

The OBC Muslims: Some Little Known Marginal Communities of West Bengal, India*

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Abstract: Muslims are the principal minority of West Bengal, a state situated in the eastern part of Indian sub-continent, comprising about 27 per cent of the state's total population. Sociologists and social anthropologists have studied the social organization of many Indian communities such as the Tribals and the Hindu castes but unfortunately such studies on the Muslims of West Bengal as well as India with regard to their society, economy, culture and ethnicity are very negligible causing ample loopholes in our perception and information about this very large minority from empirical point of view. As a result of which there seems to be huge lacunae in socio-scientific research and perceptive. The present paper is an attempt to examine the socio-economic and educational situations of the Other Backward Class (OBC) Muslims of West Bengal and an especial effort has also been made to find out the factors contributing as blockage in their development and social change. The paper is based on both primary and secondary data. Various relevant published and unpublished literatures have been consulted besides authors' empirical observations of the Muslim communities of West Bengal at the micro level as well as macro level.

Keywords: Muslim minority; socio-economy; deprivation; backwardness; development

Introduction

The economic growth of a country cannot be attained without development of its entire component at micro level as well as macro level. Poverty is considered to be a curse to any economy and Muslims are by and large the poor segment of the Indian society despite the fact that they have power and will to have education and to work in any area. They are both educationally and economically backward communities

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in India in spite of the fact of power and will (Rahaman and Bhumali 2011: 9). Muslims, in various proportions, are found to live in more or less all over the States and Union Territories of the sub-continent. It has been reported that the Muslims of this democratic, secular and republican country have fallen behind the mainstream society in comparison to the other religious minority communities of the nation owing to various external and internal factors keeping this largest minority as socio-economically and educationally backward in the present time when modernization is the order of the day. So far their economic, educational and political empowerment are concerned, they are the most marginalized, impoverished, deprived, and secluded community retarding in their normal progress in the spheres of economy, politics, education, knowledge and culture. The all-round eccentric troubles faced by them are interrelated to anxieties relating to discrimination, equity, security and identity (Hossain 2012: 45).

As Mondal (1994: 199-200) points out, "The Muslims in Bengal as well as in India are a cultural and religious minority and living in dominant Hindu cultural milieu. The majorities are no doubt resourceful in adapting themselves to the newly emerging institutions than the minorities by virtue of their education, enlightenment and privileged position in the society. As a matter of fact the Muslim minority is facing a serious trouble to develop and progress as it lacks the resources to provide new ideas and thoughts towards its members. As a minority the Muslims are also facing problems to develop their society as they need help from the majority." The term Minority denotes a group of people who are subjected to prejudice and discrimination in a given society. Sociologically speaking, minority groups are not necessarily numerically small group of people rather they are merely victims of discrepancy and unequal treatment in a given society (Abraham 2009: 135-136). The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2009: 476) declares that "Since the 1930s this term has been applied to social groups that are oppressed or stigmatized on the basis of racial, ethnic, biological, or other characteristics. Louis Writh, for example, defines a minority group as 'a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination'. However, seen in these terms, a minority group could in fact constitute a numerical majority in any society – for example Blacks in South Africa. It might be more useful, therefore, to distinguish between groups which are actually a minority in numbers and those which are marginal in terms their access to power."

Mondal (1992: 157) has pointed out that India is "secular", "democratic" and a "republic" by the Constitution which established recognition to all professed religions and group identities. The social, economical and political justice; faith, expression, liberty of thought, belief, and worship; equal status and like opportunity to each and every citizen of the country and seeks to preserve fraternity among its citizens with the objective of the individuals' dignity and guarantee the unity of the country which the Indian Constitution promises to all its citizens. Taking indication from the Constitution of India, Mondal (1992: 157) further indicates, "Part III of the Constitution deals with the Fundamental Rights and gives

assurance to all citizens of India that no discrimination will be permitted on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article-15). This acquires significance in the case of Muslims on the ground of their position as a religious or cultural minority in India. The Constitution also assures equality of opportunity to all in the matters of employment under government (Article-16). It gives freedom of speech, expression, residence, acquisition and disposal of property, practice of profession, free association and free movement (Article-19), gives the right of freedom of religion (Article-25), protects the cultural and educational rights of the minorities (Article-29). All these provisions also acquire significance when applied to the Muslim community, who constitutes one of the important cultural minorities of the country”.

Every Muslim citizen of India is individually a member of a distinct religious community, which together with other religious communities constitute the Indian nation. Therefore, every Muslim citizen of this country individually and Muslims as a collectivity are the part of Indian nation. Therefore, minorities are underprivileged section of a country or state and the concept of majority and minority, thus, turn largely into socio-political concepts consistent with the above statements. It might be more helpful, thus, to make a distinction between groups which are actually a minority in numbers and those which are marginal in terms of their access to power and privileges in a given society.

Land and the People

As a constituent state of the Indian union, West Bengal was created on 15th August 1947, by the partition of the undivided British Indian province of Bengal into West Bengal which covers the bottleneck of India in the east, stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. In the north it is surrounded by Sikkim and Bhutan, east by Assam and Bangladesh, on the south by the Bay of Bengal and on the west this Indian state is surrounded by Orissa, Bihar and Nepal. Thus, West Bengal has three international frontiers to the north, east and west. When India became independent in 1947, Bengal was partitioned between India and Pakistan. West Bengal remained in India's share and Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, became a part of Pakistan (Rahaman and Bhuimali 2011: 77). Muslims in West Bengal are fairly more in the rural areas owing to their ties with the land. What is significant to note in this context is that the outcome of involvement ensuing in the movements of the Muslims away from West Bengal towards the country now called Bangladesh, occurred largely in the urban areas. Nevertheless this does not actually mean that the Muslims in rural areas, after partition, did not leave West Bengal. They left the region in lesser numbers in comparison to the urban areas and migration of the Muslims from rural neighbourhoods to the urban neighbourhoods of Calcutta and other towns is smaller in number (Mondal 1994: 56).

The largest Muslim concentration of around 47 per cent to the total India's Muslim population is in three states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar consisting of 25 per cent, 18.5 per cent and 16.5 per cent respectively as the 2001 Indian census report estimates. While in the states like Assam (31%), West

Bengal (25%) and Kerala (24.7%) Muslims are found to reside in high concentrations. In West Bengal, it is estimated that one-fourth of the entire state population are the Muslims who constitute the largest and principal minority of the state concerned with a population potency of around 96 per cent to the total minority population of West Bengal. Muslims of this state are found to reside in all the districts in diverse proportions and there are twelve such districts where they represent around 25 per cent population to the entire population of the districts and in the districts like North Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad they consist of more than 50 per cent of the entire population of the districts according to the 2001 census report estimates (Hossain 2012: 46-47).

Stratification and Heterogeneity

Despite the fact that Islam opposes social stratification and its value system stresses equality and universal brotherhood among its followers, social stratification is very conspicuous in Indian Muslim society and they are separated into different social groups and subgroups along ethnic, social and cultural lines organized in a stratified social order in empirical context. Within the Indian Muslim society, the segmentation and the system of social stratification is a situational development conflicting with the egalitarian norms of the Islamic social system. However, the textual Islam and the lived Islam are not the same or one thing so far as Islamic ideology and Muslim societies are concerned. Due to immense historical, social and cultural diversities among Muslim communities all over, the problems faced by them are also not the same and consequently there are social, economic and political challenges and impediments. Besides, the Muslims have been definitely facing severe issues in contemporary India and more so for the reason that they are incorrectly portrayed as a monolithic and homogeneous group while the reality is that Islam and Muslims are not monolithic, rather the live Islam has great diversity and heterogeneity (Hossain 2013: 278-279).

Other Backward Class (OBC)

The term "OBC" stands for *Other Backward Class*. A community is classified as "OBC" when it meets the criteria as "backward" based on a complex set of socio-economic and educational criteria specified by the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) (Kumar 2011: 33). With the dawn of independence and subsequent promulgation of the Constitution of India, these backward segments of the population were identified and targeted for special treatment and these people were termed as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). With reference to job, education, welfare and development of these people, various compensatory policies are enacted for all three categories of people.

Muslims cannot be the SCs because this category is restricted to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists but the STs can be Muslims though they are not many. A few such minute Muslim tribal groups are the dwellers of Lakshadweep, Gaddis and Bakrewals of Jammu and Kashmir. This clearly means that only the third

category, OBCs seems to be open for them. Despite the socio-economic backwardness of the Muslims, they could not take advantage of this for a long period of time for the most part as it remained an unclear category and criteria for inclusion in this category were not specified in the Constitution (Hasnain 2010: 35-36). The backward classes in India constitute one-third of the total country's population usually made up of three main groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). They are huge in numbers and are a mixed category of people with boundaries that are not always clear. As the OBCs are a residual category; their population in society is largely indistinguishable varying from one religious community to another. It is indeed unfeasible for us to present an exact statistical account of their numerical strength (Moinuddin 2003: 4905). On the other hand the State is empowered by Article 340 to appoint a commission 'to investigate the condition of socially and educationally Backward Classes'. Two such commissions have so far been appointed at the all India level viz., Kaka Kalelkar Commission and B. P Mandal Commission by the Govt. of India for the systematic study of the OBCs (SCR 2006: 191).

Kaka Kalelkar Commission

The First Backward Classes Commission was Kaka Kalelkar Commission. It was appointed in 1953 under Article 340 of the Constitution and put emphasis on the lower status in the *caste* hierarchy as the critical factor for backwardness along with other considerations viz., educational levels, levels of income and representation in public employment. The Commission submitted its report in 1955 and Kaka Kalelkar Commission's Report was the first case in which certain *castes*/communities among Muslims and other religious minorities were also declared backward and brought within the purview of affirmative action. The Commission identified more than three thousand *castes*/communities as 'OBC' (SCR 2006: 191; Kumar 2011: 22-23).

B. P. Mandal Commission

The Second Backward Classes Commission appointed in 1980 was B. P Mandal Commission. In order to identify socially and educationally backward classes, it adopted eleven criteria under three major headings, viz., social, educational and economic and also relied on the *caste* criterion, though, the tangible indicators to ascertain a *caste* or any social group as 'backward' incorporated lower position in the hierarchy of *caste*, lower age at marriage within the group, inaccessibility to drinking water, average value of family assets is lower, higher rate of female work participation, higher school dropout rate, occurrence of *Kutcha* houses is higher and the like. Different yardstick was employed in case of non-Hindu communities. The Commission identified 3743 *castes* (SCR 2006: 191; Kumar 2011: 23).

Therefore, Other Backward Classes form a major underprivileged group of people who remained deprived in terms of education, economy, political empowerment and social benefits for centuries in India. From an all-around category as during the period of British, the backward classes of this country as a category has gradually emerged to explicitly refer to those caste groups who occupy the middle place in the social hierarchy and fall back in terms of various human development indicators viz., educational, economic, and others (SCR 2006: 192; Kumar 2011: 25).

OBC Muslims in West Bengal

The then Left Front Government of West Bengal had stated that more than one crore and seventy two lakh Muslims would get the privileges of reservation in services and posts on account of their backwardness. Moreover, the present state Government (TMC) includes 86 percent of the Muslims from the entire Muslim population of the state in to the Government list of OBC groups for Muslims in a declaration. Therefore, for the most part the Muslims of West Bengal are the OBC Muslims today.

The Government has further categorized those OBC Muslim Groups in two broad categories, 'Category-A' which implies 'More Backward' and 'Category-B' which denotes 'Backward' on the basis of their relative backwardness. All total 53 Muslim groups have been declared as OBCs among which 49 Muslim groups are declared as 'More Backward' and the rest 4 Muslim groups as 'Backward'. Accordingly the OBC Muslim groups Abdal, Baidya Muslim, Basni or Bosni, Beldar Muslim, Bepari or Byapari Muslim, Bhatia Muslim, Bhatiyara, Chowduli, Chutor Mistri, Dafadar, Dhukre, Dhunia, Fakir or Sain, Gayen, Ghosi, Hajjam, Hawari, Jamadar, Jolah (Ansari-Momin), Kalander, Kan, Kasai, Khotta Muslim, Laskar, Mahaldar, Majhi or Patni Muslim, Mal Muslim, Mallick, Midde, Molla, Muchi or Chamar Muslim, Muslim Barujibi or Barui, Muslim Biswas, Muslim Haldar, Muslim Mali, Muslim Mondal, Muslim Piyada, Muslim Sanpui or Sapui, Nashya-Sekh, Nehariya, Nikari, Patidar, Penchi, Rajmistri, Rayeen or Kunjra, Sardar, Shershabadia, Siuli (Muslim), Tutia are included in the 'Category-A' considered as the 'More Backward' segments within the Muslim communities of West Bengal and the rest four groups viz., Darji or Ostagar or Idrishi, Dhali (Muslim), Pahadia-Muslim and Tal-Pakha Benia are included in to 'Category-B' regarded as 'Backward' sections as per notification no. 6309-BCW/MR-84/10 dated 24-09-2010 prepared by the Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal and also as per the data found in *Anandabazar Patrika*, (Bengali Daily), dated 2nd October,2010.

After the defeat of the then Left Front Government who already declared some Muslim groups of West Bengal as deprived and socio-economically backward and also included in the existing OBC list of West Bengal in two different categories which have already been mentioned above. Again after coming to power the newly formed TMC Government of West Bengal has conducted a sample survey in order to find out the relative backwardness of this underprivileged segment of the people, belonging to the Muslim community, who had been bypassed from inclusion in the previous list of OBCs. By the endeavour of the

existing Hon'ble Chief Minister of this state, these underprivileged segments of the people are now included in the latest list of backward classes of the state, commonly known as OBC list. In addition to Notification No. 6309-BCW, dated on 24th Sept. 2010, the Hon'ble Governor of this state also happily grouped the specified classes into the list of OBC under category-A and category-B.

The different Muslim groups of West Bengal who fall under the extreme backward category-A are Bhangi, Dhatri/Dai/Dhaity, Halsana, Kayal, Naiya, Gharami, Goldar/Golder, and Shikari/Sikari. Besides the aforementioned groups of people Abdal, Akunji/Akan/Akhan, Bag, Chaprashai, Deptari, Dewan, Dhabak, Gazi, Khan, Kolu Muslim, Shah, Sahaji, Sadhukhan, Malita/Malitha/Malitya, Mistri, Mondal, Paik, Pailan, Purkait, Sana, Sareng, Sarder, Sarkar, Tarafdar, Mouli and Sepai have been included in to the Category-B of the comparatively less backward class of Muslims in accordance with the Notification No. 1673-BCW /MR-209/11 dated on 11th May, 2012.

Contemporary Social Situation of the Muslims

There is a lack of data regarding Muslim communities in India and the information available in the census includes a broad count by religion without present socio-economic information in relation to religion. As well, there are a very small number of studies on the economic profile of Muslims of this country. Although it is reported that there are several studies and analyses of Muslims in the possession of the Government of India based on census reports, however, these are yet to be made public (Kazi 1999: 24). Each consideration of the socio-economic situation of the Muslims in India needs to mean that diverse issues faced by them are multilateral as they at the same time face problems concerning identity, security, justice and equity like all other minorities of the country and the interaction of these dimensions is at the core of the socio-economic and political processes that the community is exposed to on a daily basis. As a result of unavailability of relevant 'hard and unbiased' data, an empirical searching of these multifaceted problems is difficult and such information constraints are obviously a further limitation for security and identity-related apprehensions (Besant and Shariff 2010: 02).

The socio-economic condition of the Muslims in India can be assessed by examining the indicators like occupation, economy and land ownership, work participation, levels of living, literacy and schooling condition among them (Mondal 2000: 101). As Moinuddin (2013: 75-76) remarks,

"Like any other minority community the Muslims suffer from a number of socio-political problems. Some of these stem from their specific social organization, some from their religious conservatism and some from their relative isolation from the dominant Hindu groups. Many reports on the specific situations of the Muslims in India like the Sacher Committee Report have pointed out that the Muslims lag behind their Hindu counterparts in almost all aspects of life – like education, occupation, Political participation etc. The microscopic presence of the Muslims in the above mentioned spheres of life make the problem more complex. The specific belief system, value orientation and cultural practices of the Muslim community are believed to be important variables in studying the roots of such problems. At the same time there are some ideological issues that play a significant role in this respect. As a result the processes like westernization, modernization and globalization have little impact on them."

Conversely, the socio-economic situation of the people under study has not transformed much in post-independent India. The various reports and research studies clearly reveal that Muslims in India are educationally and economically backward and the backwardness faced by them is a cyclical and ongoing process leading to economic backwardness. They are suffering from ample problems like other minorities; besides, they face problems relating to security, identity, and equity. The feeling of insecurity among the Muslims is very high, for the most part in communally sensitive states and among women. Ghettoisation is an outcome of insecurity and prejudice in housing, schools and jobs. Insecurity adversely affects their mobility, predominantly of women leading to situations in which Muslims are not competent to completely exploit economic opportunities. Educational backwardness is a key concern of the community besides limited access to good quality schools is a leading obstruction that affects female students more adversely (Rahaman and Bhumali 2011: 08).

Economic Status

Educational achievement and employment opportunity, which are considered to be crucial for the socio-economic development of individuals, are the two major problems faced by the Muslims in India. It is evident that Muslims in India as well as in West Bengal, in terms of quantitative and qualitative education, are lagging behind. One of the prime reasons for educational backwardness among the Muslims are their poor economic situation, meager number of Government and Government aided schools exist in such areas where large number of Muslims inhabit and there is limited scope of employment opportunities to the educated people within the community. Muslim women are lagging behind in education probably owing to socio-cultural pattern of the family and the society. The pessimistic attitude to the education of the girls and the lack of accessibility of infrastructural amenities for education in Muslim concentrated areas are two factors which act as bottleneck to their development. They do not have adequate access to far away schools. In order to provide job oriented education and to set up adequate number of technical schools separately for male and female in the Muslim concentrated areas is necessary (Rahaman and Bhumali 2011: 84 and 91).

Muslims in rural Bengal are mostly engaged in agricultural pursuits. Most of them work as agricultural labour and many of the others suffer from joblessness and under-employment. Educational facilities are terribly meagre and, if these are accessible to some extent, they are beyond easy reach of the huge number, owing to the cost involved. Prompted by the need for alternative self employment a large number of them, for survival, specializes in a few crafts such as carpentry, tailoring, needle and *zari* works, embroidery, paper crafts, gold smith and the like and such odd jobs like rickshaw pulling draw these people to cities including Bombay and Delhi. Kolkata is rather insignificant as it provides very restricted scope for their survival in the city (Siddiqui 2011: 213 and 214).

One of the key determinants of social status of an individual is her or his employment which is a social certainty and a base of self-esteem although it is an economic activity. In order to take part in the developmental activities of a nation, employment presents landscapes to both men and women. Moreover, the productive people can contribute their might to the income of a nation while the unproductive people mainly depend on others. Therefore, it is very depressing to note in this context that although in the development process a large section of women are capable to contribute their share, they are being considered as unproductive because of the widely prevalent notion that the role of women should be confined in the household and the expectation for women that they will happen to be just good housewives and good mothers. But since no development is achievable ignoring and bypassing more or less half of the entire human population i. e. the women citizens, it is essential to note that the participation in and access to social and economic activities of women is indispensable not only for their own development but also for the development of the country (Azim 1997: 89). As Mondal (1994: 196) observes,

“Though perfect statistical data is not available, yet it has been observed that Muslims in Bengal are poor and their society is characterized by poverty, impoverishment and destitution. Besides unemployment, lack of resources and high market price, the poor economic condition of the bulk of the Muslim people is also due to their low income, high expenditure and uneconomical habits. These are mainly due to recurring growth of population in Muslim households, a few working hands being called upon to support large families and certain cultural restrictions and sanctions to their earning and expenditure. It has been examined that besides external forces and structural constraints, the poverty of the Muslims is also due to certain aspects of their way of life. Poor economic condition, indebtedness and marginality of the Muslims perpetuate a kind of poverty and culture that do not allow them to attain a style of life that can be receptive to modernity and progress. The economic backwardness of the Muslims is a cyclical and on-going process as it is leading to social backwardness and that in turn resulting into economic backwardness further.”

With reference to the economic status of the Muslim women in India, Kazi (1999: 25) has remarked that it is very hard to make out the specific roots behind their low employment status owing to lack of existing research and analysis in the sphere of employment of the Muslim women whereas their educational status most apparently execute a significant pressure in both urban and rural areas on the type and ranks of their employment.

Educational Status

The Education Commission under the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India stated in the year 1966 that the responsibility of the educational system is to convey to different social groups and classes simultaneously to support the materialization of an egalitarian and integrated society. In contrast, unfortunately, the development of education in India is very poor. Although different efforts have been made after independence to spread education among its citizens, the outcome is very unsatisfactory with particular reference to minorities or weaker sections of Indian society (Mondal 1997: 19). There is also a common belief that Muslim parents think that education is not essential for girls and that it may instil a

wrong set of values. Even if girls are enrolled, they are withdrawn at an early age before completion of her education in order to marry them off which leads to a high drop-out rate among Muslim girls. The problem is found in the non-availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower levels of education, lack of hostels for girls, absence of lady teachers and accessibility of scholarships as they move up the ladder of education (SCR 2006: 85). However the rates of enrolment have increased considerably at the primary level but many students who register soon drop out and as a result very small number of them manage to get beyond the primary stage.

Inequality and differences between communities is one additional critical aspect of the broader disparity in India. It is a well-known fact that the literacy and educational levels of the Muslims are under the national average notwithstanding the fact that the census reports of India remain silent on the status of Muslim education. In the field of education gender discrimination is one key element of educational disparity (Hasan and Menon 2004: 47). There is no doubt that Muslim women are educationally backward and have low work participation rate, yet, this reality cannot be understood in an adequate way and there is need for taking on a broader socio-economic, political and programmatic standpoint along with the existing heterogeneity in terms of region, sect, class and gender. By adopting such perspective, it would be possible to understand the real reason behind the low educational level of the Muslim women mostly in higher and job oriented education and also to set up necessary measure relating to both at the community level and at the level of policy or programme (Hussain 2010: 53). As Mondal (1994: 197) points out,

“Education is by far the most important cultural trait through which a society changes and makes progress. But it has been seen that the Muslims of Bengal are educationally backward. The resultant effect of educational backwardness creates a type of socio-cultural atmosphere which perpetuates the elements of tradition and backwardness among the Muslim masses. All these together have greatly retarded the emergence of social reform movements in the direction of modernity, development and progress of the Bengal Muslim community.”

With a population of 16,075,836 individuals Muslims in West Bengal constitute 25.20 percent to the total state population, out of which 84.26 percent of the Muslims live in rural areas and 15.74 percent in urban areas and the rate of illiteracy among Muslim women of this state is 61.07 percent compared to 47.04 percent among Hindu women as per the 2001 census report. The National Family Health Survey report of 1992-93 reveals that in the age group of 13-49 years, 1.4 percent of Muslim women have read up to high school only while 6.9 percent of non-Muslim women are in this category. Again the percentage of Muslim women in the post-high school education was stated to be 0.5 while that of non-Muslim women is 4.6 and the ratios of Muslim and non-Muslim in the categories are 1:7 and 1:9 (Siddiqui 2011: 213).

Concluding Observations

Thus far, the analysis presented in the preceding review, it is observed that the Muslims of West Bengal are lagging behind the mainstream in almost every sphere of development. From the perspective of

socio-economic situation, educational status and political empowerment, Muslims are the most marginalized, secluded and deprived section of the society. Poverty and backwardness have retarded this community in their normal progress in the field of education, knowledge, economy, political participation and culture. This unfortunate reality of the Muslims has also come to light in the Sachar Committee Report and the Ranganath Misra Commission Findings. As a consequential result of educational backwardness among the Muslims of this region it forms a sort of socio-cultural setting that keeps the elements of conventionality and tradition-bound nature among the Muslim masses, retarding social change and transformation. On the other hand, their economic backwardness is a recurring and constant process as it leads to social and educational backwardness which in turn results in further economic backwardness. This complex dilemma faced by them is linked to anxieties concerning identity perception, protection, discrimination, justice and equity. Muslims of West Bengal are a minority community both in numerical sense and in terms of their position in greater socio-economic and political structure and the culture of the state. Thus, the Muslims, as citizens of India and as members of the largest minority population of the nation, face considerable challenges even after the completion of six decades of Indian independence.

The backwardness of any community in any part of the country is a national calamity and should be recognized as an obstacle of the whole nation. In order to overcome this hazard, the country as a whole should act together to get rid of such evil. Under such a context what needs to be done is to build awareness for development, greater inspiration, self-reliance and self correction within the community. Moreover, mass participation of the community is essential in almost all the available developmental programmes. For the over-all development and change in the Muslim society, they need to come out from their low level of aspiration, frustration, fear psychosis and tradition bound nature which grew out of situational depression and cultural retardation.

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