



## Muslims & Social Work Institutions in India

Vivek Rai<sup>1</sup>, Rajesh C. Mishra<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Humanities, Vidya Vihar Institute of Technology, Purnea, Bihar, India.

<sup>2</sup>Secretary, Vidya Vihar Institute of Technology, Purnea, Bihar, India.

**Email ID:** [viv.kundan@gmail.com](mailto:viv.kundan@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [rajeshmishra@gmail.com](mailto:rajeshmishra@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*This paper addresses the dual life led by Muslims in India post-partition, focusing on their identity and development within the national context. Despite being the second largest demographic group according to the 2011 census, Muslims often face challenges in achieving progress and development. The discourse highlights the necessity of recognizing and addressing these issues through foresightedness rather than partiality. Communities in India are often categorized by religion, language, and caste, with Muslims forming a crucial part of society. However, their comparative lack of progress necessitates targeted development efforts to foster an educated, self-reliant, and financially stable community. Reports like the Sachar Committee and political manifestos have suggested measures for Muslim welfare, yet these efforts often remain politically motivated and insufficient. The paper emphasizes the moral duty to ensure not only the security of Muslims but also their educational, economic, and social development. This responsibility extends beyond government initiatives to societal engagement and social work practices. Historical movements such as the Aligarh Movement exemplify the advancement of Muslim modernity, yet contemporary social work frequently neglects the community's rights and secular needs. The primary challenge identified is the revival of the Muslim identity, which has been marginalized over time. Generating public opinion and incorporating minority issues into social work curricula are essential steps toward addressing these basic needs and fostering holistic development for the Muslim community.*

**Keyword:** Aligarh Movement, Communal and Political Biases, Education and Economic Development, Minority Welfare, Muslim Identity Revival.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Indian Muslims: A Perspective

"The dispersion of Muslims in India can be seen as a consequence of historical agreements, where Muslims and Hindus coexisted amidst music, festivities, and religious shifts, transitioning from diverse beliefs to the prevalent 'Sufism'. 'Sufism' stands as an example akin to the Sikh religion." (Singh K. Story of Sikhism; pg.11) Indeed, Indian Muslims exhibit a rich tapestry of multiculturalism, encompassing variations in caste, customs, regions, and traditions [1]. Notably, differences are observable between North and South Indian Muslims in their culinary preferences, dialects, and attire. Additionally, matriarchal systems exist among Muslims in Kerala. According to the 2001 census, the Muslim population stands at 24.7% nationwide, with percentages varying across states:

Karnataka (12.2%), Andhra Pradesh (9.2%), Tamil Nadu (5.47%), Uttar Pradesh (18%), and Bihar (16%). Indian Muslims can be categorized into three divisions:

1. Ashraf
2. Azluf
3. Arzal

Ashraf Muslims represent the superior section, while Azluf corresponds to O.B.C. and Arzal to Scheduled Castes among Muslims. Before their conversion to Islam, there was a concern for the purity of Hindu blood, leading to the adoption of a caste system based on professions. It's noteworthy that Arabs do not always regard Indian Muslims as 'true' or 'pure' Muslims, which contradicts Islamic principles. Following the Bombay Blast (1993), Muslims faced serious allegations regarding



patriotism. However, it's essential to acknowledge that Hindus have also been associated with figures like Dawood Ibrahim. Unfortunately, terrorism has been religiously contextualized, leaving Muslims feeling insecure, particularly in South Asia. While Muslims have held esteemed positions in Indian governance, such as the presidency, vice presidency, election commission, and governorships, symbolic representation alone is insufficient. Educational, economic, and social development is imperative for the Muslim community's progress. Addressing their fundamental issues is crucial, accompanied by a collective awakening.

## **2. Problems of Indian Muslims**

After the partition of India and Pakistan, a segment of Muslims, including laborers and farmers, chose to remain in India due to their lack of affinity for Pakistan [2]. However, influential figures like politicians and landlords harbored political ambitions and economic stability, prompting a desire to migrate to Pakistan. The Muslim population in India was approximately 13.4% according to the 2001 census, totaling around 170 million in 2011. In South Asia, Muslims constitute about 500 million. While their population has increased by 29% since partition, their educational, economic, and social conditions have regressed significantly. (H.R.D.I.; 2010) Muslims' problems can be divided into two categories, Genuine and perceived. While genuine issues warrant attention, they often get overshadowed by perceived ones. Although the Indian Constitution provides provisions for minority development in various spheres, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA government attempted to dismantle such provisions under the guise of minority welfare. Opposition parties like Janata Dal Secular, Telugu Desam, Congress, CPI, and CPM thwarted these efforts, preventing BJP's success. Unfortunately, BJP's focus on Muslim issues remains confined to religious identity [3]. The fallout from the Godhra incident led to a shift in Muslim voting patterns towards the Congress party, trusting its promises for Muslim welfare. In March 2005, a committee,

chaired by Justice Rajinder Sachar, was formed to address these issues. And a few problems among them are as follows:

## **3. Economic Disparity**

The financial gap within the Muslim community is significant, with many individuals predominantly employed in low-income occupations such as cycle repairing, textile work, rickshaw driving, ironwork, and carpentry [4]. On average, Muslims earn approximately 800 rupees per month. (SCR; pg.157). Their representation in government jobs is notably low, with less than 2% participating overall. Specifically, only 3% attempt the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), 1.8% pursues the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and 4% engage in the Indian Police Service (IPS). Furthermore, a mere 4.9% of Muslims take part in the Public Service Commission's (PSC) exams (2003-04). The distribution of employment across various government departments is as follows: Railway (4.5%), defense services (4%), education (6.5%), police constabulary (6%), health (4.45%), and traffic (6.5%). Alarmingly, the employment rate in banking and commercial sectors is less than 0.5%. (SCR; pg.165, 166,168,169,170,171,172,173) The communal riots of 1984 exacerbated economic inequality, instilling fear among Muslims for their safety. Despite economic reforms and globalization, significant gains have not been realized. Consequently, Muslims have tended to isolate themselves, seeking safety in separate communities. Muslims are reluctant to take financial risks, often avoiding bank loans in favor of borrowing from relatives, hindering their access to significant projects. (ADRI,20005,pg.223) While urban poverty among Muslims has improved from 1993-94 to 2004-05, rural poverty persists, impeding opportunities for advancement. (SCR, pg.160). The economic disparity is such that children as young as 12-13 years old are forced to work, hampering their educational progress. Many Muslims live in poverty, restricting their access to opportunities [5].



### 3.1. Illiteracy

"Without modern education, Islam can be preserved, but not Muslims."

-(Sir Saiyyed Ahmad Khan).

In Muslim-majority areas, modern education is often neglected in favor of religious education in schools and madrasas. Madrasas typically do not prioritize subjects like Science, Mathematics, and English, crucial for comprehensive education and future prospects. Muslims perceive their civilization and way of life as distinct, fostering a reluctance to integrate into predominantly Hindu schools. Furthermore, the lack of technical education exacerbates the problem, leading to a mere 3% of Muslim children attending madrasas. The report of the Ranganath Mishra Committee highlights a decline in Muslim access to education compared to previous years. (EPW, 2004, Pg.17). Poverty, fear of losing cultural identity, and the perceived inferior quality of education contribute to high levels of illiteracy among Muslims. Only 4% of Muslims attain a bachelor's degree, and less than 2% pursue post-graduation. (SCR, Pg.69, 77) The substandard education system exacerbates fears of backwardness among Muslims.

**Ghettoization:** Ghettoization among Muslims began to intensify after 1984, driven by political and communal tensions. Settlement for livelihood and fear of communal violence were primary factors behind this phenomenon. Initially, Muslims migrated to urban areas in search of employment but subsequently opted to stay. The sense of community and mutual trust led to the formation of ghettos, where Muslims felt secure from external threats. However, political upheavals transformed these areas into hubs of communal violence, further isolating Muslims from mainstream society. The fear of riots prompted Muslims to congregate in these ghettos, forsaking amenities like education, healthcare, and proper housing. Mutual mistrust between communities escalated tensions, with other groups derogatorily labeling these ghettos as "Pakistan." This negative perception fosters a sense of alienation among Muslims, who retreat further into their enclaves. Economic constraints prevent

them from fully accessing available facilities, compelling even young children to work to support their families.

**Muslim Identity: A Question:** After 1943, Muslims began to perceive a threat to their identity among the Hindu majority. This concern rapidly intensified amidst communal politics, which seemingly divided India into two parts. Preserving one's religion, culture, and language is crucial, but so is ensuring education, economic, and social development, which are modern necessities that also strengthen community identity. When politics exploit sensitivities, the objectives become distorted. Indian politicians, under the guise of secularism, have instilled so much fear in Muslims that their actual issues have been overshadowed. For instance, protecting a plant from goats and sheep by surrounding it with bricks may be necessary, but it's equally important to ensure the plant receives essential life-sustaining elements like water, air, sunlight, and fertilizer for growth, rendering the protective cover unnecessary. This analogy reflects the situation of Indian Muslims, where the purported protection obscures their other fundamental needs. Urdu language serves as a potent example; it originated in India, with a fusion of Persian and Arabic. Mahatma Gandhi referred to it as 'Hindustani,' but political divisions transformed it into a symbol of Indian Muslim identity. The segregation of Hindi and Urdu reflects a negative aspect stemming from language dominance. A contentious issue arises regarding the Uniform Civil Code, seen by some as interference in personal laws. Dr. B. T. Kazi (retired Professor in TISS, Mumbai) explains that while matters like marriage, divorce, succession, dower, and custody of children fall under personal law, the entirety of criminal procedure, IPC, CPC, evidence law, registration act, commercial law, and tax law are secular, devoid of religious influence, including Islam. Although differences exist in personal law, 95% of civil and criminal law is common to all Indian citizens. However, certain practices, like bigamy, are exceptions specific to Indian Muslim marriage practices.



#### 4. Integration through Social Work

Comparing educational, economic, and social development between Muslims, Hindus, and other religions underscores the need for integrated social work. Initiating discussions on these fundamental topics is essential, but solutions remain elusive. Social work can formulate plans to disassociate politics and communalism from state affairs, focusing instead on religious harmony.

**Opening Ghettos:** The initial step involves opening up ghettos. While some advocate for their dismantlement, social work suggests revitalizing these areas. Engaging with residents, including Jamaats and youth groups fosters confidence and promotes development. Sporting activities can facilitate interaction with other communities, dispelling negative perceptions. The primary aim of social work is to instill confidence, encourage positive attitudes towards education, and address the needs of ghetto residents through collaboration with the administration. Establishing committees comprising members of all communities can promote reconciliation, fostering understanding and unity while transcending religious differences.

**Establishment of New School or Modernization of Madrasas:** The modernization of Madrasas is essential, albeit not a new concept. It is necessary for the Jamat-E-Islam to agree with this notion, which may be challenging but not impossible. The introduction of computers, English, math, and science has been implemented in Madrasas, albeit not extensively. It is imperative to ensure that while vices such as dishonesty and falsification are against Islam, education, language; science, medicine, and technology are not contradictory to it. Given that Muslim-majority countries, including India, utilize mechanics, computers, mobile devices, and other modern technologies, it is evident that such advancements are not in conflict with Islamic principles. Vocational training should be provided to impart skills for various industries, accompanied by counseling to assist individuals in choosing their career paths. Social work can play a crucial role in gaining the cooperation of the Jamat and other traditional institutions, raising awareness

about different objectives, fundamental rights, and the role of Muslims in addressing their issues, thereby promoting education among Muslims. The Jamat wields significant local influence, making their cooperation highly advantageous.

**Scientific Education:** Secular and scientific education is imperative, with English being a necessary component of the curriculum. By providing Muslim students with access to scientific education alongside religious studies, logical thinking skills can be developed, enabling them to adapt to modern times. Scientific education is not only vital for Muslims but also for the entire Indian population, as the utility of education is paramount. Education should foster critical thinking and a healthy mind, with a focus beyond mere livelihood. The value of education should not be solely determined by its ability to secure employment; rather, it should instill a deeper understanding of its significance, ensuring that individuals do not view education as a futile investment.

#### 5. Critical Analysis

Discussions regarding the condition of Muslims often prompt comparisons with Pakistan or Iraq. However, it is essential to remember that we are discussing Indian Muslims. The backwardness of Muslims in India can be attributed not only to politics but also to leaders who make lofty promises without delivering tangible benefits to the community. Secularism faces crises when religion influences governance, jeopardizing its principles. The communalization of education and historical narratives further exacerbates tensions between religious communities. Secularism should be inclusive and focused on scientific and ideological perspectives, rather than being defined by majority-versus-minority dynamics. (Asgar Ali Engineer, 2004)

**The Crises of Secularism:** Religion inevitably influences individuals, but when it dominates the political system, secularism is endangered. Education has been misused to propagate communal agendas, with state governments intentionally shaping historical narratives to serve communal interests. The communalization of





education undermines secularism, perpetuating divisions between religious communities. While India officially adopted secularism in its constitution during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister, communal forces have sought to redefine secularism to prioritize majority interests. The focus on secularism often neglects sensitive issues, and political parties exploit religious sentiments for electoral gains. Congress party claims to be secular, which prevented Muslims from leaving India for Pakistan. However, this does not absolve the party from addressing the socio-economic issues facing Muslims. The Sachar Committee Report, initiated by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, aimed to address the plight of Muslims and make recommendations for their improvement. Despite the report's findings, subsequent governments failed to take adequate action, with only limited efforts made to implement the recommendations. The reluctance to address the issues highlighted in the Sachar Committee Report reflects a broader failure to prioritize the socio-economic development of marginalized communities.

**Social Work Institutions: Desperation:** Social work, as a vast field, has the potential to address the pressing issues faced by the Muslim community on the ground level, diverging from mainstream politics. However, despite the presence of numerous NGOs and civil society organizations, there has been a lack of concerted efforts to advocate for the recommendations of the Sachar Committee report. Unfortunately, unified action from these entities has not materialized, highlighting a broader challenge in addressing communal issues that divide communities along religious, caste, regional, and linguistic lines. It is imperative to reassure the majority population that the development of minority communities, including Muslims, is not detrimental to their interests and is, in fact, reflective of a collective progress that benefits society as a whole. Drawing inspiration from historical figures like Aligarh and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who rallied Muslims together for social and educational advancement,

there is a need for renewed efforts in this direction. In the field of social work, the concept of sectional development is prevalent, but there is a pressing need to tailor these efforts specifically to address the challenges faced by Muslims.

### Conclusion

Since the partition of India, Muslims have grappled with a dual identity, feeling marginalized from their nationality despite their significant contribution to the nation's human resources and development. The persistent lag in various fields among Muslims compared to other communities poses a threat to the nation's progress. It is essential to recognize and address this disparity through inclusive development initiatives that empower Muslims economically, politically, and socially. Until the misconception that Muslims are safer abroad than in their own country persists, genuine solutions to their problems cannot be realized. It is the responsibility of the nation to ensure the safety and well-being of all its citizens, including their educational, financial, and political empowerment. The paper highlights the fundamental problems and underscores the urgency of initiating social work interventions tailored to address the specific needs and challenges faced by the Muslim community. Dual life in India refers to the experience of Muslims who, while belonging to the country, feel excluded from national identity due to communal prejudices. They exist as a branch of the national tree but often feel marginalized and excluded.

### References

- [1].Jaffrelot, C. (2012). India since 1950. New Delhi: Yatra Books.
- [2].Kazi, B. T. (1994). A Study of the Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal: A Thesis. Shivaji University, Kolhapur.
- [3].Mahajan, G., & Jodhka, S. S. (Eds.). (2010). Religion, Community and Development. New Delhi: Routledge House.
- [4].SCR, (2006), Loksabha
- [5].Sheikh, A. (2006). Modernisation of Islam. New Delhi: Arise Publishers & Distributers.