MUSLIM COMMUNITY ARE GETTING ACCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA- AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract: A large number of Muslims in India are receiving education from English medium schools. Higher Education has reached to the mind of many muslims. They felt that in the 21st Century modern education is of utmost importance and this can be achieved only by sending their children to Higher Educational Institutions. Nowadays marginalized Muslim communities are increasingly demanding more quality education from their Higher educational Institutions. But most of the Higher Education Institutions in India are privately owned and many educationist may not feel a need to fulfill the community desires. Although Muslim parents are attracted to the safe environment of these schools, they are aware that a purely religious education will not help their children to earn a decent living, because of outdated traditional methods and technique of teaching and learning, with a negative outlook towards modern subjects and also due to lack of innovations, experiments and researches. The main concern of this paper is to find out the contribution of Higher education in the empowerment of Muslims and point out the shortcomings of Higher education. This paper suggests some remedial measures also to improve the quality of Higher education for overall development of Muslim community.

Keywords: Higher education, Muslims, Empowerment, Marginalized.

1. Introduction

The development of any nation depends on its educational system and it is proved that education is the key to human progress and social change. Education is a powerful tool for empowerment of individual. It helps in developing confidence in individual and community about their own capacities, inherent strengths to shape their lives and thus enhance the inner strength. Education is the means by which societies have been known in history, to grow out of oppression to democratic participation and involvement.

Empowerment is seen as matter of providing at least to some extent means of subsistence as a right. However empowerment in general is understood as means to enable to control the personal, communal and societal environment to foster their own development. Thus empowerment is defined as a matter of access and participation always being a process of getting empowered rather than being concerned with a status of being empowered. For empowering a community, it is required that access to quality education be ensured for the community. Nowadays marginalized Muslim communities are increasingly demanding more quality education from their Higher Education Institutions. But most of the Higher education institutionss in India are privately owned, Higher education institutions leaders may not feel a need to respond to community desires.

Most of the Higher Education Institutions are in the process of introducing modern education. However, that some of the Institutions have introduced modern education complemented with religious education. In majority of these Institutions, the students have no access to modern secular education. If modern and scientific education is introduced in these institutions, it will certainly create conditions for promoting modern and secular outlook among students and empower them to participate as equal partners in an inclusive society. These Higher Educational Institutions should serve as a vehicle for articulating the Islamic cultural heritage and universal values that are deeply embedded in the tradition, consciousness and identity of the Muslim community.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

☐ To analyze the role of Higher education Institutions in empowerment of Muslims in India.
☐ To find out the problems faced by the Indian Higher Education Institutions regarding empowering muslims.
☐ To suggest some remedial measures for improvement of Higher education.

3. Education In Islam

To seek knowledge is a sacred duty in Islam, The first word revealed of the Quran was "*Iqra*" which mean „Read‟ and Seek knowledge! Educate yourselves! Be educated. There is a general stereotype that the principles of Islam are responsible for educational backwardness of the Muslims. But there is no empirical basis of such a stereotype. Actually Islam does not stand against the acquisition of knowledge and education among its believers. Islam has given proper emphasis on attainment of education and has provided many guidelines for it. Islam has broader meaning of education. According to Islamic prescriptions acquisition of knowledge is compulsory for all men and women. It states that "go in quest of knowledge to as distant as a place as China".

Table: 1 Literacy Rate of Muslims (2001)

Rural			Urban		
All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
53	62	43	70	76	63

Source: Sachar Committee Report

4. Educational Status of Indian Muslims

The national educational policy (1986) stressed the need of the liberalization of education to liberate marginalized sections of the society.

The policy recommended for the use of distance education media in a massive way to reach those un-reached. The Sachar Committee (2006) report indicated about the educational status of Muslims. The findings showed that Muslims were the most educationally backward community in the country. Comprising nearly 13% of India's population, Muslim enrolment at the primary school level (Class1-5) was a meager 9.39% of total enrolment figures for 2006-07

Table-2

YEAR	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Percentage of Muslim Minority enrolment in India (2006-10)				
Primary Level	9.39	10.49	11.03	13.04
Upper Level	7.52	8.54	9.13	11.47
Elementary Level	8.89	9.95	10.49	12.58

Source: District Education System for Education (DISE)

The preliminary analysis of provisional data suggests a significant improvement in participation of Muslim Minority children in elementary education programmes. Muslim children in **Primary classes** in 2009- 10 was **13.04 percent,** while the percent share of Muslim enrolment during the previous year was 11.03 percent,10.49 percent in 2007-08 and in 2006-07, it was 9.39 percent. Like enrolment in Primary classes, percentage of Muslim enrolment in **Upper Primary classes** has also improved to **11.47 percent** in 2009-10 from 9.13 percent in 2008-09, 8.54 percent in 2007-08 and 7.52 percent in 2006-07. The **elementary level** data also shows increasing trend of Muslim enrolment i.e. 8.89 percent in 2006-07, 9.95 in 2007-08, and 10.49 in 2008-09 and**12.58 percent** in 2009-10.
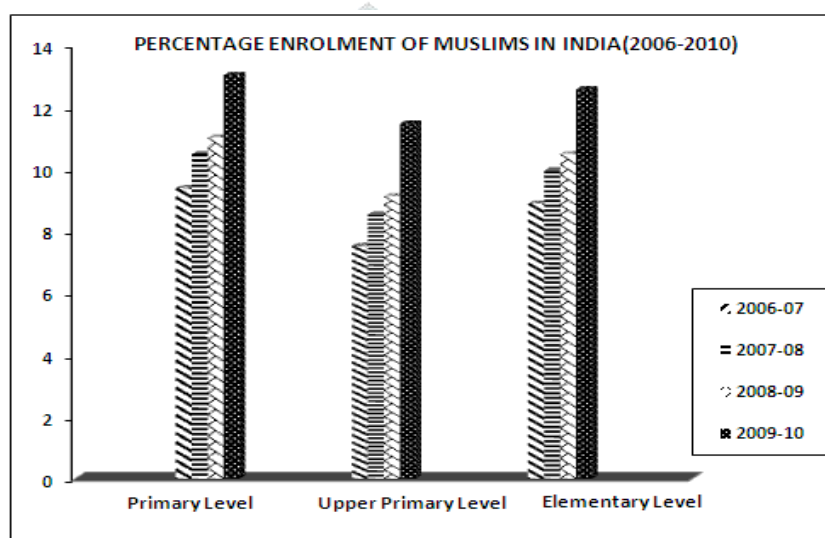

Fig.1 Enrollment Of Muslims In India In Educational Institutions

Table-3 which is given below used the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data, more specifically, 66th survey (2009-10). These are the largest sample surveys in India that provide information on the caste and religion of the respondents along with information on education and employment characteristics.

Table-3

Percentage Distribution of Persons by Education for each Socio-religious Category, (17-29								
	Hindu UC	Hindu OBC	Hindu SC	Hindu ST	Muslim OBC	Muslim GEN	Muslim All	Other Minorities	All
Not Literate	5.7	16.2	24.7	30.1	26.1	18.8	22.3	8.8	17.1
Secondary &below	51.2	59.3	60.8	58.0	59.0	67.7	63.8	56.2	58.2
Higher Secondary	24.0	16.1	10.0	8.6	10.2	9.7	9.8	22.1	15.5
Graduate & above	19.2	8.5	4.5	3.0	4.8	3.8	4.1	13.0	9.2

Source: National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO)

The situation has become so depressing that if urgent remedial measures are not undertaken the things would slip out of hand. With limited access to good quality public schools, coupled with increasing identity pride and communal prejudices, poor Indian Muslims send their children either in Higher educational institutions or in the Urdu- medium schools that serve Muslim communities. This is especially true for parents of Muslim girls who believe that their daughters will be safe in an Urdu-medium school.

5.   Role of Higher Education in Empowerment of Indian Muslims

We live in a competitive world today, where education in general and professional education in particular, is in great demand. The common people are aware of the advantages of modern education and even for an enlightened and inclusive democracy, it is necessary that all sections and classes of people are well educated and intellectually equipped to shoulder the responsibility for a free nation. Education occupies a unique role in the process of empowerment of minorities especially Muslims in the contemporary Indian context. As the Muslim community has lagged behind educationally over the decades, it is necessary to advance, foster and promotes the education of this

community at a quicker pace and as a matter of priority. Next to Indonesia, India is home to the largest number of Muslims in any single country in the world.

6. Efforts for Modernizing Higher educational institutions

The number of Higher Educational Institutions in India is estimated to be 3500 to 4000. To make Higher education more acceptable, various efforts have been made by the government to modernise the system. The High Power Panel on Minorities (1980) and the Group on Minorities Education (1990) set up by the Department of Education advocates relevant changes in the curriculum. The National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992) and the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme for Welfare of Minorities suggested the modernisation of traditional Higher educations, and the „Scheme of Modernization of Higher education" was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme in 1994 suggesting the introduction as an addition of English, Science, Mathematics and Hindi subjects on a voluntary basis. In 2004, the Standing Committee of "National Monitoring Committee for Minorities" was constituted.

The Higher Educational Institutions Modernisation Scheme of the government should be suitably revised, strengthened and provided with more funds so that it can provide finances and modern education up to Standard X within those Higher educational institutions themselves which are at present imparting only religious education or to enable the students of such Higher educational institutions to receive such education simultaneously in the general schools in their neighbourhood. The Madrasa Modernization Scheme may, for all these purposes, be operated through a central agency like the Central Wakf Council or the proposed Central Madrasa Education Board.

The National Policy on Education commits itself to provide all possible means for the uplift of the educationally backward minorities. The children of the educationally backward Muslim minorities attend Higher Educational Institutions with very little participation in the national mainstream education system. In order to provide them with access to education in modern subjects, the Central Government has been implementing the Area Intensive and Madarsa Modernization Scheme. These are the various schemes launched by the government for the empowerment of Muslims, but they were not successfully implemented.

7. Problems Faced by Indian Higher educational institutions

Higher educational institutions, through which the Community ensures that its future generations will not be able to acquire knowledge of Islam, have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India. Often they are looked upon with suspicion by the wider society, with the fact that the Higher Educational Institutions failed to provide religious education to the Muslim community.

Science and Mathematics teachers appointed under this scheme have not been paid their salaries regularly. Besides, the salaries fixed are too low. It is widely believed that the help given to Higher educational institutions is "on paper alone". Giving computers to Higher educational institutions has not been perceived to be of great help to the Community. However, Madarsa „modernisation" does not mean only having science/mathematics teachers and installing computers. As mentioned earlier Higher educational institutions need to be affiliated by regular education boards.

Some major and important shortcomings of Higher education education system are stated as below:-

- Absence of definite aims and objectives.
- Lack of basic facilities like proper building, classroom and especially furniture, black board and other equipments in some of the Higher educational institutions.
- Outdated traditional methods and technique of teaching and learning.
- Isolation from modern developments in the area of natural sciences and social sciences and over emphasis on the traditional subjects, with a negative outlook towards modern subjects.
- Lack of coordination among various Higher educations Institutions.
- Defective system of examination & evaluation.
- Poor quality of planning and administration.
- Poor financial condition and management.

8. Suggestions

Few suggestions for the improvement of Higher education are given below:

First of all, the aims and objectives of Higher education education should be well defined

Enlarge the scope of Madrasas beyond religious education to school teaching subjects, like Science, Mathematics, English and Computer.

An arrangement whereby Muslim students may be able to access both religious and school education is required to ensure their completion of education till at least eighth standard.

Infrastructural development is very important for the Maktabs and Higher educational institutions, like classrooms, Furniture, blackboards etc

Quality education should be provided in Higher Educational Institutions with emphasis on Information and Communication Technology.

There should be a provision of teachers training programme for the teachers who wish to associate with Higher education education. They should be either accommodated in existing training institutes affiliated with the universities, or there should be a separate system of training for them.

9. Conclusion

This study highlights the present educational status of Indian Muslims, their enrolment in schools/ Higher educational institutions, Higher education and its contribution in empowerment of Muslims; important initiatives being taken by the Indian government, problems faced by these Higher educational institutions and some suggestions for improvement of educational status of Indian Higher educational institutions. The contribution of these Higher educational institutions has been so important that one cannot strategize the educational development of Muslim community by neglecting or overlooking their services to the community. These Higher educational institutions form a parallel education system which completely blocks the roads of economic growth and prosperity of the Muslims who resort to it and consequently Muslims are most backward religious community in India. So there is an urgent need to modernize or improve Higher education systems in India to educate the Muslims at that level which help them to compete to the children belong to modern education system. This will develop the confidence of Muslim children as well as helpful in the empowerment of whole Muslim community in India.

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