

Minorities within Indian minorities



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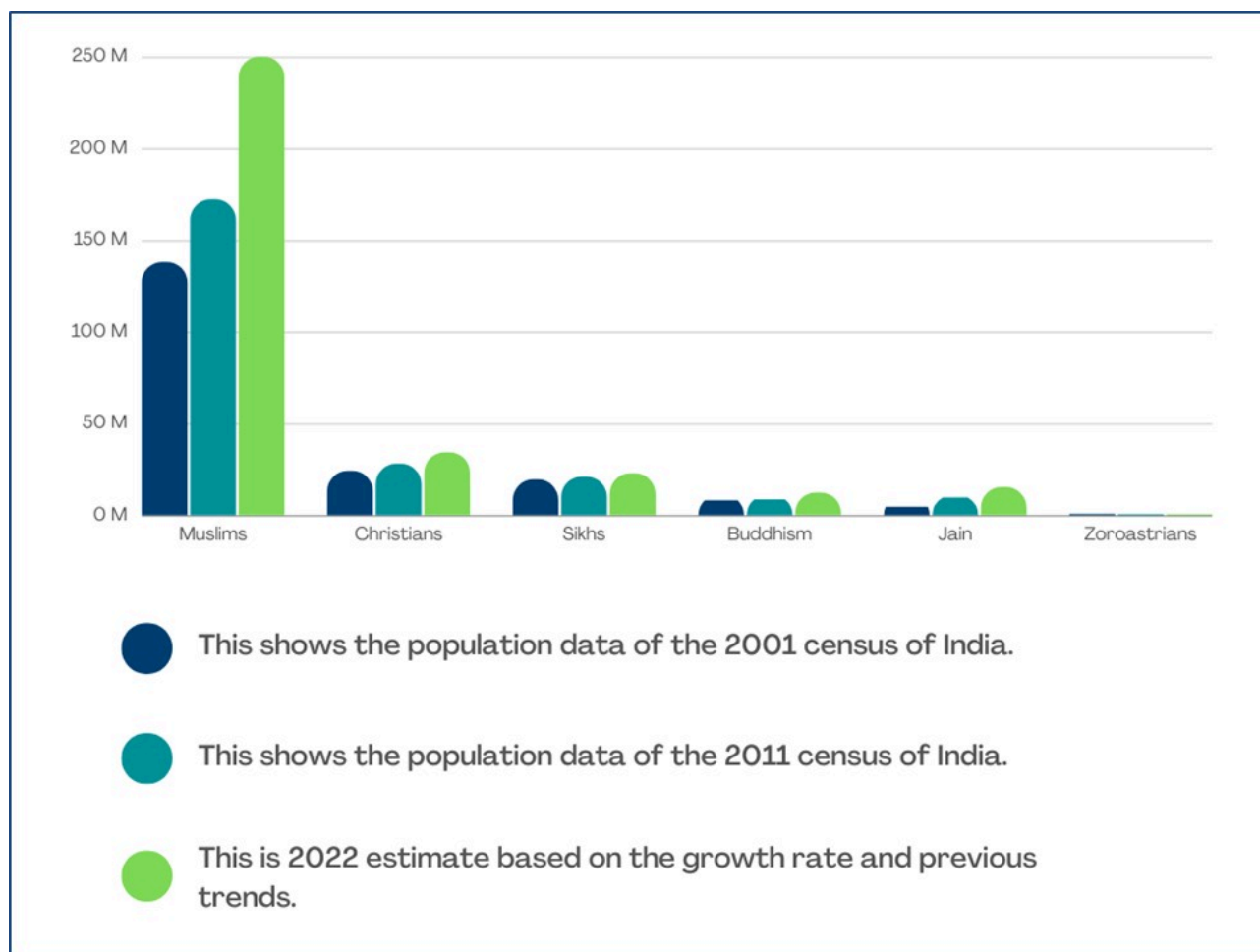
Highlights

1. Caste based and functional (Operational) discrimination among Christian, Muslims and Sikhs is rampant.
2. This makes out a case for socio-economic and religious reform in Islam, Church, and Gurudwaras.
3. Among the religious minority in India, several low caste converts in these religion face exclusion and discrimination in terms of opportunity as well as social studying.
4. While there has been resistance to reform from well establish section of these three religions. There is a room for providing better governance aimed at uplift of these sections.
5. Also, divisive tendencies and extremists trick has made a big chunk of Indian minority population restless. This has posed a major challenge for both states and central government in India.
6. Untouchability, abuse, rapes, and denial of opportunity has kicked up violence which may have to be tackle very judiciously.
7. This short paper goes into analysing the state of all the six religious minorities in the wag of central government move to bring about harmony within minorities.
8. The first such signal to focus on the neglected people within the minorities has comes recently from the Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad.
9. Though details of socio-development plan that the government is working on or not available. There is a reasonable expectation that the specific project may be kicked off to reform those within the minorities that are not part of the Indian growth story.
10. For instances Pasmada and other may be targeted in the socio-economic development plans. Similar is the case with Christian that discrimination with Hindu Dalit who embarrassed the faith within, the all Sikh populace the huge chunk of neglected minorities may be targeted for uplift.

Minorities in India

The term “minority” has been obtained from the Latin word “minor” and the suffix ‘ity’, which means “small in number”. The Constitution of India mentioned the term ‘minority’ or its plural form under Articles 20 to 30 and 350 A to 350 B, but does not define the word ‘minority’. Article 29 of the Constitution of India has the term ‘minorities’ in its marginal headline but speaks of “any section of citizens having a distinct language script and culture”.

Karnataka high court once defined the term minorities within the ambit of Article 30(1) of the Constitution of India. It stated that ‘a minority either linguistic or religious is determinable only by reference to demography of the State and not by taking into consideration population of the country as a whole’. As per clause (c) of Section 2 of the National Commission for Minorities Act, six communities are declared minority communities:



| S.No | Community | Population (Census 2001) | Population (Census 2011) | Population in 2022 (Estimated) |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Muslims | 138 M (13.4%) | 172.2 M (14.2%) | 250 M |
| 2 | Christians | 24 M (2.34%) | 27.8 M (2.3%) | 34 M |
| 3 | Sikhs | 19.2 M (1.89%) | 20.8 M (1.7%) | 22.5 M |
| 4 | Buddhists | 7.9 M (0.74%) | 8.4 M (0.7%) | 12 M |
| 5 | Jain | 4.5 M (0.46%) | 9.5 M (0.72%) | 15 M |
| 6 | Zorastrians (Parsis) | 0.069 M | 0.057 M (0.006%) | 0.05 M |

As per the Census 2011, the percentage of minorities in the country is about 19.3 percent of the total population of the India.

Anatomy of Religious Minorities in India



The government of India recognises six communities under the head of religious minorities (table1). Religious minorities have their religious autonomy.

| S.No | Religion | Sect |
|------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Islam | Sunni Shia |
| 2 | Christian | Catholic Protestant |
| 3 | Sikh | Jat Ramdasia Ravidasia Nirankari Namdhari |
| 4 | Buddhist | Mahayan Hinayan |
| 5 | Jain | Digambara Svetambara |
| 6 | Zorastrians (Parsis) | Shehenshah Kadmi Fasli |

Islam



Islam is the largest religious minority community with 14.2% of the total population in India. Islam is divided into different sects and schools of thought across the world i.e. Sunni, Shia, Wahabi, Sufis etc. India is the home of almost all sects of Islam. The societal division is very complex in Indian Muslim community. The Indian Muslim community is divided majorly into three classes which are Ashraf (better or upper-class Mahomedans), Ajlaf (backward class Mahomedans), and Arzal (degraded or depressed class Mahomedans).

Social evils like discrimination on the basis of class, caste, and gender is highest in the Muslim community. No words can express the great and many evils like discrimination, especially in Pashmanda and other Arzal communities. Before we delve deeper into these different classes, it is quite distressing that such evils exist. But far more distressing is the fact that there is no organised movement for social reforms among the Muslims in India on a scale enough to bring about their eradication.

| S.No | Ashraf | Ajlaf | Arzal |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Sayyed | Ansari | Halalkhor |
| 2 | Shaikh | Mansuri | Lalbeghi |
| 3 | Pathan | Rayeens | Mehtar |
| 4 | Mirza | Qureshi | Razzak |
| 5 | Mughal | Pasmanda | Julaha |

The Muslim society in India divided itself into different categories on the basis of descendants. The superior one is **Ashraf**, which is an Arabic term that means the most honourable one or denotes direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad. The second one is **Ajlaf**, usually, they are a backward or discriminated class of Islam in India. Ajlaf's are defined as being the descendants of converts. Ziauddin

Barani, who was a member of the Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq's court clearly disdained the Ajlaf and strongly recommended that they be denied education. The last one is a much more degraded and depressed class of the Muslim society is **Arzal**, which means vile or vulgar. Arzal's are at the bottom of the social scale and untouchables remain on fringes of the social advancement dynamics.

Discrimination in Islamic society

1. Negligible participation of backward caste Muslims in any kind of work within the community.
2. Unequal access to resources within the community i.e. entry into mosques or community spaces.
3. The backward caste Muslims have no role in any social organisation or any leading position within the Muslim community.
4. The backward-class Muslims (Ajlafs & Arzals) are not invited or kept in isolation in the wedding feasts of upper class Muslims (Ashraf). Even if an invitation is extended, the opportunity to eat is given only after the upper-caste people have eaten.
5. Children of discriminated Muslims are forced to sit in separate rows in classrooms of Madrassas.
6. Dead bodies' of those from backward caste are not allowed to be buried in cemeteries of upper caste Muslims. They either bury them in a separate place or a corner of the main cemetery.
7. The upper caste Muslims like Syeds usually don't marry outside their community.
8. In many countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, and Bangladesh Ahmadiyya Muslims are struggling for recognition as Muslims.
9. Mistreatment of the Pasmanda, Hawaris, Halalkhor's, Mehtar's, etc. is a regular process for the so-called upper caste Muslims.
10. Political and religious leadership is controlled by Ashrafs, while non-Ashrafs are hardly represented in socio-economic dealings among the Muslims. Most of leaders are Ashrafs and they do very little for the non-Ashrafs, being barely concerned about their plight. Economically and educationally extremely marginalised backward class of the Indian Muslim community is the victim of pervasive discrimination

Due to absence of the studies and data,

stories regarding Dalit Muslims' discrimination over food, marriage, studies, and cremation go less or unreported and unpublished.

The recent example is when Danish Azad Ansari, a 33 year old man takes oath as a minister of state (MoS) in Yogi Adityanaths' cabinet in Uttar Pradesh. Since taking the oath, Ansari faced on several social media platforms have been filled with derogatory, casteist remarks against his birth, where he has been repeatedly called a "julaha". Comments are like "Why are these Julahas so happy these days? Have they won a lottery." Another user wrote "Sadar saheb does all the hard work but a Julaha has been made a minister." Here Sadar Sahab refers to a high-caste Muslim.

Examples of some idioms and phrases that mock Julahas are popular in the Muslim community, for example:

1. *'Khet khaye gadha, maar khaye Julaha'*

Means it was the donkey who ate the crops, but a Julaha was beaten for it.

2. *'Mere lal ke sau sau yaar, dhunai, Julaha aur manihar'*

Means my son has hundreds of girlfriends, such as Dhunias, Julahas and Manihars.

3. *'Julaha agar namazi hai, toh usne bhi jaalsaazi hai'*

Means if a Julaha is doing namaz, there is something suspicious.

4. *'Kodo Sowa anna nahin, julaha dhunai jan nahin'*

Means Kodo and Sowa cannot be called grains, Julaha and Dhunia caste people cannot be called humans.

Christians

Christianity is a distinct monotheistic religion that dates back to Abraham like Islam and Judaism. According to 2011 census of India the country's total population was 121.09 crores out of this 2.78 crores i.e., 2.3 percent are Christians. In India out of 2.78 crores 37 percent constitute catholic Christian and the rest are from other denominations.

There are several denominations or churches within Christianity that fall under categories:

Denomination

Catholicism or Roman Catholicism It is one of the world's largest religious body and the oldest existing western Christian church. It maintains a hierarchical structure, with the Pope, or Bishop of Rome, serving as its head and residing at the Vatican. The followers of the Catholicism are believes that the Pope is divinely ordered head of the Church from a direct spiritual legacy of Jesus' apostle Peter. There are 22 Eastern and one Western (Roman or Latin-Rite) specific Churches, or Rites, that make up Catholicism. With around 98% of Catholic membership falling within the Latin Rite, it is by far the largest. The Church has a centralized doctrine and organizational framework, and local congregations are led by volunteer clergy in 176 countries.

Orthodox Christianity The Holy Orthodox Church, which is oldest existing form of Christianity in the East, has a ceremonial head in the form of Bishop of Constantinople (Istanbul), also known as a Patriarch. However, its various regional forms, such as the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, and Ukrainian Orthodox, are autocephalous (independent of Constantinople's authority, and have their own Patriarchs). Orthodox churches are very racially and geographically motivated. The Orthodox Christian religion and the Roman Catholic Church share many doctrinal principles; yet, they disagree on several fundamental ideas and do not acknowledge the authority of the Pope.

Protestant Christianity As an attempt of reform in Roman Catholicism’s customs, dogma, and theology, the Protestant Christianity started in sixteenth century. It includes a number of forms or denominations, that are differ significantly in terms of its structure, belief, relationship to the clergy. Many protestant theologies place a strong emphasis on the primary role of scripture in their faith, encouraging free individual interpretation of Christian scriptures without the need for intervention of a supreme religious leader like the Roman Pope.

The three oldest Protestant denominations, Lutheranism, Calvinism (Presbyterianism), and Anglican Christianity (Episcopalianism), all have established liturgies, governing structure, and formal clergy. Other forms of Protestantism, such as Pentecostal movements and autonomous churches, might be missing one or more of these components, their leadership and beliefs are individualized and dynamic.

It is considered that in 33 CE, Jesus Christ was crucified in Jerusalem. Soon after that the remaining eleven apostles, his closest disciples picked lots to decide where they would go to spread the world of Christ. One of these apostles was St. Thomas, and he picked India. He came through the Mediterranean Sea, via Red Sea and into the Arabian Sea and some say he came

via Afghanistan. Finally he reached the shores of Kerala. It’s believed that he founded the St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Church, first church in Palayoor, Kerala.

From total population of Christians in India, the Protestants are 59.22 percent, Catholics are 33.19 percent, Orthodox are 7.44 percent, and others are 0.15 percent.

There are many sub-groups of Christian’s denomination:

| Denominations | Sub Groups |
|----------------------------|---|
| Catholic or Roman Catholic | Easter Rite Latin Rite or Western Rite |
| Orthodox | Greek Orthodox Russian Orthodox Serbian Orthodox Alexandrian Antiochian |

Protestant

Lutheran
Presbyterian
Quakers
Dutch Reform
German Reform
Baptists
Evangelicals
Pentecostal
Methodist

Discrimination within Christian's in India



In Indian Christian community, Hindu Dalit converts do not have equal rights and any representation at all level within the church. Dalit Christians' are not being appointed as Archbishops on many churches. The church hierarchy in India irrespective of denomination is in mood of denial of secular, civil and human rights for long time. Many organisation like Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) of the discriminated Christian groups are concerned on their discrimination and demanded the justice before law.

Sikhs

Sikh faith system was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Sikhism emerged at a time when there was growing conflict amongst two dominating traditions of Hindus and Islam in India. Guru Nanak

frequently depicted as a reconciler of the two conflicting traditions. The word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word “Shishya” meaning disciple or learner. Those who followed Guru Nanak, came



the founder of the Sikh faith is
The Reform Movements

There have been several religious reform movements among the Sikhs to eradicate social evils. The growth of

to be known as the Sikhs.

different forms of Sikhism sects was influenced by these movements.

Movement/s

Nirankari Movement

Baba Dayal, founder of the Nirankari movement who preached against evils that had slowly crept into the Sikh social and religious life. Also he preached against idolatry, worship of graves, tombs, trees and belief in other complicated rites and ceremonies and exhorted his followers to worship one Nirankar (God). Sikhism developed in the Nirankari. One of the followers, Baba Avtar Singh, who started a parallel movement of his own known as Sant Nirankaris.

Namdhari Movement

Namdhari upsurge, is popularly known as Kuka movement. The movement, which was founded by Bhagat Jawaharmal and Baba Balak Singh, flourished among the Sikhs under leadership of one of the latter's disciples, Baba Ram Singh. Baba Ram Singh particularly enjoined upon his followers worship of one God through prayer and meditation. He also preached against social evils such as the caste system, infanticide, early marriage and barter of daughters in marriage and popularized simple and inexpensive anand Marriage.

Akali Movement

Historically Akalis are the members of the suicide squads of the Sikh armies. That first appeared about 1690 AD when execution of two predecessors and continued persecution by the Mughals forced the Tenth Guru of Sikh (Guru Gobind Singh) to resort to armed struggle against the rulers. The Akalis, who typically wear blue dress, are also known as Nihangs. In 1920s, the Akali movement was again revived as a semi para military volunteers raised to oppose the British government.

Sikh Caste Hierarchy

The teachings of Sikh Gurus, religious institutions of sangat and langar, the absence of caste-based priests and respect for manual labor, all seems to have create a community that did not differentiate between caste, creed and status. Sikhism does not recognise caste divisions as being justified by the scriptures. The focus has been on equality of all people and their brotherhood under one God. But the issue is with the practice, not the principles.

The various castes within the Sikh community, includes:

| S.No | Upper Caste | Middle Caste | Lower Caste |
|------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Jat | Ramgarhia | Ramdasia |
| 2 | Khatri | Tarkhan | Ravidasia |
| 3 | Ahluwalia | Labanas | Ranghreta |
| 4 | Arora | Suniyaras | Sansi |
| 5 | Kamboh | Jheer | Chamar |

Discrimination within the Sikh community

For generations, many members of the lower caste pyramid who adopted the Sikh faith in hope of living in a caste-free, equal world with dignity waited in the hallway of doubt for what the Gurus had rightfully and spiritually guaranteed to them. But...

1. In many villages of Punjab, it's been observed that separate Dalit Gurudwaras and funeral sites exist even today.
2. The Sikhs accepted foreigners of every description in their company, excepting the jats

(Jatts). They also do not approve inter-caste marriages, nor they eat or drink along with other castes.

3. According to the 2011 Census, 31.9 percent of such population belongs to the Dalit community but they have only 3-5 percent of the cultivable land, Manjit Singh, a professor at Panjab University, considers this to be the root cause of caste based discrimination.
4. Political representation or social representation of Dalits is negligible.

Buddhists



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One of the major world religions, Buddhism, had its beginnings in India during the sixth century B.C.E. The Buddhist teachings were spread throughout Central and Southeast Asia. Today, there are Buddhists all over the world.

The religion is based upon the teachings, life experiences of its founder Siddhartha Gautam, born into royal

family of Sakya clan who ruled from Kapilvastu, in Lumbini which is situated near the Indo-Nepal Border.

There are some tenets of Buddhism i.e., Madhyam Marg, noble truths which were the essence of the religion, Three Pitakas i.e, Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka, and Abhidamma Pitaka.

School of thoughts/Sect

Mahayana Mahayana is a Sanskrit phrase that basically leads to "Great Vehicle." It holds that idol worship of Buddha and Bodhisattvas who represent Buddha Nature and the heavenliness of Buddha.

Hinayana This term is also taken from a Sanskrit word which literally means "Lesser vehicle, also known as Abandoned Vehicle or Defective vehicle". It adheres to the doctrine of elders or the fundamental teachings of the Buddha.

Vajrayana Vajrayana usually referred to as tantric Buddhism, meaning "The Vehicle of the Thunderbolt." It is grounded on esoteric elements and very complex set of rituals compared with the rest of the Buddhist schools.

Jains



Jainism gained prominence when Lord Mahavira spread the religion in the sixth century B.C. There were 24 great teachers (Tirthankara) and the last was Lord Mahavira. The word 'Jain' is comes from jina or jaina which means the 'Conqueror'. Samyaktarshana (Right Faith), Samyaktjnana (Right Knowledge), and Samyaktcharita (Right Sects in Jainism

Action) were the major tenets of Jainism. The major doctrines are Ahimsa (No injury to any living being or non-violence), Satya (Do not speak a lie), Asteya (Do not steal), Aparigraha (Do not acquire property), and Brahmacharya (Observe continence).

Digambara

Mula Sangh
Bisapantha
Terapantha
Taranpantha
Samaiyapantha
Gumanapantha
Totapantha

Svetambara

Murtipujaka
Sthanakvasi
Terapanthi

Zoroastrians (Parsis)



Zoroaster, also known as Zarathushtra, was a reformer and spiritual leader who lived in modern-day Iran in the sixth century BCE. His teachings and wisdom set the foundation for ancient religion of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians follow the Avesta as their sacred text, and they have a single God they refer to as Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord).

The first Zoroastrians arrived in India in the Tenth century. Landed on the Gujarat coast, and by the Seventeenth century, majority of them had settled in Bombay (Mumbai). According to 2011 census 57,264 Parsis are residing in India, mostly in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Sects in Zoroastrians

Shahenshais

They calculate their calendar from the last Sassanian king, Yazdegard III.

Kadimis

They claim their calendar is the oldest and most accurate.

Faslis

They follow the traditional Persian calendar.

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