

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF INDIAN MUSLIMS

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Abstract - The Muslims in India constitute around 17.18 crores i.e. 14.2% of country's population (Census, 2011). The cultural mosaic of society has been more effervescent with contribution of Muslims to development of society, culture and civilization of India. In India, contrary to common belief, Muslims do not constitute a socially homogenous community. Indian Muslims are characterized by regional and linguistic variations and highly unequal systems of social stratification with caste like formations (Ahmad, 1976). Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in India and thus the largest minority. However, Muslims are one of the most marginalized groups along with SCs/STs. At times, the marginalization and deprivation of Muslims is much more on various developmental indicators as compared to traditionally deprived sections like SCs/STs. Muslims are educationally most backward, economically poor and politically a powerless community of the country (Waheed, 2007). The deprivation at different levels of education is at the root of every problem, which Indian Muslims are facing. The lower rates of enrolment and retention and higher dropout rates at various levels of education are an important reason for marginalization of Muslims. The lack of higher and professional education deprives them of an opportunity to earn salaried income and decent standard of living. The job prospects at various levels are hampered by lack of education required for gaining skillful employment. In addition to rampant unemployment and underemployment, income inequalities are also a problem among Muslims. The high rate of poverty among Muslims, both in rural and urban area, is an important reason for their deplorable condition. The low earnings or income of Muslims is reflected in less savings, low access to quality education, high dropout rate, unskilled or semi-skilled employment or self-employment, low consumption expenditure and ghettoized existence. The paper attempts to highlight the pitiable conditions of Muslims by exploring the pattern and trends in employment and poverty among Muslims vis-à-vis other socio-religious groups in the country.

Key Words: Muslims, Poverty, Unemployment, Education, Minorities

Introduction :- The Census of 2011 enumerated India's Muslim population at over 17.18 crores (approx.14.2%). Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in India and thus the largest minority. India's Muslim population is amongst the largest in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's and close to the Muslim populations of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Moreover, it is larger than the total populations of most countries of the world (GOI 2006-07). The Muslim population lives predominantly in rural areas like the ST/SC and the total population. The level of urbanization among the Muslims, however, is higher than the ST/SC or the general population. Half of the Muslims living in the urban areas reported themselves as OBC Muslims. Analysis of the recent trends in the distribution of population across socio-religious categories in rural areas, metro cities and other urban towns from NSS data indicate that a higher percentage of Muslim population reside in metro cities or other urban areas compared to other religious groups (except upper caste Hindus (NSSO Report, 2011-12).

Also, it is important to note that the higher presence in urban areas especially metro cities provides innumerable opportunities for work and business, albeit at the cost of education in terms of Muslims. The high level of poverty combined with low literacy of parents is a perfect combination for dropping out of education system for Muslims. This, however, has long term effect on both employability and employment opportunities for Muslims. However, the recent trend in urbanization has exclusionary tinge benefitting the well-off sections across the major caste-religion spectrum and have become less welcoming for weaker and more vulnerable social groups. The percentage of increase in the share of urban population is noted to be very low in case of Muslims. This reflects social factors constraining their mobility, particularly into smaller urban centers. Their share in metro cities has gone up by a slightly higher margin (although by a lesser margin than for UCH), compared to that in smaller cities and towns, as the social discrimination may be less there due to anonymity in larger urban settlements (Kundu, 2014). Hence, the

discrimination faced by Muslims in smaller urban areas, where standards of living are somewhat decent, pushes them to move towards metro cities where conditions of existence are pitiable and struggle to earn livelihood more intense.

Methodology :- The present research article is based on secondary sources such as books, Reports of government-non-governments committees, newspapers, internet and other sources.

Objective :- To overview the employment pattern among Indian Muslims and analyze its socio-economic impact.

Indian Muslims: An overview - The progress of Muslims as compared to other socio-religious groups in terms of development in education is an important reason responsible for their present socio-economic and political status. Since independence, it has been observed that the Muslims have fallen much behind other communities, including SCs STs, in all the developmental indicators. This along with the issue of identity and security, which has been a focal point of Indian politics, has accelerated the process of degeneration of Indian Muslims. This has led to a situation where Muslims are more concerned about their very existence than quality of existence. The rampant discrimination and fear of insecurity has bounded Muslims to ghettoized existence denying them employment opportunities and also an avenue for socio-economic mobility. This has led to a situation where Muslims have one of the highest poverty levels as compared to other socio-religious groups. Poverty is traceable to the vicious circle of poverty i.e. low level of income generates low level of savings, which in turn keeps the level of investment low. Low level of investment yields low level of income and thus the circle is completed (Kamnopuri, 1983). The Muslims in India have been caught in vicious poverty trap. Poverty creates a situation which leads to frustration and inability to complete education; leading to low employability or unemployment furthering more frustration and eventual isolation from society.

The educational condition of Indian Muslims has deteriorated to a great extent and it's just a shade of its glorious past. Widespread illiteracy, low income, irregular employment implying thereby a high incidence of poverty is all pervasive among Muslims. (Makki,2008). A survey conducted by TISS among Muslim households in districts of Maharashtra found that a large proportion of Muslim students from both genders do not show any aspirations in terms of education and employment, this does not augur well

for the future of community, which is already marginalized (Shaban, 2016). The completion of basic education is necessary to become eligible even for low skilled jobs. Whereas, higher education throws open avenues for employment opportunities guaranteeing good salary, decent standard of living and career planning for oneself and coming generations. The low priority given to educational development and career making of children pulls back Muslim students from achieving academic success. The indifferent attitude of Muslim parents and guardians towards education play an important part in low success rate among Muslim students (Zaidi, 2004). The lack of attention given to education by community and its leaders has made Muslims the most deprived and vulnerable sections of society. This vulnerability is across the spectrum of all developmental indicators and more intense in economic sphere having ramifications for overall conditions of existence. The lack of education has pushed Muslims to margins of employment where they are employed in informal/ unorganized sector or are self employed i.e. either self-account worker or doing petty business or hawking with virtually having hand to mouth existence. With respect to employment of Muslims it can be generalized that in rural areas, they consists working class and landless agricultural labourers working in others farms, while in cities they are daily wage earners or self employed; in either sense they exists on margins of poverty with deplorable and pathetic living conditions.

Employment status among Muslims :- The job market in India is segmented. The opening of the economy has created a new set of jobs which are available for the upper classes as they possess suitable technical knowledge, skills and educational levels. But, the majority of weaker sections of society are deprived of this opportunity and eke out subsistence living. One of the major inequities observed among the Muslim community, highlighted by various researchers including Sachar Committee Report is in the field of education. A direct result of any disparity in educational standards, especially of educational attainments at higher levels, would be reflected in the employment situation, especially in the quality of employment (Kundu, 2014). During 2011-12, the percentage of rural households living on self-employment among Muslims was 49 per cent close to the national average of 50 per cent. However, about 25 per cent of rural Muslim households lived from earnings from self-employment in non-agriculture as against 14 per cent for Hindu households. In the urban areas, 50 per cent of the Muslim households are self-employed against only 33 per cent

among the Hindus. The livelihood of Muslims is mostly dependent on self-employment in informal sector which is also evident from their lower share of households living on earnings from regular wage employment (28 per cent households for Muslims versus 43 per cent households for Hindus and 42 per cent for the overall urban households). Over the recent years, it appears that more of urban Muslim household have shifted to self-employment as a major source of household income. Though, importance of higher education in getting quality employment cannot be neglected, there are however several socio-cultural factors including non-economic factors leading to observed patterns of employment and significant disparity in earnings for the Muslim community vis-a-vis other social groups (Rakesh Basant, 2012). It is essential to understand that the burden of poverty, discrimination and concern for security has left Muslims with very less choices regarding education and associated benefits of education. Muslims have to choose either from low education or no education which seriously dents their prospects of economic well-being.

Among the SRCs, the NSS 68th round (2011-12) show that the Labour Force Participation Rate For urban males, the labour force participation rate is the highest for Muslim OBC followed by Muslim Others. The figure works out to be highest in the 15-20 age-groups, implying their massive withdrawal from education system at young ages. Casual workers engaged in agriculture constitute the most vulnerable group in rural areas. ST, Muslim OBC and Muslim others, too have high percentage of casual workers. The share of workforce in the category of Employer is lower among Muslims compared to all other religious groups – even less than the Hindu OBC. Furthermore, the percentage of regular salaried workers is the lowest for Muslim OBC (26 %) and Muslim others (31%) among the urban males (Fazal, 2013).

The pattern of employment among Muslims differs according to their place of residence. In rural areas, the share of Muslims in agriculture and allied activities is low as compared to other groups. Muslims are more into crafts and trade and work as plant and machine operators. Hence, they are less dependent on vagaries of agricultural income and are somewhat better. However, the percentages of Muslims working as professionals, clerks, in service etc are less than those of SC/ST population and way below that of general population occupational status. Here too, the Muslims are missing from those occupations/jobs that require higher education and ensure a decent standard of living.

A stark fact of Muslims in rural areas is that they possess less land holdings as compared to other socio-religious groups. So, it a matter of research to identify whether the land alienation amongst Muslims has protected them from uncertainty associated with farming or it has deprived them with an opportunity which might provide them with economic surety and security. There is similarity of occupational pattern in smaller urban centre along the lines of rural areas. One of the reasons for this might be increasing sub-urbanization which has made it difficult to demarcate the rural from semi-urban or urban. The smaller urban areas having more of informal employment opportunities have sizeable presence of Muslims. Discrimination and resulting market segmentation has resulted in Muslims been denied employment ensuring better salary and working conditions and relegated to jobs at the margins of informal market.

The status of the Muslims in metro cities can then be considered to be relatively worse than that in rural areas in terms of their occupational hierarchy. Significantly, the percentage of Muslims in elementary low paying occupations is higher than the general population, although less than that of SC and ST (GoI, 2006). The sectors of manufacturing, construction, trade and services has higher representation of Muslim male workers. Similarly trend is visible in sectors of transportation and storage in both rural and urban areas vis-à-vis other socio-religious groups. Unfortunately, however, the share of urban Muslim workers in public administration, services, education and health sectors are much lower than other SRCs. The higher share of jobs in public administration and similar service sectors for SC and ST is the result of the policy of reservation in public services. The NSS data show that the presence of Muslim workers in modern services sectors in general is much lower than other groups including ST and SC (Fazal, 2013).

A large section of the Muslim population is self-employed and casually employed. The skills they possess are low and the percent of unemployed among educated youth (higher Secondary and above) is higher than that among the less educated. As high as 18 percent of the educated urban Muslim youth report unemployment (Kundu, 2014). The high rate of employment could be for various reasons such as unsuitability of jobs offered, pursuance of higher education or aspirations regarding jobs. However, unemployment even after taking education sends wrong signal to the Muslim community in general which is already impoverished and finding an alibi to forsake

education. In the lower educational categories, the percentage of unemployed is the highest among Muslims, closely followed by SC and ST. Other interesting trend is high unemployment rate among Muslim educated women, both in rural and urban areas. This reflects a change attitude of community towards girl's education. At the same time, it reflects the changing aspirations of educated Muslim women towards employment/jobs and associated difficulties in securing them. It is important to note that though high rate of unemployment among youths is a matter of concern having adverse impact, but it must be borne in mind that the reasons for present conditions can be eventually traced back to social and economic deprivation and discrimination of the community.

Conclusion : The Muslim community is one of the most deprived groups as compared to other socio-religious groups. This deprivation is a result of both socio-cultural and economic factors. However, deprivation at every level of education is an important reason for marginalization of Muslims. The choice between low education and no education combined with the issues of identity, equity and security has affected the community in manifold ways. The lower participation in education system has lead to low skills and ineligibility for jobs guaranteeing high salary and standard of living. A higher Work Participation Rate (WPR) for Muslim men in 15 plus age group is a testimony to fact of Muslim men joining labour force early without completing higher education. The lower WPR for Muslim female, which is lowest among all other socio-religious groups, as compared to Muslim men further affects already low purchasing power of household. The large presence of Muslims in informal sector, both as self account worker or self-employed, has relegated the community to margins of society impacting the overall status and jeopardizing opportunities for future generations.

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