



Government of Tamilnadu

Department of Employment and Training

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Topic : Problems of Minorities

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PROBLEMS OF MINORITIES

Introduction:

The term 'minority' has not been defined in the Constitution or in any other enactment. However, the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations' Organization in 1950 has defined minority to include "only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserve suitable ethnic, religious and linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from the rest of the population".

The UN Sub-Commissions in Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities define minority as a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state which possess and wish to preserve stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions.

The Indian socio-economic fabric is very complex because it is much affected by caste, religion and all the more regional / linguistic differentials. At the same time, the Indian economic, social and political institutions which are persisting since centuries have a historical basis. These factors have given a unique character to Indian society. It has become a conglomeration of various layers and segments divided and sub-divided.

According to the Census 2011, of the total population of 121 crore, the Hindus make up 79.8 percent. Muslim constitutes 14.2, Christians 2.3, Sikh 1.7, Buddhists 0.7 and Jains 0.4 percent.

The Census 2011 data indicated that Hinduism is professed by the majority of the population in India. The Hindu is majority in most States and UTs except in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Lakshadweep, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.

As regards religious minorities at the national level, all those who profess a religion other than Hinduism are considered minorities. The Muslims are the largest religious minority followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain and Parsis.



Problems faced by minorities in India

- **Problem of Identity**

- a) Because of the differences in socio-cultural practices, history and backgrounds, minorities have to grapple with the issue of identity
- b) This give rise to the problem of adjustment with the majority community. Discrimination is often at the root of identity-related tensions. Such tensions have a potential to develop into crises that could ultimately lead to conflict, forced displacement and, in the worst cases, to atrocity crimes, including genocide.

- **Problem of Preserving Distinct Social and Cultural Life:**

India is one among the very few nations which have given equal freedom to all the religious communities to pursue and practice their religion. Article 25 of the Constitution provides for such a right. Added to this, Article 30 (1) states all minorities whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

They are given the right to preserve their socio-cultural characteristics. It has set up a “Minorities Commission” to help the minorities in seeking justice. No minority community can have a grievance against any government particularly in this matter.

- **Problem of Security**

- a) Different identity and their small number relative to the rest of the society develop feeling of insecurity about their life, assets and well-being.
- b) This sense of insecurity may get accentuated at times when relations between the majority and the minority communities in a society are strained or not much cordial.

- **Problem Relating to Equity**

- a) The minority community in a society may remain deprived of the benefit of opportunities of development as a result of discrimination.
- b) Because of the difference in identity, the minority community develops the perception of the sense of inequity.



- **Problem of Communal Tensions and Riots**

- a) Communal tensions and riots have been incessantly increasing since independence.
- b) Whenever the communal tensions and riots take place for whatever reason, minority interests get threatened

- **Lack of Representation in Civil Service and Politics**

- a) The Constitution provides for equality and equal opportunities to all its citizens including the religious minorities
- b) The biggest minority community, that is, Muslims have a feeling among them that they are neglected
- c) However, such a feeling does not seem to exist among the other religious minority communities such as the Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, for they seem to be economically and educationally better than the majority community.

- **Problem Relating to the Introduction of Common Civil Code:**

Another major hurdle that we find in the relation between the majority and the minority is relating to the failure of Governments which have assumed power so far, in the introduction of a common civil code. Some communities, particularly the Muslims oppose it.

They argue that the imposition of a common civil code, as it is opposed to the “Shariat” will take away their religious freedom. This issue has become controversial today. It has further widened the gap between the religious communities.

- **Problems those are specific to Muslims only:**

Here, we will deal especially the third category which is specific to Muslims only. Religion is a complex phenomenon in India. Though India is declared a ‘secular’ state, yet the problem of secularism looms large here. Conversion to Islam and Christianity has been a much controversial issue over the last couple of decades.



Measures to solve the Minorities problems:

- a) Under the Constitution, religious and linguistic minorities enjoy special rights. The minority status helps to give constitutional safeguards to minority communities and make them eligible for welfare programmes of the Union Minority Affairs Ministry.
- b) The global governance network must recognize that effort to promote and protect the rights of minorities must be multidimensional and engage the entire System.
- c) The communities and civil societies need to look after is the sense of developing an integrative humanistic framework which allows for affirmative discrimination in favor of minorities at the same time ending avenues for potential abuse.

Government Initiatives

The Government has taken various steps to improve socio-economic and educational status of minority communities

Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme

- a) Prime Minister New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities, which is an overarching programme covering various schemes/ initiatives of different Ministries/ Departments. Earmarking 15% of targets/ outlays for the minorities or specific monitoring of flow of benefits/ funds to minorities or areas with substantial minority population.
 - b) The programme is being implemented with the objectives of enhancing opportunities for education of minorities
 - c) Ensuring equitable share for minorities in economic activities and employment
 - d) Improving the condition of living of minorities
 - e) Preventing and controlling the communal disharmony
- National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was set up by the Union Government of India in 1992 to protect the existence of minorities all over India.
 - **USTAAD:** The Scheme aims at upgrading Skills and Training in preservation of traditional Ancestral Arts/Crafts of minorities.



- **Hamari Darohar:** The Scheme aims to preserve rich heritage of minority communities in context of Indian culture.
- Khwaza Garib Nawaz Senior Secondary School Will be established at Ajmer by Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) to give a fillip to minority education.
- **Nai Manzil:** A bridge course to bridge the academic and skill development gaps of the deeni Madrasa pass outs with their mainstream counterparts.
- **Strengthening of State Wakf Boards:** The scheme envisages to provide assistance for meeting the training and administrative cost of State Wakf Boards. Removal of encroachment from Wakf Properties and also strengthening of Zonal/Regional offices of Wakf Boards.
- **Nai Roshni:** The scheme is envisaged to reach out to women through nongovernmental organizations who will be provided with financial support conducting leadership development trainings so that women are empowered and emboldened to move out of the confines of home and community
- **Minority Cyber Gram:** The MCG programme seeks to introduce digital literacy skills in identified minority clusters in India Only a coalition of the oppressed castes, classes and gender across religions can overcome communalism. The words that causes great troubles and cycle of communal hatred and violence can be stopped only by ending first the history of false equivalences and selective silences.

Questions:

1. Describe the problems faced by minorities in India.
2. Describe the measures taken by the government to improve the socio-economic and educational status of minority communities.