

Indian Muslims' Socio-Political and Economic Challenges in the Globalised World

Sadia Khanum* and Tasawar Hussain**

Abstract

India is a multi-religious and multiethnic society, the rise of Hindutva in the country's politics has polarised it in an unprecedented way. The state's inclination towards Hindutva is evident from the plight of Indian Muslims, who constitute one of the largest minority communities anywhere in the world. In today's globalised world, analysing Muslim minority's socio-economic conditions is imperative especially in the context of the United Nations Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals. This paper primarily examines the post-globalisation socio-economic and political status of the Muslim minority in India. The study focuses on the changing social and political dynamic of Indian society and repercussions for Muslims under the BJP's government. The findings bring forward an alarming situation by highlighting that Muslims minority in India is systematically deprived and by implication, lagging behind vis-à-vis other communities in a state that claims to abide by liberal, secular and democratic norms. Economic and political deprivation, communal riots, prevailing illiteracy, poor health and social conditions are the main characteristics of the Muslim community of India.

Keywords: India, Muslim Minority, Globalisation, Hindutva, South Asia, BJP, Communalism.

Introduction

Indian Muslims' socio-political and economic status has been the subject of debate for a long time, however, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s

* The author is Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Iqra University, Islamabad Campus. Email: sadia.khanum@iqraisb.edu.pk

** The author is Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Iqra University, Islamabad Campus. Email: tasawar.hussain@iqraisb.edu.pk

and India's fast pace economic growth have raised the bar of expectations for the Muslim minority as well. The globalisation of India has further intensified the issue of mal-treatment of more than 14 per cent of its population. Muslims population of India is the world's third-largest Muslim population and the largest Muslim-minority anywhere in the world, yet, they are one of the most deprived religious/ethnic groups in the twenty-first century. As per the available statistics, Muslims lag behind other ethnic and religious minorities in education, economic wellbeing and political representation. The situation is more critical under the BJP's rule in the last decade where frequent communal riots always end in depriving them of their lives and livelihood. Against this pretext, it is pertinent to note that Indian constitution promises all kinds of civil liberties and protection to minorities but in practice these are nowhere near to reality. This scenario, in turn, pose a threat to India's long held tradition of secularism, pluralism and liberal democracy.

The political rise of Hindu right (Hindutva) and by implication, Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) constant victory in elections contributed immensely in triggering anti-Muslim sentiments in India. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ruling BJP has created an atmosphere of ultra-nationalism and tried to consolidate their popularity and acceptability in majority population by using Hindu card since their first tenure in government in 2014. The BJP government has taken radical steps to highlight controversial agendas and convert them into policies. The critics consider the Hindu nationalist agenda as anti-Muslim and an attempt to deprive the country's largest minority of their legal and constitutional rights. The waves of violent riots against Muslims in different parts of India justify critics' concerns that the Modi government is changing the country's secular identity and trying to make it a Hindu republic, denying basic human rights and liberties to non-Hindu citizens of the country.

The present study shows empirical picture of socio-economic and social-political conditions of the Muslim minority in India. In doing so, it first provides an extensive detail of demographic play of Muslim population making them the largest minority community. The next two sections offer the socio-economic and socio-political conditions of the Muslim community leading to the assertion that Muslims are the forgotten minority in terms of their rights and they are lagging behind

socially, economically and politically. It is concluded that such a situation is alarming for India itself because no country in the present globalised world can be developed in true sense while ignoring its largest minority community in the whole process of development. It is advisable for the global community to push India to dispense its constitutional as well as global promises of equal and fair treatment to all of its citizens without any ethnic, racial, religious and other prejudices.

Muslims in India: Demographic Understanding

The data related to the demographic composition of Indian Muslim would be helpful in analysing their socio-economic conditions as well as understanding their political status. According to the Indian censuses, the proportional decadal growth of the Muslim population is 10.70 per cent (1961), 11.20 per cent (1971), 11.36 per cent (1981), and 11.45 per cent (1991).¹ A big number of Indian Muslims reside in the three states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar and West Bengal. More than a half (52.01 per cent) of total Muslim population in the country is located in these three states, more than 1/5 (22.43 per cent) Muslims live in the south Indian states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and the union territory of Pondicherry. About 1/7 (14.9 per cent) Muslims reside in western states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa and 2 union territories of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. 1/20 (5.05 per cent) live in seven states of north-eastern region and 1/25 (3.87 per cent) in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.²

¹ Hafeez Malik, "Indian Muslims: Adaptation to Indian Secularism," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XXXI, no. 1(Fall 2007): 17.

² M. Motiur Rehamn, "Muslim Population in India: Demographic Changes," *Radiance*, vol. XXVII, no. 24, (April 1992): 67. Cited in Shahzana, Malik, *Hindu Revivalism and the Indian Muslims* (Karachi: Royal Book Company), 1994. 68.

Table No. 1

Decadal Growth of India and Muslim Population

Decades	India's Population increases in %	Muslims' population increases in %
1961	21.51	25.61
1971	24.8	30.85
1981	24.69	30.59
1991	23.56	28

Source: S.K. Ghosh, Muslim Politics in India, (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1987), 91.

Early 90s balance of payment crisis resulted in economic reforms in India and the economic development in the next two decades brought substantial improvements in longevity and better earning and living choices. India witnessed a rise in population along with better economic credentials and that concerned the policy makers as the rising population is considered a big hurdle in the way of the country's development and growth. Indian government's measures to curtail population have been fruitful as population growth has slowed in the last three decades. Population growth was 25. 61 per cent in the 1960s and in the 1970s it reached to nearly 31 per cent per decade, however, the population growth in between 2001-2011 decreased to 20 per cent.³

³ Stephanie Kramer, Population growth and religious composition, Pew Research Centre, www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/population-growth-and-religious-composition/

Table No. 2

India's Population Size (1951-2011)

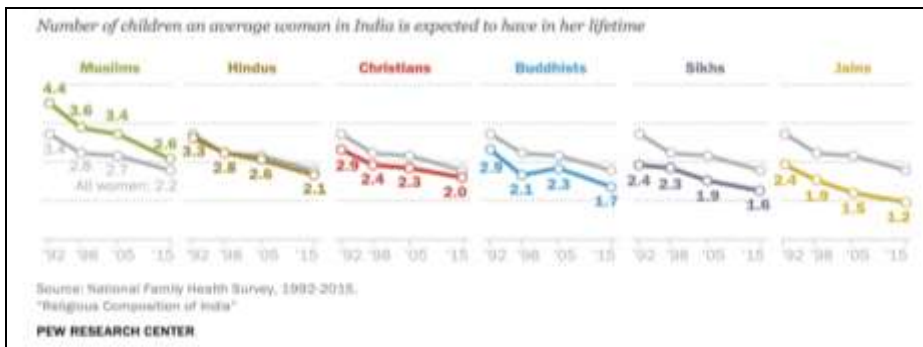
% Increase of India's Population Sizes between Census Years				
	All	Hindus	Muslims	Christians
1951-61	21.6%	20.7%	32.7%	29.0%
1961-71	24.8	23.7	30.9	33.0
1971-81	24.7	24.0	30.7	17.0
1981-91	23.9	22.7	32.9	17.8
1991-2001	21.5	19.9	29.4	22.6
2001-11	17.7	16.7	24.7	15.7

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Indian census data, 1951-2011. "Religious Composition of India"

The slowdown in population growth is visible in all religious identities in India including Muslims. Indian Muslims have always faced criticism for over breeding from Hindu rightists but the national census shows that even Muslims' population has slowed over the last few decades. Muslim grew at 4 per cent per annum at times but slowly the difference in growth rate of Muslim and Hindu population is now almost the same.

Graph No. 1

In India, Fertility Rates have Fallen and Religious Gaps have Shrunk



Source: National Family Health Survey, 1992-2015. "Religious Composition of India"

Now after a quick review of Indian Muslims' population growth and concentration it is also imperative to see if Muslims are a cohesive monolithic body in India or a scattered entity and divided in states and regions.

According to the India's national census 2011, the ratio of Muslims in total population of India is 14.23 per cent that means they constitute the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. The states with large number of Muslims are Assam (34.22 per cent), West Bengal (27.1 per cent), Kerala (26.56 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (19.26 per cent), Bihar (16.87 per cent), Jharkhand (14.53 per cent), Maharashtra (10 million), Andhra Pradesh (9.56 per cent), Lakshadweep (96.58 per cent) and Jammu and Kashmir (68.31 per cent).⁴ Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Lakshadweep are Muslims majority areas, elsewhere Muslims are minority. As per the states, Muslims are not a monolithic block in India rather scattered in different regions and states. Their demographic location is important to know since their political representation depends on their number and the vote bank politics also depends on how large or small a group they are in any state. In the light of the demographic presence of Muslims, it would be easier to find out their socio-political and economic status in modern globalised India.

Muslims' Socio-Economic Condition in the Globalised India

Growing Muslim population's socio-economic development indicators do not portray any fancy picture. Data collected by different government and non-government commissions and surveys show that Muslims lagging behind in almost all human development indexes. Since their social acceptability is problematic in the Indian state and society, therefore, achieving an overall economic and social equality of the Muslim minority is also a tough task. Statistics show that Indian Muslims are more deprived economically than other religious identities. As reported in *Economic Times*, a survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) shows that Muslims' chances of living below poverty line as compared to other Indians are bigger as 31 per cent of Muslim population lives below poverty line compared to 26 per cent of overall

⁴ Muslim Religion Census 2011, Census 2011, <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/2-muslims.html> on 04-09-2022.

Indians. Survey further revealed that nearly one-third of Muslims in India earn less than 550 rupee a month in the year 2004-2005.⁵

Muslims' economic backwardness has many reasons and one and most important is illiteracy and lack of interest in modern education. Most of them are skeptical of sending their children to modern education institutions and prefer madrassa education, meanwhile there is negligence on the part of the state and private organisation and institution since they don't provide enough facilities to Muslims in the field of education. Affordability is another concern as they do not earn well to spend on their children's education.⁶ The NCAER survey reveals that "Muslims are most likely to generate income from small family businesses, partly because of educational differences across the community. It said social group differences in enrollment are striking."⁷ The Sachar Committee Report explains Muslims' educational deprivation in these words:

"Regarding school education, the situation of Muslims is gravely concerning. The data points out that, while the overall levels of education in India measured through various indicators are below universally conventional criteria, the educational standing of the Muslim community, in particular, is even worse than that... When alternate indicators of educational achievement, more illustrative of the growth in education, are considered, a noteworthy inconsistency between the status of Muslims and that of other SRCs (except SCs/STs) is noted. For example, both the Mean Years of Schooling and attendance levels of Muslims are low in unconditional terms and contrast to all SRCs except in some cases SCs/STs. In fact, in many contexts, SCs/ STs are found to have overtaken Muslims."⁸

⁵ "31 Percent Muslims Live Below the Poverty Line: NCAER Survey," *Economic Times*, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/31-per-cent-muslims-live-below-poverty-line-ncaer-survey/articleshow/5734922.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst on 05-09-2022

⁶ Syed Shahabuddin, "Economic Status of Muslim Community in India: An Overview," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. V, no. 1 (1983-84): 246.

⁷ NCAER Survey.

⁸ Rajinder Sachar, "Social, Economic, and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, 2006."

Muslims’s enrollment in higher education institutions is also lower than other Scheduled Classes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The table below contains the data collected by All India Survey on Higher Education Reports (AISHE) (conducted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government Of India).⁹

Table No. 3

Indian Muslim’s Enrollment in Higher Education

Years	Muslim (%)	STs (%)	SCs (%)	OBCs (%)
2010-11	3.8	4.4	11.1	27.6
2011-12	3.9	4.5	12.2	30.1
2012-13	4.2	4.4	12.8	31.2
2013-14	4.3	4.6	13.1	32.4
2014-15	4.5	4.8	13.4	32.8
2015-16	4.7	4.9	13.9	33.75
2016-17	4.9	5.1	14.2	34.4
2017-18	5.0	5.2	14.4	35.0
2018-19	5.2	5.5	14.9	36.3

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education Reports (AISHE), conducted by MHRD, GOI.

Muslim OBCs illiteracy rate is further alarming as they lagged behind in education from general Muslims, OBC Non-Muslims and general non-Muslim population 7 per cent, 8 per cent and 20 per cent (as per enrolment per year) respectively. India’s national average literacy

⁹ “Educational status of Muslims in India: An Overview/Scope for Improvement,” *Muslim Mirror*, <https://muslimmirror.com/eng/educational-status-of-muslims-in-india-an-overview-scope-for-improvement/>

rate is 65 per cent, and the gap for OBC Muslim is 15 per cent higher.¹⁰ Muslims literacy deprivation is reflected in their participation and representation in government jobs as well.

Table No. 4

Muslims in Indian Administrative Services since 1981

Year	Total	Muslims	Percentage
1981	126	1	0.79
1982	167	5	2.99
1983	235	1	0.43
1984	233	6	2.58
1985	214	4	1.87
1986	216	6	2.78
1987	178	5	2.81
1988	249	15	6.02
1989	246	13	5.28
1990	298	9	3.02
1991	217	8	3.69
1992	157	3	91
1993	147	2	1.36
1994	131	2	1.53
1995	91	8	8.79
1996	81	3	3.70

¹⁰ "Socio-Economic Disability and Unemployment Problems Among Muslims Of Other Backward Classes," 6
https://niti.gov.in/planningcommission.gov.in/docs/reports/sereport/ser/stdy_muslim.pdf on 06-09-2022

Strategic Studies

1997	7 6	3	3.95
1998	5 5	1	1.82
1999	5 6	2	3.57
2000	9 3	6	6.45
Total	3266	103	3.15

Source: 'Muslim Representation in the IAS and IPS: An Overview,' Nation and the World, March 2002, cited in Muslim India, No 238, October 2002, p 462.¹¹

Muslims lag behind and struggle in overall living standards as well. As per the Gallup statistics “Muslims of India (51 per cent) are less likely than Hindus (63 per cent) or others (66 per cent) to be satisfied with their standard of living. Similarly, Muslims (65 per cent) are more likely than Hindus (53 per cent) and others (51 per cent) to say their standard of living is staying the same or getting worse.”¹² The graph below shows the Gallup findings (survey conducted in 2010-11) of satisfaction with living standards among different religious communities in India.¹³

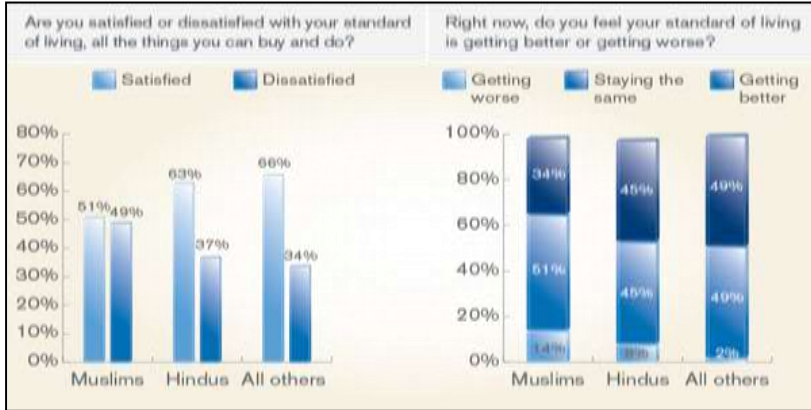
¹¹ Syed Najiullah, “Representation of Minorities in Civil Services,” www.epw.in/journal/2006/08/commentary/representation-minorities-civil-services.html

¹² “Muslims in India: Confident in Democracy Despite Economic and Educational Challenges,” <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157079/muslims-india-confident-democracy-despite-economic-educational-challenges.aspx#:~:text=Muslims%20represent%20India's%20largest%20religious,except%20for%20Indonesia%20and%20Pakistan>

¹³ Gallup.

Graph No. 2

Satisfaction Level Among Different Communities of India



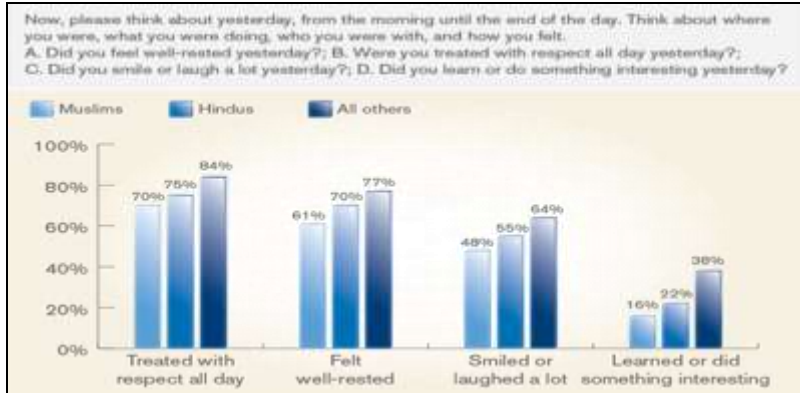
Source: Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157079/muslims-india-confident-democracy-despite-economic-educational-challenges.aspx#:~:text=Muslims%20represent%20India's%20largest%20religious,except%20for%20Indonesia%20and%20Pakistan>

Gallup's inquiry about other social indicators like feeling well and happy shows that Muslims as compared to Hindus and other Indians receive less respect and regards as a community. The margin is not big, however, comparatively 70 per cent Muslims feel respected in India as compared to 75 per cent Hindus and 84 per cent other Indians. As per the Gallup survey, Muslims do not rest well or have quality time in a day.¹⁴ The graph below exhibits Gallup's findings on happiness and positive life experiences among different religious groups.

¹⁴ Gallup.

Graph No. 3

Positive Experiences are Less Common Among Muslims



Source: Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157079/muslims-india-confident-democracy-despite-economic-educational-challenges.aspx#:~:text=Muslims%20represent%20India's%20largest%20religious,except%20for%20Indonesia%20and%20Pakistan>

Globalisation and neoliberal economic reforms were expected to boost per capita income of Indians and over the last three decades per capita income had increased, too, but Muslim population once again couldn't reap the benefits of growth. The National Sample Survey Organisation's statistics show the difference in annual income of Muslims and Hindus in the 1990s was marginal, however, this margin has been increasing in the first decade of the twenty first century.¹⁵ Muslims economic deprivation is tantamount to failure of neoliberal economic reforms along with the state and society. State's discriminatory policies and community's own ideological and faith related insecurities keeping them backward in educational and economic spheres.

¹⁵ Sadia Khanum, *Muslims in Globalized India: An Analysis* (Germany: Laplambert Publications, 2012), 87.

Table No. 5

Annual Income of Religious Communities According to NSSO

Category	50th Round 1993-1994	61st Round 2004-2005
Hindu	24,691	72,618
Muslim	22,786	63,943
Christian	33,178	1,03,453
National	24,980	73,145

Source: Syed Najiullah, The Status of Muslims in India, <http://www.indianmuslims.info/statistics/economic.html>

Table No. 6

Annual Per Capita and Household Income of Different Religious Minorities

Category	Muslims	Christians	Other Minorities
Annual per capita Income	3,678	5,920	2,9427
Household Income	22,807	28,860	30,330

Source: A study by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) August 2006, www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/sachar_comm.pdf

A big number of Muslims are employed in temporary labour related work. Muslims' employment in public or private sector salaried jobs is less than Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Hindu SC/ST have 25 per cent of regular jobs while Muslims have only 13 per cent share in regular salaried jobs.¹⁶ As per Sachar Commission report, Muslims key sources of earning are: "(i) Merchants and shopkeepers (especially for males and in urban areas); (ii) Sales persons and shop assistants (especially for males and in urban areas); (iii) Tailors,

¹⁶ Sachar Committee Report, 2006, 92.

dressmakers and the like (especially for women in urban areas); (iv) Transport equipment operators (especially for males and in urban areas); (v) Tobacco preparers and tobacco product makers (especially women); (vi) Spinners, weaver, knitters and dyers (especially for males in urban area: and (vii) Machinery fitters, assemblers and precision instrument makers (especially for males and in urban areas).”¹⁷

Apart from government’s negligence regarding empowering the Muslim minority, there is constant threat of anti-Muslim rioting in areas where Muslims have their own small scale business and doing comparatively well.¹⁸ If we see the record of communal rioting in different parts of India in the last few decades, economic interests are clearly involved in each confrontation. Muslims were the soft target for the Hindu right wing rioters for their already distorted identification as anti-state/nation (goes back to partition of India and the demand of a new Muslim country out of the united India). Muslims profiling as traitors and not loyal to the state has always been used against them to deprive them of economic and political opportunities.¹⁹ Furthermore, there’s a long history of their struggle to seek justice after suffering discrimination, despite the country’s constitutional guarantees to protect minorities.

Muslims’ socio-economic deprivation leads to their socio-political disadvantages. Lack of political will, organisation and under representation has further added to their miseries.

Socio-Political Condition of Indian Muslims

Minorities anywhere usually follow two methods to participate in electoral politics; first, in a less hostile and threatening social environment they choose to follow the majority and do not feel the need to set a distinct agenda as either they find their identity safe despite being a minority or they feel obliged to shun their identity and assimilate in society well. Second, if minority keeps its distinct identity then result could be a forced isolation or discrimination on the basis of ‘we’ vs.

¹⁷ Sachar Committee Report, 103.

¹⁸ Moin Shakir, *Islam in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1983), 49-50.

¹⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, “Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at the Risk?,” Working Paper no.17, South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg.

‘others.’ Indian Muslims followed the second approach and tried to preserve their distinct identity.²⁰ Muslim community usually participates in electoral politics as a cohesive unit despite their scattered demographic presence. In some constituencies, their voting choices and party preferences have a great impact on election outcomes. Their significance in determining the election results is one of the reasons behind vote bank politics of major national and regional parties. Muslims throughout the post-independence period supported secular parties especially Congress party because of its secular agenda but their support and vote was not constant for any one party. They played the role of kingmakers in states where there is significant Muslim population like Bihar, UP, Kerala. Their voting behaviour changed against Congress after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and that benefited JD in UP and adjacent states of Hindi Belt.

Table No. 7

Shift among Muslim Voters (1995-2000)

Party	1995	1996	1998	1999	2000
Congress	21.9	23.3	14.9	33.9	6.6
BJP+	7.5	5.6	4.2	13.4	7.9
Janata Dal+	57.3	68.9	19.0	–	–
RashtriyaJanata Dal	–	–	59.6	48.2	61.4

*Source: Sadia Khanum, Muslims in Globalised India: An Analysis, 114.*²¹

Muslims’ vote bank clearly favoured the Congress party in 2004 and 2009 election by casting 36 per cent vote in both elections while BJP could secure 7 per cent and 3 per cent votes respectively due to their

²⁰ H W Blair, “Minority Electoral Politics in a North Indian State: Aggregate Data Analysis and the Muslim Community in Bihar,” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 67 (4) (1973): 1275- 87.

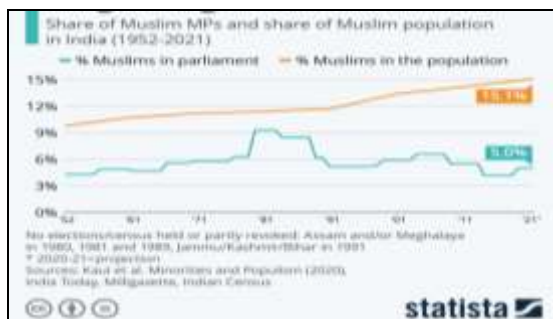
²¹ Khanum , *Muslims in Globalised India: An Analysis*, 114.

communal agenda and Gujarat Riots of 2002.²² In 2014, Lok Sabha elections, BJP secured 9 per cent Muslims votes while Congress managed 38 per cent votes. 2019 general elections saw a sharp change in Muslim voters' behaviour as despite BJP's communal rhetoric and practices Muslims vote percentage increased to 20 per cent for BJP and Congress party could win 30 per cent Muslim votes.²³ It seems Muslim voters are now coming out of their fear of the rise of Hindu nationalism and the reason again is poor performance of the Congress party in delivering their promises to them.

An alarming development witnessed over the time is that Muslims are not having their fair share in the country's legislature despite having a considerable vote bank. Muslims representation in Lok Sabha is decreasing gradually. In the graph given below a sharp decline in Muslims representation in Lok Sabha from 1952 to 2021 can be seen.²⁴

Graph No. 4

Number of Muslim MPs in India



Source: Statista, March 4, 2020, www.statista.com/chart/21025/muslim-representation-lok-sabha-parliament-india/ on 07-09-2022

²² Fact sheet: Muslim representation in Parliament, *India Today*, March 10, 2014, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/muslim-representation/story/fact-sheet-muslim-representation-in-parliament-184338-2014-03-10> on 07-09-2022.

²³ Pew Survey quoted by Aditi Phadnis in *Business Standard*, June 30, 2021, https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/20-muslims-voted-for-bjp-in-2019-general-elections-says-pew-survey-121063000059_1.html on 07-09-2022

²⁴ Katharina Bucholz, Number of Muslim MPs Stagnating Despite Faith Growing, *Statista*, March 4, 2020, www.statista.com/chart/21025/muslim-representation-lok-sabha-parliament-india/ on 07-09-2022

Muslim representation by states is also marginal as compared to their population. Table given below shows Muslim representation in 2014 general elections. Ironically, there's no Muslims MP from 8 states in Lok Sabha.²⁵

Table no. 8

Muslim Representation in 2014 General Elections of India

State	Muslim population (%)	Total MPs	Muslim MPs	% of Muslim MPs	Muslim candidates in polls
Assam	30.9%	14	2	14.23%	30
Andhra Pradesh	9.17%	42	1	2.38%	48
Bihar	16.5%	40	3	7.5%	93
Gujarat	9.06%	26	0	0%	22
Jammu & Kashmir	66.97%	6	4	66.67%	50
Jharkhand	14.00%	14	0	0%	18
Karnataka	12.23%	28	0	0%	48
Kerala	24.7%	20	3	15%	39
Madhya Pradesh	6.36%	29	0	0%	31
Maharashtra	10.6%	48	0	0%	116
NCT of Delhi	10.3%	7	0	0%	25
Rajasthan	10.5%	25	0	0%	26
Tamil Nadu	5.56%	39	2	5.13%	33

²⁵ Fact sheet: Muslim representation in Parliament, *India Today*, March 10, 2014, www.indiatoday.in/india/muslim-representation/story/fact-sheet-muslim-representation-in-parliament-184338-2014-03-10 on 07-09-2022

Strategic Studies

Uttar Pradesh	18.5%	80	7	8.75%	154
Uttarakhand	11.92%	5	0	0%	10
West Bengal	25.25%	42	7	16.67%	58
All India	13.43%	543	30	5.52%	832

Source: "Fact sheet: Muslim representation in Parliament," March 10, 2014, India Today, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/muslim-representation/story/fact-sheet-muslim-representation-in-parliament-184338-2014-03-10>

The underrepresentation of Muslims in national and states' legislature is an indication of polarisation in society, especially under the Modi led BJP government. The rise of Hindu right has changed the political atmosphere in India altogether, all political parties are under pressure to prove themselves loyal to Hindu nationalism and this trend has further marginalised Muslims politically and socially. And while the BJP has made no qualms about its dislike for Muslims, even the states that claim to be secular have not made adequate efforts to accommodate this community. States where secular parties have substantive control and influence, such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, ditched saffronisation based polarisation, however, Muslims population there, too, is ignored and marginalised politically and their stake in politics again is limited to the notorious vote bank politics of majority parties.

Political underrepresentation and marginalisation are having a negative impact on the community's social status in the country. They are unable to get rid of discriminatory policies and unable to organised them against biases and prejudices.

In the last three decades the trend to target Muslims' belief, culture, language and education system has been mainstreamed by the ruling elites themselves. The ruling BJP's whole election campaign was based on anti-minority slogans; the target was once again Muslim minority. Uttar Pradesh (UP) is the most populous state of India and it has a significant number of Muslims. During the election campaigns BJP and Sangh Parivar leaders created a very hostile environment against the

Muslim minority and used communal slogan loud and clear to ignite their Hindu voters. The Hindu right under the protection and patronage of Chief Minister of UP, Yogi Adityanath targeted Muslims in the name of “cow protection” and “love jihad.”²⁶ BJP and other right wing Hindu groups’ communal rhetoric have spurred a violent vigilante campaign against Muslims eating cow meat. As per the Human Rights Watch report, “between May 2015 and December 2018, at least 44 people —36 of them Muslims — were killed across 12 Indian states. Over that same period, around 280 people were injured in over 100 different incidents across 20 states.”²⁷ The campaign not only costs human lives and physical abuse but also casts a fear spell on minorities as most of the victims and their families do not file and pursue their complaints. It is also the failure of the judicial system and local law enforcing authorities to ensure the protection of citizens as per their constitutional responsibility. Indian constitution and international human rights laws make it imperative for the state to protect the lives and livelihood of vulnerable minorities.

Conclusion

India’s economic triumph and democratic tradition are phenomenal and a ray of hope for the global south and particularly for South Asia where people are still struggling to get rid of poverty and non-democratic system. However, this is also a truth that Indian secularism and economic growth could only be consolidated if Indian secularism remains the guiding principle for any regime in power. Protecting and promoting secular tradition and following the Global Human Development Index could only be the way forward to consolidate democratic and economic success.

Muslims’ socio-political and economic poverty and marginalisation are not only a challenge for the community but for the state of India as well.

²⁶ Divya Trivedi. U.P. becomes the first state in the country to pass an ordinance on ‘love jihad.’ *Frontline*, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/cover-story/uttar-pradesh-up-becomes-first-state-in-the-country-to-pass-an-ordinance-on-love-jihad/article33213952.ece>

²⁷ Meenakshi Ganguly, It’s Not Just Cow Vigilantes. Mob Madness is Spreading and Undermining the Rule of Law in India,” *Scroll in*, July 26, 2017, <https://scroll.in/article/845002/its-not-just-cow-vigilantes-mob-madness-is-spreading-and-running-down-the-rule-of-law-in-india>

India's secular, democratic identity needs to be preserved and consolidated and for that it is essential to protect the constitutional rights of minorities. Muslims constitute a significant chunk of the total proportion of India's population and ignoring them would only add in economic and developmental hurdles for the country. A brief review of the socio-political and economic conditions of the Muslim minority in India suggests that they are the victim of radical Hindu nationalism and negligence on the part of state and society both. The introduction of neoliberal economic reforms could have changed the fate of Muslims but that required government level patronage to equip them with modern education and competitive skills to excel in a free market economy. They gradually lost their traditional sources of earning with the growing capitalist market and illiteracy further added in their miseries. The lack of education facilities in their localities and almost no incentive from the state to participate in government machinery on merit basis further contributed to their impoverishment. There's a constant fear and the sense of "others" as the frequent violent rioting and anti-Muslim campaigns keep targeting their houses, businesses and lives. The Indian judiciary also has a record of tilting in favour of the Hindu nationalists and their verdicts deprive Muslims of justice. The trust deficit in judiciary further broadens the cleavage existing between the state and the Muslim minority.

In sum, Indian government needs to win the confidence of the Muslim minority by providing them incentives to participate in the country's political, administrative and social institution on merit. They not only need acceptance as an equal citizens of the state but also require encouragement and facilitation to be a productive part of the state and society without any discrimination, prejudice and biases based on their past.