



**INDIAN MUSLIMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: A  
STUDY OF SELECT UNIVERSITIES IN  
NORTH AND SOUTH INDIA**

**ABSTRACT**

**of the Ph.D. Thesis**

Submitted to

**Jamia Millia Islamia**

for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**August, 2012**

## **INDIAN MUSLIMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF SELECT UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH AND SOUTH INDIA**

**Keywords: Indian, Education, Muslims, Universities, inclusions**

The socio-historical journey of higher education in India has evolved through different periods, viz., ancient, mediaeval, colonial, post independence and contemporary. In this journey, a system of English education takes a position in higher institutions of learning. The institutions of higher learning are considered the most important agency of social change, social transformation, and entire development of the country. In fact, this journey of higher education started with an ancient system of education in the Vedic period in which two types of educational system were present there, viz., the Brahminical and the Buddhist systems of education. The Brahminical system of education was regulated by religious values, while the Buddhist form of education was “secular” in nature. Formal education in India, as elsewhere in the world, began as instruction in religious Scriptures, observance of rules and regulations, rites and customs, performance of prayers and other injunctions prescribed by religion. Muslim conquest of India brought with them the riches of their education and culture in the form of particular education system. Muslims in India adopted, more or less, the same pattern of education as prevalent in other Muslim countries in early days. Muslims drew inspiration from Prophet Mohammad’s famous command “Seek knowledge even if it is available in a distant country like China”. But the major change in Indian higher education took place through the initiatives of British rulers that made an impact both in positive and negative ways. In pre-independence India until 1931 the community based data on literacy and education was made available through census reports but since the census of 1941, for unknown reasons, this crucial information has never been published. Muslims being a significant minority group of the country and consequently having a definitive role to play in the socio-economic and political life of the Indian society, no serious thought have been given to maintain a regular record of their access to and attainments at different levels of education. Without such evaluation it becomes almost impossible to know the exact status of education of Muslims at a given point of time vis-a-vis other social groups.

In early 1980s the realisation to have such basic data about the status of education among Muslims and other weaker sections dawned on the Union Government and for the first time efforts on official plain were made to collect information on educational situation of minorities including Muslims and other backward groups of society in selected states of India. The Sixth Annual Report

(1983-84) of the Central Minorities Commission confirms the backwardness of the Muslims. It states that out of 172 districts of the country identified as backward by the Planning Commission, 39 districts, including, seven classified as most backward have a sizeable Muslim population. In the National Sample Survey 43<sup>rd</sup> Round conducted in 1990 it was revealed that only 2.3% male and 0.8% female Muslims had acquired graduate qualification in the country. The 55<sup>th</sup> Round of the NSS (1999-2000) has provided an analysis of the levels of education achieved by Hindus and Muslims at all India and at the state levels. According to the survey Muslims participation in higher education in urban and rural areas in 1999-2000 was 3.9% and 0.8% respectively whereas Hindus participation rate was 11.5% and 1.8% respectively. The National Sample Survey Organization made estimates of a few indicators in 1987-88 and many more for 1993-94 and 1999-2000. In urban India, the Muslim illiteracy rate that was as much as 14 percentage points higher in 1993-94 had narrowed a bit to 11 percentage points by the end of the decade.

After a long stony silence on the issue of educational backwardness of the Indian Muslims since Independence, the Government of India ultimately decided to publicly appreciate the fact that Muslims are educationally most backward and special actions have to be taken to remove this. Several provisions concerning education of minorities were incorporated in the National Policy of education- 1986 and in its Programme of Action various educational schemes chalked out which were to be implemented- recognition of minority educational education, coaching classes for competitive examination, modernization of Madrasa Curriculum. Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme was issued with guideline 11 and 12 pertaining to education. The Commission in its 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report for the period 1989-90, to the Government of India had rightly observed that the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development did not have information of what was being done by the States and Union Territories. The President of India, in his address to the Joint session Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2005 announced that the Government would recast the 15-Point Programme for the welfare of minorities with a view to incorporate programme specific interventions.

The condition of the Muslims continued to deteriorate, as depicted by the report of the Dr. Gopal Singh High Power Panel for Minorities (1983); the 43<sup>rd</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> rounds of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 1988, 1994, and 2004-05 respectively; the seventh annual reports of the National Commission for

Minorities; the report of the Committee of Governor on the welfare of minorities (1998); the resolution and representations of minority parties and organizations, and others.

The Sachar Committee Report, have pointed out, Muslims are among the most economically, educationally and socially backward sections of Indian society. Undoubtedly, the report is immensely useful for understanding the magnitude of this problem, as are many of the suggestions that it provides for ameliorating it. The Government of India constituted Justice Sachar Committee for preparation of a Report on the Social, Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Community of India, and Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission for identifying criteria for socially and economically backward classes among the religious and linguistic minorities, and to suggest various welfare measures for Minorities including Reservation. The Sachar Committee has looked into the share of different communities in various institutions in order to assess their level of exclusion and discrimination in the access to various services. It has observed that the shares of several of the religious minorities are far below the average figures of other communities. Suggesting the adoption of suitable mechanisms to ensure equity and equality of opportunity to Muslims in residential, work and educational spaces, the first of its kind report makes a strong pitch for mankind diversity a key feature of public policy. The salient findings of the Sachar Committee are: The literacy rate among Muslims was 59.1%, which was below the national average of 64.8 %; less than 4% of Muslims are graduates or diploma holders compared to about 7% of the population aged 20 years and above. It is estimated that only one out of 25 students enrolled for an undergraduate programme, and only one out of fifty students enrolled for a postgraduate programme is a Muslim. The percentage of Muslim men enrolling for a degree course is lower than that of women.

The committee emphasised the need to view the recommendations: (i) Mainstreaming and inclusiveness should be the cornerstones for any policy initiative; (ii) There is an urgent need to enhance diversity in residential, work and educational spaces; (iii) More equity would reduce the sense of discrimination that the community perceives; (iv) Availability of detailed information can facilitate action and monitoring especially when combined with the Right to Information (RTI) Act; and (v) Focus should be on *general* rather than *community-specific* initiatives. A multi-pronged strategy to address the educational backwardness of the Muslim community, as

brought out by the Sachar Committee, has been adopted. It was heartening to find that the Report acknowledges the fact that enrolment rates for Muslims have picked up in recent years. The need of the hour is to strengthen and accelerate this trend. The government should move in and do something not for popular votes but for uplifting a major section of the Indian citizenry. Madarsas can be transformed into modern educational centres where both religious and vocational studies may be imparted simultaneously. Muslims should be provided reservation in higher education and elite institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. The main explanation put forward by the committee seems to be generalised discrimination and lack of access, in part because of poverty. But this cannot be the total answer, because in some states Muslim participation in education is much higher than the norm. In fact, on many measures Muslims are doing better in western and southern states than they are in the rest of the country. The current trajectory of the implementation of the SCR recommendations is leading it nowhere near the goal of empowerment of the Muslim community. Basant feels that the basic mistake made by the government was making the Ministry of Minority Affairs the nodal agency for implementing the Sachar Committee recommendations. “Most of the recommendations of the Sachar Committee favour general programmes with better inclusion of all under-privileged groups, including Muslims, rather than Muslim-specific programmes. The policy-making and implementation task should lie with a general ministry, such as the Ministry of Home or Finance.

It is evident from above analysis that saga of Muslim Higher Education is quite sordid in the country that vindicate the hypothesis mainly Muslim representation in education in general and higher education in particular is far lower both in relations to their population as well as in relation to other minority communities. The above inference has empirically been drawn through an analysis of data and information provided by several universities across board viz. Four Universities from North India- Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Uttarakhand, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh and Allahabad University, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh and four from South India- Karnatak University, Karnataka; Puducherry University, Puducherry; University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad,

Andhra Pradesh and University of Kerala, Kerala. Over twenty Universities<sup>1</sup> have been contacted out of which eight Universities have provided adequate, if not substantial information and many wrote back that they do not maintain the required data. If we look at the overall picture of North Indian Universities, the analysis shows, two Universities i.e. Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University are **Minority** institutions, where more than 50 percent of students enrolled are Muslims. Among these, at Aligarh Muslim University it counts to 75 percent which is even higher than Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. The other two Universities at Uttarakhand and Allahabad- Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University and University of Allahabad- enrolment rate for Muslim students are 1 and 3 percent respectively which is much below SC (13 percent) and ST (5 percent) enrolment. In professional courses, in minority Universities, Muslim enrolment rate is high but in other two Universities it counts to 2 to 3 percent for Muslims. In minority Institutions 50 percent of the scholarship is being availed by Muslim students. Whereas at Allahabad and Uttarakhand Universities only 1 percent of the total scholarship are being availed by Muslim students.

To conclude the finding for South Indian Central Universities, it is seen that at Under Graduate level Muslim constitute around 9 to 10 percent of the total students. In Post-Graduate course it is raised to 11 percent. In M.Phil courses an average of 9 percent of Muslim students are enrolled. The might be many but the main reasons is the reservation for Muslims in educational Institutions. In Karnataka the reservation is 4 percent and in Andhra Pradesh also it is 4 percent. Currently in Kerala Muslim share in reservation has increased to 12 percent in government jobs and 8 percent in professional educational institutions. Pass percentage is approximately 80 percent for Muslim students. And about 7 percent of the Muslim students avail scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> Note – Hyderabad University, Hyderabad; Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad; University of Himachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh; University of Karnataka, Karnataka; University of Kerala, Kerala; University of Punjab, Punjab; University of Madras, Tamil Nadu; Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; University of Allahabad, Allahabad; Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow; Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Uttarakhand; Delhi University, New Delhi; Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi; Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Puducherry University, Puducherry; The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad; University of Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar

If we compare the Universities of North and South India, there is quite a variation. In North India, the two Central University taken for analysis are minority Institutions where more than 50 percent of the students are Muslims, in the other two Universities it comes to approximately 2 percent. In South India though none of the University comes under Minority but still it constitutes about 10 percent of Muslim students. In the North India Universities as we climb the ladder high in higher education, the percentage of Muslim students decline which is not the case with South Indian Universities. If we look into the findings the percentage of Muslim students increases with each successive degree for Muslim students. In South Indian Universities, it's not that only in professional courses Muslim percentage is high; in almost all the courses the percent of Muslim Students is between 7 to 10 percent or even high. Whereas in North Indian Universities very few students opt for professional courses because of high admission fee and self financing nature. There is one similarity among both that pass percent in North and South Indian universities for Muslims comes to 80 percent. The scholarship availing students in North Indian Universities is just one percent apart from Minority University, in south India it contributes to 7 percent.

There is a spectacular divide between South and North Indian Muslims in terms of education. While the South Indian Muslims, particularly of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have shown impressive progress in education, compared to their counterparts in Bihar, U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. The educational institutions in the South have a major role in keeping the communal harmony in the region. The interdependency nature of educational institutions is the major reason for this phenomenon. The institutions accommodate students and faculty from various religious and cultural backgrounds. This cultural amalgamation facilitates the internalisation of multicultural values and communal harmony in academic community, and thereby, in entire society's wish the North Indian Muslim community should adopt such Indian model of Education. The educational backwardness of the Muslim men and women is not the only an acute problem of the Muslim society but also a problem of the whole nation. Thus, at first Muslims should come forward to remove their backwardness. If Muslims themselves

make conscious endeavour to remove their backwardness it is expected that the nation will also come to their rescue.

The thesis examines the educational status of Muslim at Higher level in India. The key argument of this thesis is that the higher education in India is slowest and lowest among Muslims. Despite various recommendation and steps taken there is slow rate of progress.

Chapter One is an introductory chapter, which describes the historical background of higher education in India in general. It also assesses about the Constitutional status of minority institutions, Muslims in particular, in India and gives a brief account of various minority organisations and statutory bodies.

Chapter Two provides an overview of history and growth of Muslim Higher Education in India. It also gives an overview of various committees and commissions which have been established by the Government of India to look into the educational status of Muslims and various suggestions and recommendations put forward by them.

Chapter three examines the report of Prime Minister High level Committee - Sachar Committee- which has been constituted to look into the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India. It mainly emphasizes on the educational perspective of the committee particularly higher education. It also analyses the recommendations put forward for the improvement of the status and how far these recommendations are successful.

Chapter four and five of this thesis deals with the data analysis of the select universities from North and South India on Higher Education. Chapter four takes into account and analyse four North Indian Central Universities. Chapter five examines and analyse the four South Indian Universities.

Chapter six deals with the findings, suggestions and conclusions. It concludes by giving an account of findings of the Universities which has been analysed in previous two chapters. It also concludes by analysing the problems which Muslim face in attainment of educations and give suggestions to do away with this problem.



## Profile

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