

## Disparity in Access to Higher Education among Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India: An Analysis of Household Survey Data

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### Abstract

*Education plays an important role in improving the social and economic status of individuals and families as a whole. Muslims are the country's largest minority, accounting for nearly 14 per cent of the total population. The study's main objective is to explore the trends and patterns of higher educational attainment among Muslims in comparison to other socio-religious groups, as well as to highlight disparities in access to higher education. The study examines the pattern of higher educational status among various socio-religious groups using data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) from 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2009-2010 and 2011-2012. The study aims to highlight the level of higher education attainment among people of economically active age. Dearth of empirical evidence is one of major constraint in the analysis of educational status of Muslims. the present study is a modest diagnostic attempt to assess the state of higher education among Muslims. Caste and religious affiliation have a significant impact on access to higher education. Muslims have a lower presence in higher education than Hindus-Gen and Hindu OBC. Muslims perform poorly in terms of their share of higher education in the majority of the states studied.*

**Keywords:** *Disparity, Higher Education, Inequality, Muslim, Socio-Religious Groups*

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### Introduction:

Education, particularly higher education, plays a critical role in enhancing an individual's and a family's social status. As 'Education constitutes an important instrument of social and economic transformation and, therefore, no segment of the citizenry can be allowed to remain educationally and economically backwards' (Anis Ansari, 1992). It contributes to the country's economic growth by providing skilled labour, which increases productive capacity and, in turn, improves the family's economic status and higher education spending. The government has taken a number of steps to reduce educational disparities between men and women, castes, classes, and religions, but disparities persist (Divya Vaid, 2004), and they have widened at higher levels of education. Higher education has been seen in numerous studies to be necessary for improving economic growth and reducing income inequality. Growth and the development of human capital can be mutually beneficial. Human capital development promotes growth, and growth promotes human development (Tichaona Zivengwa et al., 2013). It is also regarded as a vehicle for social and economic mobility for people from lower social strata. It is essential to an advancement of nations in terms of social progress, human development, political stability, and a wide range of other aspects of growth and development (Tilak, 2019). Not all socio-religious communities perform well in terms of higher education attainment; Muslims are the most marginalised and faced the problem of recognition and redistribution. Since they're not recognised as a marginalised group in society, resources are not allocated to the community's upliftment. Many scholars have claimed that Muslims face double marginalisation as a result of their economic poverty, which leads to educational poverty, and their status as a minority community. Despite the fact that, Muslims are the largest minority, data suggests that they are on the margins of social, political, and economic advancement.

Sociocultural differences have an impact on educational choices. Boudon (1974) made this argument in his model of social mobility. He claimed that people from different social classes needed to travel different social distances to achieve the same level of

education. This argument emphasizes the fact that education has different costs and benefits for different social groups. Despite the fact that caste and gender disparities in access to higher education have been well documented by research and policymakers, religious disparities have received little attention. Reports by Gopal Singh (1983) and the Sachar Committee (2006) are notable examples. With these considerations in mind, an attempt has been made to investigate the trend and pattern of higher educational attainment among socio-religious groups in India, with a focus on Muslims. The paper is divided into two sections. The first section examines Muslims' overall educational status in comparison to other socio-religious groups, as well as trends in higher educational status and regional perspectives, in order to identify regions that are improving and those that are lagging behind and require policy intervention. The second section examines the disparities in higher educational attainment across gender, caste, and religion in urban India.

### Literature Review

Literature is the lens through which research identifies research gaps. Many scholars have looked into access to higher education and the disparities that exist. Tilak et al. (2019) investigated higher education disparities and discovered that, while higher education attainment rates have improved over time, the gains have not been distributed evenly across social groups. There are few studies specifically related to Muslims' higher educational status, though there are numerous studies that shed light on the educational status of people from various socioeconomic strata. Some of the literature devoted to Muslims' educational status focuses on their literacy status (Kamat, 1988), while Abdulrahim (1999) attempts to investigate the causes of Muslim educational backwardness. In every social stratum educational opportunity are exploited by those oriented to employment. Muslims are not a homogeneous group, and their educational backwardness is due to a small social class that seeks educational opportunities rather than religious fanaticism (Imtiaz Ahmad, 1981). Some scholars attempt to present empirical evidence to demonstrate Muslims' educational status (Abusaleh Shariff, 1995; Zaidi, 2002). Abusaleh Shariff emphasises the importance of expanding the

database in order to investigate ethnic and religious disparities in socioeconomic and educational outcomes. Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon (2004) focused on several aspects of Muslim women's lives, including socioeconomic status, work, education, marriage, mobility, media access, political participation, and decision-making. They discovered that there was group inequality in three areas: socioeconomic status, education, and work, as well as gender inequality in marriage decision-making and mobility. Using census data, Safikul Islam and Lubna Siddiqui (2019) investigated the literacy status of Muslims in West Bengal and found that literacy inequality has decreased in most of the state's districts. Several studies have identified disparities in access to higher education and the state of higher education in India based on caste and gender. We have found very few studies (Basant, 2012) related to the higher educational status of Muslims and other socio-religious groups. The present study is a modest attempt to highlight the current situation of higher educational attainment among various socio-religious groups.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the trends and patterns of higher education among different socio-religious groups in urban India.
2. To analyse the degree of inequality in higher education attendance rates among socio-religious groups in urban India.
3. To estimate the disparity in higher education attainment rates between Muslims and other socio-religious groups.

#### **Database and Methodology**

The study uses data from the National Sample Survey's four rounds of employment and unemployment data for the years 1999–2000, 2004–2005, 2009–2010, and 2011–2012 to assess overall educational progress among India's various religious groups over a ten-year period. These surveys are nationally representative and collect information about individual educational levels and other socio-economic parameters. The purpose of this research is to show the trends and patterns of higher educational achievement among various socio-religious groups, as well as the disparities between them. Using descriptive statistics, the trends and patterns of higher education attainment among different socio-religious groups were examined. Higher

education includes Graduation and above level of education. Person aged 18 years are expected to attain higher secondary levels of education and upper age limit for graduation and above levels of education is 21 years. The upper age limit for entry into any formal employment is 35 to 40 years. Keeping these in mind the population aged 18–40 years have been taken into consideration. For estimates of the proportion of the population attending higher educational institutes, population aged 18–29 years taken into consideration. In order to ascertain whether whole Muslim community is backward or a particular section of the population within the community living at the lower social ladder, are victims of backwardness, we have taken two social categories for Muslims viz Muslim-general and Muslim OBC. The Hindus are categorised into Hindus-General, Hindus-SC, and Hindus-OBC. The study is focusing on socio-religious groups living in urban centres. In order to measure the inequality in higher educational attainment rates across gender a statistical technique given by S.M.I.A Zaidi has been used.

**Coefficient of Inequality (CE) =  $X_1/X_2$ ,**

where  $X_2 \geq X_1$  and  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  are the observed values of two groups of the population. The value of CE always ranges between 0 and 1. In the case of no disparity (i.e., perfect equality), CE will be 1. It may be interpreted as smaller the value of CE, higher the extent of disparity and higher the value of CE, lesser the disparity (S.M.I.A Zaidi).

#### **Analysis and Discussion**

##### ***Educational Status of Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India***

India has made significant progress in educational achievement since independence, but this progress has not reached all sections and strata of society equally. Despite educational growth, research on educational stratification suggests that educational inequality between different social strata persists and, in some cases, even grows (Sonalde Desai and Veena Kulkarni). The present study seeks to investigate the status of Muslims' higher educational attainment in comparison to other socio-religious groups. Education is thought to help people move up the social ladder. Higher education plays a critical role in this regard because it increases an individual's chances of being accepted into

higher-paying jobs. Higher education is not available to all members of society in equal measure. Religious groups are diverse, and religious groups belonging to various caste categories have different levels of access to higher education. Table 1 shows that illiteracy among the general population aged 18–40 years has decreased over time, falling to 11.90 percent in 2011–2012, while religious and caste breakdowns show very different results. In 1999–2000, illiteracy rates among Hindu Scheduled Castes (36.80 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (38.80 per cent) youth were extremely high, but thanks to various government affirmative actions, illiteracy rates among Hindu-SC and Hindu-ST youth fell to 18.20 percent and 20.20 percent, respectively, in 2011–2012. Muslim-OBC youth have a much higher rate of illiteracy than Hindu-OBC, Hindu-SC, and Hindu-ST youth. Higher education completion rates in the general population have increased from 15.20 percent in 1999–2000 to 21.20 percent in 2011–2012. Though, the participation of youth in higher education has improved, their shares are alarmingly low. Graduation and higher education completion rates are very high

among Hindu-Gen youth, with 26.50 percent having graduated or higher education in 1999–2000, rising to 33.80 percent in 2011–2012. Muslim youth are at a most disadvantageous position in terms of graduation completion rates. Only 8.90 per cent of Muslims have graduation and above levels of education during 2011–2012. The most compelling picture emerges from the socio-religious breakup: Among all socio-religious groups, Muslim-OBCs are the most backward. Though all socio-religious groups' shares of higher educational attainment have increased over time, Muslims, particularly those from lower social strata, have lagged behind in terms of higher education attainment rates. One can also infer from the table that dropout rates are very high among Muslims and most of them discontinue studies after secondary and higher secondary levels of education. When compared to the Hindu-Gen and the total population, the disparities in higher education participation are stark. Among all Muslims, graduation completion rates were 5.70 percent in 1999–2000 which rose to 8.90 in 2011–2012 while for Hindu-Gen this figure was 26.50 per cent and improved to 33.80 per cent.

**Table 1: Educational Levels of Different Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India**

Levels of Edu	Total Population	Hindu-GEN	Hindu-SC	Hindu-ST	Hindu-OBC	Muslim-Gen	Muslim-OBC	Muslim-All
<b>1999-2000</b>								
Not Literate	20.20	8.80	36.80	38.80	22.10	31.30	33.90	32.30
Primary	17.50	11.80	21.00	16.20	21.50	23.60	26.10	24.30
Secondary	33.90	34.70	29.50	29.10	36.00	29.80	29.80	29.80
Higher Sec	13.30	18.20	7.20	8.10	11.20	8.60	6.30	7.90
<b>Grad &amp; above</b>	<b>15.20</b>	<b>26.50</b>	<b>5.50</b>	<b>7.90</b>	<b>9.10</b>	<b>6.70</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>5.70</b>
<b>2004-2005</b>								
Not Literate	17.20	6.70	29.60	31.40	18.20	27.00	33.10	29.20
Primary	17.50	10.90	23.40	18.70	20.40	21.20	25.60	22.70
Secondary	32.80	32.30	31.70	28.40	34.90	32.80	29.70	31.60
Higher Sec	16.40	22.50	9.30	13.50	15.10	10.20	7.40	9.30
<b>Grad &amp; above</b>	<b>16.10</b>	<b>27.60</b>	<b>6.10</b>	<b>8.00</b>	<b>11.50</b>	<b>8.80</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>7.20</b>
<b>2009-2010</b>								
Not Literate	12.50	5.10	21.60	19.90	12.40	19.50	25.50	22.30
Primary	15.00	8.60	22.10	17.90	16.00	23.50	20.70	22.30
Secondary	32.50	28.90	31.70	29.40	35.20	35.40	35.60	35.40
Higher Sec	19.60	24.40	13.60	18.20	19.70	13.80	11.20	12.60
<b>Grad &amp; above</b>	<b>20.40</b>	<b>33.00</b>	<b>11.10</b>	<b>14.50</b>	<b>16.70</b>	<b>7.70</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>7.40</b>
<b>2011-2012</b>								
Not Literate	11.90	4.70	18.20	20.20	11.20	19.60	23.80	21.60

Primary	15.10	8.60	19.30	17.30	16.20	22.00	23.70	22.80
Secondary	31.40	28.10	35.00	30.00	32.10	34.20	32.40	33.40
Higher Sec	20.40	24.90	15.40	17.70	21.00	13.70	12.80	13.30
<b>Grad &amp; above</b>	<b>21.20</b>	<b>33.80</b>	<b>12.10</b>	<b>14.90</b>	<b>19.50</b>	<b>10.50</b>	<b>7.20</b>	<b>8.90</b>

Source: Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>

### Higher Education attendance Rates among Socio-religious Groups

Higher education attainment rate is a stock variable that shows what percentage of the population has completed a higher education. To examine current attendance at a higher educational institution, it is necessary to examine higher education attainment rates and disparities by caste and religion. Table 2 shows the gross graduation attendance rates in urban India by socio-religious groups. Gross attendance ratios across gender and social-religious groups have been used to measure inequity in access to higher education. Between 1999–2000 and 2011–2012, there was an increase in gross higher education attendance rates (Fig. 1). Only 8.70 per cent of the total population attended higher education in 1999–2000. After a span of eleven years, the higher education attendance rate among the total population aged 18–29 years has increased to 17.70 in 2011–2012. The true realities are not reflected in this total figure. A disaggregated analysis, which considers castes and gender, reveals a different picture. Hindu-Gen has a higher rate of educational attendance than the rest of the population. In 1999–2000, nearly 13 per cent of the population attended higher education, which increased to 18.10 percentage points in 2004–

2005 and then to 24 per cent in 2011–2012. Gross attendance rates for Hindu-Gen men increased from 13.90 percent in 1999–2000 to 25.30 per cent in 2011–2012, while females in relevant age and religion groups only attended 22.90 per cent of higher education institutions. According to socio-religious analysis, Hindu-SC and Hindu-ST are the most backward groups within the Hindu religious community, with lower participation in graduate and higher education than the general population and Hindu-Gen. Only 5.10 per cent and 4.60 per cent of them attended higher education in 1999–2000, but their percentages increased to 12.50 and 15.80 per cent in 2011–2012. It is clear that their status in higher education has improved as a result of government affirmative action. Between 1999–2012, the gross attendance rates among Hindu-SC, Hindu-ST, and Hindu-OBC increased by nearly 8 percentage points to 12 per cent. This could be due to the government's various policies aimed at increasing their presence in higher education institutions. This also suggests that Hindus from various social strata living in urban areas benefit from the government's efforts to improve their educational standing.

**Table:2 Gross Graduation Attendance Rates among Socio-Religious Group in Urban India**

	1999-2000			2004-2005			2009-2010			2011-2012		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Total Pop</b>	9.50	7.70	8.70	12.70	10.80	11.80	18.70	16.50	17.70	18.50	16.90	17.70
<b>H-Gen</b>	13.90	12.40	13.20	18.80	17.30	18.10	24.40	24.20	24.30	25.30	22.90	24.10
<b>H-SC</b>	5.90	4.00	5.10	8.00	5.30	6.80	13.30	10.30	11.90	12.40	12.60	12.50
<b>H-ST</b>	6.70	2.80	4.60	14.30	8.30	11.50	19.80	15.10	17.50	15.00	16.90	15.80
<b>H-OBC</b>	8.40	5.20	6.90	11.50	8.00	9.90	18.10	14.10	16.20	19.90	17.20	18.60
<b>M-Gen</b>	4.80	3.70	4.30	6.80	5.60	6.30	13.40	10.50	12.00	10.30	8.40	9.40
<b>M-OBC</b>	3.70	2.70	3.30	5.20	2.80	4.10	11.50	7.50	9.60	8.60	8.40	8.50
<b>M-All</b>	4.40	3.30	3.90	6.30	5.20	5.80	12.40	9.10	10.80	9.40	8.30	8.90

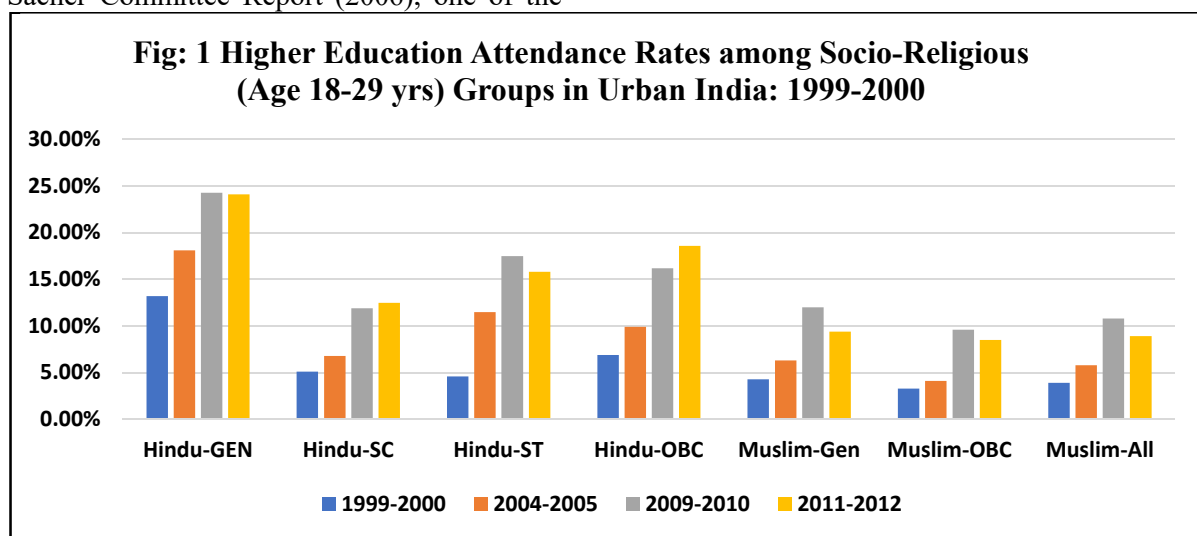
Source: Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>.

Gross attendance ratio inequalities persist across socio-religious groups. Muslims are found to be the most backward of all socio-

religious groups. Their presence in higher education is lower than that of the Hindu-SC, Hindu-ST, and Hindu-OBCs. Only 4.30 per

cent of Muslims-Gen aged 18–29 years were enrolled in higher education in 1999–2000, but that number rose to 6.30 percent in 2004–2005 and 9.40 percent in 2011–2012. Only a five-point increase in their share of higher education has occurred in the last ten years. In higher education, there is a significant disparity between the Hindu-OBC and Muslim-OBC populations. Despite the fact that OBCs have a reservation, Muslims do not benefit from it. The most pressing question is why the government's affirmative action plan has failed to benefit other backward castes belonging to the Muslim religious community. According to Anis Ansari (1992), one reason for Muslims' low participation in education and higher education is that Muslims are self-employed artisans, workers, or petty shopkeepers. As a result, they are uninterested in modern education because it does not provide them with immediate financial benefits. Their current occupational roles make modern education irrelevant. According to the Sacher Committee Report (2006), one of the

reasons for Muslims' low participation in higher education, regardless of caste affiliation, is that a significantly higher proportion of Muslims are self-employed, and Muslim youth dropout rates are extremely high. The report also stated that because Muslims are mostly from low-income families, this is one of the reasons for their low participation in higher education. Females from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and Muslims have a lower rate of participation in higher education than males. Gender inequality in higher education was thus present across all socio-religious communities, and it widened among females from lower social strata. For Muslim women, gender-based discrimination is being aggravated by their minority status. Muslim young women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are likely to face several daunting hurdles in attaining a higher education. 2017 (Biswamitra Sahu and Patricia Jeffery).



### Disparities in Higher Educational Attainment Rates

Gross attendance rates are the flow variable while gross attainment rates are the stock variable. This is a good indicator to study the quality of manpower available in the country, who have the skills needed to contribute to the growth of the nation. The availability of human capital in the country is indicated by educational attainment rates. Higher education

access is regarded as a barometer of an individual's and nation's social and economic well-being. Table 3 shows the percentage of young people aged 18 to 40 who have completed a bachelor's degree or higher education, by caste and gender. Higher educational attainment increased for all socio-religious groups between 1999 and 2012, though there were disparities between socio-religious groups.

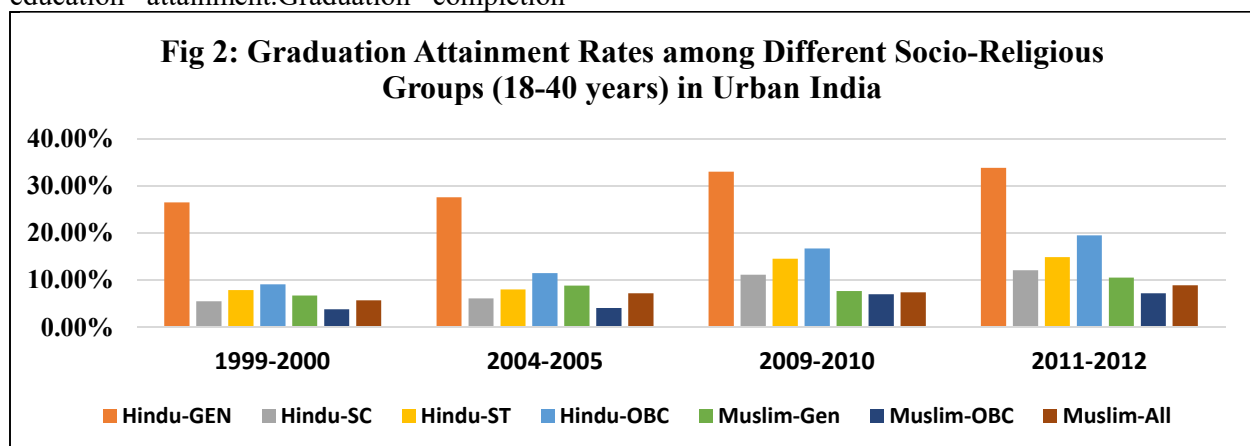
**Table 3: Growth Rates in Higher Educational Attainment for Youth (aged 18-40) among Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India: 1999-2012**

	Higher Education Attainment Rates				Growth Rates		
	1999-2000	2004-2005	2009-2010	2011-2012	1999-2004	2004-2009	1999-2010
Total Pop.	15.20	16.10	20.40	21.20	1.16	4.85	2.99
Hindu-GEN	26.50	27.60	33.00	33.80	0.82	3.64	2.22
Hindu-SC	5.50	6.10	11.10	12.10	2.09	12.72	7.27
Hindu-ST	7.90	8.00	14.50	14.90	0.25	12.63	6.26
Hindu-OBC	9.10	11.50	16.70	19.50	4.79	7.75	6.26
Muslim-GEN	6.70	8.80	7.70	10.50	5.60	-2.64	1.40
Muslim-OBC	3.80	4.10	7.00	7.20	1.53	11.29	6.30
Muslim-All	5.70	7.20	7.40	8.90	4.78	0.55	2.64

Source: Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>

Young adults' higher education attainment rate increased from 15.20 percent in 1999-2000 to 21.20 percent in 2011-2012. The disparities between Hindus and other socio-religious groups are prominent and persistent throughout the period (Fig. 2). We found a high level of inequality within the community between Hindu-Gen and other marginalised groups. In 1999-2000, 26.50 per cent of Hindu adults had completed college, and their share of higher education has steadily increased over time, reaching 33.80 per cent in 2011-2012. Inequality in higher education attainment rates is particularly pronounced among SC, ST, and OBC Hindus. Table 3 reveals an intriguing fact that Muslims, regardless of caste affiliation, have a dismally low rate of higher education attainment. Graduation completion

rates among Muslims have increased slightly over the period under consideration. The disparities between Muslims and other socio-religious groups are large enough to necessitate policy intervention in order to integrate the world's largest minority group into development. The growth rate shows the rate of change in graduation completion rates. Between 1999-2010, the compound growth rate of higher education attainment was highest among SC, ST and OBCs, Hindu religious groups, and Muslim-OBCs. Affirmative action in the form of reservation policies adopted by the government in higher educational institutions may be held responsible for the significantly high growth rate among the marginalised section of society.



### Disparities Across Gender

Table 4 presents the higher education attainment rates across genders. Gender inequalities are high in higher education attainment throughout the period between 1999-2012. During 1999-2000, only 16.80 per cent of males and 13.50 per cent of females

had graduated levels of education. There is an increase in gross higher education attainment rates among young males and females (22.50 per cent and 19.90 per cent, respectively, in 2011-2012). The younger age population, 18-40 years, who are supposed to attain higher education, their share in this sphere is not very

encouraging. According to the data's socio-religious breakdown, SC males are at a disadvantage in terms of higher education attainment rates among Hindu religious communities, compared to the Hindu-OBC and general-Hindu populations. Marginalised Hindu females from SC and ST groups have very low levels of educational attainment. The condition of Muslim females is the same as that of SC, ST, and OBC females. Among

Muslims, only 4.70 per cent of young females were higher educated. This figure rose to 6.30 per cent in 2004-2005, to 7.40 per cent in 2009-2010, and further to 7.90 per cent in 2011-2012. Higher education attainment rates among Muslims across gender and caste are lower than those of other socio-religious groups.

**Table 4: Higher Educational Attainment for Youth (aged 18-40) among Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India: 1999-2012**

	1999-2000		2004-2005		2009-2010		2011-2012	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Pop.	16.80	13.50	17.00	15.20	21.40	19.20	22.50	19.90
Hindu-GEN	28.20	24.60	28.10	27.10	34.00	31.90	34.60	33.00
Hindu-SC	7.10	3.70	6.90	5.10	11.80	10.30	12.50	11.70
Hindu-ST	9.90	5.80	9.20	6.80	15.50	13.50	17.20	12.00
Hindu-OBC	11.40	6.60	13.10	9.60	18.80	14.40	21.80	17.10
Muslim-Gen	7.80	5.50	9.70	7.70	8.00	7.50	12.10	8.80
Muslim-OBC	4.20	3.40	5.20	3.00	6.70	7.40	7.50	7.00
Muslim-All	6.60	4.70	8.00	6.30	7.40	7.40	9.90	7.90

Source: Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>

Higher education attainment rates among Hindu-Gen males increased to 6.40 percentage point and females to 8.40 percentage point from 1999-2000 to 2011-2012, while Muslim-Gen males and females improved by 4.30 percentage point and 3.30 percentage point, respectively. The table reveals that between 1999 and 2012, the increase in higher education attainment rates among Hindu-SC,

Hindu-ST, and Hindu-OBC males and females was very sharp. This could be due to the government's affirmative action to increase their participation in higher education. One intriguing point is that Muslim-OBCs have not reaped the benefits of reservation policies, and their presence in higher education has grown, but not to the same extent as Hindu-OBCs.

**Table 5: Disparities in Higher Educational Attainment Rates across Socio-Religious Groups in Urban India: 1999-2012**

	1999-2000			2004-2005			2009-2010			2011-2012		
	Male (X2)	Fe (X1)	CE= X2/X1	Male (X2)	Fe (X1)	CE= X2/X1	Male (X2)	Fe (X1)	CE= X2/X1	Male (X2)	Fe (X1)	CE= X2/X1
Tot Pop	16.80	13.50	0.80	17.00	15.20	0.89	21.40	19.20	0.90	22.50	19.90	0.88
H-GEN	28.20	24.60	0.87	28.10	27.10	0.96	34.00	31.90	0.94	34.60	33.00	0.95
H-SC	7.10	3.70	0.52	6.90	5.10	0.74	11.80	10.30	0.87	12.50	11.70	0.94
H-ST	9.90	5.80	0.59	9.20	6.80	0.74	15.50	13.50	0.87	17.20	12.00	0.70
H-OBC	11.40	6.60	0.58	13.10	9.60	0.73	18.80	14.40	0.77	21.80	17.10	0.78
M-GEN	7.80	5.50	0.71	9.70	7.70	0.79	8.00	7.50	0.94	12.10	8.80	0.73
M-OBC	4.20	3.40	0.81	5.20	3.00	0.58	6.70	7.40	1.10	7.50	7.00	0.93
M-All	6.60	4.70	0.71	8.00	6.30	0.79	7.40	7.40	1.00	9.90	7.90	0.80

Source: Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup>

Note: CE= Coefficient of Inequality, H-GEN = Hindu General, H-SC = Hindu Scheduled Caste, H-ST = Hindu Scheduled Tribe, H-OBC = Hindu Other Backward Caste, M-GEN = Muslim General, M-OBC = Muslim Other Backward Caste



Table 5 depicts gender disparities in socio-religious groups' access to higher education. The Coefficient of Equality is a measure of educational disparities between men and women. A coefficient of equality has been calculated to determine the extent of gender inequality in access to higher education. Gender inequality was very high among backward social groups (SC, ST, and OBC) with Hindu religious affiliation in 1999-2000. The inequality was in the range of 0.52 to 0.58. The lowest gender inequality was observed in Hindu-Gen. Male-female inequality was not significantly higher among Muslims with higher educational attainment. While caste-wise segregation shows that gender inequality was found to be higher among Muslim-Gen and low among Muslim-OBCs. In the subsequent periods of 2004-2005, 2009-2010, and 2011-2012, the same trend was observed. Gender inequality in access to higher education has decreased over time among various socio-religious groups, though women from backward castes continue to be denied higher education at a higher rate than their male counterparts and females from other socio-religious communities.

#### ***State Wise Pattern of Gender Disparity in Higher Education Attainment***

The Constitution guaranteed equality to all Indian citizens, regardless of religion, caste, race, sex, and place of birth. This declaration undoubtedly boosted women's education, as well as that of scheduled castes and tribes, but the goal of achieving equality has yet to be achieved. To determine the higher educational status of females from different socio-religious groups, a coefficient of inequality (CE) was calculated. Education, as a state subject, is heavily influenced by the state government's policies and programmes. In Jammu and

Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, male-female disparity within Hindu-Gen was negligible or negative (female education is higher than male education) during 2004-2005, whereas it was high in Bihar, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The same pattern was observed in the following years of 2009-2010 and 2011-2012. Gender disparities in higher education have decreased among Hindu-Gen adults in most of the selected states, though the situation remains dire in Bihar and A.P. This suggests that a significantly higher proportion of females in high-caste Hindu adults have access to higher education. Females from the Hindu-SC and Hindu-OBC communities face a different situation. As a result of historical and socio-cultural factors, different social groups reacted to education in different ways. During the 2004-2005, disparities in Hindu-SC were negative in Gujarat and Maharashtra, but very high in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, M.P., Karnataka, and Kerala. In the states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, there were few disparities. With the exception of Jharkhand and M.P., male-female disparities have decreased over time in most states. The same trend can be seen in the higher educational attainment of Hindu-OBC males and females. Gender disparities in higher education were extremely high among Muslims in all of the states studied when compared to other socio-religious groups. In Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Assam, M.P., Gujarat, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, it was between 0.19 and 0.60 in 2004-2005. Gender disparities among Muslims have decreased in almost all of the selected states over time, though they remain higher than in other socio-religious groups.

**Table 6: State wise Gender Disparity in higher educational attainment rates 2004-2012**

States	2004 - 2005				2009 - 2010				2011 - 2012			
	Hindu -GEN	Hindu -SC	Hindu -OBC	Muslim	Hindu -GEN	Hindu -SC	Hindu -OBC	Muslim	Hindu -GEN	Hindu -SC	Hindu -OBC	Muslim
J&K	1.54	0.50	1.17	0.90	1.68	0.59	0.06	0.75	1.45	1.06	1.75	0.99
Rajasthan	1.02	0.24	0.80	0.30	0.82	0.62	0.89	1.22	0.91	0.95	0.66	1.35
UP	0.97	0.87	0.56	1.00	1.12	0.91	0.76	1.14	1.00	1.06	0.80	1.18
Bihar	0.46	0.11	0.29	0.19	0.65	1.49	0.36	0.52	0.57	1.70	0.41	0.55
Assam	0.60	0.09	0.61	0.45	0.58	2.46	1.09	0.05	0.97	0.81	0.69	2.02
WB	0.97	0.95	1.18	0.71	0.78	0.55	1.11	0.55	0.91	0.84	0.57	0.70
Jharkhand	0.77	0.21	0.51	0.34	0.64	0.88	0.48	0.53	0.73	0.24	0.49	0.73

MP	0.75	0.33	0.66	0.50	0.75	0.49	0.58	1.25	0.97	0.63	0.83	0.61
Gujarat	0.99	1.58	0.55	0.56	1.14	0.35	1.15	1.51	1.03	0.77	1.11	0.47
Maharasht	1.19	1.24	1.02	0.69	0.93	0.70	1.14	1.56	0.91	0.83	0.78	0.73
AP	0.72	0.76	0.62	1.28	0.77	0.62	0.57	0.56	0.64	0.91	0.67	0.31
Karnataka	0.77	0.45	0.89	1.73	0.73	0.72	0.59	0.83	1.07	1.55	0.81	1.25
Kerala	1.21	0.46	1.71	0.59	1.18	6.88	1.48	1.42	1.81	2.13	1.66	0.97
TN	0.92	0.83	0.77	0.57	1.00	1.81	0.73	0.89	0.78	0.87	0.74	0.87

Source: Unit Level Data on Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 61<sup>st</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup>, 68<sup>th</sup>.

### Disparities across Caste and Religion

Historical and socio-cultural factors that differ from region to region and state to state are blamed for social and religious discrimination based on caste and religion (Kulkarni, 2002). In this section, we look at the disparities in access to higher education by caste and religion in some selected states. The analysis is done for those states where the sample is representative enough to make any generalisations after caste and religion bifurcation. The differences in access to higher education between "Hindu-Gen and Hindu-SC," "Hindu-Gen and Hindu-OBC," and "Hindu-Gen and Muslim" have been studied. As a result, three groups have been identified to assess the extent of socio-religious disparities in higher education.

#### *Hindu-Gen and Hindu-SC*

Tables 8, 9 and 10 present the overview of inequality among Hindu-Gen and Hindu-SC in higher educational attainment during the period 2004–2005 to 2011–2012. During 2004–2005, disparities between Hindu-Gen and Hindu-SC were very high to high, i.e., in the range of 0–0.25 in J & K, Assam, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, T.N, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan. In the rest of the selected states, the disparities were in the range of 0.25–0.45. Overall, Hindu-Gen and

H-SC inequalities are high in almost all the states, barring the states of Assam, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat, where inequalities have narrowed down in recent years. The result is not unexpected as SC, being the victim of discrimination and marginalisation, has been deprived of educational opportunities for generations. In recent years, due to various government policies, their presence in primary and secondary levels of education has improved, but at higher educational levels, their representation is significantly low.

#### *Hindu-Gen and Hindu-OBC*

During 2004–2005, the Hindu-Gen and Hindu-OBC gaps were very high (0.00 – 0.15) and high (0.15 – 0.25) in J & K and Madhya Pradesh. Moderate to low (0.25–0.45) was in the states of Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh. The disparities were low (0.45–0.94) in Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Assam and Bihar. Overall, it is found that Hindu-Gen and Hindu-OBC disparities in higher educational attainment have declined in most of the selected states. Some states, like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu, exhibit moderate disparity. None of the states have very high disparities except J and K.

**Table 8: Disparities in Higher Educational Attainment (aged 18 – 40 yrs.)**

2004 – 2005			
Disparity	Hindu-GEN/Hindu-SC	Hindu-GEN/Hindu-OBC	Hindu-GEN/Muslim
<b>Very Low</b>		Karnataka	Assam
(0.45 – 0.94)		Kerala	
		Maharashtra	
		WB	
		Assam	
		Bihar	
<b>Low</b>	Bihar	AP	AP
(0.35 – 0.45)	Maharashtra		

<b>Moderate</b>	WB	Jharkhand	MP
(0.25 – 0.35)	Gujarat	TN	WB
	AP	Gujarat	Jharkhand
		UP	Kerala
		Rajasthan	Gujarat
			J&K
			Maharashtra
<b>High</b>	UP	MP	Bihar
(0.15 – 0.25)	Karnataka		UP
	Rajasthan		
<b>Very High</b>	J&K	J&K	Rajasthan
(0 – 0.15)	Assam		Karnataka
	Jharkhand		Tamil Nadu
	MP		
	Kerala		
	TN		

Source: Unit Level Data on Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 61<sup>st</sup>

### *Hindu-Gen and Muslims*

Muslims shares in higher education are not at par with total Hindus, Hindu-Gen and Hindu-OBC. The comparative picture for the has presented in table 8,9 and 10for the time period of 2004-2005, 2009-2010 and 2011-2012. In higher education attainment rates Hindu-Gen and Muslims gaps were very high in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and Maharashtra, while high in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and

Andhra Pradesh. Overall Muslim performance in higher education is poor in all the states except J&K. Even in educationally and socially better off states of southern India, Muslims representation in higher education is conspicuously low in comparison to Hindus and H-Gen in particular. This might be due to Muslims are generally urban located and engaged in pity occupation where education has little role to play.

**Table 9: Disparity in Higher Educational Attainment (aged 18 – 40 yrs.) in Urban India**

<b>2009 - 2010</b>			
<b>Disparity</b>	<b>H-GEN/H-SC</b>	<b>H-GEN/H-OBC</b>	<b>H-GEN/Muslim</b>
<b>Very Low</b>	Maharashtra	Rajasthan	J&K
(0.45 – 0.94)		Jharkhand	
		AP	
		WB	
		Assam	
		Maharashtra	
		Karnataka	
<b>Low</b>	J&K	Kerala	Karnataka
(0.35 – 0.45)	Assam		
<b>Moderate</b>	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	Bihar
(0.25 – 0.35)	AP	Gujarat	Jharkhand
	Bihar	UP	
	WB	Bihar	
	Jharkhand	TN	
	UP		

	MP		
	Karnataka		
<b>High</b>	Rajasthan		MP
(0.15 – 0.25)	Gujarat		Gujarat
	TN		WB
			Kerala
			TN
			AP
<b>Very High</b>		J&K	Rajasthan
(0 – 0.15)			UP
			Assam
			Maharashtra

Source: Unit Level Data on Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 66<sup>th</sup>

**Table 10: Disparity in Higher Educational Attainment (aged 18-40 yrs.) in Urban India**

<b>2011 - 2012</b>			
<b>Disparity</b>	<b>H-GEN/H-SC</b>	<b>H-GEN/H-OBC</b>	<b>H-GEN/Muslim</b>
<b>Very Low</b>	Assam	Rajasthan	J & K
(0.45 – 0.94)	AP	J & K	
	Gujarat	WB	
		Jharkhand	
		AP	
		Karnataka	
		Maharashtra	
		Kerala	
		Assam	
<b>Low</b>	Maharashtra	UP	Gujarat
(0.35 – 0.45)	Karnataka	Bihar	AP
	WB	MP	
		TN	
		Gujarat	
<b>Moderate</b>	Rajasthan		Jharkhand
(0.25 – 0.35)	MP		Assam
	Bihar		Maharashtra
	Jharkhand		Kerala
	Kerala		
<b>High</b>	UP		WB
(0.15 – 0.25)	J & K		MP
	TN		Karnataka
			UP
			Bihar
			TN
<b>Very High</b>			Rajasthan
(0 – 0.15)			

Source: Unit Level Data on Employment & Unemployment among Religious Groups NSS Rounds 68<sup>th</sup>

### Conclusions:

The present study highlights the trends and patterns in access to higher education in urban India. The study's overall purpose was to look at how different socio-religious communities fared in terms of getting access to higher education in the years 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2009-2010, and 2011-2012. Despite the government's various measures to improve the educational sector, access to education, particularly higher education, is limited to some privileged sections of society, according to the findings. Education's benefits have not reached every level of society. Even in the most recent period of 2011-2012, a higher proportion of Hindu-SC, Hindu-ST, Muslim, and Muslim-OBC persons are illiterate. Muslims' higher education attainment rates have improved across caste and gender affiliation during the study period, but their share of higher education is still abysmally low when compared to other socio-religious communities. In comparison to Hindus, Hindu-SC, and Hindu-OBC, Muslims in general and Muslim-OBC in particular are underrepresented. The analysis in this paper also sheds light on the increasing growth rate in higher education among adult Hindu-SC, Hindu-ST, and Hindu-OBC. This is largely due to the government's affirmative action policies, which primarily take the form of reservation policies. The impact can also be seen in the case of Muslims from minority groups, whose participation in higher education has increased. Rising inequality, particularly in education, is detrimental to the country's long-term economic and social growth. Gender inequality has decreased in higher education across all socio-religious groups, though inter-caste and religion disparity remains high. The regional pattern also reveals an intriguing picture: Muslims perform poorly in terms of their share of higher education in the majority of the states studied. The study attempted to depict the trend and pattern of higher education attainment in urban India among various socio-religious groups. The author has highlighted the disparities in access to higher education among adults from various social groups in this empirical study, and calls for caste and religion-specific policy intervention to close the gaps in access to higher education.

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