

## THE OTHER INDIA

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The Report of the Com-mittee headed by ex-Justice Rajendra Sachar for the investigation of the socio-economic-educational conditions of Indian Muslims has created some sensation, but not many are familiar with the general contents of the Report. The Committee was constituted on 9 March 2005 and relied on the following data sources;

- (a) The Census report of 2001
- (b) The 55th and 61th rounds of the National Sample Survey
- (c) The information provided by the Reserve Bank of India, NABARD, SIDBI, NMFDFC etc.
- (d) Various commissions such as the National Backward Classes Commission and the Backward Classes Commissions of various states.
- (e) The information provided by various government departments.

According to the Census of 2001, the population of India was 1028.6 millions, among whom the Muslims constituted 13.4 percent. In other words, the number of Muslims in India was 137.8 millions. They form the largest minority community of India. India has the largest Muslim population in the world, next only to Indonesia, Bangladesh and Pakistan. If this large community lives permanently with poverty and hunger, while lacking modern education it implies not only the wastage of a large amount of human wealth, but also the creation of an objective condition for considering itself a 'Separate' entity. It hampers national solidarity and creates obstacles to the transformation of the society. On the other hand, there is a growing feeling of rancour among other communities towards the Muslims. It is common knowledge that Muslims of the Indian society are victims of deprivation. But so far, there has been no official estimate of the magnitude of this deprivation.

The Muslims are not uniformly spread over all the states. Among the 593 districts of India, nine have Muslim populations as 75 percent or more of the total. In eleven districts, Muslims constitute between 50 percent and 75 percent of the population. In 38 districts, their proportion in the population is between 25 to 50 percent. In 182 districts, they constitute 10 to 25 percent of the population.

During 1961-2001, the growth of population in India has been about 20 percent per decade. Among the Muslims, this rate is higher, something approaching 30 percent per decade. But during 1991-2001, this rate is lower compared with the earlier decades for both Hindus and Muslims. Rather the rate of deceleration is higher in case of Muslims.

The ratio between women and men is declining dangerously in the Indian society. In 2001, the number of women per 1000 of men was 933. The condition of Muslims in this respect is marginally better, and in their case, this number was 936. In case of children below the age of 6, the number in case of Muslims is 950 as against the average of 927. This shows that the tendency to kill female babies is significantly lower in case of Muslims. The experience of southern states show that with the promotion of female education and improvement in the standard of living, the rate of growth of population

declines. During 1991-2001, the growth of Muslim population, male and female combined, was 15.8 percent in Kerala, 17.9 percent in Andhra Pradesh and 13.7 percent in Tamilnadu, while these figures are 27.3 percent in Bihar and 25.6 percent in Uttar Pradesh. So, to make the facile generalization that the rate of growth of Muslim population is high, while that of the Hindu population is low, and to put the Muslim community on the dock on the basis of such generalization is devoid of any scientific investigation, although it might contain some political motives. Examples of various countries show that with a total fertility rate (the number of live babies given birth to by a woman on the average) of 2.2, the population remains stationary. In India, the T.F.R has already reached 3 and in several states it has gone down further below. But on the whole, the Muslim community is backward in this respect.

In the Report, it is stated that the failure of the Central Government to make arrangements for the free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen has in general deprived the children of India. Muslims are, in addition, victims of some special deprivations. According to the Report, Muslims are faced with a double disadvantage; one is the low percentage of the educated, and the other is the low quality of education. In the opinion of the Committee, the relative share of Muslims is even worse than the scheduled castes that have been oppressed by the caste system for long. The percentage of literacy among the Muslims is 59.9, significantly lower than the national average of 65.1. Among the scheduled castes and tribes, this rate is still lower, 52.2 percent. Barring the Muslims and SC/STs, the percentage of literacy among all other groups is 70.8 percent. The percentage of literacy among Muslim women is 50 percent, significantly higher than the SC/STs.

It is clear that the participation of the Muslims in higher education is also very poor. In the whole country, the percentage of Muslim graduates among the total is only 6.3. The corresponding figure for the SCs-STs is 8.2, and others have 85.5 percent. Among the technical and managerial students, the proportion of Muslims is even less. Among the students of all the branches of the Indian Institute of Management, Muslims constitute only 1.3 percent, and among the IITs, this is 3.3 percent. In the graduate courses of the latter, only one in 25 is a Muslim and in the post-graduate courses this ratio is one in every fifty.

The Report has shown that in case of the age group 6-13, the difference among various religious- social communities is not large, and the existing difference is declining. But as one moves higher along the hierarchy of education, this difference grows larger, and the proportion of scheduled castes/tribes and Muslims go on rising.

Many are inclined to the opinion that Muslims are more willing to send their children to Madrasas, and that is why the education of Muslim students are not good enough. The Sachar Committee, after a scrutiny of the evidence, has concluded that this notion is not a well-founded one because at the all-India level, only four percent of the Muslim school-going children receive their education at the Madrasas. The Committee has proposed modernization of Madrasa education, and financial aid to the Madrasas, and has observed that while the state has not fulfilled its duty of universal education, the Madrasas are bringing education to at least some people. The Sachar Committee has examined the problem of instructing through the medium of Urdu and has recommended this language as the medium of instruction in those areas in which the density of Urdu-speaking people is high.

Reviewing the evidence, the Committee has found that most of the Muslim workers are self-employed in manufacturing and trade. Their proportion among salaried permanent workers is less than any other socio-religious group. Whatever employment they get is in the unorganized sector and the working conditions are worse than those of other groups. Their participation is very low in government jobs, and the jobs provided by state enterprises and large private companies. It is found that in the urban areas, Muslims constitute only 7.9 percent of the employees of these institutions, while the shares of upper caste Hindus, SC/STs and O.B.Cs are 17.2, 11.9 and 5.8 percent respectively. It is well known that in the Indian society, a large difference exists between the organized and unorganized sectors in respect of facilities and working conditions. Employees of the former, beside receiving higher salaries, are entitled to leaves with pay, and enjoy healthier working conditions, social security and higher social positions. For this reason, this low presence of Muslims in the jobs of the organized sector, which is lower than the SCs and STs, have created a serious asymmetry in the Indian society. Besides, a government employment is not only an employment; it is an instrument of power. An officer-in-charge of a police station, a Block Development Officer or a Bank Manager not only earns his salary but enjoys some administrative and financial power also at the same time. If the presence of one particular community in such posts is too low, it becomes impossible for the people belonging to this community to receive administrative justice.

The following table illustrates the participation of Muslims in government jobs in 10 states:

*State Muslim (%) % Participation  
Population in Government*

		<i>jobs</i>	
West Bengal	25.2	2.1	Kerala 24.7 10.4
Uttar Pradesh	18.5	5.1	
Bihar	16.5	7.6	
Assam	30.9	11.2	
Jharkhand	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	

The above figures collected from the Table 9.4 of the Report show that among the 10 states, the condition of the Muslims is most pitiable in the CPM-led Left-ruled West Bengal, which is supposed to be the citadel of secularism. Andhra Pradesh is most advanced in this respect, while provinces like Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are far ahead of West Bengal.

As the Muslims are largely engaged in self-employment, facilities for bank loans could have advanced their social and economic advancement. Muslims who constitute 13.4 percent of the population of India, own 12.2 percent of the accounts of nationalized banks or other financial institutions, which shows their willingness to obtain bank credit. But they have received only 4.6 percent of total credit. In West Bengal, the picture is even more dismal. Muslims constitute 25.2 percent of the population, own 29.2 percent

of the bank accounts but have enjoyed only 9.2 percent of bank credit. The Committee has proposed the earmarking of a definite portion of bank credit for the Muslims and suitable propaganda campaign among them on various projects and transparency about the functioning of the banks among all socio-religious communities.

The Committee has found that the presence of postal and telegraphic communication facilities, schools, hospitals and good roads in the villages is inversely correlated with the proportion of Muslims in the population. In West Bengal and Bihar, there are 1000 Muslim-dominated villages having no schools. The corresponding number in Uttar Pradesh is 1943. There is no health centre in 3000 Muslim-dominated villages of West Bengal and Bihar, while there are 5000 such villages in Uttar Pradesh. In rural India, only about 25 percent of the population drink tap water. For the Muslims, this figure is even less. The conclusions of the committee are:

- (a) In one third of the Muslim-dominated villages, there are no educational institutions.
- (b) There are no health centres in 40 percent of the Muslim-dominated villages.
- (c) The social infrastructure in Muslim-inhabited areas is very weak.
- (d) The housing conditions of Muslims are similar to those of the SC/STs and the O.B.Cs. Regarding the use of tap water, electricity and modern fuels, Muslims are largely lagging behind others.

According to official estimates, the per capita expenditure of all communities taken together was Rs 712 for India as a whole. For general caste Hindus, it was Rs 1023, for Hindu O.B.Cs, Rs 646, for the SC/STs, Rs 520 and for Muslims Rs 635. In urban areas the percentage of Muslims living below the poverty line is 38.4, while in rural areas it is 26.9. Compared with the SC/STs, this figure is lower in rural areas and higher in urban areas. For the population as a whole, the figures are 22.8 percent and 22.7 percent for rural and urban areas respectively.

Although Islam in its original form did not allow for the caste system, the institution of caste in the Indian society and its economic content have introduced this system among Indian Muslims and Christians. There are some communities, which have adopted Islam as their religion but have remained untouchable or are leading the life of *adivasis*. In UP Hindu banjaras are identified as scheduled castes, but Muslim banjaras are not.

Some such Muslim groups should be identified among the scheduled. The Sachar Committee has made these recommendations and has asked the Government to identify the OBCs properly. But it has not recommended the reintroduction of the practice of recording caste identities in Census Reports, which it should have done, because otherwise it is not possible to obtain proper information about the OBCs.

### **WAKF PROPERTY**

Gift is a part of Islamic culture. Islam enjoins the wealth-earning people to contribute a part of their income for the sake of meeting the basic necessities of the people, particularly the poor. Such gifted wealth is called *wakf*. The quantum of *wakf* land in the country as a whole is about 600000 acres. The Sachar Committee has noted that notwithstanding the law for the maintenance of wakf property and the existence of State Wakf Boards and the Central Wakf Council, maintenance and supervision of this

property are far from satisfactory. There are some muttawalis (persons in charge of wakf property )who treat this property as their personal property and use it for their self-interest. Much of this property is under forcible occupation. The committee has recommended the promulgation of suitable laws for the recovery of forcibly occupied wakf property, and to keep wakf property out of the jurisdiction of the Rent Control Act.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The report of the Sachar Committee has presented a wealth of information on the backwardness of Muslims, and has recommended their increased participation in education, jobs and political processes. It has also recommended proper arrangements for their better access to credit and infrastructural facilities. But it has not recommended any reservation. The huge quantity of information provided by the Report clearly demonstrates the backwardness of Indian Muslims, and the state can justifiably introduce reservation for Muslims on the basis of this information, if it so desires. Whether the state will really take such a decision depends on whether the Muslim community and other democratic people can be sufficiently vocal on this issue. ~~████~~