

Muslim exclusion in India: A review of the literature  
*Sajjad Hassan*

Abstract

*It's been 7 years since Sachar Committee published its reports, highlighting the deep and extensive deprivations Muslims in India face on the range of counts. It has been as many years since the Central Government announced a programme of interventions to ameliorate the condition of Minorities and Muslims. Latest development data (India HDI 2011; NSSO, 2011; NSSO 2013) do not show any significant improvements in the conditions of Muslims. This is a serious failing. It is also true that data collection and systematic tracking and analysing of performance for Muslims have been patchy at best. Given the limited scholarly attention on Muslim deprivation and development, we are not yet sure, in a sufficiently nuanced way, what works and what does not for Muslims, nationally as well as in different regional settings. This is a significant gap, given how important Muslim outcomes are for national policies of inclusive growth and political stability. This paper is a review of the literature on exclusion of Muslims in India, and the varying understanding of the phenomenon, including its regional and local dimensions. It seeks to map the terrain, so to speak, in an effort to identify gaps and suggest research questions to better understand the drivers and facilitators of the exclusion, and how the developmental challenge for Muslims could be overcome.*

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## 1. Introduction

It has been seven years since the Prime Minister's High Level Committee on Social, Economic and Educational status of Muslim Community in India, popularly called the Sachar Committee, published its reports, highlighting the deep and extensive deprivations Muslims in India face in the range of sectors – education, employment, public services and the like. It has been as many years since the Central Government announced a programme of interventions to ameliorate the condition of Minorities, with Muslims making up the overwhelming majority. Latest data on development outcomes (Government of India, 2011; NSSO, 2011; NSSO 2013) do not show any significant improvements in the conditions of Muslims. It is however, also true that data collection and systematic tracking and analysing change in those outcomes for Muslims, have been patchy at best. Equally, given the limited scholarly attention on Muslim deprivation and development, we are not sure yet, in a sufficiently nuanced way, what works and what does not for Muslims, nationally as well as in different settings. This is a significant gap in understanding, given that Muslims make up 14% of India's population (2011 Census), and are counted, along with Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, among those making up the largest section of the marginalised in India.

This paper is a review of the literature on exclusion of Muslims in India, and the varying understanding of the phenomenon, including its regional and local dimensions. It seeks to map the terrain, so to speak, in an effort to identify gaps and suggest research questions to better understand the drivers and facilitators of the exclusion, and how the developmental challenge for Muslims could be overcome. The paper aims to propose a research agenda, and questions for further exploration, based on an understanding of Muslim deprivation that is more complex and analytical than what is currently available in the literature. In this it takes account of the varying regional and sectoral, besides conceptual, understanding of deprivation and well being. In studying Muslim well-being, this review has focused on more direct development outcomes – such as education, employment, public services. The review therefore is necessarily limited, not having examined, in any case not in any detail, the literature on identity and security/violence, both of which contribute to the realisation of 'direct' development outcomes, besides being development outcomes themselves.

The review was conducted based on literature search. Search engines/sources used were Google scholar, GSDRC, Economic and Political Review, and JSTOR. Other 'sites' included official websites in India - Ministry of Minority Affairs, Planning Commission and state government websites. For works on affirmative action policies and practices in UK, which was a particularly relevant point of comparison, given its much celebrated multi-cultural policies, I used Runnymede Foundation, besides UK Government websites. Apart from works identified through these searches, additional works were added, based on those identified in the previous search outputs. The full list of works identified thus is listed in the annexed bibliography.

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As signpost to the rest of the paper, I begin, in Sec 2, with providing a catalogue of performance of Muslims on various counts of development, doing so in comparative light, to show the extent of the deprivation. Here I also provide, in a summary fashion, how particular deprivations have been understood and explained in the popular literature. In Sec 3, I review the relevant theoretical literature – on minority rights, horizontal inequality and social exclusion – to provide a setting for further discussions, followed by a review of the policy implications of these understandings, looking first at exclusion conceptually, followed by the India case material, especially as it pertains to the other marginalised groups – *dalits* and *adivasis* - to draw lesson from for policy discussion on Muslims. In Sec 4, I open up a new front to understand Muslim wellbeing in a comparative sense, across different parts of India, starting with outcomes, followed by the explanations provided, so as to point to their inadequacy in explaining variance. Here I also check out how justifications for overall performance across states compares with that for Muslim performance. But there are intra-regional variations too in performance, and this I explore in Sec 5. The rest of the paper (Sec 6) summarises the gaps in literature examined so far, to propose a research agenda, identifying questions and suggesting a potential methodology.

## 2. How do Muslims perform?

That Muslims perform poorly on well-being outcomes is well established. Below is a catalogue of the outcomes, based on recent reports.

### 2.1 Poverty:

According to the Sachar Committee report poverty among Muslims in 2004-05 stood at 31 per cent, just under that for SCs/STs (at 35 per cent). This was more pronounced in urban areas, where nearly half of all Muslims (44 per cent) counted amongst the poorest, compared to the national average of 29 per cent. The Sachar report found Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal, constituting the poorest sections of the population, along with SC and STs. These are also states where most Muslims live. In rural areas too, Muslims lagged behind the national average poverty ratio - 33 per cent, against 28 per cent overall. Recent measures show similar trends, as shown by India-Human Development Report 2011. (Government of India, 2011:4). The significantly high urban poverty among Muslims is reported also by India-HDR, using NSS 2007-08 data, at 23 per cent, compared to 13 per cent for Hindus as a whole. Poverty incidence among Muslims was marginally better than that for Hindus, in rural areas, at 13.3 per cent (Hindu: 14.3 per cent). (Ibid: 117). Other indicators of poverty show similar trends. The relative deprivation of Muslims, along with SCs, STs was evident in their ownership of assets as well – the Access Index of Asset Ownership<sup>2</sup> across social groups was the lowest for SCs, while across religious communities it was the lowest among Muslims (in 2002–3). (Ibid: 6). And the monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE), based on National Sample Survey 2009-10 returns Muslims and SCs/STs amongst the poorest. (Fazal, 2013:5).

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as the share of assets owned by the community divided by the community's share of population

## 2.2 Food security and health:

Malnutrition is an indicator of chronic hunger, which is critically linked to people's health status. As we know India fares badly on this count. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute report, 12 of 17 major states of India figure in the 'alarming' category of status of hunger and malnutrition. (Menon et al 2009) It is no surprise then that a third of India's adult population has a body mass index (BMI) of less than 18.5 - the number below which people are declared malnourished. The condition of children and women is particularly acute. India has the largest number of malnourished children in the world – so much so that nearly half of all children under three years of age are malnourished, according to one report, the severity is twice as much as that for sub-Saharan Africa (Government of India, 2011:6-7, quoting Nutrition Report 2009 of NFHS 3). Here too Muslims suffer badly. The incidence of female malnutrition and children suffering from anaemia and stunting was above the national average among Muslims, particularly in UP and Bihar and other states with a high concentration of India's Muslims registered a higher incidence of anaemia among Muslim children, compared to others. And while female malnutrition has been reducing over time, it is increasing for Muslims (data between 1998–9 and 2005–6). (Ibid: 8)

And while overall health indicators (outcome – IMR, U5MR, MMR) are improving, and overtime, these indicators for the marginalized groups like SCs/STs and Muslims are converging with the national average (Ibid: 8), process indicators, such as institutional deliveries, contraception prevalence rate, immunisation rate, are less robust, especially when it comes to the excluded groups. It is input indicators (public investment in health, health facilities and human resource, sanitation, safe drinking water and the like) that there is most problem for Muslims and other like them. STs and Muslims have the highest Total Fertility Rate (TFR), only one-third of Muslim and SC women have institutional deliveries, only around 50 per cent of Muslim, SC, and ST women receive three or more Antenatal ANC (I), visits. (Ibid: 10)

## 2.3 Education

Poverty and education have a well established correlation. According to Census 2001, Muslims were the least literate among all religious communities. The recent NSSO 2007-08 survey, education round, further confirms a high proportion of Muslims as illiterates. This was at par with that of SCs/STs, and higher than for OBCs. Muslim women (47.3 per cent) make up amongst the most illiterate sections of society, comparable to SC/ST (53.2) women. A substantial proportion of Muslims—18 per cent male, and 15.4 per cent female - had attained only primary education. Meanwhile at higher, upper primary and above levels, Muslim proportion was significantly lower than that among all other groups including SCs. (Fazal, 2013: 6). Of course, the problem of poor education among Muslims is multifaceted. Less than half Muslim girls in age for primary and upper-primary level school, were enrolled. (Government of India, 2011:9) Among all religious communities, Muslims had the lowest Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) at all levels of education, in both rural and urban India. In fact, in rural India, low NAR among STs was comparable with that of the Muslims at the secondary and higher secondary levels. In urban India, NAR for Muslims was even lower than that for SCs and STs at all levels except at the higher secondary level, where they were similar. (Ibid: 190). Data also reveals that it is at Upper Primary level (mostly in rural areas,

but also urban) that the NAR for Muslims shows the biggest drop. And most seriously, incidence of ‘out of school’ children (of all social groups) was the highest among Muslims.

The main concern with education among Muslims remains the low retention rate, causing high drop-out, and poor transition, as children progress through the school system. Muslim children constitute 16.6 per cent of total national enrolment in Grade I, but this declines to 8.4 per cent at Grade VIII. (Government of India, 2012:12), leading the report to conclude, ‘...transition to upper primary stage is one of the major bottlenecks in the education of Muslim children’ (Ibid:14). The other concern is that around girls’ education, with only a very minuscule proportion of Muslims girls having completed secondary and graduate education. (Ibid:5). According to HDR 2011, incidence of out of school children is associated with poverty. Financial constraints turn out to be the main barrier to continuation of education, forcing children into child labour – higher among Muslims (3 %) compared to the national average (2.4%). (Government of India, 2011: 229). Involvement of Muslims in traditional occupations (carpet, glass, locks, brassware, among others) that due to old technology attract child labour). (Ibid: 229). Overall, the literacy problem among Muslims is worst in UP, Bihar and West Bengal. (Ibid:185)

## 2.4 Employment

Worker population ratio (WPR) - the proportion of an economy’s working-age population that is employed – is a useful measure of the proportion of population that is actively contributing to the production of goods and services in the economy. Among major religious groups, HDR 2011 found WPR being comparable among Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs, but much lower in the case of Muslims. For example rural WFPR for Muslim women was only 25 per cent, compared to 70 per cent for Hindu women. This is surprising given how WPR is much higher for both SCs and STs, as compared to all, explained by HDR 2011 on account of the latter’s poverty, therefore ‘must work in order to survive’ (Government of India, 2011: 99).<sup>3</sup>

How about employment in the public sector, at national and state level? According to data collected by the Sachar Committee, Muslims represented only 4.9 per cent of all employees (in central and state governments). Their representation in central PSU, at 3.3 per cent was only slightly bettered for those in state PSUs, at 10.8 %. (Government of India 2006: 165). Overall public sector employment data showed better representation in lower rungs (poor in higher managerial levels), and in university jobs, especially non- teaching, and in clerical positions in Postal department and the Railways. There was a big problem about data availability - complete data was received only from Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Only Andhra Pradesh had close to population share representation in jobs. Other better performing states were Karnataka (at 70 per cent of population share), Gujarat (at 59 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (at 57 per cent). (Ibid: 170) But there were vast variations across levels with better representation at lower than higher levels, and also across departments and

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<sup>3</sup> The Sachar Committee pointed to the lower participation of Muslim women in economic activities, as the reason for this poor WPR among Muslims (rural WFPR for Muslim women was only 25 per cent, compared to 70 per cent for Hindu women) explained on account of high dependency rate among Muslims due to a higher share of younger population among Muslim women. (Ibid....).

agencies - Education, Home, and Transport (that typically have large numbers of ‘foot soldiers’ - teachers, constables and drivers and conductors), allowed for a better representation of Muslims at lower ranks. These findings are confirmed by a study of the Sachar Committee as part of its evaluation, of recruitment through state civil service commissions over previous 5 year by select northern states. Hindus-General category was over-represented across the states, while Muslims, along with SC and ST, were severely under represented. (Ibid: 174).

## 2.5 How are poor outcome explained?

Overall, the extent of Muslim exclusion then is all-round and deep-seated. ‘...the all India pattern that emerges is of a community steeped in poverty, having low educational attainment, bereft of land and other immovable assets, and largely dependent on self employment in low income activities.’ (Fazal & Kumar, 2012:195). What are the popular explanations for the poor outcomes?

Let’s start with education, where Muslims do particularly badly. The received wisdom, reflecting long-standing stereotypes about the community, has been that Muslims are not interested in modern education, rather they prefer to send their children to *madrasas*, and are particularly reluctant to send their girls out to schools. (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2013:4). The Sachar report made the point that there is a great deal of evidence now to show that Muslims are as keen to send their children to schools as any other community, but that they are prevented from doing so for a variety of reasons. As to *madrasas*, the report showed that actually only a minuscule population of Muslims prefer *madrasas*, and that too as other avenues of education are not available close by. The report cites, for example, a recent study to make the point that economic circumstance of households has a major role to play in determining schooling outcome. It explains, school enrolment for different communities is significantly affected by the local level of development (e.g., availability of schools and other infrastructure) and the educational status of parents. (Government of India, 2006: 58).

The Sachar report demonstrates, using analysis of time trends that despite overall improvement in educational status, the rate of progress has been the slowest for Muslims. This has meant that the gap between Muslims and other groups has widened since Independence, and particularly since the 1980s. Sachar report attributed this to the inability of Muslims to reap the benefits of planning, noting that while progressing through the operation of trickle down or percolation effect, Muslims have gradually slipped further and further behind other SRCs, (Ibid: 84). It concluded that survey of changes in educational patterns across SRCs suggest that SCs and STs have reaped at least some advantages of targeted government and private action supporting their educational progress. (Ibid: 86). These are about affirmative action – the policy of reservation in educational institutions in proportion to their share of the population. There is nothing like this for Muslims, at least at the national level.

Regarding poor representation in public sector employment, Sachar report noted the general perception among Muslims alleging discrimination against them, in procedures (such as unhelpful eligibility criteria), practices (unrepresentative selection boards), and a general sense of discrimination in selection processes, as result of absence of Muslims in positions of authority, to raise their voice. This, the report noted, meant lack of any concerted focus at best and prejudice at worst, leading to denial of Muslims their rightful share of services, even

in grade IV positions where high qualifications are not required. (Ibid: 20-21) Given the salience of politics of patronage in India, especially in states with large Muslim populations, (such a Uttar Pradesh, refer Chandra, 2006 on this), this does not seem like a far-fetched grievance. As for higher positions, where there are high eligibility criteria and laid down procedures, Sachar report proposed, based on data provided by the Union Public Service Commission, that the biggest challenge was not enough Muslim youth opting to apply, indicating a possible sense of alienation of Muslim youth from the mainstream. (Government of India, 2006: 165-66). The relevant question then is, what is behind this?

Lastly, Muslim access to public services and development programmes, especially the many beneficiary oriented schemes, and those that offer direct and sizeable benefits to the poor is poor. (Ibid: 178) These include those for housing, livelihood and employment, in rural as well as urban areas, health and nutrition schemes, social security schemes such as pension, maternity and other benefits and the like. Similar is the case with access to civic amenities and infrastructure. Muslims being forced into slums, and increasingly ghettoised, and the poor provision of services in these slums (missing health centres, *anganwadis*, and school; ill kept roads, lack of piped water and sanitation; poor electricity coverage and that of banks for credit provision); large staff shortages there, or at least staff absence, combined with the negative attitude of staff posted there, result in overall poor working of those services for the inhabitants of the slums. There is little effort too to track and measure quality of service, resulting in poor outcome. Perceptions among Muslims about why there is such poor access and uptake, blamed poor awareness among the community about these programmes and widespread discrimination in provision of services, such as when Muslims are hindered, rather than facilitated, in getting their caste certificates to avail schemes. (Government of India, 2006: 23-24). Perceptions also attributed poor reach of the services to Muslims to low participation of Muslims in the political process, especially at the local level, in *panchayats* and block *samitis*, including of women. (Ibid: 188).

### 3.0 The theoretical literature

3.1 What does the theoretical literature on poverty, marginalisation and exclusion, and their empirical counterparts from India, say? How does Muslim exclusion differ from that of other communities? What, theoretically, are the drivers and the facilitators of exclusion, and what does theory say on countering those? It is these questions we will engage with in this current section. We will begin with examining how exclusion of Muslims in India has been framed, and then try to locate it within the wider literature on exclusion of specific social groups, in an attempt to pull out comparable and contrasting themes. The effort will be to evaluate whether existing ways of understanding the phenomenon are adequate, and whether they help explain the range of dimensions of the problem, or are there large gaps in understanding that need to be explored.

It is often claimed that the poor are the same everywhere, and suffer similar disabilities. But being a poor from a Muslim background poses its own set of challenges. A variety of factors have been identified to explain the observed relative deprivation among Muslims in India. As Basant argues, these include differentials in endowments across social groups; actual or perceived discrimination; and behaviour patterns or attitudes and supply of educational and employment opportunities. (Basant, 2012: 4) Thus poor Muslims are further burdened: they suffer problems faced by the poor generally – poor assets, poor capabilities, and active discrimination by state and social forces, wanting to maintain the status quo. On top of this, poor Muslims face the additional disabilities specific to belonging to the Muslim community.

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Sachar report used the framework of *identity, security and equity*, to explain the multi-dimensional nature of Muslim exclusion. In essence it showed that problems faced by Muslims relate to a combination of identity, security and equity related concerns – and that these three overlap and feed into each other in myriad ways, to create the lived experiences of exclusion faced by Muslim communities. (Ibid:11) To take an example, fact of one's Muslim identity means that, for Muslim youth, finding a room to rent in mixed habitation settlements, or being able to land a job in a company is increasingly becoming difficult. Frequent and periodic violence against the community in riots or through discriminatory actions by the police, means that the youth, in this case, are constantly in a state of siege, resulting in poor mobility or poor ability to access education opportunities, especially for girls. (Ibid: 14) Exclusion, of course, most directly impacts what are called 'equity' concerns. In the case of education, for example, these are about poor availability of school infrastructure in Muslim concentrated areas, poor quality of education provided, including insensitive text books, poverty coming in the way of children fully utilising the opportunities that are available, and low perceived benefits from education. (Ibid: 15) Implication is that efforts to ameliorate the conditions too must take the multidimensionality of poverty/well-being into account.

3.2 In the literature such exclusion – along identity lines – has been defined as 'horizontal inequality' (as opposed to vertical). Horizontal Inequality (HI) exists among groups (based on ascriptive criteria, caste or religion for instance) persisting over long periods, trapping people, generation after generation, in a situation of poverty. These also might give rise to social instability, in extreme cases driving inter-group conflicts. HIs, explain its proponents, are multidimensional - main dimensions being economic, social, political and cultural - and the interactions among the dimensions and the elements within them are important factors determining persistent deprivations of groups. Lack of access to education (a social inequality) for example may lead to low incomes (an economic one) and both may be responsible for and also caused by lack of political power. (Stewart & Langer, 2007:5). In explaining persistence of deprivations, the authors use a framework in which complementarities between the productivity and accumulation of different types of capital (physical and human, for example) tend to lead to self-perpetuating cycles of success and failure, particularly given the asymmetric social capital between different identity groups. By contrast, Vertical Inequality, or inequality among all individuals or households in a society, is also typically persistent (that is, a continuously high Gini coefficient), yet individuals or families may move in and out of poverty, in what has been defined as 'churning'. (Ibid: 5)

HI is useful concept to understand how different social groups (black and white in the US, or Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland, and northern and southerners in Ghana) seem to be locked in perpetuating cycles of deprivation or privilege, and why these differences tend to be so sticky. Thus groups that start in a privileged position are able to accumulate more, having higher returns to assets and thus sustain their privilege, while those who start in an underprivileged position fall into a vicious cycle, or poverty trap'. (Ibid: 12). HI has also been successful in explaining why societies with high levels of HI are prone to violence, because 'group inequality can be more damaging for individual well-being than similar inequality among a homogeneous population, forcing people in deprived groups to feel trapped in their situation, hence the feeling of grievance that then erupts in violence'. (Ibid: 5). What HI fails to do, however, is to unpack the blackbox to explain the processes of the persistence of higher



returns to assets of groups with a head start, compared to how the deprived are trapped. What determines persistence of the structures and the vicious (or virtuous) circles?

The concept of social exclusion is helpful here. While ‘the clustering of disadvantages of various kinds and the mutual reinforcement between the different dimensions, as in HI, helps explain the persistence of poverty among the socially excluded .....’ (Ibid: 8), it is the mechanisms driving processes of social exclusion that are critical here. A key one, as Naila Kabeer demonstrates, is the processes of cultural devaluation, through which the social exclusion of certain groups and categories by other dominant groups is perpetuated as a property of societal structures. ‘These processes draw on beliefs, norms and values to disparage, stereotype, invisibilise, ridicule and demean these ‘despised’ groups and categories and thereby explain and justify the denial of full rights of participation in the economic, social and political life of that society.’ (2006: ). Such processes, Kabeer explains, can have implication for demand by excluded groups for better provision, apart from affecting the supply of those, as they ‘have profound effects on the sense of self-worth and ‘sense of agency’ of those who are treated in this way and on the terms on which they are able to access the resources and opportunities in different spheres of their society’. (ibid: 8). These, among others go into making the lower return to assets for example, that along with low assets to begin with, explain the difference in per capita consumption between dalit and adivasi households and the rest of the population. (Ibid: 4, quoting Kozel and Parker, 2003). Similar processes may work for poor education attainment and livelihood opportunities. Similarly, ‘biased provision of basic services and lack of political voice – due to poor representation in elected councils, civil service jobs and in media (elements that have the power to undo ‘lower return’ and increase productivity, thus improve well being and livelihood prospects) are some of the other processes by which the economic vulnerability of excluded groups is reinforced. (Ibid: 11-12).

Arjan de Haan too highlights this focus of social exclusion on *process* and *relations* that create and recreate poverty, going beyond ‘social inequality’, in examining disparities between groups of people, by looking not only at structures and constraints on opportunity (low assets and low returns on those), but emphasise also the role of actors, in building and transforming these structures –through behaviour, attitudes and active denial. (1999: 37). The focus on the relational nature of deprivation emphasises the need to address the social processes and institutions that underlie deprivation, by asking why and how some groups are included and others excluded, while focusing on actors - who excludes? (Ibid: 34). The core here is the social aspect of deprivation – which, as de Haan explains, are not only the outcome of deprivation, but also an integral part of it. (see also GSDRN). This also connects to the other point that de Haan makes with regards social exclusion – about the necessity of the social exclusion framework being informed by a notion of rights. ‘Ultimately, social integration needs to refer to individuals’ and groups’ right to be integrated and the right to a society’s products and values.....’(Ibid: 38). The advantage in adopting a human rights approach is of course that ‘...beneficiaries of development are considered to be rights-holders, not subject to charity, and are thus able to make legitimate claims on governments for their rights to be respected’ (O’Neill et al: 2003: 3).

3.3 What are the policy implications of using HI and social exclusion prisms? According to de Haan, first is that emanating from stress on multi-dimensional nature of deprivation - pointing to the need to integrate sectoral approaches (de Haan, 1999:34). Improvements in

lives of the poor are possible only if there is progress on health, nutrition, social protection along with livelihood security. Stewart et al propose something similar when they argue for a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of exclusion – simultaneously address the multiple deprivations and their sources. (2007:....). Further, the specificity of intervention – targeting specific disabilities of excluded groups - is recognised, but this should best be done combining with ‘universal’ approaches – for, as Kabeer notes, universality builds solidarity/oneness, and brings the advantaged into policy connection with the disadvantaged – through equal provision of services for example. (2006: 14) Hass too proposes building a policy community supportive of fighting social exclusion. This also echoes notions of inclusive ‘political settlement’ and ‘social contract’ supportive of pro-poor growth. (see Leftwich 2008).

Other proposed interventions include those that might reduce inequalities in capital accumulation, so as to offset past discrimination and undo the discriminatory impact of past discriminations – through eliminating barriers in entry to education, provision of loans and credit, and access to housing loan and support. Equally important is improving the rate of return on the various types of capital. This last has been found possible by providing comprehensive support (eg. education support, along with that for better access to employment opportunities, possible through fair employment legislation such as quotas). And important towards enhancing the rate of return on capital, as Stewart et al have shown, is enhancing social capital – to enable the excluded to use networks and collective action. Clearly here it will be the use of ‘bridging’ social capital that will have greater impact. (Stewart, 2007)

The key role of politics (implying here rebooting the power imbalance to give the excluded more say and representation) in supporting and driving change here, has been a commonly stressed theme. Stewart et al show, in their successful cases how HIs were reduced in Malaysia and Northern Ireland, in the former case, a Malay-dominated national government pushed through a strong programme of affirmative action and redistributive policies to improve the condition of the Malays, compared to the Chinese dominant business class. In the case of Northern Ireland, it was a national government at Westminster and an external agency of the European Union government, that forced change on the ground, in opposition to local Protestant Unionist majority, to equalise education and employment opportunities and access to services for catholic republics. (Ibid: 9-31). In the final analysis, as Kabeer notes, it is the degree to which we are able to move from ameliorative to transformative approaches (through social/political mobilisation, empowerment and capacity building) allowing the greater participation of ‘excluded groups in the design of programmes and in the political decision-making processes...’ towards rewriting the social contract and crafting a new political settlement, that will determine the success of inclusive efforts. Building a policy community - with elements from NGOs, Governments, donors, organisations of the poor and corporations – is central here. (2006:14)

3.4 What of the specific literature on India? How has India’s poor performance on fighting exclusion and poverty been understood? Chronic Poverty Research Centre reminds us, the main weaknesses of the Indian effort at fighting poverty – despite the many tools and models used - have been, inter alia, the lack of disaggregated and dynamic analysis of poverty, preventing addressing its specific drivers and maintainers. There is also poor effort at targeting the poor, most programmes diffusely attempting to reach the nebulous poor.

Weak implementation capacity, poor commitment of resources, and local ‘capture’ by politician-bureaucrat-contractor nexus, combine with powerful structural maintainers – social hierarchies, and unequal land distribution, particularly – to create the failure that we see all around us. (CPRC, 2007: 4).

And Piron & Curran, in examining policies in India to address social exclusion, highlight the adverse role of political economy impairing effective implementation, pointing to the nature of the party system, patronage structures – including between the administration and elite groups – and the need for broad-based coalitions. This last connects to the point about ‘preconditions’ for policy adoption - , most important being recognition, among the policy community that ‘exclusion exists and is not acceptable as part of the ‘social contract’’. (2005: iii). This, of course, also links up to CPRC’s point about building a policy community around social protection. India’s principal failure, the authors show, has been poor implementation of equity enhancing policies, explained by Piron et al, due to a combination of technical constraints, including administrative barriers that prevent the poor accessing entitlements; a result of lack of genuine commitment to policy objectives by those charged with implementation; that itself is nurtured by prevalent institutionalised discrimination – caste, communal and corruption. It is thus elite interests (and this could take different form) that essentially sideline policies and sabotage their implementation. (Ibid:27-31). Among other things, the authors underline particularly, the role of social mobilisation among the poor themselves, as the way out.

Explaining the severe and durable disparity between social groups in Orissa, taking the case of *adivasi* in particular, Arjan De Haan, blames the lack of performance of those very pro-poor programmes on ‘.....a lack of accountability within the administrative system, and that the very disparities that the policies try to address, permeate the system of delivery responsible for these’. (de Haan, 2004:1). He shows how a narrow (political and administrative) elite in Orissa, with little incentive to open up its social base to the poor, implementing a slew of social programmes, all top down with little tribal (or indeed subaltern) participation, both within administrative systems and civil society, in a context where civil society generally, and *adivasi* association and voice particularly, is very weak, results in rendering many of the potentially-progressive programmes and institutions, ineffective at best and exploitative at worst. He reminds us, at the heart of this is the unrepresentative power structure in the state, that among other things, drives the push for industrialisation, focuses on investment in mineral sector – to the exclusion of agriculture, and performance for *adivasis* and *dalits* - and can afford to deny the incidence of acute malnutrition and hunger, and starvation deaths. (2004: 19-20).

In my own accounts of tribal destitution elsewhere, I have shown how rather than addressing the unequal power imbalance that sustains disparity and destitution, norms, practices and interests of key state agencies for tribal development, combine with poor control of the tribals over resources and opportunities that determine their lives, in the context of weak pro-poor policy commitment and weaker tribal ‘voice’, to reinforce the exploitative system - leading to exclusion from forest resources, poor access to land and other productive assets, and denial of services and entitlements. (Hassan. 2013a). Broadly similar dynamics work for tribals elsewhere in central India. It is similarly, the unrepresentative power structure that over-determines the durable failures of programmes to reach the *dalits* (poverty alleviation, nutrition, health and education, among others) resulting in the continuing poverty and

marginalisation of the poorest of the poor groups. Remarkable here is the fact that the elite tasked with implementing the many pro-poor programmes have little interest in reversing the unequal order that perpetuates the subservience of groups like dalits, to serve the interests of the rich. Central here is the role of identity-based exclusion behind marginalisation. As Hasan et al note, ‘Poverty accentuates social hierarchies of caste, religion and gender’. (Hasan et al, 2013:9).

### 3.5 What are the lessons from this for Muslim exclusion?

An assessment of the working of schemes for Muslims (4 years after Sachar report), based on qualitative research in three districts with large Muslim populations, had revealed serious drawbacks in the working of those schemes<sup>4</sup>. These were traced to a combination of factors: poor design of so-called flagships programmes for Muslim development, poor resourcing of the programmes, resulting in them being little more than symbolic gestures, if even that; and a weak institutional environment that prevents robust implementation – the last to include weak and adhoc structures and processes, and poor capacities of implementing agencies, combined with a pervasive inability on the part of those agencies to connect purposefully with Muslim groups and communities. (Centre for Equity Studies, 2011:40).

The evaluation reported that a handful of stand-alone schemes and projects, with modest budgets and coverage, and little thought for integrating those as a comprehensive programme for Muslim uplift tailored to the specific needs of the community, resulted in very little impact. There seemed little focused monitoring too, to check outputs and impact, indeed little disaggregated data collection and tracking. And rather than combining universal and targeting approaches, so as to target improvements in living conditions of Muslims using ‘universal’ development measures and approaches (not culturally-defined ones), so as to mainstream the community, the interventions, in the final analysis, though intended for Muslims and other minorities, became an area programme, with little especially for Muslims. Needless to add, in the absence of this, there was little support to improve capital accumulation or attempt to help increase returns on the capital, that could have helped undo the inequalities. The report, pointing to how unambitious the interventions have been, noted how ‘....diffidence at policy level to clearly focus on Muslims and their deprivations translates into active reluctance by implementing agencies on the ground, to target Muslims and the drivers of their deprivations..’. (Ibid: 41)

Hasan et al say much the same to explain the dismal outcomes for Muslims. Criticising the area approach of programmes for Muslims (MsDP particularly) rather than addressing their specific backwardness, and labelling them as minority programmes – demonstrating the anomaly at the heart of policy making for Muslims, targeting Muslims not as Muslims, but as Minorities, under the guise of unconstitutionality of programming along ‘communal’ lines. (Hasan, 2013:8) They point to the ‘...the failure (of the state) to enlarge the scope of state intervention and budgetary allocation to reverse (Muslim) deprivation’. (Ibid: 243). This is despite Sachar committee, as the authors note, having firmly succeeded in reconstructing the Muslim community as ‘developmental subjects’ of the state, rather than as a religious and cultural community’ (Ibid: 242).

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<sup>4</sup> Principal ones being Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP), 15 Point Programme and Scholarship Schemes

This then is the central failure of policy making for Muslims in India – inability to see Muslims as a legitimate subject of development, and by extension, of affirmative action policies. There have been many attempts by powerful policy bodies to get the Government to sharpen the Muslim focus of its ‘Minority’ programmes. But these have yielded little results, showing how entrenched the opposition is on implementation, but more dramatically at policy level. The National Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, in its memorandum on Muslim rights asked for the government to sharpen its Muslim focus. And the Standing committee of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment severely criticised the performance of Government on minority welfare, making the point that Ministry of Minority Welfare was not addressing the root of the problem highlighted in the Sachar report. (Hasan, 2013: 247). And yet moves proposing establishing Diversity Commission and Equal Opportunities Commission, made by the Government’s own Expert Group on Diversity Index to equalise opportunities, turned out to be non-starters for want of adequate political support, and proposals for a minority sub-plan, on the lines of Tribal Sub Plan and SC Special Plan, were shot down by the Planning Commission, arguing it would communalise the planning process, again citing constitutional hurdles. (Op Cit).

The evident limited policy commitment for Muslims clearly has implications for access of Muslims to entitlements and services on the ground. Evidence points to discrimination in public provision of services to Muslims, as well as play of market discrimination (in relation to employment), both formal and informal structures perpetuate this exclusion. (Hasan et al, 2013:9). There is a rich body of evidence pointing to the discrimination against Muslims in job market, even more than dalits, in the private sector, and particularly in the public sector. (R Jeery et al, 1997; Jeffrey C. 2010; Thorat SK et al, 2007; Thorat et al (Ibid); Basant R et al (eds)]. India-HDR provides some useful insights into how this discrimination plays out and what that implies for Muslims. In Government schools already plagued by poor performance, the under-representation of teachers belonging to excluded socio-religious groups (Muslims besides SC and ST) creates a social distance between teachers and students of the excluded community that is not conducive to learning and acquiring an education. For children of poorer backgrounds – where Muslims, along with SC and STs are over represented - private schools, with their steep fee structure are hardly an option, further widening the learning gap and subsequent inequality. (Government of India 2011: 12)

A recent case study of Muslim development experiences at multiple sites across the country makes much the same argument about social distance, when it reports that communal polarisation in Barabanki district combined with poor hold of Muslims over political/ bureaucratic power there enables discrimination by state agents (school teachers, panchayat workers) against poor Muslims, forcing most Muslims to withdraw their wards from government schools, and join *madrasas*, that themselves are not particularly effective centres of learning. On the other hand, absence of communal polarisation along with the presence of Muslim Anganwadi workers and ASHA workers in Murshidabad and Katihar, districts enables the (Muslim) community there to access services better while keeping the services relatively approachable to Muslims. (Trivedi, 2013: 233). The author concludes, ‘it is this communal character that induces discrimination in the form of social welfare schemes not reaching the Muslims.’ (Ibid: 235). The dominant power structures (in Barabanki in this case) use the communal card to monopolise bureaucratic and political power (panchayats elections) and that impacts the provision of services to poor Muslims, or not. Common to all four case studies in the said study, the author notes, is the ‘marked failure of the state in overcoming

hurdles put up by dominant classes in providing legitimate rights to ...Muslims' (Ibid: 238), the point of elite capture made by de Haan (2004)

Commenting on the apparent inability of national government to agree to a Muslims Sub Plan (on the lines of TSP and SCSP) and other tools to more directly target Muslims deprivations, Hasan et al note, 'the scepticism (has) more to do with fears of a political fallout than conceptual or constitutional doubts with regard to the efficacy of the sub-plan.' (2013: 246), pointing to the superior courts' having repeatedly rejected petitions questioning the legality of merit cum means scholarships (one of the major intervention for Minorities), arguing that they help to equalise opportunities for deprived sections, (Ibid: 248) to refute the point of unconstitutionality. Indeed, a handful of state governments (including Andhra Pradesh and Manipur recently and Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala in the past) have gone ahead and enacted affirmative action legislations for Muslims specifically, through creating sub-quotas for Muslim OBCs within the OBC quota for reservations in jobs and educational institutions, arguing that the entire OBC Muslim section was socially and educationally backward, and hence eligible for affirmative action under Art 15 (4) of the constitution. A political settlement has thus been crafted in those states – enabling access to entitlements for Muslims, in the process shoring up state legitimacy – in a way that has not happened elsewhere, especially in UP and Bihar and West Bengal, just to name a few major states. Hasan et al conclude thus that it is not that recognition of religious minorities for policy attention is not constitutionally acceptable, rather that 'it is still not politically acceptable, because it can lead to a majoritarian backlash..', pointing to the fear of Hindu rightwing blowback, to anything that targets Muslims directly. (Ibid: 247).

This low appetite for targeting 'Muslims' is an aspect of the communal character, more accurately communal polarisation of society. Scholars have shown, this itself is the product of repeated instrumental violence, especially in the 1980s and 1990, in the framework of the Ramjanmbhoomi movement. (Gayer & Jaffrolet, 2013: 316). Communal polarisation is a factor in enabling discrimination by the state and its actors against Muslims, and impacts the ability of Muslims to access rights and services equitably. Looking at the condition of Muslims across multiple cities, Gayer et al found that it was the absence (or presence) of communal violence (keeping other factors constant) that determined much of the resilience of Muslim communities (cosmopolitanism) in the peaceful cases (in Khozhikode and Bangalore, as opposed to Ahmedabad and Lucknow) – in the latter case resulting in ghettoisation of Muslims, resulting from organised violence, 'and only secondly of economic marginalisation or discrimination in the housing market'. (Ibid: 325) A similar conclusion is reported by Sachar report, based on a comparative study of access to basic services in four cities, three southern, with little history of communal violence and Lucknow with frequent violence providing the same evidence of wide variation in quantity and quality of services available to Muslim majority as opposed to Muslim minority localities, making the point that communal polarisation in Lucknow results in service providers weighing communal considerations in service delivery (to the disadvantage of Muslims), in ways that those in the southern cities do not. (Government of India, 2006: 149)

While the chief protagonist in this game of marginalisation of Muslims, through the instrumental use of violence) is the Bharatiya Janata Party's 'politics of polarisation', an equal accomplice, argue Hasan et al, is the Congress's 'politics of tokenism', that seeks 'to retain and bolster its Muslim constituency,' without any sincere effort at addressing their

deprivations and reducing inequalities'. (2013:248). And Gayer et al highlight this limited policy space for Muslims, when they point to the backlash by Hindu nationalist forces to the Sachar and Mishra committee reports and recommendations<sup>5</sup> framing the actions on the reports taken by the UPA government – in the case of the R Mishra Committee report, not even being tabled in the Parliament so far. (2013: 4).

Part of the problem is the nation-making process and the routes to social policy taken. Group-based provisioning – affirmative action policies, including reservations in educational institutions and public sector jobs, as well as priority in welfare schemes – are established instruments of social policy in India. Indeed the importance of these affirmative action policies to equalising opportunity in the country, is such that a total of 50 % of all public sector jobs are reserved for various groups – SC, ST and OBC. But such social justice agenda, argue Muslim activists and political thinkers, are denied to Muslims. They trace it to the set up of the constitution. Political safeguards (for minorities) in constitutional drafts and deliberations encompassed provisions for reserved seats in legislatures, quotas in government employment, representation in the Cabinet and the creation of administrative machinery to ensure supervision and protection of minority rights. All minority groups (religious as well as so called 'backward' sections) hitherto preferred were included within the ambit of these provisions in initial proposals and in the first draft of the Constitution published in 1948. In a remarkable reversal, however, by the time of the final draft of the Constitution, religious minorities were excluded from the purview of all political safeguards, which came to be restricted mainly to the Scheduled Castes and tribal groups<sup>6</sup>. (Bajpai, 2002: 4) what accounted for this? Rochana Bajpai explains:

'in the nationalist legitimating vocabulary, the political ideals of secularism, democracy, justice and national unity were construed in ways that precluded political safeguards for minority groups. Political safeguards were regarded as legitimate only for a temporary period and for a specific purpose, that of ameliorating the social and economic disabilities of the so-called 'backward' sections- the Scheduled Castes and Backward Tribes. In this context, demands for (religious) minority safeguards, undermined, in the eyes of nationalists, national unity by endangering the political integrity of the nation, by inhibiting the development of a common national identity, and by undermining the creation of a modern, secular democratic citizenship. (Ibid:13)

Recent readings of these choices made by the founding father, are more critical. Ansari claims, 'by refusing to define citizenship in ethno-religious terms, the leaders denied deep-rooted cleavages within society, (Ansari: ), a point supported by Banerjee who argues that the Indian National Congress might have been inspired by a homogenized, unitary, cultural nationalism that created much deeper conflict among communities than it solved, referring to the language movement dramatically pointing to these social and political cleavages and conflicts.(2007:25-26).<sup>7</sup> As to political and economic safeguards, rather than being

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<sup>5</sup> Organiser article ....

<sup>6</sup> Zoya Hasan...

<sup>7</sup> Other factors contributing to the sudden change of stand on minority safeguards for Muslims were, the weakening of all prominent minority formations (Muslim League, Sikh Panthic Party and Akali Dal), due to splits and migration, thus removing any significant opposition to the INC position in the Constituent Assembly. According to Retzlaff, had the initial timetable for the drafting of the constitution, which called for its completion in fall of 1947, been adhered to, the Constitution would have included political safeguards for  
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temporary, they have endured and look to do so in the foreseeable future. That reluctance of the nationalist leadership to acknowledge Muslim safeguards, continues to this day. This is despite clear evidence now, that Muslims, at least the poorer among them, are falling behind the rest of the population on all counts of development, and need support. So while dalits and adivasis face very weak implementation of social policies around safeguards and affirmative action for them, in the case of Muslims, policies and safeguards for improvement – affirmative action policies, promotional schemes and policies and the like – themselves are missing. There is ample evidence emerging pointing to safeguards and affirmative action policies for SCs and STs resulting in improved outcomes for the groups, whereas absence of similar safeguards for Muslims means equally marginalised sections among the latter are either catching up very slowly or not at all. (Gayer et al, 2013: 3, 316.)

Indeed, it is not just state action for Muslims that is shaped by fears of a Hindu backlash, rather, Gayer et al argue, the fear of the Hindu backlash also tempers Muslim political action, claiming ‘Indian Muslims have generally been reluctant to form their own political parties, fearing that their political mobilisation on a communal basis would reinforce religious polarisation in the country’ (2013:5), concluding, ‘the feelings of insecurity of Indian Muslims have nurtured a minority complex which helps to explain the political inhibitions of this population..’ (Ibid: 6). Of course, there are practical problems in putting up a Muslim political formation, as Hasan points to, quoting Syed Shahabuddin<sup>8</sup>: ‘...Muslim political parties alone, with their limited areas of influence and their small share of the votes of the Muslim community, could not create a national consensus. (Hasan 1997:273). But the real rub has been the force of the Hindu backlash.

The comparison here with backward castes is interesting. Hasan, notes how backward castes ‘neutralised their weaknesses .....by the use of political mobilisation, using their numbers and voting strength to secure attention and capture political power, as in UP and Bihar...’ most in opposition to the Hindu Right, (Ibid: 285). This has fundamentally reconfigured political power in the region, a phenomenon observers have called ‘second wave of democratisation’ (Yadav, 1999; Corbridge & Harriss, 2000; Chandra, 2004). On the other hand, whenever Muslims have asserted themselves politically or in the economic sphere, they have suffered a wave of severe backlash, mostly accompanied by violence, with the complicity of the state and its agents - police, bureaucracy and judiciary. (Hasan, 1997:285).<sup>9</sup> The hostile reception to the Muslim Convention and the Majlise Mushawarat (1962)<sup>10</sup>, as an alternative formation of the Muslims, illustrates, ‘how the political process itself imposed constraints on the articulation of minority grievances and their redressal through formal procedures’. (Op Cit)

In the circumstance, Muslim parties have, Shahabuddin notes, rather than acting on their own, at best, serve(d) as faithful and reliable channels to communicate the ‘Muslim consensus’ and have some of their demands accepted by national parties’(quoted in Hasan

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religious minorities. [R. Retzlaff, 'The Problem of Communal Minorities in the Drafting of the Indian Constitution', in R.N. Spann (ed.), *Constitutionalism in Asia* (Bombay, 1963), p. 66] quoted in

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<sup>9</sup>A PUDR fact finding report on Delhi riots of 1987 concluded :‘Hindus tend to raise their eyebrows at the assertions of an equal status by a community which they have been used to look down upon as their inferior in the post –independence era’. (Hasan, 1997:287)

<sup>10</sup> Muslim Convention

1997: 273). Weak political voice has meant, among other things, absence of compensatory programmes for Muslims (affirmative action) resulting in Muslims being forever locked in backwardness. This is behind ‘the lack of Muslim voice in governance bodies, at grassroots and management and policy levels,’ pointed out by the Sachar report (2007:24), and manifests in the form of low participation in local self government bodies resulting in developmental benefits failing to reach areas of Muslim concentration (Ibid:23); poor representation in public sector jobs; cases of non-inclusion of Muslims in voter lists (Ibid: 24-25), preventing citizens the right to cast their votes while also denying them public benefits; and in the unjust manner of carving out electoral constituencies so as to fragment Muslim majority areas or turn them into ‘reserved constituencies’, where only SC or ST or women can contest elections. On the whole, poor political participation of Muslims, prevents voice being raised in their favour. (Ibid:21)

#### 4. What of the comparative picture?

4.1 While outcome for Muslims is clearly poor relative to other social groups, there are variations in this picture across states. Kulkarni, based on NCAER-HDI Survey 1993-94, shows that on educational achievement and enrolment for instance, Muslim males do better than or at least as well as Hindu-Other Castes (OC) males in some states — Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Muslim females are also close to the corresponding indicators for Hindu-OC females, in these states except Gujarat. Indeed, in Andhra Pradesh, Muslims seem to be even slightly better off than Hindus. In Kerala, Muslims have made significant progress so much so that the large differences that existed in educational achievements (literacy in age group 50+, middle school education in ages 25+) in the past, have recently narrowed down quite significantly. On the other hand, it is Muslims in northern and eastern parts of the country – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam, and Punjab and Haryana - that are far behind the rest of the population. (Kulkarni,2002:13). This variance, in Muslim outcomes across states, exists in other fields too.

Taking poverty, Sachar report shows how urban poverty is most pervasive amongst both Muslims and SCs/STs, generally, but it is in Orissa, MP, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and AP that Muslim-HCRs is considerably higher than the state average. In other states, the difference (vis a vis other communities) is less acute. And rural poverty among Muslims is significantly high in West Bengal and Assam. (Government of India 2006:158) As for inequality generally, state-wise estimates of the Gini coefficient are somewhat high in Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, but substantially higher in Kerala and Haryana, and least in Assam, Bihar and Jharkhand. (Ibid: 156)

On employment, WPR, representing level of unemployment, also shows this variance, with Muslims doing better compared to other SRCs in several states - Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, UP and West Bengal. There is also variance in employment across sectors, with higher Muslim share in Manufacturing, Trade and Self-employment, as compared to other SRCs (Ibid: 106). In public employment too, the overall picture is a dampner - in no state does the representation of Muslims in public sector match their population share. Yet, Andhra Pradesh does significantly better (Muslims percentage of jobs there is close to their 12 per cent share of population) than Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. Only three other states, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, return

share of jobs as more than 50 per cent of their population shares, at 70, 59 and 57 per cent respectively. (Ibid: 171). And while there is, overall, poor coverage of Muslims under different beneficiary oriented programmes (Ibid: 177-78), and there is no clear trend of specific states delivering these services better to their Muslim populations, there is a body of literature, some qualitative case studies, others survey based, that show significant variation in quantity and quality of services available to Muslims (Ibid: 149) as well as in wellbeing indicators (proxies being mainstreaming of Muslim communities, termed ‘urban cosmopolitanism’ by its authors. (Gayer et al 2013: 325) – across the North-South divide.

4.2 What explains the variance? In the literature, poor achievement in education and literacy among Muslims (and the large Hindu-Muslim differential) has been attributed to multiple factors - lower tendency among Muslims to pursue academic or white-collar careers because of traditional association with skilled manual work; tendency to send children to religious rather than secular schools; backwardness of the community as such; sense of insecurity, and discrimination in schools. (Hasan 1997, Ahmad, 1981; Saxena, 1983). Much of these factors apply to Northern states with poor education achievements. It is historical developments in those states that have been identified as determining the specific dynamic (of the push away from education because of poor incentive structures, and discrimination in schools, and corresponding pull towards skilled manual work for instance) at play, singly or jointly, resulting in poor education outcomes.

Saxena shows, based on education attainment data in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early parts of 20<sup>th</sup> century that Muslims were close to average everywhere, and better than average in what is now Uttar Pradesh (1983). Kulkarni argues therefore that ‘Muslim disadvantage in North India, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, is relatively a recent development’, attributing this to a variety of factors : decline in the position of Urdu from late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, under British rule and especially after Independence with Hindi replacing Urdu as the language of government. Partition (and associated migration, mostly from North, central and eastern regions) removed the professional classes from among Muslims in India. (Hasan, 1997:289). This further reduced the section that uses education most because of its interest in professions and government jobs (Ahmed, 1981:1461). It also removed the middle class and intelligentsia (educated classes), thus depriving common Muslims of role models that help in engendering the push for education. (Saxena, 1983). The complete switch to Hindi as the language of administration in UP and Bihar, and other northern provinces, was the final nail, so to speak. (Hasan 1997:288) These developments had the combined effect of dampening ‘.....aspirations of white-collar employment’ among Muslims in Northern-Central-Eastern India. (Ibid: 22).

South and Western states faced less of this ‘skimming off’ of Muslim educated classes, with only a small section migrating out. Along with this, there is evidence that there was greater community effort for educational development in the south (in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu), along with affirmative action policies in educational institutions and jobs for Muslims in all southern states, much before anything like this in Northern states (Hasan 1997: ). Further, expanding employment opportunities in the Gulf, for those in Kerala, but also Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, provided incentives and motivation for Muslims in the South to seek education. (Ibid:288). And Muslim trading communities, established in Western India, also opened up economic development and demand for white collar jobs.

(Ibid: 23). Lastly southern states never faced the loss on account of Urdu language that Muslims in the North faced, as Urdu was never the language of administration there.

4.3 While it is true that there seems to be a North-south divide in outcomes for Muslims, it is equally true that there is a North-south divide in outcomes generally. Southern states, it is widely acknowledged now, are better at delivering the goods, including those for the weaker sections. Northern states, on the other hand, are recognised as having failed to deliver to the poor. (Sen & Dreze 2002, World Bank 2008, Government of India 2011). What, according to the literature, explains this north-south dichotomy? In trying to understand the differential on Muslim outcomes, it will be important to factor in the extent to which the North-South divide on pro-poor outcomes generally, accounts for that specifically on Muslims.

There is an influential body of work explaining the success of southern states in enabling inclusive development. Taking the cue from Dreze & Sen, they point to the particular role of ‘determined public action / political activism’ in enabling this. (1997:17). According to the authors, the central argument explaining existing inequality in educational achievement across states is attributable to ‘variation in efforts’ to expand basic education in different states. (Op Cit 1995). Central to this argument is the role of social movements and public action to undo the lack of political power of socially disadvantaged groups (or agency of scheduled tribe/scheduled caste/Muslim population). (Ibid:21). In all southern states, the narrow domination of Brahmin caste was challenged early on, with the effect that since Independence, political base of power in these states has generally been middle castes and classes, even lower classes, resulting in greater focus on inclusive policies, as compared to the North, where Brahmin domination was challenged only recently. (Dreze & Sen, 2002). India HDR explains: Kerala achieved significant leaps in terms of its human development indicators - despite relatively low levels of economic growth and per capita income in the first four decades after Independence – largely due to the ‘active role of the state government’ to establish well-functioning public health and education systems’. (Government of India 2011:29) Crucially for our discussion, the benefits of these ‘are equally shared by the lower castes also’.

Similar efforts by the government in Tamil Nadu, to ensure the effectiveness of public health and education system, could be traced to the Dravidian movement in that state, that had as its dual objective, educating all and eradicating superstition. This created conditions for the state government to provide opportunities to all, irrespective of caste, and resulted in higher enrolment rates for SC and OBC children. It is, explain the authors, a combination of social movements (of the middle and lower castes) and technical interventions by the state that explains better than average health, education, and nutritional status in southern states. (Mehrotra, 2006:30, quoted in Government of India, 2011:29). (see also Harriss:1987 on political regime) Weak or failed attempts at engendering ‘social movements’ in UP and Bihar among others, despite increased public expenditure there in infrastructure social services and social protection, creates the enduring exclusion of the poor in the northern states. (Ibid). and borrowing from the Southern India example, Asadullah et al point to the following pre-conditions for pro-poor change: low gender gap in the labour market, to facilitate household investment decisions in female schooling; equal access to public infrastructure (such as availability of credit for investment in education) by various social groups; apart from higher spending to create opportunities, policies targeting disadvantaged and/or difficult-to-reach

social groups, to equalise opportunities; and finally presence of affirmative action policies to weaken the adverse effect of discriminatory factors such as caste and religion. (2010:21).

4.4 Let's look at some of these cases more closely using a Muslim lens. Karnataka, with a Muslim population percentage of 12.23 per cent (2011 census) had a large Muslim presence in Bangalore the capital city, as well as some of the districts. Pre-Independence, the ruling Wodeyar princes followed liberal policies towards education and development that benefitted Muslims too. These policies created a push for education in the state, which post-Independence, led to the mushrooming of educational institutions by the states many communities, including Muslims. Principal here being the Al-Ameen educational Trust (estd. 1966), that set up a chain of schools and professional colleges, contributing to the spread of education among Muslims. Observers have noted community action in other arenas too – such as in delivery of civic services, as by the Hira Welfare Organisation (in Muslim dominated Sivajinagar in Bangalore) to fill the gap left by the absence of state there. (Arif, 2012:307). Similarly the Karnataka Muslim Muttahida Mahaz (KMMM), an umbrella organization of major Muslim NGOs and organisations acts to mobilise and aggregate Muslim aspirations and demands, and engage with political parties and state and civil society actors.

Alongside, growth of backward class politics, and the drive to marginalise the dominant Lingayat, Vokkaligas and Brahmins castes, led to the Congress government (under Devraj Urs, 1972-80) introducing reservations in jobs and education. Muslims as a whole were included in the Backward Classes list. (Ibid: 291). Affirmative action programmes for backward classes was further formalised in 1986, under Ramakrishna Hegde - also bringing in Muslims low caste within the OBC list - and further by Veerappa Moily (1994-95). Karnataka was also the first state in the country to set up a Minorities Commission, and a separate ministry for minority welfare (in 2002). Earlier, and much before such a thing had been attempted in Delhi with the Sachar Committee, Karnataka had established, in 1994, the high power committee on socio-economic and educational survey of religious minorities, as a means to map the deprivations faced by minorities/Muslims in the state. (Op Cit). Consequently, the high representation of Muslims in government in Karnataka is not a new phenomenon. In 1950, Muslims made up 6.3 % of state population, but accounted for 10.6 % of open government positions. In 1971, they represented 7.1 % of state judiciary. (Ibid:292). And even though observers have noted how the positive trend for Muslims in government and public life might be reversing of late - there are no Muslim MPs from Karnataka in 2009 Lok Sabha, and only a handful in State Assembly and Bangalore Municipal Corporation - yet presence of senior Muslim leaders ensures that Muslims are not excluded from their share of public goods.

The case of Kerala is more famous. There is first the vigorous civic culture among Kerala Muslims, mirroring the civicness of the state as a whole (refer McKibben, 1996 on civicness in Kerala) with influential organisations such as Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham and Muslim Education Society, emphasising secularist pro-education agenda including for girls. These are themselves the outcome of social reform movements, under Mujahid reformists and Wakkom Maulvi, taking cues from Ezhava social reforms under SNDP and Nairs under Nair Service Society that transformed Kerala society as a whole. As Radhika Kanchana explains, it is the reformist Islamists leadership that has set the agenda among Muslims – with a stress on 'moral as well as socio-economic advancement', engendering aspiration of local Muslim community to progress and compete – especially with Hindu and Christian communities.

This virtuous circle has led, among other things, to the mushrooming of Muslim educational institutions, of which Farouq college Kozhikode, is only the best known. Kozhikode, the headquarters of Kerala Muslims, is an educational hub and has a rich print tradition that, along with the almost universal literacy rate in the state, encourages wide-ranging public debate and discussions. The library movement, literary clubs and local trade associations, encourage a robust associational life, allowing bridging (Muslims with the rest of society), as much as bonding (within Muslims groups) capital, enabling Kerala Muslims to make use of the opportunities that are available all around. (2012: 264-265. Also see Hasan, 1997:288)

Opportunity itself was created first under the liberal and modernising vision of past rulers – Travancore Rajas – who invested heavily in education and social justice programmes, benefiting all sections of society. These policies were carried over into post Independence era, with reservations bought early on for backward classes – these included Muslims in their fold, helping create avenues for their advancement. That Kerala Muslims have had a strong entrepreneurial tradition that they could call upon, and the opportunities that the Gulf provided for employment, helped further improve opportunities for Kerala Muslims, creating the pull for education and modernity. But it is in the realm of politics that Kerala's success with its Muslim population must be seen ultimately.

Kerala Muslims, according to Kanchana, 'have more leverage than Muslims in the rest of India', attributing it to the particular political culture of the state, with its coalitional bi-party politics, requiring both the Left Democratic Front (led by CPI ML with strong support among Christians) and United Democratic Front (led by Congress, who Ezhavas support) formations, including parties and religious organisations allied to them, to cooperate, eschew excesses and be mutually accountable. This creates a virtuous circle all around, with all sections, caste and religious groups, getting their share of benefits. (2012:283). This also enables Kerala Muslims to actively participate in the political process, through Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), but also other parties. (Ibid:283). In one of the exceptions of Indian politics, IUML, a party purportedly of and for Muslims, has held important portfolios in state cabinet, such as education, and been behind the setting up of Calicut university, creation of a separate Muslim majority district of Mallapuram, and plays the king maker between the two political formation. Its philanthropic activities, such as for investment in education, through its affiliate, Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre (KMCC) which has branches in all Gulf countries and the UK, helps it further consolidate its position among its constituents. The success of IUML then, as the political voice of Muslims of Kerala, is best explained in the words of Wilkinson, when he notes – like large minority groups in democracies elsewhere, Muslims can serve as a crucial voting bloc in India. That there is greater division among Hindu voters in southern states "made Muslims a pivotal swing group in the south very early on" in a manner that was not possible elsewhere (Ibid:....)

Kanch Ilaiah, in a similar effort to explain poor outcomes for Muslims in Gujarat compared to their positive 'gradual upward mobility in all walks of life' in Andhra Pradesh, comes to similar conclusions about the crucial role of political organisation. He notes: 'the communitarian identity of Andhra Pradesh Muslims was stronger with visible communication channels such as their own newspapers, TV channels, a political party (All India Majlis Ittehadul Muslameen) and other channels of mobilisation'. 'Gujarat Muslims', he notes, 'do not have their own newspapers to represent their problems, culture and history', adding

‘identity formation of Muslims in Gujarat was weak’ (2013:76) The same could be said of Muslims other northern states – UP, Bihar, West Bengal, among them.

## 5. Intra-regional variations: the limited space for manoeuvring

5.1 It is clear from this reading that the policy space opened up in southern states – allowing for creating equity in access and equalising of opportunities for middle and lower castes, also facilitated access by Muslims to those services. These dynamics created conditions for reservations for Muslims in government jobs and education, in Kerala and Karnataka as Muslims, and in Tamil Nadu, as backward classes, besides the gains that Muslims made from improvements in public health and school education, and contribute to the better Muslim attainments. Perhaps what would be useful here is to see intra-regional differences, and how contributory factors made use of improved pro-poor policy spaces to create outcomes. Likewise, it will be instructive to compare intra-regional dynamics in North India, to test how the limitations imposed by absence of social mobilisation in the North, coupled with the fear of the Hindu backlash is being negotiated political actors among Muslims in UP and Bihar.

Despite the success of Kerala Muslims in education, political participation, and civic activity, data shows under-representation of Muslims in government jobs or in the professions. (On an average 10 per cent representation, against state population ratio of 24 per cent, HPC, 2006:170) Indeed high education does not result in high WPR for Kerala Muslims too - 23.2 per cent compared to 32.3 per cent for state as a whole. A pull down factor, according to Fazal et al seems to be extreme low participation of Muslim women (5.9 per cent), although Muslim male WPR too falls behind the rest (42 per cent compared to 50.2 per cent). Alongside, there is high incidence of self employment and casualisation of work. (Fazal et al, 2013:191-94). Closer examination of education data reveals even the success with education is limited to schooling, with poor showing for higher education, flagging up issue of poor retention. This then is the curious case of Muslims of Kerala: very high literacy, somewhat close to state average, but poor education attainment, low retention rate, and low appetite for higher education (secondary and college). Part of the story, might be poor incentive for higher education, due to the call if the Gulf. But there are stories of discrimination too, in landing public sector jobs. This, despite a separate quota for Muslims (under OBC) in Kerala (10% for class-I and 12 % in class-IV jobs. (Kanchana, 2012:278). In this context, what explains better outcomes for Muslims in neighbouring Karnataka (such as relatively better representation in government jobs – 8.9% for lower positions against state Muslim population ratio of 12.2 %, Government of India, 2006:170), especially in the absence of a Muslim political formation to represent their problems and voice their demands.

We have seen that, compared to the south, outcomes for Muslims in the North are very poor, in states such as UP, Bihar, and West Bengal. Closer examination reveals fine differences here too, in outcome terms (education, employment among others) as well as regards contributory factors - whether in terms of better political organisation and participation; better representation in government, or better community action). Dasgupta in examining the failure in UP of Muslims and other Urdu speakers to secure official status for the language, notes ‘.... large part of the language conflict in Uttar Pradesh is influenced by memories of past conflicts transmitted to Hindu and Muslim communities by the cultural and political leaders.’ (Dasgupta, 1970:150). This has resulted in all governments dragging their feet on giving



Urdu its due share, many senior political leaders being even openly hostile to the idea. (Hasan, 1997: ) And while Bihar has been no playing field for Urdu – demands were strongly opposed, and riots occurred, in Ranchi in 1967 - the state and political class there have been more accommodating – Urdu was made (in August 1989) the second official language of the state. What explains this difference?

According to Paul Brass, there are multiple factors at play - firstly, Urdu and Muslim culture were more entrenched in UP than in Bihar, therefore the Urdu debate in UP got willy nilly mixed up with larger Hindu-Muslim questions, in a way the issue did not in Bihar, where the subject was presumably less threatening for the Hindu majority. Secondly, Bihar was more linguistically heterogenous than UP, and the question of Urdu was seen as part of the wider demand by linguistic minorities – Bengali, Oriya, Maithli, Santhali et al – rather than just about Urdu. Equally significant, Muslims, right from Independence, Brass claims, have been better represented in Bihar Government than in UP, including at crucial positions, thus helping the cause of Urdu. (1974:121) What explains other differences – such as better political organisation among Muslims in Bihar; better representation of Muslims in government employment in Bihar (such as in Education department. HPC, 2006:172), and their better coverage in the state OBC lists (Ibid:197).

Indeed, up until 2006 when the Sachar committee report was published, Bihar was the only state, apart from the southern ones, that had special arrangement for affirmative action for Muslims. Under the 'Karpuri formula' of 1978 (amended after bifurcation of Bihar in ), backward classes were split into Other BC (OBC) and Most BC (MBC) and 13 per cent and 18 per cent quota respectively, reserved for them in educational institutions and government jobs. Important for our discussion, Muslim caste groups, depending on their level of development, were included in both the OBC and MBC lists – 9 in state's OBC list and 27 in MBC.<sup>11</sup> Backward Muslim groups are included in the central as well as state OBC lists of most states. But that, Muslims claim, does not go far enough for them, as poor Muslims then have to compete with more advanced Hindu backward groups (especially Baniyas, Kurmis, Yadavs), thus losing out in the intra-OBC competition for jobs and college seats.<sup>12</sup> By bringing a majority of Muslim groups in the MBC list, the Karpuri formula created space for mobility also among poor Muslims, as it did for the less advanced sections among Hindu OBCs. In UP (as most other northern states), on the other hand, there is a single OBC list, and some 30 Muslim groups figure in that list (Ibid: 198) More powerful OBC groups among Hindus corner much of the benefits on offer. And while states such as Andhra Pradesh and Manipur have aft the Sachar report, taken cues from Bihar, and are putting special arrangement for reservation of Muslims, through creating sub-quota within OBC for Muslims, little of that discussion seems to be on the table in UP.

This takes us to another feature of politics in Bihar, as it affects Muslims, that is markedly different from that in UP<sup>13</sup>. This is the backward classes politics<sup>14</sup> – of which the Karpuri formula was a product – and which has also spawned a backward class politics among

<sup>11</sup> Quota for other communities are: 15% for SC, 1 % for ST; and 3 % for backward caste women, bringing the total to 50%, the maximum reservation allowed under ruling of the Supreme Court.

<sup>12</sup> This has also been the grievance of the more backward Hindu groups among OBCs, and to which the karpuri formula was responding.

<sup>13</sup> The other states with substantial Muslim populations are West Bengal and Assam. Muslim politics

<sup>14</sup> For more on this see Blair (1980).

Muslims. Called the Pasmanda movement, and championed by the All India United Muslim Morcha, and the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Pasmanda movement Khalid Ansari writes, ‘reminds us that just like the Hindu community, Muslim community too is segmented’ into at least three caste blocs—*ashraf* (upper caste elite), *ajlaf* (middle caste shudra) and *arzal* (lowest caste Dalits), to claim that and the interests of all are neither homogenous nor do they necessarily overlap. PM started off as a social movement, and soon entered electoral politics. In the assembly elections in Bihar in 2005, AIPMM decided to support Nitish Kumar’s JD(U), in opposition to Laloo Yadav’s RJD, which had for over a decade relied on its Muslim-Yadav constituency to return it repeatedly to power. RJD was supporting calls for implementing recommendations of the R Mishra commission that proposed reservations in jobs and colleges for Muslims as a whole, as a way to undo Muslim backwardness. This, AIPMM and other Pasmanda groups contend will lead to the cornering of all benefits by the advanced sections among Muslims, at the cost of the weaker sections.<sup>15</sup> Nitish, anxious to expand his constituency, supported the PM and its demands for rejection of Ranganath report, to retain special arrangement for backward Muslims alone, by adopting the Bihar model nationally, putting most Muslims OBCs in the MBC list.<sup>16</sup>

Muslim politics in Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand, is marked by the absence of a social justice agenda or any social movement. Muslims have traditionally supported the Congress, and increasingly since the rise of the BJP from the late 80s, the Samajwadi Party. The latter’s winning formula, as with RJD in Bihar, has been its Muslim-Yadav alliance. It was this combine that brought it to power in the 2012 elections, many observers noting how Muslims voted enmasse for SP, to keep the BJP at bay. Yet, changing equations are seen to be leading the SP to begin to mend its fences with the Hindu Right, to retain its hold over power. This has come at the cost of Muslims, with promises of better representation in jobs and services belied, rather a return to the insecurity of the past years, with a rash of riots erupting in the past years. As to those in Muzaffarnagar recently, the role of the state government during the violence, and subsequently in providing relief and justice, demonstrates how far the SP has travelled from being the protector of Muslims. (refer to Ahmad, 2013; Rao et al, 2014)

It is clear that the narrow upper caste domination in UP has yet to be challenged in the same manner as it has been in neighbouring Bihar, notwithstanding the much celebrated ‘revolution from below’. (Yadav, 1999; Corbridge et al, 2000: ) Indeed Mayawati’s attempts at forming a rainbow coalition, with Brahmin support as central to it, is proof of that failure. This explains the continued hold of the Hindu right in politics in UP, the ever present ‘Hindu

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<sup>15</sup> KA Ansari has demonstrated, using Sachar data on group representation in public employment and NSSO data on composition of population, and taking Pasmanda muslim population to make up some 85 % of total Muslim, how rather than all Muslims being under-represented in public employment, it is the Pasmanda only, and that Ashraf Muslims (with just 2.01 % of total population) are rather over represented. Even in the field of political representation, of the 7500 MPs from 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, only 400 have been Muslim. Of these 340 have been from Ashraf backgrounds (making up 4.5% of total, as compared to 2.01 % share of their population). Ansari thus concludes, there is thus no case for reservation for Ashraf Muslims (or Muslims as a whole), as they will then corner a large section of opportunities newly made available, due to their cultural capital. Khalid A Ansari. ‘Muslim Quota’: Keep it Simple, Silly! Kafila. September 2, 2011

<sup>16</sup> Other pasmanda demands include (i) brining in the many left-out Muslim OBC castes in the Central OBC list and (ii) delisting ‘dalit’ Muslims from OBC list, bringing them in the Scheduled Caste list, by scrapping the 1950 Presidential order that bars all but Hindus, and now Sikh and Buddhists, from SC category.

backlash’ to even modest attempts to reach out to Muslims<sup>17</sup> and the prominence of that old Muslim bugbear – violence and communal polarisation as an instrument of electoral politics. But equally, the UP case demonstrates the failure of imagination of Muslim renewal, with entrenched sections and interests (in both the principal secular formations, Samajwadi Party and the Congress) continuing to call the shots, to protect their own turfs. Recent attempts at innovations – Ittehadul Millat and Peace Party – have failed too. The former has nothing new to offer than identity politics, and the latter has done little beyond creating a little space for its leaders. And as opposed to the Bihar case, despite OBCs making up a large section of the Muslim population in UP, Pasmanda movement, with its potential to rewrite how Muslims engage with politics - within as well as without - has made little headway there. Understanding UP in this context will be useful.

## 6. Conclusion and Research Agenda

6.1 Our survey of literature on exclusion of Indian Muslims pointed to various gaps in knowledge. Overall there is only a thin body of work studying Muslims, somewhat corrected of late, especially after the publication of the Sachar Committee report, although it must be said that violence that Muslims have suffered has been the subject of a wide array of works (Brass, 1996, 2003; Wilkinson 2004; Varshney, 2002). Most works tend to be descriptive, with few analysing the drivers and maintainers of their exclusion. There is definitely little describing and examining, the comparative disadvantages Muslims face, vis a vis the rest of the population, as well as other disadvantaged groups. Early examples of works of this nature were Saxena (1983), Hasan (1997), Khalidi (1995), Kulkarni (2002), supplemented of late by Government of India (2011), Fazal (2013), Basant (2012), and Ranganath Commission report 2005, and Sachar committee report 2006, which in a sense opened the gates to more work of this nature.

Part of the problem, of course, was the unavailability of reliable data by religion, up until quite recently, which prevented much analytical description or comparison. Sachar corrected that anomaly, and recent NSSO data have been returning Muslim figures along with the rest (NSSO 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> rounds). But a more fundamental change was that of public policy. Sachar and its less feted counterpart, the Ranganath Mishra report, were the products of major shifts in national policy towards Muslims. The Congress-led UPA government in the Centre, returned to power after a considerable gap, in 2004, having been voted out of power in 1996. Its failure to prevent the destruction of the Babri Mosque (1992) and prevent the large-scale targeted violence against Muslims in Mumbai in its aftermath, had alienated Muslims from the Congress. The Hindu rights BJP, that ruled in the Centre intermittently during that gap, was seen by Muslims as having escalated anti-Muslim rhetoric and practices, including wide-ranging changes in the education system that excluded Muslims. The 2002 violence in Gujarat against Muslims, where the BJP led state government was seen as having done little to control the selective violence, and its laxity in providing relief and justice to the victims, completed the picture of Muslim disenchantment with mainstream parties.

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<sup>17</sup> A little known Hindu Front for Justice recently petitioned the UP High Court to direct State Government to withdraw its modest scholarship scheme for Muslim girls. (‘High Court seeks UP govt's reply on scheme for Muslim girls’. Indian Express 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2013)

Parliamentary elections in 2004 proved the turning point, with the Congress plugging into Muslim grievance, promising a range of pro-Muslim initiatives, on the back of which it returned to power. The UPA government that it led, announced a range of measures for Muslims - high level fact finding commissions on Muslim socio-economic deprivations (led by retired judges Rajinder Sachar and Ranganath Mishra), to identify policies and schemes towards better delivering to Muslims; alongside revival of the '15 Point Programme' of old, being a bunch of development measures for Muslims; and a proposal for a communal violence prevention legislation, to better equip Central government to control communal riots of the Gujarat type. Collecting, recording and analysing socio-economic data by religion was a corollary to this policy shift towards addressing Muslim backwardness. This policy shift, along with specific interventions it enabled – including the schemes rolled out based on recommendations of the Sachar report – have led to greater interest in studying and understanding Muslims, and have contributed to the increasing scholarly interest in the condition of the community.

However, as our literature survey shows, there are vast differences in how Muslims in different parts of the country fare. Much of the aforementioned literature has a North India bias, but a concentration on the North, at the exclusion of other regions – south and west particularly – misses the variance that the regions show. Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, particularly show much divergence on education, employment, and political and civic engagement. While there is a body of work looking at Muslims in Kerala (Ahmad, 1989; Aziz, 1992; Hasan and Menon, 2005, Kanchana, 2012) that on Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, where Muslims do equally or even better on various counts of development, especially in comparison with the national story, is very limited. And there is little at all on the East, particularly Assam and west Bengal. Assam has the largest concentration of Muslims in India (30%), after Jammu and Kashmir. This is matched closely by West Bengal (25%). The poor (and vastly unequal) outcomes for Muslims in West Bengal, on the range of factors, as shown by Sachar findings – poverty education, and employment, including public employment - in a state ruled by a radical formation for much of its post-Independence existence, is puzzling. Politics in Assam on the other hand has been much fashioned by the immigrant (meaning Muslims of Bengali descent) debate, and has frequently led to violent mobilisation by Assamese nationalist groups, as well as tribal formations eager to carve areas of autonomous influence for themselves, resulting in severe marginalisation of Muslims. Yet the Sachar report shows some positive trends, in public employment. And most significant is the case of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), as the only political formation of Muslims, outside the southern states, that has shown success at the hustings, and is today the principal opposition in the state assembly.

In federal set up such as India's, it is provincial governments (states) that, along with central governments, act on social and economic policies, and much of the development outcomes then are the functions of the working of the state government, as much as, if not more than that of the Centre. Further, regional differences/variations in the make-up of society, identity formation, and colonial policies and their impact on contemporary politics and development; among others, make state-level dynamics salient. Understanding regional and state-level variations in Muslim outcomes, and the factors that result in those variations, is going to be crucial. An equally big gap is more comparative in nature – there is little analysing the divergent trajectories of Muslims in the south as compared to the North. Hasan (1997) makes a brief mention, and HPC (2006) refers to the difference indirectly, but there is little serious

work examining and explaining the difference, so as to draw out general lessons for Muslim development. This is a serious gap in literature, not only from a scholarly point of view, but also for policy reasons, so as to learn and apply the lessons of the South to that in the North, for example.

Closer examination of the regional cases reveals other differences within regions too. The South might be better off than the North, in aggregate terms, but as we noticed in our survey of Kerala, high literacy and good enrolment in schools, is not reflected in enrolment at higher levels and in colleges. Neither does literacy translate into high work participation. Indeed, alongside Muslims doing as well as the rest of the population on literacy, sits a big gap in WPR. Similarly, public sector employment, although high for Muslim in absolute terms, is poor when compared to Muslims share of the population there. On the other hand, Karnataka, although not so favourably placed in terms of a strong political formation, or the advantage of Muslim numbers, does consistently better than Kerala on education and employment, including public employment. What explains this? A similar divergence could be noticed in the North, between Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the two states clubbed together for similar social make up, their being part of the Hindi heartland, and nature of political regimes. So is Muslim outcomes. Yet, as we saw, Bihar has been better at providing for Muslims than UP.

Rigorous state-level comparisons might provide clues to what works and what doesn't for Muslims, that aggregate studies or state case studies might fail to notice. There is a rich tradition of scholarship on India using state level comparisons to explain outcomes as varied as poverty and development (Harriss, 1988; Kohli, 1987; 1990; Dreze & Sen, 1997); industrial development (Sinha, 2006); communal violence (Varshney, 2002) and political order and state capacity (Hassan, 2008). Comparing states for Muslim outcomes has the potential to deliver similar benefits. Indeed, studying intra-regional differences on Muslim outcomes, holds as much promise if not greater (than inter-regional), for policy interventions, given how different regions of the country differ so much in terms of social and political mobilisation and state capacity, factors that over-determine political outcomes and cannot be created artificially.<sup>18</sup> This then is the nub of a developing research agenda on Muslim exclusion and inclusion in India.

6.2 So the questions for us are these:

- i. Why are the outcomes for Muslims so poor across the range of subjects – income, education, employment, access to services?
- ii. Why are improvements across the board so slow, compared to that of the other traditionally marginalised group - *dalit*, as well as in specific cases, also *adivasi*.
- iii. Why isn't there a more robust response to the exclusion of Muslims, by the state – central and provincial - than there should have been, given the recognition of exclusion of Muslims.
- iv. What explains the divergence in outcomes, across Northern (UP and Bihar) vs Southern (Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu)
- v. What explains the divergence in outcomes within regions, between comparable states, candidates being (a) Kerala vs Karnataka, (b) UP vs Bihar, and (c) West Bengal vs Assam ?

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<sup>18</sup> limited space for manoeuvring

Given the significant gaps in understanding on Muslim exclusion pointed out in the survey, any serious attempt to advance knowledge will require the spread of the proposed research to be wide. This will entail work at three levels:

- i. National, using aggregate data, to examine national level trends
- ii. Country-wide, using region-wise disaggregated data, to compare and tease out regional patterns
- iii. Local level, using state-level disaggregated data, to compare and identify state and local level dynamics that result in divergent outcomes.

And based again on the review of literature, the proposed analytical framework, given the social, political and economic bases of development outcomes, is hybrid: political mobilisation of the weak, resulting in social change, and the impact of the resultant empowerment (participation/engagement), within the Muslim community on state capacity for delivering to the section. Hence we aim to look at the following dynamics, comparatively

- Social structure among Muslims, and how that has retained or been challenged
- Political mobilisation, history, processes and impact – who gains and who loses
- Civic engagement (political and social) and its impact on participation/‘social capital’ including for influencing policies, and accessing collective entitlements
- State capacity: ability of the state to reach out to Muslims, and for Muslims to access the state, founded on and founding legitimacy

Given the above, our hypothesis for the divergence in Muslims development outcomes across Indian states could be framed in the following manner:

Our survey of literature points to gaps in use of appropriate conceptual tools to understand what lies behind differences in outcomes for Muslims. The southern states – particularly Karnataka - and to a lesser degree Bihar in the North, demonstrate that behind much of the gains made by Muslims in these states is the role of political mobilisation of the backward classes, including Muslims (by backward sections keen to undermine upper caste domination), that set in motion changes within the Muslim sections too, creating the space for mobility, the drive towards education and the urge for jobs in professions and government departments. Political and social mobilisation led to spawning of civic engagement – of the ‘bonding’, but more significantly, ‘bridging’ type, enhancing Muslim participation in public life creating social capital, and Muslim ability to convert assets and resources into opportunities and capabilities. These dynamics have effects for state capability, to reach out to Muslims, with clearly defined programmes and the reach (‘social control’) into the community to both implement the programmes and hold providers to account.

Where there is absence of political (and social) mobilisation including of Muslims, old order, overall (elite domination in UP, West Bengal...) as well as within Muslim communities persists. Reflecting this elite control is power within the Muslim community that remains in traditional (and religious) hands, whose agenda are narrowly defined along identity lines. This mirrors elite power in society at large. The elite use communal polarisation, including through use of violence, to retain their hold over society, especially in the face of backward assertion, recent example being the Hindu right consolidation in Uttar Pradesh – Muzaffarnagar riots and reluctance of state administration to respond actively to the violence and the large-scale humanitarian crisis, the overwhelming majority of victims being Muslims.

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Demand making by Muslim elite too – political and religious - for identity-based as well as socio-economic rights, results in further backlash by Hindu elite. In this context, the state, representing the interest of the majority elite, is neither embedded in Muslim society (hence has little legitimacy) nor is it autonomous from social forces to enable justice to Muslims – the pathetic injustices being meted, as we speak, on the victims of Muzaffarnagar riots being a case in point.

The wide spread of the research (in terms of levels of analysis – national, state level and local - and the range of geographical cases) will necessarily require its scope to be narrowly defined. This is required to better manage data collection and analysis, and will require narrowing down the subjects of study – the ‘outcomes’ for Muslims. At a most aggregate level, the objective of all development is human well being. Central here is human development, itself defined, using the now widely used Sen’s capability framework as ‘....the process of enlarging a person’s “functionings and capabilities to function, the range of things that a person could do and be in her life,” expressed as expanding “choices” (Sen 1989). Improvements in human development, seen thus, include better education and health and nutrition measures; secure and sustainable livelihood, measured in terms of quantum of assets, and the ability to earn a reasonable return on those. Secure livelihood itself could be categorised into employment levels, more secure if in the formal sector, including especially the public sector. All these are what could be called *equity* outcomes. For religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, protection of *identity* is an equally important outcome. These are about cultural markers - language, freedom of faith, and of identity. In the context of religious minorities in India, Muslims especially, and the frequent organised violence they suffer, Sachar committee added a third objective – *security*. It is on these three criteria of equity, identity and security that much of the examination of ‘outcomes’ for Muslims rests. Each of these individual outcomes, themselves are subdivided into a range of sub-outcomes that add up to enable the higher level outcome.

Public sector employment is a special sort of outcome, that is both an end (secure employment), as well as a means, to create conditions for enabling development outcomes, through its influence on the nature of the state. The state is inclusive, if bureaucracy is representative of the wider society, and exclusive, if it is more homogenous, thus less committed and likely to deliver for all. There is a wide body of literature, showing how a representative bureaucracy works better for inclusive equitable development, and protection of rights of minorities. (Peters et al 2012; Smith 2011; Bangura, 2008; Demireva (?). There are various routes to inclusivity in public sector employment, most common being affirmative action policies: like those in the US for black and ethnic minorities and ‘reservations’ or fixed quotas for under-represented groups in India, but also other positive actions for the range of protected groups covered in UK Equality Act 2010. Representative bureaucracy – the outcome - then depends on two things: firstly, the presence of such policies, which would itself be the result of a range of factors (the history of political mobilisation and contestations; awareness and acceptance by the majority of the rightfulness of a claim for affirmative action; and appetite of the majority for pursuing a social justice agenda, among others). And secondly , how effectively those policies are implemented, an outcome that would depend on the factors such as the commitment and capacity of the state, as well as the ability of civil society and citizens groups to act as watchdogs and hold the state to account.



It is public sector employment that we will focus on as our subject of enquiry, looking at national, inter-regional and intra-regional state level data, and the various political and social dynamics that play out contributing to the outcomes, in order to understand and explain the general question, why some states in India are better at providing for Muslims while others are not so, and what lessons that provides for Muslim inclusion as a whole. We believe, a tight focus on public sector employment as a proxy for Muslim outcome, is a better way to address our wider question on Muslim outcome, because public employment (commitment, effort, framework and results) is easier to identify, measure and track than some of the more complex outcomes, such as education, poverty or access to public service. And given how central a role a representative bureaucracy plays in making an inclusive state, a focus on public sector employment is also expected to have greater policy impact.

In looking at public sector employment outcomes, we will seek to unpack the black box of policy making to understand what makes leaders provide ‘equal opportunity’, by placing these processes in the context of history of state making, development of social policy and provision for minority groups, and state effectiveness towards these goals, to map divergent trajectories across state cases. We will, at the same time, also examine and map Muslim ‘participation’, in terms of political mobilisation as well as civil society and advocacy group engagement, around development along identity issues, to understand how ‘demand side’ measures contribute to policy making and outcomes. These will entail historical analysis, ethnographic research, and policy and programme analysis. Drawing from international experience on inclusion and equal opportunity policy, will be helpful, and we plan to do that, from the British experience particularly, to see if and how positive handholding helps, and what the triggers for those were, using secondary material.

Given that background, we list below possible ‘independent’ variables that contribute to our dependent variables. These are sub divided into supply and demand side variables.

#### Supply side (of the state / society)

- History of focused public service delivery
- State policies and commitment for the marginalised: social justice agenda
- Political culture: (party monopoly, competition or collaboration; objects of competition/collaboration...)
- Nature of social structure (and strength of the Hindu right)
- State capacity for delivery to marginalised sections / Muslim groups

#### Demand (within and from Muslim communities)

At the policy level, these could be about:

- Presence of a Muslim middle class to articulate demands
- Political power and affiliation (Muslim oriented parties or important Muslims leaders)
- Political mobilisation, and its nature (in identity or development terms, for Muslims or marginalised Muslims )

At local level

- Ability to mediate the state – citizen interface (role of brokers)
- Civil society: spread, fragmented or networked, linked (or divorced) to wider civil society, delivery capacity, access/partnerships with state agencies
- Civil society also as watchdogs: to keep tabs on performance, raise voice through frequent reporting of performance, and advocate greater accountability of state actors

to goals they are committed to. This would also include minority employees associations

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