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UTILIZING GOVT. PUBLIC AVENUES AND ESTABLISHING PRIVATE  
INSTITUTIONS

Seminar paper presented by  
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*Utilizing Govt. and Public Avenues and Establishing Private Institutions*

Muslims, the largest minority community in the country, constituting 13.4 per cent of the population, are seriously lagging behind in terms of most of the human development indicators. While the perception of deprivation is widespread among muslims, there has been no systematic effort since independence to analyse the condition of religious minorities in the country (Sachar Committee Report, 2006).

Today, globally Muslims show the lowest literacy rate.  
<http://www.islamfortoday.com/syed07.htm>. (is that a consolation?)

If you thought there were regions in India where things are not so bad, see this:

"A study, conducted by a committee comprising of the former pro-vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, K M Bahavuddin, among others, says, "We started with the impression that the situation of Muslims is comparatively better [in Kerala] but after collecting the data, we have come to the conclusion that their situation in Kerala has also been deteriorating in the last 20 years".  
<http://www.indiatogather.org/2007/aur/edu-muslimedu.htm>.

All education begins with literacy. And literacy is the acquisition or learning of basic language skills. And learning language skills is nothing more than listening to what is spoken and understanding it, speaking to make others understand what one wants to communicate, and reading with understanding, writing to communicate at a very simple level. So one can say that it is literacy that provides the base on which the whole project of educational development can be built.

Experts on human cognitive (mental) development tell us that literacy enhances an individual's ability to think and enables him/her to reflect on the existential reality in which they find themselves. This leads to the development of more rational attitudes. It opens avenues of communication that otherwise remain closed. Education not only provides knowledge and skills but also plays a role in developing social, cultural and moral values in an individual. It gives right direction to desires, emotions and thereby

shapes outward behavior of individuals. Education has a vital role in the social transformation of a society and its economic development.

Only a proper understanding of this power of education can make us realize what a handicap it is to be uneducated. And now see how uneducated we are as a community.

*It is found that 54 per cent of the total population of the Muslims in India is illiterate with 17.5 per cent literate people just for the name sake only. (a total of 71.5%).*

The Sachar Committee Report states that as many as 25 per cent of Muslim children in the 6-14 year age group have never attended a school or have dropped out.

It may be noted that at primary level the proportion of Muslim children in total enrolment roughly corresponds to the proportion of Muslims in total population but at

upper primary stage, it is somewhat lower, confirming higher drop-out rates of Muslim

children, particularly as one goes up in the educational ladder.

The ratio of girls to boys throws up some surprises. Whereas at the primary level, the

ratio of girls to boys is gradually approaching one, but at upper primary level, it is more

than one. This indicates that either the enrolment of girls is growing at a faster pace than enrolment of boys at upper primary stage or less girls are dropping out than boys.

Enrolment of Muslim Children in Primary and Upper Primary Stage

Year	Enrolment (in crore)			As % of total enrolment		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary stage						

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
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	0.63	0.69	0.73	0.89	0.90	0.93
	1.23	1.41	1.49	1.80	1.76	1.82
	9.22	10.39	10.91	13.35	12.87	13.10
	9.48	10.67	11.21	13.70	13.21	13.54
	9.35	10.52	11.05	13.52	13.04	13.31
Upper Primary stage						
	0.18	0.21	0.24	0.32	0.32	0.35
	0.17	0.21	0.24	0.33	0.33	0.37
	0.35	0.43	0.49	0.65	0.65	0.72
	7.03	8.15	8.70	11.37	11.10	11.04
	7.87	8.98	9.59	12.47	11.84	12.29
	7.42	8.54	9.12	11.90	11.25	11.65
Higher Education						

In his Report titled 'Six Years After Sachar', (Abusaleh Shariff - January, 2013), has analyzed the

participation of Muslims in higher education. He finds that Muslim OBCs are much behind the Hindu OBCs, SCs and STs. Even the general category of Muslims are far behind SCs and STs. Worryingly, it has been noted that the general category of Muslims have seen 1.5% decline between 2004-05 and 2009-10 (p. 22).

The study has also noted that there has been massive increase in the participation of students in higher education in the age group of 17-29, in general. In 2004-05, the percentage of participation in this age group in higher education was 6 % and it has risen to

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11% in 2009-10. However, the Muslim community has not been able to get the benefit of higher education despite the Sachar Committee Report and some steps taken by the Government to address the situation.’

Let us now look at the theme for this session.

*Utilizing Govt. and Public Avenues and Establishing Private Institutions*

This theme can be seen as having 2 topics:

1. Utilizing Govt. and Public Avenues, and
2. Establishing Private Institutions

Each of these topics covers a wide but separate range of activities. They both, however, have a common purpose or goal which is empowering the community through education. That is empowerment of the community by raising its level of education.

Let us look at the first topic ‘Utilizing Govt. and Public Avenues’ by turning it into a question. Are we utilizing govt. and public avenues properly? The answer is a clear NO.

Here again please note that we are talking about the utilization or rather underutilization of two different avenues of educational development available to us:

1. The avenues made available by the central as well as the state governments, and
2. The avenues that are available as well as those that can be created in the public domain.

It is no wonder then that Muslims being the most backward community educationally we are economically the weakest, socially the most backward and politically the most exploited.

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He says 'We strongly feel that there is a need to take concrete steps to improve the participation of Muslims in higher education by making it mandatory for the Universities, Institutions and Colleges to try to achieve diversity in their student

population. Scholarships, fee waivers and other facilities like hostels etc. given to SC students also need to be made available to Muslim students so that poverty does not come

in the way of their participation in higher education.'

Now coming to the operative part 'Utilizing Govt. Avenues' our first job is to identify the different avenues available to us for the different stages of education.

Firstly we have to familiarize ourselves with the on-going general schemes for promotion of education which can be done by accessing the websites of the MHRD, Health Ministry, and Ministry of Labour etc. at the Central as well as the State level. Considering the manner in which the Muslim population is distributed most of our children have to get into the general stream. By definition the general stream is meant for all people and, therefore, does not provide for any facilitation to Muslims to enable them to avail themselves of whatever is provided in it. At the primary and secondary level, for example, joining govt. schools is not a problem but ensuring quality education here is definitely an issue which seems to require support from outside the system. This is being done in some cases through adoption of govt. schools (to be discussed under 'Utilizing Public Avenues').

The problem area in the govt. sector, however, seems to lie in the implementation schemes and institutions created by the govt. for the benefit of the Muslims. To illustrate this problem I would like to give 2 examples here.

1. After the Sachar Committee Report when it was established that Muslims as a community occupied the lowest rung of Indian society on all development indicators it became necessary for the Union Govt. to initiate some action. After much debate and discussion one of the measures adopted was funding development in Muslim Concentrated Districts (MCDs) with, of course Education on the top of the agenda. To see how this worked let me mention here a finding of the most acclaimed study of the Post-Sachar scenario ('Six Years After Sachar: A

Review of Inclusive Policies in India," by economist and chief scholar at the U.S.-India Policy Institute Abusaleh Shariff.) :

It (the Report) said allocations for the much-publicised Minority Concentration Districts [MCDs] aggregated to a total of Rs. 37,800 crore until March 2011. Yet this...allocation was underutilised: "It was shocking to note that only Rs. 856 crore [which is 22.8 per cent of central allocation] had reached the districts. Much lower amount was found to have been taken to the grassroots..."

This only shows that after much reluctance when funds are ear-marked for Muslim specific projects they are diverted to other schemes and then what little is spent is also not utilized properly. What is to be done about it will be discussed later.

2. My second example is to show what often happens when a govt. scheme meant for Muslims is

Managed by Muslims themselves:

In 1996 the Govt. of Karnataka started **Morarji Desai Residential Schools for Minorities** under the Directorate of Minorities to provide free residential education from Standards VI to X to the students from minority communities. There are 5 of them. One each in Bijapur, Gulbarga, Ramnagar, Mangalore, and Srirangapatna. Because of political interference the schools were initially placed under local management committees. When this didn't work properly the schools were placed under the HKGN

Headed by a prominent Muslim political leader and each school named after a religious/historical figure from that region, the one in Srirangapatna being named after Tippu Sultan. When this political leader fell out of favour the schools were placed under the Social Welfare Department and 2 years later transferred to the Directorate of Minorities. From this you can imagine how well these schools must have been administered, though each school has a budget of Rs. one crore per year.

Let me briefly narrate here my experience with this school in Srirangapatna. All the teachers in the school had been selected by the local management committee. Like all the other schools except the Mangalore school, this

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school was also an Urdu medium school. When I got to know this school it had completed 10 years. I found the academic standards very low. When questioned the teachers squarely blamed the students' poor background for this. When pressed to do something a senior teacher made a revealing comment. He said, 'Sir, these boys and girls don't even get enough to eat at home. They stay here for five years get enough to eat and leave as young people. Why do you want to disturb this arrangement?'

You know when this school was started in '96 it was housed in a rice mill godown. The students study and live in rooms and halls with no proper ventilation or light. And this school was long ago adopted by a well known trust which has on its governing council a very powerful Muslim political leader who, as a Union Minister, wanted to start a University for the minorities. So what do we do? This brings us to our next sub-topic 'utilizing public avenues'.

#### UTILIZING PUBLIC AVENUES

The very first thing that needs to be done is ensuring delivery of quality services by Govt. agencies and institutions established to benefit Muslims specifically. What is to be remembered is that huge sums of money is ear-marked for specific schemes for Muslims. What we need to do is put in place community organizations costing a tiny fraction of that amount to facilitate the working of those agencies and institutions. The details of this process fall outside the ambit of this paper.

Coming to on-going schemes in mainstream education what we require is efforts to make the benefits accessible to students from the community at all levels. For example to help students enroll in the school system at different levels and appropriate institutions

what is required is an organizational set up to facilitate this. To be effective this will have to be established at the local or district level. Apart from the awareness campaigns like the 'school chalo' kind of programs at the beginning of the school year we need an institutional mechanism to sustain this effort for extended periods of time.



This kind of effort is now being made at the post metric level. What experience has taught us is that occasional awareness camps, counselling in the form of lectures and ppps do not have the desired effect. That is to say that they are essential but not sufficient. What seems more effective is an organizational set-up which provides counselling on an individual basis on an extended time scale as compared to a one-off session, like the work being done by organizations like the Jan Seva Education Guidance Centre at Mysore.

What is desirable, though quite difficult, is putting in place a support system that includes academic, financial and other related matters. This kind of effort is also now in place for bright students from the community at the post-metric level by organizations like the Lead Trust of Bangalore which has as its mission: 'To identify brilliant students, having inadequate awareness of good educational opportunities coupled with poor economical condition and enable them to get into prestigious institutes to pursue their dream careers.'

But the work of these organizations has to be increased many manifold to serve our purpose.

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