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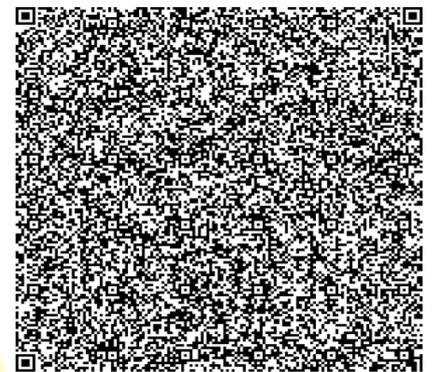
Educational Problems and Current Status of Minority Communities in India: Constitutional Guarantees and Policy Interventions

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Abstract

This study explores the educational problems and present status of minority communities in India, including both religious and linguistic groups. Constitutional provisions under Articles 15, 16, 25–30, 347, 350–350B ensure protection of their rights, while government initiatives such as the National Education Policy (1986, 1992), 15-Point Programme, and schemes like Naya Savera, Padho Pardes, Nai Udaan, Begum Hazrat Mahal Scholarship, and Nai Manzil aim to promote educational access, skill development, and socio-economic empowerment. Despite these measures, minorities face challenges including identification issues, psychological insecurity, discrimination, and limited access to quality education and employment opportunities. Linguistic diversity, regional disparities, and social inequities further complicate their educational development. Effective implementation of policies, along with teacher support and community engagement, is crucial to address these gaps. Promoting inclusive education for minorities not only ensures social justice but also contributes to national integration, tolerance, and overall development of the country.

Keywords: Minority, Education, Status, Indian Constitution



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Introduction:

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and an essential instrument for the social, economic, and cultural development of individuals and communities. In India, a country renowned for its pluralistic, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic composition, education plays a particularly significant role in promoting social cohesion and equality. However, despite the constitutional guarantees and numerous policy interventions, educational disparities continue to exist, especially among minority communities. Minorities, in the Indian context, are defined as communities whose population constitutes less than 50% of the total population of the state. These include both religious minorities such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis, and linguistic minorities who speak languages other than the predominant regional language of a state. The Indian Constitution recognizes and protects the rights of these minorities, acknowledging their distinctive socio-cultural, religious, and linguistic identities, while also promoting their inclusion and development within the larger framework of the nation.

Religious and linguistic minorities in India have historically faced unique challenges in accessing quality education. According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rate among Muslims was 68.5%, significantly lower than the national average of 74%. In contrast, Christians recorded a higher literacy rate of 84.5%, while Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains exhibited literacy rates of 75.4%, 71.8%, and 94.9% respectively. These figures highlight the disparities in educational attainment among different minority groups and indicate the need for targeted policies and programs. Religious minorities in India, which include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs,

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Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and other smaller groups, collectively face a range of social, economic, and educational challenges due to their subordinate status in a predominantly Hindu society. The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act of 1992 officially recognized five religious communities – Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis – as minorities, thereby facilitating focused interventions for their welfare. Scholars such as Jagnath Pathy (1988) have noted that minority communities often experience subordination, discrimination, and exclusion, both socially and economically, which directly affects their access to education and developmental opportunities. The United Nations also defines minorities as groups that are politically, socially, and economically non-dominant and possess a smaller population relative to the majority, thereby facing systemic disadvantages.

Linguistic diversity further complicates the educational landscape in India. The country recognizes 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, reflecting its rich linguistic heritage. Historical invasions, colonial rule, and large-scale internal migration have contributed to the complex linguistic environment in India, where minority languages are dispersed across regions, often without formal recognition or support. The linguistic reorganization of states post-independence created both opportunities and challenges for linguistic minorities, as regional languages became the medium of instruction in schools, while minority language speakers often struggled to access quality education. The Constitution, through provisions such as Articles 347, 350, 350A, and 350B, ensures that minority languages are preserved, promoted, and integrated into educational frameworks, allowing linguistic minorities to receive instruction in their mother tongue and maintain their cultural identity.

The importance of constitutional safeguards for minorities cannot be overstated. Articles 15 and 16 prohibit discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth and ensure equal opportunities in public employment. Articles 25 to 28 guarantee religious freedom, the right to manage religious institutions, and exemption from taxation for propagation of religion. Articles 29 and 30 specifically empower minorities to preserve their language, culture, and establish and administer educational institutions. These constitutional provisions form the foundation for government interventions, programs, and policies aimed at promoting educational equity and empowering minority communities.

Despite these constitutional guarantees, minority communities continue to face several barriers to education. Identification issues, rooted in socio-cultural and historical disparities, make it challenging for minorities to integrate into mainstream society. Security concerns, arising from their minority status, create psychological and social vulnerability, which can affect educational participation. Equity-related challenges, including systemic discrimination, limited access to quality schooling, and exclusion from developmental opportunities, further exacerbate the educational gap. In professional and higher education, minorities often face discrimination in admissions, civil service examinations, and employment, reflecting broader social inequalities. Psychological insecurity resulting from perceived discrimination negatively impacts motivation, aspirations, and achievement among minority students.

To address these issues, the Government of India has implemented various policies, schemes, and programs aimed at promoting the educational and socio-economic development of minority communities. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, recognized that certain minority groups were educationally backward and emphasized the need to provide focused attention to their educational development. The NPE advocated for the protection of minority languages and cultures, while also promoting integration based on shared national values and objectives. The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 further elaborated on specific measures to enhance minority education, including technical skill development, orientation and training programs for teachers and administrators, and the establishment of coaching centers in minority-concentrated areas.

Several targeted schemes have been introduced to facilitate educational empowerment and skill development among minorities. Programs like “Naya Savera” provide free coaching for competitive examinations, while “Padho Pardes” offers educational loans at subsidized interest rates for technical and professional studies abroad. “Nai Udaan” supports students clearing preliminary examinations conducted by central and state agencies, and the “Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship” promotes educational advancement for meritorious girls. Skill development initiatives such as “Nai Manzil” and “Seekho aur Kamao” aim to upskill minority youth, enhancing their employability and entrepreneurial potential. Additionally, cultural preservation programs like “Hamari Dharohar” ensure the maintenance of minority cultural heritage within the broader Indian civilizational framework.

According to the 2011 Census, Muslims had a literacy rate of 68.5%, which was lower than the national average (74%). Christians have a higher literacy rate (84.5%), which exceeds the national average. Sikhs (75.4%), Buddhists (71.8%), and Jains (94.9%) have varying literacy rates, with Jains having the highest literacy rate of any community.

Religious Minorities About 82% of the population in India is classified as a religious minority and is Hindu. The minority include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and other smaller groups. Five religious communities—including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis—have been designated as minorities under the National Commission for



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Minorities (NCM) Act of 1992 (*Official Website of National Commission for Minorities, Govt. of India, 1992*)

Jagnath Pathy (1988) also outlined the characteristics that distinguish a minority community. The minorities, in his view, are Subordinated to the majority in some way; Differentiable from the majority due to physical or cultural characteristics; Collectively seen and treated as distinct and inferior because of these characteristics; and Excluded from full participation in society. He further said that Minority identity is based on the subordinate or minority group's self-segregation and the dominant group's discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion.

The definition provided by the United Nations is "Any group or community socially political and economically no dominant and inferior in population are minorities."

Linguistic Minorities: Language is one of the most divisive topics in Indian education. The Indian Constitution gives 22 languages a position in the Eighth Schedule and recognises them as national languages. The several waves of invasion and colonisation (the Aryans, the Moghuls, the Portuguese, and the British) are to blame for the linguistic variety of India. migration without restriction both inside and between the various states and union regions. Following India's independence, political factors led to linguistic reorganisation of the states, and many racial and religious minorities (Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others) are dispersed throughout India.

India is politically split into 29 states with different regional languages and seven union territories. India's linguistic environment is quite complicated. In addition to the regional language spoken by the vast majority in each area or state, caste and class dialects and a number of minority languages, some of which lack recognised scripts, further complicate the issue.

Objectives of the study

- To Discuss About Constitutional Provisions for Minority in Indian Constitution.
- To Discuss About Educational Problems of Minorities in India.
- To Discuss About Present Educational Status of Minorities in India.

Constitutional provisions for minorities: A number of protections have been incorporated into the Constitution to protect minorities in the nation. Minorities and all other citizens share some of these rights. The following Articles of the Constitution guarantee certain rights:

- Article 15 declares it illegal to discriminate against people based on their race, religion, ethnicity, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- Article 16 creates several "Classes" for employment, appointment, and progression in the state's services while ensuring equal opportunity in public employment problems.
- Article 25 guarantees religious freedom, including the right to freely proclaim, practise, and spread one's faith.
- The freedom to supervise religious organisations and affairs is guaranteed under Article 26, subject to public morality, health, and order.
- Article 27 guarantees the exemption from paying taxes for the propagation of any certain faith.
- Article 28 guarantees the freedom to participate in religious worship in religious institutions or in some educational organisations.
- According to Article 29, minorities have the freedom to maintain their respective languages, writing systems, and cultures.
- According to Article 30, minorities have the right to establish and manage educational institutions.
- Article 347 permits the use of minority languages for official purposes.
- Article 350 mandates that the State allow the use of a minority language to resolve disputes.
- Article 350A requires the State to provide facilities to linguistic minority groups for instruction in the home tongue at the basic stage of education, and Article 350B established a special officer for linguistic minorities who will be selected by the President.

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM OF MINORITIES :

The following are some of the major issues minorities in India face:



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- **Identification Issue:** Due to the disparities in sociocultural norms, histories, and origins, minorities have identification issues everywhere, which make it difficult for them to integrate into the dominant community.
- **Security Issue:** Because of their unique identities and low population compared to the rest of society, they experience a sense of vulnerability about their lives, possessions, and general security. This unease may be amplified in societies where there are hostile or unfriendly interactions between the majority and minority groups.
- **Equity-Related Issues:** As a result of prejudice, the minority population in a society may continue to be denied the benefits of developmental chances. The minority community has a sense of injustice as a result of their distinct identities.
- **Problem of being deprived:** such as social facilitation and employment politics and they feel that they are poorly responded. Also in civil services, medical colleges and engineering colleges they are discriminated by dominant group.
- **Problem of psychological insecurity:** According to sociology, the impression of discrimination has a negative sociological impact on minority group members' motives, aspirations, and accomplishments.

PRESENT EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MINORITIES:

At present, the Government of India is setting up commissions and committees for the benefit of minorities, starting from enacting various laws. It is also implementing various commissions, committees and laws that have come from the past. Follows the present educational status of minorities:

- **The National Policy of Education, 1986 :** Regarding minorities, the NPE, 1986 notes that "some minority groups are educationally backward or deprived." In the interests of equity and social justice, more focus will be placed on educating these populations. This inevitably includes the protections for their languages and cultures as well as the constitutional rights they have to create and run their own educational institutions. In addition, every effort will be made to promote integration based on an awareness of shared national ideas and goals. Objectivity will be reflected in the development of textbooks and in every facet of school life at the same time. according to the basic curriculum. The 1992 Revised Policy Formulations reaffirmed this.
- **15-Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities:** In May 1983, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi issued a 15-Point Directive on welfare of minorities. Point Nos. 11 and 12 concern education of minorities.
Point No.11 In many areas recruitment is done through competitive examinations. Minority groups frequently face obstacles in utilising the school system to participate fairly in these exams. To help them overcome these handicaps, steps should be taken to encourage the starting of coaching classes in minority educational institutions to train persons to compete successfully in these examinations.
Point No. 12 The acquisition of technical skills by those minorities who are today lagging behind would also help in national development. Arrangements should be made to set up ITIs and Polytechnics by government or private agencies in predominantly minority areas to encourage admission in such institutions of adequate number of persons belonging to these areas. (Singh, 2010)
- **Programme of Action, 1992:** The Programme of Action, 1992, began by taking notice of the existing programmes for the - Muslim Minorities. It also suggested a large number of short term, medium term and long-term measures to promote education of minorities. Short Term Measures:
 - (i) Imparting of technical skills through the Community Polytechnics set up in the predominantly minority concentration.
 - (ii) Programme for evaluation of textbooks from standpoint of national integration by the NCERT to be taken up more systematically for speedy and effective implementation.
 - (iii) Orientation programmes for the Principals/Managers and training programmes for teachers from minority educational institutions to be intensified.
 - (iv) UGC Scheme of Coaching Centres for students belonging to educationally backward minorities to be revamped and expanded to cover more minority concentration areas.
 - (v) A crash programme for school improvement will be implemented on priority basis in minority concentration areas.
 - (vi) Extensions will be made to the resource centre programme.
 - (vii) A proper monitoring machinery for monitoring of various programmes for the minorities need to be set up.
 - (viii) Appointment of Regional language teachers for national integration and implementation of three language formula.
 - (ix) Special attention to be paid to locate schools in minority concentration areas so that minority children have access in matters of admission.



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(x) Facility of Urdu medium schools should be provided with in schools with required number of students belonging to backward minority. (Npe.pdf,1992).

- **Educational Empowerment :**

“Naya Savera” (New Dawn) Free coaching and allied programmes are available to help students and job hopefuls improve their knowledge and abilities in preparation for competitive exams and admission to technical and professional programmes.

“Padho Pardes” Programme (Study Abroad Scheme) for educational loans with reduced interest rates for technical and professional study abroad.

“Nai Udaan” to support students clearing Preliminary Examination conducted by the Central Government and State Governments such as those conducted by UPSC, SSC, State Public Service Commission, etc.

“Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship” for Meritorious Girls, implemented by Maulana Azad Educational Foundation (MAEF).

Between 2014-2018, over 300 thousand students from minority communities have benefitted from the aforementioned schemes relating to educational empowerment.

Bridge Course for madrasa students & school dropouts by Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh and Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi under Nai Manila Scheme.

- **SKILL DEVELOPMENT :**

‘Nai Manzil’ Plan for formal school education and retraining of school dropouts.

‘Seekho aur Kamao’ - A placement-based skill development programme for minorities, goals to upskill minority youth in a variety of model and traditional skills based on their educational background, current economic conditions, and market potential so they can find suitable employment or be prepared to start their own business.

- **SPECIAL NEEDS:**

The Hamari Dharohar Scheme seeks to preserve minority people's rich cultural histories within the framework of Indian civilisation.

Under the Swachh Vidyalaya programme, schools and other institutions without restrooms on the grounds are given money to build separate toilet buildings for boys and girls.

CONCLUSION:

There is both policy support and programme interventions to promote the educational development of minorities; however, teachers play a critical role if these policy measures are to have a real impact in promoting the educational development of these groups and integrating them into the national mainstream. While legislation may only minimise inequities in access to excellent institutions, teachers can assist students in overcoming feelings of alienation and insecurity and cultivating good attributes such as tolerance, secularism, and humanism, as well as respect for all fellow beings. This, in turn, will put a stop to separatist impulses and terrorism, resulting in national unity. More significantly, this will add to these youngsters' academic success.

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