

## Background

Recently, India has taken major steps in formulating and implementing plans to educate her masses. The Right to Education Bill of 2005 (many folds more extensive and encompassing than the No Child Left Behind initiative in the US) not only extends the opportunity of a good education to all but also mandates it. In this bill the parity of education amongst the genders is also promoted and targeted. The government has made the education of the disadvantaged group of minorities a national priority. The focus is on bringing the educationally backward minorities at par with the rest of the society and to make them participate fully in the national development.

Unfortunately, in this beehive of educational bonanza, there is a group in the nation's minorities, though not being ignored but is still way behind. This group within the minorities remains backward in education and mired in customs and traditions that have impeded its progress and prosperity for more than a century. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first Indian Muslim leader who saw the need for their reform. Though he tried to introduce modern ideas, he was not wholly successful in changing their plight or the ways of their thinking. This section of the society is unable to avail of this bounty because of many reasons, some of which are:

- 1.) Socio-economic Factors: It is a known fact that groups that are educationally backward are also economically and socially backward. For generations they can remain mired in this perpetual catch 22. The only way for them to climb out of this pit is the ladder of education. Education is their only hope and salvation.

- 2.) Lack of Educational Institutions: Despite the great strides that India has made in the field of education, the fact remains that there are just not enough institutions of secondary and higher learning in the country. This makes it so much harder for the under privileged, who start out with a handicap to successfully compete with the privileged groups for the few available seats. Statistics show that USA with one-fourth the population of India has four times as many universities.

- 3.) Lack of Guidance and Counseling: Guidance through this maze of opportunities is also very important. For a person to develop to his or her full potential, counselors who can gauge and properly direct their educational focus are a must. A careful evaluation of the person's capabilities and the market demand needs to be paired before setting his or her course of education.