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A Systematic Reflection on the Constitutional Rights and Socio-Political Marginalization of Religious Minority in Pakistan

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Abstract: *This study examines the political participation of minorities with special reference to constitutional and to highlights problems and barriers from a respondent-centred perspective. Owing to the nature of the study, primary and secondary sources were used to explore the constitutional rights of minorities and to know about the representation of minorities in provincial and federal assemblies of Pakistan. The data reveal that although the numbers of seats for minorities in the national and provincial assemblies have been reserved no increase is made for a long period. Furthermore, minorities have shown very little success in the general election because of the faith-based voting behaviour in Pakistan. It is concluded from the study that few of minorities have shown great success in the political arena but they still need more political representation in local, provincial and national politics in Pakistan.*

Key Words: Minority, Participation, Discrimination, Population, Politics

Introduction

Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim majority state with a total population of 172 million of which 96% are Muslims including about 20% Shia and 80% Sunni. The remaining 4% of Pakistan's religious minorities are Sikhs, Qadiani, Hindus, Christians, Baha'i, Parsis, Jews and Buddhists. The total population of minorities in Pakistan is approximately 7 million. The state religion of Pakistan is Islam, practised by 96 per cent of the population, with the remaining 4 per cent practising Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and other non-Muslim minorities (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Being a pluralistic society, Pakistan is a country having multiple ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversities (Ziring & Burki, 2019). In Pakistan, there are seven religious minorities that were granted equal rights and citizenship by the State's founding fathers. The civil rights of all citizens are acknowledged in the constitution of Pakistan which allow and guarantee individuals to live decently and honourably (Khan, 2018). The state safeguards the legitimate freedoms and interests of minorities including the "liberty of occupation, association and freedom of

speech. They have also been granted the right to openly profess their religion and the right to form their religious organizations (Majid, 2014). Besides, protection of the property, human rights, the right to education and political participation have also been guaranteed to the minorities in Pakistan. Likewise, religion, independent opinion, worship and association are the rights they have been granted after the independence of Pakistan (Shabir, 2012; Majid, 2014).

A minority (lesser) is a set of individuals or groups within the larger inhabitants in any given area who are viewed as culturally, religiously, socially, ethnically and racially distinct from the dominant group. Furthermore, a portion of the population differs since the leading group in certain characteristics, such as religion, sex and nationality, is subject to differential rituals, and cultural and religious practices (Mckena, 2018). Furthermore, a minority group usually denotes a category of relatively disadvantaged persons related to memberships of a prominent societal group. The word minority is usually viewed as subjected to discrimination and disparities in a given social and political system. It is usually a group of people less than half of a majority set. Besides, the minority is relatively a smaller group or community of persons living with a dominant

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social group (Healey, 2018). Furthermore, at the most general level, the minority is considered a category or group of relatively disadvantaged people among a relatively larger community. Belonging to the minority group is usually focused on variations in measurable characteristics or behaviours, such as gender, nationality, race, faith, incapacity, sexual coordination or gender identity. A group of smaller denotes a community of individuals in a dominant social group with fewer numbers (Healey, 2018).

When we talk about minorities in Pakistani society, it is mostly referred to the groups of people who follow a religious belief other than Islam. The conceptual definition of minority is similar to that of other minority groups however this may be referred to the differences based purely on a religious basis. A religious minority is a category of persons who have different beliefs and have different religious beliefs with lower socio-economic positions and are statistically lesser in number than the larger population of the given territory. Furthermore, religious minorities have a strong sense of solidarity and are also committed to preserving their religious beliefs, cultural values and norms (Ali, 2018).

Literature Review

Various researchers have examined minority rights, inequalities, discrimination, social exclusions and associated issues at different times and places (Javid & Martin, 2020; Devji, 2020; Asif, 2020; Mahmood, 2016; Rozario & Uttom, 2016; Alam, 2011; Dasgupta, Togawa, & Barkat, 2011; Mohapatra, & Sahoo, 2014; Ahmad, 2016). It has been an agreed upon the view that minority is one of the most critical issues and challenges of the human race since the start of history, particularly since the origin of the organized state and societal system. The privileges, status and rights of minorities were deemed essential in all times and spaces. Despite the growing influence of mass media, globalization, broad education, enlightenment, and constitutional guarantees, the rights of minorities still need efforts to be ensured (Ahmed, Hassan & Shahzad, 2014).

According to the UN, all states within their national territories have one or more groups of minorities whose national, linguistic, religious or ethnic identity changes after the popularity of the inhabitants. In a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Deterrence of Judgment and Protection Minorities issued in 1977, they declared that a minority is a group which is inferior: a smaller group among the rest of the inhabitants of the national population. This is a non-dominant group having no prominent role and they are a member of the state with different ethnic, religious or linguistic features from the rest of the people and who, if implied, display a sense of solidarity aimed at preserving their principles, civilizations, faith or linguistic; (Ahmad, Hassan, & Shahzad, 2014).

Article 1(3) of the UN defines the goal of international cooperation as "maintaining and promoting peace and justice. In 1948, the General Assembly of the UN implemented the famous "worldwide announcement of human rights", which outlined the element concerning human rights in much more depth and is one of the most important international texts on social rights. Its provisions on anti-discrimination and other clauses are also of a dominant position to citizens be appropriate to non-Muslims. It was signed at the end of the Conference of the UN on the Worldwide Organization, on 26, 1945; it was implemented by 24 October 1945 and began to affect worldwide (Qadri & Qadri, 2016)

In 1965, the UN adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which prohibit any form of discrimination based on race, colour, or national or cultural source". In 1966, Article 27 of the Global Covenant on Civil and Political Rights included a specific provision concerning minorities, the main lawful instrument for promoting minority privileges. The subcommittee on the Deterrence of Discrimination and the Defense of non-Muslims was formed in 1947 as a sub-committee of the Command on Human Rights, and an important report on this issue was arranged (UN, 2016).

The International Agreement on Civil and Radical Rights and the 1992 Announcement on the Human Rights of Individuals of National or Social, Religious and Language Minorities recognized and protected the rights of people belonging to minorities in 1966 (General Assembly, 1992).

- The declaration on minority rights is being debated for a long time in the General Assembly and later on adopted with full spirit. The Declaration of Minorities contains the political participation of minorities by clarifying that the preamble recognizes that the true representation of minorities will contribute to the social and political stability of the state and if the minority has been granted their due rights as citizens. Likewise, in turn, it will contribute to the rise of relationships and cooperation among inhabits and countries, declaring this announcement on the moralities of individuals belonging to national or ethnic minorities and linguistic: Among the greatest prominent thematic statutes are the following:
 - According to Article 1, the state shall preserve the presence of minorities within their territories and their national or ethnic, social, religious and linguistic identity and encourage the creation of conditions to foster that identity.
 - Under Article 2, the minority must have the right to engage in political, spiritual, financial, and community life effectively without interference or discrimination of any kind

- Non-Muslims have the right to contribute actively to decision-making in the community in which they live or in the provinces in which they reside, at the national level and, if necessary, at the regional level, in a manner that is not contrary to national law.
- Minority people have the right to engage in political, spiritual, financial, financial and community lifetime professionally
- They have the equal right to found and uphold their personal association.
- Minority persons have the right to found free and nonviolent associations with additional persons in their groups and with persons going to other sections, as well as cross-border contacts with residents, and to maintain these links without any discrimination to other States with which national, ethnic, religious or Linguistic.
- The states must workout to uphold their privileges without discrimination, including those set out in this Declaration, both at the level of community and individual
- The country shall arrange the necessary events to ensure the full and effective exercise of all its human privileges.
- Conditions shall prevail to provide equal incentives for people fitting to minorities to learn their mother language or to get an education in their mother language whenever possible.
- The country will collaborate in fostering admiration for the privileges laid down in this statement
- Nation shall organize events for the expression of the characteristics of persons belonging to sectors and the development of their culture, linguistics, belief, civilizations and duties, but in cases, anywhere certain observes violate the nationwide rule and contravene worldwide values (GA, 1992).

Minorities and the Constitution of Pakistan

The 1956 constitution of Pakistan gives all universal equal rights to all of its citizens, whatever their religion may be. According to the constitution, every Pakistani, who was twenty-one years of age or older and else of sound mind, had the right to contest the election. No view on the religious ground shall be discriminated against. But as long as the nationwide debate on the electorate structure persisted in force, and despite the inclusion of the minorities, they were deprived of the ability of the joint electorate that they demanded. They were excluded from the active part of the Muslim-typical political, financial and cultural set-up, and there was not just a clear line of haggard distinction between the Muslims and the secular minority (Malik, 2002). Besides, it explained that these guidelines would not impinge on non-Muslims' personal law and their

lives as residents. Much of the constitutional provisions had been designed in such a way as to give the impression that Pakistan's population consisted of Muslims only. In Pakistan, religious minorities including Hindus, Christians, Parsees, Sikhs and Buddhists, had as much right to be there as the Muslims. The constitution, in short, made capabilities for minorities. It identified their problems and suggested that it desired to resolve these difficulties, but by announcing that Muslims mostly live in Pakistan (Shamsi, 2011).

According to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, equal liberty for all Muslims and minorities to practice and follow their faith. The 1973 Constitution make sure that basic fundamental rights may be granted to all citizens and provides vital security to religious minorities (Majid, 2014). All residents of the country are equal before the law and no person should be deprived of life and liberty. Religion, caste, creed, sex or place of birth must not be made grounds for discriminating against citizens either Muslims or Non-Muslims. The rule of speech, expression, association and cultural accomplishments are guaranteed to all citizens equally. Religious preaching within boundaries and limits are guaranteed. Protection against discrimination in government services and the maintenance and growth of the religious institutions of all communities are provided. The State must ensure to safeguard minority genuine rights and welfare, including their proper representation in the Federal and Provincial Services. The State must ensure minorities the following protections:

- Liberty of profession and trade
- Liberty of speech
- Right to information
- Self-determination of professing their religion and protection of their religious institutions
- Protection against any other religion
- Protection of their educational institution with their religion
- The facility as to property
- Property rights
- Equal opportunity for citizens
- Educational rightssss4
- No discrimination in respect of access to public places3
- Protection against discrimination in service
- Protection of linguistics, writing and morals (Ahmed, 2010).

Despite all the human rights organizations, United Nation Organizations and constitutional coverage, minorities are experiencing social, political and economic marginalization. They are discriminated against in public participation and hence they get fewer or no opportunities in politics and public activities. The most important question we are examining in this research is to document the numerical strength of religious minorities especially their representation in the Pakistani Parliament. Federating units

and senate. We also plan to underscore whether minorities participate less in elections than their compatriots. Results of previous research show that ethnicity or religious background are important determinants of political abstention (Norris, 2004; Sandovici & Listhaug, 2010). It is hypothesized that minorities do not sufficiently participate in politics due to social exclusion, biases and discrimination in the political realm of the host countries (Fennema & Tillie, 2001). We have calculated and explored the numerical strength of religious minorities in various political platforms in Pakistan as given below.

According to the vision of the founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan is a liberal, independent state that would grant equal rights to its non-Muslim people. The most momentous idea of religious freedom, separation and state was proposed by Jinnah at the first meeting of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly in its Governmental Address on 11 August 1947.

"Remember that you are now an Independent Lawmaking body and the main task of the administration is to preserve law and order. You would certainly agree with me that their subjects 'life and religious beliefs should be fully covered if you change your former life and work together in a soul no matter what community (cited in Mahmud, 1995).

"He further added that"

In Pakistan, everyone is free to go to their temples and you can go to your mosques or to some other places of worship. You may belong to whatever race, class or caste has nothing to do with the state's affairs but we continue to believe that we are all individuals of one country and equal citizens (cited in Paul, 2009). We must keep this currently as our ideal and you will find that Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims in the course of time not because that is the individual faith of every individual. Pakistan's government guarantees equivalent privileges and fair opportunities for Muslims and minority citizens (cited in Malik, 2002).

Problem Statement

In the annual World's Minorities Reports for 2007 and 2008, Minority Rights Group International ranks Pakistan in the top ten out of more than 150 states on its list of states that abuse the rights of minorities. The condition of religious minorities is worse since, despite experiencing all the challenges that come from being poor and weak in Pakistan. Religious minorities experience additional problems and insecurities that emerge directly from their position as a minority. Though religious minorities in Pakistan officially do not pay *Jizya* (Poll-tax), in practice the disparities in the law cause unscrupulous Muslims to force religious minorities out of their territory, seize their properties and take them into attached employment and suppression (Gregory & Valentine, 2009).

According to the non-Muslim minorities, Pakistan's constitution has refused to deliver them security, safety and fair rights, because it has been proclaimed an Islamic state that only follows Islamic education and standards. The Muslim ministers in the Senate have allocated seats but others have been totally stripped of their privilege. The government claims the Senate has a 5 per cent mark of minorities if that is true so then there is no fair representation there.

It is generally very difficult to achieve a successful political career, especially for minorities because of structural barriers and obstruction but some success stories indicate that scope is available for further growth and progress in this regard. The social exclusion of minorities from mainstream political processes leads towards the marginalization, alienation and underdevelopment of Pakistani citizens. The poor and underrepresentation of minorities in politics in Pakistan have also been raised on international forums and Pakistan has been spotlighted for poor performance. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a critical analysis of the topic to highlight the social, cultural, political and legal difficulties obstructing minorities from true political representation.

The Objective of the Study

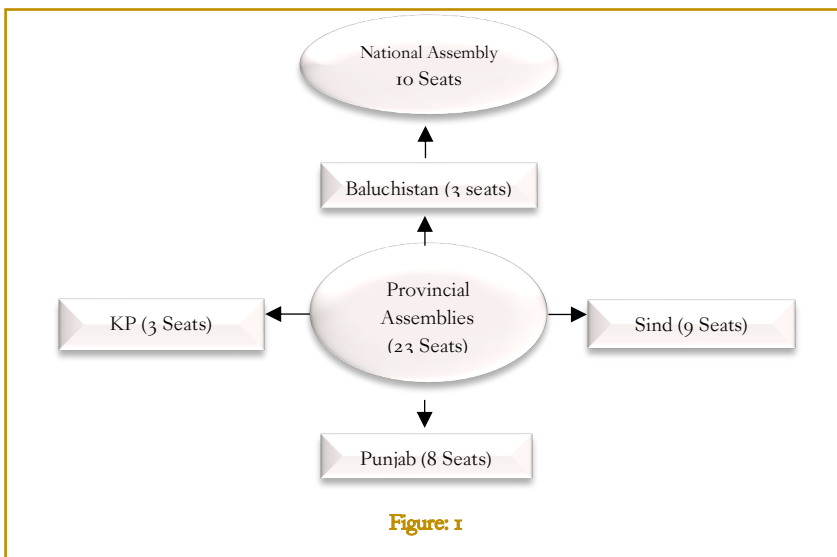
The major objective of this study is to know about the general situation of religious minorities in Pakistan and to review the basic rights of minorities under the constitution of Pakistan. Furthermore, the study aim at exploring the political representation of minorities in national and provincial assemblies in Pakistan and to discuss the major challenges faced by the minorities in the way of political participation in Pakistan.

Material and Method

This study was conducted through primary and secondary sources while using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Secondary sources of data including books, journal articles, and published reports were consulted to gather descriptive information for the first two chapters. Likewise, statistical data regarding minorities and their political representation was obtained from various reports and websites. All the gathered data were analysed and tabulated in tables and described in detail. Furthermore, qualitative data was obtained from various political representatives of minorities including MPAs, MNAs and politicians. All these members were visited and interviewed in the participant setting through in-depth interviewing while using an interview schedule. The collected information in the form of the interview was word-to-word transcribed and studied repeatedly. The collected text obtained from the study participants has been placed in chapters 2 and 3 while contextualizing its significance.

Major Findings

Seats Reserved for Minorities



Population and Seat Allocation

According to the Pakistan Bureau of statistics (2020), the total population of Pakistan is 197 Million (197,000,000) which a population of Muslims is 189,671,600 while the population of Non- Muslims is 7,328, 400. Statistically, seats of the national and provincial assemblies are not allocated on the basis of proportional allocation between minorities and Muslim majorities. Statistics show that out of 342 of the National Assemblies of Pakistan, only 13 seats have been allocated to minorities while 329 seats have been allocated to the Muslim majority.

The above figures show that the political participation and representation of minorities in Pakistan are not

considered the true representative of the religious minority population. Because they have been given ten seats in the National Assembly long ago which has then never increased despite of substantial increase in their population. Likewise, the political representation of religious minorities has not been increased in the federating units despite the increase in the population. Furthermore, the public also doesn't favour and support any person in their constituency during an election campaign because of his or her religious background. The following table shows the political representation of religious minorities in the National Assembly of Pakistan. These political representatives are serving the public on the reserved seats.

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan (Election, 2018)

| S. No | Name | Party | Province |
|-------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Mr LC | Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) | Sindh |
| 2 | Ms Shunila Ruth | PTI | Punjab |
| 3 | Mr RK | PTI | Sindh |
| 4 | Mr Jai Parkash | PTI | Sindh |
| 5 | Mr Jamshed Thomas | PTI | KPK |
| 6 | Dr Darshan | Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) | Sindh |
| 7 | Mr. Kesoo Mal kheel | PML-N | Sindh |
| 8 | Mr Ramesh Lal | Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) | Sindh |
| 9 | Mr. Naveed Amir jeeva | PPPP | Punjab |
| 10 | Mr James Iqbal | MMAP | Punjab |

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in Punjab Assembly (Election, 2018)

| S. No | Name | Party | Province |
|-------|------|-------|----------|
|-------|------|-------|----------|

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|------|--------|
| 1 | Ptter Gill | PTI | Punjab |
| 2 | Ijaz Masih | PTI | Punjab |
| 3 | Haroon Imran Gill | PTI | Punjab |
| 4 | Mahindar Pall Singh | PTI | Punjab |
| 5 | Munir Maesh Khokhar | PMLN | Punjab |
| 6 | Joyce Rofin Julius | PMLN | Punjab |
| 7 | Khalil Their Sandhu | PMLN | Punjab |
| 8 | Tariq Masih Gill | PMLN | Punjab |

(Khan, 2018).

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (Election, 2018)

| S. No | Name | Party | Province |
|-------|---------------|-------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Wazir Zada | PTI | KPK |
| 2 | RK | PTI | KPK |
| 3 | Wilson | PTI | KPK |
| 4 | Ranjeet Singh | Muttahida majlis-e-amal | KPK |

(Khan, 2018)

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in Baluchistan Assembly (Election, 2018)

| S.No | Name | Party |
|------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Danesh Kumar | Baluchistan Awami Party |
| 2 | Titus Johnson | Balochistan National |
| 3 | Sham Lal | Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal |

(Khan, 2018)

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in Sindh Assembly (Election, 2018)

| S. No | Name | Party |
|-------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Mukesh Kumar Chawla | PPP |
| 2 | Rana Hamir Singh | PPP |
| 3 | Anthony Naveed | PPP |
| 4 | LC Ukrani | PPP |
| 5 | Surendar Valasai | PPP |
| 6 | Sachanand | PTI |
| 7 | Nand Kumar | Grand democratic A |
| 8 | Sanjay Perwani | MQM, Pakistan |
| 9 | Sanjay Gangwani | PTI |

Minorities on the Reserved Seats in the Senate of Pakistan (Election, 2018)

| S. No | NAME | Province | Party |
|-------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Dr Ashok Kumar | Baluchistan | National Party (NP) |
| 2 | Brig. (R)John Kenneth Williams | Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | PTI |
| 3 | Dr Ashok Kumar | Baluchistan | National party (NP) |
| 4 | Hari ram | Sindh | PPPP |

Details of Minorities Contested General Election (2018)

| Non-Muslims Contest the General Election in 2018 | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Tharparker.PS 56 | Lajpat Raey Independent | | Faqer shar Muhammad balani PPP |
| | 12,347 | | 54,755 Win |
| Sangar | Kishan Chand Parwani | | Shazia Marei PPP |
| | 70,436 | | |

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Meer Pur Khas | Sanjay Parwani MQM 67,552 | 80,752 Win Ppp Hussan Ali shah 5,018 Win |
| Jamshoro | kesu mel kel das PMLN 3,627 | sakndar ali PPP 133,492 WIN |
| Krachi | Dewan chand chawla MQM 3,63 | Jam abdul kreem PPP 66,623 Win |

Barriers and Opportunities

As evident from the given data, seats are reserved for minorities at both national and provincial assemblies but there are very fewer opportunities for them to contest and won the election on the general seats. Such lower participation in politics on the part of minorities is associated with historical, structural, social, and religious factors. It is generally very difficult and challenging for minority members to win an election owing to their religious background because people usually prefer to vote for a Muslim candidate in relation to the minority member. During personal interviews with minority members, we explore the lived experiences of these minority members as political candidates. In an interview with one of the minorities member R. K RK (Hindu) who was nominated for a reserved seat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

“During an interview the respondent said”

I belong to a political family and my father was twice elected as a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. I joined PTI in 2004 because the party structure of PTI is totally different from other political parties in Pakistan. I struggled for fourteen years to achieve this stage. I contest the election two times on the PTI ticket in the 2013 and 2018 general elections but I could not secure the seat. PTI gave me a suitable political platform and I expect this in the future as well. I hope that the incumbent government play an important role to empower minorities and women in society. I am saying this because the job quota for minorities was increased by up to 5 per cent. PTI passed another resolution in KP assemblies that the appointment to teaching posts in colleges may also be ensured to minorities. Along with this, the current government has also supported minorities to safeguard their religious activities all over the KP and all minority groups of the Kalashi community. In education, the government has also started a scholarship program for minorities and each year 400 scholarships are awarded to the students. In Peshawar,

the PTI government started a school project, especially for the Sikh community amounting to 20 million rupees, along with the disbursement of 200 million rupees for the reconstruction of the religious places of minorities.

“Another minority member Mr.J. Thomas Member of the National Assembly (MNA) has stated that”

I joined Pakistan Tahreke Insaf (PTI) in 2009. I had no background in politics. I had never been a counsellor, neither MPA nor Nazim. My party directly gave me an MNA ticket and with the grace of God, I am MNA today. My qualification is a master's in social work from Peshawar University. I have also excellent working experience with UNO and other such national and international organizations. Being a member national assembly, I have delivered two speeches and presented bills. It's not that our voices are not heard. We have been heard and responded quite reasonably. And I just submitted a bill today about colleges, universities and higher education admission quotas for non-muslim students. Especially I put demand that minorities must be granted a 5% quota in professional colleges and universities so that boys and girls of minority communities may get technical and professional education and decent job opportunities in Pakistan. So, we are heard and responded -a differences of opinion can exist that's obviously human nature. However, if we discuss state priorities, they are definitely heard.

“The respondent has further added that”

Pakistan is our country and we own it. The role non-Muslims specifically the Christian community had played in Pakistan's prosperity and development is not hidden from anyone. You can see our missionaries' schools and a college has been serving not only during and after the time Pakistan came into being. Many bureaucrats and politicians feel proud in telling that they are graduates of missionary schools and universities. As for as problems of minorities are concerned, yes problems exist and it is not unusual in society. With PTI into power, some of the steps regarding non-muslims and minorities within the last eleven months, I feel they are very encouraging and Prime Minister Imran

Khan is committed to providing equal rights for non-Muslims. In addition, we are struggling with that. We are having our job quota -sometimes it is 5% and other times it is 3%.

“In the above narrative, the respondent has highlighted the services of minorities in Pakistan. It was highlighted that missionary schools have prepared so many active individuals who have contributed to the development of Pakistan. They also have a positive opinion about the job quota but they usually expressed the long-standing underdevelopment of minorities in the region. As the respondents added that”

We do not have enough educated people so it is easy to implement it. If our people also become doctors and engineers then only I think the job quota will be better implemented. For now, we have ten non-Muslims reserved seats and Punjab has eight MPA, KPK has three, Baluchistan has three and I think three in Karachi as well. Therefore, this has been the same since 1998 and now some of our MNAs have submitted a bill for the increase of seats which is in the standing committee; a discussion has been going on it. The number of seats reserved for non-Muslims is confident will increase, especially in the National Assembly, I hope, would also be increased.

“Regarding the rights of minorities in political participation, especially the head of the state, one of our respondents Dr R.K the Participant of the (NA) from Sindh Tharparker stated in his interview in August 2019 says that”
If Non-Muslims are allowed to become President of Pakistan, surely it will enhance the image of Pakistan as a democratic state. According to the 1973 constitution, the head of the state must be a Muslim which shows the inequality of provision of opportunities to minorities in political participation. During Musharraf's era, minorities were not allowed to take part in a direct election process they come through the political parties and reserved seats. In other countries, minorities come through the direct election process and many people are electing them whether they are from the majority or minorities. For instance, Fiji India and many more countries have dual vote rights for minorities like Azad Kashmir.

“Another respondent from KPK on a reserved seat stated in his interview “

According to the constitution of Pakistan, only Muslims can be elected as President (head of the state) or PM, or military chief of staff. It would require an amendment to the constitution to make it possible. I think if this amendment that a non-Muslim can also be president or can be in such high positions is passed, it would improve Pakistan's image internationally. Just as we saw Dr Abdul Kalam has long served as the president of India. That's why they call themselves the biggest democracy on the planet. If we do this amendment, again it would better Pakistan's image

internationally and in this matter concerns regarding non-Muslims in Pakistan at the international level would be reduced, I support this amendment for the better international image of Pakistan.

“Another member of the national assembly from District Umarmkot stated in his interview that”

The first law minister of Quaid's cabinet was Hindu, Yogender Nath Mandal. But later on, minorities were deprived of being elected to the post of president of Pakistan. Under the 18th amendment, the right to the post of prime minister was also withdrawn. Minorities by and large consider it a discriminatory move in a democratic country like Pakistan. When Quaid did not discriminate, then why minorities have been socially excluded and stopped from elevating to the highest posts? I personally had the view that this should be done away with in the national assembly 10 earmarked seats for minorities were reserved in the 1973 constitution. The process for those seats was a separate electorate since the Zia era. Since then the reserved seats were never increased. However general seats were increased two times since then. There is a demand by the minorities that the reserve seats be increased in NA from 10 to 15. Such legislation is also pending in parliament. One can only hope that political parties give it priority and give it due consideration.

The rights of minorities in the political spectrum is a long debate since Pakistan came into existence. The founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a strong advocate of the equal rights of minorities. His message was so strong that the political rights of minorities have been projected in the constitution of Pakistan. They have been granted reserved seats in the senate and national and provincial assemblies. Because of their historical underprivileged status, they have also been granted quotas in various jobs. However, it is a general perception among minorities that the social and political inequalities are so deeply rooted and more efforts on the part of the government are needed to curb them completely.

“On the question regarding the equal opportunity of political participation and representation, a respondent added that”

It is a basic right of each Pakistani citizen to become the president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan I think whether there are Christians or Hindus, they are born and buried on this soil and they played a major role in the creation of Pakistan. For example, the Christian community has supported Quaid-e-Azam during the freedom movement therefore I think that they should have the right to become the president of Pakistan like Muslims. I think that the message of equality given by Quaid is purely ignored because now the constitution does not allow the minority to become head of the state.

“Another respondent added that”

According to Pakistan's constitution, a non-Muslim can't become head of the state including a prime minister, or military chief of army staff. It would require an amendment to the constitution to make it possible. I think if this amendment that a non-Muslim can also be president or can be in such high positions is passed, it would improve Pakistan's image internationally. Just as we saw Dr Abdul Kalam was India's president for an extended time due to which they are being called the biggest democracy on the planet.

Conclusions

It is concluded from this study that non-Muslims are considered a citizen of Pakistan, but at a practical level their political rights have not been paid much attention to. For instance, one of the biggest problems reported in this study is the lack of proportional representation of minorities in various political platforms like the National Assembly, Provincial assemblies and the senate of Pakistan. Furthermore, one of the repeatedly raised issues was the lack of opportunity for a minority to become head of the Pakistani state. Likewise, seats have been reserved for minorities in various bodies like the senate, National Assemblies of Pakistan and all the federating units of the country but minorities nominated on these seats are named and stereotyped for not being elected directly through ballot votes. In the National Assembly, there are just 10 seats while 4 spaces in Senate are reserved for non-Muslims, but since becoming Pakistan, these seats have not been increased. Non-Muslims participate in the Pakistan General Election because they do not vote for the minority. They magically won three non-Muslims in the General

Election of 2018 while there was no seat won by any religious minority before the last general election in Pakistan. This shows that the larger public and civil society also vote on the religious background of the candidate and don't extend their support to the candidate on the basis of his or her services.

This study also concludes that although a few minorities have played an exceptionally strong role in the political sphere in Pakistan however they hold the opinion that minorities are not given equal rights to openly participate in the political sphere. On the one hand, constitutionally, they cannot become the head of the state and they also face lots of structural barriers to winning elections on the general seats. They attribute this lack of political performance of the minorities to the larger majority of Muslims because they don't vote for performance but they uphold religious affiliations when it comes to the election and political participation in Pakistan. Furthermore, the underlying factors behind the lowest representation of minorities are also attributed to their lack of resources, unemployment, education and business. They have also no political participation at the local level and their representation in other statutory bodies including trade unions and students union. Because of these factors, minorities do not get a conducive atmosphere for political training as a consequence they lack skills in political leadership. However, the performances of a few of the given examples suggest that their hard work, continuous struggle and commitments may make them able to bargain and negotiate their political participation in the coming years.

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