

Accessing Education among Muslims in India: Residential Segregation in Urban Landscape

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Abstract

The interest in patterns of representation and inclusion has widened in India and across the world. In the past few years, the demand for policies of inclusion has considerably increased. Further, the need for public interest and equal rights has increased the urgency to act. The propagation of democracy has led to a consensus that in the democratic system any single group should not extend monopoly over the governance. This has further led to an awareness of creating policies that will deal with the aspirations of the marginalised groups for building equity, and stability within the political system. As it stands, the imagery of an ideal city differs from region to region and forms multiple identities of an individual. In the scenario of rising global capitalism, it does not require to engineer rhetoric from outside, but an inquest from within to comprehend exclusion by inclusion. In the analysis drawn from this paper, it is not a claim that Muslims are experiencing scarcity in welfare benefits of the government; indeed it is an effort to represent Muslims in a spectacle of equality in the interstitial spaces of access to education. Notably, it's time to read –reflect debate and discuss.

Keywords: representation; inclusion; policies; democratic; education; access

Background

In a multi-cultured and demographically rich country like India, the connotations of social exclusion – inclusion has risen. While there are no two opinions that caste has remained the major factor for discrimination, in the case of Muslims, they are not benefited by the programs and policies and the country's progress which has led to their marginalization. As

the stratification of the Indian society is reflected in its apparent inequalities, an investment in the status of education amongst Muslims can be an approach to reduce the differences. Moreover, the educational system developed by the subjugated elites is exposed with hurdles towards the lower groups. This led on to the premise of 'Maximally Maintained Inequality' which states that the educational inequality is not changed until enrolment at a particular level reaches the saturation point (Raftery and Hout, 1993). These arguments pose a challenge to the existing policies and their alternatives. Furthermore, policy making is indeed the best strategy for connecting dots between the inter-disciplinary fields which are overlapping in each genre.

The educational achievement of any society is deeply embedded and conditioned by a number of factors; prime being the accessibility of these institutions evenly between areas. The right of children to free and compulsory education is an ambitious step to meet the recognised obligations based on principles of equity and non-discrimination to elevate staggering poverty. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the narratives of parents, children and the teachers on the schooling system, accessibility of resources, the denial of opportunities, identity issues and the system of education in a ghettoized environment. Due to lack of proper monitoring children become vulnerable to exclusion leading towards the denial of friendly and equitable environment. The poor monitoring results in poor maintenance of the education policies. In the school, the child interacts with his or her surrounding and gains experiences from it.

Gupta (2008) notes that "a child cultivates self-image through all the experience of childhood and gradually prepares a sense of identity". As the interaction of the child in a school with classmates, teachers, and parent helps them to build their self-image, the life in school plays a key role in the building of a personality. The ghetto too plays a role in the shaping up of identity directly and indirectly. The non-group actors like the parents, teachers and the surrounding influence the intervention and re-intervention enquiry into the child's world. While inequalities are well narrated, how we deal with them remains a debatable topic. While the issue needs a grounded approach rather than a hollow discussion on preferential treatment to Muslims. The availability of better infrastructure in schools, fulfilling teachers vacancy, better educational environment, availability of higher educational institutions in Muslim areas, can be some of the realistic approaches towards the problem of Muslim education.

The teacher-student relationship leads towards better youth development, achievement, and commitment towards a better future. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) narrated the banking concept of education in which the students are the depositories, and the teachers are the depositor. He analyzed that in the banking concept knowledge is bestowed by those who consider themselves informed upon those whom they consider not informed. In the process of inquiry, the teacher presents himself opposite and justifies their existence based on the student's ignorance. By this, he argues that submission towards the teacher limits the creativity of the student and teachers must be partners of the student in relation and not dictators. Freire emphasized towards communication between the teacher and the student. The association of a positive relation between the two leads to academic improvement. The motivation and expectation by teachers improves the self-esteem of the students. Ironically, teachers are an important factor for improving social relations.

Panda (1999) says that the teacher's professional capability and obligation determine the quality of education to a great level. As children are coming from different backgrounds in the school, the relationship between the two must be looked upon as it is the crucial foundation on which learning is related. Similarly, Carr & Klassen (1997) suggests that the relationship between teacher and student is significant to academic achievement for minority students and the experiences of teachers working with ethnically diverse group need to be understood. Banks & Lynch (1986) highlights that the teacher must understand how the differences between race and culture cause educational problems for students who are minority. As teachers have a huge influence in the classroom, the relationship they build is related to the schooling experiences of the child. Moreover, for these children, the teacher's incompetency along with the structural disadvantage leads to a higher probability of failure. Parenting on the other hand is the most challenging job, and students who have involved parents have effective learning outcomes. Chandrasekhar & Mukhopadhyay (2006) comes out with four aspects of the parents that decide the schooling experience and its effect on the child. First, parental education is most importantly mother's education. Second, the economic welfare of the household as measured which links the occupation of the household head and the likelihood of children going to school. Third is the inclination towards boys over girls. Fourth, the availability of school and its quality are necessary determinants of school enrolment. Thus, in individual zones, the importance of each of these is essential to overcome the multi-faceted challenges of the teaching-learning process.

No dissent on the underachievement of marginalized children can be completed without understanding their handling in school and with their peers. A child interacts with his or her surrounding continuously and gains experiences from it. Thus, the interaction of the child in a school with classmates and teachers help them to build their self-image. A school is an arrangement where a child not only learns the organized form of learning but interacts with the society at large. School provides a space of inter-community interaction and making friends is an important part of the schooling process. But the ghettoization seems to have influenced the interaction pattern of the children within the school itself. Ramchandran and Noream (2013) highlight two instruments of exclusion. The first is language – where the students are excluded at times due to the language of instruction not known to them. Owing to separate seating arrangement, water facility, children from lower backgrounds feel unwelcome and inferior in the school premises which contribute to their low attendance and in turn hampering the overall educational achievement (Watch, 2014).

Access to Education

In India, historically schooling was elitist. Later on, it started extending to the masses at different times. The important point is that even after the equality of educational opportunity was formally accepted, the elitism is still prevalent. Earlier in South Asian countries, the education system even at the primary level was heavily against girls (Myrdal, 1968). Chanana (1988) argued that in the case of girls, social and educational functions are seen as one. The socialization centres on the traditional value of family, kinship and marriage present a dichotomy of the masculine and feminine roles creating a gender irregularity. Educational institutions reflect and reinforce these differences. The condition of Muslim women is at stake due to the double disadvantage of being women and Muslim. Zakia (1993) states that lack of education, poverty, economic dependency and further ignorance of rights of Muslim women have made the situation more vulnerable to exploitation, which requires an acute need to undertake research to identify problems specific to

Muslim women and delineate the causes of their backwardness. The constitution enshrined to provide elementary education under Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). It reads, “The state shall endeavour to provide within ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all until they complete the age of fourteen years.” In 1993 in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that Right to Education is a Fundamental Right flowing from Right to life in Article 21

of the Constitution. Subsequently in 2002 education as a fundamental right was legitimized through the 86th Amendment of the Constitution. It modified Article 45, which now provides that the state shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

In Islam, education is considered supreme, and it emphasizes on learning. When the Holy Qur'an was revealed, its first word was 'Iqra!' that is, 'Read.' In verse "Iqra Bismillah", Allah mentions the significance of knowledge and education with these verses. (Surah Al-Alaq /30, in the Holy Quran). The books of Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) have verses on knowledge (ilm). Ironically; in today's time, educational backwardness is seen as one of the main causes for the isolation of Muslims. Engineer (2001) defines that the conventional definition of Muslim education ignores changing realities. He stated that "it is generally thought that Muslims do not prefer to send their children, especially girl children to school". The Sachar Committee (2006) traced that the condition of Muslims in the field of education was "depressing" and their educational needs required particular attention. The report encouraged the government to meet its obligation of compulsory education for children up to the age of 14 and urged to review the school curriculum with an aim to reflect the diversity and discourage religious intolerance.

Hasan (2003) frames that Muslim educational backwardness is largely the result of poverty and neglecting attitude of the state. The number of the Indian Muslims working as landless labourers, small or marginal peasants, artisans and petty shopkeepers is considerable, and more than half of the urban population lives below the poverty line, and a considerably higher number are self-employed. The Sachar Committee report (2006, p.12) mentions that "Muslim parents often face overt discrimination from school authorities when trying to get admission or availing of scholarship schemes for their children. Small acts such as lack of civility in behaviour, rude questioning, and an atmosphere which treats them and their children as 'second-class' citizens – all these combine to create a powerful deterrent, distancing the Muslim community from the school system." The study of Thorat & Attewell (2007) specified that job applicants having a Dalit or Muslim name were considerably less likely to have a positive outcome than an equivalently qualified persons coming from a high caste Hindu name. On the contrary, it appears that caste favouritism and social exclusion have infused private enterprises which are the most dynamic modern sector of the Indian economy.

The lack of access to quality education for Muslims has in large parts translated into their poor representation in salaried jobs in the public and private sectors.

In a study, on education, it links that issue of access, lack of motivation and quality schools results in the dropout of the children in the education system. “Not only many children are reluctant to enter school; there are many of those who drop out before completing basic education. Many children from the most deprived strata are or become part of the workforce” (Ramachandran, 2003). The study noted that parents of underprivileged groups realize the value of education and go beyond their reach to admit children to schools, but they find private schools beyond their reachability and municipal schools are widely seen as boring, unattractive, and marked by ineffective teaching-learning process. It is the lack of accessibility and amenities in the community that leads to poor access to schooling opportunity. Singh (1999) mentions that the conditions change as we move up from one level of education to the other. In a democratic society, access to primary education should be equally available. Further, she emphasizes that “the other key problem in this area of work is to ensure that the transition from school to college takes place not in the traditional way. Instead, it has to conform to the changing realities.”

On the issue of access to education Ramachandran & Jandhyala (2007) states that the term “access” needs to be revised with the term “meaningful access. It shall be seen that every child has access to a functioning school with sufficient allocation of financial resources. The three major concerns that came out from their study was, first that the school system is highly differentiated and the poorest in rural and tribal areas, in peripheral urban settlements and sparsely populated regions get far less resources than better-endowed regions. Second, that the poor Muslim children, especially girls are not accessing elementary education. The third issue was related to the tribal areas and the role of dialects and languages in the pedagogic process.

Benei (2008) reflects that sending children only to Muslim schools is not a deliberate choice that parents make; they are forced by the environment of the mainstream school due to situations of their religion. Abdo (2006) takes forth the idea of ‘alienation’ as getting disconnected from others, a feeling of not belonging to a larger community hence resulting in frustration and low self-esteem. The cycle goes on as children in these ghettos do not have a chance to explore things beyond these ghettos. Baxi (2005) focus on the gendered culture in

ghettos where women become the victims of different acts of violence with their voices unheard in the religious identity.

For every policymaker, scholar or activist concerned with the current state of Indian Muslims, 'there is a need to consider numbers as they tell a story that we may not like to confront: the level to which Muslims are on the margins of the structures of social, economic and political relevance in India' (Robinson 2005).

Discourse on Madrasas

In a religiously plural country like India, the interfaith discussion holds a significant place for the progress of the entire community. Emerging as a major centre of learning during the Mughal and Turkish rule, there are very few academic works on Indian Madrasas and its contemporary scenario. The term Madrasa is derived from the Arabic word *darasa*, which means 'to study'. Madrasas are seen with suspicion in the age of the global 'War on Terror'. At the time of the Prophet, education was imparted in the mosques, but when Islam began spreading, the need for a systematic educational system was felt, which led to the origin of Madrasa as an institution, having a separate identity to a mosque. Hodgson (1974) points out that the spread of Madrasas was initiated for 'Sunni revival' that was taken to counter growing Shia influence where Sunni Madrasas trained individuals for service in the state establishments.

Sikand (2005) discussed the historical evolution of the Madrasa system highlighting that there has been no fixed system of classes or syllabi in the medieval Indian Madrasas and each Madrasa has a different syllabus and choice of books. The Madrasas were meant for males, but Muslim elites made arrangements for the education of their women through *ustanis* (female tutors). He notes that the number of Muslim students studying in the regular schools outnumbers the Madrasa students, but in religious way Madrasa plays a central role in the life of Muslim community. As Urdu was targeted as Muslim language, in many lower class families, Madrasa provide single access to the educational system. There have been small yet growing numbers of Madrasas for girls who provide them with the learning environment. The largest girls Madrasa Jami 'at us-Salihah in India has been set up in Malegoan, Maharashtra by Maulana Mohammad Usman Qasmi in 1973, having large hostels and syllabus planned according to the Deobandi Madrasa which has produced a large number of graduates.

Additionally, Kabir (2011) pointed out that Madrasa, in general, advocates identity of 'Muslim-ness' by indoctrinating Islamic practices and sense of consciousness of Muslim selfhood. The process of selfhood formation is highly debatable even within Madrasa who are affiliated with different orientations. Originating from a single entity of addressing ways to impart Islamic education, in the current times, the different modes of Islamic percepts has formed interpretative differences within the community. The education given through Madaras and Maktabas to the Muslims has fallen into a contested notion. Engineer (2001) discusses the situation of the modern secular education among Muslims by pointing out that "it is necessary to dispel the stereotype that Muslims resist modern secular education and opt for Madrasa education. Such stereotypes, besides being unreal, are dangerous as they intensify communal attitudes".

Metcalf (1982) focused on the most important Madrasas in the Indian subcontinent: the Dar al Ulum at Deoband. She mentions the activity of Madrasa which taught students the way of life, cooperation and participation not only in religious activities but in government and politics as well. The system of instruction and the goal is to train well-educated ulama (learned of Islam) who are dedicated to reforming Islam. Such ulama would become prayer leaders, writers, preachers, and teachers, and thus disseminate their learning, in turn. The 'ulamas', took part in the Indian struggle for Independence. Hasan (1972) defines that 'the ulama have undoubtedly considerable influence through the institution of Madrasas and fatwa over public opinion'.

There have been debates on the funding of Madrasa. The fund is dependent on the land or property is given by waqf (charitable endowments) or sources from within the community. As service-providing institutions, waqfs were a major source of education, health care, and employment. Moreover, funds are generated in the form of zakat or sadaqa which are contributions by the Muslims who are well off to those in need. To pursue their social interest people of the Arab world funds institutions of poor Muslims including in India that has started an industry of Madrasas and attracted a large sum of money. The Madrasa has now become the source for transnational networks, besides its role as institutions of religious learning. "Any knowledgeable person who looks like a Maulvi (Religious teacher) and who knows Islamic terms and speak some difficult Arabic words, sets up his own Madrasa and then sends commission agents to collect donations" (Ali, 2002).

The linkages and the source from where the Madrasa has been receiving donations have prominently come into the forefront after the 9/11 attacks and vilification spearheaded by certain groups. “As a result of this growing environment of fear that is being actively stoked by the media, political ideologues and security analysts alike, one of the most expansive global networks that have emerged over the past few hundred years is being increasingly threatened” (Noor, 2008). The continuous upsurge of the Islamic movements has converted the whole identity of Islam and Muslims as a contested issue. Sikand (2005, 14) argues that “scores of Hindu supremacist organizations openly call for violence against Muslims and other marginalized communities and has been closely involved, often along with thousands of innocent people have perished till date”.

The ‘reforms’ and ‘modernization’ of Madrasas may be related to each other, but it is different from each other. It has been noted that most of the community members who attend Madrasas come from underprivileged families having few options. Reforming of the Madrasas is a major cause of concern because of the belief in the system that unreformed Madrasas are breeding ground of terrorist. The statement of Ashraf Ali thanvi, leading Deobandi alim of the twentieth pointed out that- “It is in fact, a source of great pride for the religious Madrasas not to impart any secular (duniyawi) education at all. For if this is done the religious character would inevitably be harmed. Some people say that Madrasas should teach their students additional subjects that would help them earn a livelihood, but this is not the aim of the Madrasas”.

In the discourse for reformation of Madrasa and the revival of Islamic education, Muslims are often typed cast as being away from the modern education and being held in the hands of the clerics of Islam who have their interest to keep the community backwards and anti - modernist. This fact rejects the reality that Muslims are forced to send their children to Madrasa because of lack of any other affordable alternative for them. The Madrasas are responding in the diverse ways and challenges of the contemporary times. The stakeholders of Madrasa have become acutely conscious about their identity and hostile to the government (Jhingran, 2010).

The Madrasa should de-clutter its role as ‘dens of terror’ and come out of the larger anti-Muslim agenda and its conspiracies to demonize the religious character of the community. The hope of reform lies in the sections of the young Muslim activists who have taken up both Islamic and secular education and are well versed in the Islamic theology. They need to

articulate and understand Islam to creatively engage it to the challenges faced by Muslims in the contemporary life. Madrasas need to be taken up as a sensitive topic involving people who are themselves at an identity crisis. Thus, inter-communal relations need to be peacefully built up.

Residential Segregation in Urban Landscape

Marcuse (2005) highlights that the “spatial areaing seems to be an inevitable accompaniment of urban life. Spatial processes have resulted in many forms of areaing (ghettos, gated communities, ethnic enclaves, religious communities, developments for the elderly), but the dividing line between those areas that are of public concern and those of no public policy interest is not always clear”. Amid the rising of India’s economy during the last two decades, the caste system could be expected to have morphed into a newer class cognisance in urban spaces. Contrarily; such differences were seen to be higher in the smaller towns (Dubey, 2011). However, though caste, religious belief and ethnic status were considered to be the key determinants of an individual’s social position, there has been little evidence to convey that there has been a turnaround during the last couple of decades in India.

The urban theory argues that as individuals and groups get used to the citylife, social organisation— weaken and modify the process of segregation by establishing distances (Burgess, 1984). Earlier studies have taken into consideration accessibility regarding transport network and the principles of city growth and structure in response to the dynamic changes (Hoyt, 1964) and taking the city however not merely as a geographical and ecological unit but at the same time an economic unit (Burgess, 1984) while stating the economic capability and affordability of any activity to locate itself at a given site.

Voluntary segregation has become a new force where groups sometimes enroute to segregation to reinforce their fragile identity. The combination of residential segregation and the systematically uneven spatial distribution has affected not only the quality of life, but it has led to a cycle of underdevelopment which may last for generations to come. We as a nation need to improve our perceptive of the problems of these segregated areas as the process of Globalization has fostered the more prominently. Notably, Muslims have loosened ground in socio-economic and political events, but there has been some revival regarding their literacy level and social development. The commitment for the idea of equality was the rationale behind enacting social welfare policies. These policies come at stake if not implemented judiciously. The diversity of identity makes policymaking burdened with

complexity leading to unintended effects; one among this is social exclusion. It is noted that Muslims, a numerical minority has been in focus due to their identity-related issues rather than empowerment and education.

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