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Indian Muslims: A Community on the Rise

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ABSTRACT

For India's Muslims, it has been a protracted struggle. They have been making an effort to mend their broken lives after the trauma and hardships of division, despite tremendous obstacles including extreme poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and neglect. The community is disjointed and dysfunctional on many levels, lacking both vertical and horizontal communication and coherence. Sometimes the average Muslim is without a leader, and other times they are led by politicians and charlatans. The common Muslim suffers from both internal and external discrimination. The institutionalised riot mechanism frequently alarmed them as they dealt with genocidal acts and ethnic cleansing. Their attempts to establish themselves in North India have run across official resistance and apathy. Ghettoes without even the most basic utilities have become the home of Muslims from all social groups, even in cosmopolitan places like Mumbai and Delhi. They are compelled to choose hazardous, filthy parts of cities like Kolkata, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, and many more in the west and the north where they must live. The concerns of all people for economic and political justice, there is a need for a party or parties, or for a political front. Muslims are given several advantages in their attempts to create a widespread political movement against social and economic exploitation. In comparison to other groups, they have better interactions with the pan-Indian communities, an all-India presence, a sense of pride in their rich culture and heritage, and an all-India presence. They will also have an advantage because of their innate sense of justice.

Keywords: Indian Muslims, Empowerment, Minorities, Muslim ghettoes, Justice.

Indian Muslims: A Community on the Rise

We need to have a clear understanding of our current circumstances in order to move together as a community toward a better future. This is an attempt to take a look around, assess the situation, and determine where and how we want to go from here. Muslims as a group are strong and have great potential for development. There are flaws, foolishness, and quirks in the community that need to be found and fixed. The community's past and present serve as landmarks that provide direction and caution when making plans for the future.

India is the second-largest nation in Asia and the seventh-largest nation in the entire planet. There was no sense of India as a whole because the nation was divided into small warring states before the arrival of the Muslims. Muslim tyrants, particularly the Mughals, united the nation and established a centralised government.

"I am a Muslim and am proud of the fact. Islam's splendid tradition of 1,300 years is my inheritance. The spirit of Islam guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of that indivisible unity that is the Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice, and without me the splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element that has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim." — Maulana Abul Kalam Azad



Source: - Google Image

India has around 1.3 billion inhabitants, which places it second only to China in terms of population. India has 966.3 million Hindus (79.8%) and 172.2 million Muslims (14.23%), according to the 2011 Censusⁱⁱ. Christians make up 2.3% of the other minorities, and Sikhs make up 1.72%. The second-

largest religious group in India is the Muslim faith. They make up the second-largest (after Indonesia) Muslim population in the world with more over 10% of the global totalⁱⁱⁱ.

Muslims are present

The second-largest religious group in the nation is the Muslim population. They account for 10% or more of all Muslims worldwide^{iv}. The second-biggest Muslim population in the world (after Indonesia) and the largest concentration of Muslims outside of OIC members may be found in India. The Muslim immigrants made the subcontinent their home, with the majority being Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and Mughals^v. When they are dispersed among several towns, cities, and villages, they blend together. The depressed and marginalised were converted to Islam in significant numbers thanks to the efforts of Muslim scholars and religious leaders^{vi}. These converts' descendants make up the great bulk of modern Indian Muslims^{vii}. There are nine districts in the nation with a Muslim population of 75% or more, including Lakshadweep and eight districts in Jammu and Kashmir^{viii}.



Source: - Google Image

Muslim dominance

The inability of Dahir, the ruler of Sind, to keep the pirates in the Arabian Sea under control led to Muhammad Ibn Qasim al-invasion Thaqafi's of Sind in 713 CE. That, however, was a North Indian tale. In the first century HE, Arab traders brought Islam to the coastal populations in the south. The Muslim emperors and monarchs who ruled over northern and central India for more than a millennium were not colonial tyrants^{ix}. Asia and Africa had never ever heard of an invasion for the sake of plunder. The concept of outsiders only became popular with the emergence of nation states. The sub-continent had become their home for many who had emigrated from other nations^x. They did not discriminate amongst religious communities, but rather provided everyone with an equal chance and, most of the time, ensured social fairness, regardless of their religious affiliation^{xi}.

During the Muslim dominance of India's social and cultural life, Islam was definitely present. However, the propagation of Islam did not play a significant role in official initiatives. The fact that Muslims were a small minority in Delhi for the entirety of the Muslim era, which lasted 647 years (1211–1858 CE), provides strong evidence for this^{xii}. The most significant positions, such as those of ministers and army generals, were frequently handed to non-Muslims, particularly Hindus. Majorities of the country had social peace and tranquilly when under Muslim administration^{xiii}. History is devoid of even a single instance of racial unrest under Muslim authority. Through their "divide and rule" strategy, the British brought forth the phenomena of racial unrest^{xiv}.

British Empire

With the overthrow of Siraj-ud-Dowla as the ruler of Bengal in 1757, the British began the process of colonising India^{xv}. Following the unsuccessful uprising of 1857 against the colonial forces, which was led by both Muslims and Hindus, the British crown assumed control of the subcontinent in 1858. Given that they had taken authority from Muslims, the new colonial powers saw Muslims as a potential danger to their political dominance^{xvi}.

We must start right here when looking for the causes of Muslims' current backwardness. The foreign rulers implemented a discriminating policy right away, showing hostility toward Muslims and support for Hindus^{xvii}. The benefits that Muslims had previously had in terms of property rights, etc., were taken away, and trading opportunities were restricted. They continued to be behind in practically every area of life^{xviii}. The colonial powers attempted to exacerbate existing differences between the two main communities, Hindus and Muslims, as part of its "divide and rule" strategy^{xix}.



Source: - Google Image

The Division

Thousands of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus lost their lives and their possessions as a result of the subcontinent's 1947 Partition, which led to the establishment of Pakistan and India^{xx}. Muslims from the middle classes who were educated immigrated in great numbers to Pakistan. As a result, there was a significant leadership gap among Indian Muslims. The vast majority of them lost strength in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres because they were unable to leave their ancestral lands^{xxi}. In the viewpoint of the new governing class, they turned became the internal enemy. Since then, the Muslims in this area have faced ongoing pressure to demonstrate their loyalty to the country. The colonial force tried to greatly split the two main communities, Hindus and Muslims, as part of its "divide and rule" strategy. It ultimately resulted in the Partition^{xxii}.

Governments' discriminatory practises

The Hindu upper caste majority government in India has discriminated against Muslims since the country's independence. Despite the fact that all communities in India are guaranteed fundamental rights by the Indian Constitution^{xxiii}, the reality on the ground is far from ideal^{xxiv}.

It is common knowledge that Indian Muslims are consistently and systematically marginalised in their country. When several states and territories were reorganised shortly after gaining independence, the minority-dominated areas were broken up and absorbed into other states in an effort to lessen their power and make it more difficult for them to win any elections. The names of Muslims are occasionally removed from the electoral rolls in an effort to further weaken their political influence. For instance, the electoral rolls created in Hyderabad and Secunderabad for the elections in December 1994 were altered to eliminate the names of 138,000 Muslim voters. Muslims' democratic rights were denied through the use of gerrymandering and delimitation strategies.

Even the Gujarat State Election Commission acknowledged that more than 2.5 lakh names were removed from the voter list during the local body election of 2015, however the opposition parties claim that the true number was more than four lakh. It goes without saying that all the votes that were removed were from regions with a high Muslim population. The colonial powers attempted to exacerbate existing differences between the two main communities, Hindus and Muslims, as part of its "divide and rule" strategy. It ultimately resulted in Partition.

Instead of making any attempt to restrain Hindu fanaticism, the Congress party, which dominated India for more than four decades, did everything by default for its nourishment. Now that the BJP is in power at the federal level, Muslim communities in particular are being attacked in every way conceivable. Muslims tend to have a strong sense of uneasiness. They are afraid for their safety, reputation, and fortune. This anxiety is made more palpable by the police's and other authorities' discriminating behaviour.



Source: - Google Image

Socio-economic circumstances

The socio-economic-political circumstances of Muslims in the country have gotten exceedingly bad in addition to this disenfranchisement^{xxv}. This argument was expressed emphatically in the Justice Sachar Committee, Ranganath Mishra Commission, and Prof. Amitabh Kundu Committee findings. In some regions of the country, the Sachar Committee even claimed that Muslims' conditions were worse than Dalits'.

Added weight

The Sachar Committee brought up the fact that Muslims have a double burden of being simultaneously labelled as anti-nationals and placated when talking about how the general public views them. Both of the Hindutva right's accusations are a part of a bigger plan to deny them their just share of national resources while keeping them on the defensive. Muslims are not given the chance to sit and reflect positively or take steps toward more important objectives. It also goes without saying that, particularly in northern states, this identity issue has caused the community to regress in nearly every aspect of life. We can cite other instances when identification indicators have resulted in mistrust and discrimination on the part of authorities, organisations, and individuals. The media's and the public's overzealous interest in problems of personal law and other sociocultural aspects of the community also have a detrimental effect, and in most cases, the community is held accountable for its backwardness. Always, the outcome is "heads they win, tails we lose."

Security issues

Muslims generally have a high level of insecurity, particularly in politically sensitive states. Their fortune, reputation, and lives are in danger. This anxiety is made more palpable by the police's and other authorities' discriminating behaviour. One of the key causes of the creation of ghettos is this element of uncertainty and anxiety. Additionally, it limits their movement, making it difficult for Muslims to take advantage of business possibilities. They are consequently denied access to possibilities for education and a respectable life.

The worry has only grown as a result of recent occurrences. The killings on behalf of cows, the lynching of two cattle traders in Jharkhand, unreported harassment and attacks across the nation, frequent threatening statements from hydra-faced organisations and small-time sanghis, as well as calls for Muslims to leave the country, have all contributed to the current state of unrest. Conflicts are a possibility since Hindutva nationalism is inherently violent. Over the past few years, there have been a considerable increase in conflicts between Muslims and Hindus.

Persistent inequality

Muslims are frequently denied equality, despite the fact that the Constitution guarantees it in every way. When it comes to the distribution of national resources and the administration of various social programmes, they are the victims of flagrant unfairness. Muslims have difficulty obtaining credit and bank loans. The majority of Muslim-populated neighbourhoods have been labelled by many banks as "negative or red zones," where they do not grant loans. Police departments view them with distrust.

Academic sluggishness

The development and improvement of social and economic position depend heavily on education. Muslims have lower literacy rates than most other underprivileged groups in many states, nevertheless. It is not accelerating quickly enough to catch up to other groups' literacy rates. Around 74% of people in the nation were literate in 2011–12. Muslims had the lowest level of literacy (70%), followed by Hindus (74%), and the other religious minorities (83%) among the broad socio-religious groups (SRCs). In the 6-14 age range, OBC Muslims have a substantially greater percentage of children who have never attended school than do all SRCs, and this trend persisted into 2011–12. Their attendance has increased thanks to several proactive community actions, particularly in primary schools. Children who are not in school are doing so because their parents are either uninterested or unable to afford to pay for their education. The latter is cited as the main cause for Muslims. In both the 5 to 14 and 15 to 24 age groups, 26% of youngsters have not finished primary school.

Signs of development

Muslim children are more likely than SC and ST children to have never attended school, while their rate is still higher. In the age range of 6 to 14, up to 25% of Muslim youngsters have either never attended school or have dropped out. Muslims have the greatest percentage of dropouts, and this number appears to increase dramatically after middle school. Although they are among the lowest, enrolment rates in schools have increased recently. This is in line with the idea that the neighbourhood is increasingly using education as a way to raise their socioeconomic standing. Muslims also have some of the lowest levels of primary and upper secondary schooling. Graduation attainment rates are consequently among the lowest and are not convergent with the national average. It goes without saying that Muslims have a very low participation rate in technical and engineering education.

In prestigious colleges, only one in every 25 undergraduate and one in every 50 graduate students are Muslims, according to research. Muslims make up a small percentage of students in all courses, especially at the PG level and in the science stream. Urdu schools are crucial for the community in Urduspeaking areas, particularly at the basic level when it is preferred to educate children in their mother tongue. Their reach is very constrained, though. Less than 4% of Muslim students who attend school attend madrasas, according to the studies that are accessible. In other words, the community's growing

need for education can only be met by traditional institutions. In numerous jurisdictions, there has been serious concern about the state governments' resistance to recognising minority education institutions. Additionally, this is blatantly against Article 30 of the Constitution.

Ideally, self-employed

Muslim employees, particularly women, tend to focus more on self-employed (home-based) businesses than other groups do, and their proportion of formal employment is very low, particularly in the government, public sector, and major private sector. Comparatively more Muslim workers than workers from other communities work in industry and retail. Their pay is generally poor, and their working conditions are more unstable. In addition, a higher percentage of Muslim labourers than the general population operate as street vendors and do not receive employment benefits or social security.

A thorough examination of employment in several government agencies shows that Muslims are underrepresented and frequently work in low-paying positions. Additionally, very few Muslims hold positions in the government that include providing public services like healthcare (nurse), security (police), etc. Muslim employees, particularly women, are disproportionately concentrated in self-employed labour compared to other groups, and their participation in the public and commercial sectors is quite low^{xxvi}.

In the IAS, 1.8% in the IFS, and 4% in the IPS, there were only 3.0% Muslims present. The Muslim community only makes about 4.5% of the workforce on Indian Railways. Nearly all of them (98.7%) are situated at lower levels. Muslims make up about 4% of the security agencies, 6.5% of the education department, and 7.3% of the home department. Only about 6% of the police force's constables are Muslims as a whole. Their share is roughly 4.4% in the health department and 7.8% in the court. About 2.1% of all candidates hired by the State Public Service Commissions are Muslims^{xxvii}.

Muslims have been hardest hit by the so-called "competitive" forces unleashed by liberalisation notwithstanding the much-ballyhooed economic growth. Both internal and external liberalisation have had a significant negative impact on employment rates and the displacement of employees who have lost their jobs as a result of competition and the importation of low-cost goods. Muslims who have been forced out of their conventional jobs have lost their source of income, which has resulted in even more poverty. Additionally, it has been discovered that Muslim women have the lowest worker population ratio of any other community, particularly in urban areas. Up to 18% of young Muslim educated urban adults are unemployed. Muslims and Dalits are nearly tied for having the highest unemployment rates in the lower educated brackets. Statistics given in the Lok Sabha demonstrate that minority groups are still underrepresented in government positions even after nine years of the Sachar Committee. Even more concerning, their population is declining xxviii.

Utilization of public services

According to the Sachar Committee study, all poor households, including Muslim households, have limited access to the public infrastructure. The SC/ST community has just marginally greater access to skilled medical personnel and birthing facilities than the general population. Both in rural and urban areas, Muslims have very limited access to tap water; in rural areas, Muslim households have the least access to this amenity^{xxix}. Not much has changed. Muslim communities, whether urban or rural, frequently lack good roads, adequate transportation, sanitary facilities, access to water and electricity, and public health services.

Low income and standards of living

Except for SCs and STs, Muslims in the nation's northern states have been shown to have a greater rate of poverty than any other underprivileged groups. Regarding the severity of poverty in urban and rural areas, the situation is the same^{xxx}. Muslim households in metropolitan areas tend to have extremely poor spending habits (less than Rs. 500/-). With a head count ratio of 38.4%, Muslims in urban areas have the highest incidence of poverty, closely followed by SCs and STs at 36.4%. Muslims in rural areas experienced poverty rates that were greater than the national norm in 2004–05 and 2011–12. OBC Muslims experience poverty at a rate that is approximately twice as high as the general population in urban areas throughout the same time period. Muslims who have been forced out of their conventional jobs have lost their source of income, which has resulted in even more poverty.

Community riots

Communal riots, which first occurred in India during the British Raj, are now a common occurrence there. In the 39 years between 1954 and 1992, or nearly one riot every day, there were 13,356 major anti-Muslim riots, according to the MHA, government of India. Following the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, major communal riots that culminated in the massacre of thousands of Muslims occurred in Meerut in 1987, Moradabad in 1980, Bombay in January 1993, and Gujarat in 2002. 2014 saw 1,227 riots, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau. According to some historians, the nation had an institutionalised riot system that could be used as and when necessary xxxii.

Political participation

The fact that Indian Muslims make up an average of 11% of the voters and have sway in over 200 Lok Sabha constituencies across India may come as a surprise to many. However, the percentage of Muslims in the political realm^{xxxii}, both nationally and regionally, has been small thus far and is rapidly declining, raising serious concerns about the inclusiveness of our polity and the Islamophobia that pervades all "secular" parties. For instance, Muslim representation in the current Lok Sabha fell to a historic low of 22 seats. According to the 2011 Census, 14.2% of the population is Muslim. Accordingly,

they ought to have held 77 seats in the 16th Lok Sabha. Nevertheless, only 49 Muslim MPs have ever been elected to Parliament, and even then they were underrepresented. Since the first general election in 1952, the population has been declining xxxiv.

In the run-up to the 2014 elections, the BJP did coin the slogan "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," but in Uttar Pradesh, where there are over 35 million Muslims, not a single Lok Sabha seat was granted to Muslims by the party. There hasn't been a Muslim chief minister in India since 1982, with the exception of Jammu & Kashmir, which has a majority of Muslims^{xxxv}. The final one was AR Antulay, a member of the Congress party who presided as chief minister of Maharashtra from 1980 to 1982. Since independence, India has only had five other Muslim chief ministers in addition to him. Only one of them—MOH Farook from Pondicherry—was able to serve the whole five years of his sentence. Muslim political underrepresentation in states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu is significantly more than 50%.

The younger Muslim elite is becoming more aware of how India is moving forward and expanding quickly while leaving them behind, and that because of the government's treatment of Muslims, they are forced to fend for themselves. Their neutral reaction to the major political parties reflects this sensibility. Inability of Muslim political organisations to articulate genuine Muslim issues has been demonstrated. It's possible that the formation of new political parties like the SDPI and WPI signals a shift in political philosophyxxxvi.

Conclusion

Like many Muslim communities around the world, the Muslim community in India has never completely given in to difficult circumstances and difficulties. It has always had a very optimistic outlook on surviving. In times of crises, movements, scholars, and leaders have teamed up to guide the community through these challenges. Over the past approximately 1400 years, despite facing multiple significant obstacles, Muslim communities around the world have managed to maintain their sense of self-worth and confidence. The Indian Muslims have demonstrated this strength throughout their history as well. Vasco de Gama's arrival on the Malabar Coast in 1498 signalled the beginning of colonialism in India and other countries, which was preceded by the fall of Muslim Spain in 1492. When the Portuguese pirates endangered the trade, religion, and culture of the Mappila Muslims, they did not flee but bravely battled the assailants. The British Empire turned its attention to Muslims during the First War of Independence in 1857. The weakest Mogul emperor ever, Bahadur Shah Zafar, brought an end to the illustrious period of Muslim dominion. By this period, most of the important towns on the subcontinent were under the jurisdiction of the East India Company, the forerunner of British dominance in India. Hindus and Muslims joined together to fight the British in the 1857 War of Independence, which fanned the flames of their animosity and led to the invention of the "divide and rule" strategy. Muslims were slaughtered by the British troops throughout much of north India throughout the conflict. An estimated 27,000 Muslims are believed to have died in Delhi alone. However, the attack did not generally demoralise or dishearten Muslims; on the contrary, it reinforced their resolve to stave off the invaders. Several movements for the betterment of the community in India's northern region emerged in the years that followed. In addition to offering the Muslim community leadership to oppose the British, the post-1987 crisis assisted the community in giving birth too many innovative leaders and organisations. The Muslim community of today can learn a lot from these revolutions that gave Muslims the tools they needed to end their suffering. Lamenting the past will accomplish nothing. A community will only survive if it is prepared to battle the odds with optimism. The organisations that were founded prior to independence shared the same goals—community reform, education dissemination, and resistance to western invaders—despite having different work plans and techniques. The well-known movements founded prior to independence included Tareqe-Mohamediya, Aligarh Movement, Deobandi Movement, Tableeghe Jama'at, Jam'iyyathul Ulema-e-Hind, All India Muslim League, and Jama'at-e-Islami.

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