

The future of the minorities in India and Bangladesh: prospects and risks

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Abstract: Secularism is one of the main principles of the constitution of Bangladesh and India. But in reality, in these two countries, religious factors are misused by the political parties to come in or to prolong the power. Most often the political parties intend to get the support of the majority, therefore, this tendency of the political parties' effect on the political and social life of the minorities. In Bangladesh since independence in 1971, they were subjected to physical and mental torture as well as the victim of grabbing lands. Particularly, it is noticed from the political history before and after the election, the minorities Hindus were terribly affected because of political violence. Therefore, a huge number of Hindus had been migrated to India. Similarly, in India, Muslim minorities are humiliated because of the different religious factors to get the majority of Hindu support. Due to cow protection, the killing of Muslims has become very common for some years. Further, different reports show that the socio-economic condition of the minority Muslim is very low because of the social caste system. Discrimination and political repression can play a role to raise Muslims extremist activities in India which can create a social and political crisis in this region. Therefore, in these two countries secularism has been criticized due to the use of religious factors in politics which divides the citizens into majorities and minorities. In this article, the author has studied the present conditions of the minorities by using historical and comparative analyze method.

Keywords: secularism, minorities, persecution, migration, cow protection, NRC

The concept secularism refers to the separation of religion from the state. It is originated from Europe and by colonialism expanded in the different parts of the world. The term secularism can be different types depending on different countries and cultures, Nader Hashemi addressed two types of secularism: Anglo American secularism which allows practicing religion publicly and other is French model that prohibits people from practicing religion publicly. Ahmed T Kuru also wrote two types of secularism, one is assertive secularism which is similar to French secularism and other is passive which is similar to Anglo American secularism. Besides these types, Riaz Ali a Bangladeshi American political scientist added more two models such as the British model in which thought judicial and legal department is separated from the state but having a state church. Another one is the Indian model where all the religions are given equal priority. This Indian model of secularism prevails that the state will not intervene practicing of the religion of its citizens. But it is noticed that in this multicultural society of Bangladesh and India religious factors are often misused in politics to gain political advantages. In recent Bangladesh in the constitution there is a coexistence of secularism and religion (Islam as a state religion) which is considered as a contraposition and pro-Islamic nature of the state influenced on the minorities. Since independence, a gradual migration of Hindu minorities is noted because of grabbing lands and the dominance of the majority. Traditionally, before and after the election a political clash resulted in persecution on Minorities. As a result of their gradual migration happened from the country. The last census report in 2011 shows the

percentage of minorities became 8.5 % whereas, in 1972 it was 13.5%. According to a scholar of Bangladesh, Abul Barakat that from 2001 to 2012 everyday average 674 Hindus were missed from the country. In the present time, in spite of developing the socio-economic condition of the minorities in Bangladesh, many Hindus are willing to migrate to India because the Indian government proclaimed to offer citizenship of the migrated Hindus from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Similarly, though India as a secular country but the ruling party BJP who came in the power in 2014(a pro-Hindu nationalist party) intend to establish a Hindu country. As a result, religious factors are very crucial to get support from the majority Hindus. During the ruling of this party, cow slaughtering has been prohibited and many Muslims minorities were killed because of their involvement with cow killing or preserving cow meat in the house. Besides this, by following the caste system Indian society is divided into different classes and groups. Muslims are considered as outcaste classes and their socio-economic situation is worse than lower cast in some places. They have not equal opportunities in access in the job and education. A report, called as Sachar report was held in 2005 to know the condition of the Muslims and it found that in some places, though they have a good property but 80% of them considered as labor workers, 60% of Muslims in villages don't have their own lands, 49,9% live below the poverty line, Only 17% of people live in the cities, 0.4 % are in respectable professions. As we notice from a survey conducted in the West Bengal in 2014 (which included 325 villages and 73 urban wards), explored that there is no marked changed in the Muslims community after seven years of the Sachar committee report. Therefore, the latest reports claim that till now the condition of the Muslim minorities has not changed significantly. Recently, the government has taken a program of NRC(National register of the citizens) in Assam (about 30% Muslim majority province) a thousand of Muslims has been excluded from this NRC claiming illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. Thus, a huge number of Muslim minorities are in the threat to be refugees. As a result, Muslims extremist activities can be increased because of this deprivation which will arise as a social and political crisis in this region

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