

# Rise of Violence against Minorities, Fragile governance or Structured Marginalization?

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 10 January 2019

### Keywords

Minority, Structural Marginalization, Governance, Fragile, Administration

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## ABSTRACT

NDA led BJP government slogan 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' has been perceived a major heart winning for common citizen of India and it successfully culminated into majority seats win. But once it came into power, on the ground the results are contradictory to their actual commitment; the violence against minorities went up all time high. So, the question is does violence against minorities are the product of fragile governance or is it structured marginalization? Because minority communities are facing multiple structural marginalizations due to this ongoing systemic violence and in recent time it has worrying conditions especially in Jharkhand because of mishandling or close nexus of state administration in dealing with such issues. This paper attempt to understand the dynamism of close nexus between state society relations on which it operates, It tries to explore the discourse of minority in political development that became central point of debate and discussion in contemporary India. The study conduct on the basis of primary data from the field as well as secondary data collection come into analyzed retrieved from online available reports and academic journals and books.

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## 1. Introduction

The replacement of UPA by BJP-allied NDA government in last 2014 general election with big promises in terms of 'SABKA SAATH SABKA VIKAS' was actually seen its commitment to improve conditions of common citizen of India but unfortunately the case is extremely contradictory. The rise of BJP in occupying political power in majority of the states and the scale of violence against minorities went up all time high. The recent saffron group's frequent attacks, killings in the name of cow vigilantism and rioting in particular areas which were always remained communally sensitive suffered most. The minority communities are facing multiple structural marginalizations due to this ongoing systemic violence. By analyzing the historical context of minorities persecution it continued well-organized manner as it exhibited in past like; Gujarat pogrom 2002, Kandhamal-Orissa 2008, Assam 2012 and Muzaffarnagar-2013 riot. It is evident the new trends in targeting minorities especially Muslims are high. The case has worrying conditions because of mishandling of state administration in dealing with such issues. The political nexus of these groups have huge setback on system morale. The religious appeasement of government has policy paralyzed that hugely impacted on governance system. It has compromised with democratic values and constitutional ethos. So, the question is does violence against minorities are the product of fragile governance or is it structured marginalization? Though, it is government duty to take necessary steps to ensure peace and harmony in living together as a citizen of this country. By going through recent incidents which received more coverage in media and it shaped common understanding of communities that there is silent assent of state administration that institutionalized the structural violence of minorities.

This paper attempts to understand the relationships between religion and politics in India and how systemic violence and structural marginalization of minorities are being

done. It tries to explore the discourse of minority in political development that became central point of debate and discussion in contemporary India. The issue picked in this study are primarily based on recent series of incidents with special attention of Hindi speaking regions because of recent systematic targeting of minorities outnumbered other states. It tries to understand why political parties especially ruling regime persistent on minority concern and how minorities are being systematically marginalized from all public sphere. So, therefore there is a need felt to go through study on this issue with necessary measure to highlight and bring some constructive assessment. The study conduct on the basis of primary data from the field and secondary data availed from collection of different articles covering marginalized sections of society especially Muslims.

## 2. Defining Minorities

There are large number of literatures available which deals minority subject but hardly one could suffice describe the exact definition of minority concept which would accepted universally, neither legal nor social terms. Thus, the concept has vaguely defined depending on the context, no such agreed binding definition exist. There are willfully defined minorities by many states to exclude large chunk of masses out from this ambit. To the contrary groups strive to get minority status that hurdled in formulating universally accepted norms. In result, there is lack of international laws as a guiding principle in pronouncing the concept. (J. Rehman, 2000).

There are many classification of Minority in terms of defining the group of people living in a state boundary. One among major classifications is on the basis of numerical inferiority of a social group within a state territory; it is supposed to conceptually understand a minority group. This conceptual determination of a group of people's status depends on the size of numbers lesser to the larger groups of the country. The other

classification of conceptual determining of a group of people is on the basis of power domination. Social scientists explain, minority is not just a numerical phenomena rather it is a political and sociological reality. From a political point of view, a minority situation is based on the degree of political participation and social inclusion rather than on numbers of members of a specific group. In fact, minorities are possibly undermined not so much by their weaknesses in numbers, but by their exclusion from power. (Khan, 2012)

History has taught lesson that Inter or intra-state conflict are the by-product of failure of the political system in protecting minority rights. In these conditions International systems intervene in the matter of human rights violation surpassing state sovereignty in terms of internal matters. However, every country has their own preferences in giving the minority rights according to its own suitability. There is no international clear cut law definition which bound onto them in protecting minority rights nor does it have power to interfere in state's territorial sovereignty. In the absence such authority regimes either deny the existence of minority or willfully fail in protecting their legal rights in their territorial boundaries. (Khan)

### 3. Indian Minorities and Pervasive use of Minoritism

India is a country with vast composite heterogeneous cultural assortment; its interwoven socio-culture brings strength and sustainability. The Indian composite culture and civilization is the product of centuries old assimilation and amalgamation. Over the period, it developed a different civilizational unity and that is referred as "unity in diversity" in which each one retain its own identity in a wholesome, like a bouquet of flowers or vegetables in a salad bowl. This mixture of identities is interwoven into multi-ethnic society of India (Khan, 1992). One can clearly get impression of Indian diversity once it comes to know the demographic heterogeneity of societies. It has surpassed a billion population comprises six major ethnic groups, six large religious groups and approx. 6400 castes and sub castes in which it speak 18 different languages recognized officially. There is another multilayered class within each ethnic community further complicate the identity mixture. (Marguerite, 1976).

Though, it is broadly classified in four types of minority in India; linguistic, religious, caste, and tribal. But these divides insignificance in Indian context, much of debates and discussions always centered to religious minority because it remained always contested subject due to the artificial construction of states boundaries on the basis of religious identity that partitioned undivided India unrealistically. There is continuous struggle to assert identity based demand within India in the constitutional limits. Although, India does not recognize any official religion and it proclaims a democratic secular republic. While proclaiming it a secular polity, religion has a presence in the country's public and political life; it did not affirm as a private affair and exhibited in public places everywhere.

### 4. The Paradigm shift of Politics from Secular to Communal

The 2014 Loksabha election became major deciding factor inroad to power grabbing of Hindutva Politics. Bharatiya Janata Party, Hindu nationalism appealed succeeded in gaining

popularity among common Indian masses and it has been voted with thumping majority that made possible to the main political party Congress to out of office. The defeat came as a shock to the Congress and its allies who had been successfully striving India to the development goals with some corruption charges that charged sporadically the negative propaganda. However, it is irrational to summarize the future of secular Indian politics as dead horse. As Amartya Sen opined that the rise of Hindutva nationalism in mainstream politics has become the new political reality of India. (Bhargava, 1998). Although, it is undeniable that Congress has lost the ground which is unusual but it is predicted that it has capacity to recapture as it has done earlier in Indian political history.

The plight of secular nationalist approach are attributes of failure of earlier nation builders that descent into chaos among common understanding of Nehruvian secular civic model of Indian democracy. Many have tried to explain this answer and there are many scholars who explained these phenomena by emphasizing the causes of crucial transformations in Indian politics which enabled the BJP ascending to control state. It require a thorough study on what ground civic nationalism faded away by replacing ethnic nationalism in which religious identity became instrumental in politics. To understand these transformations, there is a need to go through discourse of Indian politics and in general popular mass perception centered to secularism synonymously being used as minority appeasement.

### 5. Factors behind Violence against Minorities

There is no clarity of state role in terms of religious belief. Although, constitution clearly pronounces that state has no religion, it has secular character yet in practice governments directly or indirectly involve in religious affairs or intervened from time to time to make reforms are seen encroachments in their personal matter discriminatory. The debate over the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the rights of religious minorities are considered discriminatory against Hindus. The BJP added fuel to this grievance by insisting that the demands of other communities to maintain their retrogressive personal laws was threatening a sense of common citizenship and consequently, the integrity of the nation itself. By playing up the notion of threat skillfully, the BJP planted potent seeds of insecurity, which allowed them to steadily politicize religious identity as a major force in Indian politics. The BJP politicized the dominant Hindu identity by shoring up the notion of threat to the nation-state by pseudo-secular policies that pamper religious minorities and lower castes groups. Hansen's emphasis on how the dominant community is often politicized by a perceived threat is essential because it provides a better explanation for why conflicts between Hindus and Muslims have been particularly frequent and violent in India (Hansen & Bloom, 1999).

One major setback blown to Congress through its initiatives one particular Sachchar Committee Report commissioned by UPA and some recommendations are being documented in policy process alleged by BJP minority appeasement. Although, most of its recommendation still not implemented due to weak political will. Another most critically pressing subject became was the Prime-minister Manmohan

Singh remarks that minority has the first right to national resources which is being politicized by BJP very aggressively and they quite became successful to malign the image of Congress and its political future by demonizing it in front of majority masses. Most of secular parties used Sachchar Committee Report in their public speeches to woo the Muslim minority vote bank in their favour that consequently went in favour of right wing parties. BJP has been successful to politicize the minority stunt by emphasizing on how the dominant community tends to feel most threatened by these policies. The politicization of Hinduism was thus shown to be a reaction to the perceived threats created by the democratic transformation of political community. There is a false creation of insecurity among majority population. If anybody talk about secularism it means he or she is anti-Hindu. The propaganda goes on day by day with false words like "Hindu ghata desh bata" these types of perceptions deeply penetrated among Hindu population. This is why majority of Hindu feel nervousness and anxious about its future. These insecurity dilemmas led the growth of right wing forces that promises to the majority Hindu's to the creation of Hindu nation state. RSS as an umbrella organization strategically devised many frontlines and nourished many different organizations which came into being with different names and motives. The ongoing attacks on minorities and Dalits are by product of these false narratives.

## 6. The Recent Scenario

Most of recent communal violence against minorities came from Hindi belt especially Jharkhand that became battle ground for political control in the tribal-dominated state where 26 percent tribal populations live there. The main political contestation is among BJP and JMM who try to garner support by various divisive methods. Some other political parties also has support base in non-tribal populations. Jharkhand has intensified among various political parties in recent times. The JMM and the BJP are the main political players in the region, but, Babulal Marandi is also trying to get a foothold for his party among the crucial tribal electorate by waving new political party of JVM. Former Deputy Chief Minister and All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) leader Sudesh Mahto is trying to woo the non-Adivasi population of state and quite successful.

BJP has successful in footing its ground here by divisive politics. It has currently 42 seats alone with AJSU 8 seats are in power. From the creation of a separate state of Jharkhand from Bihar, most of time it ruled state with some interval period; the saffron ideology has been deeply penetrating in societies even in tribal region of Santhal Parganas where it won 5 seats among 18 seats. This is not a mean achievement for the saffron party, which had struggled to win even a single seat in the Santhal Pargana region not long ago. It is because of saffron outfits continuous hard work in tribal areas. It has used several strategic tactics to convert tribal and lower caste population in Hindu dominion. The larger insecurity threat has been sown from the Muslims here very cleverly among non-Muslim populations. There are many incidents happened in which it used to create direct confrontation between tribal and Muslims population. At the same time it has recruited majority of foot soldiers from lower caste groups through sanskritization of them into Hindu fold. Although, Jharkhand populations are

largely constitute lower caste echelon and they were living peacefully with fellow Muslim neighbours from years back. The majority of Muslim populations are native origins that were converted long ago.

The transformation of non-Hindu populations into Hindu religion is the saffron ideological manoeuvring of larger masses with the silent support of BJP rules. Once incident happened in Gumla district in which tribal and Muslim came into confrontational mode due to damage of tribal leader's statue. It was picked by BJP who facilitate all support against minority community. There are many occasions in which right wing groups uses every platform to create false propaganda against minority to bring non-Muslims into their fold. There was a Sarna-Sanatan Mahasammelan organised by Hindu Jagran Manch in Gumla's Param Vir Albert Ekka Stadium where senior RSS leader Indresh Kumar addressing the crowd claiming that Sanatan and Sarna religion were same and those who arguing against this are the enemy of us, they are conspiring to divide the people of this land. He further elaborates that there are many fronts in which India is fighting and there is also threat within the state, for that a similar surgical strike needed against the religious conversion in the region (N Kumar, 18 Oct. 2016).

These types of programmes are being organised every corner of the state. Which is creating huge cleavages between social groups and this divides are culminating into hatred against each other especially against Muslims that outburst in many occasions in the name of cow protection. There is series of incidents occurred of mob lynching where uncontrolled crowd led by RSS outfits brutally killed innocent men not spared even minors. Apart from old pattern of communal violence in festive season where it became regular practice of riot in which killing arson, looting, damaging of Muslims properties is became routine offence. In most of cases, mainstream media shy away to question the state failure and investigate the real causes and conspirator behind it. It is social media that highlights the matters gravity; although, some incidents covered by national and regional daily only to boost TRP of channel but hardly one investigate matter in detail. The ongoing of societal transformations in radicalizing of majority have long repercussion in Indian societies.

The incidents of communal violence and role of state are the main cause of worrying. The history of communal violence has long past but the way state response it has huge setback to the very democratic secular character of the Indian state. All BJP's ruling state are going through constitutional crisis position where it is demonstrating unwelcome move. Protection of the people is the state duty pronounced by the constitution without any discrimination and they are bound to do so. To the contrary, BJP's leaders openly supporting to the criminal who have been charged of grave crime committed in communal violence or killed innocent men in the name of Hindu Pride. They have visited to the accused house and promising all support citing him great Hindu warrior. One such incident in which BJP Cabinet Minister Jayant Sinha garland to convicted criminals who were out of bail, same one BJP MLA Yadurnath Pandey visited Alimuddin killer's house and ensured his freeing from case and reward him, these tendencies created disrespect for law & order and boosted morale high to the Hindutva Sena to go at any length and sabotage administration.

## 7. Role of Civil Societies to the Current Crisis

There are large numbers of protests occurred in different part of the country joined by many people belonging from various socio-culture organisations. A large numbers of common citizens outpoured for demonstrations in different part of regions from national to international level against these criminal atrocities. They demanded harsh punishment for those perpetrators who involved in killing of minorities and Dalits. Despite all demonstrations and protests to ensure safety and security for them, government inaction to do swift justice seems very frustrating. It is because of the involvement of ruling party's leaders in these crime raises serious doubt over their intention in delivering fair justice to victims. In these situations there is hardly any hope for common citizens to get their rights to protected. All such efforts by civil societies to protect its civil political rights have been derailed by politically aligned administration. And the dilemma is that in most of cases the ruling party allege opposition for fuelling crisis and blame game use to start over whose is responsible for the incident and it dilutes the actual matter giving much room to mislead the investigation. These set tendencies of blame game helps law enforcement agencies in manipulating the case into different direction to appease the ruling regime and these patternistic behaviour show bureaucratic apathy and inhumanly approach in dispersing cases.

## 8. Media Role in Covering Minority Issues

Reporting on minority issues has increased in recent times but the problem is that large numbers of national as well as international media reports come up with majoritarian version of voices. Although it is established fact that in most of cases minorities' people were targeted and also framed despite their non-involvement in crimes. This double victimization often inflicted upon them because of the biased reporting of media houses which confuse common people to take side on which direction it proceed further. The decline of professional morality and ethics of media reporting in general are very disappointing. There are numerous examples in which it has been totally biased accusing the victims for those lynching inflicted upon them and defend culprits. This is why international body of media watch put Indian media in a very poor light.

If we closely watch the recent attacks on minorities and Dalits, it would be clearly visible the dubious role of media in portraying hate crimes by Hindutva forces are the outcomes of victims persuasion whose acts are liable for these attacks. It becomes habitual in reporting majoritarian version of false reasoning for inciting crime rather than bring liable guilty to those groups who involve in such crime, they give clean chit them. In result of these reporting, the investigating agencies put in a condition where they have to take some balancing act and it halt the fair investigation in framing those culprits liable to the crime. In all recent cases where minority and Dalits being attacked in Jharkhand meted same fate and role of media is very worrying. On the basis of these events and the way it come into light through media coverage itself damaged the credibility of it functioning. Most of people nowadays prefer social media for news update rather than watching television news channels.

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is urgent need to intervene in this matter by all political parties and civil societies' members to ensure the justice and to control the ongoing systematic violence against minorities in India and particularly in Jharkhand.

- There is a separate ministry which looks after minority affairs, so it necessary to make the nodal agencies independent in handling such issues by initiating a particular department which take concrete plan and policy formulation approach in dispersing those cases.
- There is a need to form committees in each district where minority peoples are regularly being attacked by communal violence and faces discrimination. These committees should empower to research and investigate each and every case of violence especially pre-election and post-election periods. The committee research would bring the causes of violence and quantum of loss of human suffering and properties damages.
- On the basis of such research, minority should be rehabilitated or those who bear the persecution of riots irrespective religion. In each district, there should have some sustainable programme facilitated by government like; employment generating schemes, housing allotment, poverty eradication measures. At the same time organizing programmes, cultural activities to sensitize, aware and bring communal harmony, in which both minority and majority will participate and get to know each other along with their culture.
- There is a strong need of civil society engagement to campaigns in socializing the masses through every means of communication in right direction and in advocating to take concrete steps by the government to ensure peace & security of each and every citizen.
- There is also need to bridge the gap between different communities by forming volunteer groups who are engaged in quelling crisis through communicating authority as well as responsible persons in societies. With the help of commission such group should be created by involving minority as well as majority people. It will help in diffusing disputes among themselves.
- There is also need a team who have specialized in taking swift action to engage the Local government/administration at the time of violence to secure minority people's lives and damage of properties by taking immediate action under the prescribed laws.
- In summing up, government must rehabilitate such affected families by compensating and ensuring safety & security for them. There is a strong political commitment needed from political parties from the top to down level either in government or opposition to protect minorities from recurrent violence. Minorities must not be used as an instrument of politics to play blame games and gain benefits. The enforcement of law with impartial outlook could make a difference and establish rule of law in the country.

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