

**ATROCITIES AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND
COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABSTRACT
2. INTRODUCTION
3. LITERATURE REVIEW
4. CRITICAL ARGUMENT
5. CONCLUSION
6. REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

This research article deals with the topic 'Atrocities against religious minorities and communal violence in India'. Minorities in our country include Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains. As per the Census 2011, the percentage of minorities in the country is about 19.3% of the total population of the country. The population of Muslims constitute 14.2%; Christians 2.3%; Sikhs 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jain 0.4% and Parsis 0.006%. (Ministry of government affairs, 2011).

Since the beginning of mankind, human beings have had differences and still managed to survive through them. India, for instance, has been known for its diversity and contradicting beliefs worldwide. A society that has differences is bound to have clashes among itself, and we witness that daily. Instances of communal and caste-related violence are common, and therefore, it is important to acknowledge and talk about them. This paper will discuss the prevalent conditions of religious minorities in the context of crime, harassment, discrimination, living conditions, and the kind of treatment received from society. The key finding of this research paper is the cause behind the rise of communal hatred, the failure of authorities to investigate the crime and convict the guilty, and the solutions to fix the problem. It will also talk about the chronology of atrocities against certain communities at different points in time. The issue which is being dealt with is of prime importance because cruelty against any community just because of its mere identity or a set of beliefs is a sheer violation of human rights and stands against the spirit of the Indian constitution.

Keywords: - communal violence, religious minorities, society, equality, diversity, human rights.

INTRODUCTION

India, as we see today, is the perfect example of a society that accommodates and celebrates numerous cultures of largely varying belief systems. However, after independence, our country has witnessed many incidents of communal violence. “Communal violence is a form of violence that is perpetrated across ethnic or communal lines, the violent parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership”. These incidents have resulted in the death of thousands and have left numerous people injured and homeless. From the exodus of Kashmiri pandits in 1990 to anti-Sikh riots in 1984, from 2002 Gujarat riots to the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013, there has been a soar in the number of these episodes in the past decades. Apart from major incidents, frequent small-scale instances still go unreported by the authorities and leave us unaware of the current situation.

Communal violence has majorly impacted the minorities on all fronts - majorly Muslims, minutely Sikhs, and Christians. The reason behind this is a sense of dominance in the majority, which makes them believe that minorities don't belong with them. This results in the discrimination respective religious groups face in social, economic, and political aspects of life. They are not accepted just because of their faith and often become victims of atrocities and crimes.

As we witness regularly, religious minority groups and people from backward classes are used as an instrument for political propaganda. Political parties attempt to gain vote banks with the help of communalism either by making hate speeches or inciting riots. Eventually, marginalized people are forgotten, and only hatred penetrates into the roots of society.

In recent years, hostility towards religious minorities is getting an all-time high. Mob lynching, various kinds of persecutions, demolition of religious places, hate crimes, and imposed conversions are just a few examples of the atrocities against these communities. Recently, a TV anchor called the selection of Muslim candidates in the civil services examination ‘bureaucracy jihad’, whereas, in Ramnagar, Karnataka, a large-scale protest was carried out against a planned statue of Jesus Christ. The witch hunt of anti CAA activists, the spread of Islamophobic hate messages on social media, and the Delhi riots in February incited by famous political leaders just depict the failure of the system in upholding its ideology of equality.

The biased media is also equally responsible for propagating hate into the citizens' minds with its manipulated facts. Pre-conceived opinions are being shoved down the viewers' throats. Lately, this violence has led to insecurity among religious minorities. All the things together are just making our country hollow from the inside, and our unity is being compromised. Therefore, communal violence is one of the most important social issues in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of communal violence has far more toxic and dangerous effects than what we can comprehend. Numerous scholars and authors have pondered upon this issue and provided us with case studies and research journals elucidating the scenario around it.

Nathelene Reynolds (2020), in her report titled, 'Hindu nationalism and the Muslim minority in India,' talks about how radical Hindu nationalists have painted a target on the Muslim community and are frequently questioning their loyalty towards this country. India is the third-largest country in the context of the Muslim population comprising 172 million people of the same faith. Rather than using this to our strengths, Hindu nationalists have constantly proclaimed a demand for a country with a complete majoritarian society. The claims of Islam not being native to our nation have inflicted a sense of fear among people, which has led to larger disparities and discrimination. In the second part, 'tyranny of the majority' of her report, the author talks about the three major events - the 'communal slaughter' that followed Indira Gandhi's assassination; the 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya; and the subsequent riots that succeeded (Peter Gottschalk, 2000). It has increased atrocities against the minority and communal violence leading to an expansion of political parties with pro majority ideology.

Stuart Corbridge, Nikhila Kalra, and Kayoko Tatsumi (2012) in their journal named, 'The Search for Order: Understanding Hindu-Muslim Violence in Post-Partition India' inferred the major places where these riots frequently occur and what are the reasons behind them. Eight cities— Ahmedabad, Bombay, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Meerut, Baroda, Calcutta, and Delhi— account for a hugely disproportionate share of communal violence in the country. The incidents of communal violence are quite centralised in these urban areas. The prime reason behind these large-scale events is the persuasion of the masses by hate speeches and provocation to cause crimes. Communal violence is mainly a result of political propaganda, and these incidents are allowed to escalate by not taking appropriate measures or deploying forces to curb these incidents by the party in power.

Jaytilak Guha Roy (1991), in his journal titled, 'Politics, Religion, and Violence in India' emphasises how these three elements are intertwined and what influence one has on another. "Communalism is inter-linked more with religious fundamentalism than with the

fundamentals of religion.” When people in power start to take advantage of a particular community based on their set of faith, it can be used to manipulate the minds of vulnerable citizens and provoke them to do wrongful acts.

A discussion of India's political future always had for a background the relations between its two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. Few questions in this country have aroused such intense passion and controversy as the communal question. In recent years, especially, the communal problem has almost come to overshadow the Indian political scene, so much so that an attempt at its solution has become the paramount need of the day.¹

Another research paper titled, ‘Communal Violence in India: Perspective on Causative Factors’ by Roshni Sengupta (2005) examines and analyses various causes behind atrocities against minorities and communal violence in post-independent India. It starts with the dissection of the 2002 Gujarat riots and how far right-wing politics and ignorance of the state claimed thousands of innocent lives. It also establishes a stellar connection between elections and riots with reference to the arguments proposed by Wilkinson (2004).

The major reason behind the polarisation of the public is the disproportionate distribution of communities in the country. Hindus and Muslims are unevenly divided, and thereby they form two essential and opposite parts of a vote bank. Other religious minorities are also concentrated in some cities and towns, making them a significant part of the same vote bank.

A report by Minority Rights International named, ‘A Narrowing Space: Violence and discrimination against India’s religious minorities’ tells us what solutions and measures the government and citizens of India can take to minimize this problem. They include: -

- Condemning the religious intolerance and holding the perpetrators accountable and guilty for their actions.
- Providing legal and financial assistance to the victims of communal violence and atrocities.
- Reforming the laws and policies which pose a threat to the fundamental rights of religious minorities. For example, anti-conversion and anti-cow slaughter laws in some states.

¹. Mehta, Asoka and Patwardhan, Achyut, *The Communal Triangle in India*, Kitabstan, Allahabad. 1942 p 7

- Consistently monitoring and covering communally violent incidents throughout the country from cities to small towns and villages.

CRITICAL ARGUMENTS

The main argument of this research paper is the foundation, cause, chain of events, and the after-effects of communal violence on religious minorities of our country. The regularity of these events has just made us accustomed to them, and we have turned a blind eye towards these incidents. As stated in the earlier mentioned journals, there are loads of factors and incentives which lead to this phenomenon of violence. The repercussion and aftermath of the same are horrifying and end up scarring the generations which follow. The trauma which the families go through is unimaginable, and most of them don't get justice or compensation. India falls at a rank of 4 in the world with the context of religious intolerance. All the factors, when combined, create a huge drawback for our country and hinder development in all aspects. Most of our financial budget goes into funding defence and security forces. Unnecessary riots and disturbances are just a waste of our capability, resources, and manpower.

The current trend in communal violence is that it is continuing to grow at an exponential rate and is often leading to alarming situations. Intense political campaigning on the grounds of religion and caste is frequent and is followed by instances of violent breakouts, which are at an all-time high. These incidents are primarily focused in a few states and urban cities, but now they are moving to small towns and cities as well. In most cases, Muslims are the worst hit. The riots claim the lives of both Hindu and Muslims and harm everybody else.

The key elements which incite these events and occurrences are the spread of propaganda through politics; hatred spread on social media, biased media, sensitized news inflicting a false sense of fear and insecurity among citizens, and the manipulation of vulnerable people by religious heads.

On a global level, India has been condemned numerous times for the way it treats minorities. The United States Commission on Religious Freedom criticized the Delhi riots. Frequently our country has been slashed and denounced by different organizations for the treatment of citizens in Kashmir. India as a country may end up losing a permanent seat in UNSC if the condition of communal violence doesn't improve in the coming years.

Several counter-arguments are made against the occurrence of hate crimes and atrocities. The major one is the masking of islamophobia under the fabric of potential terrorism. Toxic religious heads and leaders are convincing the majority that the other community will take over the whole country and practice terrorism on our lands. This is an inhuman and nonsensical statement that needs to be addressed by authorities, and elements that are guilty of inciting such hate speeches should be punished. The other counter-argument is the justification of every move by saying that these actions are what their 'religion' demands. No religion or faith preaches hate or violence, and it is of paramount importance that people realize and act upon this.

Evidence of communal violence is gut-wrenchingly painful, and the data of loss of life and property again emphasize why it is the most important issue to be addressed.

Major incidents of communal violence post-independence are: -

- 1980 Moradabad riots between Muslims and Dalits that claimed 2500 lives.
- 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi which claimed around 3700 lives.
- 1990 exodus of Kashmiri pandits with a motive of ethnic cleansing, which claimed around 200-1300 lives and left thousands displaced.
- Demolition of Babri masjid in 1992 and the violence which followed after.
- 2002 Godhra riots which claimed around 2000 and left around a lakh people displaced and numerous injured.
- 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots which claimed 65 lives, an estimate of 50,000 were displaced and heinous crimes were committed against minority women.

CONCLUSION

To close with, several articles, journals, documentaries, and pieces of evidence have repetitively indicated that communal violence and atrocities against minorities is the most important issue of the hour that needs to be dealt with. The very foundational idea of our country, 'unity in diversity' is greatly threatened by this problem.

We have faced numerous incidents of communalism and violence related to it in the past, and the wounds are still fresh. The hindrance it causes to our mental and social development is indescribable.

When people from various communities are made to feel like outcasts, it cripples the whole society from within. As a quote says, "An empire toppled by its enemies can rise again. But one which crumbles from within? That's dead." Every word of this saying makes sense in the context of today's world. The ambition of every Indian is to see the country at great heights and be a part of the global power it is supposed to become. This will only happen if we stay united and don't compromise with our integrity.

The education of youth is very important to overcome this situation. They should be taught the true fundamentals of religion. Empathy and love should be inculcated in their hearts. Religious extremism should be condemned and the perpetrators should be punished at the earliest to create deterrence among people to refrain them from committing any more hate crimes. The practice of inclusiveness and mutual respect has to be propagated among people to make this situation better.

Violence on the lines of religion and ethnicity poses a major threat to development and progress. International human rights laws should be strictly followed to avoid such heinous crimes, and a comprehensive legal framework should be established to deal with the same.

In the end, the authors would like to emphasise the ideology that change begins from our own self. If we take the initiative to improve the situation for the better and work for it, it eventually will. A serious effort is needed from both the citizens and the government to overcome this issue and take a step towards growth. Communal violence will end up immobilising and destroying the country if it is not checked and minimised at the earliest.

REFERENCES

- Minority rights international, *A Narrowing Space: Violence and discrimination against India's religious minorities*, CENTER FOR STUDY OF SOCIETY AND SECULARISM (June 2017)
https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MRG_Rep_India_Jun17-2.pdf
- Minorityaffairs.gov.in. (2020)
<http://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/MsDP%20%28FAQs%29.pdf>
- Nathele Reynolds, *Hindu Nationalism and Muslim Minority in India*, 279-303 (2020)
- Stuart Corbridge et al Nikhila Kalra et al Kayoko Tatsumi, *The Search for Order: Understanding Hindu-Muslim Violence in Post-Partition India*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (JUNE 2012), 287-311
- Roshni Sengupta, *Communal Violence in India: Perspectives on Causative Factors*, Vol. 40, No. 20 (May 14-20, 2005), 2046-2050
- Jaytilak Guha Roy, *Politics, Religion and Violence in India*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1991), 439-447