

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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CHAPTER-7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 SHORT SUMMARY

This study tries to depict the socio-economic condition of Muslim community in India and the condition of Muslim people of Naxalbari Block in Darjeeling District and Farakka Block in Murshidabad District, both in the state of West Bengal. In order to assess the socio-economic status of Muslims, the data of different socio religious communities especially between Hindus and Muslims have been compared. Muslim population in India constitutes 13.4 percent and Muslims in West Bengal constitute 25.2 percent of the state population in 2001.

It is clear from the study that Muslims in India are backward almost in every sphere of socio-economic development particularly in the fields of education and employment. It is noteworthy that the economic backwardness of the Muslim is a cyclic and recurring process leading to education and social backwardness.

The data reveal that literacy among Muslims in India is around 59 percent compared to the national average of 65 percent and for all other SRCs (except Hindus, and SCs/STs) of 70.8 percent. Literacy among Muslim women in urban areas is 63 percent and it is 43 percent in rural areas as against 73 percent and 46 percent respectively for all SRCs.

Backwardness in education is a key concern for the Muslim community. Low literacy level is the main factor for low economic development of the community. It requires not only general education but also a quality and job oriented education for their all round development. Sachar Committee Reports has mentioned that 25 percent of Muslim children in the age group of 6 to 14 have either never been to school or have dropped at some stage (Ref-page 58).

Muslim community is also economically backward. The 61st round data of the NSSO show that 22.7 percent of India's population was poor in 2004-05 while Muslims are poor with head count ratio (HCR) of 31 percent who are still living below the poverty line. The poverty among OBC Muslims is close to that of SCs/STs with HCR of 35 percent. Work participation rate (WPR) of community is 57 percent as against 69 percent for all communities. It appears that 61 percent of Muslim workers are engaged in self employment activities such as street vending, tobacco and textile products, repair and maintenance of motor vehicles; artisan works, household works etc. as against the national average of 56 percent and 55 percent for the Hindus. The Muslim female workers representing 73 percent are engaged in self-employment while 59.7 percent Hindu female workers are engaged in self-employment.

Urban Muslim workers are engaged mostly in informal sector representing 92 percent against the national average of 79 percent, while 94.2 percent rural Muslim workers are engaged in informal sector as against national average of 88.5 percent. This is even higher than SCs/STs of 88 percent.

Muslim workers are representing only 5.6 percent in formal sector particularly in government/public sector in urban areas as compared to the national average of 14 percent.

Thus, Muslims cannot earn much from such low paid activities and at an obvious reason; Muslims are not getting social benefits. It is depicted that the Muslims are facing with poor physical and social infrastructural facilities in villages having large share of Muslim population. Ghettoisation is a result of deep sense of insecurity is another great problem for the community. The people of this community cannot avail improved physical and social infrastructure of other areas.

Thus, cumulative effect of all these factors is unfavourable to Muslim people as these give rise to poverty and helplessness among the community.

It is evident that the urban Muslims in West Bengal are educationally backward than even SCs/STs. The 2001 Census data reveal that literacy amongst Muslims in West Bengal (57.5 percent) is lower than national average (65 percent), state average (68.6 percent), Hindus in the state (72.4 percent) and other minorities of the state (81.6 percent).

Female education amongst Muslims in the state is 49.75 percent as against the state average for female of 59.6 percent and the Hindu females at 63 percent. Among the various reasons of educational backwardness amongst the Muslims, the major ones include poor economic condition; limited number of government and government aided schools in Muslim concentrated areas and lack of job opportunities for the educated people in the community. Muslims have limited access to far off schools, which is also a bottleneck for their improvement.

The economic profile of Muslims in West Bengal is gloomy aggregating all contributing factors. Mean Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) of Muslims in rural areas is Rs.501 in West Bengal as against the state average of Rs.576, Hindu OBCs Rs.652 and SCs/STs Rs.524. The MPCE of Muslims in urban areas is Rs.748 compared to state average of Rs.1159, Hindu OBCs Rs. 1008, SCs/STs Rs.784 and Hindu general Rs.1385.

High levels of incidence of poverty among the Muslims in West Bengal are observed. Poverty among rural Muslims in the state is high as 33 percent as against 25 percent of the state average for all SRCs while poverty level among urban Muslims is 27 percent compared to the state level at 12 percent.

We have studied two villages in Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling District in West Bengal. Muslims in Naxalbari Block constitute 5.51 percent of the block's total population of 1,44,915 in 2001. We have studied two villages in the block named Totaramjote (a Muslim concentrated village) and South Rathkhola (a Hindu concentrated village) having population of 613 and 514

respectively in 2007. Sex ratios (females to 1000 of males) of two villages are 965 and 862 respectively compared to the district ratio of 937.

Literacy among the inhabitants of Totaramjote is 59.4 percent in 2007 having males' literacy of 63.4 percent and females being 55.2 percent. Literacy rate of another village, South Rathkhola, is fairly good at 78.5 percent of which males are 86.7 percent and females' share is 69 percent. Thus, the Muslims of Totaramjote are significantly lagging behind the Hindus of the adjoining village South Rathkhola in the field of education.

The Mean Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) per month is Rs.435 among the populace of Totaramjote which is far lower than South Rathkhola of Rs.759. Household sizes of Totaramjote and South Rathkhola are 5.6 and 4.3 respectively.

Major part of the people of both the villages is engaged in petty trade and cultivation. The inhabitants of South Rathkhola represent more in government and semi-government sector than the inhabitants of Totaramjote Village.

It appears that 65 percent of total 110 families in Totaramjote are holding BPL cards whereas 34 percent of 119 families in South Rathkhola are holding such cards. Sixty nine percent of the families in Totaramjote are aware of different welfare schemes of the government as against 79 percent of families in South Rathkhola. Large proportion of inhabitants might have heard about such government schemes but could not reap the benefits due to lack of knowledge on to the process of getting such benefits.

Social and infrastructural facilities are not adequately provided in these two villages but for health care, the villages are well equipped. One rural hospital & one primary health sub-centre within a distance of 4 km; a sub-divisional hospital and a medical college & hospital at a distance of around 25 km have been established by the State Government.

We have also studied two villages in Farakka Block of Murshidabad District in West Bengal. Muslims constitute 62.76 percent of block's population of 220,049 in 2001. Manik Nagar (entirely a Muslim concentrated village) and Hazarpur (entirely Hindu concentration) villages under study have population of 806 and 863 respectively. Sex ratios of the two villages are 924 and 979 respectively. Literacy among the Muslim population of Manik Nagar is 55.7 percent in 2007 of which males' share is 68.5 percent and females' share being 41 percent. Literacy amongst the Hindus of Hazarpur is 61.2 percent of which males are 63.7 percent and females are 58.7 percent

Murshidabad is one of the highly Muslim concentrated districts in India. Muslims' share in the district is around 64 percent. Literacy rate of Murshidabad District is 54.4 percent compared to the state average of 68.6 percent and literacy level of Darjeeling District is 71.8 percent. Literacy among the Muslims in Murshidabad District is again lower than the state average for Muslims and literacy among Muslims in Darjeeling District.

It is observed that educationally both the Muslim dominated villages are lagging behind the other two Hindu dominated villages. Among four villages under survey, South Rathkhola village in Darjeeling District has the highest literacy rate. Literacy among the inhabitants (both males and females) of Manik Nagar Village is the lowest. It appears that income and education have positive correlation in all four villages i.e., literacy rates have increased with the increase in income.

MPCE of Manik Nagar (Rs.563) is lower than MPCE of adjoining Hazarpur Village (Rs.575). The MPCE of Totaramjote is the lowest (Rs.435) and South Rathkhola is the highest at Rs.759. Entire population of Manik Nagar and Hazarpur are living below the poverty line but only 8 percent of the total 162 families of Manik Nagar and 5 percent of the total 180 families of Hazarpur have received BPL Cards. It is seen that 15 percent families in Manik Nagar and 100 percent families in Hazarpur Village are aware of welfare schemes of the governments.

Villages under Farakka Block are lagging behind the villages of Naxalbari Block in respect of availability of infrastructural facilities like education and health care facilities.

7.2 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Social, economic and cultural backwardness among the Muslim population of India-Pakistan subcontinent culminated the creation of political organization known as Indian Muslim League in 1906 and the great Muslim League leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah persuaded the whole Muslim community to press for a separate Muslim state. The leader thought that the only way to preserve Indian Muslim from complete subordination to the Hindus was to demand for an independent state solely for the Muslims. India became independent in 1947 and completed its sixty years of independence in 2007. During this span of time little could be done for ameliorating the helplessness of the really poor such as scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, and the Muslims.

The socio-economic and political state of the Indian Muslim community presents a dismal picture. Available literature, government documents, reports (including the report of 'Sachar Committee' appointed by the Prime Minister of India in March 2005 headed by retired Justice Rajindar Sachar, 2006) have clearly highlighted Muslim marginalization particularly since 1947. But the fact remains that in spite of submitting reports by various committees and commissions to the governments (state and central) to address the social, economic and political problems faced by the Muslim community, little initiatives have so far been taken in proper direction. Our study also confirms about the distress faced by the community. The serious problem facing this community is the feeling of insecurity. Indian states are passing the days with riots, communal and political violence. A study (Ram Puniyani, www.counter current.org) shows that 80 percent of victims of communal violence occurred in India during 1961-1992 are from Muslim community. It is reported that around 4000

Sikhs were died during Delhi riots in 1984 and more than 2000 Muslims died in Gujrat riot in February 2002.

Muslim community is afflicting with another problem of low per capita income. It is true that due to poverty and lack of genuine financial resources the majority of the Muslim community is lagging behind in terms of their social, economic, and cultural development. A study by NCAER (1999) shows that among all the religious minorities in India, the level of consumption of the Muslims is low (for example, consumption less than Rs.300 a month among 29 percent of rural Muslims). NSSO data for 1999-2000 also support this observation. Many reasons have been offered for low level of income of this community. Their spending is less because majority of working Muslims are in casual employment and seasonal occupations. It is seen that Muslim households, on average, cultivate smaller plots of land. The unemployment rate among the educated Muslim (Men and Women) is higher compared to non-Muslim communities. Our Naxalbari study compares the income and expenditure pattern of two villages of Darjeeling district in the state of West Bengal. Of these two villages the Muslim-dominated village has lower income and expenditure level than the Hindu dominated village.

The mean income of households in Totaramjote (a Muslim-dominated village) is Rs.2,436 and in South Rathkhola(a Hindu dominated) is Rs.3,265 and expenditure per head per month is Rs.435 in Totaranjote and Rs.759 in South Rathkhola. But the Farakka study represents more or less a similar income-expenditure pattern for both the Muslim and Hindu communities.

Educational status of the Muslims is far below the Hindu community in both Darjeeling and Murshidabad villages (tables 4.5 and 5.4). The infrastructural facilities are also poor in both the Muslim-dominated villages of Darjeeling and Murshidabad districts.

The Muslims are deprived of due representation in both public and private employment. This is also evident from our village level survey. Not

only in public sector, are the Muslims also denied equal opportunity in the private sector. They are less represented in the police and military departments. Agriculture is still the dominant sector in the villages we surveyed. But it only provides three to four month's employment to the farm labourers. Due to this lack of job opportunity, large numbers of young and middle-aged labourers migrate to other places only in search of doing manual work. This work requires fewer skills which suits the unskilled rural labour force. In Farakka village, a large number of Muslim and Hindu women including the teen-aged girls contribute to supplement the meagre family income by making bidis.

Our survey reveals that most of the respondents are being deprived of governmental programmes meant for alleviating rural poverty. A large proportion of the village population is shifted from their traditional occupations but their income level remains to be very low. Most of them belong to the category of BPL. But the irony is that governmental facilities do not percolate to the BPL card holders in a proper way. The ultimate effect of such governmental measure cannot change the lots of the really poor. In Naxalbari block sixty five percent families of the Muslim-dominated village received BPL card while thirty four percent families of the Hindu-dominated village had been given the card. In Farakka villages only a little over six families received BPL card till 2007. But the fact is that families residing in both the villages (Manik Nagar, a Muslim-dominated village and Hazarpur, a Hindu-dominated village) are in abject poverty.

Report of the Sachar Committee (2006) confirms that sixty percent Muslim families living in the rural areas do not have any land. Our primary survey with the villagers reveals the dismal picture of landholding of the families (both the Muslim and Hindu families). The average landholding of the Muslim and Hindu dominated families in Darjeeling and Murshidabad villages are 0.17 and 0.10 acre respectively. So is the condition of distribution of patta and vested land (tables 4.8 & 5.8) to both the Muslim and Hindu poor families. Distribution of governmental loan (co-operative and scheduled commercial bank loans) to the Muslim community is

meagre. It is almost a diktat that institutional loans should be given cautiously to the poor because there is a possibility of low recovery of loan. This view is supported by the Sachar Committee (2006). In our study, we also find that the poor have little or no access over institutional loans. Only some huge amount of loans was taken by a few well-off families as house building loans. Some members of those families have stable income from their cattle business of good turnover. But that does not reflect the true picture of distribution of institutional credit to the minorities including the Muslim community.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to partition of the country into India and Pakistan hundreds of thousands of Indian Muslims lost their lives and property and witnessed unprecedented poverty and destitution. Only a portion of the educated and well-to-do Muslims migrated to Pakistan, but most of them who were not so economically and culturally sound remained in India. They became further weak in the economic, political, social and cultural vistas. The censuses and national sample surveys fail to give true picture of the socio economic conditions of the minorities in India including the Muslims. It is agreed and proved that Muslims in India are socio-economically and culturally worse-off than even the backward communities and the OBCs. The life and property of this community is also very insecure.

Our study observes that the rural Muslims are the most deprived and marginalized community in India in terms of economic, education, cultural and political empowerment. For the overall improvement of this community, the following recommendations are briefly made.

- It is necessary to have a qualitative and quantitative data bank for the Indian Muslims. This requires collecting data on social, economic, educational and political conditions of Muslim community in a most scientific manner. The data thus collected should be made available to the general public so that those can be used by the governmental organizations, activists and policy makers. It further needs disaggregating

data in terms of gender, religion, class, caste, language etc. If that can be done systematically then those can be compared between the Muslims and other communities. On the basis of this data bank a proper policy prescription can be made for the betterment of this community.

The Muslim community is lagging far behind the other minorities in India in all respects. For their overall uplift, it needs special attention to sort out plans and implementing development schemes so that these are acceptable to Muslim community. The participation of local communities, Muslims and other marginalized groups must be ensured in formulating, planning and development schemes.

Several studies including our study focus on the issue that the Muslims are less represented in formal sector employment. Few years back, the central government made provision for reservations of backward Muslims in Indian states in the name of the other backward castes (OBC). But that is not adequate. It is necessary to work out mechanisms for ensuring adequate for the Muslim community in central government services, police and defence departments. For this purpose most depressed Muslims should be included in the list of scheduled caste category. Adequate representation of the Muslims to the public body and the appointment in decision making body in the public administration is the need of the hour so that Muslims can also take part in formulating developmental plans and in decision making.

The bulk of Indian Muslims suffer deprivation in social opportunity because of lack of access to education, health facilities and other public services and employment. They are also less informed about the facilities available in different sectors of the economy. Atmosphere needs to be created from the part of the government, NGOs and community based organizations so that every member of the society becomes well-informed and knowledgeable, and receives the benefit of development through active participation in productive activities of different sectors of the economy.