

An Analysis of the Socioeconomic and Political Status of Muslims in India

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Abstract

This study investigates the socioeconomic and political standing of the Muslim population in India. The scope of this inquiry has been restricted to particularly examine three areas: education, employment, and political representation. The presence of a different array of criteria can be ascribed to the analysis of the presented scenario for each of the groups. Darin-Mattsson, Fors, and Kåreholt (2017) have noted that several strategies have been employed to operationalize the idea of socioeconomic status. Among these ways, education, social class, and income have emerged as the primary indicators. Therefore, this paper examines the circumstances of Muslims based on the specified criteria mentioned in line three. It concludes that Muslims are encountering significant challenges in all of these areas, and the government appears to be disinterested in their plight. Instead, it appears that their marginalisation and confinement to specific areas is rising, and they are viewed as troublesome and suspicious in society.

Keywords: India, Muslims, Minority, Indian Government, Education, Employment, Political Representation

BACKGROUND

The historical narrative surrounding the presence of Muslims in India is a subject of considerable intricacy and diversity, encompassing a lengthy and diverse chronology spanning more than a thousand years. The spread of Islam to India occurred through various means, encompassing dawah (Islamic missionary activities), trade interactions, travel, and conquest, among other factors (El-Nasr-Allaah & Musa-Hajjaj, 2011). The following are a few significant facets pertaining to the arrival of Muslims in India.

The exchange of goods and services between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent has been occurring for an extensive period of time, spanning several millennia. Prior to the advent of Islam, traders had the opportunity to engage in commerce with Southeast Asian ports by utilising the Konkan-Gujarat and Malabar coastlines. According to the historical account presented in Elliot and Dowson's book titled "*The History of India, as Told by its Own Historians*," it is documented that the initial sighting of a ship transporting Muslim travellers occurred along the Indian coast in the year 630 AD (Elliot & Dowson, 2010). According to H.G. Rawlinson, it can be argued that the initial establishment of Arab Muslims on the Indian coast occurred towards the conclusion of the 7th century AD (Rawlinson, 2003). The latter viewpoint is substantiated by the scholarly works of Zainuddin Makhdoom II, Haridas Bhattacharya, and J. Sturrock (West, 2010). Based on Athar Mubarakpuri's

scholarly analysis, it has been observed that Ibn Kathir's work includes a reference that suggests the existence of Muslim presence in India during the caliphates of Umar and Uthman (Mubarakpuri, 1973).

The ascent of the Arab civilization as a prominent global cultural influence commenced with the dissemination of the Islamic faith. The emergence of the new religion was facilitated by the propagation efforts of Arab tradesmen and merchants, who effectively spread its teachings across the surrounding geographical area (El-Nasr-Allaah & Musa-Hajjaj, 2011). The historical event of Ubaidullah's introduction of Islam to Lakshadweep is commonly attributed to the year 661 CE. There is a prevailing belief that his burial site is located on the island of Andrott. Several Umayyad coins dating from 661 to 750 AD were discovered in Kothamangalam, Kerala (Malekandathil, 2017). As per the assertions made by Kerala Muslims, Masjid Zeenath Baksh located in Mangalore is regarded as one of the most ancient mosques in India. Based on the historical account known as the Legend of CheramanPerumals, it is believed that the inaugural mosque in India was constructed in the year 624 CE in Kodungallur, presently situated in the state of Kerala. This mosque was commissioned by the final sovereign of the Chera dynasty, who embraced the Islamic faith during the lifetime of the esteemed prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632) (Samad, 1998). Based on the account of QissatShakarwatiFarmad, it can be inferred that the Masjids located in Kodungallur, Kollam, Madayi, Barkur, Mangalore, Kasaragod, Kannur, Dharmadam, Panthalayini, and Chaliyam were founded during the reign of Malik Dinar (Friedmann, 1975). Malik Dinar is said to have passed away in Thalangara, located in Kasaragod. The Cheraman Juma Mosque was constructed by Malik Deenar in the year 629 A.D (Friedmann, 1975). It is also posited that the construction of the initial mosque took place in Gujarat during the period spanning from 610 to 623 CE. It is plausible that the Mappilas constituted the initial Muslim community in the region of Malabar. Following the implementation of missionary endeavours along the coastline, a considerable number of indigenous individuals underwent a conversion process and embraced the Islamic faith (Islam, 2017).

The Muslim conquest of the Indian subcontinent commenced with the arrival of Muhammed Bin Qasim (695-715), a youthful Arab general, in the eighth century. Qasim embarked on this expedition with the objective of propagating and extending the dominion of the Umayyad Empire, which was centred in Damascus. His journey led him through the arid terrain of Sind (El-Nasr-Allaah & Musa-Hajjaj, 2011). Despite the relatively brief duration of Bin Qasim's expedition, his role in establishing the foundation for subsequent Muslim expansions was of utmost significance. During the 11th and 12th centuries, the Turkish Dynasty conducted military expeditions in the Indian Subcontinent. According to Spear (1990), these raids hold great significance in historical context. Nevertheless, despite achieving military triumph, these incursions were short-lived as their main objective was plunder rather than territorial acquisition (Calkins & Alam, 2001). Qutb-ud-Din Aybak, the founder of the Slave Dynasty in the late 12th century, was singular in his achievement of establishing the initial Muslim empire in the Indian subcontinent, commonly referred to as the Slave Dynasty. Subsequently, a series of Muslim rulers governed the Indian subcontinent (Aziz, 2002). The Mughal Empire represents the culmination of historical empires. The Mughal Empire exercised governance over the Indian subcontinent for a period exceeding two hundred years. Scholars widely concur that the Mughal Empire stands as an exceptional and illustrious empire, garnering significant recognition in historical records (Aziz, 2002).

Population

In the Indian context, it is evident that a substantial portion of the Muslim population is associated with South Asian ethnic communities. The recent study presents evidence indicating that the spread of the

Islamic religion on the Indian subcontinent was predominantly characterised by cultural transformations, while genetic intermingling coming from West Asia was found to be relatively restricted (Eaaswarkhanth, et al., 2009). The influence of *kafa'a* on the establishment of caste structures within the Muslim community in India is well-known. The prevailing belief posits that *Ajlaaf*, individuals who underwent a conversion from Hinduism, were assigned a comparatively lower social status in relation to *Ashraaf*, who are perceived to possess a higher social position as a result of their Arab lineage (Delage, 2014).

Muslims constitute the second largest demographic group in India, following the Hindu population. According to the findings of a Pew Research survey done in 2015, the proportions of religious groups in India have showed a noteworthy degree of consistency since Partition. One noticeable demographic shift has been a minor increase in the number of Muslims, accompanied by a comparable fall in the proportion of Hindus. Between 1951 and 2011, there was a 4.4 percentage point rise in the Muslim population, resulting in their representation reaching 14.2% of the overall population. In contrast, the Hindu population fell by 4.3 percentage points, bringing their proportion down to 79.8% (Hackett, 2015).

Based on the 2011 census estimates, the overall population of the nation is approximately 1.2 billion individuals. In contrast, according to the data obtained from the 2001 census, the percentage of Muslims in relation to the overall population was recorded as 14.2%. Since the 1971 census, there has been a notable decline in the proportion of Muslims, with the percentage decreasing from 32.48 percent to 24.7 percent. Upon analysing the growth rates of different populations during the period spanning from the 2001 to 2011 censuses, a significant observation came to light: the Muslim community exhibited the most substantial decline in growth rate, decreasing from 29.52 to 24.60, while Hindus experienced a little decline in growth, from 19.92 percent to 17.75 percent (Kramer, 2021). Based on the results of the 2014 National Family Health Survey, it was observed that the decline in fertility rate per woman was more pronounced within the Muslim community compared to the Hindu population. The study revealed that the fertility rates among Muslim women residing in the states of Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh were determined to be 2.3, 2.2, and 1.8, correspondingly. The fertility rates of Hindu women in the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh were recorded as 2.9, 2.8, and 2.6, respectively (James & Rana, 2021).

Based on the results of the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) in 2019-2021, the Hindu population had a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of about 1.9, while the Muslim population had a TFR of about 2.4. James and Rana (2021), on the other hand, say that the drop-in fertility rates in India affects all faith groups, including Muslims, and that the rate of decline is faster among Muslims. Ghosh (2018) looked at data from the 2011 Census and found that there was a link between Hindu fertility rates and Muslim fertility rates in different areas. The study found that districts with high Hindu fertility rates also had high Muslim fertility rates. On the other hand, districts with low Hindu fertility rates also had low Muslim fertility rates. These results show that faith does not seem to be the main factor that affects the number of births. The study also showed that places with high fertility rates had high fertility rates across all social groups, regardless of how religious the women were or how much education they had. This trend also holds true for areas with low birth rates (Das & Ghosh, 2023).

An analysis of states and union territories characterised by a substantial Muslim populace exposes the propagation of misinformation by the Hindu right-wing regarding the Muslim community. The prevailing discourse, as disseminated through propaganda, asserts that Muslims in India are

increasing their birth rates with the intention of attaining numerical advantage and, notably, acquiring political dominance (Chowdhury, 2021). The regions of Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, and Kerala exhibit growth rates of 1.1, 1.3, 3.3, 1.8, and 1.9, respectively. The regions of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha in India exhibit a replacement fertility rate of 2.1 among the Muslim population. According to projections, the Muslim population in the states of Kerala, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh is anticipated to attain this level in the forthcoming census (Kramer, 2021). At the national level, the Muslim community can be divided into four categories based on the proportion of their representation in each state, ranging from majority to significant, minority, and negligible. According to 2011 census data, the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep have a majority Muslim population, with percentages of 68.3% and 96.58%, respectively. Muslims have a significant presence in states such as Assam (34.22%), West Bengal (27.01%), Kerala (26.56%), Uttar Pradesh (19.26%), and Bihar (16.87%). Among India's states, 17 have minority Muslim populations, with percentages ranging from 14.53% in Jharkhand to 5.8% in Tamil Nadu. The remaining 11 states, on the other hand, have negligible Muslim populations, ranging from 4.87% in Chandigarh to 1.3% in Mizoram (www.census2011.co.in).

Education

Education and its reform are essential for the long-term prosperity and stability of a community. This is especially true in India, where Muslims currently have the lowest rate of educational attainment of any ethnicity in the country. It was widely considered that the bulk of Muslim children were educated in madrasas, which fostered religious fanaticism. Nonetheless, according to the 2006 Sachar Committee Report on Muslims, approximately 4% of Muslim children aged 7 to 19 are enrolled in madrasas, whereas the bulk of Muslim students attend public or publicly sponsored educational institutions (Sachar, 2006);(Shazli & Asma, 2015).

According to the data of the 75th Round National Sample Survey Report, the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) among Muslims was considerably lower (100) when compared to SCs (101), STs (102), OBCs, and other minority groups (2020). At the upper primary level, their community's GAR (Gross Attendance Ratio) is shown to be lower than that of neighbouring communities. At the secondary level, the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for Muslims was 71.9 percent, which was lower than the GAR for Scheduled Tribes (STs), which was 79.8 percent, Scheduled Castes (SCs), which was 85.8 percent, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), which was also 71.9 percent. Similarly, the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for Muslim pupils in upper secondary school was the lowest, at 48.3 percent. The proportion obtained by the SCs was 52.8%, which was greater than the percentage obtained by the STs (60%) but lower than the percentage obtained by all other communities. The Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for Muslims in higher secondary school was 14.5 percent. This proportion was somewhat higher than that of the Scheduled Tribes (STs), at 14.4 percent, but lower than the GAR of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), at 17.8 percent. In addition, the GAR for other communities was higher than for the aforementioned groups. Muslims have the greatest percentage of people aged three to thirty-five who have never attended a formal educational institution or course (Khan A. , 2020); (Parvez & Hasan, 2015).

Based on the findings of the All-India Survey on Higher Education Reports (AISHE), conducted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) under the Government of India (GOI), it is evident that the enrollment of Muslim students in higher education is comparatively lower when

compared to other communities, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The subsequent table presents the findings of the survey.

Table 1: Muslims Enrollment in Higher Education

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

Source: (AISHE Reports)

The examination of data pertaining to the current enrollment of students in educational institutions reveals a notable socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by Muslims. According to statistical data, the enrollment rate for individuals aged 15-24 belonging to the Muslim community stands at 39%, which is comparatively lower than the enrollment rates of 44% for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), 50% for the Hindu Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and 59% for the Hindu upper castes. A significant proportion of young Muslim are choosing to pursue a NEET (Neither in Education, Employment, or Training) status. The category in question contained 31% of the youth in the group, which represented the highest percentage among all communities in the country. This was followed by 26% of the SCs, 23% of the Hindu OBCs, and 17% of the upper castes within Hinduism (Khan A. , 2020). According to a report by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the proportion of Muslim students in the Indian Institutes of Management is only 2%, compared to 7% for the overall population while a report published by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences stated that the proportion of Muslim students in the Indian Institutes of Technology is only 5%, compared to 14% for the overall population (Qazi, 2018); (Deshpande, 2022).

According to official statistics from the 2011 Census, Muslims have the highest proportion of individuals without literacy abilities, accounting for 42.7 percent of all religious groups. The Jain community, on the other hand, has the largest percentage of educated members, with 86.4 percent of its members being educated. According to the findings, about 25.6 percent of people who identify as Christians, 36.4 percent of people who identify as Hindus, 32.5 percent of people who identify as Sikhs, and 28.2 percent of people who identify as Buddhists lack formal education. The overall literacy percentage in all communities is 63.1%. In terms of literacy, Christians have a 74.3 percent share, followed by Buddhists (71.8%), Sikhs (67.5%), Hindus (63.6%), and Muslims (57.3%) (Shazli & Asma, 2015).

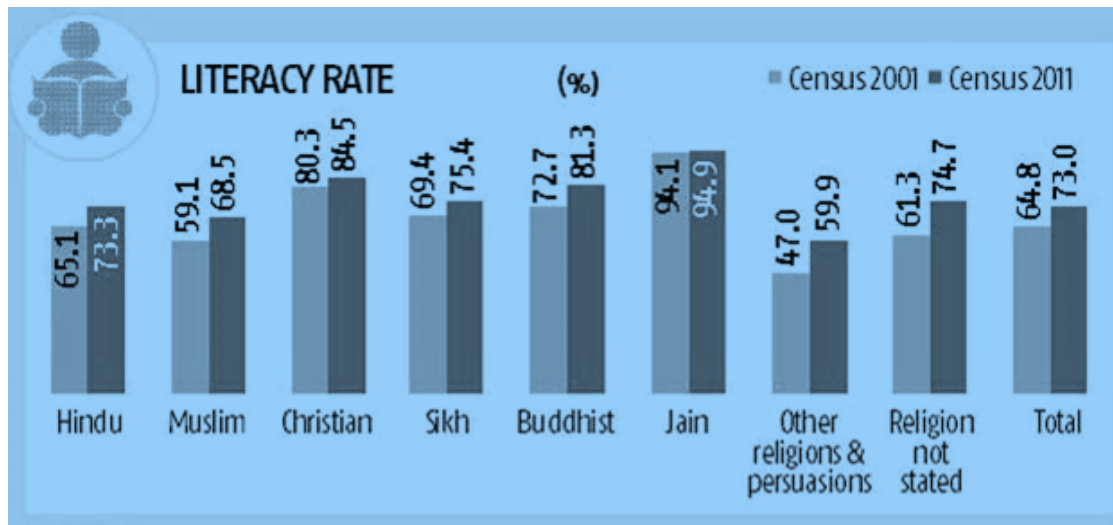


Figure 1: Muslims Literacy Rate

Based on a study conducted in 2006, it was observed that the Indian states of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (89.8 percent) and Kerala (89.4 percent) exhibited the highest levels of literacy among the Muslim population. Conversely, the states of Haryana and Bihar demonstrated comparatively lower levels of education among Muslims, with rates of 40 percent and 42 percent, respectively. The states with a significant Muslim population, such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Haryana, exhibit comparatively lower levels of educational attainment among Muslims when compared to followers of other religions (Shazli & Asma, 2015).

Based on the preceding discourse, available evidence, and diverse reports, it is evident that the educational situation of Muslims is significantly disadvantaged when compared to other religious groups, as well as socially disadvantaged groups such as SCs, STs, and OBCs, across all educational levels including primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher education. The dearth of data poses a significant challenge in formulating strategies for Muslim education. In contrast, individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are prominently represented in various significant statistical departments and organisations, such as Educational Statistics at a Glance, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), and the National Achievement Surveys (NAS) conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Nonetheless, the District Information Systems for Education and the All-India Survey on Higher Education offer limited insights into the Muslim population (Jaffrelot & A., 2019) (Kurrien, 2021).

Employment

Based on the findings of the Sachar Committee Report (SCR) published in 2006, it was revealed that the proportion of Muslims in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was reported to be a mere 3%. Similarly, the representation of Muslims in the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) was found to be 1.8%, and in the Indian Police Service (IPS), it was observed to be 4%. The employment representation of Muslims across various departments exhibits a notable deficiency at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. Within the Indian Railways system, the Muslim community constitutes approximately 4.5% of the total employee population. It is noteworthy that a significant majority, specifically 98.7%, of these Muslim employees are engaged in lower-ranking positions within the organisation. The presence of Muslims is noticeably lacking in academic institutions, including universities, as well as financial institutions, such

as banks. The proportional underrepresentation of Muslims in government departments across all states is evident. The representation of Muslim in the police constable sector is only 6%, whereas in the health sector it is 4.4%, and in the transport sector it is 6.5% (Khan S. , 2020); (Parvez & Hasan, 2015).

Analysing the most recent statistics released by the Home Ministry (2016) reveals that a major chunk of the metrics have demonstrated no progress after the SCR was submitted. There appears to be a decline in specific situations. For example, the percentage of Muslims in India's police forces fell from 7.63% in 2005 to 6.27% in 2013. Following that, the government prohibited the sharing of information about the religious makeup of police officers. During the time period preceding and following Sachar, Muslims continually had the lowest average monthly per capita spending (MPCE) (Rs 635 in 2004-04 to Rs 980 in 2009-10) in contrast to other communities (Rs 712 in 2004-04 to Rs 1,128 in 2009-10). Muslim male labor-force participation increased slightly from 47.5% in 2001 to 49.5% in 2011. In a similar line, the labour force participation rate for Muslim women increased little, rising from 14.1% in 2001 to 14.8% in 2011 (Shaikh, 2016).

The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), which include the country's highest-ranking officers, are likely to have the most important statistics data. According to the Sachar Committee's findings, Muslims make up 3% of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and 4% of the Indian Police Service (IPS). On January 1, 2016, the respective percentages under consideration were 3.32% and 3.19%, according to figures published by the Home Ministry. The key reason influencing the loss in Muslim representation in the Indian Police Service (IPS) is a significant decrease in the proportion of Muslim officers promoted within the IPS. According to the Sachar Report results, the proportion of Muslim promoted officers was 7.1%. However, by the beginning of 2016, this percentage had dropped dramatically to 3.82% (Shaikh, 2016).

According to the findings of the 2011 Census of India, the median income of Muslim families in India was around \$1,500, showing a lower value when compared to the national median income of around \$2,200. According to the aforesaid census data, the unemployment rate among Muslim males in India was roughly 8%, exceeding the national unemployment rate of approximately 7%. According to a survey done by the Centre for the survey of Developing Societies, the proportion of Muslims in India engaged in salaried employment stands at 4%, compared to the overall population's corresponding figure of 15%. According to a survey published by the National Sample Survey Office, the percentage of Muslim households in India that own residential property stands at 27%, which is much lower than the general population's ownership rate of 42%. According to a report provided by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Muslims in India are disproportionately underrepresented in various government jobs. According to a survey published by the National Sample Survey Organisation, the percentage of Muslim families with access to safe drinking water is 57%, which is much lower than the entire population's average of 75%. According to research published by the National Sample Survey Organisation, 41% of Muslim households have access to sanitation, which is significantly lower than the corresponding figure of 63% for the overall population.

Employers discriminate against Muslims in India, claims a book by W. W. Hunter published in 1969. Since they were neither Treasury Department employees nor military officers, they were unable to hold official positions (Khalidi, 2006). Muslims in India continue to experience employment discrimination even today. In their study, Thorat and Attewell (2007) employed a correspondent research methodology to investigate the phenomenon of occupational discrimination within the context of India. Newspaper advertisements have reported instances where individuals have utilised fictitious

names associated with upper-caste Hindu, Muslim, and Dalit communities in order to submit job applications. Although all the fake applicants met the same educational requirements, there was still prejudice based on caste and religion (Thorat & Attewell, 2007). In the private sector, candidates with Muslim names and lower castes performed worse than those with non-Muslim names and higher castes (Bhalla & Luo, 2013).

Surprisingly, a large number of Muslims work for themselves, a common occurrence in Muslim communities. The prominence of self-employment among Muslims frequently sparks debate on the concept of "enclave labour markets." In light of this, Bordia Maitreyi Das conducted research on the phenomenon of "minority labour markets" or "enclaves" in order to investigate the circumstances under which marginalised minority groups, who are frequently excluded from mainstream employment opportunities, resort to self-employment as a means of economic sustenance (Das M. B., 2008). Because of the close association between education and employment, the study discovered. As a result of limited access to education, a significant proportion of Muslim males work in low-skilled industries such as tailoring, weaving, transportation, carpentry, and masonry. Individuals living in rural areas, on the other hand, face limited options and are forced to form isolated groups due to a scarcity of arable land and a lack of financially lucrative vocations (Das M. B., 2008). Muslims in India have a higher proclivity to work in occupations with lower salary and productivity levels. Indian Muslim men are frequently working in small workshops or garages. According to the results of the Economic Times Intelligence Group, there are just 62 Muslims on the boards of directors and senior executive positions of BSE 500 businesses, out of a total of 2,324 executives (Engineer, 2022). According to the data from the Census of 2011 presented below, it is evident that the work participation rate among Muslims is recorded at the lowest level of 32.6%. The worker-population ratio for Hindus is 41, for Christians it is 41.9, for Buddhists it is 43.1, for Sikhs it is 36.3, and for Jains it is 35.5 (Ghosh, 2016).

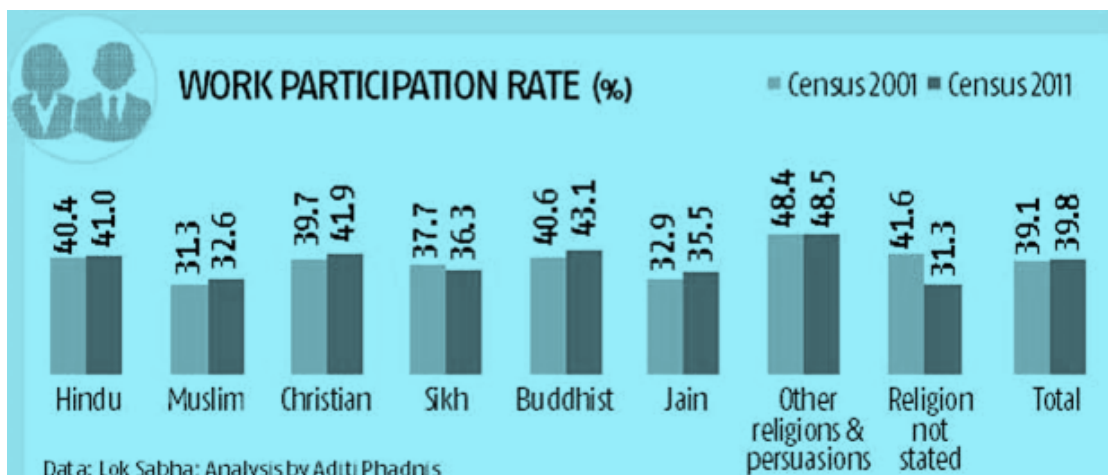


Figure 2: Muslim Work Participation Rate

The Sachar Committee report, issued in 2006, stated that around 61 percent of Muslims are self-employed, while 55 percent of Hindu workers are. In reaction to the aforementioned report, the Kundu Committee was formed the following year to assess the situation of Muslims (Sachar, 2006). 'According to the findings of the Kundu Report for the year 2011-2012, about 50 percent of Muslim households in

urban regions were self-employed. The proportion of self-employed households in the Hindu population, on the other hand, was found to be 33%. Furthermore, the report found that only 28 percent of Muslim households earned regular wage income, whereas this ratio was 43 percent for non-Muslim households. The data suggests that the employment, poverty, and overall circumstances of Muslims have changed little since the Sachar Committee Report was adopted (Post Sachar Evaluation Report, 2014).

The underrepresentation of Muslims in government jobs is frequently attributed to their religious beliefs. Muslims make up less than one-third of the workforce in states with major Muslim populations, including as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar. According to Shaban (2016) and Bidwai (2016), the proportion of Muslims employed by the government in West Bengal is much lower than the overall population percentage of 25.2 percent, at 4.2 percent. West Bengal and Assam have Muslim populations of 25.2% and 30.9%, respectively. However, Muslim employees in major judicial positions in these locations are considerably underrepresented, accounting for only 5% and 9.4%, respectively. The absence of proper representation demonstrates the prevalence of religious bias.

According to the research of Khalidi (2006), the absence of Muslims in government posts can be attributable to three major factors: migration to Pakistan, discrimination, and educational disadvantage. According to his account, the individuals who suffered the most severe consequences after 1947-1948 were the property classes, whose immovable assets were frozen by the Custodian of Evacuee Property until 1956. Muslims who were possible evacuees were barred from selling property within India under this regulation. As a result, Muslims found themselves in a tough situation, as financial institutions recognised their lack of creditworthiness and made it impossible for them to secure loans (Khalidi, 2006).

MUSLIMS' PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AS

Political Participation

Based on data from the 2011 census, it has been established that around 14% of India's overall population identifies as Muslim. The representation of Muslims in the 17th Lok Sabha following the 2019 election is roughly 5%, which is consistent with the average representation witnessed since India's independence. In 2019, the number of elected Muslim Lok Sabha MPs grew to 25, an increase from the previous total of 22. Political underrepresentation of Indian Muslims is a long-standing issue, as the community has always been underrepresented in relation to its population (Farooqui, 2020). The table below shows that in 1980 and 1984, community representation in parliamentary elections was closest to the population. The principal element leading to this phenomenon may be traced to the Congress party and other political factions' concentrated efforts to mobilise support among newly empowered and politically active socioeconomic strata. During the period of democratic transition and outreach, the Muslim community's political fortunes improved. During this period, the Hindu right, initially represented by the Bhartiya Janata Sangh and later by the BJP, was politically marginalised. To avoid potential dissatisfaction among its supporters, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has routinely given fewer seats to Muslim candidates and has not actively explored initiatives to build meaningful connection with this group. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) had successfully won the support of the Hindu electorate by strategic bidding by the time of the 2019 parliamentary election, solidifying its grip over the majority community. Due to fears of alienating Hindu voters, even persons who usually identify as Muslim claimants were hesitant to share their views on communal matters (Farooqui, 2020).

Table 2: Percentage of Muslim Representation in Parliament

Year	Percentage of Muslims in Lok Sabha with Quantity	Muslim Percentage in Population
1 st Lok Sabha 1952–1957	4 (11)	10
2 nd Lok Sabha 1957–1962	4 (19)	10
3 rd Lok Sabha 1962–1967	4 (20)	11
4 th Lok Sabha 1967–1971	5 (25)	11
5 th Lok Sabha 1971–1977	5 (28)	11
6 th Lok Sabha 1977–1980	6 (34)	11
7 th Lok Sabha 1980–1984	9 (49)	11
8 th Lok Sabha 1984–1989	8 (42)	11
9 th Lok Sabha 1989–1991	6 (27)	11
10 th Lok Sabha 1991–1996	5 (25)	12
11 th Lok Sabha 1996–1998	5 (29)	12
12 th Lok Sabha 1998–1999	5 (28)	12
13 th Lok Sabha 1999–2004	5 (31)	12
14 th Lok Sabha 2004–2009	6 (34)	12
15 th Lok Sabha 2009–2014	5 (30)	13
16 th Lok Sabha 2014–2019	4 (23)	14
17 th Lok Sabha 2019	5 (26)	14
Total	6	11

Source: (Farooqui, 2020)

The spatial distribution of Muslims, as well as the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting method, have had a negative impact on Muslim representation in Independent India. Muslims are a minority group in many locations due to their geographic dispersion, making them reliant on outside sources for political representation. To achieve plurality, the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) voting system incentivizes voters to form cross-cutting social coalitions. However, in circumstances when the political system favours ethnic majoritarianism, the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system can be detrimental to minority interests. This is related to the phenomena of ethnic consolidation, which prevents political parties from fielding minority candidates for fear of alienating and losing support from the majority group (Farooqui, 2020). As a result, candidates from ethnic minority groups have a larger chance of winning simply in districts with a high proportion of minority residents. Similarly, the Indian Constitution includes a provision that allows minorities living in diverse parts of the country to express their views. Muslims vary from other scattered minority groups when it comes to compensatory measures such as the implementation of allocated seats. Indian Muslims' political participation is dependant on the backing of other social groups. A combination of institutional and spatial factors exacerbates Muslims' underrepresentation in politics. Furthermore, because of India's long history of religious conflicts, the ruling elite is wary of Muslim political activity for fear of alienating the Hindu majority population(Ahmed, 2022).

According to Amir Ali, a political scientist and professor at India's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), political underrepresentation of Muslims is a consequence of the community's continual process of marginalisation and exclusion. Historically, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has shown some recognition of the Muslim minority in its election candidate choices. During the 2014 general election, the political party fielded 482 candidates, seven of them were recognised as Muslim. Each of the participants was defeated. In 2019, there were a total of six Muslim candidates, with three running in Jammu and Kashmir, two in West Bengal, and one in Lakshadweep. Despite their involvement, none of these candidates were able to secure a parliamentary seat (Santhosh & Paleri, 2021).. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) once had three Muslim members in India's upper chamber. However, all of these members' contracts have recently expired. Political parties can choose to reappoint ministers; however, none is nominated for reappointment. Amit Shah, India's Home Minister and a prominent member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has told the media that the issue of "winnability" plays a factor in the decision not to field Muslim candidates for assembly elections (Shaikh, Iqbal, Fazal, & Khan, 2023). According to Ali from JNU, prior governments had some semblance of representation for Muslims, albeit with limited impact on their overall socioeconomic circumstances. The prevalent apathy regarding Muslim marginalisation is highly alarming, especially given the grim future that many Muslims perceive themselves to face. There is a link between the increasing number of Muslims in India's population and a fall in their political representation (Rehbar, 2022).

Muslim-led political parties have experienced varying degrees of success, primarily achieving electoral victories in districts with a significant Muslim population. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), headquartered in Kerala, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), headquartered in Telangana, and the All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), headquartered in Assam, serve as notable examples of such achievements. Parliamentarians in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir's Muslim-majority Kashmir valley have been elected with a significant majority (Santhosh & Paleri, 2021). According to former MP Mohammad Adeb, Muslims have no business in politics. Political parties often refrain from actively engaging with Muslim voters due to concerns about potentially alienating the majority of voters. This apprehension stems from the fear of facing political repercussions, such as a loss of support, if Muslim voters remain loyal to their preferred political party. According to Saloni Bhogale, a political analyst and computer scientist, the underrepresentation of Muslims in the Lok Sabha may potentially result in noteworthy policy implications. During her analysis of the 276,000 queries posted by parliamentarians over a span of 15 years, the researcher observed a notable trend among Muslim parliamentarians. Specifically, these individuals exhibited a higher level of engagement and expressed greater concerns regarding matters that held particular significance to their community, such as instances of anti-Muslim violence and the treatment of Muslim prisoners. The representation of Muslim women in the Lok Sabha is less than one percent, indicating a limited likelihood for their concerns to be adequately addressed (Farooqui, 2020).

In the context of voting preferences, it has been observed that Indian Muslims have consistently exhibited a higher propensity to support the Congress party. The political preferences of Muslims in contemporary India have been influenced by various factors, including the decline of the Congress party, the emergence of backward caste and regional parties, and the ascent of the Hindu right represented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (Farooqui, 2020). There is a common perception that Muslims tend to vote collectively, employ strategic voting tactics, and remain unaffected by factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, or geographical location. The voting preferences of Muslims are contingent upon

the prevailing political circumstances and the prominence of political parties in a given context. As previously mentioned, the relatively low representation of Muslims within the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) voting system incentivizes politically strategic behaviour among Muslim voters, leading them to support mainstream political parties. The political landscape in India has been significantly influenced by the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, since the late 1980s. This development has played a pivotal role in shaping the voting patterns of Muslims in the country (Farooqui, 2020). The primary objective of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) revolves around safeguarding the interests and privileges of the majority population, a stance that has generated apprehension among Muslims towards the party. The electoral preferences of the Muslim community have been significantly influenced by the perceived capacity of their preferred political party to outperform the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, it is important to note that the outcome is contingent upon the specific circumstances and exhibits regional disparities across different states. According to the findings of the Lokniti-CSDS poll, there has been a decline in Muslim backing for the Congress party, accompanied by an increase in support for non-BJP political parties. In the year 2019, an equivalent proportion of Muslim individuals cast their votes in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as they did during the preceding election. The number of individuals who cast their votes for non-NDA parties in the recent Lok Sabha election remained consistent with the figures recorded during the 2014 election. Since 2009, it has been observed that the Muslim community has consistently supported political parties other than the NDA, as indicated in the table provided (Farooqui, 2020).

Table 3: Trends in Voting Patterns of Muslims in Lok Sabha Elections 2009-2019

Party/Alliance	2009 (%)	2014 (%)	2019 (%)
BJP	4	8	8
INC	38	38	33
Others	58	54	59
NDA	6	9	9
UPA	47	45	45
Non-NDA, Non-UPA	47	46	56

Source: (Farooqui, 2020)

The strategic voting behaviour observed within the Muslim community indicates a relatively equal level of support for non-NDA political groups. The Muslim community exhibits significant diversity in their voting preferences. Historically, the voting preferences of Muslims were predominantly influenced by factors such as candidates' strategies to secure votes, the dispersion of Muslim communities, and the range of political options available to them. Currently, there exist three distinct categories of electoral contests within the states: direct contests involving the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Indian National Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), contests between the UPA and non-BJP parties, and contests involving more than two political parties. A comprehensive examination of the parliamentary elections held in 2019 reveals a discernible inclination among Muslim voters to favour the Congress party and its affiliated alliances in states where direct competition exists between the Congress-led UPA coalition and the BJP-led NDA coalition. However, in this particular scenario, the level of support is contingent upon the candidates' likelihood of winning (Farooqui, 2020).

In several Indian states, namely Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, Muslims have exhibited a greater inclination towards supporting the Congress party in comparison to its allied political factions. However, it is worth noting that in certain states such as Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Karnataka, there has been a higher propensity for voters to support political parties aligned with the Congress party. In the state of Kerala, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) holds a relatively minor position, the electoral contest primarily revolves around two major non-NDA coalitions. Notably, during the recent election, the Muslim community exhibited a significant preference for the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Conversely, the Left Democratic Front (LDF), under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), has managed to garner a substantial following among the Muslim community. In instances where alternative political options are available or when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not in contention, the Muslim electorate tends to divide its vote (Ahmed, 2022). Muslim voters residing in regions such as Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Delhi have strategically cast their votes in favour of political parties that they perceive to possess the highest potential for defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In the state of Telangana, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) holds a relatively lesser significance compared to other regions. Consequently, Muslim voters in Telangana exhibit a diversified political inclination, aligning themselves with various political parties. Despite the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) not being widely favoured among the Muslim population, empirical studies indicate that a certain proportion of Muslims cast their votes in favour of the party during both the 2014 and 2019 elections. According to a survey conducted by CSDS-Lokniti, during the past two parliamentary elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received support from approximately 8 percent of Muslim voters (Farooqui, 2020).

Conclusion

The above assessment of the Muslim community in India has experienced various challenges including lower educational attainment, limited employment opportunities, economic disparities, and difficulties in achieving social and political inclusiveness. The issue of socioeconomic disparities encountered by India's Muslim population is complicated and impacted by a variety of causes, including the lingering consequences of colonialism and partition, which have had a considerable impact on Muslim community. Furthermore, the difficulties faced by the Muslim community in India are exacerbated by a variety of factors such as limited access to top-tier educational opportunities, disparities in educational infrastructure quality, inadequately equipped schools, insufficient resource allocation, and socio-cultural barriers. Furthermore, the prevalence of limited economic possibilities, socioeconomic inequality, and religious-based discrimination all contribute to the worsening of these discrepancies.

A survey published in 2010 by the National Council for Economic Research discovered that 31% of Muslims were poor. According to a 2013 poll performed by an entity linked with the Government of India's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Muslims were the religious group facing the greatest level of economic disadvantage in India. Clearly, the problem goes beyond the level of acceptance that we are willing to accept. According to comprehensive research undertaken by Quartz in 2018, India has made great achievements in poverty eradication, culminating in the potential elimination of poverty for at least 170 million people since 1990. Muslims in India have seen a drop in social and economic progression, making them the demographic with the least social and economic advancement. According to an investigative study conducted by journalists Abhishek Jha and Roshan Kishore for the

Hindustan Times, there is a widespread use of veiled language to imply that the Muslim community in India is growing faster than other religious groups. According to the writers, the aforementioned commentary falls short of giving appropriate information and insightful analysis. Furthermore, it was claimed that Muslims are overrepresented in relation to their proportion of the population among the lower socioeconomic strata. The aforementioned demographic is primarily centred in southern India and has a greater numerical presence than the Hindu population in the lower six deciles. Poverty, in turn, maintains the underlying systemic biases that caused it to exist in the first place.

Several structural economic constraints must be considered, such as limited educational and housing opportunities, as well as countless incidences of religious prejudice. Nonetheless, there is a notable dearth of comprehensive rules designed specifically to defend the rights of this particular community. Furthermore, efforts to garner significant political support in order to adequately address their challenges have had limited success. Muslims have consistently been the target of discrimination and, in some cases, physical harm. Throughout its recorded history, India has seen numerous instances of communal violence. Approximately 3,000 episodes of communal violence were reported in India between 2017 and 2021, according to official government estimates. According to data available, Muslims in India have the lowest degree of participation in higher education. Furthermore, it is vital to acknowledge that socioeconomic factors such as poverty and discrimination tend to compound the challenges to educational access that Muslim children face.

Moreover, a notable decline in the enrollment of Muslim students was observed between the years 2019 and 2020, amounting to an 8% decrease, which corresponds to a reduction of 1,79,147 pupils. The aforementioned data was derived from a study which demonstrated that the Muslim community was the sole group to witness a decline in student enrollment, whereas other demographic groups observed an upward trend in overall enrollment figures. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Bihar, and Karnataka experienced significant impacts as a result of the reduction. The limited presence of Muslims in senior positions within India's higher-level workforce cannot be solely attributed to discriminatory recruitment practises. Jha and Kishore posit that a plausible rationale for this phenomenon could be attributed to variations in educational attainment among Muslim individuals seeking employment, which is expected to exert a significant influence on their prospects for securing employment. The recognition of the presence and significance of religious politics in relation to the economic restrictions faced by Indian Muslims may not readily manifest, but it is imperative to acknowledge its direct influence. There has been a decline in the level of political representation afforded to the Muslim community within government. In the year 2022, the ruling political party encountered a conspicuous dearth of Muslim Members of Parliament, marking the inaugural instance of such an occurrence in its historical trajectory. Moreover, the present composition of the Centre does not include any ministers who identify as Muslim.

Muslim individuals face unjust discrimination when it comes to accessing suitable housing, a crucial factor in assessing their overall welfare. As a consequence of this denial, individuals belonging to this group experience discriminatory practises within the rental and real estate sectors. These practises engender feelings of insecurity and exclusion, thereby constraining their ability to engage in residential mobility. The manifestation of my religious beliefs initially occurred when I embarked upon the search for a rental property. Rapidly, it emerged as the predominant concern. Instances have been encountered wherein property owners have explicitly stated their refusal to rent to individuals of the Muslim faith. In an interview conducted by The Swaddle in July, Fathima, a 36-year-old woman, reported instances

where elderly property owners have invoked their children residing abroad as a pretext to articulate their aversion towards Muslims. These individuals have expressed sentiments such as, "Muslims do not trouble me, but my children in the United States feel uneasy." The educational and economic progress of Muslims in India is of paramount importance. Jha and Kishore (2023) inquire whether India's transition towards majoritarian politics has led to the prioritisation of identity issues over the economic concerns of the Muslim majority. The existing prevalence of these restrictions serves to further intensify the economic disadvantage experienced by the Muslim community in India, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty. The task of surpassing these limitations would likely prove to be exceedingly challenging unless a comprehensive approach is adopted, one that takes into account the multifaceted factors that contribute to the existing predicament, encompassing socioeconomic, cultural, and political aspects.

To improve the socioeconomic position of India's Muslim minority, a comprehensive and multidimensional plan is required. First and foremost, it is critical to prioritise the provision of equitable access to high-quality education, ensuring that Muslims have equal opportunity to attain scholastic success and enhance their skill sets. The aforementioned goal can be achieved through providing resources to the improvement of educational infrastructure, the provision of scholarships, and the implementation of targeted projects. Furthermore, efforts for reducing employment gaps and promoting inclusive economic possibilities must be implemented. This could include the introduction of regulations aimed at eliminating discriminatory practises in the employment market, the formation of skill development programmes, and the support of entrepreneurship efforts directed primarily at the Muslim population. By using a systematic approach to affirmative action, India has established measures with the goal of alleviating ethnic inequalities. The implementation of quota systems has resulted in certain gains for marginalised groups including as Dalits, adivasis, and other marginalised populations, but Muslims have not reaped the same benefits. The primary goals of these systems are to improve political representation, increase educational accessibility, and develop public-sector employment prospects (Khan O. , 2015). Comparable measures should be implemented for Muslims. They must be granted reservations in the areas of education, employment, and politics. It is unfortunate that the present regime has lately cut Muslim reservation quotas, as shown in Karnataka. Furthermore, BJP allied organizations have called for an economic boycott of Muslims, and openly encourage Muslims in Uttarakhand to close their stores and enterprises under the threat of harsh repercussions. Furthermore, the promotion of social inclusion, the reduction of biases and preconceptions, and the expansion of political representation can serve as catalysts for the formation of a more equitable and inclusive society. To enable these initiatives and generate significant reform, strategic partnerships between the government, civil society organisations, and the Muslim community are required.

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