio-economic divide among citizen of this country. Though, it has initiated several policies & programmes to uplift vulnerable groups but somehow Muslim minority left marginalized because of political chauvinism and lack of will of the government. This paper tries to explore the causes & consequences of socio-economic conditions of Muslim minority in general. The Study is based on primary as well as secondary sources that has been analysed on the pretext of describing the problems facing the community in socio-economic front.

1. Introduction

India is a country of billion plus population with mixture of varieties of ethnic, religious, caste and class people live harmoniously from century past and this assimilation and amalgamation nourished a distinct Indian civilization which is called "Unity in Diversity". Over the period it developed as a strong nation. Despite so much upheaval people bound together in a singular nationhood. Post Nehruvian era, the lack of political manoeuvring created huge socio-economic divide among citizen of this country. Though, it has initiated several policies & programmes to uplift vulnerable groups but somehow Muslim minority left marginalized because of political chauvinism and lack of will of the government. For a developed country, it needed inclusive policies & programmes to bring each and every section of society into mainstream economic development parity. Because of socio-economic conditions is considered prime factor to compare the development base of each community. The study relies on primarily empirical data in which it tries to explore the causes & consequences of exclusion of Muslim minority in socio-economic front and it has also focused on various forms of exclusion conditioned to socio-economic marginalization. Though there are many researches and committees appointed suggest the backwardness of community. This study attempts to understand and explore from macro to micro level problems faced by community. The objective of this study to highlight the discriminatory practices of exclusion in Indian society and that is the prime factor of marginalization of Muslim minority.

Indian Muslims are second largest populated group yet it is considered minority community in India. It is because of community largely lagging behind every sphere of life. The backwardness of community in socio-economic and educational front is far below among all other communities. Whatever reasons behind this miserable condition in failing to meet their share in developmental process is needed to be assessed. Though, from time to time every government run many welfare policy initiatives for economically weaker sections of the society. Over the period, many commissions

appointed to bring some concrete finding and corrective measures that could be helpful in addressing backwardness of Muslims. In this cause the last one was Sachar Committee that has given every details of community plight. On education it observed only 4 percent is educated least among all communities in India. Muslims are also heterogeneous in terms of culture within India but it has some faith base association with global Islamic community (Umma). But it is not concern of everyday practical life, where they interact with the local cultures. (Hossain, 2013)

2. Historical development of Indian Muslims Narratives and its marginalisation

Post Independent India has many unhealed wound that made difficult to cope Muslims because of partition blamed on them. Though, they chose to live in India by aligning themselves with secular ideology. The continuous hostilities between Hindu Muslim didn't bring equal footing for development. For the Muslims many secular leaders came forward in helping hand to boost their confidence among them Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar and many others. From Muslims community Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had nationalist mass appeal, who believes in Indian Nationalism rejecting Dr. Iqbal idea of Muslim Homeland. He had visualised the partition trauma thus was to cautioning Indian Muslims to refrain from Muslim League deception of Islamic nation. Post partition Maulana Azad did great job in streamlining community into mainstream. Later on, with the passing of Nehru era many political parties came into being and they start politicising the communal line. They stated appeasement politics only to garner support in their favour. To the contrary reactionary forces exploit these conditions accusing Muslims for all wrongdoing in this country. In result community were left marginalised in all socio-economic educational fronts. Their low caste occupation and class stratification never been uplifted by any government. The discriminatory practices of government agencies further demoralises the confidence of Muslims in secular forces. On the other hand, the rise of Hindutva politics also pushed them into more vulnerability, a

position of living in own country in denial mode. (Imran Ali & Y. Sikand, 2006)

The rising of Hindutva fascist ideology has halted every single march to democratic civil rights assertion and Muslims have badly felt this onslaught. In contemporary situation it is very difficult to forge any alliance to counter communal forces by Muslim leaders. Though, every party has Muslim leaders but none of them has Muslim representation. This situation causes huge socio-economic marginalisation because in the absence of true representative no any voice heard to them. (R. Basant, 2012)

The UPA government appointed Sachar Committee in 2005 to assess the socio-economic and educational conditions of Muslims in India. The committee did very vast ground work in collecting data covering all aspects from socio-economic to political cultural development thoroughly. The committee exploited every possible method to get the best result of its finding. With the consultations of many individuals, men, women, community heads, social activists through various method of inquiry, it found government's institutions are largely insensitive to some extent biased to Muslims and this is because of communal propaganda of Hindutva forces successful in generating prejudices among non-Muslims. Caste prejudices are also very much prevalence in delivering services to them. In comparing with Hindu Muslims localities in dispersing expenditure of developmental schemes least preferences were given to minority concentrated areas. Muslims feel cheated badly because they all pay taxes as others do. After globalisation India also followed neo-liberal economic system that also pushed the Muslim craftsmen, artisan to abandon their traditional work due to lack of support from government agencies consequently pushed more economically marginalized. In these conditions it is difficult for them to have better education of their children. It is believed and also published in CSDS Report that wherever Muslims have fairly advanced in economic growth in such areas anti-Muslim riots occurs frequently to sabotage their economic upward mobility. These riots are being engineered by Hindutva forces with state nexus to damage properties and devastate economic activities. That's why; the government is also accused to a large extent, responsible for the marginalization of Muslims.

On the matter of Muslims representation in governmental services, each government showed lack of apathy. From the beginning of electoral politics Muslims rallied its support to Congress Party because of its secular appeal. It has partially intact with promises which bound marginalized sections into their fold. In the post Nehruvian period Congress divergent tactics to woo non-Muslims especially majority appeasement goes far length by appeasing majority through unlocking Babri Masjid for Puja and in Shah Bano case bypassing Supreme Court judgment was actually seen divisive mechanism that ultimately tarnished its image among common masses. (Hossain, 2013) Later on period, each Congress governments added much fuel to communal polarisation that paid the price of divisive politics. It lost faith of minorities, Dalits and Adivasi's. Their wrong policies turned away supports to regional parties or BJP vote bank. Two UPA terms had chance

to bring back all in their fold but it didn't headed to them. The people who were once huge supporters for them actually disheartened by his insensitivity toward their representations, it had much time to make democracy flourish at grassroots level by giving actual representation to the deprived sections whether minority, Dalits, Adivasi and OBCs. So it can be loyal to them at the time of crisis but it only played appeasement strategy. The party has been blamed for minority appeasement but in reality it has pushed them much in vulnerability in its period of rule. The marginalization of minority in all socio-economic and educational fronts is the attributes of Congress failure. To the contrary Hindutva fascist forces projects Muslims into new untouchable wherever get chances it exclude deliberately especially in educational institutions and socio-economic enterprises. Now it can be observed in BJP ruled states where hardly any Muslims representations visible whether it is politics or socio-economic engagements. Earlier it could be notice a sizable number 2, 3 percent in government services but the latest report show dropped down below SC & ST level.

Many social thinkers agree with Prof. Kancha Illaiah views "Hindutva forces opposed not just to the Muslims but also the Dalits, he suggests that there is need for a broad alliance between Muslims and Dalits. This view was also articulated particularly by several 'low' caste Muslims, who also spoke about how Hindu and Muslim elites had a vested interest in promoting communal controversy and conflict so as to pit 'low' caste Muslims and Dalits against each other in order to reinforce their own hegemony". Muslim scholar's criticism of government and Hindutva forces for their marginalisation, it also questions about Muslim leadership for their apathy. They expect religious heads must confront with existing reality by giving much importance to economic, social educational development of community apart from teaching Islamic knowledge. Their role is to give wise interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence in the matter of contemporary problems and they should also refrain from conservative practices and from sectarian confrontational positions. But in reality neither Muslim political leaders nor religious Ulemas are imparting their duty honestly, this is why community lagging in every field. Muslim political leaders work as an agent to party whose role is only to garner support for party, though they can raise Muslims socio-economic issues and bridge the gap between government and community. There is strong urge to look alternative path of communication with government agencies to get benefits from various schemes. (SCR, 2006)

Above mentioned all discussion about the socio-economic conditions of Muslims minority has larger repercussion on day to day communitarian life. From the historical development of ruling class to being ruled class, the formation of narratives in a particular way in which certain identity groups were given preference in every sphere of life at the same time one minority group were systematically excluded in every sphere of life. The political and social surrounding was highly communal in post partitions scenario. Muslims pushed in corner being blamed for division of country and it was made to realize them to dive their nose down for the guilt of partition of the country. Although it is established that Muslims were not the architect of that devastating politics of division. It was a grand political imperial

design collaborated with Indian political ruling elites. There was not any mass aspiration for dividing country on the basis of communal line. By and large the majority of people were victims of divisive politics but the major portion of pain inflicted on Muslims in terms of loss of lives, properties and other deprivations. It took huge toll in their future generation which still not recovered from that stigma.

3. How Muslims Stand

The overall scenario of the plight of Muslims in India are the by product of that historical development of socio-economic deprivations. There is slight difference from state to state in terms of degree but nature of marginalisation remains same. From above all situations, the plight of Muslims community somehow directly or indirectly is the product of that grand political manoeuvring. Post partitions scenarios have larger implication on community social life. The community issues have become unidirectional surpassing all regional identities. They are seen in single uniform group with a binocular, although there are many more complexities in terms of their heterogeneity. There are much more differences in social life ranging from class, caste, culture and regionalism, these are not in uniform way but very localise varying from state to state. So, therefore, to resolving all problems one needs to see these all very microscopic.

4. Politics of Exclusion and Inclusion of Minority

There is unchecked discrimination in India and it has not limited to only minority community. There are many others group who also continue facing onslaught on regular bases. In recent time, there is debate taking place in political circle rejuvenated the caste based discrimination and questioning the merits of caste based reservation in contemporary political discourse. The RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat stressed out in a statement demanding reinterpretation/rearrangement of caste based reservations that were harshly criticised by various political parties' leaders. Although many experts on the subject feel that there are other important avenues of discrimination and deprivation apart from caste based. It is visible in employment and in education sector that how much the reservation policy has benefited the lower caste groups and it brought them into mainstream. For any just society it is necessary to have some affirmative actions for marginalized community to streamline them and bring them in equal footing. Our constitution has made some provisions for that and those provisions have been opened new avenues for the unofficial unrecognised groups that are in multilayered in character constitutes a large part of disadvantage groups. These groups also need attention in spite of debating on validity of caste based reservations. This need felt realized in Sachar Committee Report (SCR). It gives an indication that there is need to shift priority apart from ongoing caste based of inclusion. The SCR has stressed out adding other point of inclusiveness.

There are rapid changes going on in every front especially in economy due to globalisation. The new political economy has given opportunity only to professional skilled person

leaving more vulnerable to unskilled masses at the mercy of their fate. It is quite evident the educational backwardness of Muslims and their economic marginality. They are generally not part of the ongoing economic boom; in fact, the new economic boom threatens to marginalize them further from the mainstream economy driven by knowledge and education. Service related and IT industries recruit highly professional technically educated persons and Muslims share of education in this field also witnessed very low in comparison with other categories. There are also discriminations in private sectors in hiring employees; very few numbers of Muslims would be visible in IT and Service sector. There are many schemes parallel going on offered by centre, state agencies that include the Area Intensive and Madrasa Modernization Scheme, setting up the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, leadership development of minority women, corporations to promote entrepreneurship with increased credit flows, national-level scholarships for students in professional and technical institutions, provision of basic amenities in selected minority concentration districts and the development of artisan clusters.

5. Conclusion

Above mentioned all detail descriptions, prescriptions and suggestions have larger implications on social political and economic well being of community. The political discourse of exclusion has direct connection to their future direction. For a healthy democracy it is necessary to create an atmosphere of general faith between the government and its citizens. But when it comes to Indian Muslims, this very idea of mutual trust have eroded or eroding and it is quite being felt harshly in contemporary time. If we see the development indicating statics, there is huge widening gap in which Muslims lagging far behind among all sections of society. These data itself speak government apathy towards Muslims; it has failed miserably to safeguard minority rights by Indian state. In the absence of legal and political support through policy framework it is obvious to let them excluded. These conditions created huge trust deficient between government and community. So, therefore, there is urgent need to actively ensure such measures which boost community confidence on Indian state. The basic fundamental rights; rights of equality, rights of equal opportunity must be protected.

In a nutshell, It is understood that without proper government initiatives and also without any other organizations helping hand there would not going any change in community fate near future. *PM 15 Points Programme* for minority development must be implemented in true spirit. For this some willingness on governments part is also needed. The recommendations of SCR, Rangnath Mishra Commission, and Deshpande Report are very authentic work and government must regard their findings for the development of community in bringing mainstream line. These commission's recommendations would not benefit only urban Muslims but also to rural areas Muslims but that's needs miles to go. India cannot fulfill its dream of super power and a developed nation until unless 15 percent population also joins hand.

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