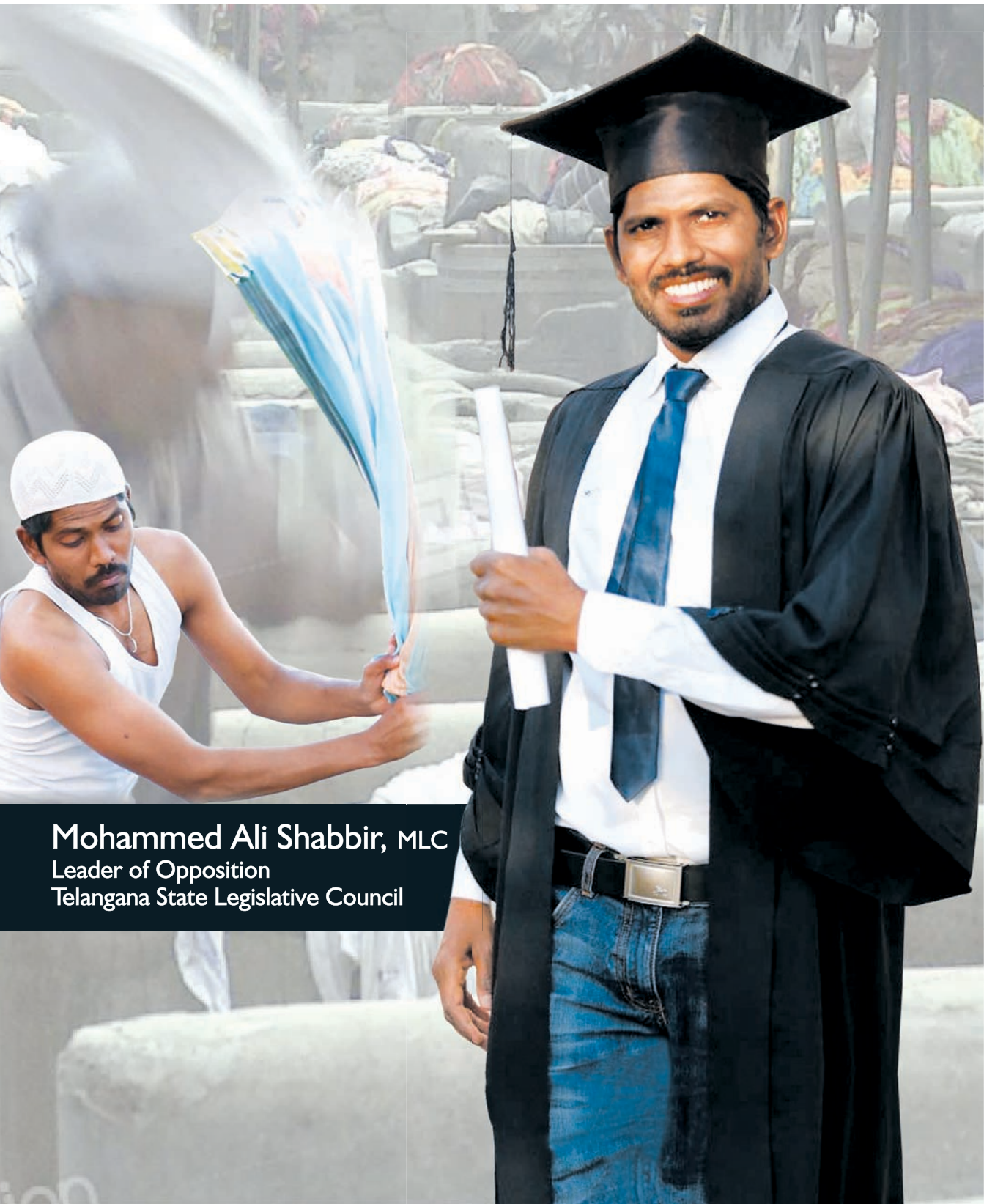


THE STRUGGLE

4% Reservations to Eradicate Social and Economic Backwardness among Muslims



Mohammed Ali Shabbir, MLC
Leader of Opposition
Telangana State Legislative Council



Foreword



It is an open fact that Muslims in India are distressed and backward socially, educationally and economically. There remain differences of opinion on the cause for this backwardness among Indian Muslims, but there is no denying of the fact that there exists an unjust backwardness.

During the British Rule, there were organized efforts made to engineer communal rifts, because the British saw dividing the people on communal lines as the only plausible strategy to hang on to power in India. This resulted in a carefully architected marginalization of the Muslim community.

History has shown us that this communal wedge the British drove among the Indians led to the division of our nation and formation of Pakistan, an Islamic nation. However a majority of Indian Muslims opted to remain in India, showing their patriotism for this soil. They chose to live in secular harmony with their fellow Indians than opt to live in a country carved for communal reasons. This is just one example of how much the Indian Muslims loved this country.

After independence, many communal forces tried to blame the Muslim community for the division of the nation. This polarity even led to the assassination of 'The Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi. The conditions of Indian Muslims further deteriorated during this volatile phase.

Reservations for minorities to ensure an equal share for them in the social, political and economic development of the nation was first discussed during the debate in the Constituent Assembly. However, after the division of the country, this issue did not progress given the precarious state of affairs that followed.

Not only has there been no improvement in state of backwardness in the community after independence, but it has further deteriorated in the decades hence. The Congress party was committed to addressing the issue at a national level. The UPA Government constituted many high level bodies like the Justice Ranganath Mishra commission and Sachar committee to delve into the economic, social and educational backwardness of the Muslims to ensure any step taking towards mitigating their backwardness was commensurate to the quantum of the problem. The commission and the committee had both submitted their reports and recommendations to the government.

In this background, there rose a beacon of hope for the socially, economically and educationally backward Muslims in the then southern state of Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) in the form of Mr. Mohammed Ali Shabbir. A dynamic personality and a political leader known for his people-friendly ethos, he was one of the youngest ministers in the 1989 government of Andhra Pradesh. He played a vital and constructive role in making the dreams of reservations come true for Muslims. His efforts on the political and legal front in this movement were phenomenal. His ideological strength and perseverance made reservations a reality today, one that's making a positive difference to the lives of lakhs of Muslims not only in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh but also to many Muslims across the nation.

Today, in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, socially and economically backward Muslims, get 4% reservations in education and government employment sectors. Apart from reservations, there are also various

measures like fee reimbursement and scholarships that are further bolstering their future. There has also been a significantly higher representation of Muslims in Government, committees, and local bodies like Municipalities, Municipal Corporations, Nagar Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Raj institutions and agricultural marketing committees.

It gives me great happiness to witness the happiness of the lakhs of students who are now able to pursue Medicine, Engineering and other professional courses thanks to the reservations. This access to an empowering education has opened doors of progress for them that were traditionally denied to them for decades.

The journey of Mohammed Ali Shabbir has been a fascinating one. He was the first Minority Welfare Minister in the country's first Minority Welfare Ministry created during the Chief Ministership of KotlaVijayaBhasker Reddy. As a young minister he was moved by the plight of the community in his state and the nation. He created history by issuing orders for reservations for the entire Muslim community in 1993. Not perfect in form, but it was the beginning of a new dawn in the lives of various economically and socially backward Muslims.

Starting in 1994 with the Telugu Desam Party coming to power, the entire Muslim community was once again plunged into the darkness of denial by the government stopping the implementation of reservations. In 2004, after a decade of darkness, the Congress party came back to power in the state and under the able leadership of Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, the government announced 5% reservations to all Muslims in less than 55 days after coming to power.

The issue of Muslim Reservations is very dear to me. During the 2004 General Elections, as the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee in-charge of the then Andhra Pradesh, I enabled adding Muslim Reservations to the manifesto. After the Congress party came to power, I

followed up on this issue to ensure we fulfilled our poll promises. However, the path to the upliftment of Muslims was strewn with hurdles. Mohammed Ali Shabbir, has published this book chronicling the journey, the efforts, the hurdles and the experiences of over a decade to make reservations for backward Muslims a reality.

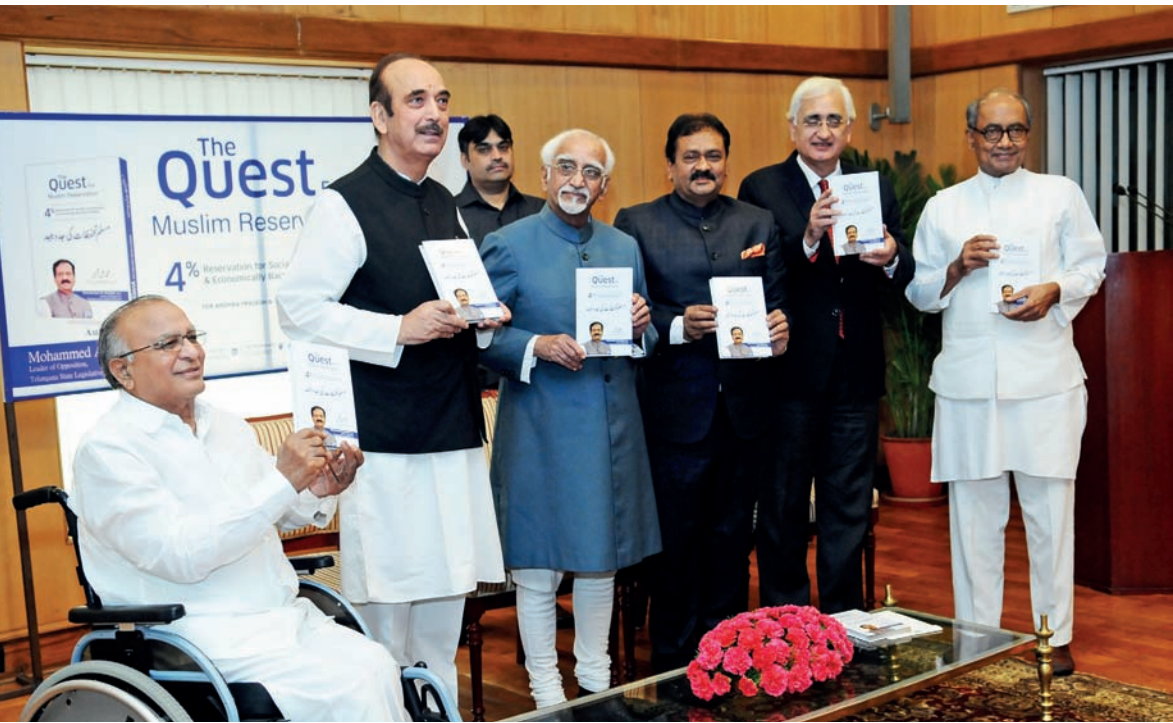
Life in politics, be it personalities or parties is filled with ups and downs. Leaders who dedicate their lives for the people of this nation continue their struggle regardless of political victory or loss. Mr Shabbir Ali put in untiring efforts in this journey in the ranks of Congress party. I congratulate him on publishing this book that documents the plight and struggle of Indian Muslims in India after independence. In this aspect, it is indeed a historic document.

The unique beauty of this book is that it refrains from personal praises and focuses solely on the struggle for reservations documenting the many problems and hurdles that were overcome before making it a reality.

This book will help paint an accurate picture of the backwardness of Muslims among our countrymen and also create awareness about the struggle for reservations. I wish this book transcends borders and goes beyond just Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to reach every corner of our country where Muslims want to exercise their rights in this great democracy.

Ghulam Nabi Azad
16 Feb 2015





Release of My Urdu Book (Muslim Tahfuzat Ki Jaddu Jahad) "The Quest for Muslim Reservation" by Hon'ble Vice-President of India, Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari Ji on 12-07-2017 at the Vice-President of India Residence, New Delhi.



Prologue

“Reservations are not an entreaty to be considered, it is our right. So, the question is not whether there should be reservations, but the question is, how do we achieve it and make it a reality for all. If we don’t stand together, how will we run this race of life as equals. Unfortunately, today, most of us start the race much behind the others. Reservations will bring these people to the same starting line and make it a level playing field.

It is the responsibility and duty of every citizen to bring their fellow countrymen up to the mark of equality. I congratulate Shabbir Ali for this momentous achievement and showing way to the others.”

**- His Excellence the Vice President of India
Hamid Ansari Ji**

On a warm evening in New Delhi on July 12, 2017, a small group of people gathered at the residence of His Excellence the Vice President of India Hamid Ansari Ji. The occasion was the launch of my Urdu book “The Quest for Muslim Reservation (Muslim Tahfuzat Ki Jaddu Jahad).” The book chronicles my struggle of over a decade to bring reservations for socially and economically backward Muslims. But the audience comprised of national level leaders from all over India. Why did so many national leaders attend this book launch? They did because my successful struggle to bring reservations proved as an inspiration for many leaders. Many of them strived to achieve the same in their states using my precedent and they won the popular mandate of their constituencies. The reservations changed lives

of many Muslims and gave them hope they hadn't experienced before in Independent India. I've selected some quotes from some of the dignitaries who graced the occasion and spoke at the event to underline the impact of Muslim Reservations.

"The State of Indian Muslims is a story of despondence and the Sachar Committee's findings have proven that. Reservations give hope to such forlorn people. Shabbir Ali has improved the lives of thousands of students. This journey is a historic journey and everyone needs to read this. This book has to be translated into Hindi and English too so everybody can access it."

- *Shri Digvijay Singh*

"This is the saga of a silent yet successful struggle for justice for the poor. The poor have no religion and in this fight against poverty, this movement for reservations is a huge step towards the country's progress. This book documents a systematic effort initiated during Vijay Bhasker Reddy's reign and continues, intensified and pursued relentlessly by Shabbir Ali in partnership with leaders like Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy and Shri Rosiah.

Accepting the move from 5% to 4% was not a cowardly submission, but a tactical intervention to ensure the victory in the fight against poverty"

- *Shri Jaipal Reddy*

"Today the ask is not just for equality and reservation, but also for security of their lives. While reservations are fruits enjoyed by many today, seldom do people remember who planted the tree that gives the fruits. This book reminds us all of the heroic efforts of the team that made reservations a possibility. Shabbir bhai is a part of the team that has seeded the idea and persevered in the face of adversity."

- *Shri Gulam Nabi Azad*

I am indeed blessed that this struggle has inspired and brought together an entire generation of people to stand up for their right to be equals as citizens of this great nation. Today's Muslim youth doesn't pelt stones on a Friday after prayers; all they want is to hold a pen and improve their lives.

The Struggle



Introduction



I'm a Telangana Muslim citizen of India. These are the parts that make my identity whole. I'm proud of every aspect of it. As much as I'm proud of it, as a public servant elected multiple times by my fellow citizens to represent their rights and needs in this country, it is my duty to identify and solve their problems. My track record as a public representative from the Kamareddy constituency, with a 92% Hindu population, is openly available for anyone to see. I have had the honor of serving on many departments including as a cabinet minister, and in every role, I've had great success thanks to the support of my people and the party.

The greatest challenge of my life, however, has been securing the 4% reservation for backward Muslims. As the largest minority in our country, accounting for about 14% of the population, most Muslims live in surprisingly deplorable conditions. They were heavily underrepresented in the education and employment sectors. Until 1994.

That year marked the beginning of a long-drawn struggle for Muslim reservation and a dawn of hope for backward Muslims. Was the journey simple? No. Was it easy? No. Was it a path strewn with thorns and hurdles? Yes. Was it worth it? Absolutely yes!

The Struggle

This book is about lives of Indian Muslims, class distinctions among minorities, and their socio-economic backwardness. It delves into my movement to get backward Muslims into mainstream society by getting them reservations, the struggle to make it a reality and the various historical, cultural and legal hurdles we had to cross to ensure this dream became a reality. This isn't a text book or a lesson in history. It is meant to foster discussion and debate. I hope you ask yourself, and me, a lot of questions while and after reading the book. And I hope you will see, as I did, the efficacy of bringing this movement to life.

Mohammed Ali Shabbir, MLC.,

Leader of Opposition,
Telangana State Legislative Council.

The Struggle



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The Struggle



Incidents that Molded and Inspired me

This part of the book is about my entry into politics and some of the incidents that happened to me before I embarked on the movement for getting Muslim reservations. Why is this part of my life pertinent to the book? It's important because you need to understand what made me choose this fight, what gave me the inspiration to go on despite some of the most humbling setbacks and opposition to the movement. My life's backstory and the circumstances during which I entered politics play an important role in my struggle for Muslim reservations. It gives a context of why I persevered where most would quit or move on.

The Struggle

My Entry into Active Politics

I was born in Machareddy, a sleepy village in Nizamabad. Growing up, public service was a way of life at home and I was deeply inspired by the activities of my father (Late) Mohammed Masoom. He was a member of the Municipal Council and took part in several welfare activities. He laid strong emphasis on the need for education all around. He always focused on grassroots activities and that's why the people around him could relate to him and feel the impact of his service. Respected and commended for his services all his life, he dedicated it to public service. I imbibed my sense of politics and public service from him. One of the continuing inspirations during my fight for Muslim reservations was my father's belief that public service is a life-long journey and not just a stint. Sometimes the journey is long and arduous, you just have to bear it with a smile and keep going at it.

My father always taught me to stand up for what I believed in, despite any hardship or backlash one had to face. I grew up with this ethic and I think that's was one of the strong reasons I joined the Congress party at a time when most leaders and party workers were deserting the party. It was the year 1977 and the party was going through a major backlash across the nation. For the first time since Independence, the nation had a Non-Congress government. Even Smt. Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi lost their home seats in Rae Bareli and Amethi. I believed in what the congress party stood for and I believed in the leadership of Smt. Indira Gandhi. That's why I joined the congress party – in 1977. I knew it was an uphill task to garner a victory for the party. But I jumped into the fray nevertheless.

The congress party won only 154 seats across the nation. But they won 41 out of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh. It was a bittersweet moment for us. We had lost the national elections, but I campaigned in the only state that elected the congress party with such a majority, and I was proud of it.

The 1977 elections were a great launchpad for my career in politics. I was thrown in at the deep end and learnt some hard but important lessons in fighting negative propaganda and falsehoods – lessons that have stood by me even today. A year later, senior Congress leaders including Raja Ram, Bala Goud and P.V. Narasimha Rao undertook the process of reorganising the party in Nizamabad district. I entered the party under the flag of Youth Congress. I was associated with the party since my college days as an active member of National Students Union of India (NSUI), but active politics was a completely different ballgame and I took to my role in the political scenario with vigour and enthusiasm.

My beliefs not only stood me in good stead throughout my political career, but also proved me right in the general elections of 1980. Smt. Indira Gandhi contested elections from Medak and my constituency Kamareddy was a part of the Medak Lok Sabha Segment. We campaigned hard and she won the seat with a resounding majority. She also won the Rae Bareilly seat that year, but she honoured us by retaining the Medak seat.

Here's the second source of inspiration – hurdles are aplenty when you set out to achieve something big, especially if it is something that challenges long held belief systems of the majority and the powers that be. If my entry into politics have taught me anything it is that you have to plough on in the face of adversity and hopelessness. You owe it to your beliefs.



29 Days in Jail

I'm not the first political leader to spend time in jail for my beliefs, and I won't be the last. But I'm fortunate to have had followed the footsteps of some of the most influential leaders across the world who, in their struggle for their people, have spent time in jail.

In the initial years of my political career I was actively involved in Youth Congress programs at the state level. In 1984, AP was swept by the N T Rama Rao wave and the TDP government was painting the state yellow. However, citizens were reeling under the anti-people policies of the Telugu Desam Party, and it was left to us to fight the atrocities. My dear friend, (late) Sudheer Kumar and I were very active in agitating against the ridiculous policies of the government and the government was happily painting us as the rabble rousers with no future in politics.

In 1989, the then Minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju made a controversial statement alleging that Shri. Rajiv Gandhi was behind the assassination of his own mother Smt. Indira Gandhi in order to become the Prime Minister. This triggered large scale protests across the state. Sudheer and I staged a sit-in protest in front of the State Legislative assembly. Tempers flared and at one point we breached the security perimeter and entered the Assembly premises while it was in session.

The then Speaker G Narayana Rao convicted us for breaching the Assembly security and we were sent to prison for 30 days. I was named Accused No 1 along with 30 others. Our arrest and imprisonment in Musheerabad Jail activated the Congress cadre across the State, and protests began at a massive scale across every Mandal of all the 23 districts.

During our stint in jail, we received heroes' treatment from the party members and cadre who visited us regularly. We had visits from some very senior members who told us that we had made them proud. It would suffice to say, we were feeling good about ourselves and charged about our service to the party and the nation.

The Struggle

During this time, TDP leader Devineni Nehru and some of his followers were lodged in the same jail in connection to the murder case of MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga. It didn't take long before we had difference of opinions. One such disagreement led an altercation and we being hot-headed students were all charged to take the fight with them head-on. It was a tense moment at the jail and the officials had even considered bringing in outside support to break up the fight. A very peculiar thing happened at that point. The Superintendent M R Ahmed intervened and he did it in a very strange way. He held a gun to his temple and threatened to shoot himself if we did not stop immediately disperse to our barracks.

What would you do in such a situation? We were shocked, but all of us returned to our barracks. Mr. Ahmed came by our barracks an hour later and told us why he did what he did. He explained how we were all impressionable young students on our side while on the other side, they were seasoned hardcore criminals. Not only would the fight have been one-sided but we would also have been victims of an unfair fight.

While we were imprisoned, the state was reeling under protests and we were released on the orders of the Supreme Court on the 29th day, one day short of our conviction period.

Sometimes the fight is not easy. You will emerge victorious because your fight is a just fight, but it doesn't mean it will be a smooth ride. Be strong enough to brave prison for your beliefs, but at the same time be wise enough to stay away from fights that take you away from your goals without contributing to it. This was just one more incident that both strengthened and matured the fighter in me.



My First Electoral Victory

My protests and struggle against the anti-people policies of the TDP party got me recognition among the senior party leadership. We had to expose their true colors and enable people to see beyond the charisma of NTR the actor. It was considered a monumental effort and an impossible task. We jumped into the fray with great vigor and successfully crashed the giant wave of NTR's popularity. I was given an MLA ticket from Kamareddy. People were tired of the ineffectiveness of the TDP government and they had been noticing the energy with which I was fighting for them.

It was considered a tough fight but I won it. Not only did I win it but I won it with a huge margin. This win was important. It catapulted me into the top of the mind of the higher echelons of the party leadership and gave me a voice that would be heard and taken seriously by the powers that be. Allah, the merciful, elevated me from being a youth congress member to an MLA and then inducted into the cabinet of Dr. Marri Chenna Reddy. I knew it was given to me so that I could serve my people better, stronger and more relentlessly.

My first day at the Assembly was a memorable moment. It was just a few months ago that I had to breach security and barge my way into these hallowed halls to make my voice heard. Today my people elected me and gave me access to these very halls legitimately. The same guys who were chasing me to drag me out of this place not very long ago, were saluting me as I walked past them. I must admit it was a proud moment for me, my family and every member of my constituency.

The victories along the way, some big, some small, but all of them very important, help you relish your journey and keep you motivated to stay on course.



Youngest Minister with Five Portfolios

Working relentlessly was an ethic my father instilled in me. And working meant improving lives of the people around me – my own people, be it the members of my party or my constituency or my fellow countrymen – everything I did was always keeping a section of these people's welfare at heart. I think it was evident in the way I spoke or worked, but ever since the beginning of my political career, my seniors and leaders believed in me and always gave me abundant responsibilities.

As a first-time MLA and minister I was allocated the Wakf Board and Urdu Academy portfolio. As soon as I took charge and started discharging my duties, the then Chief Minister Shri. Chenna Reddy Ji allocated me four other portfolios of Sugar, Fisheries, Khadi & Village Industries, and Small Scale Industries. This decision surprised everyone. I was the youngest minister in the cabinet and was elected to the Assembly for the first time and here was a Chief Minister who was trusting me with the responsibilities of four other prominent portfolios.

Many of these industries underwent major changes, some of them were even transformed completely when I was leading them. Life for me is about action; you move or you become stagnant. So, I took to my ministries with great passion and worked relentlessly to serve my people. My first term was an eye opener in many ways. It was during this time that I saw dissatisfaction and a disconnect between the minority youth and mainstream society. Protection and preservation of Wakf properties was done arbitrarily at best. It took many sleepless nights and struggles to get this department into shape. In fact, in 1993, during the regime of CM Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, Andhra Pradesh became the first state in the country to establish a full-fledged Department for Welfare of Minorities under the Minorities Welfare Ministry.



The Nation's First Minority Welfare Department

When I first walked out of the Raj Bhavan after taking oath for the first time in 1989, the mood was celebratory. Congratulations poured in abundantly; in fact, some journalists even offered 'double congratulations' for my induction into the cabinet and also for being the youngest minister of the country. I was looking forward to taking charge and making an impact on people's lives.

So, imagine my shock when I was told that no department reports to me directly. The various institutions working for the welfare of minorities were associated with other powerful departments. While the Urdu Academy was linked to Education Department, the State Wakf Board was a part of Revenue (Hindu Endowments) Department. Similarly, the Minorities Finance Corporation was under the Industries Department while the Minorities Commission was under General Administration Department. Both Mecca Masjid and Royal Mosque were under the control of Hindu Endowments Department till 1993. I was dismayed that my role as a minister was just decorative and customary; what could I get done if I had no department reporting to me?

I don't know how to give up, so I set out to achieve my goals despite the roadblocks. But no principal secretary or any senior official was even prepared to attend a meeting of the Minorities welfare. Why would they? Here's a scenario – if you were a principal secretary who was heading a department with a funding of Rs 1400 crores and were asked to attend a meeting of the Urdu Academy that has a meagre Rs 6 lakh budget, would you be very keen to attend? It was the same story with the Wakf Board, Minorities Finance Corporation and Minorities' Commission. All departments were sending junior officials to review meetings.

And so, came the biggest challenge of my political career. I had to convince the Chief Minister to first detach all departments of minority welfare with different ministries and then bring them under one umbrella by constituting the Department for Welfare of Minorities. I got a nod for doing it too. But here's some context for you – in our bureaucratic system, creating a new post in an existing department is considered a herculean task, now imagine what would entail setting up a completely new department with a Principal Secretary as its Administrative Head and creation of news posts, filling them up through repatriations or transfers? It was tough. It was uphill, but it had to be done. Finally, the then Chief Secretary Mr. Jayabharat Reddy and other bureaucrats began the process to create the nation's first ever Department of Welfare of Minorities. Today I can look back and some of these incidents bring a smile to my face. Not because they were funny, but because despite so many hurdles, we got things done. Here's one of them:

The Chief Minister directed me to follow up on the tactical issues of creating the department with the Chief Secretary. I offered to visit the Chief Secretary's office the next morning. I didn't think much of it but my Personal Secretary Akhtar Hussain (who had earlier worked with Mr. M.M. Hasham) and another PS M.A. Ghaffar (who had worked with Lok Sabha MP Mr. Baga Reddy) told me that being a Cabinet Minister, I couldn't visit the office of the Chief Secretary as it would be violation of protocol. I didn't care for protocol as much as I did for the creation of the department, but I couldn't blatantly violate it either. Thankfully the CS came to the rescue and offered to set up the meeting between 9 am and 10 am – before the official day began at the secretariat and thereby avoiding a protocol violation.

Not only was he smart about coming up with such solutions, but he had also earlier worked as the Secretary of National Commission for Minorities and therefore, he was well acquainted with the issues concerning the community. He accepted my proposals and finally the formation of country's first Minorities Welfare Department became a reality. A dedicated ministry for minorities with a dedicated department, officials and most importantly a dedicated budget became a reality.

It was a successful model. It elicited applause from all over the nation. When the then CM of Uttar Pradesh visited Hyderabad, he spent exclusive time with me enquiring about the department. He wanted to emulate our success and soon UP had its own Minorities Welfare department. Many states followed suit. The icing on the cake – the central government under the UPA alliance adopted the same model and created the country's first Union ministry for Minorities' Welfare with Mr. Abdul Rahman Antulay, former CM of Maharashtra, at the helm.

My life in politics has been this constant pattern. I have a vision that's at loggerheads with realities around me. I take a step back, assess the situation and fight to execute my vision. Each struggle makes me stronger and wiser. More importantly, each struggle steels the resolve in me to persevere in the face of obstacles.





1. My political career always involved fighting for what I believed in and rallying for justice
2. They thought prison would break my spirit; it just inspired me to fight harder for the downtrodden
3. Campaigning with Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy in Kamareddy
4. My first electoral victory and the cabinet of ministers in the 1994 assembly
5. Early days of my political career
6. The swearing-in ceremony of 2004, when Congress party came back to power to fight the darkness spread by the TDP



The Struggle



The beginning of the movement

How did the idea for Muslim reservations take root? It wasn't a political tool for winning votes. After all my constituency was Kamareddy, where Hindus constitute 92% of the population. They never voted me to power for my religion nor did they hold it against me. They have always been a constant support for most of my political journey because they were very certain of the fact that regardless of whatever battles I fought in other spheres, their welfare would always be of primary importance to me. The movement for Muslim reservations began after I started my duties as the Minorities Welfare Minister. This part of the book will give you a peek into what started this movement, a historical, cultural and socio-economic context so that you will understand the need for such an act.



The First Step towards Muslim Reservations

As a minister, especially of the Minorities Welfare, I could see many of the socio-economic problems that engulfed the Muslim community. And they were plenty. Initially I was keen on solving the problems of people as they came to me on a case by case basis. I was observing the people who came to me and soon I realised I wasn't looking at individuals who were suffering, but I was looking at an entire community who came from a realm of suffering. Firstly, they had no hope of anything good that might come of their lives, they felt marginalised, they didn't feel a part of the larger national ethos, and their requests were most of the times a cry for basic survival. I realised the problem wasn't of one person or a community. The problem was systemic and it had to be addressed at that level.

It was imperative that Indian Muslims felt a part of the mainstream society. Better education, better jobs and career enhancement was the most productive way of going about it. And that's how the thought of reservations for Muslims took birth as a way of bringing about this social change. I couldn't attack this problem at a national level, so I took baby steps and tried to do it at a state level.

In 1993, I invited prominent Ulemas, Mashaiqeen, religious leaders, intellectuals and other influential personalities to discuss the issue of reservation for Muslim community. I contended that other castes and communities have been growing at various levels due to the benefits of reservations and therefore, the Muslim community too should seek reservation in education and employment.

I was expecting their unanimous support for this initiative. So, imagine my shock when I encountered unanimous resistance to this idea. They argued that since Islam preaches equality, the Muslim community could not be classified into different sections for the sake of reservation. After the first meeting, I made several efforts by holding talks on individual basis with

socio-religious heads to bring consensus on reservation. But they stood firm on their resistance.

Sometimes you have to struggle alone. Victory would mean a happy Muslim populace all around and a loss would mean permanent oblivion for me in politics. But this was a cause worth fighting and I took it upon myself to fight it. I consulted the then Chief Minister Vijay Bhaskar Reddy on the issue and with his consent, the Andhra Pradesh Government issued GO Ms No 30, dated 25th August, 1994, notifying Muslims as Backward Classes. Four days later, Justice Puttu Swamy Commission was constituted to study and decide the quota in jobs and employment for Muslims in Andhra Pradesh. The ball was set in motion, but it would be another decade of resistance and setbacks before it would become a reality, as you will see.

What do I mean when I say Indian Muslims weren't a part of the mainstream society? It wasn't like they were barred from doing anything to improve their lives, but there just wasn't enough context for them to look at life as a part of the mainstream ethos. So, before I take you through GO Ms No 30 and the trials it went through I want you to read about some incidents that will help you get a context of what I mean by marginalisation.



The Oath in Urdu

Here's some food for thought. What would you say if an elected representative would want to take oath in his mother tongue, especially if that language is a recognized official language in that state? If an MLA in Tamil Nadu asked to take oath in Tamil or if an MLA in Gujarat asked to take oath in Gujarati or if an MLA in Andhra Pradesh asked to take oath in Telugu? It wouldn't come as a surprise, right? More importantly it wouldn't be a showstopper at the oath taking ceremony. So now tell me what would you say if an MLA in Andhra Pradesh would want to take oath in Urdu, which is a recognized official language in the state? It should be easy, right?

No, it wasn't. The first time I was elected as an MLA, I was seated among other MLAs who were to take oath as ministers in the Swearing-in-Ceremony at Raj Bhavan. While a few took oath in English, a majority preferred their mother tongue Telugu for the same. I decided to take the oath of office and secrecy in Urdu language. I requested the then Hon'ble Governor K Krishna Kanth that I will take oath in Urdu language. And the ceremony came to a grinding halt. There was no draft of oath available in Urdu.

However, since both Governor Krishna Kanth and Chief Minister Chenna Reddy knew Urdu, they decided to translate the English draft into Urdu by taking the help of an Urdu journalist. The Governor himself wrote the copy and then administered the oath to me as a Cabinet Minister.

The governor later pulled up his staff and took them to task on the non-availability of the draft of oath in an official language and made sure that the Urdu draft was mandatorily available for all subsequent swearing-in ceremonies. This initiative also resulted in Rashtrapati Bhavan issuing directions for keeping the Urdu draft of oath as well all other Raj Bhavans and Union Territories were directed to keep the draft of oath in all scheduled languages of the country.

This incident created some questions in my mind. I knew it wasn't a conspiracy to marginalise Muslims and that the lack of an Urdu oath draft was just an oversight. But that was the problem. Sub-consciously, the nation was marginalising the minorities and it was a sign of how things were, even in the social and economic spheres. How could I make sure that Muslims and their welfare mattered to the general conscience of the populace? How could I reintegrate backward Muslims into the mainstream society once again?



Muslim as The Terrorist, a Disturbing Mindset

There is a concentration of Muslim population in and around the Charminar. Most of them are from the lower social and economic classes of the society. Each time there is a communal issue or an attack by fundamentalists, the police in that area rounds up all the youth in that region and starts interrogating them. Some activists fight this generalized marginalization but it largely goes unnoticed or unacted upon.

It really is not surprising that it could happen in our country to the poor and the backward. In fact, it could happen to even the upward and influential, as long as they're from a minority community. It happened to me.

It was September 2004 when a Muslim youth, Mujahid Saleem, was shot dead by an official of Gujrat ATS near Police Headquarters. He resisted the arrest of an Islamic cleric Moulana Naseeruddin. Saleem was the son of another noted scholar Moulana Abdul Aleem Islahi. Next day, I went to Moulana Islahi's house to convey my condolences. However, a section of media used the occasion to tarnish my image. They tried to brand me as an "ISI Agent". This was completely unheard of. I had served as a minister from 1989-1994 and was serving my second term as minister. I was elected from a constituency (Kamareddy) where Hindus constitute 92% of the total population. However, the anti-Muslim mindset of a section of media and also bureaucracy worked against me.

At this time, a senior police official sent a report to the Central Government against me, raising suspicions of me having links with sympathizers of a fundamentalist organisation. He alleged that I had prevented the police from conducting searches and arrests in a few Deeni Madarsas. The Central Government was shocked over the report. It immediately alerted the Chief Minister.

Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy immediately convened a high-level meeting on the Law & Order situation. He invited me as a 'Special Invitee' as meetings on Law & Order are conducted only by the Chief Minister and no minister is allowed to sit in those meetings. The police officer who had sent the report about me was also present in the meeting. Dr. YSR began the meeting by pulling up the officials and asking, "How dare you target my cabinet colleague? On what basis did you try to malign his image? Give me the proof to show that he had links with fundamentalist groups. You are targeting him just because he is a Muslim minister and visited the house of a cleric whose son was killed in open firing by Gujarat Police."

The Chief Minister warned all the officials of stern action if they continued to work on speculations. He said if the officials could target a senior minister, then he could only imagine what they could do with the common Muslims. He made it clear that no Muslim should be targeted on mere suspicions. However, he gave clear instructions that no anti-national activity should be tolerated in the State. But the officials must ensure that no one is discriminated on the basis of his religion.

Dr. YSR also directed the then DGP M.A. Basith and Hyderabad Police Commissioner Balwinder Singh not to implicate innocent Muslims in false cases. He also asked them to admit of wrong arrests and tender apologies for the same. Subsequently, not only were several innocents were released, but many false cases were also lifted. Each of the released innocent youth was paid compensation and also given a Character Certificate. This was a first of its kind action in our country.

Dr. YSR was a visionary leader who ensured people of all classes thrived. But imagine this situation anywhere else. It is so easy to brand a Muslim as an ISI agent and it is not even questioned. The post-truth world we live in makes it very easy to tarnish images of entire communities by false propaganda. I can feel moral indignation about the incident, but nobody is going to convince me that this is an accepted truism in my country. No, it is not. But what of an uneducated youth? Don't incidents like these cause people to feel ostracized? It is such vulnerable youth that become the targets

for recruiters of fundamentalist organizations. It was therefore imperative that they were included in the mainstream society and a Muslim engineer should be as natural a picture as any other engineer or doctor or any other respectable profession for that matter.



Fakhir Imam: The Mendicant Municipal Councillor

This story might really jolt you and disorient you momentarily. It could be the first of many times in this book that we will question the existence of a caste system among Indian Muslims.

'Fakhir' is one among the 14 castes among Muslims which were provided 4% reservation under BC-E category. Fakhir Imam was a known figure in Kamareddy. He used to work as 'Saheri Wala' and collect Alms during the holy month of Ramzan. He also used to beg on Thursdays and Fridays. He got elected as Councillor for Kamareddy Municipality on a Congress ticket. However, his election as Councillor did not change his social identity. He continued to beg despite getting elected as people's representative. He was a good mass leader and effectively represented problems being faced by people in his constituency. But he stayed true to his 'caste' and continued with the profession that was handed down in their family for centuries.

Ask yourselves, do the fakhirs deserve a shot at a better life and dignity? It's not because Fakhir Imam is a Muslim that his family has been relegated to begging, it is because of the existence of a class system within the faith and call it anything you might, but that community would've continued in this profession if not for reservations to put them in a different boat.



Indian Muslims in the New Millennium

I can write reams about the injustice meted out to the Muslim community or how underrepresented they are in all spheres of life in our nation. No amount of subjective lamentation can suffice as evidence, but one can't refute facts supported by hard data. Let's take a look at the lives of Muslims in the new millennium and the early 21st century.

On March 9, 2005, the Prime Minister issued a Notification for the constitution of a High-Level Committee to prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India.

The seven-member High Level Committee, chaired by Justice Rajindar Sachar, submitted its final report to the Prime Minister on November 17, 2006. The Government tabled the Justice Rajindar Sachar Committee Report in Parliament on November 30th.

The Sachar Committee has compiled data from a number of sources. The report frames these issues as related to identity, security and equity. Barring some generic observations about the causes for the 'development deficit' among Muslims, there is no explicit or detailed discussion of the causes of such conditions. Here are some findings from the committee:

Age	Hindus			Muslims	Other Minorities
	Gen	OBC	SCs/STs		
6-13	19.1 (17.3)	36.1 (35.5)	25.7 (27.4)	14.0 (15.1)	5.1 (4.8)
14-15	24.3 (19.1)	36.1 (35.2)	21.4 (25.2)	12.2 (14.5)	6.0 (5.3)
16-17	28.9 (21.1)	33.7(35.0)	20.2 (24.7)	10.7 (14.0)	6.3 (5.1)
18-22	34.0 (20.8)	30.5 (34.4)	17.7 (25.5)	10.2 (13.9)	7.6 (5.5)
23 & up	35.6 (23.9)	29.2 (35.1)	18.3 (24.1)	7.4 (10.9)	9.5 (5.9)

Note: Figures in parentheses show the proportion of the community in the respective age-group.

Children Currently Studying as a Proportion of Population by Age Groups – 2004-05

	All India	Rural			Urban		
		All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
All	64.8	59	71	46	80	86	73
Hindu	65.1	59	72	46	81	88	74
SC/ST	52.2	49	61	36	68	78	58
Muslim	59.1	53	62	43	70	76	63
Others	70.8	64	77	52	85	90	78

Literacy rates (2001)

	All	
	Govt	Pub/Pvt
All	34.2	13.1
All Hindus	35.3	13.9
- SC/ST	39.4	9.5
- OBCs	30.4	12.8
- Upper Caste	37.4	17.1
Muslim	23.7	6.5
Others	35.8	12.8

Salaried Workers Employed in Government, Public & Large Private Sectors (2004-05) (%)

Here are some more startling findings of the Sachar Committee:

- About one third of small villages with high concentration of Muslims do not have any educational institutions.
- About 40% of large villages with a substantial Muslim concentration do not have any medical facilities.

The Struggle

According to the report, “the abysmally low representation of Muslim OBCs suggests that the benefits of entitlements meant for the backward classes are yet to reach them.”

Let me ask you a question. Would you believe it if I told you that the majority of Indian Muslims do not send their kids to school and prefer sending them to Madrasas instead for religious training? You would, right? Of course, you would, because it has been the relentless propaganda of the unsecular right wing parties who have scant faith in the secular nature of this great nation. Now let me give you a fact – only 3% of all Indian Muslim children go and enroll in Madrasas. I’m not saying this – the Justice Sachar Commission report says this. So why are the rest of the Muslims so underrepresented in education and employment sectors? It’s because they have no access to infrastructure of any sort and the deeper you go into rural areas, the scarcer are the resources for their education and development.

A similar report was undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh State Government (It was still one state when commissioned) and led by G. Sudhir, IAS (Retd.) officer. The findings in the state were equally dismal and paint a poor picture of the social and economic conditions of the Muslims living here.

It has been my struggle since the early 1990s to ensure backward Muslims are supported by affirmative action to include them into the mainstream society. The findings of committees like Justice Sachar and Sudhir, both of which came after we started the struggle, only strengthened our cause and bolstered it with data support.



The road was bleak and dark for many muslim youth from socially and economically backward classes. Was there a light at the end of the tunnel?





1. The beginning
2. With Muslim Youth to get a perspective on hurdles in their lives
3. Discussing the initiative with members of the community
4. Getting the buy-in for the reservations bill from the top leadership
5. My session with the religious heads of various Muslim organizations to discuss and get consensus of the subject of reservation



The Bill, trials and tribulations over 16 years

For a majority of leaders across history, Muslims and their wellbeing was an electoral strategy. The reservations would have been one of the most concrete steps in ensuring their development. But if this happened a lot of leaders would lose their control over the downtrodden because they wouldn't remain desolate anymore. So, there was much opposition to this bill and many lawsuits ensued. This section is a journey of the reservation movement from the time the first GO was passed and the time it was brought into practical effect.



GO MS NO. 30: A Revolutionary First Step

GO MS No. 30 was the first of the many milestones in this struggle. Muslims of Andhra Pradesh were officially accorded reservation, as an addendum into the list of backward classes, in the education and employment areas on a government order. The Congress Government of Andhra Pradesh, through the Backward Classes Welfare Department, issued this historic order on August 25, 1994, for inclusion of certain castes, including Muslims, in the list of Backward Classes.

Why had no one done this until now? It was certainly not for lack of trying; it's just that nobody tried hard enough. Let's take a look at the various attempts by the governments over the years to look into reservations, define what constituted backwardness and how much reservation would each of these classes need and for how long before they could be called a part of the mainstream society.

1968 -1970, Manohar Pershad Commission and Anantharaman Commission

Recommended reservations of 30% to 93 classes of the society as being backward and further classifying them into A, B, C and D sub sections. The government accepted the recommendations of this commission with a minor change – they gave 25% reservation against the recommended 30% - and implemented these changes through GO No. 1793. This was challenged before the AP high court that struck it down. On appeal, the apex court reversed the high court's decision and upheld the GO stating the Anantha Raman commission had enough data to support its recommendations.

1982, N.K. Muralidhar Rao Commission

Recommended that reservations to backward classes to be enhanced from 25% to 44% among Backward classes A, B, C, D and E as 10%, 16%, 8%, 8% and 2% respectively. Here's the surprise factor – Nine communities were to be added to the list of backward classes and Muslims were one of the nine; Kapus, Balijas, Telagas and Ontari were among others that made up the nine. The government issued GO 166 enhancing BC reservations to 44% in addition to GOs 167 and 168 enhancing SC & ST reservations from 14% to 15% and 4% to 6% respectively. This triggered large scale protests in the state and the AP High court struck the GOs down and only upheld the enhancement of reservations for SCs and STs.

1979-1989, The Mandal Commission

The reservations scenario has always been a contentious theme in our country, but nothing up to this point had driven the nation to strife like the Mandal Commission. Established by the Morarji Desai government in 1979 the commission gave its recommendations in 1980 that included reservations for OBCs, SCs and STs. Mired in controversy since its inception, it was not implemented by any government till the V.P. Singh government attempted it in 1989. The country literally went up in flames with student self-immolations, protests and large scale bandhs across educational institutes. The Supreme Court recommended the constitution of a permanent body to examine the complaints of wrong inclusion or non-inclusion of groups in the list of Backward Classes and on its directions, the Government of Andhra Pradesh constituted the Andhra Pradesh Commission for Backward Classes by the Andhra Pradesh Act. No. 20 of 1993.

GO 30 was the result of detailed research and analysis of the on-ground situation. I coordinated with the officials of Backward Classes Department, Law Ministry and other experts to make a strong base to provide reservation for Muslim community.

I'm reproducing some of the extracts from the GO to help you understand how much thought went into it

"There has been considerable unrest among the members of various castes and communities in support of their long pending demand and the government initially extended certain non-statutory educational benefits to students of certain castes whose parents' or Guardian's income is Rs. 12,000/- or less per annum. Similarly, certain economic support schemes have also been extended to parents whose income is less than Rs. 6,000/- p.a. These benefits were subsequently extended to Muslims along with other Minorities.

However, the mere extension of economic benefits is felt inadequate and will not entitle these castes for reservation of seats in educational institutions and for the reservation of jobs in Government and Local Bodies, which indeed is their main demand. In fact, certain Castes who are similarly situated are already included in the list of Backward Classes in certain regions of the State and other neighbouring States. In these circumstances, the government made a request to the BC Commission for an interim report in regard to the Social and Educational Backwardness of these castes and communities. But the Commission expressed its inability to do so.

Normally before any caste or community is included or excluded from the list of Backward Classes, the government is expected to seek a report from the Commission and then take appropriate action. It is not the policy of the Government under normal circumstances to deviate from this procedure. But so far as the demand of the Castes and communities under references for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes is concerned, it is a long pending

demand with the a mass support sometimes even causing unrest, for the simple reason that certain communities which are more or less on par with them in the matter of Social and Educational backwardness have already been included in the Backward Classes. Thus, a feeling of inequity has been generated in those communities giving rise to emotional upsurges for social justice."

Through G.O. MS. No. 30, the government ordered that any reservation to the communities to be included in the BC list would not cut into the quantum of reservation available to those who are already recognised as BCs. Further, the government made it clear that separate orders would be issued to decide:

1. The percentage of reservation to be earmarked to the castes and communities to be included in the list of BCs;
2. The group/classification/class in which they should be included;
3. The economic criteria to be applied for the entitlement of the benefits extended to the Backward Classes under the rules.

We were moving fast and on August 31st, 1994, six days after the release of GO MS NO. 30, the State Government constituted a BC Commission headed by Justice K.S. Puttuswamy and assigned the task of deciding the percentage of reservation to be given to 14 new castes in the BCs list.

It would have been a new dawn for the lives of many backward sections of our society had we run the course of this GO and enforced it successfully. But tragedy struck, and just in four months after we passed the GO, TDP came to power in the state.



The Dark Decade of TDP Rule

The decade of TDP rule between 1994 and 2004 was an unprecedented period of darkness in our lives. First there was the political drama that ensued within the first family of the TDP party with Chandrababu Naidu pulling a coup in less than 9 months after winning power and unseating his father-in-law. And then he ensured that the GO never saw the light of the day.

The BC Commission, as a permanent body for dealing with issues related to BCs, was originally formed in 1993 through an Assembly Act and Justice Puttuswamy was appointed as its chairman on 31st March 1994. The Commission was given a three-year term as per the Act but it was extended by another three years on the request of Justice Puttuswamy on the plea that the work was incomplete. Later, a six-month extension was given five times with the last one ending on September 30, 2002, following which the Commission neither sought any extension, nor was its term extended suo motu by the TDP Government on its own.

Despite staying on post for eight-and-a-half years, the Commission did not give a report; not a single line. The TDP government has spent a colossal Rs. 2.59 crores on it over 8 years and kept extending the Commission's term without seeking a report. This caused gross injustice to not only Muslims, but also other castes like Kapus who were classified as BCs by the Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy Government. At the time of formation of Puttuswamy Commission, there were 92 castes in the State list of BCs. Representations were made by a record number of 109 other castes to the Commission seeking BC status. All waiting in vain for a full decade.

The Naidu government was one of the most corrupt and divisive governments of all times. On one side, they were engaging the Muslim community with sweet talk and deception, by increasing the budget allocations for minorities' welfare and misled the community into believing he was pro-

muslim development. On the other, he was actively seeking partnership with the BJP strengthening their hold over the state and implementing RSS ideologies to keep Muslims marginalised. Not once in the nine-year rule has Naidu ever mentioned the Puttuswamy commission. Lies and deception constituted his strategy to engage with the minorities.

Here's a thought for you – if Naidu had enforced GO 30, one batch of engineers, doctors and other professions would have started practicing their professions with at least three other batches completing various stages of their education because of the reservations. Naidu just whitewashed his campaigns with hi-tech dreams and pushed every other development agenda under the carpet. The people finally decided that if they wanted fantasy and drama, they'd go to the movies; they voted him out. But he'd already inflicted 9 years of damage to their development by then.



The Naxal Attack; a Fresh Lease of Life

The period before the General Elections in 1994 were one of the proudest moments of my career. We had sown the seeds of Muslim reservations. And the loss in the general elections set us back. I too had lost my seat in Kamareddy as did many congress leaders in their constituencies. I served as the PCC Vice President and General Secretary working on various welfare activities keeping ourselves busy for the people in our constituency. And then one day in 1997 my life changed.

On July 7, 1997, I was heading to Machareddy village in the company of senior congress leader and MP M. Baga Reddy to unveil statues of Smt. Indira Gandhi and Sri Rajeev Gandhi. One moment we were talking about the state of affairs in the state politics and suddenly there was a huge explosion blowing the Jeep in front of us to pieces. It was mayhem all

around, people screaming and running in all directions. I was disoriented and all I could see around was blood and body parts flung all over, not to mention the dark smoke.

It was a Naxalite attack targeting M Baga Reddy and me. They missed us by a few feet, but we lost six colleagues that day. Many more were injured, two of them have permanent disabilities that affect their mobility even today. These were all people who had dedicated their lives to the service of people. They were people we called friends. And they were lost forever in an incident of mindless violence.

It was a fresh lease of life for me. I was very grateful that I had survived the assassination bid but more importantly I realised that my survival had a higher purpose. The Allah Subhanahu Tala granted me a few more years of life for a reason and I was intent on using them to serve my people. I got back to public service with a renewed vigour. Reservations for Muslims was an important goal for me until that day, but that day it became my life's ultimate goal.

I knew that the only way this bill would see the day of light would be under a pro-people congress government. That's why it was imperative that we won the elections. I joined Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy's team, which played a major role in strengthening the party in 1999. Our efforts payed off and my prayers were answered. We won the elections in 2004. I won the Kamareddy seat again.

Sometimes it takes a near death experience to relook at your life and assess your priorities. Victory, defeat, wealth, poverty, ego and humility – none of them matter as they are all temporary. The only permanent thing is the legacy you leave behind. You will only be remembered for what you've done for your people. And I want my legacy to be reservations for backward Muslims – the one move that singularly changed the lives of Muslims in the country forever.



Muslim Reservation in the Congress Manifesto; Is a Dhobhi a Dhobhi by any Religion?

The 2004 election was important to us in more than one way. It was important for the party that was away from power for a decade. It was important for me as it was the only way I could breathe life into the reservation bill. I wanted Congress to include the reservation agenda into our election manifesto. I wanted it because I knew that if Sonia Gandhi Ji promised something, she would fulfil it under any circumstances.

There are several politicians, bureaucrats and even law experts who argue that reservation could not be given on the basis of religion. This is nothing but intellectual discrimination against Muslims. They want to deny deserved benefits to the economically and socially backward Muslims for the simple reason that they practice Islam.

There are also many Muslim leaders and intellectuals who oppose quota on the grounds that Islam preaches equality. Their argument is correct only on one count. Islam indeed preaches equality. All Muslims are equal and there is no discrimination, whatsoever, within the community. Take Zakat as an example. The Islam that has made Zakat mandatory has also prescribed the people who are eligible to get Zakat. While making Zakat mandatory for rich Muslims, Islam has enabled the poor and downtrodden Muslims to benefit from the same. Therefore, Islam has supported the cause of poverty alleviation through the system of Zakat. If poor and backward Muslims can use Zakat to improve their lives, why not reservation? Is it just not another form of it philosophically?

The Manifesto Committee was constituted and it was conducting meetings on regular basis. I could articulate the philosophical argument for reservations, I was, however grappling with the constitutional rationale for putting this argument ahead. That was when a thought struck me and

I immediately employed the services of a voluntary organization to study the lives of Muslims eking out living through professions considered to be among backward classes in the Hindu religion and did a comparative study of the socio-economic conditions among these two sets of people.

The rationale was right there, hidden in plain sight. And I had just found it.

We have never sought reservation on the basis of religion. We never said that we want quota in jobs and education 'just' because we are Muslims. We sought reservation on the grounds that the Muslim community is more backward than the identified Backward Classes in socio-economic aspects. If a Muslim dhobhi family lives in the same conditions that a Hindu Dhobhi family lives in, should a Muslim dhobhi family not have access to the same benefits as that extended to a Hindu dhobhi family? Or would they be denied this chance at a better life just because they're Muslims? They cannot be; it amounts to discrimination. It is illegal, immoral and unconstitutional too. The Constitution of India has guaranteed equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. So how about reservations for Muslim dhobhis?

Armed with this argument and the socio-economic survey of the Muslim community in Andhra Pradesh, I participated in the Chintan Baithak held at Shimla by the Congress party at the national level in 2003. Presided over by our president Smt. Sonia Gandhi, this brainstorming session was held among 250 leaders from all over the country. I was included in the Social Empowerment Group and assigned the subject of Development of Indian Muslims. I presented my report at the Chintan Baithak. The report included minute level detailing including department level strategy on how to implement the proposal. It was widely debated, but it was also well received by all the leaders. In fact, Smt. Sonia Gandhi even called this proposal 'highly practical'.

There were two issues that needed urgent attention. One was farmers who were deserted by the TDP government that led to thousands of farmers committing suicide during the dystopic reign of the TDP. The other major

issue was the deteriorating condition of Muslims in the State. Therefore, the two major promises of Congress party were free power for farmers and 5% reservation for Muslims in jobs and education. The rival parties, especially the TDP, could not digest the Congress manifesto. Its leaders ridiculed our promises. The free power scheme was described as non-practical. We were reminded that the Punjab Government had withdrawn the free power policy after finding it impractical. The promise of Muslim Reservation was considered as non-implementable and impossible.

But we did our homework. It was watertight. Not only were we committed to it in-principle, but we were also sure about how to execute it to the last mile. The people believed our Mandate and elected us back to power, with an overwhelming majority. Once again, I won the Kamareddy seat with a huge margin. We had rewritten history that day.



Congress Returns to Power

The month of May 2004 was historic and special in many ways. First, on May 12, we returned to power with an overwhelming majority after a decade. Two days later Dr Y S Rajasekhara Reddy took oath as the Chief Minister.

On May 22, I was among the 24 ministers who were sworn in as the ministers in Dr YSR's cabinet. Seated at the Raj Bhavan, awaiting to be sworn in I was taking a trip down the memory lane reminiscing the highlights of my career so far. The time I spent in jail, my request to take oath in Urdu, the changes that we brought about and many more memories flashed through my mind that day. However, my mind kept coming back to the Muslim Reservation GO.

The TDP had hurt the prospects of education and employment for Muslims by putting the GO on the backburner. They did not seek any report from the Puttuswamy Commission despite giving it extension after extension. Although I continued my efforts to make effective representation on Muslim issues, in a democracy, you can do result-oriented work only if you are in power. And here we were, ready to assume power and get the ball rolling again.

Sitting there I thought I would be called 7th or 8th given that they call the names in alphabetical order, but imagine my surprise when they called my name out first. Governor Surjit Singh Barnala administered the oath of office and secrecy to me along with 23 other legislators. It was a day of mixed emotions. More importantly it was a day of anticipation of what was ahead.



Bhook Ko Phansi Do (Hang Hunger till Death)

Sometimes you need to think out of the box, break the routine and disrupt people's thinking to bring important issues to their notice. Prior to the release of GO. MS. NO. 33, I underwent a silent, but highly intense exercise to get 5% reservation for Muslim community.

While a majority of leaders were fully convinced about Muslim Reservations, a small section of them was opposed to the idea on the pretext of religion-based reservations. The opponents disputed the fact that Muslims were backward. As a Chief Minister, Dr. YSR had to consider everyone's opinion before taking a final decision on the matter. I was concerned that this might hurt the chances of reservations for Muslims. A large section of them were struggling to get by with just one square meal a day. Poverty and hunger were a part of their existence and I wanted to eradicate this hunger.

That's how the idea of 'Bhook Ko Phansi Do' (Death by hanging to hunger) came about. I had commissioned a private survey to delve into the level of backwardness in the Muslim community. Instead of submitting a text report, I created an audio-visual. We studied the lives of some of the most backward Muslims and shot their stories on film. These case studies were compiled into a disc titled "Bhook Ko Phansi Do"

I requested Dr. YSR to allow a departure from official agenda during a cabinet meeting and played this 22-minute film in Telugu. While the leaders had some inkling about the backwardness in the lives of Muslims, they were not prepared for the abject poverty they encountered in the video.

Dr. YSR called this an eye-opener and proceeded to ask me why some sections of Muslims were opposed to this. I told him with a smile that the Muslims who were opposing the reservations were the affluent ones who had access to too much biryani that blinded them to the fates of Muslims in backward and rural areas. Dr. YSR instantly said "Oh, so these are the Biryani Nawabs, eh?" and that was the last time he paid attention to these

High Energy Tales

As the Energy Minister, I experienced quite a few incidents that encouraged our style of working. Here are two of them:

When Modi was Jealous of Andhra Pradesh

In 2007, as the Energy Minister for AP, I was attending the conference of Energy Ministers. I was there along with Dr. YSR to receive the CRISIL award for best Energy Department. Sri Narendra Modi, who was the CM of Gujarat during that time walked up to us and said "Kabhi to Gujarat ko bhi inaam jeetnay dijiye. Kya hamesha aap log hi award letay rahengay. (Let Gujarat also win the award sometime. Will you always take the award for yourselves?)" His contention was that AP only provided 7 hours of free electricity to its farmers while Gujarat provided 12 hours and why were we getting all the laurels. I smiled and said "Modiji, Gujarat has 2.6 Lakh agricultural pumpsets while AP has 31 Lakh. So, the sheer magnitude of power we give away for free is staggering". Modiji was taken aback. He concurred that AP deserved to take home the prize.

Actually, as per the world bank norms states providing free electricity would lose three points. Despite these deductions, we took home the prize because we ran a tight ship with absolute control on all aspects of quality and resources. We ensured efficiency, plugged all loopholes and drastically reduced Transmission & Distribution Losses. As the energy minister, I took home three CRISIL awards.

A B Bardhan Upset that they don't strike

I met CPI(M) leader A B Bardhan on a flight to Delhi. Aziz Pasha introduced me to him as the Energy Minister of AP. The first question he asked me was "Are my partymen not active in your state? As a state housing the Singareni Collieries, your state has, very surprisingly, not had a single instance of workers' strikes or unrest in the past few years"

I told him that we took care of our 72,000 mine workers as our own family members and solved all their powers since coming to power. When there's no unhappiness where would unrest come from?

Mr Bardhan was extremely happy at how we were functioning. But on a lighter vein, he said, "You're making my party men idle"

I have a very simple philosophy – it doesn't matter what responsibility has been entrusted to you, the only thing that matters, is how well you've done that job. For me, it's always perfection or the path to perfection.

Biryani Nawabs. Dr. YSR and the entire cabinet was now behind the idea of reservations for Muslims.

The same CD got a positive response from a lot of community leaders, many of who were originally opposed to the idea of reservations. The film did the trick. It successfully strung the hunger and let it die.



Muslim Reservation in 58 days

We had just come back to power and there was a mood of jubilation all around. Celebrations and felicitations were being organised across the State, especially Hyderabad. However, instead of entering into celebrations mode, we confined ourselves to our chambers in the State Secretariat holding review meetings with the officials to fulfil the promises that we made with the people without wasting a single day.

The first file that Dr YSR signed after taking oath as the Chief Minister was of free power for farmers. The next task was giving reservation to Muslims. In just 58 days after coming to power, the Congress Government issued GO Ms No 33 giving 5% reservation to Muslims in the State in jobs and employment. It was given based on a socio-economic survey done by the Osmania University. Here's how the sequence of events flowed:

On 2nd June, 2004, a high-level review meeting was held with the Secretaries of all major departments to implement 5% Muslim reservation. Based on the outcome of that meeting, on 4th June, the State Government issued G.O. Ms. No. 50, directing the Commissionerate of Minorities Welfare to conduct

a study to examine the social, economic and educational backwardness of Muslim Community in the State for the purpose of including them within the purview of the Backward Classes of citizens under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution. The Commissionerate was asked to submit its report to the government at the earliest.

On 5th July, 2004, the Commissionerate of Minorities Welfare submitted its report to the government. After revealing the horrific conditions in which the majority of Muslim population was living, it recommended 5% reservation to Muslim minorities in employment, education and other fields on par with the Backward Classes in the State. The State Government accepted the recommendations and issued an order vide G.O.Ms.No. 33, dated 12-07-2004, directing that Muslims in the State be provided with 5% reservations in educational institutions and employment in the State

In the very first year, nearly 7,000 poor Muslim students benefitted from the policy. While 187 Muslims got admission in Medical colleges, 55 joined Dental Colleges and as many as 4,500 students got admission in different Engineering Colleges. Thousands of others got admission into various other professional courses.

So just like that after all the mishaps and setbacks, the dream began coming true. At least that's what I thought. And before we could properly even celebrate this big moment in our journey there came the biggest hurdle in the journey.



HC Strikes Down GO MS No. 33

The decision to provide 5% Muslim reservation was challenged before the High Court. A bench comprising Justice B. Sudarshana Reddy, Justice A. Gopal Reddy and Justice K.C. Bhanu struck down the G.O. Ms. No. 33 dated 12.07.2004 as it found it to be in violation of Articles 14, 15(1) and (4), 16(1) and 16(4) of the Constitution of India.

The judgment ran into many pages and is publicly available for anyone who wishes to go through it. For simple understanding, the basis of the high court's decision is as follows:

- The method adopted to identify a section of people as socially and educationally backward had to meet certain criteria as laid down by the supreme court in the precedent of Indra Sawhney case. The Commissionerate of Minorities Welfare's report in our case had not met those criteria completely
- To declare an entire population of a religion without excluding the creamy layer would amount to discrimination and the GO in its current form had failed in that aspect.
- Inclusion of Muslims as a backward class had to go through consultation with the Backward Classes Commission constituted under the provisions of Act 20 of 1993 before revising the list of backward classes.
- The reservations made in favour of socially and educationally backward classes under Article 15(4) and in favour of backward classes under Article 16(4) of the Constitution of India should not normally exceed 50%. On account of the inclusion of the entire Muslim community into the list of backward classes, the total reservations would come up to impermissible limit of 55.75% and the 5% reservations were struck down on those grounds alone.

While striking down the GO MS No. 33, Justice Sudarshana Reddy bench gave three directions to the Government of Andhra Pradesh:

- 1) The Government of Andhra Pradesh shall forthwith initiate the process of reconstituting the Andhra Pradesh Commission for Backward Classes and complete the same within a period of three months. That immediately upon such reconstitution, the Government shall initiate the process of consultation and seek the opinion of the Commission for inclusion of the Muslim Community into the list of backward classes.
- 2) The Commission shall examine the requisition/request of the Government and shall decide the same by duly giving its opinion within a period of six months from the date of such requisition/request being made by the State Government. It shall be open to the State Government to forward the entire material in its possession, including the material collected by the Commissionerate of Minorities Welfare for the perusal and consideration of the Backward Classes Commission.
- 3) The identification of any caste, social group or community involves exclusion of creamy layer. The State of Andhra Pradesh though a party to the decision rendered by the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney's case (1supra), so far did not lay down any criteria for identification of creamy layer. In the circumstances, it would be just and necessary to direct the State Government to lay down the criteria for identification of creamy layer so that it could be applied while considering the case of the Muslim Community for identification as backward class. That an appropriate criterion shall be evolved by the Government in terms of the directions of the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney's case (1 supra).

Although the HC order came as a major blow to our efforts in empowering the community through reservation, the judgment provided us with right direction to implement quota for socially, educationally and economically backward Muslims in the State.

Justice Sudarshana Reddy & His Role in the Movement

This book will be incomplete without a mention of the role played by Justice Sudarshana Reddy in the movement for Muslim Reservations. The entire Muslim community in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh will forever be indebted to High Court Judge Justice Sudarshana Reddy who pronounced a very fair judgment and paved the path for Muslim reservations.

Instead of simply quashing the GO on Muslim reservation, Justice Sudarshana Reddy not only pointed out specific flaws, but also guided the government in taking corrective steps. It was at his direction that the BC Commission submitted its reworked report within the stipulated period. His directions on keeping the creamy layer out of reservation net was one of the most important changes the act has gone through on its journey to become a reality.

He was also instrumental in breaking the myth that Muslim reservations to might lead to conversions.

In one of the judgments on Muslim reservation given by AP Government, one judge had made these following shocking remarks:

"Adventitious opportunities and advantages as are inherent in a reservation programme, for entry to academic pursuits, like professional and technical education, which have a limited intake and to public employment, provide a powerful incentive to conversion and proselytization. By the Ordinance, professing the faith of Islam better enables educational and public employment opportunities."

Justice Sudarshana Reddy trusted the intent of the reservation bill. And his guidance paved the way for Muslim reservations. Over 10 lakhs socially and educationally backward Muslims have benefitted from this policy, however in the past 12 years, not a single case of conversion to Islam was seen for this advantage.

On behalf of entire Muslim community, especially the socially and educationally backward classes, I salute Justice Sudarshana Reddy; we will forever remain indebted to him.

Justice Dalava Subrahmanyam Commission

Have you seen the Hollywood movie Martian? It's about an Astronaut who's stranded on the planet Mars after an accident. All through the movie he sets out to improve his conditions there. At first, he tries to survive on Mars, failing which he attempts to escape. Till the very end his attempts suffer setbacks and failures. But he doesn't give up, not till he successfully gets back home. In the climax, he addresses a class of students and says "At some point, everything's gonna go south on you... everything's going to go south and you're going to say, this is it. This is how I end. Now you can either accept that, or you can get to work. That's all it is. You just begin. You do the math. You solve one problem... and you solve the next one... and then the next. And if you solve enough problems, you get to come home."

That's the attitude we adopted while facing the setbacks to our Muslim reservation dream. We set out to solve problems. One after another.

Following the judgment of Justice Sudarshana Reddy Bench of High Court, the State Government issued G.O.Ms.No.57 on 18.11.2004 while exercising powers conferred by Section 3 of the Andhra Pradesh Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 (Act 20 of 1993) to reconstitute the B.C. Commission. It was headed by Justice Dalava Subrahmanyam, a retired Judge of High Court and with four other members.

The terms of reference given were as follows:

- i. Examine requests for inclusion of any class of citizens as a backward class in the lists and hear complaints of over-inclusion or under-inclusion of any Backward Class in such list and tender such advice to the Government as it deems appropriate;
- ii. Examine and make recommendations on any other matter relating to the backward classes that may be referred to it by the Government from time to time."

On 25.11.2004, the Government wrote a letter to the Member Secretary of the A.P. Commission for Backward Classes, Hyderabad. It gave a reference to the judgment in Muralidhar Rao's case and quoted directions given by the Court, and sought its advice on the subject if whether Muslims could be included within the purview of backward classes under articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the constitution. The commission began this task immediately.

The commission conducted public hearings on this topic. It also examined criteria adopted by previous Commissions, namely, Anantharaman Commission, Muralidhar Rao Commission and Mandal Commission and formulated its own criteria purportedly dealing with social, educational, economic and political aspects besides employment and occupational aspects.

It then collected primary data through enrolment particulars of students from 540 schools in 300 Mandals, that formed the representative sample. Secondary data was gathered from a published report of the National Sample Survey Organisation. On analysis by the method it adopted, the Commission came to the conclusion that the Muslim community is educationally and socially backward and they are not adequately represented in public employment. Accordingly, the Commission submitted its report titled as "Report on inclusion of Muslim Community in the list of Backward Classes in the State of Andhra Pradesh" to the Government on 14.06.2005.

The Andhra Pradesh Government, a week thereafter, promulgated Ordinance No 13/2005 declaring all the members of Muslim community as backward class. The Ordinance was subsequently replaced by the Act 21/2005 declaring the Muslim community in the State of Andhra Pradesh as Backward Classes and providing for 5% reservation in their favour in educational institutions and areas of employment.



Justice Bilal Nazki Judgment

The Muslim reservation was again challenged in the Andhra Pradesh High Court in the case B. Archana Reddy and Others Vs State of AP.

A bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Bilal Nazki, Justice Goda Raghuram, Justice V.V.S. Rao, Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice R. Subhash Reddy delivered its judgment on 7th November, 2005.

After hearing arguments, both in favour and against Muslim reservation, the HC bench delivered its verdict scrapping the Ordinance No. 13 of 2005. The HC bench, in its 170-page judgment came to the following conclusion:

The basis for warranting the revision of the existing reservations is invalid, and that it exceeds the maximum permissible reservation quota of 50% by 1 percentage point without proving extraordinary circumstances. Once again it invoked Articles 14, 15(1), 15(4), 16(2) and 16(4) of the Constitution and struck down our ordinance declaring it unconstitutional.



The P.S. Krishnan Report

While the appeal in the supreme court was pending adjudication, in view of the observations made by the five-member supreme court bench, the Andhra Pradesh Government again referred the matter to the BC Commission for identifying socially and educationally backward groups among Muslims.

On 17th April, 2007, the State Government asked the BC Commission to conduct a survey of the Muslim Community in Andhra Pradesh to specifically identify the classes among the Muslim population in the State that can be classified as socially and educationally Backward Classes in the

light of the High Court judgment. The commission assigned this task to Mr. P.S. Krishnan, the then Advisor to AP Government in May 2007.

He had a two-pronged approach – one, identify backward classes among Muslims who deserve and would benefit fairly from reservations. Two, apply the guidance of the AP High Court and the Supreme Court regarding constitutional provisions vis-à-vis reservations.

P.S. Krishnan did an exhaustive study on Muslims covering various subjects like Social Ideology of Islam and Social Stratification in Muslim Societies; Emergence and Growth of Muslim Society in India, South India and Andhra Pradesh; Indian Caste System and Social Stratification in Indian Muslim Society; Social Stratification in South Indian Muslim Society and Social Stratification in Andhra Pradesh Muslim Society. Then he dealt with the complex issues of identification of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes among Muslims based on general principles and judicial decisions. In its 281 page, 81,583-word report, he published his survey findings on Social Backwardness of Muslims supported by a detailed analysis of statistics delving into the socio-economic status of Muslims.

PS Krishnan the submitted his report recommending the inclusion of 14 classes of Muslims as Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Muslims in the Andhra Pradesh list of Backward Classes, as a separate Group E and that they be provided with 4% reservations in order to not violate the upper limit of reservations that stood at 50%. Since the recommendations specifically name the backward classes, it automatically excludes the creamy layers of Muslims from availing benefits provided to backward classes.

The BC commission held its public hearings on this subject in parallel to Mr. Krishnan's study and taking into consideration his recommendations along with their analysis of the hearings, the BC commission recommended

the creation of a separate heading 'E' that would be added to the existing A, B, C and D classes and that the Muslim classes so recognized be awarded 4% reservations.

The classes among Muslims recommended for reservations:

Attar Saibulu, Attarollu | Borewale | Chakketakare, Kakkukotte Zinka Saibulu, Chakkitakanevale, Terugadu Gontalavaru, Thirugatigantla, Rallaku Kakku Kottevaru, Pattar Phodulu, Ganta Sayebulu, Ralla Sayebulu, Mondivogula | Dhobi Muslim, Muslim Dhobi, Dhobi Musalman, Turka Chakla, Turka Sakala, Turaka Chakali | Faqir, Faqir/Fhakhir Budbudki, Ghanti Fhakhir, Ghanta Fhakhiru, Fhakhir Budbudki, Turaka Budbudki | Garadi Muslim, Garadi Saibulu, Pamulavallu, Kani-kattuvallu. Garadollu | Gosangi Muslim | Guddi Eluguvallu, Elugubantuvallu | Hajjam, Nai Muslim, Navid Muslim | Labbai, Labbi | Quresh (Muslim butchers), Khatik, Khatik Muslim, Kasab, Muslim Katika | Shaik, Sheikh | Siddi

The classes that were not included for reservations:

Syed, Saiyad, Sayyad, Mushaik | Mughal, Moghal | Pathans | Irani | Arab | Bohara, Bohra | Shia Imami Ismailis, Khoja | Cutchi-Memon | Jamayat | Navayat



Reservation Debate in the Assembly and Council

July 23, 2007, will always be remembered in history as the day when a State Assembly passed a law giving reservation in jobs and education to socially and educationally backward Muslims. In doing so it gave them a real opportunity to gain financial independence, social acceptance and become a respected part of the mainstream society.

Although Mr. Mukesh Goud was the Minister for Backward Classes Welfare and I was holding the portfolios of Minorities Welfare, Chief Minister Dr. Y.S. Rajashekhara Reddy assigned the responsibility of getting the bill passed to me.

I moved the 'Andhra Pradesh Reservation in favour of socially and educationally backward classes of Muslims Bill', 2007. After a brief introduction, the Bill was put to debate. While the Congress legislators were in favour of Bill, two parties opposed it. While BJP's objection to Muslim reservation was obvious, the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) played truant and tried to stall the Bill in a veiled manner.

As promised in its election manifesto, the Congress Government provided 5% reservation to all Muslims in just 58 days after coming to power. However, this move hit a road block with High Court striking down reservation primarily for two reasons. First, that the reservation was given on the basis of religion and not backwardness and second, it crossed the ceiling of 50% quota. We immediately took corrective steps and as per the High Court's directive, we constituted a BC Commission, identified 14 backward classes among Muslims and reduced the quota by 1% to meet the legal requirements. It took us almost three years for us to come up with a legislation on Muslim reservation. The Bill was drafted with surgical precision to ensure that reservation does not face any legal complications. But MIM tried hard to nullify those efforts.

In both Legislative Assembly and Council, MIM members proposed Amendments in the Bill which could have stalled the reservation process. However, all the amendments were disapproved in the House and Bill was smoothly passed.

I'm here by re-producing some extracts of my speech in Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly:

Extracts of my speech in the Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Council

“This is true that the Congress party in its manifesto promised to give reservation to the entire Muslim community. We fulfilled this promise in 45 days. But when our decision was challenged in the court, the five-member High Court bench headed by Justice Sudardhan Reddy scrapped it on the grounds that reservation was not provided without the recommendation of BC Commission.

We had constituted Puttuswamy Commission in 1993 to provide reservation to Muslims. But TDP came to power in 1994 and it gave six extensions to the Commission without asking for any report.

TDP Government was anti-Muslim and therefore, it was against giving them reservation. It was an ally of BJP and Chandrababu Naidu had no permission from Vajpayee-Advani Government to give reservation. TDP Government is responsible for the present backwardness of Muslims in the State.

When Congress Government provided 5% reservation to Muslims, Chandrababu Naidu also claimed that he was also planning to give 3% reservation. When and how was he going to do that? Where was it written? Has it figured in your manifesto? Is it in your agenda? You did not provide reservation despite being in power for 10 years. There was no one to prevent you. You were the uncrowned king in Delhi. You yourself have claimed that you were kingmaker and had the capacity to make Presidents and Prime Ministers. Then why have you not given reservations when you wielded that kind of power? You never had any intentions of giving reservation to Muslims.

There is division among Muslims. However, they are profession-based groups like barbers, butchers, scavengers, etc., and therefore, such groups are being extended the benefits of reservation. Some people have objected to giving reservation to "Shaiks". A survey was done by the British Regime in Tamil Nadu in 1901 which revealed that several backward classes converted to Islam and Christianity. Similarly, ICS officer Justice Mazherullah conducted a survey during Nizam regime in 1931 which identified Shaiks as a labour class. Therefore, reservation for Shaiks has been recommended both during British and Nizam rule.

Muslims are equal and one when they enter the mosque. But once we come out, we get divided as per our professions. Some members questioned the existence of "Madaris". There is a place called Dubbak near Siddipet. There are five to six villages where many Muslims earn their livelihood by doing street plays with Bear. Similarly, we have snake charmers, stone crushers and perfumers (Attar). Those sitting in Hyderabad will not be able to understand or realise these things. They will understand the poverty of Muslims only when they visit villages and rural areas. Therefore, the present reservation is not based on religion, but backwardness."



Ordinance No: 5/2007

Each time we found a way around a barrier to the reservation problem, we felt it was the final green signal for the movement. So, with our sense of optimism we acted on the latest petition of the BC Commission and announced 4% reservation for Muslims included in the new Group E of backward classes through Ordinance No 5/2007.

The new reservation quotas stood as follows:

Scheduled Castes	15%
Scheduled Tribes	6%
Backward Classes	29%

And the breakup of quotas within the Backward Classes was as follows:

Sub categorization in the BCs are as under:	
Group A	7%
Group B	10%
Group C	1%
Group D	7%
Group E	4%

The overall reservations did not cross the 50% mark, the additional reservations for Muslims came from an additional classification, so the existing backward classes did not lose anything from their share of the quotas. It certainly seemed like a win-all solution.

Our government issued GO MS No 23 and brought the Ordinance regarding 4% reservations to Muslims into effect and extended it to educational institutes.

The next hurdle wasn't very far off. We were challenged again in a court of law.



“All of us are aware that there is no reservation anywhere in the country on the basis of religion. In Andhra Pradesh too, several Hindu brothers are deprived of reservation benefit which has been given to other backward classes. We are being asked whether there are no poor people among Syeds and Pathans. And if there are then why they are being deprived of reservation. I can only say that there are poor people among Brahmin, Reddy, Velama, Kapu, Teliga, Baliga and other communities that are recognised as mainstream and do not have reservation. So just like Hindu communities don't enjoy the benefits of reservation in the name of religion, Muslims too will be given reservation not based on their religion but only on the basis of their social and educational backwardness.

The State Government has tried in vain four times in the past to provide reservation. The Constitution and Central Government has made it clear that reservation could be given only on the basis of backwardness. We are wrongly being accused of dividing the Muslim community into various groups. I have statistics with me that prove that Andhra Pradesh has the lowest reservation in all states.

While only four groups - Laddaf, Duddekula, Noorbash and Pinjara communities of Muslims are getting reservation under State list, only Quershis are included in the Central list. If we look at other States, 23 groups in Bihar, 24 in Madhyapradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, 9 in Rajasthan, 5 in Tamil Nadu, 16 in Uttar Pradesh and 6 groups in West Bengal are getting reservations.

There is equality in Islam. But there are groups within the Muslim community that are backward. Don't link reservation with religion. They are two very different things. Religion teaches you the way of life, reservations are only an aid to catch up with the rest of the society.

Total of 111 groups are enjoying reservation. 23 groups among Muslims are getting reservation under BC and ST quota. There are Muslims in Gujjar and some ST groups in Kashmir are Muslims. Six Muslim groups are classified in SC list.

There are many profession-based cases among Muslims like stone crushers, cattle breeders, mason, etc., Are they not Muslims or are they not backward? Five Muslims groups have been enjoying the benefits of reservation since 1970.

But giving reservation to 14 Muslim groups, we are not trying to attack religion. We are not interfering in the mosque affairs or Muslim Personal Law. Our aim is only to provide education to poor Muslims.

MIM did not interfere when we gave 5% Muslim reservation, why it is now opposing reservation."

Justice Anil Dave Judgment

A little after a week after we passed the GO for 4% reservations, T. Muralidhar Rao and others filed a writ in the high court (Petition 15267 of 2007) on July 16, 2007 challenging the GO Ms No 23, asking for it to be squashed.

The High Court passed an interim order on July 24 saying that the admissions made based on the new set of reservations were subject to adjudication and that the same had to be conveyed to students in their letters of admission.

The government filed a counter affidavit on August 20 while the BC Commission filed its counter on August 28. The BC commission in its counter clearly outlined and explained the methodology it followed to gather data used in its recommendations. It also submitted that the reservations could not be viewed as communal because they did not pertain to a particular religion as much as they pertained to backward classes. They referred to precedents and the previous judgments on this subject and outlined how they followed guidelines laid out by the courts during these cases. It also put forward the recommendations and reports of various committees including the Sachar committee, Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission and the P.S. Krishnan report to validate its recommendations to the state government on reservations for backward Muslims. It also drew parallels to its criteria and methodology for identifying backward classes among Hindus and how the same principles had been employed here.

The justices comprised of a seven-member bench. The court threw out our case but this time it was not unanimous. On February 8, 2010, the majority judgment led by Hon'ble Chief Justice Anil Dave including Hon'ble Justices A. Gopal Reddy, V. Eshwaraiah and G. Raghuram JJ called the Muslim reservation act unsustainable because the criteria were not clearly spelt out and that the population numbers were not gathered in totality, and that the surveys conducted weren't conducted scientifically. It was crushing, but there also a glimmer of hope there because, while the quashing of reservations was a majority judgment, the remaining three judges had separate judgments.

Hon'ble Justice Smt. T Meena Kumari concurred with the majority judgment but disagreed with them on the subject of the procedure to identify socially and educationally backward classes. She held that this procedure must be left to the discretion of the commission.

Hon'ble Justice Sri B Prakash, while holding the impugned action valid, left it open to the government and the commission and all other parties concerned to make a post facto re-exercise with regard to inclusion of any social groups and it is open to any of the parties to move the Commission in case they have material to show that any of the social groups is not backward.

Hon'ble Justice Sri D.S.R Varma had a longer list of exceptions:

- The methodology and procedure adopted to identify the backward classes was neither perverse nor defective and he did not believe that the exercise was manipulated in any way to suit a pre-conceived result as claimed in the suit.
- The criteria followed for identification of the backward classes were in accordance to the well-tested principles of social enquiry and that similar approaches were made by the National Commission for Backward Classes, the Mandal Commission and other Backward Classes Commissions in the country in the past.
- The current identified list of backward classes does not discriminate based on religion nor does it violate the rights of any citizen.
- The plea that this act would lead to conversions with mala fide intentions is both irrational and unrealistic.
- None of the groups included in the list of backward classes is unjustified. He also averred that the 4% reservation is neither unjustified nor excessive.
- Once a legislation is enacted the judiciary has to take into account the principle of presumption of constitutional validity of any legislation under the Indian Constitution and set it aside only if there is anything in the legislation which strikes the conscience and strikes the eye as totally unreasonable.

And this bit of dissent was enough to give us hope that this time the fight was turning in our favor. On February 26, 2010, we appealed against the judgment of the high court in the Supreme Court (Special Leave Petitions Nos.7388-97 of 2010)



4% Quota, the Supreme Court Hearing

It was yet another blow for us, but we were very firm on our intentions to give reservations. It was important to an entire community and for the nation if it had to become a truly secular nation with equal opportunities and harmony. The Congress Government was quite serious on getting an interim stay on 4% Muslim quota in the Supreme Court. It was not only an issue of the Congress party's prestige, but the question of career of thousands of poor Muslims. We wanted the quota in education and jobs to continue at any cost. Since those who challenged the Muslim reservation had contacted several leading lawyers like Shri. Nariman, Shri. Soli Sorabjee and was represented by senior counsel Harish Salve, we also wanted a senior counsel to argue the case in the Supreme Court.

The union law minister Verappa Moily, the Attorney General of India Goolam Hussein Essaji Vahanvat, and I met with a few other experts to discuss the strategy. We zeroed in on Mr. Parasaramji and requested him to argue the case. The octogenarian declined our request as he was busy with his Shastipoorti, the celebration of 60 years of his marriage.

I had come to learn that the then Chief Minister Mr. K Rosiah and Mr. Parasramji were good friends and went back a long way to the days preceding the formation of Andhra Pradesh when Mr. Parasramji was the Advocate General of Madras. So, I requested Mr Rosiah to convince Mr. Parasramji.

Some politicians make tall claims on secularism and thump their chest about how pro-Muslim they are. But when it comes to action, they fall short. Mr. Rosiah was a stark contrast to such people. He did something wonderful. Despite being the CM of a state, he made a trip to Delhi just to meet with the senior counsel. He did it silently without any media bytes. He wasn't looking for any mileage out of this. He just wanted to see the reservations happen. Mr Rosiah is a staggering six feet tall while Mr. Parasramji is just over five feet. The giant of a man stood with folded hands, bowed to Mr. Parasramji and said "Please fight this case for the sake of poor Muslims, they have suffered injustice for a very long time". It was said with such conviction that it softened the heart of Mr Parasramji and he agreed to be our counsel and argue the case. I left with tears in my eyes.

When the hearing took place in the Supreme Court, the Attorney General of India spoke for about 50 minutes followed by Mr. Parasaramji who argued the case for over two hours. After the lunch break, counsel Ramakrishna Reddy (present Advocate General of Telangana) argued against the Muslim reservation and then Harish Salve argued the matter.



The Historic Argument in Supreme Court

Sometimes it all comes down to that one particular moment in history and then it is never the same again. In our relentless struggle for empowering the Muslims of the state and the nation, there came a point when it came down to a set of very critical questions asked by a very learned and wise judge.

The Supreme Court of India granted an interim stay on 4% Muslim quota in Andhra Pradesh (now divided into Telangana and AP) after a historic argument. The three-member SC bench was headed by Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan.

When the counsel for opposition Mr. Harish Salve objected to reservation for Muslims, the Chief Justice asked whether or not there are Dhobis among Muslims. Harish Salve replied in affirmative. Then the CJ asked whether they wash clothes on same 'ghat' or they have separate ghats. Salve said both use same 'ghat' to wash clothes.

Justice Balakrishnan then proceeded to ask that when both Hindu and Muslim Dhobis practice same profession, then why should one section be deprived of reservation benefit while the other is enjoying the same. To this Harish Salve responded by saying that there was equality in Islam and it does not have any castes and don't differentiate people on the basis of their profession. But the Chief Justice said religion was a personal matter and therefore, why the children of a Muslim Dhobi should be denied the same opportunities as that of a Hindu Dhobi.

Harish Salve contended that there was no problem if reservation was given on the basis of backwardness. But religion-based reservation was against the law. The Chief Justice, however, differed from these views and asked whether Hindu Dhobis were not being accorded reservation on the basis of their religion, and if they were eligible for reservations, why should Muslim Dhobis be kept away from the reservation safety net?

Salve argued that Muslims are not divided on caste basis. They can offer prayer in the same mosque and stand together while doing so. And since there was no discrimination here, there were no backward classes among Muslims begging the question how could some sections become eligible for reservation. The Chief Justice asked him if the Muslim Dhobis were as backward as the Hindu Dhobis? Mr Salve replied in the affirmative.

The Chief Justice said it was wrong to discriminate people practising same profession on the basis of their religion. While granting interim stay, he referred the matter to the Constitutional Bench for final judgment.





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Naxalite mine blast claims five lives at Kamareddy

By the Staff Reporter
A Naxalite mine blast in Kamareddy, West Godavari district, on Sunday claimed the lives of five people and injured several others. The blast occurred in a small mine near the village of Kamareddy, about 100 km from Hyderabad. The victims were identified as two men and three women. The police are investigating the cause of the blast. The Naxalites are active in the region and have been carrying out several attacks in the past. The government has taken steps to improve security in the area and has launched a campaign to educate the people about the dangers of Naxalites. The Naxalites are a Maoist group that has been active in the region since the late 1980s. They have been carrying out several attacks in the past, including the killing of several police officers and the destruction of several government buildings. The government has taken steps to improve security in the area and has launched a campaign to educate the people about the dangers of Naxalites. The Naxalites are a Maoist group that has been active in the region since the late 1980s. They have been carrying out several attacks in the past, including the killing of several police officers and the destruction of several government buildings.



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1. The high court of Andhra Pradesh squashed our bill and got us to introspect deeply about how to make it work
2. The then AP Secretariat
3. Sonia Gandhiji allowed reservations to be on our manifesto for the 2004 elections after I released the CD 'Bhook ko Phansi Do'
- 4-6 Soniaji at various public meetings in our state
7. Rahul Gandhi ji discussing issues with me at a public event
8. Dr Y S R and I with elders of the community
9. The naxal attack, a fresh lease of life and renewed vigour to bring the bill to fruition
- 10 Justice was finally done when the Supreme Court allowed 4% reservations

The Struggle



2004-2014, The Golden Decade for Muslims

Reservations were a firm commitment, but reservations also happened because we were invested in their future. That is why reservations was just one among many initiatives we launched for Muslims. The decade between 2004-2014 was the golden decade for the community.



Real Progress, Real Results

Shouting slogans and claiming to work for the benefits of minorities is one thing. Fighting for them, striving to empower them with education and jobs, refusing to back down, and overcoming all obstacles to ensure a bright future for them is another.

The Congress-led UPA Government has set a new benchmark for the development of minorities in the country. In a decade, from 2004 to 2014, all energies were focussed on the educational and socio-economic development of minorities.

While the UPA-I laid the foundation for the real growth of minorities, the UPA-II accomplished what history failed to do so far.

As per the India Human Development Report of the Planning Commission, literacy rate among Muslims had registered a marked improvement from 52.1% in 1999-2000 to 63.5% in 2007-08 in rural areas and from 69.8% to 75.1% in urban areas. As per the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Report on employment and unemployment situation among major religious groups in India (2009-10), it has been observed that unemployment rate for minority communities have declined in 2009-10 as compared to 2004-05 in both rural and urban areas.

Under the PM's 15-point programme, 11 ministries had introduced 24 programmes for minorities. Scholarships and Multi-Sectoral Development Programme are the important ones among them.

The Plan allocation for the Ministry of Minority Affairs had been increased from Rs.7000 crore during the 11th FYP to Rs. 17,323 crore during the 12th FYP.

In 2012-13, Rs.1360 crore was released under the scholarship schemes to support education of 72 lakh minority students. The Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) had been implemented effectively in 90 identified Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) across 20 States/UTs of the country during 11th Five-Year Plan. Out of the total allocation of Rs. 3780 crore for the MsDP during the 11th Plan, approval for plans/projects of Rs. 3733.90 crore (99% of allocation) had been given and Rs. 2935.93 crore was released to the States/UTs as on 31.03.12 — as per the report from State Govts./UTs , an amount of Rs. 2278.76 crore of that had been utilized.

The 15 Point Programme and MsDP have done a commendable job. From 2006-07 to 2012-13, more than 33,000 new Primary and Upper Primary Schools have been opened in districts with substantial minority population under the 15-Point Programme. In the same period, about 23,800 Primary and Upper Primary Schools were constructed and 555 new Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas had been sanctioned in such districts. More than 22 lakh IAY houses were constructed for minorities under the 15-Point Programme in this period.

Under the MsDP, projects worth about Rs. 6000 crore have been sanctioned and Rs. 4272 crore of these were released to the States and UTs from the inception of the programme in 2008 till September 2013 to create a strong socio-economic infrastructure and provide basic amenities in Minority Concentration Areas. More than 700 School Buildings, 18,000 Class Rooms and 562 Hostels for Boys and Girls have been taken up for minorities' welfare under the MsDP. A further 113 ITIs and 44 Polytechnics have been undertaken under this programme.

In Andhra Pradesh, it was the Congress Government which established the country's first Minorities Welfare Department in 1993. For the first time, a budget of Rs 2 crore for minorities' welfare was allocated. In 2013-14, the budget was increased to over Rs 1,024 crore.

Providing reservation for Muslims in education and jobs was the most revolutionary scheme implemented by the Congress Government in 2004. While it immediately benefitted thousands of students in getting admissions in medicine, engineering and other professional courses, and hundreds of Muslim youth in getting 4% of government jobs in different recruitment drives. It also led to political empowerment of Muslims across the Andhra Pradesh (now divided into AP and Telangana). Categorized as BC (E), the economically and socially poor Muslims were extended the same benefits being given to the Backward Classes. Thus, the benefit of political reservation being given to BCs in municipal and other local bodies (rural and urban) were also extended to Muslims who came under the BC (E) category. It was implemented for the first time in the GHMC elections held in 2009. As a result, two Muslim candidates got elected from the seats reserved for BCs.

It was a great beginning and the first step towards political empowerment of the Muslim community. The major impact was seen in the Gram Panchayat elections held in 2013. The results were highly encouraging and for the first time in the history of Andhra Pradesh (undivided), the number of Muslim sarpanchas crossed double digits (266) due to BC (E) reservation. While 89 Muslims got elected from 8,701 Gram Panchayats in Telangana region, as many as 177 Muslims were elected from 12,770 GPs in Andhra Pradesh (Seemandhra). This was a major leap in the political empowerment of Muslims due to BC (E) reservation.

The last elections to the municipal corporations, municipalities, ZPTCs and MPTCs have ensured the election of over 900 Muslims in both Telangana and residuary Andhra Pradesh to different posts due to their status as BC (E). So far, BC (E) reservations have seen three Muslims become Mayors, five Municipal Chairmen, 18 Vice-Chairmen, 37 Corporators, 327 Councillors, 15 ZPTCs, 236 MPTCs and 266 Sarpanches.

In the last elections, Sk Abudul Azeez and Shaik Noorjahan became Mayors of Nellore and Eluru respectively. Both were elected from the seats reserved for BCs. Similarly, four out of five Muslim municipal chairmen were elected from the BC reserved seats in Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, the lone Muslim Municipal Chairman of Telangana, Smt Sabiya Begum of Bhainsa was elected from BC (E) seat.

Seven out of 12 Muslims elected as Vice-Chairman in Telangana and 11 out of 12 VCs in Andhra Pradesh won from the BC reserved seats.

The Muslim reservation played a major role in increasing the community's representation in all the municipal bodies. For instance, 24 Muslim candidates got elected out 150 seats that went to polls in Karimnagar, Ramagundam and Nizamabad. Out of the 24, as many as 13 were elected from BC (E). As against the present representation of 16%, the Muslim percentage in these corporations would have been just 7.33% without reservations.

Similarly, 114 out of 206 Muslim councillors in Telangana were elected from BC reserved seats. Presently, they are in 14.72% of municipalities in Telangana, which otherwise would have been confined to 6.58%.

The impact of Muslim reservations is quite encouraging in Andhra Pradesh too. Out of the 31 Muslim corporators, 22 were elected from BC reserved seats. Similarly, out of 292 Muslim councillors, a whopping 213 were elected from BC reserved seats.

The reservation policy benefitted the Muslims in ZPTC and MPTC elections. Presently, 11 out of 12 Muslim ZPTCs members in Andhra Pradesh and 4 out of 9 Muslim ZPTCs were elected due to their status of BC (E) candidates. Likewise, 163 out of 262 Muslim MPTCs were elected from BC (E) in Andhra Pradesh while 73 out of 138 MPTCs in Telangana were elected from BC reserved seats.

The impact was more visible in GHMC elections held in 2016.

GHMC Seats	TOTAL	Muslims
Total	150	46
BC Reserved Seats	50	29

Muslims were able to contest from BC Reserved seats due to 4% Muslim reservation provided by the then Congress Government in 2004. Without BC (E) Reservation, there would have been only 17 Muslim corporators. But there are now 46 Muslim corporators. Instead of having just 11.33% Muslim representation, today we have 30.67% Muslims in GHMC.

Irrespective of which party won the elections or seats, Muslims got politically empowered due to reservation. I feel proud whenever I see these figures.

Elected To Local Bodies (Rural & Urban) Under BC (E) Category			
POST	Telangana	Andhra Pradesh	TOTAL
Mayor	1	2	3
Dy Mayor	0	0	0
Chairman	1	4	5
Vice-Chairman	7	11	19
Corporators	15	22	37
Councillors	114	213	327
ZPTCs	4	11	15

Average admissions under BC-E in last 10 years, excluding 2005-06		
Doctors	225 x 10	2250
Engineers	9023x 10	90,230
B.Tech/B. Pharm	12,415 x 10	124,150
MBA/MCA	5,975 x 10	59,750
M. Tech/M. Pharm	1840 x 10	18,400
B.Ed	2250 x 10	22,500
Other Courses	70,000 x 10	700,000
TOTAL	10,15,030	

MPTCs	73	163	236
ZP Chairman	0	1	2
MPP President	2	0	2
GP Sarpanches	89	177	266
TOTAL	306	604	912

The above statistics clearly prove that the Congress party has introduced and honestly implemented the Muslim reservation policy. Although the Congress party did not draw any political mileage out of this scheme, it had indeed sown the seeds of development for a community and now that tree has started yielding fruit.



Government Enabled Marriages for Poor Muslim Girls

It is very satisfying when you reach out to someone in need and solve a problem for them because you help them take one step forward. But when you do something that takes them forward by leaps and bounds, and you do it en masse – the satisfaction just touches your very soul.

It was another memorable day in my political career when I got a call from the Chief Minister Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy. I was at home. Dr. YSR asked me to reach his camp office within 20 minutes. I was worried and even started thinking what mistakes I could possibly have committed. I immediately rushed to the Chief Minister's Camp office.

The Chief Minister was in a review meeting. I entered the conference hall. Dr. YSR made me sit next to him. The meeting was on mass marriages of poor girls to be conducted Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam. After the meeting, the Chief Minister asked me whether we can conduct marriages of poor Muslim girls through Wakf Board. I told him that TTD is country's richest temple board with income of Rs. 8,000 crore. Whereas, the Wakf Board was a poor institution surviving on Rs. 2 crore government grant each year. Of this, Rs. 60 lakh went only towards salaries.

Dr. YSR asked if we would be able to conduct marriages if State Government allotted more funds. I replied in the affirmative.

For poor Muslims, performing a daughter's marriage was a herculean task. A poor rickshaw puller, a vendor, a shop keeper or a labourer works very hard to earn two meals a day for his family. For him, mobilising funds for his daughter's marriage is next to impossible. Consequently, almost all of them end up borrowing loans from private money lenders at huge interest rates and spend years repaying them.

The Congress Government then introduced an innovative scheme of Mass Marriages for Muslims who were below the poverty line. Accordingly, a budget provision of Rs. 5 crores was provided during the financial year 2008-2009.

Subsequently, a meeting with all the Muslim MPs, MLAs, MLCs, Religious Scholars and Editors of all Urdu News Dailies was convened to elicit their opinion on 19-04-2008 in the State Secretariat. Based on the detailed discussions in the meeting, the State Government constituted a State Level Committee on Mass Marriages of Muslims to suggest the guidelines of marriages including details of items to be given by government at the time of marriages.

After prolonged deliberations, the State Level Committee on Mass Marriages of Muslims resolved and suggested certain guidelines. The government decided to allocate 85% of the budget for Muslims Mass Marriages and 15% of the budget for Christians Mass Marriages out of total allocated budget of Rs. 5 Crores and also approved the guidelines for sanction of financial assistance for Mass Marriages of Minorities. A GO Rt. No. 340, Minorities Welfare (Wakf-III) Dept., Dated: 21-07-2008 was also released.

It was decided to conduct marriages of poor Muslim Girls three times in a year based on the auspicious months as per Muslim practice, commencing from August 2008. Later, I conducted a video-conference with District Collectors and asked them to organize mass marriages of poor Muslim girls in their respective districts.

On 24-04-2012, the then Congress Government issued G.O.Rt.No. 123, enhancing the amount allotted to each Mass Marriage from Rs. 15,000/- to Rs. 25,000/- for Muslim girls in the State. This scheme benefitted hundreds of poor Muslim families and all of this was done without any hype or publicity.

The “Shaadi Mubarak” scheme being implemented by present Telangana Government is nothing but an extension of what the Congress Government initiated in August 2008. The present government enhanced the amount from Rs. 25,000/- to Rs. 51,000/- and instead of Mass Marriages, individual beneficiaries are being reimbursed the amount.



Pre-matric Hostels in 12 Districts

We provided Muslim reservation within 58 days after coming to power in 2004. But we suffered some jolts due to legal complications. Although we were busy finding legal solutions to continue the implementation of reservation, we focussed on taking some steps which could strengthen the Muslim community at the base level.

On November 11, 2005, the Chief Minister held a review meeting on Minority Welfare. Several proposals were discussed and the Chief Minister directed his cabinet colleagues and senior officials to come up with some concrete proposals to help the educationally backward poor minorities, especially Muslims.

As a follow-up to this meeting, I held several interactive meetings, both at the official and personal levels, with eminent personalities, particularly academicians. I then came with the suggestion of starting Pre-Matric Hostels for Minorities. The Chief Minister liked the concept. So, on November 20, 2006, the State Government issued G.O.Ms. No. 34, to start Pre-Matric Hostels for Minority Students in the districts where Muslim population was substantial.

It was decided to start Pre-Matric hostels for Muslim students (boys) in the 12 districts of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Nizamabad, Medak, Adilabad, Mahabubnagar, Kurnool, Cuddapah, Anantapur, Chittoor, Guntur and Krishna.

It was decided to initially start the hostels in Urdu-Ghar-Cum Shadikhanas in the concerned districts, where the Shadikhanas were not being used for the purpose for which they were constructed, provided they are located in convenient places. The District Minorities Welfare Officers in the above 12 districts were entrusted with the job of starting and supervising the hostels.

The estimated expenditure of Rs. 2.19 Crore for the year 2006-2007 and an amount of Rs. 1.53 Crore from the year 2007-2008 for starting Pre-Matric Hostels was sanctioned. 12 posts to hire regular hostel wardens for each of the hostels were also sanctioned. Other professionals like cooks, watchmen, etc., were engaged on outsourcing basis.



Post-Matric Hostels for Minority Youth

In less than 8 months after starting Pre-Matric Hostels, the Congress Government decided to start Post Matric Hostels for Minorities Students in 13 districts with substantial Muslim population.

Subsequently, G.O.Ms.No. 19, Dated 16-7-2007 was issued. "Keeping in view the need to promote access to higher education opportunities to Minority students, the government had decided to start Post Matric Hospitals for Minority Students in the Districts, which have a good network of institutions offering higher education opportunities," read the GO.

The government ordered the starting of Post Matric Hostels with an intake of 50 boarders. The hostels were started in Hyderabad (Boys & Girls); Ranga Reddy (Boys); Nizamabad (Boys); Medak (Boys); Adilabad (Boys); Mahabubnagar (Boys); Kurnool (Boys); Cuddapah (Boys); Anantapur (Boys); Chittoor (Girls); Guntur (Girls); Krishna (Boys) and Karimnagar (Girls).

Depending on admission into educational institutions, eligible students from other districts were also considered for admission into the hostels.

Further, the State Government also accepted the proposal of the College Development Committee, Indira Priyadarshini Government Degree College & P.G. College for Women, to start Post-Matric Hostel for Minority Girls at the land allotted by the Committee near the P.G. building in the premises of Nampally for construction of Post Matric Hostel. The eligible minority girl students coming from other districts for studying in the Nampally college in the premises, as well as other colleges in twin cities were declared eligible for admission. The Hyderabad District Collector was also directed to sanction Rs. 50 lakh as the first instalment for the construction of hostel building. The government even sanctioned Rs. 2.02 Crore for the year 2007-08 for Post Matric Hostels. Except in Karimanagar where the building was ready, other hostels were initially started in rented buildings.



English Medium Residential Schools for Minorities

One day, I was sitting along with the Chief Minister Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy in a review meeting with the Information Technology companies. The Chief Minister enquired with the heads of IT companies on the ratio of Dalits, Tribals and Minorities employees in their companies. They told us that the presence of those communities is quite negligible. The primary reason which they cited was lack of communication skills, especially English. After the meeting, Dr. YSR asked to me come up with both short-term and long-term solutions to upgrade the Muslim students with good English communication skills.

As a long-term measure, the Congress Government issued G.O.Ms.No. 20 on 17-07-2007, to establish English Medium Residential Schools with Urdu as second language for Minorities in 12 districts to provide them access to quality school education.

English Medium Residential Schools were started in the following districts:

S.No.	District	Boys/ Girls	Jurisdiction
1	Ranga Reddy	Boys	Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy
2	Guntur	Girls	Coastal district except Prakasam and Nellore
3	Kurnool	Girls	Prakasam, Anantapur and Kurnool
4	Chittoor	Girls	Kadapa, Nellore and Chittoor
5	Nizamabad	Girls	Telangana Districts
6	Nizamabad	Boys	Kamareddy
7	Medak	Boys	Nizamabad and Medak
8	Wanaparthy	Boys	Mahabubnagar
9	Anantapur	Boys	Rayalaseema Districts
10	Krishna	Boys	Krishna, West & East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and Vijayanagaram
11	Nellore	Boys	Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore
12	Warangal	Boys	Karimnagar, Adilabad and Warangal
13	Nalgonda	Boys	Khammam and Nalgonda

Initially, the Residential Schools were started in rented buildings and soon own buildings were constructed in all the districts. An amount of Rs. 3.37 Crore was sanctioned for the year 2007-08. An additional amount of Rs. 11.66 Lakh was released to the A.P. Residential Educational Institution Society towards salaries and honorarium to the staff for the year 2007-08. The teaching and non-teaching posts were filled on regular and contract basis on a 50:50 ratio.

Starting with an intake of 72 students in the first year, the intake increased to 324 students from the sixth year (2013-14) onwards.

Later, we acquired land and constructed permanent buildings. The present Kamareddy Collectorate is located in the same building which was originally constructed for English Residential School for Minorities.



Why English Medium Schools?

I was in Warangal once to attend an official function. One Urdu lecturer confronted me objecting to the setting up of English medium schools for Minorities. He asked me why English medium schools were being set up instead of Urdu. I told him that Urdu was the second language, so there wasn't really a reason for him to be upset. But he contended that we should have set up Urdu medium schools only.

I got a bit furious at his approach. I asked him about the schools his children were studying in. All his three children were studying in English medium schools. Then I asked him how come he admitted his children into English medium schools although he himself was serving as an Urdu lecturer where he was even recently promoted as an Associate Professor. He said his children would have no great future if they studied in Urdu medium schools. I then pulled him up for his dual standards. "You want your children to study in English medium school, but you are against giving same kind of education to poor Muslims."

My classmate Qasim, who was witnessing this argument, later asked me as to why I got so furious. I replied, "Everyone needs to change their attitude. We cannot change the conditions of Muslim community unless we change our basic thought process. While we choose the best things for our children,

we treat poor children differently. They hail from rural, backward areas and usually accept whatever is given to them by the government. We must ensure that they are given the best options so as to grow up in their lives and careers.”



Muslims In IT Sector

The Congress Government held several interactions with IT companies to start short-term courses for Minority students. In collaboration with IT giants like TCS and Infosys, we designed a three-month course for skill development and gave a matching grant. The training was held at Haj House, Mallareddy College and SME Centre at Yousufguda for batches of 120 each. Over 500 students were imparted training in IT skills.

During the training students were mandated to communicate only in English. Regional language or mother tongue was not permitted in training centre's premises during the course duration. The result – by the end of the program, not only did we have students qualified in IT skills, but also confident of speaking English fearlessly.

After three months, these students matched the national and international standards of IT professionals. They were selected by reputed companies and offered good jobs. This short-term measure worked out well and we continued the training courses on a regular basis.

Fee Reimbursement for Minority Students

The introduction of 5% and then 4% reservation enabled the admissions of socially and educationally backward Muslims in leading educational institutions across the State. However, most of them were unable to pay academic fee due to poverty. Therefore, the objective of empowering Muslims with higher education appeared incomplete to me. There were thousands of other students who were getting admission in professional courses in private colleges, but were unable to pay their fee.

Therefore, as the then minister for Minorities Welfare, I ensured that eligible minority students studying Post-Matric Courses get reimbursement of Tuition Fees and Special Fees.

Accordingly, G.O. Ms. No. 16, Dated On 03-07-2007 was issued. "With a view to promote advancement of the minorities, the government has taken a decision to reimburse the fees to the eligible minority students at the rate reimbursed by the B.C. Welfare Department with effect from 2007-08 and for which sufficient amount has been provided in the budget for the year 2007-08 towards reimbursement of tuition fees for minority students with effect from 2007-08," read the GO.

The government ordered that the tuition fees and Special fees as are/will be charged in Government Colleges and Universities, or as permitted by government from time to time by B.C. Welfare Department, be reimbursed to all eligible minority students.

As per the guidelines, the tuition fee and special fee as fixed by Government/ Universities was reimbursed in full in case of Government and University Colleges. In case of government colleges, if eligible minority students are exempted from payment of tuition fee, only the special fee was reimbursed. The amount was sanctioned to the courses in the order of priority of Professional courses, Technical Courses, P.G. Courses, Degree Courses and Intermediate.

Income criteria for reimbursements was kept on par with other BC students.

Medical students studying in Government colleges were reimbursed 100% of their fees, while students studying in private and minority colleges were reimbursed 50% of the fee with the other 50% being given to them as loan by the APSMFC. Sometimes loans were even given in bulk against Government guarantee.

In the case of Engineering students, the entire tuition fee for both private and government colleges was reimbursed.

This scheme benefitted lakhs of poor Muslim students. Their parents had no more worries about their children's education. All the meritorious and deserving students got admissions under BC-E category and their entire fee was paid by the government. Those who got admissions in private colleges too got fee reimbursement. All the students had to do now was aim high and work hard to reach their goals.

The fee reimbursement scheme was more helpful for poor Muslim girls. In most of the families, parents used to treat girls as a burden bearing in mind the impending marriage expenses. Therefore, they were unable to bear the double burden of education and marriage. However, with the introduction of fee reimbursement scheme, higher education for Muslim girls no longer felt like burden. Since an educated girl gets good matches, parents allowed their daughters to opt for higher studies. Subsequently, today we have thousands of highly qualified Muslim girls who are not only doing jobs, but also taking care of their families.



NRI Affairs

I've handled many portfolios — Energy, Information, Public Relations, and Minorities Welfare among others. Not many people know that I've also handled the NRI affairs portfolio. When I say NRI, the immediate picture that comes to mind is a well-educated, well earning Indians settled abroad, isn't it? This section of NRIs usually face very little problems. And in most cases, it's easy to sort their problems out. However, there's another group of NRIs that we don't picture easily — the migrant labour, thousands of poor people from all over the country go to the middle east in hopes of alleviating their poverty and providing their family with better lives. Their lives are not easy — the living conditions are deplorable, their immigration status is sketchy and illegal in most cases, and even when its legally correct they are almost held imprisoned by their employers who lock their passports up.

Into this chaotic situation, add an economic meltdown in the country they migrated to. Not a pretty picture.

The Global Financial Crisis took its toll on the migrant labour too. Many jobs were lost and their livelihoods were hit. Several countries, especially the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Muscat, ordered immediate deportation of all illegal migrant workers and also of those not employed on regular basis. The migrants from Andhra Pradesh were badly hit. Most and them didn't have enough money to pay for their tickets back home. And then there were people who didn't have legal documents that would allow them to come back. Dr YSR asked to us to give it all we had to help these people out. We coordinated with the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Consulates in the Gulf countries and the local governments. We found out there were 35,000 people just from our state that needed urgent help. 35,000 people battered psychologically, financially and in some cases physically too. We assured them that our government was with them every step of the way. Not only would we get them back but we'd also help rehabilitate them by facilitating jobs locally.



The government paid for the tickets of 1,256 migrants. We persuaded the airlines to slash their prices and the government to waive off tax on these tickets. We reached out to various Indian and Telugu associations of NRIs abroad and asked them to pitch in. We succeeded. We got them all out.

I personally accompanied the first 250 of them when the UAE government declared amnesty for illegal immigrants. Food on arrival, transportation to their hometowns and then once they got over the anxiety of being stranded in a foreign country, we also arranged for job fairs. We got our people back and we looked after them.



Job Abroad? Let Us Make Things Easy for You

Setting up The Attestation Cell of External Affairs Ministry in the State Secretariat was another milestone achievement for me. If you're looking to get a job abroad, you would need to get your testimonials attested by the General Administration Department in the State Secretariat. These documents are then certified by the External Affairs Ministry. Since it was difficult for all aspirants to go to New Delhi to get attestation, they used to hire the services of agents who used to charge north of Rs 5,000 per attestation. It would take 15 days for a job aspirant to get their certificates attested. This was a sorry state of affairs. I put in a request and Dr. YSR immediately made a representation with Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, then the Minister of External Affairs. Mr. Mukherjee liked the idea and approved two cells outside of Delhi. One in his hometown Kolkata and the second one in Hyderabad.

Now getting attestation is a matter of just 24 hours. Oh well, that is if the current government decides to work efficiently and I'm not saying much about it.



The Impact of Muslim Reservations

Did the reservations work? Did they achieve what we set out to do? There are a lot of numbers that will tell you how many lakhs of extra people studied or how many extra thousands of people got employed because of the reservations. But the barometer for me has always been what I see in beneficiaries' eyes when I meet them. Let me tell you about a couple of incidents. I was coming out of a mosque after offering prayers in Guntur once when an old man came and kissed my hand. I told him I wasn't a Moulvi and that he needn't show this sign of devout respect. He said he knew who I was, had been waiting for a chance to meet me for a while and now that his prayers were answered he was very happy. I was still puzzled at this behavior. He continued to tell me that he was a poor mechanic who could hardly make two ends meet. His two sons would've probably followed his suit if it hadn't been for Muslim reservations. Today these two kids are studying to be doctors.

There was another incident at the Haj house in Hyderabad. I was on the dais with some dignitaries when I heard a commotion outside. I saw that a lady was arguing with the security guards and insisting on coming inside. I asked them to let her pass and asked her why was she so agitated. She said all she wanted was to bless me and leave. And then she handed me a small pouch of sweets that emerged from her torn bag. She told me that she was a maid who had big dreams for her daughter but was held back by her poverty. Thanks to the reservations the child got into medical college.

The incident kept me awake at night. Nobody dreams small for their children. Nobody says I hope my child becomes a mechanic or I wish my child becomes a housemaid. They always have great dreams for their children. Their poverty and social backwardness holds them back. Some of these people do not even dare to presume that a life other than one with hardship was available to them. The reservations are a boon to such people, it allows them to dream big and achieve their goals. It gives a large section of the society a chance to be prosperous. And these people not only add

to the growth of this nation but would also be in a position to help more people in need.

Take the case of Dr. Khwaja Ateefuddin. This young man met me during a meeting in Nizamabad and told me that he could proudly add the prefix 'Doctor' to his name only because of the 4% reservations. He said he always aspired to meet Dr. YSR and me to thank us for this gift to people like him. Today Dr. Ateefuddin runs a children's hospital in Nizamabad. He's married to a like-minded doctor and together they serve the people around them.

To make a positive change you don't need power or influence. You need a vision and the courage to achieve that vision. After all, you could earn lots of wealth and buy expensive things all your life but you still will only be remembered by what you did for the people around you. That's how powerful legacy is and I'm blessed that my legacy in this world will be the reservations for backward Muslims.



The Fruit of Our Labour: Success Stories

The journey has been long and hard, but the hardship was worth it. Lakhs of students have now availed themselves of a college education. Thousands of socially backward Muslims have now gained employment in government offices and some of them are even public representatives. Here are some stories for you to grasp what reservations have meant to the dreams of the downtrodden.

First up are some stories from some Muslim daughters who have dreamed of being doctors and for the first time in our history it was accessible to everyone who dared to dream of it.

1. One girl medico says while the society's thinking changed from the olden days when they believed women should not pursue higher studies, there was no access to education for most Muslim women. Studying intermediate was a great milestone for Muslim women, but thanks to reservations and fee reimbursements, she's studying medicine. Her parents are very proud that their daughter is becoming a doctor.

2. Another proud daughter says that in middle class families especially in large ones, sometimes one or two kids had to sacrifice education for their siblings and it was usually the girl child who had to give up studying. But thanks to reservations and scholarships, girls are able to overcome family obstacles and march ahead towards progress.

3. Yet another happy girl medico says that usually girl's education is something that parents don't prefer to spend money on, so their dreams were always cut short, but thanks to reservations and fee reimbursements, she can now become a doctor.

4. One proud Muslim girl says exclusive women's colleges, reservation for backward and poor Muslims along with fee reimbursements have

ensured that girls can now study as much as they want that too with the blessings of their parents.

5. One very happy Muslim daughter says it was her childhood dream to be a doctor but since she came from a very poor family and there was no way they could've afforded her medical education. But thanks to reservations and scholarships she was inspired to dream big. By the grace of Allah, she got a good rank and she's on her way to fulfill my dreams.

6. One proud girl medico says it is no longer a choice between the son's education and the daughter's. Reservations and fee reimbursements mean everyone can study and achieve their dreams if they work hard.

7. A joyous Muslim medico says that parents traditionally preferred saving up for a girl's wedding than to invest in her education. But thanks to reservations and scholarships, they don't have to choose between the two anymore. Women can now dream big and achieve big.

8. Shaikh Sameera is the daughter of a migrant daily-wage laborer. Her parents had great dreams for their three daughters but did not have the means to make the dream come true. The 4% reservations have ensured that Sameera and her sisters get quality education. Sameera is a proud medico today.

Muslim boys have their own stories of transformation. While social norms and pressure wasn't so much a problem for them, poverty certainly was, and they could now overcome this hurdle their families have been facing for decades.

9. Shaik Sayed Miyan is from Nalgonda district. He is a student of B.Ed from Osmania University. Years ago, he could never dream of getting a college degree given his family's financial and social background. But he now has dreams of setting up a model school and inspire kids to get more out of their lives.

10. Mohammed Musavvir Ali is from Adilabad. He is now pursuing a PhD from OU. He attributes the Muslim reservations for thousands of kids including himself escaping the clutches of a Chicken center or a tea stall or a puncture shop – not because they wanted to end up there but because they'd have no other option.

11. Saleem Pasha is from Nalgonda district. He is a final year student of LLM at Osmania University. He gives credit to the 4% reservations for his entire higher education. He is grateful that Muslims now have both a fair representation and a voice on the campus. Every year 400 Muslims gain access to the Osmania University campus education thanks to the reservation. Poor Muslims have not only gotten an empowering education but also respected jobs like Professorships all facilitated by reservations.

12. Mohammed Moulana is from Narayankhed. He's pursuing LLM from Osmania University. He says the reservations have provided livelihoods from hundreds of families and have thrown some rays of hope in otherwise very dreary lives.

13. Mohammed Abdul Hameed is from Zaheerabad. He is studying M.A. in Urdu. He says the reservations are giving opportunities undreamt of before and helping rewrite the destinies of people from the most rural and backward sections of the society.

14. Mohammed Ameeruddin is from Mahbubnagar district. Financial difficulties in his family almost kept him away from higher studies, but his dream of studying on the Osmania University campus came true because of reservations.

15. Altaf Hussain is from Zaheerabad. He's pursuing his M. Com from Osmania University. He is not only the first person from his family to study PG but also the first person from his village, thanks to reservations for Muslims. He believes this is just the start and soon everyone in his village will get higher education and better livelihoods.

16. Aqueel Ahmed Danish is from Warangal. He is a PhD scholar. He says Muslims were heavily underrepresented in Universities and Government jobs. It is only after the reservations that Muslims' voices are being heard. He believes they will now have a prominent role to play in the future of this nation instead of sitting on the sidelines. He believes they downtrodden will rise from the pits of poverty and reach for the skies.

17. Dr. Afroze Hussain is from Medak district. He is pursuing MBBS from RIMS. He's on the way to becoming a successful doctor thanks to the reservations. He wants to open a world class hospital with advanced facilities and serve the poor and needy.

18. Nagul Meera Shaikh is from Khammam. He is studying MA in Osmania University. He was wallowing in abject poverty till he completed his graduation. His determination and the reservations are now giving him a shot at a better life. He's very happy that his fellow Muslims are being benefitted and becoming an active part of the mainstream society.

19. Dr. Mohammed Samiullah is from Hyderabad. He is able to pursue his dream of becoming doctor because of the reservations. He believes the reservations are alleviating their poverty and giving them opportunities to contribute to the society. He wants to pursue a career in Generic medicines.

20. Mohammed Kashifuddin is from Hyderabad. The 4% reservations enabled him to study MBBS. He says that in 2013, the year that he joined college, reservations ensured that there were 22 Muslims in his class instead of what would have been hardly five students.

21. Naseer Pasha is from Maheshwaram. He is doing a PG in law and wants to be a judge. He's able to pursue his higher education only because of reservations and fee help for Muslims.

22. Shaikh Ashfaq is from Adilabad. He is a councilor for Ward no. 14 here. He has been committed to social service for almost two decades, but reservations have ensured he got elected as a councilor. This post has legitimized his years of unwavering service to his people.

23. Shaik Nisar Ahmed is from Karimnagar. He has a job in the irrigation department because of reservations. He struggled for seven long years to get this job with no result, but once reservations for Muslims came into effect, he landed a job as a Junior Assistant in the department. He wants to inspire other Muslim youth to dream big and work hard for success.

24. M A Zaheer Ahmed is from Khanapur. His village has a very high Muslim population, most of them from very backward and neglected sections. None of them ever thought higher education or a government job was within their reach. Thanks to the reservations helped him become a teacher. He says nobody heard of their village until a while ago but is confident that it will start producing bright people who will make them proud.

25. Mohammed Younus Parvez is from Hyderabad. He is a law graduate. He says he is a very average student from a very backward class. But the efforts of Shabbir Ali and Dr. YSr have ensured that he can make a dignified living for himself. He believes reservations will inspire millions of Muslims to eke out a better life for themselves.

26. Inteqab Alam is from Adilabad town. He is the first person in his town to secure the BC-E certificate for his children to avail 4% reservations when the GO for the same was released. One of his sons is a successful Anaesthesia specialist and his younger son completed his M Pharmacy.

27. Mohammed Salman Khan is the son of a maulvi. His parents wanted their children to study hard and have a bright future, but financial constraints and lack of support meant his older sisters had to sacrifice their dreams of becoming doctors. Salman suffered from a congenital heart disease and wanted to pursue medicine to find a cure for his disease and also serve the millions of people who suffered from inexplicable diseases across the world. He too would have had to sacrifice his dreams but by the time he came to college 4% reservations were brought in and his entire family's dream of having a doctor came true.

I believe everybody on this planet has something worthwhile to contribute to the world. Sometimes it just takes that little push or that little support for people to realize their worth and rise to the occasion. Muslims have been relegated to the sidelines and poverty for centuries, and I think reservations singularly contributed to ending this era of backwardness and darkness in their lives. This journey is not over, neither is my fight over.

There is much more to fight for. There are still many classes of backward Muslims who have not been included in the list of beneficiaries. Reservations are not availed to socially backward Muslims nationwide. There's too much resistance and red tape to implementing laws that will encourage Muslims to become a part of the mainstream society here. I will continue to fight, but please remember, regardless of who you are, this is your fight also. It is in your interest that every citizen of this nation is on a level playing field when it comes to opportunities.

That's the only scenario where everybody creates value. Otherwise people are either going to fight poverty or wallow in injustice. Reservations was one step towards a just society. The road ahead is long, but the destination at the end of it is worthy of all the sacrifices I'm making. And these stories of successful Muslim children give me immense joy and motivation to keep going.



Next Step – Sub-plan for Minorities

My next destination is Sub-plan for minorities. I have begun the groundwork and have been working strenuously to get this going. I wrote to the then PM Manmohan Singh ji in December 2013 outlining the historical and sociological context for a Sub plan for Muslim minorities on the lines of Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP). Dr Singh responded to this positively but you know that winds of change are constant and the current BJP government is anything but secular in action.





These are some of the beneficiaries of the 4% reservation whose lives got transformed because of access to education and jobs. The above pictures are numbered according to their appearance in the “The fruit of our Labour” section.





7



8



1. 2004 marked the beginning of the Golden Decade for Muslims
2. One of the early batch of recipients of the reservations
3. Dr. Y S Rajasekhara Reddy giving away reservation pattas to a muslim student
4. Mass Marriages for Muslims heralded happy lives for many a couple from poor families
5. Distributing computers to aid education in the community
6. Dr Y S R speaking at a public meeting about reservations
7. Muslim representatives are needed to ensure inclusiveness in the legislature
- 8, University education is no longer an unattainable dream

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day, we will be the most powerful nation on this planet and we will lead with peace. That one day, we will be that perfect picture of a family that finds unity in diversity, and the world will look to us for inspiration. That one day, every Indian will just be that – an Indian and not a member of a religion or caste – equal in every spirit of that word. And until that dream comes true, my struggle will continue.

The Struggle

Additional Snippets

The following snippets are for providing an additional context to you across some relevant areas of our history. Leading here will be a series of thoughts, observations and quotes from various legal stalwarts on the subject of reservations and class division among Muslims. Then there is a historical timeline of how Indian Muslims were relegated to backwardness and obscurity. The notes on our actions to protect the Wakf board takes you through the importance of the focused initiatives we had to take to protect Muslim heritage in our country.

On Class Divisions in Islam

“Non-Hindu Religions’ like Islam, Christianity and Sikh do not recognize Caste as such but the existence of caste-like social stratification among Muslims is well recognized. In case of non-Hindus, social backwardness cannot obviously be identified for the purpose of recognizing as a class on the basis of caste in the conventional sense known to Hindu society. In all such cases, the part played by the occupation, conventional belief and place of habitation coupled with poverty may play a dominant and significant role in determining the social backwardness. But in either case, identification of Backward Classes cannot be based solely and exclusively on the basis of caste,” – **Justice SudarshanaReddy in his judgment on Muralidhara Rao Vs State of AP.**

“Identifying a section of society on the basis of the religion they follow is only an identification of class of citizens. Considering the circumstances, I am of the view that such an exercise is justified and there is no impediment to hold that Muslims are entitled to the affirmative actions.” – **Justice Ghulam Mohammed in his judgment on Muralidhara Rao Vs State of AP.**

“Reddy, J., while holding that a caste can and is quite often a social class in India and if a caste is backward socially, would be a backward class for the purposes of Article 16(4), held that in respect of non-Hindu communities, there are several occupational groups, sects and denominations which for historical reasons are socially backward. They too represent backward social collectives for the purposes of Article 16(4).” – **Justice Raghuram in Archana Reddy Vs State of AP.**

“The above material makes it amply clear that a caste is nothing but a social class - a socially homogeneous class. It is also an occupational grouping, with this difference that its membership is hereditary. One is born into it. Its membership is involuntary. Even if one ceases to follow that occupation, still he remains and continues a member of that group. To repeat, it is a socially

and occupationally homogenous class. Endogamy is its main characteristic. Its social status and standing depends upon the nature of the occupation followed by it. Lower the occupation, lower the social standing of the class in the graded hierarchy. In rural India, occupation-caste nexus is true even today. A few members may have gone to cities or even abroad but when they return - they do, barring a few exceptions they go into the same fold again. It doesn't matter if he has earned money. He may not follow that particular occupation. Still, the label remains. His identity is not changed."

"A washerman ordinarily carries on the same job though he may have a laundry of his own. May be some others too, carry on the profession of barber or washerman but that does not detract from the fact that in the case of an over-whelming majority, the caste-occupation nexus subsists. In a rural context, of course, a member of barber caste carrying on the occupation of a washerman or vice versa would indeed be a rarity - it is simply not done. There, one is supposed to follow his caste occupation, ordained for him by his birth. There may be exceptions here and there, but we are concerned with generality of the scene and not with exceptions or aberrations. Lowly occupation results not only in low social position but also in poverty; it generates poverty. 'Caste-occupation-poverty' cycle is thus an ever-present reality." – **Hon'ble Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney case [(1992) Supp. 3 SCC 217]**



The Backwardness of Indian Muslims – a Historical Perspective

The first step to solving any problem is to acknowledge that there is a problem. This was the thought which drove the Congress party to go into the depth of each problem and find a solution. As a devout Congress worker, I always adopted the approach of finding permanent solutions to existing problems. I never believed in superficial solutions.

Right from beginning I stood firm on the belief that illiteracy and unemployment are the root cause of all problems in the society. Therefore, I directed all my efforts to weed out these two problems from the Muslim society. My entire struggle for Muslim reservation was aimed at ensuring education and employment for poor Muslims. A few sections of the society were upset with my straightforward approach. When I was inducted into the cabinet for the first time in 1989, I decided that I will change the way Muslim community is defined by the media. I was bored of stories of community's backwardness, deprivation of opportunities, discrimination, etc., I wanted the people to discuss about growth of Muslims and their success stories. I was trying to change the mindset which was stuck at the inferiority complex due to some deep-rooted conspiracies hatched by the British.

The British Regime started the politics of Enquiry Commissions in 1870, when the then Viceroy Lord Mayo wanted to find out the reasons for growing resentment among Muslims against the British Government. He constituted a commission under Sir William Hunter and he prepared a Report named "Our Indian Musalmans". The Hunter Commission Report, which was based on undivided Bengal, revealed that Muslims were under-represented in government jobs.

Post	Hindus	Muslims
Grade-3 Asst. Engineers	14	2
Sub-engineer & Supervisors	24	1
Overseers	63	2
Finance Dept	50	0
Lawyers	239	1

The pre-Independence strategy to demoralise the Muslims using statistics of their backwardness and suppressive terms was extensively used after India achieved Independence. Within few days after independence,

the then Union Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel presented the 'Minority Report'. During the debate on Muslim reservation, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a member from United Provinces, strongly objected to the use of word of 'minority' for Muslims. "I refuse to accept Muslims to be a minority. Now you say you have done away with this communalism. Are we not calling a minority to refer only to Muslims? I have got a very fundamental objection to this Minority Report. How is it that when you talk of minorities you mean Muslims only and when you talk of reservation you refer to Muslims only? The Muslims refuse to be called a minority if parties are formed on political line," he said.

Maulana Hasrat Mohani did not participate in the debate which ended in Constituency Assembly recommending reservation of Muslims, Christians and Scheduled Castes. Two years later, the recommendation was amended and Muslims and Christians were removed from the list of beneficiaries.

Very few serious attempts were made to improve the conditions of Muslims although 'concern' over their conditions was expressed on several occasions.

"It is a fact that there is a great deal of frustration in the Muslim mind in India. I am not referring to people who may be pro-Pakistan. There are not very many like that. But conditions have arisen in India, which bring continues pressure on the Muslims in various ways. There is the question of employment in government services, all India and State. There is even the question of education facilities in colleges and the rest of it. Even in business there is pressure against them. It is not surprising, therefore, that they lack security for the future," the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said on 20 March 1954 in his letter written to Chief Minister Ravi Shankar Shukla on how to deal with Muslims in India.

On April 26, 1954, Pandit Nehru wrote a letter to Chief Ministers saying, "Our Constitution is very good and our laws and rules and regulations are also fair. But the fact remains that in practice some of our minorities, and

notably Muslims, suffer from a deep sense of frustration. They feel that the services are not really open to them in any marked degree, whether defence, police or civil. In business, the evacuee property laws, which unfortunately continue even though they are not applied frequently, bear down upon them and restrict their opportunities. In elections to our assemblies and Parliament, it is not easy for Muslims to come in. Even in our public organisations, it is becoming increasingly difficult for proper Muslim representation. It is easy for anyone to become a primary member of the Congress, but when it comes to any elective post, a Muslim is at a disadvantage and there are no reservations now anywhere," he said.

Almost 31 years after country's independence, the Government of India again realised that minorities were facing injustice and discrimination and constituted the National Commission for Minorities. "Despite the safeguards provided in the Constitution and the laws in force, there persists amongst the minorities a feeling of inequality and discrimination," read the government resolution dated 12 January 1978.

The National Commission for Minorities was entrusted with eight functions:

- i. To evaluate the working of the various safeguards provided in the Constitution for the protection of minorities and in laws passed by the Union and State Governments;
- ii. To make recommendations with a view of ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of all the safeguards and the laws;
- iii. To undertake a review of the implementation of the policies pursued by the Union and the State Governments with respect to the minorities;
- iv. To look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of the minorities;
- v. To conduct studies, researches, and analyses on the question of avoidance of discrimination against minorities;
- vi. To suggest appropriate legal and welfare measures in respect of any minority to be undertaken by the Central or the State Governments;

- vii. To serve as a national clearing house for information in respect of the conditions of the minorities; and
- viii. To make periodical reports at prescribed intervals to the government.

However, the future and current developments clearly show that the Central or State Governments did not take the Commission very seriously and its role was confined to that of a grievance cell.

About eight months after the formation of National Commission for Minorities, the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai admitted of atrocities on minorities. Intervening in a two-day discussion on communal riots in Lok Sabha on 5th December 1978, Morarji Desai conceded that the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) had committed excesses in Aligarh. "It happened because there was very little representation of the minorities in the PAC," he said. However, he blamed the previous government for the situation.

In 1980, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed a high-powered committee to study the conditions of Muslims. Initially, the committee was headed by Dr V A Syed Mohammad. Later, senior parliamentarian Dr Gopal Singh took over as the chairman with Khurshid Alam Khan as the Secretary. The Committee submitted its 119-page Report on June 14, 1983 giving both long-term and short-term measures to be taken to improve the conditions of Muslims and other backward classes. However, the report was never made public.

On 12 May 1983, Indira Gandhi announced 15-Point Programme to resolve the problems being faced by minorities. In a letter to all the Union ministers as well as the States, she asked them to ensure proper representation to minorities in the police forces and services. "The increase of communalism in recent months and the large number of attacks on the lives and properties of minorities is cause for deep sorrow. These incidents are a blot on the good name of our country," she said in her letter.

In 1995, the Minority Commission came out with a report on the deplorable condition of Muslims. The report clearly stated that Muslims were under-represented in jobs and completely disproportionate to their population in various States.

A year later, a 12-member Sub-Committee of the Planning Commission while raising the concern over the deplorable condition of minorities observed that, "The representation of minorities, especially Muslims, in the States and at the Central level is disproportionate to their proportion and to correct the imbalance till now no specific action has been taken."

The backwardness of Muslims remained engulfed around Committees and Reports. There was not a single report which stated that Muslims have progressed. No government ever gave a thought on preparing an Action Taken Report on the recommendations made by previous enquiry committees. Instead, they constituted another commission to study the latest conditions despite knowing well that nothing has changed for Muslims. The findings of Planning Commission of India, the erstwhile highest planning body in the country, were also ignored.

The Planning Commission of India in its report for 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) observed, "Though previous Five Year Plans have attempted to focus on weaker sections of the society, they have failed to include many groups, especially Muslims, into the development net," reads the Paragraph 6.155 (Page 127 of 6th Chapter on Social Justice).

The admission of non-inclusion of Muslims into the development net came six decades after India achieved independence. It meant that the largest minority of the country, which constituted about 13.4% of the total population, was not part of India's growth story. Despite making these serious observations, the same Commission has rejected the recommendation of a separate Minorities Sub Plan made by the Working Group of Empowerment of Minorities led by Dr Zoya Hassan in 2006.

Till the Seventh Five Year Plan, the minorities got the developmental benefits along with the OBCs. Till the end of 2005–06, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment continued to be the implementing agency for programmes for the minorities. On 29 January 2006, a separate Ministry of Minority Affairs (MMA) was created.

Meanwhile, the Central Government constituted a High-Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Rajinder Sachar to prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community. In its comprehensive Report, the Committee observed that Muslims have been left behind the growth and development process.

The Prime Minister's New 15-Point Programme was launched in 2006 aimed at ensuring the well-being, protection and development of minorities. However, the programme lacked mandatory powers and were only advisory in nature. It needed clear cut policy directions for its effective implementation which should have a strong political will among the States because the State Minority Commissions have no statutory powers to address religious minority issues. Further, in States like Gujarat, there is no mechanism to disburse the benefits of welfare schemes among the minorities.

The Chief Secretary is the Presiding Officer in the States to conduct meetings to review the implementation of PM's 15-Point. However, the meetings are not conducted on regular basis in most of the States by the Chief Secretaries. There is a lack of serious approach in the implementation of programme which was admitted by the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs on multiple occasions.

The Ranganath Mishra Commission too came up with a report on backwardness of Muslims and even recommended 10% reservation in jobs and education.

The status of Muslims remained largely unchanged even after the completion of 11th Five Year Plan. The Report of the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Minorities for the formulation of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) observed, "There is a need for sustained policy interventions accompanied with adequate funding, proper delivery systems and institutional and strong monitoring of implementation process. There is a need for sustained policy interventions accompanied with adequate funding, proper delivery systems and institutional and strong monitoring of implementation process as participants and not as passive recipients of developmental benefits."

In Andhra Pradesh (now divided into Telangana and AP) too, several studies were conducted on the conditions of Muslims. The most comprehensive, study was conducted by P.S. Krishnan Committee. In his 300-page report, submitted to the State Government on 11 June 2007, he gave a detailed account of socially, educationally and economically backward classes among Muslims. Although he recommended reservation for only 14 classes of Muslims, who comprise of nearly 80% of total Muslim population, his findings have exposed the inability of successive governments to take the Muslims on the path of growth. Based on this report, the Backward Classes Commission, gave nod for 4% quota for 14 identified groups of Muslims in jobs and education.

Although the continuation of 4% Muslim reservation in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is subjected to final verdict of Supreme Court, so far, nearly one million (10 lakh) socially and educationally Muslims have benefitted from the policy. However, the number of beneficiaries is too negligible when compared with total Muslim population. The overall conditions have remained the same.

There are hundreds of castes and communities in the country who are enjoying the benefit of reservation. Most of them were included in the SC, ST or BC lists on single page recommendation. However, despite having dozens of reports, Muslims are always asked to prove their backwardness.

Case in point is the attitude of the National Commission for Backward Classes. When the commission held its hearing in Hyderabad, the Commission refused to entertain generic representations which demanded reservation for Muslims, as a single community. One after the other, the Commission called out names of 14 castes of Muslims which are already enjoying 4% reservation in the State list under BC-E category. They asked the representatives of each caste to explain their backwardness to get included in the Central list.

Shockingly, except for four-five castes like Qureshi, Labbi, Faqir and Shaik, no representation was submitted to the Commission by other castes for inclusion in the Central list. The case of 4% Muslim reservation is going on in the Supreme Court and the continuation of quota is subject to the final judgment of the Apex Court. Therefore, instead of depending only on State Governments to argue their case, the members of these castes must prepare for a legal battle on individual basis to ensure continuation of reservation. Further, the castes like "Syed", which were not included in the BC-E category must wage a separate legal battle seeking inclusion in the list of reservation beneficiaries. They must conduct their own studies on the level of backwards and furnish the reports to the authorities to enable them to take a favourable decision.

Unlike the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes which have separate NGOs for Madigas, Malas, Yadavs, Gouds, Lambadas, etc., only a few castes included in the BC-E have constituted separate representative organisations. They must realise the fact that the struggle

for Muslim reservation cannot be fought alone. It needs to be backed by hundreds of NGOs and representative organisations at the locality-levels. The critics will certainly object to reservation for entire Muslim community. But their opposition will lose its intensity when smaller groups seek reservation based on their social, economic and educational backwardness.



Excerpts from My Letter to PM Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji on Minority Sub-plan

Sir,

I would like to request you to consider introducing a Sub-Plan for Minorities in the country on the lines of Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).

As a prelude, the Planning Commission of India may be directed to include the studying the proposal for having a Minorities Sub Plan in the Terms of Reference for the Working Group on "Empowerment of the Minorities" in the context of the formulation of the Thirteenth Five Year Plan.

Sir as you are aware that Andhra Pradesh is the first State in the country that enacted a legislation to implement the SC, ST Sub-Plans. The Andhra Pradesh Assembly on December 2, 2012, passed the Andhra Pradesh SC, ST Sub-Plans Bill 2012 providing statutory status for implementation of the Sub-plans for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The legislation will ensure fund allocation proportionate to the SC and ST population and is expected to prevent to diversion of Sub-plan funds for other activities and not allowing them unspent. The Bill was introduced on the recommendations of the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The demand for according legal status to the Sub-Plans was made on States for a long time by the Planning Commission of India and National Development Council (NDC). This is a welcome sign that the Karnataka Government too has passed a similar legislation early this month to implement the SC, ST Sub-Plans.

Sir, the implementation of SC, ST Sub-Plan by the Government of Andhra Pradesh has raised hopes among the minorities across the country that a similar Sub-Plan would be implemented for their welfare. Sir as you are aware that despite introduction of several welfare schemes, the condition of majority of people belonging to Minority Communities, especially Muslims, have remained unchanged since independence.

I would like to mention the following observation from the Report of the Planning Commission of India for 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012).

“Though previous Five Year Plans have attempted to focus on weaker sections of the society, they have failed to include many groups, especially Muslims, into the development net,” reads the Paragraph 6.155 (Page 127 of 6th Chapter on Social Justice).

This admission of non-inclusion of Muslims into the development net came after six decades after India achieved independence. It means that the largest minority of the country, which constitutes about 13.4% of the total population, was not fully part of India’s growth story. While these observations of Planning Commission of India are highly appreciable as they have led to the introduction of several minority welfare schemes in the country, we regret that during the same period the Commission has rejected the recommendation of a separate Minorities Sub Plan made by the Working Group of Empowerment of Minorities.

It may be mentioned that on May 23, 2006, the Planning Commission of India (Backward Classes Division) had constituted a Working Group on “Empowerment of the Minorities” in the context of the formulation of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). The Working Group was set up by the Chairman of the Steering Committee on Empowering the Socially Disadvantage Groups.

The 36-member Working Group was chaired by Dr Zoya Hasan, Professor, Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group were:

- i. To review the existing approach, strategies and priorities; the on-going programme and their implementation for empowerment of Minorities and suggest rationalisation/minimization of the on-going related programmes and effective inter-sectoral convergence;
- ii. To identify neglected areas and groups; gaps, weakness and bottleneck in the implementation; and take note of the persisting and emerging problems/situations related to welfare, protection, development and empowerment of Minorities in the changing scenario and suggest necessary interventions;
- iii. To review the implementation of the existing legislations related to Minorities and mechanism for their enforcement and suggest corrective measures.
- iv. To review the functioning of the existing Institutional Arrangements, both at the Central and State levels for implementation of policies and programmes for empowering Minorities and suggest measures to make them more effective.
- v. To review and assess the involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Local Self Government Bodies and NGOs in the implementation of programmes for empowering Minorities and suggest measures for their effective involvement in planning process; and
- vi. To review the physical and financial achievements in relation to the targets fixed under various programmes for Minorities during the Tenth

Plan and project programme-wise requirements, both physical and financial for Empowering the Minorities during the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12).

Among others, the Working Group recommended the Sub-Plan for Minorities which was rejected by the Planning Commission.

It was in 1980 that a High Level Committee chaired by Dr. Gopal Singh was set up to study the condition of Muslims in the country. The Committee, in its report, concluded that the poor among the Muslims could not avail the opportunities in education, employment and economic activities because of isolation and various historical factors. In view of this, in 1983, the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme was launched to provide a sense of security to minority communities and ensure their rapid socio-economic development.

This 15-Point Programme was based on a three-pronged approach, (i) to tackle the situation arising out of communal riots; (ii) to ensure adequate representation of the minority communities in employment under the Central and State Governments as well as Public Sector Undertakings; and (iii) other measures, such as, ensuring flow of benefits to the minority communities under various development programmes, maintenance and development of religious places, Wakf properties and redressal of grievances of the Minorities.

Till the Seventh Five Year Plan, the minorities got the developmental benefits along with the OBCs. In 1989, an autonomous, non-political, nonprofit organization - the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) - was set up with a corpus fund of Rs 100 crore to promote education among educationally backward Muslims in general, and Muslim girls in particular. In the final year of the Tenth Plan the corpus of Rs 100 crore with the Foundation was doubled. The interest accrued on the corpus was used for implementation of its educational schemes.

During the Eighth Plan (1992–97), two exclusive schemes were introduced for their educational and economic development. In 1994, the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) were set up with an authorized share capital of Rs 500 crore.

The Ninth Plan (1997–2002) saw a new Central Sector Scheme for Pre-examination Coaching for Weaker Sections based on economic criteria. Despite these schemes, till the end of 2005–06, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment continued to be the implementing agency for programmes for educational development and economic empowerment of minorities.

On 29 January 2006, a separate Ministry of Minority Affairs (MMA) was created. Meanwhile, the GoI also constituted a High Level Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Rajinder Sachar to prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community. In its comprehensive Report, the Committee observed that Muslims have been left behind the growth and development process.

The Prime Minister's New 15-Point Programme was launched in 2006 aimed at ensuring the well being, protection and development of minorities. While the 15-Point Programme of the 1983 centred on communal riots, representation of minorities in services and ensuring flow of benefits to individual beneficiaries, the focus of the new Programme is to make certain that benefits of various schemes/programmes flow equitably to the minorities.

However, the Muslim community of India has been kept deprived from the very beginning. A feeling has been infused within the community that the policy makers have neglected the Muslim as bigger minority of India. Several key issues and policy implementation were not transparent.

As far as Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme is concerned, there are no mandatory powers and they are only advisory in nature. Further, it needs to have clear cut policy directions for its effective implementation which should have a strong political will among the States because the State Minority Commissions have no statutory powers to address religious minority issues. Further, in States like Gujarat, there is no mechanism to disburse the benefits of welfare schemes among the minorities.

The status of Muslims remained largely unchanged even after the completion of 11th Five Year Plan. The Report of the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Minorities for the formulation of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) observed, "There is a need for sustained policy interventions accompanied with adequate funding, proper delivery systems and institutional and strong monitoring of implementation process. There is a need for sustained policy interventions accompanied with adequate funding, proper delivery systems and institutional and strong monitoring of implementation process as participants and not as passive recipients of developmental benefits."

The Report further said, "Report of the Justice Rajender Sachar Committee in 2006 had made special recommendation for the development of Muslims. While most of the recommendations have been translated into action in the 11th Plan period, there are certain recommendations that need to be put into action in the 12th Plan."

Sir, while we appreciate the efforts of your government in ensuring the overall growth and development of Muslims across the country, we would like to request you to consider introducing a Sub-Plan for Minorities in the country on the lines of Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).

As a prelude, the Planning Commission of India may be directed to include the studying the proposal for having a Minorities Sub Plan in the Terms of Reference for the Working Group on "Empowerment of the Minorities" in the context of the formulation of the Thirteenth Five Year Plan.

Sir this major policy decision will change the lives of crores of minorities across the country. I would like to mention that a similar policy decision taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 2004 has revolutionized the lives of thousands of backward Muslims in the State. The Government of Andhra Pradesh implemented 5% reservation for Muslims in jobs and education. Although the percentage was reduced to 4% following legal complications and the case is still going on in the Supreme Court, this policy alone has benefitted thousands of poor and backward Muslims.

Sir as many as 225 Muslim students are getting admission in government Medical colleges across the State due to 4% reservation policy. So far, nearly 2,000 poor Muslims students, including girls, have become doctors due to the policy of reservation. This year (2013-14), as many as 225 students got admission in various medical colleges. In addition, as many as 500 students are getting admissions in Minority Medical Colleges taking total output of Muslims doctors in Andhra Pradesh to 725 per year.

Similarly, a total of 9023 Engineering seats in the State are earmarked for Muslims under BC-E category reservation. The numbers in other streams of education too are highly encourageous. In the year 2013-14, under the SW-I & SW-II-AC, as many as 12,415 Muslim students got admission in B Tech/B Pharm, 5,975 in MBA/MCA, 1,840 in M Tech/M Pharm and 2,250 in B Ed.,

Sir the 4% reservation benefits were also extended in local bodies elections. Four percent of seats reserved for Backward Classes in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation were earmarked for Muslims under BC-E category during the GHMC polls held in 2009. Similarly, reservation

was implemented across the State in the local bodies elections. In the recently held Panchayat elections, as many as 266 Muslims got elected as Sarpanches due to reservation. Therefore, this policy has ensured the political empowerment of Muslims in the State.

Thousands of Muslim youth were also provided with the benefit of reservation in the recruitments done by all agencies of the State Government. Therefore, four per cent seats were reserved for jobs from Group-I to Class IV employees. The reservation policy was implemented across all departments without any glitches.

Sir the serious implementation of one policy of 4% Muslim reservation has changed the lives of thousands of poor Muslims in Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, a policy like the Sub-Plan for Minorities would ensure the overall growth of Minorities, especially the Muslims in the country. The Sub-Plan would ensure that the Muslims get budget allocations proportionate to their population in the country and respective States. This will end the disparity among various States with regard to the implementation of Minority Welfare schemes. For instance, Andhra Pradesh Government has allocated Rs 1027 crore for the welfare of minorities for the year 2013-14. While no other State in the country matches this allocation, the Central allocation too looks meagre when compared to this allocation.

In this year's budget, the Union Finance Ministry has allocated Rs 3,511 crore to the Minorities Affairs Ministry. Although the allocation has been enhanced by about 12 per cent compared to last year, but it is inadequate for the welfare of about 19% population including 13.4% Muslims. The Govt of AP is spending over Rs 1,000 Crore for about 80 lakh Muslims, but the national spending on about 17 Crore Muslims is just Rs 3,511 Crore. Sir this can be bridged by introducing a Sub-Plan for the Minorities.

With the introduction of Minorities Sub-Plan, several developmental works could be taken up in the Muslim Concentrated Districts and other backward areas. They include setting up of educational institutions, construction of roads and other infrastructure, public health, safe drinking water, underground drainage system, etc.,

The Centre could also emulate the successful model of Andhra Pradesh with regard to Minorities Welfare across the country and several schemes could be incorporated in the Central schemes through the Minorities Sub-Plan.

Further, the availability of correct data is essential for the effective implementation of welfare schemes. Since most of the data which is being relied upon by the different government agencies has become obsolete (in some cases it is based on 2001 Census), we request you to initiate steps to compile fresh data on the actual status of Muslims in India, preferably based on 2011 Census. Another important aspect that needs to be included in the data is the figures relating to unemployment among educated Muslim youth and other parameters that define the backwardness of the Muslim community."



Protection of Wakf Properties

India has largest number of Wakf Properties in the world with various Wakf Boards in the country being the third-largest landholders after the railways and defence. There are about 4.9 lakh registered Wakf properties spread across 6 lakh acres. The estimated market value of these properties is nearly Rs. 1.20 lakh crore. These properties have the potential to generate annual income of Rs. 12,000 Crore, at an average minimum return of 10%. But the current income of all Wakf properties stands at just Rs. 163 crore. You may ask why – it's because almost 70% properties are under encroachment (As per the findings of Joint Parliamentary Committee report)

From September 1974 to March 2014, the Central Wakf Council received grants-in-aid of just Rs 42.26 crore from the Centre. It sanctioned loans for 137 projects across the country and only 85 projects have been completed so far.

The Congress party was quite serious on development of Muslims and therefore, during UPA-2 regime, the National Wakf Development Corporation (NAWADCO) was constituted on 31 December 2013. It has an authorized share capital of Rs 500 crore with a paid-up capital of Rs 100 crore.

As the Minister for Wakf for two terms, I worked hard to protect and develop Wakf properties across Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana). There were 35,703 Wakf institutions in undivided AP. Of them, 32,225 properties are in Telangana with attached lands of 76,504 Acres. Nearly 4,700 cases are pending in various courts in efforts to stave off encroachers

Most governments until then were accused of selling away Wakf lands or taking no action against the encroachers. But during my first stint as Wakf Minister, Haj House at Nampally was built by acquiring Razack Manzil. We acquired two more adjacent properties. Several Wakf commercial complexes were also built. A sense of fear was instilled among land grabbers by sending very strong messages that any mischief involving Wakf properties will be dealt with maximum intensity of the law.

We were committed in our approach towards Wakf Properties and our government's actions in the case of land pertaining to Dargah Hzt Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Aulia located in Davada village of Visakhapatnam proves the strength of it.

In 1902, the entire village of Davada Village was declared as belonging to Dargah Hzt Syed Ali Ishaq Madani Aulia by the then Nizam of Hyderabad state. This land was spread over 5000 acres. All revenue generated from this

land would be utilised for the upkeep of Dargah, and various religious and charitable services. However, due to the indiscretions of the Mokhsadars, their heirs and many unscrupulous leaders, this land was leased to various entities for commercial purposes – an act that went against the provisions of the Wakf act. In fact, Chandra Babu Naidu, during his term as the CM, even decided to alienate the land of Davada village in favour of NTPC and HNPCL for power projects.

This land was embroiled in controversy and legal suits for close to a century. The complete chronological events and case history is available on public domain. However, in a nutshell – it was a very complicated case involving various departments, ministries and the Wakf board. And all the while that this case was dragging on, the Wakf board was losing precious money that could be used for charity.

The moment DR YSR and I looked into the situation, we went into high-energy action mode. Dr. YSR directed the revenue department to withdraw all cases against the Wakf board and treat the land as belonging to the Wakf board, as proven and directed by the courts too. He then directed the Wakf board to arrive at a valid rate in lieu of the lands alienated to NTPC and HNPCL, and that the revised rates be paid with interest. And just like that he solved a very complex case with all parties leaving happily without breaking the law or being subject to a lengthy court battle. Sometimes all it takes is a strong will and the commitment to act on it.





Mohammed Ali Shabbir

Visionary behind the successful implementation of 4% reservations to eradicate social and economic backwardness among Muslims

THE STRUGGLE

4% Reservations to Eradicate Social and Economic Backwardness among Muslims

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