Under-representation of Muslims in Higher Education : A Case study of Maharashtra and Gujarat

1. Background:

According to the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2017-18, the Muslim Enrolment in higher education in India is only 5% as compared to other religious groups. This under-representation in Higher education is both a cause and result of the current socio-economic status of Muslims in the country. This status of the community varies from state to state as well as sub categories within the community. As per the Census of India 2011 the percentage of Muslims in Maharashtra and Gujarat are 11.54% and 9.64% respectively. These two western states once a part of the same province share a common historical background. Maharashtra ranks second in terms of student enrolment followed by Uttar Pradesh, both Maharashtra and Gujarat are among the list of top 8 states with highest number of colleges in India as per the AISHE 2017-18. The Census of India 2011 data shows that the Percentage of Graduate and above among Muslims in Maharashtra and Gujarat are 4.9% and 2.7%. In terms of state-share of enrolment, Maharashtra tops in the enrolment of students in Universities (including constituent units) with 9,51,642.

It becomes important to understand the overall status of Muslims in Higher education throughout the nation, but it is equally essential to focus upon these two progressive western states with considerable proportions of Muslims. However, the inclusion of these sections of population in the mainstream educational system still continues to be a challenge. As far the data from two national level data sets (Census of India and AISHE) suggest, there is a great need to study these contrasting facts. Why is the community so poorly represented in education, politics, industries or service sector and what could be the major leading factors? The high drop-out rates, lack of higher education opportunities and near absence of integration of education with employment opportunities could be some of the many reasons for this low representation. Given the current political scenario, these two states with Hindu majority and history of communal riots, it adds more suspicion to the prevailing situation of the largest minority community of the nation.

The access to higher education in particular, is still one of the biggest challenges for the Muslim community. The report of the prime-minister's high level committee on 'Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India' in 2006 highlighted that Muslims are at double disadvantage: lower level of educational attainment combined with low quality of education. In some instances, the relative share of Muslims in education is lower than even Scheduled Castes (SCs) who have been victims of long standing caste system (Sachar Committee Report, 2006: 49-50). Other factors like lack of inclusion of Muslims in the formal and public sectors dissuade the Muslim youth from striving for higher education. This is manifested in high drop-out rates and very sharp decline of educational attainments of Muslims.

2. An Overview of Maharashtra and Gujarat

2.1 Maharashtra – Historical Background

The present day Maharashtra has been ruled by several dynasties, right from the Mauryas to the Yadavas, which was later taken up by the Mughals. In the early 14th century, the Yadava dynasty, which ruled most of present-day Maharashtra, was overthrown by the Delhi Sultanate ruler Ala-ud-din Khalji. After the collapse of the Tughluqs in 1347, the breakaway Bahmani Sultanate governed the

region for the next 150 years from Gulbarga and later from Bidar. The decline of Islamic rule in Deccan started when Shivaji founded the Maratha Empire by annexing a portion of the Bijapur Sultanate in 1674. The Maratha Empire went on to end Mughal rule and secured lands. The Maratha Empire dominated the political scene in India from the middle of the 17th century to the early 19th century with territories stretching from Delhi in north to Karnataka in South, and major parts of central India. Finally the British entered the region through ports in Bombay and dominated the picture.

The Mughals were long over thrown by the Marathas, but what they left behind was huge number of Muslims both converted and extended families after the Islamic period mostly in the parts of Mumbai, Aurangabad, Osmanabad, etc. Their poor status was also affected in the post partition era and the division of the Bombay Presidency. As the elite section of the Muslims migrated to the newly built nation and the majority left behind were from the lower social strata, that suffered a lot and is still struggling with lack of motivation and leadership. The majority that stayed back in the state associated themselves to traditional crafts (*Hunar)* with low socio-economic and educational status. A large part of the community settled in Mumbai and the sub-urban areas forming ghettos with poor educational and Health infrastructure making the Muslim community largely Urban.

2.2 Demographic profile of Muslims in Maharashtra

As per Census 2011, 11.54% of the total state population. The total Muslim population of Maharashtra is 12971152 out of the total state population of 112324333. Total Muslim Males are 6789127 and Females 6182025. Among the major states, Maharashtra ranks fourth in terms of share of Muslim population to the total Muslim population in the country. The top 10 districts with high Muslim population in Maharashtra are Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Aurangabad, Mumbai, Nashik, Pune, Jalgaon, Nanded, Solapur and Amaravati. The bottom 10 states with lowest Muslim population are Gadchiroli, Gondiya, Sindhudurg, Bhandara, Wardha, Chandrapur, Nandurbar, Hingoli, Washim, and Satara. The Muslim population in Maharashtra is largely concentrated in urban areas. About 70 per cent of the Muslim population in the state lives in urban areas. A large proportion of this urban population is located in Mumbai, Mumbai (Suburban) and Thane district. The other cities like Nagpur, Pune, Nashik and Aurangabad also have a significant number of Muslims. The present distribution of Muslim population in Maharashtra is a result of a number of historical and economic factors.

2.3 Socio-economic Profile of Muslims in Maharashtra

A large section of Muslim population is self-employed and casually employed. These two categories together constitute more than 60 per cent of the total workers in the State. Muslims often live in ghettoes and overcrowded chawls and slums in urban areas with hardly any space for carrying out work. Muslims in self-employment only earn their daily living and oscillate in and out of poverty on daily basis. The share of Muslims in government services is quite low. The Muslims also seem to have lower access to government initiated public works programmes in both rural and urban areas as lower share of them is engaged in these programmes. As per the Socio-economic and educational status of Muslim in Maharashtra report about 60 per cent of Muslim population in Maharashtra lives below poverty line. Only about 10 per cent of the population has some agricultural land. The report also highlighted that a majority of the Muslims in the state don't own a ration card which indirectly deprives them from government schemes and programmes.

The state Net domestic Product (at factor cost) (Rs crores) was Rs. 634828 in 2009-10. The highest contributor to the NSDP is from the Service sector is 70.44%, followed by Industrial sector by 20.99%, the lowest contributing sector is from the Agriculture sector by 8.57%. The state is majorly urbanised

with the Per Capita Net State Domestic Product (factor cost) being Rs. 57458. The Human development index value for Maharashtra is 0.572 with HDI rank 7th out of 23.

2.4 Educational Profile of Muslims in Maharashtra

Comparatively the educational status of Muslims in Maharashtra has remained somewhat better than the Muslims in other states. The literacy rates among the Muslims in Maharashtra is 83.6% which is better than the Hindus at 81.8% in the state. But when it comes to higher education the percentages show a steep downfall at only 4.9% attending graduation and above according to the Census 2011. It is also the lowest among all the religious communities in the state. The figure 4.9% is also similar to the total representation of Muslims in higher education i.e., 5% at national level according to the AISHE. The Muslims in the state majorly study in Madrasas or any Muslim owned school and college. The various organisations working in the educational sectors are, the Anjuman- Khairul Islam Organisation, Azam campus, M.H. Saboo Siddik organisation, etc. The status of school education among the community may be good but the higher education data portrays the poor state. Table 1 presents the District-wise Number of schools and Colleges/Universities and total population and Muslim population in Maharashtra, 2011.

Table 1: District-wise Number of schools and Colleges/Universities and total population and Muslim population in Maharashtra, 2011

Districts	No. of schools	No. of Colleges/Universities	Total Population of the district	Total Muslim Population
Gadchiroli	2081	18	1072942	21063
Gondiya	1644	27	1322507	26157
Bhandara	1326	41	1200334	26502
Sindhudurg	1779	20	849651	26264
Wardha	1476	61	1300774	53854
Chandrapur	2511	98	2204307	92297
Satara	3854	73	3003741	146970
Nandurbar	2025	36	1648295	96182
Ahmadnagar	5200	1234	4543159	320743
Pune	6996	480	9429408	673704
Kolhapur	3581	78	3876001	286558
Nagpur	3951	227	4653570	390974
Sangli	2835	54	2822143	239607
Yavatmal	3290	52	2772348	239236
Raigarh	3801	72	2634200	227465
Dhule	1942	56	2050862	187901
Solapur	4612	187	4317756	441254
Osmanabad	1733	33	1657576	178925
Hingoli	1204	12	1177345	127552
Nashik	5335	139	6107187	693052
Ratnagiri	3335	24	1615069	187197
Washim	1283	39	1197160	142672
Thane	7563	184	11060148	1355630
Bid	3337	45	2585049	320395
Jalgaon	3234	72	4229917	560261
Buldana	2360	67	2586258	354236
Jalna	2156	60	1959046	274221
Nanded	3530	343	3361292	471951
Amravati	2805	154	2888445	421410
Latur	2499	56	2454196	367664
Parbhani	1971	58	1836086	306364

Mumbai Suburban	1588	99	9356962	1795788
Akola	1757	41	1813906	357253
Aurangabad	3903	0	3701282	786677
Mumbai	2473	68	3085411	773173

Source- Census of India, 2011

It is very clear from the table that number of schools and colleges in the districts of Maharashtra are limited as per the population size of the districts. A separate analysis upon the infrastructure of Muslims in Maharashtra has been conducted in another secondary analysis paper by VlikasAnvesh Foundation (VAF).

2.5 Gujarat – Historical Background

Muslim history of Gujarat does not begin with the establishment of Ahmedabad. In fact, Muslims were already in Gujarat for 600 years before Allauddin Khilji's army appeared in this region in 1297. Just like Muslims arrival in Malabar in Kerala, as soon as Islam began spreading in Arabian Peninsula, Muslims began to make their presence felt in the coastal region of Gujarat. The first Muslim foray into Gujarat appears to be in 15 hijri or the year 635 CE when governor of Bahrain sent an expedition to Thana and Bhaurch. The contact with Muslim continued for several centuries in the form of raid, trade, and migration.

After Sindh, it is Gujarat where the first Muslim rule was established in Indian sub-continent. Sanjan, a small town on the coast saw the establishment of an independent principality. Three rulers Fadl Ibn Mahan, Muhammad bin Fadl, and Mahan ibn Fadl ibn Mahan ruled successively from 813 CE to 841 CE. Sanjan, which was called Sandan by Arabs find references in travelogues of Arab writers as an important port and industrial town.Until the 1993 riots, only 32% of the existing Muslim-run educational institutions in the city had been established. The rest – 68% – were set up in the decade 1993-2003

2.6 Demographic Profile of Muslims in Gujarat

According to the Census of India, Gujarat has a total population size of 45975397 with the total Muslim population being 5111016. Gujarat is a home to 9.64% of Muslims of the total state population. The total Muslim Males in the state are 3007221 and Females are 2839540 to the total population of Muslims in the state. The top 5 districts with high Muslim population are Ahmadabad, Surat, Kachchh, Vadodara and Rajkot. And the bottom 5 districts with low Muslim population are The Dangs, Tapi, Narmada, Porbandar and Gandhinagar.

2.7 Socio-economic Profile of Muslims in Gujarat

The district of Ahmedabad is richly diverse in social and economic institutions. Demographically speaking, the district has a high proportion youth in the working age groups which offers an advantage to reap the "demographic dividend". However, it faces the challenge of a skewed sex ratio, with urban areas faring worse than rural areas. To address the adverse sex ratio, especially in the 0-6 age groups targeted programs to educate people should be taken. According to Census 2011, Ahmedabad district has a total area of 8107 Sq km. It is surrounded by the districts of Kheda in the east, Mehsana and Gandhinagar in the north, Anand in the south and Surendranagar in the west.

Sr no.	Heads	Nos.
1	Area (Sq. kms)	8087
2	No. of Talukas	11
3	Prants	9
4	Municipal Corporations	1
5	Municipal Towns	13

6	Panchayats Taluka Panchayat Gram Panchayat	11 518
7	Villages (Total)	539

The total population of the district was 58.2 lakhs in 2001 which increased to 72.14 lakhs in 2011 with a population growth rate of 22.31% over a decade. This decadal increase in the population was more than the decadal population increase in Gujarat (19.3%) as per Census 2011. Population-wise, the district is ranked 8th in India out of the total 640 districts in the country, as per census 2011. The population density in the district is 890 inhabitants per square kilometer. The district consists of 11 taluks, total 539 villages and 13 towns. Percentage of urban population in Ahmedabad district is about 84% (Registrar General of India, Census, 2011). From 2011- 2015, Ahmedabad district added three more Talukas, but reduced in area to 8087 Sq. km (District Collectorate Ahmedabad, 2015).

Educational Profile of Gujarat

Gujarat Population Census Data shows that it has Total Population of 6.03 Crore which is approximately 4.99% of total Indian Population. Literacy rate in Gujarat has seen upward trend and is 79.31% as per 2011 population census. Of that, male literacy stands at 87.23% while female literacy is at 70.73%. Urban Population of the State is 42.6%, which used to be at 37.4% in 2001. Rural population in the state in 2011 fell to 57.4% from 62.6% in 2001. Ahmedabad is the most populated District in the State, with 7.20 million people, up 11.94% from 2001, followed by Surat with 6.07 million people, up 10.07%, as per Gujarat's Directorate of census operations. Table no. 2 presents district level data for the number of schools and colleges in Gujarat along with the total number of Muslims and total population of the district. The highest proportion of Muslims are in the Ahmedabad district followed by Surat.

Table 2: District-wise Number of schools and Colleges/Universities and total population and Muslim population in Gujarat, 2011

Districts	No. of schools	No. of Colleges/Universities	Total Population of the district	Total Muslim Population
The Dangs	469	4	228291	3593
Tapi	1024	0	807022	22309
Dohad	2208	5	2127086	66353
Narmada	882	9	590297	22600
Gandhinagar	1197	22	1391753	57273
Valsad	1418	11	1705678	94034
Porbandar	538	8	585449	33565
Navsari	1052	6	1329672	78669
Sabar Kantha	3343	10	2428589	148563
Surendranagar	1540	35	1756268	109681
Amreli	1267	9	1514190	99105
Panch Mahals	3030	6	2390776	158513
Mahesana	1598	21	2035064	136431
Banas Kantha	3070	6	3120506	213505
Bhavnagar	1856	11	2880365	212863
Vadodara	3354	38	4165626	384579
Rajkot	3284	20	3804558	361388
Patan	1184	6	1343734	142797
Surat	2679	24	6081322	660772
Kheda	2300	6	2299885	264482
Anand	1628	43	2092745	250919
Junagadh	2664	13	2743082	334858
Ahmadabad	3786	96	7214225	883238
Jamnagar	2148	23	2160119	320805
Kachchh	2286	2	2092371	442355

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Source- Census of India, 2011

Previous studies on Muslim Education

A very limited number of papers and reports have been dedicated towards the educational status of Muslims in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The issue remains mostly ignored even if the Muslims are an important part of the urban population of the states. Some works by the Tata institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai regarding the Socio-economic Status of Muslims in Maharashtra have thrown some light upon the plight of Muslims in Education. The report submitted by TISS to Maharashtra State Minorities Commission in March 2011 mainly highlights the literacy rate, choice of Medium of instruction, age-group wise educational attainments, issues of madrasa education and high dropout rates among the Muslims.

It focussed upon the economic capability, social and physical access to good schools among the Muslims that generally causes the people to send their children to Urdu medium neighbourhood schools. These schools are either run by the government or the community itself. It also the connection between economic status and choice to send their children in Madarsas and take them out after second or third level of education. Also that a large proportion of Muslims in the state are educated in Urdu medium. The report concluded that the educational choices of Muslims are limited by economic, social and physical accessibility, which need to be overcome to enhance and expand the economic and social opportunities and choices. Another report published by Dr. Singh (September, 2011) where he tries to present a brief about the Muslim community in Maharashtra with respect to all the background characteristics. He has supported all his work with data from census 2001. Another researcher Dr. Mistry from AKI's Poona College has highlighted upon the gender gap among the Muslims students in attainment of higher education with the help of NFHS data.

As far as the Muslims of Gujarat are concerned there is some work by Dattiwala (2006) which is majorly focused upon the status of Muslims in Gujarat after the social changes in the state post 1993 and the Gujarat riots in 2002. The paper talks about the Muslim ghettoization as well as the poor state of educational affairs in the state. It also highlights the condition of Muslims in Ahmedabad and the few exceptions to their current position in the state.

Objectives of the study

- To study the current status of Higher Education among Muslims in Maharashtra and Gujarat
- To understand the perspectives regarding problems and struggles faced by Muslims in attaining Higher Education

Methodology

The methodology followed for the study is basically qualitative in nature. It includes personal interviews from the 3 categories, they are students, Alumni and Social leaders/civil society organisation leaders among the Muslims. The method of sampling used was purely purposive in case of Students, whereas a Snow ball sampling technique was used to interview the Alumni's and Social leaders/civil society organisation leaders. The study areas in the two states were Pune and Ahmedabad from Maharashtra and Gujarat respectively.

The selection of Alumni's was done through personal contacts and snow balling. It was taken care that the sample included Alumni's from various educational backgrounds such as Indian Institute of Technology, Indian institute of Forest Management, International institute for Population Sciences and Tata Institute of Social Sciences. This variety was maintained in order to present the heterogeneity of the data and collection of different viewpoints on the subject.

The selection of Social leaders/civil society organisation leaders were purely based on their work for the community and some expertise on the matters and problems of the community. The interviews were conducted with prior consent from the interviewees.

Maharashtra-

1. Total Student respondents interviewed : 54 (Females – 40, Males – 14)
   The students were mainly belonged to Graduation from the 3 streams of Arts, Commerce and Science. The range age group interviewed for the study was from 17-20 years with two exceptions of 24 and 35 year old respondents.

2. Total Alumni Interviewed : 12 (Females – 4, Males – 8)
   They were mainly passouts from the leading educational institutes in India.

3. Social Leaders and Professors Interviewed – 14 (Females – 3, Males – 11)

Gujarat –

1. Total Student respondents interviewed : 58 (Females – 53, Males – 5)
   The students were mainly belonged to Graduation from the 3 streams of Arts, Commerce and Science. A small group of 13 school students from Standard XII were was also interviewed in the total 58.

2. Social Leaders and Professors Interviewed – 2

Major Findings

The data collected from Pune and Ahmedabad show many similarities in them. The average age of the respondents was 19 years and 18 years respectively. In Pune the two Colleges from where the data has been collected are Abeda Inamdar Senior College, Azam Campus and Anjuman-Khairul Islam's Poona College. Whereas in Ahmedabad the data has been collected from F.D Women College, F.D Science college and F.D High School. It was observed from the data that, among the 54 respondents from Pune 18 studied in government school and 36 in private. And the data from Ahmedabad showed that 15 went to Government and 42 private schools. While in Pune majority went to Urdu Medium schools followed by English and then Marathi. The respondents from Ahmedabad mainly went to Gujarati medium schools followed by English and Urdu.

Main Constraints in attaining Higher Education

a. Financial Constraints - Our study revealed that financial problems are perceived as the most important reason for under-representation in Higher education by all the three groups of Interviewees. More than half the students responded that according to them the main constraint in entering Higher Education was Financial Problems. Since school education acts as the base of an educational career and further it is very important to understand the role of school education in the Muslim students life. When asked whether their school was good enough to build a good career? 7 out of the total data responded that due to financial problems they could not get admission into a good school. Not only major

constraint in attaining higher Education, 64 students responded that financial problems act as a barrier in achieving their career as well as fulfilling their ambition.

It was observed from the data that even though many had schools in their close proximity of 5-10 km, a total of 24 students went to schools at a greater distance. One of the important reason being the expensive school fees and affordability of the family. The interviews taken from the civil society organisation leaders also gave us evidences that Financial problems are one of the major reasons for lower representation in Higher Education. A somewhat similar situation was seen for colleges. The Alumni's also had somewhat similar experience with continuing education, an Alumni from IIT Bombay recalls her struggle when I asked the same question –

Aasiya's Struggle

Born and brought up in Nandgaon, Nashik district of Maharashtra Aasiya Shaikh would have never imagined she would one day grow up to become a Research Scientist in Kanpur. Her father was a small watchmaker. Aasiya was the third among the other five brothers and sisters. She recalls how difficult it was to understand English and Mararthi in College for an Urdu Medium student. Always a topper in class, Aasiya's father refused to support her education after Junior College due to Financial Problems, big family size and her mother's ailing health condition. Aasiya recalls secretly buying the forms and taking admission by selling away her gold earrings. She then completed her graduation by taking tution classes. It was difficult for her as there were many marriage proposals for her. The society also added the pain as they kept advising her father to get the daughter's married to reduce financial pressure as well as it was in the religion that girls should get married early. She fought all odds and completed her Ph.D in Fluid Dynamics from IIT Bombay. Now when she looks back she feels happy that she never gave up due to financial problems.

Another observation from the data which indicates towards Financial problems being the prime reason in attaining Higher Education are the number of males and females in our data. On asking the students the reason for lesser boys in the campus, a female respondent answered, *"Boys don't study much, they mainly enter small business or jobs to support family"*. To the same question another male respondent answered that, *"We learn basic calculation skills and how to read and write, that is enough to get a job and support family"*. Almost 90% of the respondents belonged to the family that had only 1 earning member, with the average annual income being less that 2 to 2.5 Lakhs and the average family size being 5 members, it becomes difficult to avail quality education to all.

b. Lack of Information and motivation– The lack of information has proved to be another factor for our subject. It was observed that on the basis of their place of residence around 40% of our respondents did not have any knowledge about their nearest university for higher education. It was also seen that half of the respondents from both the study location do not have any information about Scholarships for higher Education. The only two important fellowships/Scholarships known to the students are the Maulana Azad fellowship and Minority scholarship. There are many private scholarships too working in the field of education. Among the students who knew about the scholarship 24 said that they did not get them due to poor merits or some error in forms. Many students are struggling in filling up forms or getting admission in colleges, they believe there is no handholding from people who are already established. While our interviews with the alumni's and CSO leaders, many quoted the issue that, once a person from the community passes all odds and becomes successful they forget to guide others. *"The community needs hope, some handholding from already established people from the community may help transform the situation",* said Mamoon Akhtar, a social worker

from Tikiapara, Kolkata. In this sense the concept of Azam Campus proved very helpful to the students in Pune, that offers scholarship to students on the basis of economic condition of the family as well as avails higher education at cheaper rates. The campus is also situated at the prime location of the Muslim dominated Pune Camp area to reach out better to the community.

A gap between the level of knowledge among the students was noticed that on asking How far they want to continue education, 7 -graduation, 21 – Post graduation and 26- Beyond that, in Pune. The data from Vadodara showed that, 12 -graduation, 29 – Post graduation and 17- Beyond that. It is contradictory to the next question we asked, regarding their ambition in life. Almost 80% of the students said they want to become, Professor, Researcher, Doctor, etc, which requires either Ph.D or an MBBS degree. The students did not have any connection between the level of education and their career goals.

10 Students preferred skipping the question, on enquiring the reason for not answering, they said they don't have any dream for future, and if so they will not be supported by the family. This purely represented the lack of motivation to the students. Almost half of the respondents did not have a role model whom they could follow. This issue was raised by several CSO leaders during the interviews.

c. Feeling of Religious Discrimination – A total of 10 students from Pune and 12 from Ahmedabad responded that they felt some type of discrimination due to their religious affiliation in school, market place, buses, etc. the females highlighted the issue with more emphasis on their practice of wearing a *Burkha.* They said that in some years they have started feeling it more. Some boys have also responded that in the job sector it becomes difficult to get a job due to certain dress code or even their last name. Many Alumni's have responded that they faced problem in finding a place to live when changed cities for job. An pass out from the TISS answered that one of his friends who was newly appointed as a program officer in the Swachh Bharat Mission at Kanpur, struggled in finding a place to stay. Even after finding one the owner asked them to leave in a month stating a poor reason that they do not want Muslim tenants.

The civil society leaders were of the view that such kind of barrier is now being created from both the sides. Where the society resists the community as well as the people of the community have also made a wall that restricts any kind of contacts with the society. Scholars like Ahmad (1981) had highlighted in his work that the Muslims have created a Shell around themselves, not only because of the religious factors from within the community but also due to social pressures from outside the community. The reasons may be historical that usually have connections with the history of India's partition and India becoming a Hindu majority nation, many alumni's focussed upon the situation getting aggravated.

The story of Shafia Shaikh

Shafiya is a Sociology lecturer at Azam Campus, Abeda Inamdar Senior College, Pune. She is the 3rd child in her family, she remembers how difficult it was to convince her family and relatives to allow her to continue education. She is currently doing her Ph. D in Sociology from the Tilak Maharashtra University in Pune. She portrayed her struggle after marriage, her husband supported her education against all odds that her in-laws created for her. Shafia says that sometimes it feels like being born as woman is a curse, but being a Muslim woman adds to the misery. Shafia had a strange encounter post her Ph.d interview, with her faculties. As she had to wait for registration, the reason given was that mentors were not free and the one Muslim professor in the faculty was already full. She had to wait for around an year until the a final year student presented his synopsis. She tried to get registration under other professors too, but that could not be possible due to reasons like religious discrimination. She remembers being asked in the interview that, "Does your family allow you to study even after getting married?"

d. Lack of Infrastructure – It was noticed that the Muslims do not prefer sending their children to far of schools and colleges. The reasons stated for the girls was safety and for the boys was that instead of higher education they could help the family financially. Hence it is very important that there should be schools and colleges in the Muslim majority areas so that it could help the community to educate themselves. There is a great need that the government should take steps to uplift the community by opening government run or aided schools and colleges in such areas of Muslim majority. A number of Alumni's from our interactions have answered that the due to lack of infrastructure in the Local schools and colleges as well as financial problems the Muslims prefer sending their children to local Madrasas where education, food and boarding is free.

Dr. Tamboli, President of the Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal, in Pune talked about the lack of infrastructure being an important factor for the under-representation of Muslims in Higher Education. He says that it is already an established fact that the Majority of the Muslim community belong to the financially weaker section of the society (Sachhar Report, 2006). He lays special focus upon the students of the rural areas who migrate to cities and big towns to attain higher education. There they struggle in accommodation, coaching, financial support. He himself belonged to a small town in the Parbhani district of Maharashtra. His personal struggles in reaching at this stage was an achievement in itself. He believes that providing Hostel facilities as well as coaching to the students will help in uplifting the society to a great extent.

e. Madrasa Education System – it was observed that many students from our sample went to the madrasa schooling system. While Half of the population of the Muslim students goes to madrasas only to learn how to read the Quran in Arabic, others attended the Madrasa for basic Primary education. The prime reason given for attending a Madrasa was financial problems and religious affiliation of the community with the system of education. The Madrasa uses Urdu as the medium of instruction in many places. Many scholars and social workers like Mamoon Akhtar who have been extensively working upon the education of marginalised Muslim community are of the view that it would be a good idea to attach modern education with the already existing infrastructure of the madrasas. He believes that the schools should be English medium in order to help the community to cope up with the current job market that would help them in the developing the Poor Muslims in return.

School education forms the base of an individuals career. Good schooling leads to development of a sound personality, that leads an individual towards a good career. Madrasa education system in Majority of cases affects the base. Instead of preparing of the students for a good career, the students have to again start from the basic level at the modern education system. Many students have believed that it helps them in reforming students to more disciplined and hardworking individuals. The Samaritan Help Mission founded by Mr. Mamoon Akhtar, is working towards starting modern schools along with Madrasa in order to help the students to be able to cope with the modern society.

f. Female Education – The women among the community are the most vulnerable of all, as we can see that a majority of the sample are females we could gather responses regarding the females perspectives of higher education. A total of 93 respondents from our total sample were females. They specifically talked about the issues related to women freedom and empowerment. It was observed that the females did not have much variety in their ambitions, it was mainly dominated by the profession "teacher". On asking whether they can achieve their dream, many of the students said that they don't think it would be possible to achieve their goal. 80% of the girls responded that they do not have freedom to choose a career due to several reasons like financial constraints , early marriages and some religious inhibitions.

Even though the locations we visited were flooded with females, on enquiring they responded that completing graduation is the only aim of about 60% of the respondents. Another important constraint in female education was, "Freedom". Many girls said that they do not have freedom to make life decisions. Their decisions are either taken by parents or other family members. They also highlighted the issue of male preference over females. There is a huge gap in education among the Males and Females, which has now started shrinking in the recent years.

g. Mentality of the People – Among the many reasons the mentality of the people of the community came up many times as many of the respondents believed that the current situation of the Muslims is due to their mentality. A large mass of the population follows the religious leaders who pass on the limited knowledge they pursue. Many of the CSO leaders also responded that the masses have been blindly following the leaders. The reason they gave for this is that lack of education among the people due to which many of them are misguided and misled. The head of the Bharatiya, Muslim Mahila Andolan, Dr. Noor Jahan Safia Niaz, said that the community has been misguided and misled led in many respects. The Mullas have been propagating personal agendas for years. The people have misinterpreted the saying in the holy Quran to reap selfish benefits from the community.

When asked the reason why the community is lacking behind social and economic prosperity, many students responded that due to mentality of the community people and that they act without thinking in many respects.

Conclusion and the way Forward

The primary study upon the topic Under-representation of Muslims in higher Education revealed many facts that usually remain hidden to the outsiders. The states of Maharashtra and Gujarat with almost same cultural and social background also have a lot of similarities in the data collected from the students. Maharashtra with 11.54% and Gujarat with 9% Muslims out of the total state population have provided several insights regarding the education of the community in the current situation. The Muslims in both the states are majorly urban, who earn their living by mostly small business or less paid jobs to run a family, This shows that the quality of urbanization of Muslims is not as good. The family size of the community in both the states remains quite high at an average of 5 members per family. Both Pune and Ahmedabad are metropolitan cities with good socio-economic and political infrastructure. Pune was historically known as the Educational Hub of Maharashtra has a huge number of schools and colleges. But the Muslim enrolment in the colleges around the city is very minimal. The Muslims mainly prefer sending their children to the Muslim owned schools and colleges (Azam campus, AKI's Poona college in Pune). The sample in Ahmedabad too has been collected from the Muslim owned institutions, which was mainly founded as the owners felt that schools and colleges should not be very far from the residence and especially for the girls.

Further, the educational attainments of Muslims in Higher education are considerably lower than other social groups. The Census 2011 presents data that shows the Muslims represent poorly when compared to Scheduled castes and tribes in India. The major drop out of Muslims from educational institutions take place after primary level, and only about 4.9% and 2.9% from Maharashtra and Gujarat have been able to complete graduation. Urdu remains major medium of education for Muslims. While examining age-wise educational attainments one finds that younger age-group of Muslims has made considerable progress towards higher education. However, in comparison to other socio-religious communities the situation is still abysmal for Muslims. As most of the Muslim students are educated in Urdu medium, finding a suitable job for them is difficult except to look for teaching job in Urdu medium schools or community oriented jobs where Urdu is used. There is also a lack of quality educational institutions in Muslim concentrated areas.

Given that, there is less expectation of any meaningful return from higher education, most of the Muslim parents take their children out of the schools and put in their traditional occupation and self-employment. This requires support like scholarships which offsets the expected wage earnings of the parents from their children to retain them in schools and colleges. The present scholarship scheme offered to Muslims at various levels of education suffers from some deficiencies. And the data also suggests that there is a huge gap in the availability of scholarships as well as the knowledge about the scholarships for higher Education. The discussion with school/college authorities and students have revealed that the application requires many documents/certificates and Muslims are known to suffer from lack of legal documents as they fear to approach the state authorities and the authorities are also known to be indifferent unless one is politically and economically powerful. In such a situation, the Muslim students who need supports are left out. Further, even to get documents, a handsome amount of money is spent in bribing government officials and also it takes a lot of time of some able member of the family and that results in loss of wage income to the families.

The amount offered by the government as scholarships are miniscule. Many claim that Muslim community is presently spending many times more in such process than what it gets back as scholarship. In other words a poor community is wasting its limited resources many times more than what it gets back from the government as scholarship. This requires easing of the documentary requirements for the scholarship. Raising the expectation of return from educational investment will go a long way to bring back Muslims towards higher education. This will need similar action by the government for Muslims as it has been done in the case of SCs and STs: quota in government jobs. There are also discriminatory practices against Muslim students in some school and colleges which impairs their spirit to excel in education and career. A civil servant in the state government recounts his experience of his student days and says, "As Muslims we were always considered second grade citizens even in class rooms and were last to receive the attention of the teachers even when we did well. We used to be given lower marks and considered to deserve only that". In sum, there is a fair degree of hostility and also indifference in class rooms to Muslims in majority of the educational institutions. There is hardly any encouragement to Muslim students but criticism is severe even on petty mistake. This attitude of teachers and college authorities makes the students from other religious communities to treat Muslims as lowly or someone not worthy of any attention.

With the community lacking visionaries and government quite indifferent, the common Muslims have no alternative but to survive somehow. The traditional leadership of Muslims continues harping on Urdu Medium schools which impair students' career in long run (if they want to go for higher education), while government is not coming forward to establish English/Marathi medium schools. The diminished role of Urdu means that the education in such schools can only be used for reading religious books and not as tool to ameliorate the social and economic condition. Even after 13 years of publication of the monumental work by the Sachhar Committee, the progress in the development of the community has remained minimal. Especially the Higher Education sector is still struggling when it comes to the Muslim community. The educational deprivation of Muslims is well documented and now how to deal with this remains a vital question.

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