

Book Review

Vision 2025 Social Economic Inequalities: Why Does India's Economic Growth Need n Inclusive Agenda (2018) By Amir Ullah Khan Abdul Azim Akhtar

Md. Zafar Mahfooz Nomani

Professor, Department of Law, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi
Email id: zafarnomani@rediffmail.com
Pp/lxix+327; Price Rs 995/- Soft Bound

Date of Submission: 25/11/2018; Date of Acceptance: 19/01/2019

The book *Vision 2025 Social Economic Inequalities: Why Does India's Economic Growth Need n Inclusive Agenda* is an excellent work by Amir Ullah Khan and Abdul Azim Akhtar on the exclusion study of Indian Muslims. The book is very successful in representing the socio-economic status of the Indian Muslim in-depth, systematic and full of evidentiary articulations. The book is a follow-up the exercise of adoption of social inclusion policies towards marginalised communities of India especially Muslims in aftermath of *High-Level Committee to Examine the Socio-Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India*, 2005 popularly known Sachar Committee Report. As a natural sequel to implementations of Sachar Committee Report, Amitabh Kundu Report (*Report of the Expert Group to Propose a Diversity Index and Work out the Modalities of Implementation*, 2008) and Madhva Menon Committee Report (*Report by the Expert Group to examine and determine the structure and functions of an Equal Opportunity Commission*, 2008) documented that not much ice has melted by heat generated by governments' proactive policies during one and half decades. The book revives debates on the subject of deprivation and discrimination of Indian Muslims in deep empiricism. It raises seminal questions regarding access to education, healthcare, housing, jobs and livelihood by taking into cognisance across sectoral and multi-stake holding in a discursive way. It honestly confesses that while there was little that was left out in terms of concerns and challenges, but what is missing is a cogent set of solutions and which probably requires meticulous work and analytical study (p. x). The prefixing nomenclature of book *Vision2025* has the ambition to translate the

recommendation of socially inclusive policies by charting new horizon of social justice in earnest directions. The author tries to show how a *Vision for India for 2025* by focusing on the five critical areas of *education, health, political representation, employment and security* (p. xvii).

The book has a foreword by Amitabh Kundu focusing on the development deficits of Muslims and exploring the strategies to mitigate that, while putting forward a vision of Inclusive India for 2025 (p.iii). According to him,

a Vision India 2025, for having relevance in policy domain, too, must put forward a perspective of development interventions to mitigate the alarming inequalities in the system and purpose measures for ameliorating the conditions of the poor and vulnerable. Any analysis of recent data would demonstrate that Muslims constitute the largest majority in both the categories. (p. iii)

Under the heading 'Muslim Identity from Continuum to Categories' measured generally in a continuous scale, for the purpose of assessing their levels of deprivation. Classifying person into categories, such as poor and non-poor, rural and urban etc., based on the numerical value of the characteristics involves imposing boundary conditions that are matters of discretion. Building these categories is, nonetheless, important not only for legal, administrative and resource allocation purposes but even for day to day communication (p. iii).

However, he also cautioned that

the logical frame underlying the categories (the assumption being all members are equal within a category) conflicts with the axiom of continuity, as proposed by Amartya Sen. For example, one would not have any difficulty in accepting the axiom that a transfer of money or asset from any person to another, the latter being economically better-off, is socially undesirable. (p. iii)

Amartya Sen in his sharply focussed volume on *Identity and Violence*, written partly in response to Samuel P. Huntington's thesis of *Clash of Civilizations*, has argued that every person has several characteristics that would give her an identity which has inherent multiplicity. This multiplicity evolves and becomes complex over time as the person exercises choices in socio-economic and political spheres that make her align with identities of other individuals or groups (p. iii). He penultimately suggested that

For projecting a vision for 2025, it is important to understand the existing socio-economic inequality, keeping the poor and vulnerable Muslims in the centre of analysis. This identity is critical to the explanatory framework for understanding disparities and discrimination in the country, as brought out in the present report. The socio-economic correlates of religious identities in the society, resulting in the poor outcome for Muslims in the development process, must be understood effectively modified & monitored to move towards the goal of inclusive India. (p. iv)

The Muslim population is sparsely distributed across the country, forming a minority in every state apart from Jammu and Kashmir, resulting in very low representation in all spheres of national life. Despite being plagued by persistent socio-economic issues in the areas of education, health, livelihood generation and security. Muslims are trying to come of primordial loyalties to modernity. Being a minority community, Muslims across the country apparently have had lesser exposure and access than the average Indian to primary education, healthcare, and credit to discrimination and ethnic violence. The inadequacy in education, institutional support, economic conditions, employment and employability, cultural gap, representation in administrative bodies, security, reservations, etc. have cropped up time and again trapped to perpetual discrimination and ethnic violence in the recent history. The causes of socio-economic deprivation are usually secular, and where indigenous culture presents some nuances, they can be built into the intervention through careful study, observation and the inclusion of local decision makers. The editors have rightly remarked:

Over the last ten years, the policy framework in India has repeatedly underscored the plight of the Muslim population even as the economy soared to unprecedented heights. (p. xv)

The Book meticulously developed by Amir Ullah Khan and Abdul Azim Akhtar has been the result of a series of total eight workshops had been organised on the socio-economic condition of Muslims throughout various parts of India. The part of *National Survey* has been beautifully presented and analysed on issues of the Muslims on graphical representation index. This review covers the educational, occupational, political and social changes that have been studied by various experts (p. xviii). The editors include special papers contributed by specialists and experts to focus on the problematic which constitute the core to *Vision 2025*. Thus, the book has dwelt on the educational, occupational, political and social changes that have been studied by various experts from the empirical perspective. To quote:

The study engaged a number of subject experts to write background papers on various specific issues that would confront Indian Muslims in the next ten years. (p. xviii)

The book under review is the culmination of the authors' analysis of Muslim inclusion and exclusion. It partakes systematic methodology to study the socio-economic inequalities faced by the Muslims in India:

A detailed literature review was undertaken to bring together the various scholarly works published in the recent past exploring the ways in which Muslim India has changed. The existing secondary literature on the industry, exports, employment, skilling and technical education was looked at closely. In addition, data on the political structure were analysed to look for trends in representation and empowerment....(p. xviii)

The study also organised a series of roundtables, one to one interviews and group discussions with experts to understand how to tackle the problems of Muslim exclusion in ushering an inclusive India. To eradicate social economic inequalities and envisioning agenda, the book opens the *Vision 2025* with an *Introduction* by Amir Ullah Khan and Abdul Azim Akhtar. A large pan India survey was conducted to gather primary data on the issues, religious minority faces today in the backdrop of what the community sees as its aspirations in the next decade. The study exploits several datasets in addition to the NUEPA School's data, the NSSS employment–unemployment survey and the PRATHAM schooling data.

The authors portray panoramic perception of socio-economic inequalities by enumerating for important sectors including incomes, reservation, literacy, women, health, housing and credit of the Muslims in India (p. xi). These sectors have been highlighted with the key issues faced by Muslims in comparison to SCs, STs and OBCs of other communities. The author marshalled out the argument that the status of the Muslims as a separate segment in comparison to the whole population of the country both in the policy framework and in benefit sharing out of them is abysmally negligible. It also makes out a case for educational empowerment of the Muslim community by way of reform within the community. In the arena of the education sector, the authors come out with the argument for recognition of *madrasas* as schools by introducing them into the mainstream school systems without interference in their core syllabi, in collaboration with *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* on a voluntary basis (p. xii).

On the contrary, the authors have highlighted entrepreneurship and employment related problems. To quote

Most Muslims are engaged in self-employment activities and their participation in agricultural activity is very low. So, policies for employment generation within the Muslims should target non-agricultural sectors. (p. xiv)

This bears logic because the GDP growth in India went up by almost 10% per annum during the last decade and remained among the fastest growing economies in the world, but the Muslims remained at the bottom on almost every parameter (p. xvi). It is rightfully observed that inclusive India will need to understand how to tackle the problems that its largest religious minority faces today in the backdrop of what the community sees as its aspirations in the next decade (p. xviii). It is profitable to look at chapters dealing with health and Indian Muslims (p. xxxii), Education (p. xxxiv), Employment (p. xxxvi), Security (p. xl), Violence and Human Right (p. xli), Terrorism and prisons (p. xlv), The Violence around Conversion (p. xlvii), Partition and aftermath (p. xlviii) and Political Representation (p. l) and their polemical analysis within depth along with suggestions and recommendations. The book incorporates papers of scholars and activities in the

field of social inclusion along with the analysis of problematic the chapter wise analysis of the volume is briefly stated in paragraphs to come.

In the *first chapter*, Muqtedar Khan in his paper titled *Indian Muslims and the Political Landscape: Some Fears, Some Hopes, and Some Advice* explore the position of Muslims in the Indian political landscape. He has vividly discussed the whole chapter under the themes, *Indian Muslims in the Age of Turmoil* (p. 1), *Transformation of Indian Muslim Politics* (p. 4), *Muslim presence in Politics and Governance* (p. 4) and *A Political Vision for Indian Muslims* (p. 6). He argues that Muslim's lands and Muslim Communities are in a state of violent and intense political transformations across the Muslim heartland (pp. 1–8).

In the *second chapter*, *Family Planning, and Indian Muslims: Myths and Realities*, SY Quraishi examines the issues of Muslims and Family Planning in India by demolishing many existing myths associated with the Muslim population (pp. 9–36).

Third chapter discusses *Policy Challenges: Have Development Schemes Meant for Muslims Worked Effectively?* by Jawed Alam Khan an assessment of the policy initiatives and its design, adequacy of financial resources, fund utilisation, physical performance and status of implementation meticulously culled out. It concludes that Muslims have not been benefited from the schemes and programs meant for them, and the community faces exclusion in planning, budgeting and implementation process of development processes of development programs at various levels of governance (pp. 37–51).

Abdul Shaban, in the *fourth chapter*, entitled *Politics, Violence, and Production of 'Fear': Working of Shiv Sena in Mumbai* examines the role of Shiv Sena remaining prone to negative exploitation of the democratic values and diversities (pp. 54–70).

In *Fifth Chapter*, authored being Ram Puniyani, *Muslims in Contemporary India: Issues of Security and Equity* has poignantly observed:

The problems of Muslim Community have a long legacy... From last four decades, the process has worsened due to the rise of Hindu communal forces and the provocations provided by the Muslim communal stream. The result has been an all-round demonisation of Muslims, impacting their security, equity, and social status. The situation has been worsened by the global politics of oil, which has given birth to the likes of Al Qaeda and its clones. The popular perceptions about Muslims only worsen the scenario. (p. 71)

The author gives a beautiful historical account of the problems of the Muslim community in India under the headings *Freedom Movement: Communal Politics* (p. 72), *British Policy of Divide and Rule* (p. 74), *Partition Tragedy* (p. 74) and *Contemporary Trends* (p. 80). He attempts to outline the steps needed to strengthen the democratic rights of the religious minority in India (pp. 71–83).

The *sixth chapter* includes an article of Irfan Hussain on the issue of *Hindutva and Muslims* (pp. 85–90).

In *seventh chapter, Live-Reporting and Democracy: The Non-Publishable Crime of the televised Anti-Muslim Violence in Gujarat 2002*, Dr Britta Ohm talks about the 2002 anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat. This paper engages with the relationship between the public and democracy in the context of a particularly violent event in India (pp. 91–100). The author has highlighted:

The coming decade, for Muslims to take steps out of their marginalisation, will require to move beyond complaints about stereotypes and exclusion. It demands a greater understanding of the logic with which discourses evolve and are being organised, of the mechanisms of media and of the fact that 'being in the media' may work as much against them as for them. Precisely their precarious position in India equips them for approaching this talk. (pp. 91–100)

Vibuti Narain Rai, in *Handling Communal Violence* which forms the *chapter eight*, elaborates about the role of the police during communal riots. He encountered some disturbing trends in its behaviour. According to him, in most parts of the country, the relationship between the police and Muslims was inimical and community perception of the police in situations of communal tension was that of an enemy (pp. 101–106).

In the *ninth chapter*, Madhav Das Nalapat calls for the development of Muslims on modern lines. His paper, *Muslims in India: Anchoring Behaviour in the Word of God*, calls on the Muslim community to emphasise on the beneficence, mercy and compassion which suffuses the Word of God and which are explicitly shown to be the defining virtues of the Islamic faith (pp. 107–108).

The *tenth chapter* is based on Shafeeq Rahman's paper, *Muslim Representation in Parliament: A Case Study of 96 Parliamentary Constituencies*, to conclude that Indian Muslim is largely underrepresented in the electoral politics, as was a case in 2009 and 2014 elections. He tries to highlight the level of Muslim under-representation in Parliament, to find out its reason through the case study of last two election results, and to list out the remedial measures to overcome with such marginalisation (pp. 109–130).

In the *eleventh chapter*, Abdul Azim Akhtar under the heading *Muslim India: Brotherhood in Biradri* discusses the nature of the divide in the Muslim society and how caste shapes their life (pp. 131–156). Manjur Ali in his paper, *Forgotten at the Margins*, talks about Muslim manual scavengers who live an 'undignified' life. He has concluded his article with the heart touching remark:

Manual scavenging is a blot on the face of civilised society and democratic political structure. The presence of a 'pre-medieval' practice certainly doesn't go with India's

claim of the largest democracy of the world. State's commitment to remove the practice of manual scavenging is providing to be a false promise. Unless and until a determined effort takes place against the annihilation of casteism, the manual scavengers, who might not be doing the menial job, would not find themselves living a 'dignified life'. Their lower caste identity would continue to deceive them a 'respectful' life. (pp. 157–168)

Rakhshandah Hani in her paper, *Employment of Muslim Women Workers in the Indian Labour Market*, focuses on gender-related issues of the labour market. Her paper under Chapter 13 argues that labour force participation rate and work participation rate for Muslim women have shown a declining trend. She has pointed out in her paper:

Muslim women have been identified among the most marginalised groups in the country... Labour force participation rate and work participation rate for Muslim women have shown a declining trend. Concentration in low paying home-based self-employment, the participation of uneducated women in the labour force, in formalisation and dominance in manufacturing characterise their work.

She has also suggested that:

The Muslim community should attempt to create awareness among its women and equip them with better education and skills so that they can utilise the opportunities resulting from the rapid economic development taking place in the country. (pp. 169–182)

In *chapter fourteen, Socio-Economic Profile of Muslim Women in Maharashtra*, Vibhuti Patel discusses issues on Muslim women and development. She has highlighted:

The report of Minority Commission of Government of Maharashtra released in March 2014 shows that even after 7 years of Sachar Committee's Recommendations, the profile of women of minorities in Maharashtra has not improved. (pp. 183–197)

Likewise, Broto Rauth Bhardwaj in the paper titled *Influence of Education in Enhancing Social Inclusion of Muslim Women through Entrepreneurship: Implications and Challenges* discuss another important issue of Muslim women. She tries to find the role of education in improving the status of Muslim women entrepreneurs.

Chapter sixteen discusses *Imperatives of Personal Law Reform and Good Governance*. The chapter has rightly pointed out the political discourse of personal laws have changed over time but the basic discursive and conceptual field within which they have evolved was defined in the colonial era and perpetuated by the state in independent India without innovation.

The paper subscribes that India's continuation of the trifocal legacy of recognition of traditional laws, development of powerful norms and assumption of reform of personal

laws by state is not robust with imperatives of inclusive growth and good governance (pp. 210–220).

The Book has overshadowed the problematic purview with rigors of methodology and findings being germane to influence the policy paradigm. The Book has dimly illumined the survey of literature and some seminal works on the theme of Muslim problem. The conclusiveness of the findings has been buttressed the social exclusionary policies of the government towards Muslims in India and afterward future researchers to profitably read between the lines.

The book not only covers seminal issues of the Muslim Community in India but also presents the practicalities and solutions to the problems with deep insight of area studies of Muslim Community. The author is successful in bringing erudite explanations to complex problems of Muslim Community, with lucidity and force. The editors have very rightfully pointed out in their suggestion:

Muslims need to be optimistic and there is a wider scope for voluntary reforms within society. Muslims definitely have a bright future in India, but they must change their mindset and must give top priority to modern scientific education (p. lxvii).

Taken as a whole, the book is remarkably coherent, cohesive and exhaustive in the pragmatic portrayal of Muslim's social exclusion in contemporary India. The Book has the potential to galvanizes scholars of exclusion studies in India and abroad in understanding the trajectory and discourse of minority studies in India.