

Welfare Schemes for development of Minorities in India

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Abstract:

"A civilisation can be judged by the way it treats its minorities."

– Mahatma Gandhi

India is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual nation with diversity as its strength. The Government of India has made provisions for both religious and linguistic minorities. At present, it has notified six religious groups as minority groups viz., Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Zoroastrian (Parsi), and Jain. The goal of this paper is study the various steps have been taken by the Government for the progress and overall development of different religious minorities. One such initiative is the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities which is an overarching programme covering various schemes and initiatives of different Ministries/ Departments. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has been implementing various schemes for the education of children from the minority communities. The various initiatives and schemes of the government promote inclusive education by improving access and equity for the notified minority communities.

Key Words: Minorities, Welfare Scheme, Government, vulnerable people, Rights, Constitution of India.

Introduction:

Minorities are less aware of their rights and government schemes which leaves them more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in this regard the Government has launched numerous schemes for the social and economic welfare of the minorities of the nation. Government schemes can be defined as a plan, design or program formulated by the government for the welfare of the minority community people. The Government launches different schemes from time to time having a specific objective. The most of these government Programmes and schemes are designed to help the socio economically deprived, rural, or vulnerable people in the society.

The beneficiaries of these government schemes mostly comprise of economically backward or weaker sections of the society and low-income families. The Objective of Union Government Schemes is to uplift the poor section of the society, improve the quality of life, development of rural and backward areas, provide financial security,

education and training to the vulnerable section of the nation, provide financial assistance to women, small business and weaker segment of the society and promoting small scale business by providing entrepreneurial and training facilities and regardless of caste, religion, location, or community is at the heart of the government's welfare programs.

Understanding the Minorities:

Minorities are groups of people who do not enjoy a proportionate share of social, economic, or political power in a society. This is a sociological perspective. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'Minority' as "a smaller number or part, especially a number or part representing less than half of the whole; a relatively small group of people, differing from others in race, religion, language, or political persuasion." A special Sub-committee on the Protection of Minority Rights, appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1946, defined 'minority' as those "non-dominant groups in a population which possess a wish to preserve stable ethnic, religious, and linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of population."

The Indian Constitution does not define minorities. Although, it uses the word 'Minorities' in Articles 29, 30, 350A and 350B. Article 29 has the word 'minorities' in its marginal heading and specifies that any section of citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script, or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. Article 30 state specifically of two categories of minorities linguistic and religious. The Articles 350A and 350B relate to linguistic minorities only. The report by the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities is divided into two volumes. The volume can be accessed from: According to the Report of National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 2007, two types of minorities are recognised in India - Religious Minorities and Linguistic Minorities. At present, the categories of Religious Minorities include: Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi (Zoroastrian) and Jain. As regards Linguistic Minorities, there is no majority at the national level and so the minority status is to be essentially decided at the State/Union Territory level. This paper relates to the former as specified in Article 30.

Whom belongs to a minority group:

A person belonging to any of the recognised religious minorities at the national level namely, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi (Zoroastrian) and Jain. These communities are notified by the Union Government under Section 2 of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. Jain community was also notified as minority community on 27 January, 2014, according to the Gazette F.No.1-1/2009- NCM of India Extraordinary in Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) by Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India dated 27 January, 2014.

According to the Census of India 2011, the Muslim population is 17.22 crore (14.23%), Christian 2.78 crore (2.30%), Sikh 2.08 crore (1.72%), Buddhist 84.43 lakh (0.70%) and Jain 44.51 lakh (0.37%). Data for Parsi (Zoroastrian) is not available in the Census 2011.

Constitutional provisions safeguard the rights of minorities.

The Constitution has adopted several safeguards to protect minorities in the country. Some of these rights are common to all the citizens, including minorities. These rights are enshrined in the following Articles of the Constitution:

- Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

- Article 16 ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and makes provisions for certain "Classes" for employment, appointment and promotion in the services under the State.
- Article 25 ensures freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
- Article 26 ensures the right to manage religious institutions, religious affairs, subject to public order, morality and health.
- Article 27 ensures freedom from payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion
- Article 28 ensures freedom to attend religious worship in religious institution or religious worship in certain educational institutions.
- Article 29 gives minorities the right to conserve their language, script, and culture.
- Article 30 gives the right to minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.
- Article 347 grant to the use of minority languages for official purpose.
- Article 350 directs the State to allow the use of minority language for redressal of grievances.
- Article 350A directs the State to provide facilities to linguistic minority groups for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education.
- Article 350B provides provision for a special officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President.

The different acts enacted for the welfare of Minorities.

The Government of India supports welfare of minorities through different acts listed below:

- Dargah Khwaja Saheb Act, 1955;
 - National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992;
 - National Commission for Minority Educational Institution (NCMEI) Act, 2004 (amended in 2006 and 2010);
- and
- Waqf Act, 1995; Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2013.

The Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities.

1. Equitable availability of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
2. Upgrading access to School Education.
3. Greater resources for teaching Urdu.
4. Modernizing and improving Madrasa Education.
5. Scholarships for admirable students from minority communities.
6. Improving educational infrastructure through the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF).
7. Self-employment and wage employment for poor.
8. Improving of skills through technical training.
9. Enrich the credit support for economic activities.
10. Recruitment in Central and State Services.
11. Proper Equitable share in Rural Housing Scheme.
12. Improvement in the condition of slums/areas inhabited by minority communities.
13. Prevention of communal occurrence.
14. Prosecution for communal offences; and
15. Rehabilitation of victims of communal riots.

Welfare schemes for minorities

- **Scholarships:** Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, and Merit-Cumulative-Means based scholarships are all available.
- **Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship:** for deserving females studying in Classes IX to XII.
- **The Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme:** It offers financial support to students from classified minority communities to pursue higher education, such as Ph.D. and M.Phil.
- **Naya Savera Free Coaching and Allied Scheme:** With a total annual family income of less than Rs. 6 lakhs, it seeks to improve the abilities and knowledge of students and candidates from minority populations.
- **Seekho aur Kamao (Learn & Earn)** is an effort for minorities to improve their skill sets in a variety of contemporary and traditional fields.
- **Upgrading the Skill and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD) program:** to provide a platform for minority craftsmen and chefs from around the nation to demonstrate and market their finest handicrafts and delicately produced goods through “Hunar Haats” organized by the Ministry.
- **Nai Manzil:** It aims to give minority youngsters in these communities, access to education and skill development.
- **Gharib Nawaz Employment Training Program:** Via this program youths from those who belongs to minority communities can take short-term courses to strengthen their skills for the workforce.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is implementing this flagship program with the goal of providing skilling to one crore people across the nation, including members of minority communities, through Short Term Training (STT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- **National Minorities Development Finance Corporation (NMDFC) Loan Schemes:** It offers concessional loans for self-employment and income-generating enterprises, for the socioeconomic development of the “backward parts” of the recognized communities.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):** It is implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. It aims to enhance minorities’ socioeconomic circumstances and access to necessities in order to enhance their quality of life and lessen inequalities in the designated Minority Concentration Areas. Residential schools, school buildings, hostels, degree colleges, ITIs, polytechnics, health centres, skill centres, and sports facilities are just a few of the important projects in the education, health, and skill sectors that have been sanctioned under PMJVK.
- **Nai Udaan:** The main goal of the program is to provide direct financial assistance to minority candidates who have passed preliminary examinations held by the Union Public Selection Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), and State Public Selection Commission (SPSC), in order to fully support the appointment process at various Union and State level Civil Services.

Conclusion:

These welfare schemes aim to provide better socio-economic facilities to minority communities, particularly in the field of education, health, and skill development and it helps to secure minorities rightful place in society and to enable them to decide their own destiny and for the growth of genuine and sustainable democracy, this would eventually reduce the gap between the national average and the minority communities with regard to backwardness parameters. This will not only uplift their personality even so will open the way for their social and economic empowerment.

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