

Condition of Minority in India: 2009

Report from India Chapter

Introduction:

India is a land of diversity and of different religions with Hindus is in majority. According to the 2001 census the religious composition of the population is as follows (see table1).

Table 1: Religious Composition of the Indian Population (in Percent)

Religion	Followers
Hindu	80.5
Muslims	13.4
Christian	2.3
Sikh	1.9
Others	1.8
Unspecified	0.1

Source: Government of India, Census Report 2001.

India is a secular republic and the constitution guarantees equal rights to all its citizens without any discrimination. The Indian constitution provides many legal safeguards to the minority community and special provisions are made for their social and economic growth. Despite these, minorities in India face all types of inequity in the public sphere. Even the violence and human right violations of the minority community in India is a common phenomenon. In this context, the note of UN Special Repporteur on Freedom and Religious Belief Ms. Asma Jahangir, is pertinent when she praised India's secularism, human right activism, and strong legal protection for religious minorities at the national level but also made the point that due to the federal structure of Indian state the implementation of law varies from states to states. She said, "organized groups claiming roots in religious ideologies have unleashed an all-pervasive fear of mob violence in many parts of the country". Asma Jahangir, was making special reference to

the violence in Orissa, where Hindu fundamentalists attacked Christian and tribal communities. The violence in Khandamal region of Orissa continued for a long period, despite massive protest by activists and secular organizations.

Condition of Muslim Community: Amongst the minorities in India, Muslim is the largest community but still far behind the benefits of development. This is true that every common citizen of the country is derived from the gains of economic growth but the quotient of this deprivation is more amongst the Muslim community. This came into light when Sachar committee report on the condition of minority community was placed in the parliament. Some of the glaring findings of the report are as follows.

- 1) In the field of literacy the Committee has found that the rate among Muslims is very much below than the national average. The gap between Muslims and the general average is greater in urban areas and women. 25 per cent of children of Muslim parents in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or have dropped out.
- 2) Muslim parents are not averse to mainstream education or to send their children to affordable Government schools. The access to government schools for children of Muslim parents is limited.
- 3) Bidi workers, tailors and mechanics need to be provided with social safety nets and social security. The participation of Muslims in the professional and managerial cadre is low.
- 4) The average amount of bank loan disbursed to the Muslims is 2/3 of the amount disbursed to other minorities. In some cases it is half. The Reserve Bank of India's efforts to extend banking and credit facilities under the Prime Minister's 15-point programme of 1983 has mainly benefited other minorities marginalizing Muslims.
- 5) There is a clear and significant inverse association between the proportion of the Muslim population and the availability of educational infrastructure in small villages. Muslim concentration villages are not well served with pucca approach roads and local bus stops.

- 6) The presence of Muslims has been found to be only 3% in the IAS, 1.8% in the IFS and 4% in the IPS.
- 7) Muslim community has a representation of only 4.5% in Indian Railways while 98.7% of them are positioned at lower levels. Representation of Muslims is very low in the Universities and in Banks. Their share in police constables is only 6%, in health 4.4%, in transport 6.5%.
- 8) For the Maulana Azad Education Foundation to be effective the corpus fund needs to be increased to 1000 crores. Total allocation in the four years 2002 to 2006 for Madarsa Modernization Scheme is 106 crores. The information regarding the Scheme has not adequately percolated down. Even if the share of Muslims in elected bodies is low they and other underrepresented segments can be involved in the decision making process through innovative mechanisms.
- 9) Most of the variables indicate that Muslim-OBCs are significantly deprived in comparison to Hindu-OBCs. The work participation rate (WPR) shows the presence of a sharp difference between Hindu-OBCs (67%) and the Muslims. The share of Muslim-OBCs in government/ PSU jobs is much lower than Hindu-OBCs.

The points made above are enough to reflect on the pathetic economic condition of Muslim community in India. After the Sachar committee report comes in the public domain, national debate started on the condition of Muslim in India. Government acknowledged the problem and beneficial schemes are introduced, but still the per capita levels of investment for the community is low. According to the report released by Anhad (a civil society group working on minority affairs) after the national meet on the status of Muslims in Contemporary India, the per capita level of investment from the side of government for the community are still low. The scheme for investment in districts with high minority population, at best cover 30 percent of the total population. The programmes are for area development rather than programmes focused on the minorities; therefore they prove blunt instruments as much of the expenditure is on general infrastructure and little to directly benefit deprived people of the community. They are not consulted about their priorities.

On the economic front Muslim community face problem but this is equally true when we look at human right violations. In the recent past after every terrorist attack Muslim community are targeted by the state apparatus and several time innocent youth are also arrested on false premises or just on suspicion without any substantial proof. Cases of illegal detention are generally reported from States like Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. It came to light that Muslim youth are randomly picked in Hyderabad (cyber city) and from Azamgarh of Uttar Pradesh. Illegal detention of the Muslim community is accepted by the Andhra Pradesh government when it paid compensation to 21 Muslim youth who are tortured in the police custody after been wrongly held in 2007. India's popular investigative magazine Tehelka found than an overwhelming cases of arrest pertaining to minority community in terrorist acts are based on non-existent and fraudulent evidences. Hundreds of people, mainly Muslims and poor, were persecuted and falsely accused of terrorism. According to media reports, Bar Associations in different parts of the country, Faizabad, Lucknow and Dhar among them, have asked their members not to defend Muslim terror suspects.

Religious violence

Violence against the minority community is also a feature and from time to time communal hatred is spread amongst the people. The shocking example of this case is the blatantly communal speech of Mr. Varun Gandhi, who had openly advocated violence against the Muslim community in his election speech delivered on 18 March 2009 in Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Varun Gandhi had contested the election for the Member of Parliament from Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and he was not even once criticized by his party for a communal speech. This exposes ideology of BJP which, is a Hindu right party and did not leave any opportunity to exploit communal sentiment for political gains.

Condition of Christians: In the year of 2008, violence against Christians in state of Orissa was criticized at every level. The violence started after killing of a Hindu priest who was targeted by Maoist but Hindu fundamentalist organizations in Orissa linked it with Christian community. Christians are killed, their houses were torched, and they were

forced to flee from the main their villages. Many of them survived in the rescue camps, which are mad in the forests. It was expected that government will act strongly and will bring all the guilty to justice. Unfortunately, the quests for justice by the victims are yet not come to an end. According to the Archbishop of Cuttack – Bhubneswar, “we want full reconciliation and lasting peace in Khandmal, which will be possible when justice is transparent, lives are rebuilt and people return to their own villages without fear. We do not want any ghettoisation in the district”. The independent reports of NGO working in the area point out that an estimated 12, 00 families have migrated from the immediate area, many of them to Bhubanneswar and other parts of the country and still fear from returning to their homeland. Government of Orissa failed to restore faith inside the Christian and due to this the people are forced to live unpalatable life outside their villages and area of inhabitant.

Justice to the Victim of 1984 Riots: It is commonly known that justice delayed is justice denied. This is well being seen in the context of giving justice to the Sikh families who suffered loss of property and life in the 1984 anti-sikh riots. According to report of government some 2, 733 people are killed during the riots and the unofficial figure keep it as much as 4,000. In Delhi alone the some 600 cases of rioting, arson and killing are registered. The Nanavati Commission report on the riots named several prominent political leaders of Congress party. Cases proceeded against them but still no one is punished. In 2009, some of the cases are opened but the trails are still pending. Human right groups and activist are demanding from the government to ensure the speedy trail of all the pending cases and to bring the guilty to justice.

Condition of Other Religious Minorities and Sects: The incident of violence and discrimination against Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe (SC/ST), and against other minority sects continued in India. There are several public instances to prove this point and it was often reported in media as how SC community was discriminated in the distribution of relief material in the aftermath of 2004 Tsunami devastation. There are many instances even witnessed in 2008 when SC/ST community was severely

discriminated in the access of aid. It is a matter of concern that number of death of SC/ST community in the relief camps was far higher than among other groups.

Similarly, discrimination against other sects is general phenomenon in India as seen in the case of police excess against transsexual in India. In November 2008, Bangalore police arrested 100 of transsexual inhabitants of the city in a drive of 'social cleansing' in the city. On the other hand, violence against tribal in India is still continuing and several draconian laws are adding further to it. Armed Forces Special Power Act is amongst those laws which provide immunity to the armed forces, which is used in the tribal belts excesses. Last year several fake encounters of tribal youth are exposed by Indian Media.

Conclusion: Some of the grave issues related to the minority community are highlighted in the report. Considering the huge geographic size and vast population it is not possible to keep track of every issue. Still the figures and facts mentioned in the report are evidence enough to understand the present situation of the minority community in India. Things have changed from last decades, but a long road is ahead before minorities get their rights in a practical form.