

THE SACHAR COMMITTEE REPORT

As per the Notification issued by the PMO, a seven-member High Level Committee, headed by Justice (Retd.) Rajindar Sachar was constituted in March 2005 to study the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India and recommend necessary measures for their economic upliftment. The committee consisted of the following members:

- Justice (Retd). Rajinder Sachar,
Former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court. : Chairman
- Abusaleh Shariff,
Economist. Nominated member of Markazi Majilise Amla,
Chief Economist at National Council for Applied Eco. Research. :Member
Secretary
- T. K. Oommen, Sociologist. : Member
- M. A. Basith,
Sr. Director, Planning Dept; Karnataka. : Member
- Dr. Rakesh Basant,
Economist. : Member
- Dr. Akhtar Majeed,
Academician, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Jamia Hamdard University, Delhi. : Member
- Prof. Saiyid Hamid,
Chancellor, Jamia Hamdard University, Delhi,
Member National Executive,
All India Muslim Majlis -e - Mushawarat (AIMMM). : Member

The committee headed by Rajindar Sachar submitted its report to the Government on November 17, 2006 and the same was tabled in the Parliament on November 30th, 2006. Some of the recommendations and observations of the committee are as under:

Recommendations and Observations:

The Muslim community is lagging behind other religious groups in India as per most development indicators. The community is relatively poor, mostly illiterate, has lower access to education, lower representation in public and private sector jobs and lower availability of bank credits for self employment.

The Muslims are placed even lower than the SCs on many human resources indicators like education and health.

The percentage of Muslims in government service is only 4.9 % and in the security agencies their share is only 2.3% indicating an anti-Muslim bias at the entry point level.

The Muslim performance is below average on all socio-economic scales.

The community mostly lives in slums, characterized by poor municipal infrastructure and their insecurity and ghettoization is on the rise.

The growth of Muslims population has slowed down.

The percentage of Muslim inmates in jails is disproportionately high. In Maharashtra it is as high as 40%, whereas the community makes up only 10.6% of the population. In Gujarat, the Muslims constitute about 9.06% of the population, where as they form 25% of inmates in jails in state.

Emphasizing the need to enhance the representation of Muslims in all arms of the government and even the judiciary, the committee suggests the creation of an Equal Opportunity Commission. The Equal Opportunity Commission is proposed to be patterned after the UK's Racial Opportunity Commission and is supposed to provide relief to individuals against discrimination they suffer on daily basis.

All selection panels should include representatives from minority communities to avoid any bias or discrimination.

There should be equitable distribution of available jobs in the formal sectors for Muslims.

All districts where Muslim make up more than 25% of the population should be brought under the purview of the government's 15-point programme for the minorities.

There should be greater participation of Muslims in governance. Out of the 543 members in the present Lok Sabha, only 33 of them belong to the Muslim community. A carefully conceived nomination procedure has to be worked out to increase the participation of minorities at the grass-root level.

Adequate steps should be taken to promote Urdu language.

There should be an increase in the UGC grants to community-run colleges and schools.

Various sections of Muslims falling under the category of 'Arzals' engaged in traditional occupation like the Hindu SCs should be designated as most backward classes and multifarious measures including reservation should be taken for their upliftment.

There should be some reforms in the madrassa educational system to improve the study of regular subjects like Science, Geography and Mathematics. There should be a mechanism to link up the madrassas with the Higher Secondary School Board, so that the madrassa students wanting to shift to regular main stream schools can do so after passing out from the madrassas. Degrees from madrassas be granted recognition for eligibility to appear for competitive examinations like civil services, banks and defense service examinations.

Muslim Reaction and Affirmative Action:

The Sachar Committee Report, as expected, had created a lot of resentment and anger among the Muslim community as their worst fears and suspicion about the bias and discrimination against the Muslims have now been confirmed by the committee headed by Rajindar Sachar. Muslim leaders belonging to different social and religious organizations and political parties condemned the anti-Muslim bias prevailing in the country, which according to them was the major factor responsible for the socio-economic backwardness of the Muslim community. They also demanded immediate corrective measures and affirmative action to undo the injustice done to the community over the years. Leaders of other political parties like the left parties, Samajwadi Party, RJD and the Congress had also come out expressing grave concern over the findings of the Sachar Committee and seeking immediate remedial measures.

On the initiative of the 'Movement for Peace and Justice', a front organization of the Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind, a public meeting was held at Azad Maidan, Mumbai at 15.00 hrs on 10th March 2007 to demand the immediate implementation of the recommendations of the Sachar Committee. Besides many Muslim MPs and MLAs, leaders of many prominent Muslim organizations like Ulema Council, All India Milli Council, Aman Committee, Jamat-e-Islami, Jamiat-e-Ahle-Hadis and Jamaat-UI-Ulema-e-Hind also attended the said meeting and addressed the gathering.

The Movement for Peace and Justice also carried out a campaign to educate the Muslims about the recommendations of the Sachar Committee especially about the discrimination the Muslim community was subjected to in the past which had led to the extreme backwardness of the Muslims in the country and their under representation in the central and state services. A meeting of Imams held under the auspices of the "Movement for Peace and Justice" at Haj House, Mumbai on 5th March 2007 had also decided to make use of the services of Imams in educating the Muslim masses about the recommendations of the Sachar Committee through their Friday sermons. The Movement for Peace and Justice had also conducted a signature campaign through out the country demanding the total and early implementation of the recommendations of the Sachar Committee and a memorandum listing their demands along with the signatures collected was later forwarded to the Prime Minister.

In another significant development on December 19, 2006, a group of Muslim MPs, cutting across party lines had handed over a demand list to HRD Minister, Arjun Singh. The demand list included separate IITs and IIMs for the Muslims, five thousand schools and two lakh scholarships for Muslims especially for higher education and also opening of four more campuses each of Aligarh Muslim University and Maulana Azad National Urdu University across the country. They also sought 2000 Kendriya Vidyalyayas exclusively for the Muslim students, 1000 for girls and another 1000 for boys. They further demanded the establishment of

3000 residential schools for Muslim girls.

The leftist parties asked the government to allocate 15% of total resources on development programmes for minorities, particularly the Muslims. The leftists also wanted a refashioning of the lending policy of banks for allowing 15% of disbursement of funds to Muslims despite objection from bank managements.

There was also panic reaction from the UPA leaders who started announcing various schemes and steps meant for the upliftment of the Muslim community. The Centre also started preparing religion-based demographic statistics for the smooth execution of minority welfare schemes. Accordingly, the minority statistics from the latest census figures have been used to identify areas with more than 25% of Muslims to ensure greater flow of funds to such areas for upliftment of the minorities. In the union budget presented for the year 2007-08 such provisions were made for the first time in independent India. The Planning Commission had given approval for a special grant of Rs. 1000 crore for various welfare schemes meant for the Muslims. The Planning Commission had also asked the ministries and state governments to allocate 15% of Rs.200,000 crore funds allocated for next financial year for the upliftment of the Muslims. This was in addition to Rs.1000 special funds earmarked for them.

The Department Of Personnel and Training in a 3-page office memo issued on 8th January 2007 had instructed all the heads of departments, public sector banks, financial institutions, Quasi government organisations and all appointing authorities to scrupulously observe guidelines to make selection panel more representative. The departments were asked to submit half-yearly and annual reports beginning from March 2007, detailing number of vacancies at all levels i.e. Group A, B, C and D and the number of minority hands hired.

On December 9, 2006, while addressing a meeting of National Development Council (NDC), the Prime Minister had said that the minorities particularly the Muslims should be empowered to share equitably the fruits of development and they should have the first claim on national resources.

The Finance Ministry on 09.01.2007 had issued a directive to all banks asking them to set aside 15% of priority lending in all categories for minority communities, despite the fact that the religion of borrowers has never been factored in while giving loans.

The government has approved a central scheme entailing an expenditure of Rs.1868.50 crore to provide pre-metric scholarship to 25 lakh students from minority communities for pursuing education in government and private institutions. This scheme is to be launched from 2008-09 fiscal year.

The budgetary allocation for welfare schemes for the minorities in the XI th. Five-Year Plan (2007-12) has been hiked to Rs.7000 crore and annual allocation to the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the year 2008-09 has been suo moto raised by the Planning Commission to Rs.1400 crore from Rs.500 crore, though the ministry had sought an annual allocation of Rs.1100 crore only.

The central government has already identified 90 districts in the country as minority-concentrated for special development plans. Strangely however the known Muslim majority districts in Uttar Pradesh, Assam, J&K, West Bengal and Kerala are not included in this select-90 list. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has flagged off a scheme worth Rs.3780 crore for 90 minority-concentrated districts and each of this district is to get over 40 crore to improve the socio-economic indices of these districts to the level of national average during the XI th. Plan period.

The government has also accepted the proposal of the Standing Committee of National Minorities Committee for Minorities Education that the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and Madrassas should issue a joint pass certificate to students clearing middle level of schooling from the Muslim religious school and the Aalim and Fazil degrees issued by these schools be recognised by all Indian universities.

A Critical Evaluation of Sachar Committee Report:

A closer scrutiny of the Sachar Committee Report on the status of Muslims in India reveals that the report contains a lot of falsehood and half-truths.

The report says that Muslims are placed even lower than SC/STs on many Human Resources indicators like health and education which is quite incorrect. The SC/STS and Dalits are extremely marginalised sections of people who have been target of oppression and exploitation for thousands of years. They can never be compared with Muslims whose dynasties had ruled over large part of India for more than 700 years and had converted tens of thousand of local people to Islam. They controlled and dominated the social order and occupied important positions of power until the advent of the British rule. Their economic progress may have slowed down to certain extent because of their obscurantist life style and preference for Madrassa education. But still they have made a impressive mark in almost all spheres of life as can be seen from the fact that they have significant presence among the top lawyers, doctors, engineers, rich industrialists, transporters, artists, sports persons, journalists and those associated with the film industry in the country unlike the members of SC/ST communities.

It is alleged that Muslims have lower access to education and they are not given equal opportunities. It is a blatant lie. They have all the opportunities for better education and employment prospects. However, guided and patronised by Mullahs and Moulavis they have an aversion to modern education and many of them prefer to send their children to madrassas for education which make them incompetent to get through competitive examinations for higher education or to get plum jobs. This aversion for education is seen among the Muslims even in a developed country like the United Kingdom. According to official statistics released this year, around 33% of British Muslims of working age have no qualifications at all, which is the highest proportion of under-achievement in education for any religious group in the country. A group of theologians and educationists in the U.K. have reportedly started a series of discussions and debates to chalk out necessary measures to reverse this trend.(The Hindu,Dated 3d April,2008)

According to the Sachar Committee report, Muslims have disproportionately high representation when it comes to being in prison and in many states their representation in prison is twice or thrice as much as their percentage of population. It is an unfortunate and unpleasant

fact that Muslims constitute an unusually high percentage of criminals, under trials and prisoners in the country. But the inference that various state governments conspired to frame more criminal charges against Muslims with the objective of painting Muslims as a criminal community is highly inappropriate and irresponsible. The community leaders should make an introspection to find out as to why Muslim youths take to crime in such a large numbers and take corrective measures to reverse this trend. The argument that illiteracy and unemployment compel them to choose a career path in crime is not valid as in that case there should be much more criminals from Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalised sections of people who are placed much below the Muslims in the socio-economic status. In fact the phenomenon of Muslims constituting a disproportionately high percentage of prisoners in jails is not something confined to India alone. In 2002, the New York Post had published an article written by Daniel Pipes and Lars Hedegaard about the growing immigrant problem in Denmark. The report had pointed out that "Muslims are only 4% of Denmark's 5.4 million people but make up a majority of the country's convicted rapists, an especially combustible issue given that practically all the female victims are non-Muslim. Similar, if lessor, disproportions are found in other crimes."

The report indirectly encourages Madrassa education by suggesting that there should be a mechanism to link up the Madrassas with the Higher Secondary School Board so that the Madrassa students wanting to shift to regular mainstream schools can do so after passing out from Madrassas and also by recommending that the degrees from Madrassas should be recognised for eligibility to appear for competitive examinations like civil services, banks and defense service examinations. This is the most foolish and dangerous recommendation of the Sachar Committee. The report instead of pointing out the inadequacy of Madrassa education and motivating the Muslims to send their children to regular schools, encourages Madrassa education and thereby condemns the Muslim children to be in state of perpetual mediocrity.

The Madrassa is an educational institution of Muslims offering study of Islamic subjects like Quran and Hadith (sayings of the prophet) and Islamic Jurisprudence. The Madrassas strictly follow an obsolete and outdated curriculum which is quite different from the mainstream syllabus. The Madrassa curriculum blissfully ignores the importance of modern education and the changes brought about by the computer and IT revolution. There are no proper library and laboratory facilities in Madrassas. The clerics who run the Madrassa generally frown upon the idea of students taking part in extra curricular activities. The Madrassas do not exactly train the students to become Islamic terrorists. But over emphasis in the Madrassa curriculum about the superiority of Islam tends to create a feeling of intolerance among the Madrassa students towards other religions and make them susceptible to get easily influenced by the lure of Jihadi philosophy.

The report also stresses the need for reforms in Madrassa education with financial aid from the Centre and introduction of subjects taught in regular schools. This is probably the only recommendation in the report which could be termed as logical and appropriate. However, the Muslim clerics and leaders in general are resisting such a move, dubbing it as an attempt by the government to bring Madrassas under the government control. Any affirmative action for social and economic upliftment of Muslims has to come from Muslims themselves for which the Madarssas have to be first freed from the vice-like grip of the Mullahs and Moulavis.

The committee's finding that the growth of Muslim population has slowed down is also misleading as it is far below the fall in the rate of growth of population among the other communities.

There is some truth in the reported low percentage of Muslims in the government service and security agencies including the armed forces. These are various factors responsible for this situation. Modern education has never been a priority area for the Muslim community who preferred to send their children to Madrassas, which has naturally adversely affected their employment opportunities. The Muslim community's inclination to engage themselves in traditional business / occupation like weaving, carpentry, smithery, fishing, agriculture, brass-ware etc. also contributed to their lower employment rate in government services. It is also true that their percentage is still lower in armed forces. However, it is pertinent to note that joining the armed forces has never been a preferred career option for substantial section of Muslims with PAN-Islamic feelings because of the hostilities between India and Pakistan and this factor could also have contributed to their poor representation in the armed forces.

The lower percentage of Muslims in government service is not an indicator of their economic backwardness and discrimination. For instance, the Muslims constitute about 24.5% of population in Kerala whereas their share in government jobs is only 9.85%. If we go by the Sachar Committee's logic this low percentage of Muslims in government service in Kerala is due to discrimination against the Muslims. But consider these facts. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is a very powerful political force in Kerala. The IUML was in power in Kerala for about 30 years either in alliance with the Left Democratic Front led by the CPM or the United Democratic Front led by the Congress. The leaders of IUML and also Muslim leaders from other political parties had good representation in almost all ministries in Kerala in the past and they had held many important portfolios. How the two political fronts in Kerala had gone out of the way to please the IUML by creating government jobs exclusively for the Muslims like the creation of thousands of posts of Arabic teachers in government schools, etc. is recorded history. Even then if their percentage in government jobs in the state is comparatively low, can any conclusion be drawn that it is due to the discrimination against the Muslims. Even the Muslims in Kerala would not admit that they are economically most backward or they did not have equal opportunities to attain economic progress. According to a recent survey conducted by the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, a pro-leftist organisation of Kerala, which was widely reported in the press, in terms of economic prosperity and land held in possession, the Hindus in Kerala are lagging behind both the Muslims and Christians. However, in the field of education and employment both the Christians and Hindus are marginally ahead of the Muslims.

The CPM-led leftist government in West Bengal which has been in power for about last 30 years is considered as a Muslim-friendly government. However, according to the Sachar Committee Report, the Muslim percentage in government service in West Bengal is abysmally low at 2.1%. In contrast the Muslim percentage in government service is 5.4% in Gujarat where an allegedly anti-Muslim Govt. is in power. Similarly in respect of state public sector undertakings in West Bengal, the employment of Muslims in higher and lower position is 1.2% and 6.3% respectively, whereas in Gujarat it is 6.3% and 16% respectively. The report also says that the proportion of Muslims living below the poverty line is 36% in West Bengal, whereas it is

13% in Gujarat which is well below even the state average of 20%. The better performance of Muslims in Gujarat as against West Bengal where there is a Muslim-friendly leftist government in power clearly negates the theory of discrimination against the Muslims.

According to the latest data released by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) for the year 2004-05 released on March 30, 2007 and published in all national newspapers, there is not much difference in the general backwardness of Hindus and Muslims in the country except in the field of education.

A recent data analysis report presented by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) on its first ever national survey of Household Income and Expenditure (2004-05) has ridiculed the half-baked findings and conclusions on the economic state of religious communities in India and has asserted that at the national level, the Hindus and Muslims are closer than the general perception as far as economic parameters like household income, expenditure, savings and even ownership of selected consumer goods are concerned. As per the NCAER report, while the Hindus and Muslims at National level run neck to neck on average annual household income, the Sikhs, Christians and other communities are much better placed.

As per the 2001 census, the national average rate of literacy is 64.8%. The literacy percentage among the Hindus is 65.1% which is only 0.3% higher than the national average. The percentage among the Muslims is 59.1% which is lower than the national average by 5.7%. The rate of literacy for Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs is 80.3%, 71.7% and 69.4% respectively which is higher than the national average. This shows that the non-Muslim minorities have done much better than the Hindus in the educational sphere and the Muslim backwardness in this sphere is not that alarming as it was made out to be.

It is a fact the Muslims suffer from certain degree of social and economic backwardness as compared to Hindus and other minority communities like Sikhs and Christians. However the statistics and instances quoted above clearly show that they are only marginally more backward than other communities and that all the allegations about discrimination and lack of equal opportunities for Muslims are baseless. Rajindar Sachar who headed the Sachar Committee has obviously used selective indicators and parameters to exaggerate the extent of Muslim backwardness and deprivation and submitted a report which is blatantly biased and deliberately aimed to mislead the Muslim masses that anti-Muslim bias and discrimination was mainly responsible for the general backwardness of the Muslim community. It has also been found that Rajindar Sachar had always acted against the security interests of the country and was involved in many shady activities in the past. Some of the specific instances of his controversial and shady activities are furnished as under:

Sachar along with his naxalite friends and other human rights activists had always opposed all stringent laws like the POTA, TADA, etc. enacted by the Parliament to tackle the menace of terrorism, insurgency and naxal violence. Participating in a convention organised by the Forum for Democratic Initiative (FDI) against the alleged draconian laws like POTA, TADA and Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) at New Delhi on 6.8.04, Justice Rajindar Sachar had criticised the UPA government for its failure to repeal the POTA with retrospective effect

and its attempt to retain some of the POTA clauses through some other laws. Others who attended the convention included Dipankar Bhattacharya, Gen. Secretary, CPI-ML, Seram Rojesh, representative of Manipur Students' Association (pro-secessionist), New Delhi, SAR Geelani, Lecturer, Delhi University (who was involved in the Parliament attack case), Arundhati Roy, writer and Nandita Haksar, Supreme Court lawyer.

Justice Rajindar Sachar had always shown his sympathy for the cause of Kashmiri terrorists through his various press statements and articles. In a press release issued on March 27, 2002, Sachar had described the arrest of separatist leader Yasin Malik under the POTA by the J&K government in connection with a foreign exchange offence as a gross abuse of the Act and demanded his immediate release.

Speaking at a convention on the topic “Kashmir and India-Pak Friendship” organised by the 'Secular Democratic Forum' at New Delhi on 15th. August 2001 Justice Rajindar Sachar had said that restoring pre-1953 status to the J&K was the only solution to the Kashmir problem and declared his whole-hearted support to the demand for autonomy to the J&K. Dr. Hyder Hijazi, Secretary General Of J&K Liberation Front who also attended the convention had urged both India and Pakistan to grant independence to J&K to end the miseries of the Kashmiris. K. N. Ramchandran, a top CPI-ML leader, in his speech had criticized the Government of India for the continued repression of Kashmiri people and remarked that extension of 'Disturbed Area Act' would only worsen the situation in Kashmir. Dr. Sapan Mukherjee of CPI-ML (liberation) in his speech had lambasted the Centre for taking fascist measures while dealing with the situation in J&K and called for an immediate end to the repression of Kashmiris. The convention had also passed a resolution demanding the settlement of Kashmir issue by recognising the rights of Kashmiris to decide their own future.

In an article published in 'Kashmir Times' in January 2004 Justice Rajinder Sachar had expressed his disappointment over the two-judge verdict of Supreme Court upholding the validity of Prevention Of Terrorism Act 2002 (POTA) and stuck to his position describing POTA as a draconian law unworthy of a civilized nation. In another article published in the same daily under the caption “Uneasy Times in Kashmir”, Sachar had shown his sympathy for the cause of Kashmiri Militants.

Rajindar Sachar had participated in the 3rd Vinod Mishra Memorial meeting organised by the Delhi State Committee of the CPI-ML on 18th. December 2001. Besides Sachar, the meeting was also addressed by Praful Bidwai, Journalist, Dipankar Bhattacharya, Gen Secretary, CPM-ML and Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya.

Eleven POTA prisoners of Tamil Nadu consisting of terrorists, anti-national elements and hard core criminals had resorted to an indefinite hunger strike from 26.08.2004 demanding abolition of POTA and withdrawal of all cases registered under POTA, which was called off on 15.09.2004. 12 human rights activists led by Sachar had issued a press note expressing solidarity with the agitating prisoners and condemning the Govt. of Tamil Nadu for invoking the POTA against the prisoners.

In January 2000, Rajindar Sachar had strongly condemned the arrest of Th. Muiva, General Secretary of NSCN-IM (the most dominant Naga insurgent outfit) by the Thailand Police and had sought the intervention of the Government of India for his immediate release. He later flew all the way to Bangkok to express his solidarity with the arrested Naga leader. Participating in a symposium organised by 'Friends of Nagas', a front organisation of NSCN-IM at Bangkok, Rajindar Sachar and other human rights activists like Surendra Mohan, Nandita Haksar and Swami Agvinesh and NSCN-IM leaders like K.S.Paul Leo, S. Kho John and Akum Lonchari had passed a resolution demanding the immediate release of Th. Muiva. It may be noted that Th. Muiva was arrested by Thailand police on 19.01.2000 while he was travelling from Karachi to Bangkok on a fake South Korean passport. He was however released on bail only to be arrested again on 30th. January while trying to fly to Bonn via Amsterdam from Hatyai Airport in South Thailand.

While speaking to North-East Vigil, a fortnightly of North-East region on 05.08.2000, Isaac Chishi Sushu, Chairman of NSCN-IM had praised Indian intellectuals like Rajindar Sachar, Surendra Mohan (former MP), Swami Agvinesh (Bonded Labour Liberation Front) and Nandita Haskar (Advocate Supreme Court) for their support to the cause of Nagas' struggle.

In May 2007 when Arun Pareria, a resident of Mumbai and three other hard-core CPI (Maoist) activists were arrested by the Police, Rajindar Sachar along with writer Arundhati Roy had convened a press conference in Delhi to protest against the arrest of the said four Maoist activists alleging that they were falsely implicated in the case, despite the fact the police had recovered weapons and explosives and many incriminating documents from them. Earlier Justice Rajindar Sachar had also condemned the arrest of Dr. Binayak Sen of Chattisgarh, Vice President, PUCL, by the Chattisgarh Police for his links with Maoist activists.

The instances quoted above clearly show Rajinder Sachar's sympathy for the Muslim militants, Maoists and separatist movements in the country and exposes his anti-national credentials.

Comments:

There is a very big lobby of eminent personalities in India who are indulging in anti-national activities at the behest of some external agencies. This lobby consists of some eminent lawyers, retired judges, writers, social activists, journalists, human right activists, retired defense personnel, bureaucrats and some church activists. These activists who have a common agenda are working under different banners like human rights, environmentalists, social action and Christian action groups. All these groups have often shown their sympathy and support for various militant and insurgent outfits and naxalite groups in the country as they do not believe in the concept of India as a nation state.

Rajindar Sachar who is a close associate of other pro-naxalite judge activists like Hosbet Suresh, S. M. Daud, P. B. Sawant, Kolse Patil is also an active member of the said lobby. Sachar's findings and observations about Muslim community's backwardness and alleged bias and discrimination against them were intended only to create a surge of anger, alienation and disaffection among the Muslim community in India. It is strongly suspected that Sachar's appointment to head the High Level Committee to study the socio-economic and educational

backwardness of the Muslims was part of big conspiracy hatched by some militant NGO and human rights activists and some anti-national elements within the government with the aim of creating disaffection and promoting militancy among the Muslims in the country and also to tarnish India's image as a secular country.

The extent of damage the Sachar Committee Report has done to the reputation and secular credentials of the country can be gauged from an article that appeared in the weekend edition of London's prestigious news daily 'Financial Times Weekend' dated March 31/April 1, 2007 under the headline "A creed of loathe thy neighbour". Quoting extensively from Sachar Committee report, the article says that India's Muslims constantly battling perceptions that they are 'anti-national', 'unpatriotic' and 'belong to Pakistan' are being pushed into ghettos. Markers of their identity such as burkah, the purdah, the beard and topi invite ridicule and harassment. Bearded men find that they are routinely picked up for interrogation and hijab-wearing women struggle to find jobs. Most Muslims are unable to buy or rent property in the area of their choice. Their children are rejected from good schools and this has contributed to sharp growth in the number of Madrassas. Highlighting the atrocities and discrimination against Muslims in various fields, the article further hints that India deserved to be a target of Islamic terrorists. If Sachar Committee report had provoked publication of an article like this in a prestigious newspaper in a non-Muslim country which is engaged in a war against Islamic terrorism, then what could be the reaction it has generated among the Muslims in India and Muslim masses and intellectuals in Muslim countries. A true picture about the harm done to the country by the Sachar Committee report was seen during the coverage of November 26 terror attacks in Mumbai by the international media. A substantial section of the media in the Western and European countries while commenting on the event extensively quoted from the Sachar Committee report to justify the attacks as a sort of retaliation for the ill-treatment of Muslims in India.

The Sachar committee has done a great disservice to the country by submitting a distorted and misleading report prepared with manipulated and selective data and malicious intentions. There are vast sections of poor and backward people among both Hindu and Muslim communities and urgent necessary steps need to be taken to improve their lot. However it will be highly inappropriate and extremely dangerous to blindly implement the Muslim specific recommendations of the Sachar Committee.

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