



An Overview and Analysis of the Prevailing Educational Situation of Muslims in India and Opportunities for Change

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Abstract:

The aims of the present study is to examine and analyses the status of Muslims in Indian educational settings and their literacy along with other religious and minorities groups as well as social categories. For the purpose of this study, data was obtained from different sources, including books, reports, research papers, government surveys, and the internet. The researcher used the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports (2010-11 to 2018-19), which are published by the government every year starting in 2010-11, to examine the enrolment of Muslims and other social categories including OBCs, SCs, and STs in higher education in India. After a thorough analysis of the above-mentioned sources, it was found that the Muslims continue to have underprivileged and pathetic educational status at all levels of education (e.g., primary, upper primary, secondary, senior secondary, and higher education), especially when compared to other religious groups, as well as social categories such as SCs, STs, and OBCs.

Keywords: Muslim; Education; Sachar Committee; Waqf Board; Minorities.

1. Introduction

One of the most essential tools for the empowerment and development of any underprivileged community is education. This is critical for attaining a respectable and dignified existence within society, as well as for getting employment and sustaining oneself financially. Malcolm X was a well-known African-American activist for civil and human rights in the United States. He was quoted as saying, "Education is the passports of the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a famous socio-religious reformer and the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, once stated that "it is the unambiguous judgement of all the nations and great seers of the globe that education and training of the people is necessary for national prosperity." Remember that a life without proper education and training is analogous to that of a bird without wings. This Tibetan phrase provides a definition of the level of significance that education carries. The people of a nation, who, without education, are nothing, and therefore cannot prosper, are similar to a bird without wings in that they are unable to fly. In the same way, a nation's people are unable to develop. Therefore, education is the foundation of a nation. It provides that consciousness through which one might create in themselves a sense of good and wrong. It makes you into a more rational human being.

2. Methods and Aims of the Study

The present study is based on secondary sources of data. The secondary data have been obtained from the various sources, including, books, reports, research papers, government surveys, and from the internet. To have a look of the enrollment of Muslims and other social categories such as OBCs, SCs, and STs in higher education, the researcher has used the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports (2010-11 to 2018-19), which is released by the government every year from 2010-11. The primary aim of this study is to examine the educational status of muslims in India.

3. A Brief History of Education of Muslims in India

According to the Survey of Literature, Muslim families in India used to focus only on providing their

children with a religious education during the mediaeval period (i.e., Mughal periods) and even before (i.e., prior to Mughal periods). This religious education imparted through the mosques, madrassas, and maktabas. Education for Muslims in India advanced during both the early Muslim period and the Mughal Empire while it was in power. The development of Muslim education can be categorised into four eras: pre-Mughal, Mughal, British, and post-independence (Telwani, 2019). During the first two phases, known as the pre-Mughal and Mughal periods, the focus was only placed on religious education. However, after then, several Muslim Educators and Religious Reformers did their best to connect Muslims with contemporary education in the hopes that Muslims would not fall behind other communities in terms of their access to modern education. Within this framework, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan founded the Madrasatul Uloom Musalmanan-e-Hind in 1875. Following a transition period of two years, the institution was renamed the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. During a time when receiving an English education was taboo in the Muslim community, Sir Syed worked tirelessly to maintain the institution. And it can be said that this period was the beginning of modern education for Indian Muslims. In 1920, this college was elevated to the status of Central University, and it is currently known as Aligarh Muslim University (<https://www.amu.ac.in>). Similarly, Jamia Millia Islamia was founded in Aligarh in 1920 and later relocated to Okhla in New Delhi in 1935. On December 26, 1988, it was officially recognized as a central university (<https://www.jmi.ac.in/>).

4. Current Scenario of Education of Muslims in India

In India, the Hindu religion has the most followers, although Muslims make up the country's second largest religious population. On the basis of religious affiliation, the National Minority Commission has classified Muslims as minorities with Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. Muslims make up the majority of the minority population with 14.2 percent of the total, followed by Christians with 1.7 percent, Sikhs with 0.7 percent, Buddhists with 0.5 percent, Jains with 0.4 percent, and others with 0.7 percent. Only a few states in India, including Jammu and Kashmir, Bengal and Assam having more than twenty per cent Muslim population while Lakshadweep has 96.58 per cent. (Censes, 2011). Despite being the country's largest religious minority, Muslims lag behind other religious minorities on all indicators of human development, including standard of living, financial stability, political survival, education, and other aspects, demonstrating poor performance in the majority of areas. Their socioeconomic condition is far lower than that of other communities as well as minorities and the national average (Sachar Committee Report, 2006).

Scholars and any other government or non-government agencies have not thoroughly and satisfactorily investigated the causes of their educational backwardness. Invariably, the findings of individual researchers, organisational surveys, and committees formed by the government all come to the same conclusion: Muslims are the most marginalised and disadvantaged community in the country in terms of educational, economic and socio-political attainment.

In this context, in 2006, the Prime Minister of India established a high-level committee popularly known to as the Sachar committee. The committee's study claims that Muslims are less likely to have access to educational opportunities, have lower levels of education, and are more educationally, socially, and economically backward than other backward classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Their level of education decreases as the level of education rises. In addition, the research found that "one fourth of Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 years have either never attended school or are dropouts". In comparison to the national average of 26%, the percentage of Muslim children who have completed their secondary school is only 17% among those who have reached the age of 17 or older. In comparison to the national average of 62%, only 50% of Muslims who completed only middle school are likely to pursue their secondary education (Ministry of Education, GOI).

Muslims have a lower literacy rate, mean year of education, representation in senior secondary education, and higher education than other communities in India. For instance, the literacy rate among

Muslims is only 57.3%, which is significantly lower than the average of 74.4% for national literacy. When compared to the literacy rates of other minority communities in India, Muslims make up a minority that has a lower literacy rate than other minority communities. In India, the literacy rate for various minority groups such as Jain is 86.4%, the literacy rate for Christians is 74.3%, the literacy rate for Buddhists is 71.8%, and the literacy rate for Sikhs is 67.5%. Whereas, the literacy rate among Hindus is 63.6% overall.

Thus, these data demonstrates that the illiteracy rate among Muslims in India is the lowest of any single religious group in the country. Although the literacy rate for Muslim women is better than that of SCs and STs women, while it remained lower than that of other communities women (Times of India, 2020).

The highest levels of literacy among Muslims were found in Andaman and Nicobar Island (89.8%), followed by Kerala (89.4%), according to a study that was carried out in 2006 by S.M.I.A. Zaidi. The study indicated that the lowest levels of literacy were revealed in Haryana (40%) and Bihar (42%). In the major states of the country (such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Haryana, amongst others), Muslims have the lowest educational attainment rates compared to followers of other religious groups.

According to the findings of the National Sample Survey Report of the 75th Round (2018), which were reported by the Times of India (2020), the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) of Muslims was lower (i.e., 100) in comparison to the SCs (101), STs (102), OBCs, and other minority groups. The same situation arises at the Upper primary level as well; the GAR for their community was lower than that of other communities. At the secondary level, the GAR for Muslims was 71.9%, which was lower than the GAR for STs (79.8%), which was 85.8%, and the GAR for OBCs also. Similarly, in the higher secondary level, Muslims had the lowest GAR (48.3%), followed by SCs (52.8%), STs (60%), and other communities. Their GAR was 14.5% at the level of above higher secondary education, which was slightly higher than the STs' 14.4% but lower than the SCs' 17.8% and the GARs of other communities. Muslims have the highest percentage of individuals in the age group of 3 to 35 years who have never enrolled in any kind of formal educational institution or programme.

According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education Reports (AISHE), which was carried out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India, the enrollment of Muslims in higher education revealed that their enrollment has also been the lowest from other communities such as SCs, STs, and OBCs. The evidence of the survey data is illustrated in the following table 1.

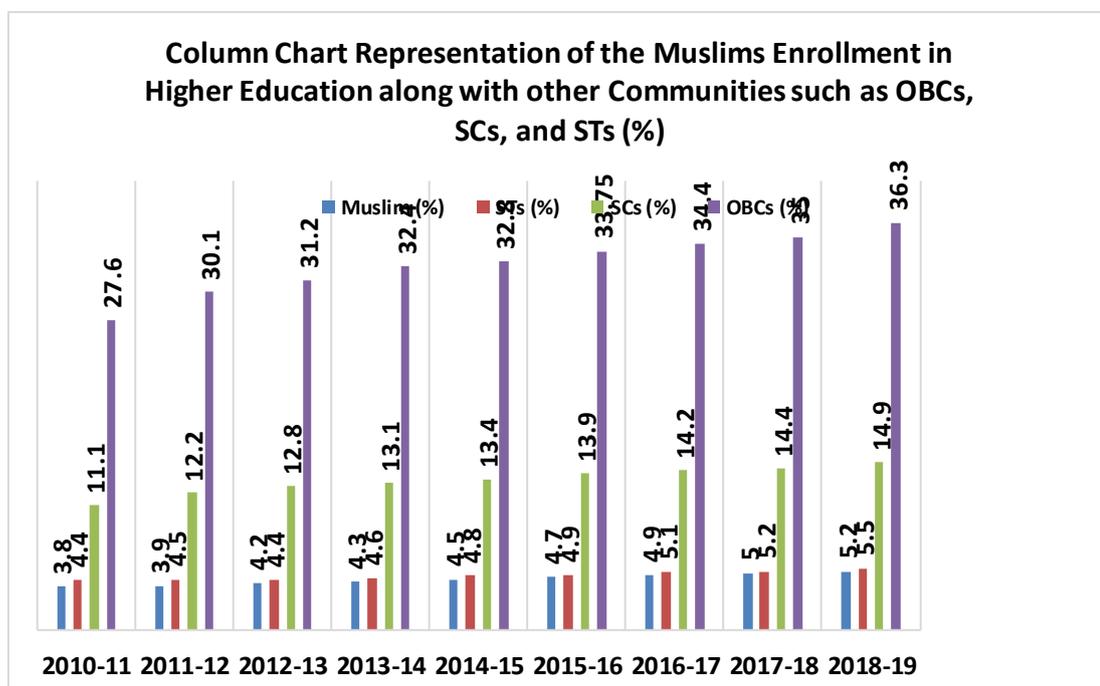
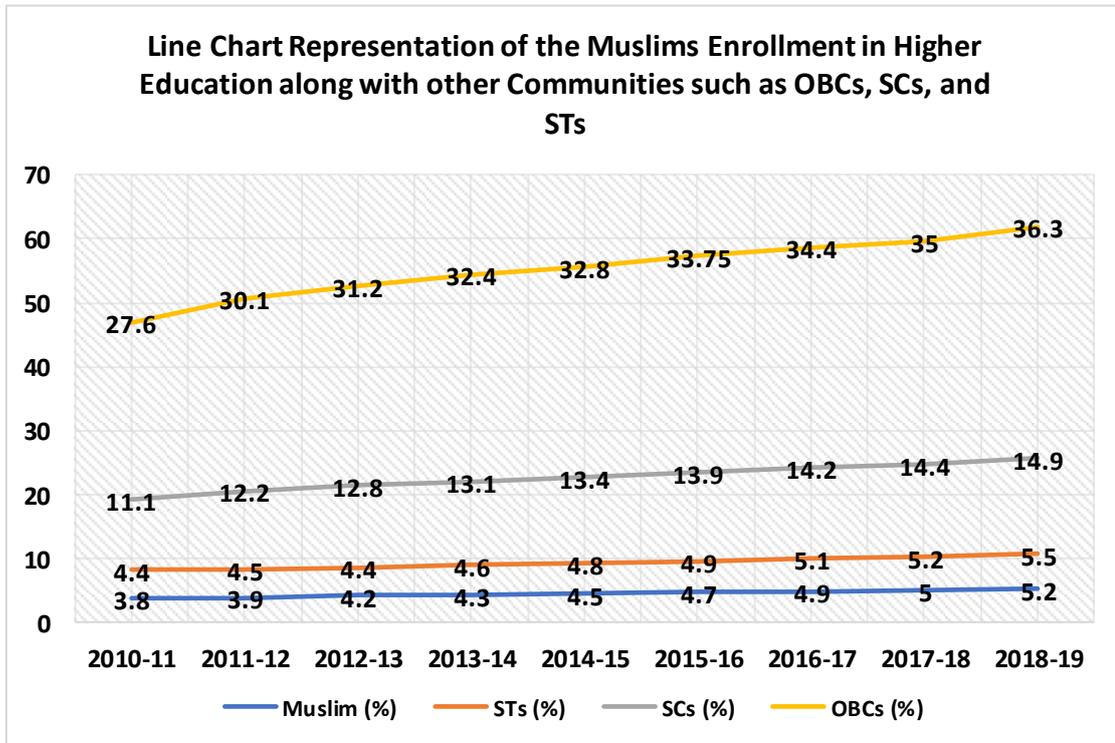
Table 1 Showing the Academic Year-wise enrollment ratio of Muslims in Higher Education along with other Communities

Years	Muslim (%)	STs (%)	SCs (%)	OBCs (%)
2010-11	3.8	4.4	11.1	27.6
2011-12	3.9	4.5	12.2	30.1
2012-13	4.2	4.4	12.8	31.2
2013-14	4.3	4.6	13.1	32.4
2014-15	4.5	4.8	13.4	32.8
2015-16	4.7	4.9	13.9	33.75
2016-17	4.9	5.1	14.2	34.4
2017-18	5.0	5.2	14.4	35.0
2018-19	5.2	5.5	14.9	36.3

Source: AISHE Reports, GOI.

According to the data presented in the above table, the enrollment ratio of Muslims in higher education increased by 26.92% between the academic years of 2010-2011 and 2018-2019, while the enrollment ratio of STs increased by only 20%, SCs by 25.50%, and OBCs by 23.96%. This clearly demonstrates that Muslims have the largest growth rate across all of these communities; but, in terms of proportion,

their enrolment is the lowest as compared to these communities. The below figure depicts the graphical representation of the Muslims enrollment in higher education along with social categories such as OBCs, SC, and STs. Figure 1 showing the Line Chart Graphical representation while Figure 2 showing the Column Chart Graphical representation of the enrollment of Muslims as well as other social categories such as OBCs, SCs, and STs in higher education.



The value of education and skill in the rise and fall of communities is well understood, and everyone understands that in the current scenario (known as the knowledge society), it is impossible to live a self-sufficient and dignified existence without an education.

Whereas, according to the aforementioned discussions, evidences, and reports, Muslims continue to have poor and pathetic educational status at all levels of education (e.g., primary, upper primary, secondary, senior secondary, and higher education), especially when compared to other religious

groups, as well as social categories such as SCs, STs, and OBCs.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

Not only is the condition of a significant number of Muslims vulnerable in almost every sphere of life, including the social, economic, and political spheres, but they also do not have access to educational opportunities. It is extremely difficult for Muslims who make a living through hard work and small businesses to obtain education or give good education to your children. There are just two options for these impoverished and hardworking Muslims seeking an education: government schools and colleges or madrasa.

Because of this, there is an instantaneous necessity for Muslims who are intellectuals and philanthropists to form an organisation so that Muslims can be made aware of all of the excellent educational schemes, policies, and programmes that are run by the government of India. It is obligatory for the Waqf Board of India to establish contemporary educational institutions on land that is currently vacant or underutilised. This would allow India's Muslim population to become better educated and will help them advance in the field of modern education. The education of Indian Muslims is a most pressing issue that requires the attention of both the state governments and the government of India.

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