

## EDUCATIONAL STATUS AMONG MUSLIMS TOWARDS SACHAR COMMITTEE REPORT WITH REFERENCE TO GOALPARA DISTRICT – A DATA BASE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The Muslims constitute the largest minority in India. It is a matter of regret that the percentage of illiteracy among the Muslim masses is much higher than the other communities in India. As per findings of Sachar Committee Report, there are major disparities in the Muslim community with regard to development and places of Muslims are even below the SCs and STs in India. Muslims of Goalpara district are the most educationally backward group in India. In comparison to their population, they have the lowest enrolment rates at elementary, high school and higher secondary school education as well as higher education. India will be national knowledge super power when everyone of Muslim community as like as other communities shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet basic learning needs. Education is not only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It is the need to present a picture of educational development of Muslims of Assam in general and Goalpara district in particular. In this regard, this paper entitled “Educational Status among Muslims towards Sachar Committee Report with Reference to Goalpara District – A Data Base Study” is important and so it is selected to study.

**Keywords:** Quality Education, Literacy Rate, Muslim Community, Human Development, and Goalpara District.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

David Scott, an employee of East India Company created original Goalpara diatrick in 1822 A.D. and David Scott was the first Commissioner of newly created North East Rangpur district. Rangpur town (present in Bangladesh) was Head Quarter of North East Rangpur district and for administration newly created Goalpara district was tagged with North-East Rangpur district. The pristine Bijni Kingdom's area including undivided Garo Hills district area also constituted the original Goalpara district in 1822. Garo Hills district was separated from Goalpara district area in 1866 and in this year Greater Koch Behar was created as a new district and the remaining portion of Goalpara district was withdrawn from Rangpur and tagged with Koch Behar. The inheritor of East India Company created Assam Valley Province as a new province in 1874 and Goalpara district area was withdrawn from Koch Behar and tagged with Assam Province. Again, the original Goalpara district was divided into four districts – Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. In 1983, two districts- Dhubri and Kokrajhar were split from Goalpara and Bongaigaon district was created from parts of Goalpara district in 1989.

Muslims of Goalpara district are educationally and economically backward. It is the need to present a picture of educational development of Muslims of Assam in general and Goalpara district in particular. Goalpara district of Assam has the focus of attention of researchers from the sociological point of view. The investigator being a local person of this district and also belonging to the same community is natural interested to study the educational progress of Muslim community in Assam with special reference to Goalpara district.

Since independence of India several committees and commissions have been appointed from time to time to study the conditions of the country and try to develop an improved pattern or policy. In March 2005, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh constituted Sachar committee with seven members headed by former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Rajinder Sachar. This is done in order to understand and identify the social, economic and educational status of Muslim community in India. In November 2006, the committee submitted its report.

Even so 27.81 % of the population in Assam is still illiterate. Among this, large lumber of illiterate Muslims are in the fore-front. Absence of a research study about this important aspect of education has not brought the problem in the lime light. Perhaps this is a reason why Muslims are not aware of the pathetic conditions of their own illiteracy, lack of education, which contribute towards their socio-economic backwardness. The Muslims would have known these facts and factors; they would have approached perhaps press towards the Governments at the state and central level.

The Muslims constitute the largest minority in India. It is a matter of regret that the percentage of illiteracy among the Muslim masses is much higher than the other communities in India. It has been taken for granted that Muslims in India are educationally and economically backward and almost all scholars begin with this assumption.

## 2. DISCUSSION

The following aspects regarding educational status among Muslims towards Sachar Committee Report with reference to Goalpara district are important and discussed-

**2.1 Literacy Rate of Goalpara as per Census-2001:** The literacy rate (58.03) of Goalpara district is lower than that of Assam average of 63.32 percent. Again, the female literacy rate is lower than male literacy rate in both rural and urban areas. However, the gender differential in literacy rate is higher in rural area in the district.

**Table-1:** Literacy Rate by Sex and Area in Goalpara district as Census of India, 2001

Place	Population			Rural			Urban		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Goalpara	58.03	64.86	50.85	56.25	63.15	49.01	76.65	82.44	70.42
Assam	63.32	71.73	54.28	59.82	68.71	50.37	85.35	89.47	79.29

Source: Census of India, 2001

**2.2 Literacy Rate of Goalpara as per Census-2011:** The total literacy rate of Goalpara is 83.77% in 2011 which is greater than the average literacy rate of 72.19% of Assam. Population-wise, out of total 39,627 literates, males are 20,798 while females are 18,829. Also the male literacy rate is 87.28% and the female literacy rate is 80.2% in Goalpara.

**Table-2:** Literacy Rate by Sex and Area in Goalpara district as Census of India, 2011

Place	Population			Rural			Urban		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Goalpara	83.77	87.28	80.20	65.93	70.02	61.69	76.08	80.24	71.80
Assam	72.19	77.85	66.27	69.34	75.40	63.03	88.47	91.81	84.94

Source: Census of India, 20011

Hindus and Christians have higher literacy rates than that of the Muslims among the religious groups in the rural area of the Goalpara district. Nonetheless, the gender differential in literacy is highest among the Hindus followed by the Muslims and the Christians.

**Table-3:** Literacy rate by religious groups and place of residence as Census of India, 2001

Religion	Residence	Literacy Rate		
		Person	Male	Female
Hindus	Rural	72	81	63
Muslims	Rural	41	47	34
Christians	Rural	72	76	69

Source: Census of India, 20011

The literacy rate of the Muslims is more below than the average rural literacy rate of the Goalpara district. Particularly, the Muslim female literacy rate in rural areas is much miserable compared to the average female literacy rate of the district as well as the rural females of the other two important religious categories.

**2.3 Factors of Educational Backwardness of Muslims:** This low level of literacy and consequent educational attainment has its bearing on the employment and livelihood opportunities of the Muslims. The main reason for educational backwardness of Muslims is poverty, due to which, children are often forced to drop out after the first few classes. This is particularly true for Muslim girls. Little children are expected to provide for their families by working in karkhanas (small workshops), as domestic help or by looking after their siblings while their mothers go to work (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). The opportunity costs involved in sending children to school is also too high for poor and illiterate parents. The community-specific factor for low educational achievement is that Muslims do not see education as necessarily translating into formal employment (Sachar Committee Report, 2006).

**2.4 Major Findings of Sachar Committee Report:** The Sachar Committee has submitted its report in November, 2006. Major findings of this committee are-

- The committee finds major disparities in the Muslim community with regard to development.
- The committee places Muslims even below the SCs and STs in India.
- This committee highlights the neglect in determining roles like IAS, IPS and the low representations in the society.

**2.5 Major Recommendations of Sachar Committee Report:** Major recommendation of this committee are given below-

- An Equal Opportunity Commission to be established to look into grievances.
- Establishing a nomination procedure to increase participation of minorities in public bodies.
- Creating a delimitation procedure which does not reserve constituencies with high minority population for SCs.
- To link Madarsas with higher education system to ensure better and proper education.
- Recognise degrees offered by Madarsas in defence, civil and banking examinations.
- Improve the employment share of Muslims.
- Establishment of National Data Bank for storage of relevant data of various Socio-religious communities.
- UGC should evolve a system where part of the allocation to colleges and universities is linked to the diversity in the student population.

**2.6 Significance of Sachar Committee Report:** The Sachar Committee is very significant from the following aspects-

- The importance of the findings and recommendations of this committee comes in handy in times of tug-war between population growth and economic disparity.
- If it comes down to Muslim community, then it's the actual reality whereby this specific community has got the least share of the development since Independence.
- Despite economic boom Muslims have to bear the brunt of the so called "competitive" forces unleashed by liberalization.
- Increasing their representation in the society, improving education system and looking into their predicaments is the only way to uplift them.
- Community-specific factor for low educational achievement is that Muslims do not see education as necessarily translating into formal employment.
- Proving the ideology wrong that Muslim community is the sole reason for increasing population.
- In times where education will be the most important weapon to uplift the Muslim community, the Sachar committee report presents this data showing the education level amongst the community. The percentage of Muslim children getting higher education and getting selected in IITs should concern the policy makers.

**2.7 Status Positions of the Central Government regarding Recommendations in Education of Sachar Committee Report:** The status positions of the Central Government regarding Recommendations in Education of Sachar Committee are-

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is being implemented by Ministry of Human Resource Development. The States/UTs have been advised under SSA to give primacy to opening of 'Girls only' upper primary schools keeping with the State government policy, in areas where there is such a demand under SSA. The Ministry of Minority Affairs is implementing three Scholarship schemes namely Pre-matric, Post-matric and Merit-cum-means based scholarship schemes for the students of minority communities.
- For universalization of access to quality education at secondary stage, a scheme called Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) has been approved. The scheme envisages preference to minority concentration areas in opening of Government schools. State Governments have been advised to accord priority to setting up new / upgraded schools in minority concentration areas while appraising proposals under this scheme.
- The Department of School Education & Literacy has launched Sakshar Bharat the new variant of the National Literacy Mission on 08.09.2009 for implementation in the 11th Plan with an objective to make 70 million non-literate adults literates by the end of the Plan. The Scheme has special focus on women belonging to minorities.
- The Centrally Sponsored Scheme in the XII Plan inter-alia envisages establishment of Block Institutes of Teachers Education in 196 SC/ST/Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs). This has covered 15 States/ UTs. Upto August 2013, 96 BITEs have been sanctioned.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) has sanctioned 285 Women's Hostels during 11th Plan in 90 Minority Concentration Districts. During 2012-13, out of 148 women's hostels, 25 have been sanctioned in minority

concentration districts. During 2013-14 (upto 30.09.2013), 68 Women's Hostels have been approved/sanctioned in MCDs.

- The Area Intensive & Madarsa Modernisation Programme has been recast as two schemes, namely, the 'Scheme of Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM)' and 'Scheme for Infrastructure Development Private Aided / Unaided Minority Institutes (Elementary / Secondary / Senior Secondary Schools)'. The scheme is demand driven.
- The Mid-day meal scheme was extended to all areas in the country from the year 2007-08 onwards and also covers upper primary schools. Blocks with concentration of Muslim population are covered under this scheme. Children in Madarsas are also covered under the programme.
- With respect to Mechanism for granting of Minority Educational Institution status more responsive, National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) has been established by an Act of Parliament with the key objective of ensuring that the true amplitude of the educational rights enshrined in Article 30 (1) of the Constitution is made available to the members of the notified religious minority communities, including the Muslims. The certificates / qualifications of the Madrasa Boards which have been granted equivalence by the State Education Board to that of their Secondary and Senior Secondary qualification have been equated with corresponding certificates of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Council of Board of School Education in India (COBSE) and other school examination boards, for the purpose of employment and entry to higher levels education. DOPT has issued notification in this regard.
- The corpus of MAEF (Maulana Azad Education Foundation) was increased from Rs. 200 crore to Rs. 750 crore during the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP). The present corpus is of the order of Rs. 910 crore and the same will be raised to Rs. 1250 crore during the 12th FYP.

### 3. CONCLUSION

India is a World-leader when it comes to secular development. Basking in the light of SDGs 1, 2 and 4 focusing on 'No poverty', 'Zero hunger' and 'Quality Education', India needs to ensure that no one is left behind, no community gets lost. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensuring Inclusive, Equitable, and Quality Education and the Promotion of Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All, recognizes several impediments for universal education and attempts to increase the number of scholarships to students in developing nations and create educational facilities that are gender sensitive and disability inclusive. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education. Education is not only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. Muslims have been the most educationally backward group in India. In comparison to their population, they have the lowest enrolment rates at elementary, high school and higher secondary school education as well as higher education. So, India will be national knowledge super power when everyone of Muslim community as like as other communities shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet basic learning needs.

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