Muslims in India and the Process of Development

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India is known worldwide for its religious, cultural, lingual and geographical diversity. It is second most populous state in the world. It has achieved remarkable success in several spheres and its economic growth and development, particularly during the last two decades has been significant. Currently it is recognized as the second fastest growing economy of the world following China. This paper aims to discuss the problem of development deficit with regard to the largest religious minority group namely Muslims in India. Though historically Indian Muslims have accomplishments and glory to their credit, they now stand at a disadvantageous position in all spheres of development viz a viz social, economic, educational and political. They are found to be lagging behind other religious groups. Muslims face multiple disadvantages and in the present context doubts are being raised more vociferously on their loyalty to the nation. Large number of communal riots since independence have not only made them suffer economically but has also instilled a sense of insecurity and fear among them resulting in their ghettoisation and relegation to the margins. Their educational, economic and social backwardness is further accentuated by the threats to their distinct religious and cultural identity. The process of development since independence which was initially through planned economic development based on the trickledown approach and subsequently under the structural adjustment programme has resulted in the marginalization of the weaker sections of which Muslims constitutes a significant part.

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1. Introduction

Muslims in India constitute the second largest population in any country after Indonesia. The growth of Muslim population in India can be attributed to many processes. Bashir, & Wilson, (2017) mentioned that for the very first time Muslims in significant numbers arrived in Indian subcontinent with the Arab conquest in seventh century CE. And subsequently the Muslim population evolved and mingled in the Indian context with the help of conversion and infiltration. Engineer (2004) argued that in Southern part of India, Islam entered in the form of Arab traders in a peaceful way through west coast, however in the northern part of the country, it entered by the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim - who was sent in later part of 7th century by governor of Iraq, Yusuf bin Hajjaj. Later, widespread conversion at all levels of society occurred throughout the sub-continent, with the permanent and enduring presence of the conquerors of Afghan, Turk and Mogul from Central Asia (Malik, 2008; Saberwal, 2006). Singh (2010) noted that Islam in full force was established in India with the invasion of Mohammad Ghazni (in 10th century) followed by invaders from Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan in 11th and 12th century. Forceful conversion and inducement further led the spread of Islam in Indian subcontinent. Historical facts reveal that even many Hindu rulers of India invited Muslim invaders to settle scores with the rival local rulers. There are instances available where one Muslim invader fought against another ruling Muslim dynasty. Babar - the pioneer of Mughal rule in India, was invited by then Rajput rulers to defeat Ibrahim Lodhi (the ruler of Lodhi dynasty), as the Rajput on their own were unable to defeat him. He fought a fierce battle of Panipat (1526) against Ibrahim Lodhi to mark the beginning of Mughal empire (Engineer, 2004). With the establishment of the East India Company in 18th century, the British conquest invariably usurped the Muslim stronghold in India. Belmekki (2014) argued that the British rule in India identified Muslims responsible for the outbreak of 1857 (first war of Indian Independence against Britishers). In the wake of it, anti-Muslim reaction emerged out of the British administration. They held Indian Muslims to pay for the rebellion by adopting a more retaliatory attitude which relegated Indian Muslims to vulnerable position. Khan (2004), claimed that after the rebellion of 1857, there was barely any Government office wherein a Muslim could even hope to get a post above the rank of poster, messenger, or filler of ink-pots. Post-1857 period devalued Indian Muslims to a state of degradation and destitution. It created an atmosphere where Muslim began to feel alienated and as others from the rest of the inhabitants in the subcontinent.

Puri (1993) viewed that August 15, 1947 was the gloomiest day for Indian Muslims in their history. With independence and partition of the country into India
and Pakistan, the Muslim community in India got a sense of insecurity, frustration and uncertainty. The post partition trauma once again reminded Muslims the collapse of Mughal empire, and in no way, the suffering was less than that. But, after the collapse of Mughal rule, the Muslims community regained their self-esteem and goodwill due to their deep-rooted patriotism, and later emerged and accepted as the leader and symbol of first war of Indian Independence in 1857. However, in 1947 and the subsequent period, Indian Muslims have been observed losing their respect in eyes of the majority community (Hindus) due to the alleged role of their leadership in partition. The partition of the country in 1947 marked a scar on the self-confidence, prestige and role of Indian Muslims in their 800 years of rich history in India. And, thus we can refer the emergence of a new community in India post 1947 which is consistently questioned for their loyalty, patriotism, and honesty towards the majority community as well as the nation. Singh (2010) stated that in the wake of partition, thousands of Muslims lost their lives and property at the hands Hindu hooligans. The partition of Indian subcontinent into two separate nations (India and Pakistan) did not solve the problems of Muslims in either nation. Rather it shattered their unity and strength, which further debilitated with the creation of Bangladesh (as the third country) in 1971. Now, Muslims of Indian subcontinent are divided in three units, of which India contains highest number of Muslims, though Pakistan was meant as a Muslim homeland at time of Independence. Muslim of all three countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) are struggling with acute problem of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. In addition, Indian Muslims are consistently facing the problems of security and identity since India emerged as an Independent nation (Engineer, 2004).

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM), identified six religious communities as Minorities in India, viz; Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains. Hindus constitutes the majority population (79.8 per cent); however, Muslim (14.2 per cent); Christian (2.3 per cent); Sikh (1.7 per cent); Buddhist (0.7 per cent); Jains (0.4 per cent) exists in minority (Government of India census, 2011). And thus, Indian society can be termed as the medley of religions with the presence of all major religions of world. Highlighting the diversity of the country, the Supreme court of India, in one of its judgements observed that “the one billion population of India consists of six main ethnic groups and fifty-two major tribes; six major religions and 6,400 castes and sub-castes; eighteen major languages and 1,600 minor languages and dialects” (T.M.A. Pai Foundations and others vs. State of Karnataka, 1993, Para 158). Muslims are the largest minority group in India. The Vice-President of India (11 August 2007 to 10 August 2017), Mr. Hamid Ansari stated that “the Muslims of India constitute a community of 180 million, amounting to a little over 14 per cent of the population of the country. They are, after Indonesia, the second largest national grouping of followers of Islam in the world. They were an integral part of the freedom struggle against the British rule. They are dispersed all over the
country, are not homogenous in linguistic and socio-economic terms and reflect in good measure the diversities that characterize the people of India as a whole” (Inaugural address of Golden Jubilee Session of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, New Delhi, 31 August 2015).

This paper aims to discuss the development deficit of Indian Muslims and problems related to that. The contemporary evidences indicate that a major section of Muslims are educationally, socially and economically disadvantaged as compared to other socio-religious groups in India. Bashir and Wilson (2017) argued that a major chunk of Indian Muslims are politically, economically and educationally backward and therefore needs special attention of the government. The religious, historical and social processes have no doubt promoted socio-economic transition among some, but still majority of Muslims are struggling for socially and economically elevated lives. The courses of action undertaken by pre-modern, colonial and post-colonial regimes have ultimately endorsed and reinforced social divisions within Indian society, leading to further differentiation, and hence have been proved less than helpful.

2. Development Deficit of Indian Muslims and related Problems

The Prime-Ministerial High-level committee popularly known as “Sachar committee” in its final report (submitted to Government of India in November 2006) highlighted that Muslims are most backward among all religious minorities of India in the entire compass of development. The 425 pages long report mentioned that there are very few above primary standard schools in Muslim localities. 25 per cent of Muslim children (6-14 years) are either school drop-outs or have never attended school. The report clarified that Muslim parents equally supports modern or mainstream education, and willingly send their children in affordable government schools. The report utterly rejected the common belief prevalent against Muslim parents that they do not equally feel the importance of female education. It noted that expansion of educational opportunities during the post-Independence era has not diminished differences in the attainment levels between Muslims and all Others. Muslims are at the top in terms of drop-out rates at all level of education i.e. Primary, Middle and Higher Secondary as compared to all other religious groups. The report further documented that out of the 25 under-graduate and 50 post-graduate students studying in regular premier colleges of India, only one reportedly hails from Muslim community. Muslims have low probability of completing graduation compared to all other religious communities. Gap in the attainment of education between Muslims and other religious communities increases with the level of education. Muslims constitute 1.3 per cent share in all courses of IIMs in India (63 out of total 4743 students). Similarly, in IITs, their presence in numbers is 894 out of 27,161 enrolled students. In top medical colleges, Muslim share 4 per cent of seats in total enrollment of students. Similarly, in all years of BA LLB course at National Law University,
Bangalore, Jain et al. (2018) exposed the poor presence of Muslims. They recorded presence of only three Muslim student (0.75 per cent) among total 397 surveyed student which is 97.9 per cent of total student strength in BALLB course; however, 82 per cent of total surveyed students were from Hindu community, 5 per cent were Jains; 4.3 per cent were Christians; 3.8 per cent were Sikhs; and 2.8 per cent were Buddhists. The situation of Muslims in higher education is depressing. The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2017-18 recorded 5.0 per cent enrolment of Muslims in total estimated enrolment of 36.6 million in higher education (while Muslim constitute 14.2 per cent of total population of India). Muslim graduates have highest unemployment rates among all religious communities.

Representation of Muslims in salaried jobs (both in public and private sector) is quite low. Majority of Muslim workers are engaged in self-employment activities; mostly involved in non-agricultural activities within self-employment category. In salaried job, Muslims generally work as casual laborer. In most of the Public-Sector Units (PSUs), representation of Muslim workers is limited to 5 per cent. Engagement of Muslim workers in the formal sector (urban areas) is less than 8 per cent against the national average of 21 per cent. Only 6 per cent Muslims are employed by Central government in ‘Public Order and Safety Activities’, while for Hindu (upper castes) the figure is 42 per cent and for Hindu (SCs/STs) and Hindu-(OBCs), it is 23 per cent. Only 4 per cent Muslims are working in the defense services, while the corresponding figure for Hindu-SCs/STs is 12 per cent; 23 per cent for Hindu-OBCs; and 52 per cent for Hindu-upper caste. Muslim representation in government services especially in the civil services which majorly involves in policy making etc. has been found disproportionately low. Panikkar (2005) stated that Muslims have terribly low representation in administrative services of India; 3 per cent in the IAS (Indian Administrative Services), 1.8 per cent in IFS (Indian Foreign Services) and 4 per cent in IPS (Indian Police Services). Similarly, in lower Group C and D services of the government, Muslim’s representation is noticeably limited. In services like railways, they constitute 4.5 per cent share of total employees; in which 98.7 per cent are positioned at lower levels; 1.3 per cent employed as Group ‘A’ or Group ‘B’ officers. The share of Muslims in security agencies like Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is 3.6 per cent at higher positions and 4.6 per cent at lower positions. It must be noted here that Minorities other than Muslims shares 11 per cent of Group- A jobs in India. In education and home departments, the representation of Muslims is 6.5 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively - half of their total population. Even in the private sector employment, Muslim are badly represented at all levels. Muslims constitute 2.67 per cent of directors and senior executives - 62 out of total 2324 executives among the 500 BSE (Bombay stock exchange) companies of India (The Economic Times, 7 September 2015).
One of India’s leading newspaper, collated its report on basis of census 2011, argued that “almost a quarter of India’s 3,70,000 beggars are Muslims, reinforcing that the community still lags behind on most counts despite the country’s rapid economic growth” (Hindustan Times, 30 July, 2016). Muslims of India are among the poorest communities in terms of per capita income. Average per-capita expenditure of Muslims (Rs. 32.66 per day) is lower than other religious groups; it is Rs. 37.50 for Hindus; Rs. 51.43 for Christians and Rs. 55.30 for Sikhs. The lowest per-capita expenditure signifies that Muslims have lowest living standard in India among all religious groups (The Hindu, 20 August 2013). Socially, Muslims are deprived more than any other religious group in India. They have been found mostly residing in ghettos. Feeling of being discriminated against other religious groups is intense among majority of Muslims, leading to their collective alienation. Muslim concentrated areas lack infrastructural facilities which reflect that access to basic services is still a problem for sizeable Muslim population. With a head count ratio of 38.4 per cent, the rate of poverty is highest among Muslims residing in urban areas. Politically Muslims are at disadvantageous position in the country. Currently in the house of people (Lok Sabha) out of 545 elected members, there are only 23 Muslims as member of parliament (MP); least representation of Muslims in the history of Indian parliament (www.ndtv.com).

Alam (2008) argued that Muslims have contributed equally for the glory and recognition of India since long. They are second to none in terms of their inputs in the field of art, literature, culture and music. In science, humanities and intellectual world, they have contributed remarkably well. In the professions like medical, engineering and law, they have accomplishments to their credit like any other community in India. Similarly, in sports they have made the country proud. Despite being an equal partner in serving the country and contributing to it, they are treated unequally by the state in extending basic services like housing, tap water, schools, medical facilities, roads etc. Access of Muslim children to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) has also been reported low and so its overall coverage.

India has travelled a long distance on the path of development since its Independence in August 1947. It has achieved landmark GDP (Gross domestic product) growth in 70 years of development course. The country has always enthusiastically adopted progressive strategies for maintaining its economic growth. Such a strategy was adopted in the form of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1991, which led India to move on the path of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). Mukherji (2009) explained that since the adoption of SAP in 1991, Indian economy has grown at a remarkable pace. From 1991 to 2004, the GDP growth rate was over 6 per cent, and it grew by over 8.5 per cent between 2003 and 2007. The notable growth of Indian economy promoted India as the second fastest growing economies in the world after China. But along with an excellent GDP growth and International recognition following the
implementation of SAP, the disparity among section of Indian population has widened, as LPG formula favored those who are educationally and financially sound. Sachar committee report (2006) in the same context argued that Muslims are mainly employed in unorganized sector of Indian economy, which has no protection of government like the organized sector and therefore they are principal victim of competitive forces unleashed by the policy of liberalization. The import of products spoiled their small businesses as well as taken their traditional occupations like sericulture, hand/power looms, leather industry, automobile repairing, garment making etc. Muslims by and large were traditionally engaged in these unorganized and traditional occupations, and thus they suffered badly due to the policy of LPG in terms of losing their job and businesses. The rate of reduction in poverty for Muslims defines the deplorable condition of Muslims post SAP (1991). Despite the excellent GDP growth between 1993-94 to 2004-05, the reduction rate of poverty among urban Muslims was modest during the same period (Mukherji, 2009).

Immediately after the independence; India declare itself a secular state where all people would have equal rights, freedom and protection of laws. The Constitution of India guarantees all its citizen “equality before law or equal protection of law within the territory of India and argues that State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them” (Article 15). It assures “equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State” (Article 16). It grants all its citizens with (a) “freedom of speech and expression; (b) to assemble peaceably and without arms; (c) to form associations or unions” (Article 19). The Constitution of India allows every citizen the “freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion of own choice” (Article 25). It empowers every religious group (a) “to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes; (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion” (Article 26). It advocates for its citizens “the right to conserve their distinct language, script or culture” (Article 29). It delegates “all religious and linguistic minorities, the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice” (Article 30). India’s concern for the protection of minority rights can be traced back to its emergence as a democratic nation. Right after three years of independence in 1950, the Prime-Minister of India and Pakistan met in New Delhi and signed the famous “Nehru-Liaquat Agreement” on 8 April 1950. Through this treaty both countries solemnly agreed “that each shall ensure, to the minorities throughout its territory, complete equality of citizenship, irrespective of religion, a full sense of security in respect of life, culture, property and personal honor, freedom of movement within each country and freedom of occupation, speech and worship, subject to law and
morality. Members of the minorities shall have equal opportunity with members of the majority community to participate in the public life of their country, to hold political or other office, and to serve in their country’s civil and armed forces” (www.commonlil.org). Raghavan (2016) argued that the pact on the question of minorities made both governments accountable to one another in their respective countries. And thus, Pakistan was made accountable for the welfare of its Hindus minority, and similarly India was made responsible for its Muslim population (as Minority). Similarly, rights and protection of minorities have been frequently debated at International forum for a long time and the same have been emphasized time and again. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (adopted by UN general assembly on 16 December 1966), in this context asserts:

“All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Article 26). “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language” (Article 27).

“Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities” adopted by United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992 enumerated rights in favor of minorities of all kinds as: “States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity (Article 1). Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination (Article 2 (1)). Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life (Article 2 (2)). States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country (Article 4 (5)). National policies and programs shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities (Article 5 (1)). Programs of cooperation and assistance among States should be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities” (Article 5 (2)).
Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on Human Rights Day (10 December 2009) stated that; “Minorities in all regions of the world continue to face serious threats, discrimination and racism, and are frequently excluded from taking part fully in the economic, political, social and cultural life available to the majorities in the countries or societies where they live.”

Today, along with the problem of relative development deficit in comparison with other socio-religious groups, Muslims in India are threatened by the issues of identity, equity and security on a daily basis (Basant and Shariff, 2010). Rauf (2011) observed that socio-economic inequality among Muslims is not only due to their developmental deficit, but also due to majoritarian approach of right-wing Hindutva, which defines and mix Muslim identity with myth, hysteria, and hostility; and thus, present them as opposite to social fabric of India. This approach not only restricts Muslims in participating as an active citizenry, but devalue them as a social, economic and political minority. Sachar committee report (2006) stressed that there is widespread perception of deprivation among Muslims and since Independence no systematic effort has been made to analyze the condition of religious minorities in India. Further the report argued that markers of Muslim Identity have become a concern for Muslims in the public realm, as every bearded Muslim man is considered an ISI (Inter-services intelligence- premier intelligence agency of Pakistan) agent. Muslims have been socially boycotted in certain parts of India and forced to migrate from places where they lived since long. At present they are frequently labeled as anti-national and at the same time appeased by the government for political gains.

Panikkar (2005) argued that minorities have been subjected to physical intimidation and attack in all South Asian countries. Now these attacks are so organized and have assumed and turned into a program against minorities. The carnage against Muslims in Gujarat (2002) unleashed by the Hindu fundamentalists is a fine example of organized program to dismantle minorities. The Gujarat carnage of 2002 was preceded by a long process of highlighting the wrong doings of minorities to the ancestors of Hindu Samaj. Dhattiwala (2017) termed the Gujarat carnage as the one of the worst ethnic killings of modern Indian history, where Muslim were largely targeted. The Minorities at Risk Project (2006), estimated that Muslim-Hindu clashes of 2002 in Gujarat known as Gujarat massacre, internally displaced as many as 5000 Muslim families within India and led to the death of more than 2,000 people. Similar kind of Hindu-Muslim clash broke-out in Muzaffarnagar (a town of Uttar Pradesh) on 7 September 2013; where more than a dozen people reportedly died in the violence and 40,000 people (mainly Muslims) were forced to leave their homes and flee (www.bbc.com). Anirban Mitra (2014) investigated the reason behind religious conflict/clashes in India and contended that religion in many parts of India is used as a systematic tool to gain economic benefits; either exploiting and looting people who are from another religion/faith or preventing them from doing businesses/occupations to
stop their access to resources/property. The researcher noted that with the increase in the prosperity of Muslims, religious conflict (between Hindus and Muslims) increases noticeably in the next and following years (in terms of number of people killed, the total number of killed and injured, or the number of riots). It is important to accept that minorities are always at high risk of persecution everywhere in the world. An increase in income of minorities induces more violence against them, and less violence perpetrated by them. A better off minority therefore needs better protection (APOLLON Research Magazine, 2014).

With the arrival of right-wing political party in power at the Centre in May 2014, social tension between Hindus and Muslims have increased. Certain fringe groups of Hindus have taken upon themselves the sole responsibility of ensuring patriotism on part of the Muslims - on the presumption that Muslims are not or less loyal to the nation. There are also attempts to reinterpret the history, which includes projection of Muslim rulers like Mughals as outsiders, who looted India and did all kinds of historical wrongs to the nation. Collusion of certain government funded agencies like National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) in implementing the right-wing agenda of certain section of Hindu population is disturbing. Today, Muslims are being attacked every now and then and purportedly on silly issues like love Jihad (a concept wherein the Hindu group believed that Muslims boys are luring non-Muslim girls and converting them into the Islam, either by marriage or promise of marriage), beef eating etc. On 28 September 2015, a Muslim man, Mohammad Akhlaq (age-50) was lynched by a mob in Dadri for allegedly storing and consuming cow meat. In March 2016 on accusation of cow smuggling, two Muslims were hanged to death in Jharkhand (aljazeera.com). Similarly, during August 2016 in the district of Mewat, Haryana, a Muslim woman along with her 14-year-old minor cousin were allegedly gang-raped for being accused of eating beef. On April 1, 2017; Pehlu Khan (55-year-old); a resident of Alwar district of Rajasthan, was beaten mercilessly by cow vigilantes for smuggling cow, who later died in the hospital due to severe injuries. Three Muslims were killed in West Bengal on 22 June 2017 in the name of cow smuggling (IndiaSpend.Com).

Between 2010-2017; 52 per cent of violence in India centered on bovine issues. Out of which 97 per cent were reported since Narendra Modi led BJP formed the government at Centre (in May 2014). Between the same period, 60 cases of cow related violence have been registered in India, out of which 58 (96.7 per cent) happened after May 2014. These violence took 25 human lives, of whom 21 victims were Muslims. In 2016 alone, 25 such cases of violence have been reported. In 18 attacks (out of 60), police have registered charges against the victims/survivor itself. In 24 attacks (40 per cent of total attacks) involvement of persons belonging to Hindu fundamentalist groups/organizations, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and local GauRakshak Samitis have been identified. The disturbing is
the figure which says that 31 (52 per cent) of these attacks were initiated simply on
rumors. Today, Muslims in India are living in an atmosphere where they are
questioned and violently attacked in the name of culture, attire, eating habits and
doubtful loyalty routinely by the so-called Nationalist Hindu organizations
(IndiaSpend report published on 28 June 2017).

Despite the constitutional safeguard of equality and equal protection of law
to every Indian citizen, the Indian state itself has been discriminatory in delivering
security and protection to Muslims in tough times. The workshop on ‘Key Issues
for Religious Minorities Rights in Asia’ organized by Minority Rights Group
International, 2005 noted that the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA- an Act
passed by the Indian Parliament in 2002 for strengthening anti-terrorism operation
in the country) has been exercised to detain Muslims unlawfully. Police in India is
biased against the religious minorities and have communalized. Even the lower
and high courts have not remained free from prejudices against minorities. The
ongoing debate in India regarding the adoption of Uniform civil code (which
advocates for a common set of rules governing every citizen in sphere of civil laws,
setting aside the personal laws of religious communities, which are based on their
religious scriptures and customs) can be understood as an imposition of majority
community law on minorities. Recently the lower house of Indian Parliament
(Loksabha) on 28 December 2017 passed “the Muslims women (Protection of
Rights on Marriage) bill” (2017) which criminalizes the practice of triple talaq
(instant talaq). This is being perceived as a step ahead by the government in its
agenda to adopt Uniform civil code, which amounts to the imposition of
majoritarian rule over the minority.

Singh (2010) observed that today politics of fear has overpowered the spirit of
secularism in India. The wish to dominate over Muslims is increasing among the
certain section of Hindu community. At the same time, there is rising fear among
Muslims of being targeted through communal riots or legal mechanism due to
prejudice and radicalization. He argued that the very purpose of the formation of
the state (security) is threatening due to the environment of insecurity and fear
among a group of the population. This is the also negation of the assertion of basic
civil rights guaranteed in the constitution of India.

Manchanda (2009) argued that historically, the failure of states in protecting
the rights of minorities has led to the emergence of major internal and international
conflicts, which has drawn international concern and responsibility for protection
of minorities. The present condition of Indian Muslims encompasses risk factors for
the internal harmony and development of the country. Stewart (2000) stressed that
there is possibility of rise in conflict in a situation where, improvements are
regarded as being unfairly shared, as happened in Nigeria in the late 1960s. The
author views that inequalities in sharing political power results in similar or more
economic inequalities for the weaker group/community; because the group in
power commonly attempts to monopolize government jobs, infrastructural
facilities and so on in its favor, while discriminating the weaker group/community. Further, he contended that educational disparity is a very common source of inequality, which triggers economic and other inequalities. In every major conflict, we find an amalgamation of economic, political and cultural factors, with an increased group perceptions and identity; formed on sharp group differentiation in “political participation, economic assets, income, social access and well-being” (Stewart, 2000). Existence of large inequalities of above kind between different groups/community increases the likelihood of conflicts sooner or later. Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch, (2011) observed that the tendency to get engage in civil war is high among those ethnic groups, having much higher or much lower per-capita income than the country’s average figure. Bartusevicius (2014) defined income inequality and likelihood of popular rebellion as directly related. He argued that higher income inequality increases the probability of popular rebellion. Further the author explained, an individual decision to get engaged in rebellion depend on his/her relative level of income rather than absolute income. The study highlighted that state with a skewed level of income distribution have more chances of popular rebellion than those with a more equal income distribution. Now, we must understand that relative inequality is far dangerous than the absolute inequality. The above studies draw a proportionate relationship between the inequality in socioeconomic aspects and the possibilities of conflict.

3. **Suggestions to Improve the Lives of Muslims**

To facilitate an equitable socioeconomic and educational development of Muslims, efforts are required at each level i.e. individuals, community, civil society and State. Joint efforts of all stakeholders in society for safeguarding and promoting rights of Muslims are required on a sustained basis to reduce the development deficit. An attempt of this kind would help in preserving the multi-cultural and multi-religious character of India. Following are some of the measures to be adopted by different actors (i.e. Individual, community and state level) for uplifting the condition of Muslims in India:

### 3.1 At Individual Level

Critical understanding about his/her present situation is prerequisite to make a beginning towards self-improvement. Muslim youth in particular need to identify the reasons for their backwardness and develop an attitude to overcome them rather than being fatalistic. They need to work on their weaknesses at individual level and must strive to inculcate knowledge, skill and motivation to compete with their fellow citizens. Muslim youth need to understand that education is the key to their development and an effective tool to enhance life opportunities. Though attaining education is not easy task keeping in mind the grass-root realities, still attempt of one generation can bring significant changes for the present as well as upcoming generations of the community. It is heartening to note that women education among Muslims is increasing at a faster pace. These
young girls need to be encouraged and treated at par with their male counterparts. Today, with the emergence of knowledge based and technology driven society, education has become an effective tool of socioeconomic development for an individual as well as community. Highlighting the importance of education, Bhaumik and Chakrabarty (2007) elucidated that earnings of an individual increases with his/her level of education. Agiomirgianakis et al. (2002) argued that education positively affect on growth of an individual in long-run, and this effect strengthens with increasing level of education. Baum, Ma and Payea (2013) mentioned that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to get employed and earns more than the less educated. While the absence of education lead to poverty and higher vulnerability of crime and human trafficking (HDR, 2016). And therefore, it is high time for Muslims youth to determine themselves for achieving as much education as they can. Education can pull the community from the shackles of poverty and backwardness.

3.2 At Community Level

Demographic spread of Muslims varies across states and districts. They are largely scattered group of population, and in very few districts they form majority or closer to it. Despite their scattered population, they have remained an active and significant population group influencing democratic political processes of India. In states like UP, Bihar, West-Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jammu and Kashmir etc. they play a vital role in the formation of government. But, it has been observed in the recent past that despite their considerable numeric strength; they have failed in pressurizing the government for their developmental needs. In India, normally fresh elections take place in every state as well as for union government after every five years, which decides the formation of the government. Muslims as a community have largely been segmented politically, thus negating their potential to be of significant value in the political process. Muslims have also been noticed to get swayed by emotional rather than rational considerations. This weakness has been exploited by almost all mainstream political parties, and the vote bank politics has really failed to focus on real issues being faced by the community. The community needs to identify issues such as education, skill development, developing competitive attitude and actively participate in competitive examinations at all levels of government recruitments. The community needs to collectively think and act to develop institutions to prepare its members for such competitions. The community needs to learn from Christian and Sikh community for making all out efforts for investing in education of the community. The community needs to first put pressure on their own leadership to stand the test of commitment, seriousness and community resource as opposed to furthering their own political and economic vested interests.

3.3 At State Level

The preamble of Indian constitution defines India as socialist country. The constitution guarantees freedoms, liberties and justice; economic, social and
political. However, a lot needs to be done to achieve these ideals. To strengthen the concept of socialism, the constitution of India inserted a chapter of “Directive Principle of State Policy” where the constitution directs the state to prepare, adopt and implement certain measures for addressing the needs of weaker and vulnerable section of population, and thus promote welfare of all rather than of few. The above discussed situation of Indian Muslim in spheres of development poses a question, whether the state really has followed the directive of Indian constitution or neglected Muslims in implementing the welfare measures as directed. Sachar committee report (2006) clearly mentions that since independence no significant measures have been taken by the Indian state to uplift the condition of Muslims. Areas with significant population of Muslims lacks basic facilities like roads, bus stops, schools, hospitals etc. The ghettoization of Muslims, labelling them as an ISI agent and identifying them disloyal and being suspicious of them in terms of patriotism is denying them equality of status and a decent standard of life. Arrest of Muslim youth on mere suspicion, over patrolling in Muslim ghettoes denies them equal justice and personal liberty as envisaged by the constitution. Indian state needs to formulate policies, which can ensure equality to Muslims set forth by the constitution. Rather than neglecting and denying Muslims their due share of development, the state must strive to bring Muslims at par with the rest of its population in all aspects of development through affirmative actions and confidence building measures. As established above that absence of education increases the vulnerability to crime and encourages other social evils. State is duty bound to open more schools in Muslim concentrated areas to protect Muslim children from falling in trap of social evils. The higher drop-out rates of Muslims at all levels needs to be curbed through required measures like concession in fees, scholarship and skill training along with formal education. Proper coaching for entrance exams of institution of higher learnings like IITs, IIMs, state and central universities can be an effective policy to promote higher education among Muslims, which can further enhance their educational and living standard.

India is a multi-religious and multi-cultural country and it is the responsibility of every citizen to protect, promote and preserve this uniqueness of the nation. In above section we discussed how the contemporary condition of Muslims can be improved through their own effort at individual as well as community level, and how the state can play a guiding role in ensuring equality of all kind among Muslims. But the endeavor of community and state is neither enough, nor justifiable until we accept that everyone has a role in nation building and therefore other communities particularly those in better position can play an active role in enhancing the living standard of Muslims. However, it needs to be acknowledged that a significant section of majority population has responded the cause of Muslims in this country. This section of secular, liberal Hindu population is a national ally of Muslims. It is the responsibility of Muslims not to let them devoid by their irresponsible and undisciplined behavior. There is therefore a grave need for Muslims community for self-reflection and introspection.
4. Conclusion

India through the pace of its development in terms of GDP growth has achieved significantly and hold the distinction of being the second fastest growing economy of world, but the development discourse continues to suffer from inequality and is lopsided in nature. A large section of society namely Muslims in India even after 70 years of independence continue to severely lag behind others in education, social, economic and political spheres. The course of development taken so far have not apparently benefitted Muslims like others. The need of the hour is to develop strategies and methodologies to address the development deficit among Muslims. Today, Muslims in India are living with a sense of discrimination, fear of violence, political, economic and social deprivation in their routine life. The targeted Mob violence on Muslims has threatened and pushed the community in a state of fear and insecurity. The increasing cases of mob attacks on Muslims in last three years and the subsequent silence and inaction of government to bar these nuisances reflects that the oppressive mob has some political patronage of the people at the helm of power and thus highlights the discriminatory attitude of the state towards its largest minority.

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