

Socio-Economic Development and Education conditions among Muslims in India - An Analysis of Patterns and Trends

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Abstract

With the submission of Sachar Committee's report, several studies have been conducted database-based analysis of the socio-economic and pedagogical conditions for Muslims in India. Many researchers, decision makers and actually common Muslims believe education can be the only mechanism for improving its socio-economic status and facilitating the introduction of better paid jobs. At the same time there is concern about access to educational facilities and possible discrimination in the formal labor market. The paper reviews available evidence of the Muslim participation in education and employment patterns. By comparing estimates from the last round of the National Examination Survey for 2009-2010 with previous years (1999-2000 and 2004-05), an effort is made to assess whether these patterns have changed in recent years. A preliminary analysis of the correlations between these patterns indicates that these are quite complex and multidimensional. Perceptions about discrimination interact with talent, opportunities, supply situations and attitudes to give rise to different patterns of participation in employment and education. Another set of policy measures may be required to improve these conditions.

Keywords: *Socio-Economic, Education, Development, Muslims, Religious Communities*

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Introduction

Muslims, the largest minority community in the country, constituting 17.22 per cent as per census 2011 of the population, are seriously lagging behind in terms of most of the human development indicators. While the perception of deprivation is widespread among Muslims, there has been no systematic effort since independence to analyze the condition of religious minorities in the country (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). The second perspective is that the Sachar report explicitly contained in the academic debate was that the problems faced by Muslims are a combination of the poor (as a large part of the Muslims are poor), of all minorities and exclusively by Muslims. This perspective adds to the multidimensionality of the problems that Muslims face and need to have a comparative perspective while analyzing the conditions of Muslims.

Ideally, a balanced understanding of multidimensional reality should inform politicians not only for the Muslim community but for all marginalized groups. Unfortunately, this is not the case because analyzes to provide such an understanding is difficult and partly due to the fact that nuanced political initiatives are often politically undeveloped. For example, confirmatory action, especially in terms of reserve policies, has addressed the problems of integration and equity in India for a long time. Through these policies, the participation of the higher marginalized groups is sought in the political, educational and work-related areas. Over the years, the scope and coverage of these custody policies has been expanded through the inclusion of new social groups and by incorporating new "spaces" that are unavailable to certain social groups so far. For example, where the reservation on both educational and work-related domains has been available for scheduled cast (SC) and scheduled ST (ST) persons, higher education rooms have only been incorporated for the other back courses (OBCs) recently. Similarly, OBCs were included at a much later stage, while reservations in the recruitment domain were introduced to SC and STS early on. Over the years, several casters and communities have been added to the reserved lists of each category at central and state levels. However, policy makers have not found it useful to analyze the role of affirmative action in different domains so that relations across key areas of affirmative action can be explored.

A variety of factors have been identified to explain the observed relative mismatch among Muslims in India. These include differences in donations across social groups, real or perceived discrimination, behavioral patterns or attitudes and the range of education and employment opportunities. In this paper, the available literature and empirical evidence are examined to investigate in the comparative perspective the role of these factors in explaining the patterns

and recent trends of Muslim participation in education and employment. On the basis of this survey, some political issues also rise. While certain fresh data analysis is made for this purpose, the bulk of prospecting is performed by gathering interesting insights from the latest studies on the subject. The review suggests that the correlation between Muslim participation in education and employment is complex and multidimensional. Perceptions about discrimination interact with talent, opportunities, supply situations and attitudes to give rise to different patterns of participation in employment and education. Another set of policy measures may be required to improve these conditions.

Population Growth:

Population projections by the Pew Research Center, a US-based think tank estimates that by the year 2050, Muslims will make up 18.4% of India's population, the largest population of Muslims in any country in the world. But, India's Hindu population will still be larger than the total Muslim population of India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, five countries with the largest Muslim population in the world. Overall, population growth is slowing down in India and the decadal growth rate fell from 21.54% between 1991 and 2001 to 17.64% between 2001 and 2011, which is in line with global trends that show that population growth rates fall as a country becomes more developed and literate. In India, the Muslim growth rate is falling faster than the growth rate of Hindus.

The decadal population growth rate of Muslims fell 4.9 % from 29.5% in 2001 to 24.6% in 2011, while that of Hindus fell 3.5 percent, from 20.3% to 16.8%. In 2001, 65.1% of all Hindus, above the age of 7 years, were literate, while 59.1% of Muslims were literate, according to census data. In 2011, the percentage of literate Hindus rose to 73.3%, while that of Muslims increased to 68.5%. Fertility rates of populations that have higher fertility, such as low-income families and Muslims, are falling faster than other groups, as methods of contraception and education spread to these groups, explained Arokiasamy of International Institute for Population Sciences.

Table 1: Share of Population in the Relevant Age Groups Participating in Higher Education for Each Socio Religious Category, 2009-10

	AGS (20+ years)	CGS (22-35)	CGF (17-29)(18-25)
Hindu SC	3.94	5.57	6.43 (8.73)
Hindu-ST	2.67	3.53	4.23 (5.83)
Hindu -OBC	6.37	9.62	10.38 (13.98)
Hindu-UC	18.49	24.42	18.15 (24.75)
Muslim-OBC	4.04	5.42	6.15 (8.02)
Muslim General	4.25	4.97	6.26 (8.49)
Other Minorities	11.78	16.12	13.64 (18.04)
Total	8.53	11.42	10.44 (14.06)
	AGS: Eligible (20+ yrs)	CGS: Eligible (22-35 yrs)	CGF: Eligible (17-29 years) (18-25 years)
Hindu SC	45.24	49.1	42.81 (50.89)
Hindu-ST	34.96	35.95	33.56 (42.81)
Hindu -OBC	44.47	48.41	40.11 (48.34)
Hindu-UC	57.01	59.4	41.05 (50.76)
Muslim-OBC	45.59	48.36	40.55 (45.70)
Muslim General	42.05	44.58	43.46 (51.35)
Other Minorities	50.19	52.06	36.81 (44.70)
Total	50.13	52.71	40.42 (49.07)

Although it is difficult to get concrete data on the perceptions of specific populations on security, identity and equity issues, a promising line of action is to develop social psychological measures of perceptions of justice and self-esteem. Such work is in its infancy in India and has used relatively small sample sizes for empirical surveys, but provides some very interesting insights. Singh et al (2010) collected data from Hindu, Muslim and Christian respondents to appreciate "perceived fair points" in various areas of opportunities - social, economic, employment, education and political - various areas we referred to earlier. Table 1 reports the mean values together with the information on the significance of the difference in these perception results. Some features stop:

- Experienced justice among Hindu participants is higher than others in all five areas followed by Christians and Muslims.
- The field of education is the only area where Christian participants have higher points (although they are not statistically different from Hindus) while Muslims have much lower points.
- In the political space, both Muslims and Christians perceive lower justice compared to the Hindus.
- In the remaining three areas (employment, economy and social), the three groups differ significantly, with Hindus reporting the highest justice in opportunities followed by Christians and Muslims. Muslims report points that are much lower than the other two groups for economic and employment opportunities.

Another remarkable result of the Singh et al (2010) study was that there were no significant differences in the gender and employment status (employees against the unemployed) among the three religious groups. However, there was no significant difference in perceptions regarding throwing for Muslims and Christians.

The Sachar Committee's report was probably the first attempt to analyze the conditions of Muslim society using large-scale empirical data. It was clearly apparent the relative dissatisfaction of Muslims in India in various dimensions, including employment and education. The Sachar report highlighted heterogeneity within the Community and the versatile dimension of issues it faces. In general, they are reflected in several dimensions of the problems in two interrelated ways. Like other minorities, Muslims encounter problems of security, identity and justice at the same time and the interaction between these dimensions is the essence of the socio-economic and political processes that the community is exposed to daily. Two, the nature of these problems varies over "spaces" - education, employment, political and social - and probably over time. Conceptually, participation in a "space" can be seen as associated with participation in another "space". For example, participation in education may affect employment and vice versa. However, an empirical investigation of these multidimensional problems and interconnections between participation in different spaces is typically hampered by lack of access to relevant "hard and impartial" data.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Workers by Activity Status for Different Sectors for Each Socio-religious Category (SRC), All Workers (Rural + Urban; Male + Female), 16-64 years, 2009-10

Sector/Activity Status	Hindu-UC	Hindu-OBC	Hindu-SC	Hindu-ST	Muslim-OBC	Muslim-General	Muslim-All	Other Minorities	All Persons
Primary Sector									
Self-employed	79.1	63.2	36.8	53.5	52.5	59.67	56.3	64.9	59.0
Regular	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.2	1.4	0.5	0.9	1.7	0.9
Casual	20.2	36.2	62.1	45.2	46.1	39.9	42.9	33.3	40.1
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Secondary Sector									
Self-employed	32.4	31.6	21.6	15.5	44.8	40.2	41.6	23.7	29.7
Regular	41.8	19.9	13.2	12.1	12.3	18.2	16.2	22.9	21.1
Casual	25.9	48.5	65.2	72.4	42.9	41.6	42.3	53.4	49.3
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Tertiary Sector									
Self-employed	46.4	51.8	44.2	36.9	63.7	58.0	60.1	37.0	48.7
Regular	50.0	39.9	43.1	48.3	23.1	31.6	28.0	54.1	43.1
Casual	3.6	8.3	12.7	14.9	13.2	10.5	11.8	8.8	8.2
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India Datalabs

Distribution of workers by activity status for each sector (Table 2) brings out the differences across SRCs more starkly. As compared to other SRCs, a much higher share of Muslim workers are self-employed in the secondary and tertiary sectors; in the primary sector also self-employment is relatively high but not higher than many other SRCs like Hindu-UC, Hindu-OBC and other minorities. In the secondary sector, the share of Muslim workers engaged in regular jobs is somewhat better than SCs and STs, but their participation as regular workers in the tertiary sector is particularly low as compared to other SRCs.

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. Section 2 discusses brief data and the socio-religious categories (SRCs) that can be defined on the basis of these data and which are useful for comparative purposes. Section 3 gives some insights about the Muslim society's perception of their participation in different "spaces". This provides a context for the subsequent analysis of trends and patterns of Muslims participation in work and education. Evidence of participation in the education is discussed in section 4 in the light of new literature on the subject. Section 5 commits a similar exercise in connection with employment patterns. The closing section concludes and highlights some political issues.

Data Sources and Defining Socio-religious Categories

A number of data sources have been used to analyze the conditions of Muslims in India. The challenge is not only to capture heterogeneity within the Community, but also to define categories of other groups to make meaningful comparisons. In this paper we have used the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data. More specifically, we have used data from the three employment unemployment rounds of NSSO - 55 (1999-2000), 61 (2004-05) and 66

(2009-10). These are the largest sample surveys in India that provide information about the caste and religion of respondents together with information on education and employment skills.

In the Indian context, economic conditions, together with social and casualties, present themselves as appropriate variables that should be used to define these groups. Consequently, the socio-religious communities in both Muslim and non-Muslim populations try to be defined in a fairly poorer way. With the help of National Sample Survey (NSS) data, separate categories have been defined. These divide Hindus into:

- Hindu, upper castes - Hindu (UC);
- Hindu, Other Backward Classes – Hindu (OBCs);
- Hindu, Scheduled Castes – Hindu (SC); and
- Hindu, Scheduled Tribes – Hindu (ST).

Muslims are divided into general and OBC (including those Muslims that report their 'caste' as SC) groups:

- Muslim, General – Muslim (Gen); and
- Muslim, OBC – Muslim (OBC).

Other minorities (OM) have been retained as a separate category.

Certainly, the internal differentiation (heterogeneity) among Hindu and Muslim communities is much more than these categories can capture. However, given the shortcomings of the information, they constitute the best option and have both a sociological basis (see chapter 10 of the Sachar Committee Report) and historical relevance (Saberwal, 2010). An explicit recognition of heterogeneity among societies is not only useful in understanding the relative deprivation of Muslim society through appropriate comparisons. It also provides insights into the emerging dynamics of political processes in Indian society. Political parties have increasingly used this internal differentiation for political mobilization. Since political participation can potentially affect security, identity and justice, understanding of such processes is crucial.

Community's Perceptions on Its Participation in Different 'Spaces'

In the absence of "hard-impartial" data, one way of exploring the complex relationships between equity, identity and security-related issues is to look at them through the lens of public perceptions. Based on extensive interactions with Muslims, it has been argued that Muslims bear a double burden to be labeled as "anti-nationalists" and to be addressed simultaneously. The fact that the so-called appeasement has not resulted in any benefits, is usually ignored. Identity markers often lead to suspicions and discrimination of people and institutions. Discrimination is also fundamental in employment, housing and education. Gender inequality is usually identified purely by personal right to rule out gender-related problems in education and employment that Muslim women face in a continuous way.⁵ The public focus on personal and socio-cultural characteristics of society also has another negative externality cause of backwardness in all spheres are assigned to society itself. In addition, the feeling of uncertainty amongst Muslims is high, especially in state-owned states and among women. The discriminatory attitude of the police and others associates this feeling; Ghettoization is a result of insecurity and discrimination in homes, schools and jobs. Uncertainty affects mobility, especially for women, which leads to situations where Muslims do not make full use of economic opportunities.

The widespread perception of discrimination among Muslims leads to a feeling of alienation and is therefore seen by the community as an important cause of inequality. Limited access to high-quality schools is a major problem that affects women students more negatively. In addition to education, employment is the second major problem. Low participation in government jobs is partly seen as a result of discrimination. The employment situation has deteriorated, as globalization and liberalization processes seem to have affected Muslim jobs (mainly self-employment) more negative than others, especially for women. This, combined with low negotiating power for workers (especially home based) results in low incomes. Credit availability limits the ability of the Community to improve its financial position. Muslim concentration areas are referred to as "red zones" where credit flows are practically non-existent. Discrimination in the implementation of state programs and infrastructure provides problems with the economic sphere. This discrimination in various economic areas coexists with low political participation. Consequently, Muslim candidates are not able to contest from Muslim concentrated areas.

The views of Muslim society summarized above mark a process where identity-based discrimination reduces access, increases inequality and adds uncertainty. The security problem also reduces access to schools, housing, infrastructure, etc. (especially for women), which in turn contributes to inequality.

Table 3: Professed justice for five different possibilities as respondent's Religion

Opportunities	HINDU			MUSLIM			CHRISTIAN		
	Upper	Lower	F	Upper	Lower	F	Upper	Lower	F
Social Prestige	11.18	12.71	5.60*	9.16	8.84	0.288	10.09	10.56	.139
Economic	9.55	12.35	24.90***	9.00	8.06	3.29	9.64	8.22	2.01
Educational	10.12	12.53	16.62***	8.43	7.76	1.06	11.39	10.22	1.06
Employment	8.65	11.82	29.96***	8.86	8.33	0.328	8.89	7.56	1.47
Political	10.92	13.57	19.36***	8.04	8.08	0.005	8.32	6.11	3.85

Source: Singh et al (2015): 129.

Overall, perceptions of justice are the lowest among Muslims. And given the fact that employment status and gender do not differ in perception points, religion is clearly the most important differentiating factor in perceptions. Unlike the other two religious groups, participants from the Muslim community had negative perceptions about future opportunities to exploit new opportunities within the five areas of community members. Of course, among Hindus, make a difference, but here the upper throws feel discriminated, probably because of the policy of booking in employment, education and political spaces.

Patterns and Correlates of Participation in Education

The report of the Sachar Committee strongly aroused the relative poverty of Muslims in education. Table 2 provides summary information on the distribution of the population (17-29 years) by training for each SRC for the period 1999-2010. The level of readiness among Muslims is lower than most other SRCs (with the exception of SC and ST) and has not risen fast enough to match literacy in high-class groups. Lesson levels are the lowest for Hindu-ST (and also low for Hindu-SC) but have increased considerably in recent years. Among Muslims, the decline in illiteracy was more dramatic for the Muslim general (37 to 19 percent) than for Muslim OBC (34 to 26 percent) during the decades of 1999-2010. More detailed estimates of literacy between different SRCs reported in Appendix Tables 1a to 1d provide some interesting patterns:

- As expected, literacy rates are much lower in rural areas as compared to urban areas but both for males and females, the rates have improved in the last decade, especially after 2004-05. Also, the patterns and trends are more or less the same as the aggregate trends described above, except that literacy rates have not improved very significantly for rural women belonging to Muslim-OBC households;
- In urban areas the rates of literacy are higher but the improvements have not been that dramatic. Moreover, while for urban females belonging to the Muslim community (both OBC and general) show the same pattern as the one described above, Muslim men living in urban areas are worse-off than all other SRCs, Muslim OBCs reporting the lowest literacy rates.

These trends are consistent with the Sachar Committee findings that school enrolment rates were among the lowest for Muslims but had *improved* in recent years. This is also consistent with the perception that the Community is increasingly looking at education as a means of improving socio-economic status.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Persons by Education for Each Socio-religious Category (SRC), (Rural+Urban and Male + Female, 17-29 years)

Year/ Education	Hindu -UC	Hindu- OBC	Hindu -SC	Hindu- ST	Muslim- OBC	Muslim- General	Muslim- All	Other Minorities	All
1999-00									
Not literate	13.4	33.7	42.9	53.1	33.7	36.9	36.0	18.8	30.9
Secondary & below	58.7	54.7	49.5	39.6	59.0	54.0	55.5	58.7	54.0
Higher secondary	15.9	8.0	5.3	5.8	5.3	6.0	5.8	14.6	9.5
Graduate & above	12.0	3.6	2.3	1.5	2.1	3.1	2.7	8.0	5.5
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2004-05									
Not literate	9.6	25.2	33.9	45.6	32.8	27.3	29.3	14.2	24.8
Secondary & below	57.1	59.9	56.4	47.5	58.8	62.1	60.7	61.1	57.9
Higher secondary	18.6	9.7	6.6	5.2	5.8	6.6	6.4	15.2	10.6
Graduate & above	14.7	5.2	3.0	1.8	2.6	4.0	3.6	9.5	6.7
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2009-10									
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	3.3	4.8	3.8	4.1	13.0	9.2
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Observer Research Foundation, India Datalabs

Dropout rates are also among the highest for Muslims and this seems to go up significantly after middle school (Table 2). Higher secondary attainment levels are also among the lowest for Muslims and in relative terms, inter-SRC differences rise at the school leaving stage. In terms of crossing the school threshold and graduate attainment rates, the rural-urban differences are interesting as far as Muslims are concerned. (See Appendix Tables 1a to 1d). The condition of Muslims is particularly bad in urban areas while in rural areas they more or less seem to be on par with Hindu-STs and in some cases Hindu-SCs which have the lowest educational attainments among all groups. In urban areas, Muslims clearly constitute the lowest rung in terms of educational attainment of passing school or going to college. Bhalotra and Zamora (2010) utilize sources of data not used by the Sachar Committee to provide evidence of low Growth in School Enrollment and Completion Rates amongst Muslims in India, which is in line with the evidence compiled in the Sachar report and also reported above.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Muslims:

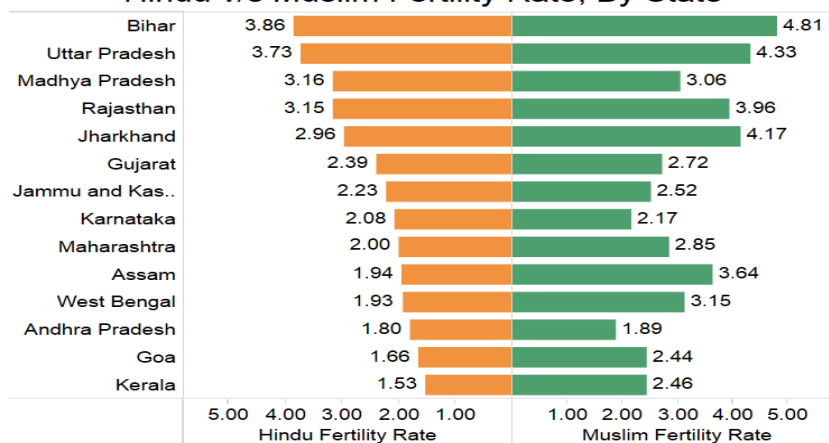
After India's independence in 1947 most Muslims decided to stay on in the country despite large-scale killing and violence. In the heat of what are known as the Partition riots, not to migrate to Pakistan was a conscious yet difficult decision for most individuals and families. Those who remained in India boldly faced the onslaught of communal violence or the threat of it. It was not that communalism was absent among the Muslims of the country. In fact, it survived, with both Hindu and Muslim communalism feeding on each other. Yet, by and large, Muslims chose to ally with secular forces. However, despite this, discrimination, social stagnation and educational marginalisation cumulatively resulted in growing economic backwardness of the Muslims in large parts of the country. The share of Muslims in government services dropped drastically.

In the name of helping Muslims, many 'secular' parties have repeatedly compromised with the most reactionary elements of the community at the same time as right-wrong Hindu groups have wrongly accused Muslims of being 'appeased' by these parties. In reality the ordinary Muslim was left to his fate and the few development schemes devised for uplifting the community were never made effectual. Economic and educational deprivation reduced the community's ability to seek relief from government development schemes. This was made more difficult by the fact that a large section of the north Indian middle class had migrated to Pakistan in the wake of the Partition, leaving behind millions of Muslims rudderless and leaderless. A large section of these were of 'low' caste background, who, despite their conversion to Islam over the centuries, had not witnessed any noticeable economic change, remaining tied down to their traditional, 'low' status occupations. Discrimination in various walks of life and police repression and often active collaboration and instigation by state authorities during communal riots further demoralised Muslims, caused loss of confidence in secular forces and resulted in withdrawal symptoms and a siege mentality. Ironically, when Hindu right-wing forces managed to grab political power they found communal elements among Muslims as their natural allies and willingly portrayed them as the representatives of Muslim community, further reinforcing deeply-rooted negative stereotypes.

Development and Fertility:

Compare, for instance, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. In 2011, the total fertility rate of Uttar Pradesh, at 3.3, was higher than the Indian average of 2.4, and higher than the rate in Kerala, at 1.8, according to census data. The Muslim population in Uttar Pradesh increased 25.19%, while the Muslim population in Kerala increased 12.83% between 2001 and 2011. Over the same period, the Hindu population increased 18.9% in Uttar Pradesh and 2.8% in Kerala. The higher growth rates of Muslims in northern states are "more or less part of a northern culture than a Muslim culture" This is in sync with higher average total fertility rates in northern and central states, such as Uttar Pradesh (3.3), Bihar (3.5), Chhattisgarh (2.7), and Madhya Pradesh (2.9), as compared to southern states like Andhra Pradesh (1.8), Karnataka (1.9), Kerala (1.8), and Tamil Nadu (1.7), according to 2011 census data. The states with the highest fertility rates in India are all in north and central India – Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan (which has a total fertility rate of 2.9), Jharkhand (2.8), and Chhattisgarh.

Hindu v/s Muslim Fertility Rate, By State



NOTE: We have included only the two biggest religious groups in the country for comparisons; Data for other states are not available.

Differences within States:

Still, there are differences within states in total fertility rates between religious groups. In 2005-2006, according to data from the third National Family Health Survey, Uttar Pradesh had a total fertility rate of 3.3, higher than the all-India average of 2.4. Kerala had a total fertility rate of 1.93. In 2005-2006, Muslims in Kerala had a total fertility rate of 2.46, higher than that of Hindus in Kerala, at 1.53. But the Muslim total fertility rate in Kerala was lower than that of Hindus in Uttar Pradesh, at 3.73. The total fertility rate of Muslims in UP was 4.33. One reason for the higher Muslim fertility within a state could be wealth-related factors. Survey information showed that families in the lower wealth quintiles have more children than richer families. For instance, in Bihar, women in the lowest wealth quintile have a total fertility rate of 5.08, while women in the highest quintile have a total fertility rate of 2.12. The same holds true for a richer state, like Maharashtra, where the lowest wealth quintile has a total fertility rate of 2.78, compared to the richest wealth quintile with a total fertility rate of 1.74. On average, Muslims across India are poorer than Hindus across India, with an average monthly household per capita expenditure of Rs 833, compared to Rs 888 for Hindus, Rs 1,296 for Christians and Rs 1,498 for Sikhs, according to a 2013 National Sample Survey report, based on data from 2009-2010.

Religion and fertility:

There is little evidence internationally of the correlation between religion and fertility rates. For instance, according to World Bank data, in 2014, Bangladesh, India's Muslim-majority neighbor, had a total fertility rate of 2.2. Iran, another Muslim country, has a total fertility rate of 1.7, below replacement level, which means the current population cannot be replaced at the prevailing population growth rate. Similarly, Malaysia and Indonesia, both Muslim-majority countries, have fertility rates of 1.9 and 2.5, respectively. Other Muslim-majority countries, such as Saudi Arabia (2.8), and Egypt (3.3), have higher fertility rates. The Hindu and the Muslim populations in Pakistan have the same total fertility rate – 3.2 – according to data from the Pew Research Center. Another neighboring country, Sri Lanka, with a Buddhist majority, had a total fertility rate of 2.1 in 2014. Its Buddhist population had a total fertility rate of 2.2 between 2010 and 2015, while both Hindus and Muslims had a higher total fertility rate, at 2.3 and 2.8, respectively.

Patterns of Employment and Working Conditions:

The estimates provided in the Sachar Committee report show that in general, the mean per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) is lower for Muslims than for all SRCs except SCs/STs and the incidence of poverty (headcount) is also higher for Muslims than for all SRCs except SCs/STs. The situation is the same with respect to the intensity of poverty in urban areas; the mean expenditure of the poor as the ratio of poverty line is the lowest for SCs/STs followed very closely by Muslims. In rural areas, the intensity of poverty is somewhat lower for Muslims than for SCs/STs and OBCs. Further exploration of urban poverty showed that the relative situation of Muslims is worse in urban areas, especially smaller towns where they experience the highest poverty levels. As in the case of other SRCs, poverty levels have declined among Muslims but the conditions of Muslims have improved at a slower pace than most other SRCs, especially in urban areas. Moreover, Unni (2010) shows that the proportion of poor among the working ('working poor') population is higher among Muslims. That is, the community constitutes a relatively larger share of the working poor implying thereby poor working conditions.

Borooah (2010) argues that participation in regular employment across different social groups is determined by the relative advantage of groups in terms of "attributes" and "access". In order to analyze the role of these 'advantages' he estimates the risks in labour market outcomes for those who are identified as disadvantaged groups. Bhaumik and Chakrabarty (2010), extend the labour market discussion to earnings. They explore the determinants of the differences

in inter-caste and inter-religion earnings in India during the 1987-99. The data show that (while earnings differences between “upper” castes and SC/ST declined between 1987 and 1999, earnings differences between Muslims and non-Muslims have increased, to the detriment of the former. Moreover, inter-caste and inter-religion differences in earnings can be explained largely by corresponding differences in educational endowment and returns on age (and, hence, experience). However, differences in returns on education do not explain inter-caste and inter-religion earnings differences to a great extent.

Unni (2010) using the NSSO data empirically explores the labour market imperfections in terms of gender and increasing informality. As was the case in earlier studies, the estimates also suggest that participation of Muslims in regular jobs is lower than of other groups even after we control for educational and other characteristics. It is difficult to establish discrimination from these estimates. Sachar Committee found that those Muslims who are able to qualify for civil services and IIM exams have the same chance as others in getting admissions. The underlying assumption therefore is that exclusion, discrimination or some kind of disadvantage in formal jobs may result in minorities setting up minority enclaves based on non-farm self-employment. Interestingly, post-primary education reduces the probability of Muslims participating in self-employment in non-agriculture and instead increases the likelihood of withdrawing from the labour force or participating in the casual labour market. However, given the poverty rates and the working conditions described in Unni (2010) and reported above, the possibility of ‘lucrative’ self-employed ventures is very low. Das (2008) argues that lower participation of Muslims with post-primary education in regular jobs reflects discrimination.

Another interpretation of these results could be that given the perceptions of discrimination, Muslim men who have some option to be self-employed do not prefer post-primary education; the others who do, have very limited or no access to the networks that Das refers to. As a result, even after post-primary education, Muslims are not able to build self-employed enterprises and limited job opportunities/discrimination keeps them out of the regular jobs. The option for them is either to withdraw from the labour force or participate in the casual labour market. However this interpretation is also somewhat incomplete as the poor typically cannot afford to be outside the labour market. Moreover, Das’s study clubs together all types of post-primary education; it is possible that a more disaggregated education variable that distinguishes between secondary, higher secondary and college education may have provided a clearer picture with self-employment and education among Muslims showing a non-linear relationship. This is clearly an area where some more work needs to be done.

What do these broad patterns suggest for policy?

Apart from other policies that enhance supply of educational facilities, affirmative action in the education and employment spaces is seen as an important policy initiative. Typically, this takes the form of reservation or quotas. Weisskopf (2010) evaluates the efficacy of positive discrimination such as reservations for reducing the social and economic marginalization of disadvantaged ethnic communities in India. His insightful analysis suggests that apart from being time-bound and flexible to the changing circumstances, policy of positive discrimination is more likely to be successful if the beneficiary community is fairly homogeneous; its members have been and continue to be subject to mistreatment and stigmatization by other communities; and they are significantly under-represented in esteemed positions in society. Moreover, such policies should be applied in those activities and well-endowed institutions where the possibility of acquiring human and social capital for the beneficiary is high. But, at same time the activity should be such that the quality of performance of beneficiary affects mainly the beneficiary and not others. In order to ensure adequate performance post preferential access, the magnitude of the preference granted.

For Muslims, there is no positive discrimination, except for those who have been categorized as OBCs, a fact not recognized by the authors. While the job reservation has existed for SCs and STs for a long time, the OBC reservation is of recent origin as it was initiated only in the 1990s. Therefore, the indirect effect of job reservation in creating incentives for education may take some time in the case of OBC Muslims covered under the scheme. Authors argue in favour of reservations, they do not consider this policy of nearly six decades to be an unqualified success: “While noting the success of the Indian affirmative action policies, it is also important to note the modest size of this success for all the groups. Although situation is improving, at each educational level, *dalits* and *adivasis* continue to lag behind upper caste Hindus and others. These disadvantages seem to accumulate at higher education levels. It is also important to note that quotas in college admission have caused great public resistance. However, our results show no improvement and even mild deterioration in college graduation rates for *dalits*, casting doubt on the effectiveness of these policies (Desai and Kulkarni, 2010).

Moreover, they also recognize that while the government reserves seats for *dalit* and *adivasi* students at college level, at a lower level, village schools continue to discriminate against them, preventing them from advancing to the college level to take full advantage of these reservations. This observation ties up with the important finding reported above that the gaps across SRCs in graduate attainment rates decline dramatically once the eligibility for college education is controlled for. The complexity of the role of reservation gets further enhanced when we combined this

evidence with the evidence on returns to education which for Muslims remain high, although have fallen in recent. In fact, for certain years, returns to education for Muslims are higher, especially in rural areas. Under these circumstances, even without reservation, the demand for higher education should go up. However, the estimates for returns are quite volatile.

The need to enhance diversity in different spaces is urgent. For this purpose, as suggested in the Sachar report, it may be desirable to evolve an acceptable, transparent *diversity index* which may include SRC status, gender and other elements depending on the context. Certain incentives for educational institutions, private sector, builders, etc, can be linked with this diversity index. For example, an educational institution can get additional grants for diverse student population, firms can get some tax cuts for diverse workforce and builders can get land at concessional rates if they are making composite housing societies. Eventually, diversity should be a corporate social responsibility. Creation of such an index is admittedly a difficult task but some informed debate on the issue would be useful. In the same vein, creation of common public spaces for interaction among SRCs can be facilitated through state-community-private sector partnerships. And more importantly, the policy discussion would move away from 'reservation syndrome' which has not allowed any experimentation.

Concluding Observations and Policy Options

Taken together the discussion in the earlier sections brings out the following key insights on Muslims participation in education and employment:

- As compared to other religions, Muslims have a higher perception of unfairness and this sense of discrimination is especially high in the employment and education spaces;
- Participation of Muslims is relatively low in the education space but has improved in recent years. However, the situation is particularly poor in urban areas, especially for Muslim males;
- The participation of Muslims in higher education is particularly poor but once they cross the threshold of school education and once other factors that affect participation in higher education, the deficits for Muslims decline significantly. Therefore, a focus on eligibility is quite critical for Muslims as for other marginalized groups and consequently the links between secondary and tertiary education are quite important for Muslims especially because the drop-out rates are quite high after middle school;
- While limited access (supply of schools) and discrimination is not ruled out, household endowments along with location play a critical role in determining participation of Muslims in the education space. There is some evidence to suggest that the Community does not fully appreciate the rewards of education even as returns to education are high;
- Muslims are predominantly engaged in self-employment and their participation as regular workers especially in the tertiary sector (that has grown in recent years) in urban areas is low as compared to other SRCs.
- While there is some evidence to suggest that Muslims choose self-employment to avoid discrimination in the formal labour market, educational endowments and other attributes like experience explain a large part of the differentials across SRCs in participation in regular employment as well as earnings. At the same time attributes are not able to fully explain these differentials and therefore discrimination remains an issue so does the measurement of attributes like quality of education.

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