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Educating Muslims in India: Trends of Past and Today

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ABSTRACT

Education has been considered an important and elementary tool for the development of any society. Institutions of the societies cannot grow of their own in isolation from each other, so is the case with education. Educational upliftment of a society has strong relations with the developments of the rest of the institutions of the society. Education takes support from the economy for its development as well as it extends support to the society for the economic and social development. The present paper explores the impact of economic and social development upon the educational development of a society. It is an ethnographic exploration of a village panchayat that chosen on purposive ground as a representative of the area. The paper is enriched with a detailed socio-economic account of the village panchayat.

The paper puts forth the role of economy and other social dynamics of the society in shaping the behaviour of people towards education. It also illustrates the role of education in making people economically sound and self reliant. The paper also has some hints about the problem of quality of education that Indian society is facing today.

KEYWORDS Education, development, economy.

Introduction

Education has been an important indicator for development of a group, community or nation. It enables people to realise their own position and overcome the confronting problems in their lives. The Muslims which constitute as the second largest majority in the country has become synonym for backwardness. It may be educationally, economically or socially. The report of Sachaar committee has substantiated this state of Muslims especially in the field of education. It is believed that educational backwardness leads the community or society to other backwardness. But in the same way backwardness in the areas other than education does impact upon the development of education in the society as well. (Haralambos 2000) With this presupposition an attempt has been made to understand the reciprocity and interdependency of basic social institutions specially economy and social dominations that reflects the polity has been examined in relation to education of the society.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on a case study of a Village Panchayat. Case studies provide opportunities for deeper and multidimensional understanding of the issues. (Wilkinson & Bhandarkar 1977) That is why case studies are important and getting popularity even in the ear of post modern researches which advocates about localised narratives instead of mega narratives. (Ritzer 2001)

The selection of the village panchayat is based on purposive sampling method. This method is useful in cases where the possibility of representation of the varieties of the universe was in doubt and does not favour the intended research theme.4 keeping the purpose of the research, researcher on the bases of his understanding choose the unit assuring that the chosen unit is the representative of the universe under investigation.(Lal Das 2000)

In this context the representation of the Village Panchayat on behalf of the entire block, Joya has been kept into deep consideration. Interview method has been used for data collection, supplemented by participants' observation. Unstructured interview schedule has been used and the respondents were chosen on purposive ground. The office records of Wasim Turki Muslim Degree College, located in the same Village Panchayat, were also used as backup for the study. The data collected from the office records of the college shows certain trends among Muslims and Non-Muslims as regard educational condition in the area.

LOCATION

Fatehpur Mafi is a Village Panchayat, consisting of three villages namely Mirpur, Mujahidpur and Fatehpur Mafi of Joya block in the district of Jyoatiba Phole Nagar, traditionally known as Amroha in western part of Uttar Pardesh. The district was created out of Moradabad Division in 2001 during the Chief Ministership of Mawati. The district is surrounded by Moradabad from east and by Bijnaur from north. Meerut, Ghaziabad and Buland Shahar cover the western boundaries of the district from north to south. Some parts of the district have connection with Badaun district in south.

In the district of Jotiba Phole Nagar, Joya block is seven kilometres from the district headquarters in south at the National Highway connecting Moradbad and Delhi. Being a town area it has its own chairperson. The village Panchayat Fatehpur Mafi that is the actual place of the study is three kilometres in south from Joya. The Village Panchayat is located at the road leading to Sambhal form Joya.

SOCIAL PROFILE

The Village Panchayat, as mentioned above, consists of three villages Fatehpur Mafi, Mirpur and Mujahidpur. The village panchayat is named after Fatehpur Mafi as it is the biggest one among all three. The population of the Village Panchayat is, as estimated by voters list, is 2095. Joya block is known as a Muslim populated belt. The Village Panchayat, being part of the same block, is also Muslim dominated. Muslims constitute eighty-one per cent of the total population of the block. Remaining 19 per cent are Hindus.

Overwhelming majority of the Muslim population consists of Turaks and Faqeers (two castes). Faqeers constitute only three per cent of the total Muslim population. Turak caste has its own sub classification and internal hierarchy in three categories; these are Khoje, Bobne and Jhojhe. Among these categories Khojhe claims to hold an upper hand in their internal caste hierarchy. Next to them is Bobne, and Jhojhe stands at the bottom of the hierarchal ladder. This internal hierarchy of Turaks is not much obvious, because, according to them and as observed, they share common culture and have common

historical background though it matters in matrimonial alliances.

The village Panchayat of Fatehpur Mafi is inhabited only by Khojhe Turaks. Here they enjoy the status of dominant caste. The Government of Uttar Pardesh has included Jhojhe, which is the lowest stratum of the internal hierarchy of Turak, in the list of Other Backward Classes (OBC).

ECONOMY

The economy of the Village Panchayat depends mostly on agriculture and certain informal sectors like brick production units and construction works. Land of the area is fertile but they do not prefer cash crop which is considered for good return. The Village Panchayat within its boundary and surroundings has 13 brick production units, out of which 10 are owned by Turaks of the same village Panchayat. Hence they are economically well off. A considerable portion of the population is still engaged in cattle and grain trading which is their traditional occupation. Six families depend upon their small provisional shops besides agriculture. Seven persons are in government jobs, out of whom six are Turaks and one Saine (a low Hindu caste). Among six employed Turaks three are teachers in high school in the same locality while one of them is in state police force (CRPF) and one is Secretary to Pradhan of a village panchayat.

Discussion

Now after acquiring familiarity with the socio-economic profile of the area, we are relatively in a better position to understand the educational development and social change in the village.

The Village panchayat shows trends that have been almost common with the entire rural India. But a shifting educational trend during the last 10 years highlights some positive symptoms though it is not yet satisfactory.

Share in government jobs is an indicator for educational status. There is no person above the age of forty in government jobs from the entire Village panchayat though they were neither Landlords nor had any other social status that sometimes acted as hindrances to Government jobs. They are still illiterate and not recognising the importance of education. Their negligence about the value of education is seems obvious from their lack of interest and parenting towards their wards that a school-going child needs. That is why ten years ago there was only one Inter College in a neighbouring Village Panchayat. The college served the population in the radius of almost 30 to 40 kilometres which requires about ten colleges. It is a self-managed college and all the teachers are from the same area, now most of them are the products of the same Inter College. Almost all of them got appointments either by their personal relation with the managing committee or by greasing the palm of concerned authorities irrespective of their abilities. Even some appointments have been managed for persons whom the managing committee considered their own either by delaying appointments till the candidates managed to get the required qualification or by waiting for retirements of the serving person.

The government, as usual in the case of Muslim areas, did show partial behaviour toward the educational development of the area. It did not open any college or school except primary education centres whose "quality" services are known to all. But of late, the rapid growth in number of schools and colleges shows an increasing inclination of Village panchayat towards education. During the last ten years, eight inter colleges, six high schools and 15 other schools, upto fifth standard on the pattern of public schools, have been established by local people within the area of five kilometres. All these educational institutions are jam-packed with learners.

Only Turki Inter College, that is the oldest inter college in the area, got success in getting financial aid from thy government, that too only for its high school section. In the year of 2005-06 a Turak from the same Village Panchayat, who is a high school teacher, established a Degree College that got affiliation from M.J.P. Rohailkhand (Braeily) University and was allotted three hundred seats for B.A courses. In its first year, the college refused many admission-seeking applications due to its limited seats. Increasing number of schools, school-going children and overall changing behaviour of parents show positive shift towards education.

No doubt the Village Panchayat has stepped forward. But in terms of qualitative and quantitative education the quantity dominates quality. Schools have been established not to serve the very purpose of education and to spread learning. Rather they have become profit-making shops. Since the "customers" of these shops are still not able to evaluate the quality that they are receiving, schools are freely working without any kind of check on their quality. They are sending their children to these schools though they have options. Schools have created a competitive atmosphere for maximising results not by imparting learning but by facilitating cheating in exams. Subject teachers are being deputed to dictate the answers at least up to the pass marks. They are interested in maximising results so they can increase of students in their schools and finally can pocket money.

Another fact that stands for their negligence to quality education is that the staff members of these colleges, who are educated, are not aware about the ill effects of knowledge handicap. They are not just victimising the children of others rather their own children are in a more dangerous position. They are relatively much confident to get the opportunity of cheating in exams.

Office records of WTM Degree College help in understanding the educational status of the area. In the beginning of the sessions WTM advertised vacancies for lecturers in seven subjects namely Hindi, Urdu, Geography, Sociology, English, Political Science and Home Science. In this era of unemployment 48 applications were received and little surprisingly no eligible candidate was among the applicants from the local area, though people prefer to get employment within or in the neighbourhood of their hometown.

Of course the whole population is passing through a transitional phase. The number of school-going children and their proportion in senior secondary and higher education is increasing. But it is realized that the interest in education is more among Hindus than their proportion in population. As mentioned earlier that the Village panchayat and neighbouring village are heavily Muslim-populated (by 81%). But the data collected from WMT Degree College shows that almost 43% of the students are from the Hindu community which has only 19% share of the total population in the Village Panchayat. Such huge gap between the proportion of actual population and their representation, of course shows the higher transitional rate among the Hindus in the locality. It may be due to their relatively weak economic and political position to overcome or by growing awareness about the importance of education. The attendance ratio of the Hindu community students is more than the Muslims as attendance registers of the Degree College indicated.

The sex ratio in educational institutions is satisfactory in the relative sense. Degree College registered 32 per cent female students which is good representation in higher education. But this representation community-wise again pushes us in a position of disappointment. Share of Hindu girls is 13 per cent, which is of course more than their proportion in population while the representation of Muslim girls is only 19 per cent, which is again far from satisfaction.

Presently the Village panchayat has about 25 simple and three professional graduates. Simple graduates are products of the regional degree college where they were facilitated with cheating in exams. All the graduates are below the age of 35 years. They are neither interested in Government jobs nor

capable of them. So, most of them are in business. Among Professional graduates two are lawyers and one medical practitioner. Lawyers are not in their profession. They are also in business of bricks. The medical practitioner has managed a degree in BUMS from a privately managed college by paying donation and is busy with his original profession.

Conclusion

The march of the Village Panchayat from illiteracy to knowledge seeking caused good impact on the people's behaviour. They now realize the ill effects of knowledge handicap and, of course, send their children to schools so they can get education. It is hoped that with the growing awareness the people will also get the sense to differentiate between quality and quantity in term of educational achievements. This shifting pattern is an indicator for a bright tomorrow. But Muslims are showing a less responsive attitude in the area. They are economically better than their counterpart but comparatively seem poor in the performance of their educational achievement. This behaviour may be the ill effect of their effluence.

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