Minorities in India

1) Introduction

- The Indian socio-economic fabric is very complex because it is much affected by caste, religion and all the more regional / linguistic differentials.

- At the same time, the Indian economic, social and political institutions which are persisting since centuries have a historical basis.

- These factors have given a unique character to Indian society. It has become a conglomeration of various layers and segments divided and sub-divided.

2) Constitutional provisions

- The term "Minority" has not been properly defined anywhere in the Indian Constitution.

- But “minority status” has been conferred on many groups.

- According to the Article 29 of the Constitution, any group living within the jurisdiction of India is entitled to preserve and promote its own language, script or literature, and culture.

- Article 30 states that a minority group “whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institution of their choice.”

- Article 51A which is of special relevance for the Minorities
a) citizens’ duty to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India ‘transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities

b) Citizens’ duty to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

- provision for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities and his duties

3) **problems faced by minorities in India**

- **Problem of Identity**
  
a) Because of the differences in socio-cultural practices, history and backgrounds, minorities have to grapple with the issue of identity
  
b) This gives rise to the problem of adjustment with the majority community.

- **Problem of Security**
  
a) Different identity and their small number relative to the rest of the society develop a feeling of insecurity about their life, assets and well-being.
  
b) This sense of insecurity may get accentuated at times when relations between the majority and the minority communities in a society are strained or not much cordial.

- **Problem Relating to Equity**
  
a) The minority community in a society may remain deprived of the benefit of opportunities of development as a result of discrimination.
  
b) Because of the difference in identity, the minority community develops the perception of the sense of inequity.

- **Problem of Communal Tensions and Riots**
  
a) Communal tensions and riots have been incessantly increasing since independence.
  
b) Whenever the communal tensions and riots take place for whatever reason, minority interests get threatened

- **Lack of Representation in Civil Service and Politics**
  
a) the Constitution provides for equality and equal opportunities to all its citizens including the religious minorities
  
b) the biggest minority community, that is, Muslims have a feeling among them that they are neglected
  
c) However, such a feeling does not seem to exist among the other religious minority communities such as the Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, for they seem to be economically and educationally better than the majority community.

- **Failure to Stick on Strictly to Secularism**
  
a) India has declared itself as a “secular” country. The very spirit of our Constitution is secular.
b) But in actual practice there is lack of commitment to secularism, purely religious issues are often politicised by these parties.

4) **causes for anger against minorities**
   - Socio-economic rise of lower strata of society constitutes a major change in social scenario and is unacceptable to a few
   - The backward classes not having access to proper education have had the privileges of reservation, which takes a large proportion of seats either in jobs or schools/colleges- this makes people in general category hostile towards the reserved sections, especially the minorities.
   - Inability of the government to create better employment opportunities for the large section of youth has created economic backwardness
   - cultural / religious revivalism and glorification

5) **Some of the recent incidents**
   - a) Una incident where Dalit beating for skinning of dead cow
   - c) 2015 Dadri mob lynching case in which a mob of Hindu people attacked a Muslim family
   - Political culture of appeasing minority has become one part, not acceptable to other sections.

5) **Education and Employment among Muslims in India:**
   - Participation of Muslims is relatively low in the education space but has improved in recent years.
   - The participation of Muslims in higher education is particularly poor
   - Household endowments along with location play a critical role in determining participation of Muslims in education.
   - Muslims are predominantly engaged in self-employment and their participation as regular worker especially in the tertiary sector in urban areas is low as compared to other socio religious communities

6) **Government Initiatives**
   - The Government has taken various steps to improve socio-economic and educational status of minority communities
   - **Prime Minister’s New 15 Point Programme**
     - a) Prime Minister’s New 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities, which is an overarching programme covering various schemes/ initiatives of different Ministries/ Departments
b) Earmarking 15% of targets/outlays for the minorities or specific monitoring of flow of benefits/funds to minorities or areas with substantial minority population.

c) The programme is being implemented with the objectives of enhancing opportunities for education of minorities.

d) ensuring equitable share for minorities in economic activities and employment

e) improving the condition of living of minorities

f) preventing and controlling the communal disharmony

• National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was set up by the Union Government of India in 1992 to protect the existence of minorities all over India.

• **USTAAD**

  a) The Scheme aims at upgrading Skills and Training in preservation of traditional Ancestral Arts/Crafts of minorities.

• **Hamari Darohar**

  a) The Scheme aims to preserve rich heritage of minority communities in context of Indian culture.

• **Khwaza Garib Nawaz Senior Secondary School**

  a) Will be established at Ajmer by Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) to give a fillip to minority education.

• **Nai Manzil**

  a) A bridge course to bridge the academic and skill development gaps of the deeni Madrasa pass outs with their mainstream counterparts.

• **Strengthening of State Wakf Boards**

  a) The scheme envisages to provide assistance for meeting the training and administrative cost of State Wakf Boards.

  b) Removal of encroachment from Wakf Properties and also strengthening of Zonal/Regional offices of Wakf Boards.

• **Nai Roshni**

  a) The scheme is envisaged to reach out to women through nongovernmental organizations who will be provided with financial support.

  b) Conducting leadership development trainings so that women are empowered and emboldened to move out of the confines of home and community.

• **Minority Cyber Gram**

  a) The MCG programme seeks to introduce digital literacy skills in identified minority clusters in India.
b) through designated Digital Fellows towards knowledge empowerment and entitlement gains of minority focused groups and beneficiaries

7) **Conclusion**

- Only a coalition of the oppressed castes, classes and gender across religions can overcome communalism
- Struggle for secularisation has to go along with the resistance to the majoritarian attempt to equate majority and minority communalism
- The scourge and cycle of communal hatred and violence can be stopped only by ending first the history of false equivalences and selective silences.