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## Religious Majoritarianism and Democratic Experiences of South Asia and the Original Position of Minority Class

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### Abstract

The South Asia region consists of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The population of South Asia is about 1.891 billion or about 1/4 of the world population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. In 2010, South Asia had the world's largest population of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Christians. South Asia alone account for 98.47% Hindus, 90.5% of Sikhs, and 31% of Muslims worldwide, as well as 35,000,000 Christians and 25,000,000 Buddhists. Despite their diversity, South Asian countries have been at the heart of the persecution of minorities since independence. Different pattern of minority exploitation can be seen in South Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan and Maldives.

**Key Words:-** Democratic country, South Asia, Minorities, Religious Majoritarianism

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### Introduction

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan are some of the countries in South Asia. One-fourth of the world's population lives in South Asia. Naturally, South Asia is important enough in the eyes of the World. Hindus make up 98.47% of the population living in South Asia, Sikhs make up 90.5%, and Muslims make up 31% of the world's population. There are also about 35 million Christians and 25 million Buddhists in South Asia. Most of the countries in South Asia were under colonial rule for a long time and were said to be socially, economically, politically and culturally backward. As a result, we have noticed that racial hatred, poverty, illiteracy, and prejudice have a profound effect on these countries. If we look at India as a South Asian country, we see that about 19.3% of the total population of India belongs to the minority community, of which 14.2% belong to the

Muslim community, 2.3% belong to the Christian community, 1.7% belong to the Buddhist community, 0.7 per cent belong to the Jain community and 0.45 per cent belong to Percy (census 2011). However, the picture we get of India's minorities is not the same everywhere. There are several states in India where Muslims are in the majority, such as Kashmir. One of the countries in South Asia, Pakistan, the main minority communities of Pakistan in the post-independence period are Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, etc. Statistics from 1997 show that about 1.85% of Pakistanis live in the Hindu community. Looking at Bangladesh, it is seen that after independence, Bangladesh (East Pakistan 1947) was inhabited by about 23.21% Hindu minority community. Later, a 2011 statistic showed that the number of Hindu communities in Bangladesh decreased to 9.2% and the number of non-Muslim devout communities other than Hindus was 10.2 percent of the total population of Bangladesh. As a South Asian country, Bhutan also has a small number of ethnic groups living in Bhutan, including indigenous peoples, Birmi, Brokpa, Doa, Lepcha, Tibetan and Taktop, who make up about 10 percent of Bhutan's population. As a South Asian country, the main population of Sri Lanka is the Sinhalese who make up 74.9% of the total population and one of the Sri Lankan minorities is Sri Lankan Tamils who make up 11.1% of the total population, and Moore is Sri Lanka's third largest community, Sri Lanka also has 4.1% Indian Tamils. As a South Asian country, Nepal also has a mix of people living in different communities. One of the main minority communities in Nepal is 2.96 million Buddhists who make up about twenty percent of the total population, Muslims are 1.12 million. There are also people from different linguistic minority communities in Nepal such as Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Thakali, Sherpa, Tharu and Raut. Looking at the population of Afghanistan, we see that the two largest populations are Pashtuns and Tajiks. Pashtuns make up 42% of the total population and Tajiks make up 27% of the total population. And one of the minority communities in Afghanistan is the Hazaras, the face of Turkmen and Baloch Hazaras (9%), Uzbeks (9%), Aimaks (4%), Turkmen (3%), and Baloch (2%) are among the minority communities in Afghanistan. Religion has been chosen as the main criterion for determining minorities in most of the countries of South Asia, and extremist religious ideologies have acted as obstacles to the establishment of unity among South Asian countries due to the tendency to establish religion-based nationalism. Beside it Different pattern of minority exploitation can be seen in south Asian countries for example farmers in Punjab protest in Delhi against the agriculture bill, was named as khalistan movement.

1. In 21<sup>st</sup> century August 24, 2020 Pakistan demolished an old Hindu Hanuman temple in Lyari, Karachi also demolished where the homes of about twenty Hindu families that lived near the temple.

2. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 2019, Easter Sunday three Churches in Sri Lanka and three luxury hotels in the commercial capital Colombo were targeted in a series of co-ordinated Islamic terrorist suicide bombing. After these incidents, there was an increase in exploitation of Muslims, Christians, Indian Tamils and other minorities.

3. Incidents of human rights violations against Hindus are on the rise in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Since 1947, the Hindu population in Bangladesh has declined drastically from 31% to less than 9% according to official government estimates. Doctor Abul Barkat of Dhaka University says that Hindus will become extinct in Bangladesh in the next three decades if their population continues to decline at this rate.

### **The Economic Position of Minorities**

Muslims, Sikhs, Persians, Christians, Buddhists and Jains are among the minority communities in India as a South Asian country. The ideal of secularism has been adopted in India. And in India, people of all faiths have been given equal opportunities in government service. The Constitution of India enshrines the ideal of equality, prohibits discrimination in financial or employment, but special protections are in place in India for the betterment of the minority community. Yet it can never be said that the economic problems of India's minorities have been completely solved. As a South Asian country, the economic position of minorities in Bangladesh is not very good. It is clear from a statistic that most Hindus have been forced to leave Bangladesh and move to India due to the persecution of the majority. While the Hindu population was 22% of the total population in 1951, it declined in 2011 to 8.5%. No special measures have been taken in Bangladesh to improve the economic condition of the minority. The recent Covid-19 situation has led to deterioration in the economic situation of minorities in various South Asian countries. On the one hand, new employment opportunities have not been created; on the other hand, many have lost their jobs due to the long lockdown process. In such a situation, the lives of the minorities in South Asia have been in jeopardy. The decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban in the current situation has created new problems in the lives of the Afghan minority. The Covid-19 situation has caused huge financial losses to almost all the states in South Asia. In such a

situation, the prices of all daily necessities, including oil and gas, have gone up. The pressure of rising commodity prices has made the economic system of South Asian minorities even more visible. In this situation, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, the governments of each country should take various effective steps to solve the financial problems of the minorities.

### **The Social Position of Minorities**

The social position of minorities in almost all the countries of South Asia is not very promising. In most countries, including India, minorities are subjected to various forms of physical and mental abuse. It is often observed that the religious areas of minorities are particularly affected, such as temples, mosques, churches and monarchs. In addition, various forms of sexual harassment were reported against women. According to Kapeeng's statistics, there were 122 incidents of sexual harassment against minority women in Bangladesh in 2014 alone and 85 in 2015. Recently, in August 2021, a Hindu temple in the Punjab province of Pakistan was vandalized. A suicide bombing at a minority church on an Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka in 2019 killed at least 267 people. In this way, various countries in South Asia are repeatedly trying to intimidate the minorities, resulting in many minorities being forced to leave the country or convert. Such an event is never desirable in the modern twenty-first century. In order to bring about the overall development of South Asia, the social life of the minority women in different countries of South Asia must be protected, various aspects of human security of the people must be protected, education must be provided by ending the financial condition of the minorities. Adequate provision of adequate nutritious food is required to improve their health. In addition, all countries in South Asia need to adopt the ideal of secularism. So that no country can give rise to religious orthodoxy, religious fundamentalism, superstition. In addition, there is a need to increase communication between South Asian countries, expand trade relations and provide opportunities for minorities in the workplace. The recent resurgence of Taliban power in Afghanistan has severely disrupted the lives of social minorities in Afghanistan. Because the Taliban's core ideology is to establish jihadism, religious fundamentalism, and Islamic nationalism. Which is a matter of considerable concern for the citizens of the minority community living in Afghanistan.

### **The Political Position of Minorities**

Politics is a very important issue for all countries in the modern century. Politics involves all the laws, policy making, science, education, culture, etc. of the country. Therefore, the issue of involving minorities in politics is absolutely necessary. But in most South Asian countries, minorities have been deprived of the privilege of political leadership. In India, seats have been reserved for ethnic minorities in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. This initiative is undoubtedly commendable. Religious politics seems to be gaining ground in elections in India. Therefore, Hindu candidates are elected in areas where the Hindu population is high and Muslim candidates are elected where the Muslim population is high. But many times it is seen that many deserving candidates are also deprived due to religious reasons. Although elections are held in a democratic manner in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the participation of minorities in politics has to face various difficulties. As a South Asian country, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan also do not have special facilities for the political participation of minorities. Constitutionally, although measures have been taken in some cases for the development of minorities, they are only written down. There is considerable doubt as to how effective they have been in practice. In this case, it is especially important to say that in order to truly develop the minorities; they need to be involved in the policy-making and policy-making system of the state. Because the laws of the country are made through the parliament. If the problems of the minorities can be raised in the parliament, their problems can be solved.

### **Cultural Position of Minorities**

Among the South Asian countries, except India, the cultural development of minorities is not very noticeable. Among the South Asian countries, India has noticed that arrangements have been made for mother tongue education for various minority communities. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has been formed for the cultural development of minorities in India. This ministry investigates various issues of minorities and prepares reports on the steps that need to be taken in this regard. In India, arrangements have been made to reserve college and university seats for ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. And at the end of the education, so that they can get the opportunity to get a suitable job, there is a provision for job reservation. In order to enable minorities in India to get education in their mother tongue, 22 languages have been officially recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Free and compulsory education for 6-14 year old boys and girls

in India for cultural development of minorities. As one of the countries in South Asia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Islamabad did not place as much emphasis on the cultural development of minorities as India. This is because in order for these three countries to be predominant in Islam, the emphasis has been on giving religious education on the basis of Sharia law in all three countries. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc., the development of minorities in education and culture has been much less than in India due to the lack of emphasis on a truly secular modern education system. It goes without saying that the resurgence of the Taliban in power in Afghanistan in 2021 will serve as an obstacle to the development of education and culture for minorities. Sri Lanka has not given much importance to the development of education and culture of the Indian Tamil minority. So there is a separatist tendency among Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka due to the lack of proper development of education and culture. The key to the development and modernization of any nation is to develop education and culture. In Nepal and Bhutan, minorities have been deprived of education and culture.

### **The Position of Minority Women in South Asia**

In South Asian countries, the social status of minorities is not very favourable. In this case, the situation of women is more worrying than that of men. In most cases, women are exploited by the men of their own community on the one hand, and by the people of the majority community on the other. The women of the Muslim community living in India are often exploited in various ways by the majority Hindu community on the one hand and by their own community on the other. The economic situation of women minorities in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan is very bad. Religious fundamentalism on the one hand, jihadism on the other, and the greedy gaze on minority women, they are often subjected to various forms of oppression. There is also a great deal of indifference among the South Asian countries towards the education and culture of minority women. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan is a major obstacle to the development of minority women in Afghanistan. In addition, in Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries, there is a lot of pressure to convert minority women. In the case of minority women, the rate of education is much lower than that of men in most of the countries of South Asia. On the one hand, in order to become a woman, they have to be subjected to various forms of exploitation and discrimination within the family. On the other hand, minority women are also victims of various forms of exploitation, deprivation and harassment in the society outside the family. As a result, in South Asian countries, the number of school dropouts is much

higher among women than men. In countries where women are a minority, a mentality of men is created to keep women confined to their homes and keep them away in education, science and technology. As a result, many of them do not develop socialization properly. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, radical education has been introduced in all these countries, so women's education is seen in a negative light. In such a situation, getting education for minority women is a new challenge. In terms of health, women also lack adequate nutrition. Iron, calcium, etc. deficiency has been noticed in South Asian women. Lack of proper infrastructure, lack of security, lack of nutrition, lack of social awareness have made the lives of South Asian women uncertain. As a result, women are lagging far behind the mainstream of society.

### **Democracy and Minority**

Democracy is a term that is closely associated with freedom of speech, opinion, the right to expression, fundamental rights, equality in the eyes of the judiciary, and so on. Looking at the countries of South Asia, it can be seen that the democratic system of governance has not been implemented properly here. Especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc. the freedom of speech of the minorities has been largely neglected. There are various pressures on minorities. And their freedom of speech is often forcibly taken away. As a result, we have noticed that in 1947, the Hindu minority population in Bangladesh (East Pakistan) was 22%, but in 2011 it decreased to 8.5%. In Pakistan, Pakistani atrocities against minority communities are often noticed, Hindu gods and goddesses, temples are vandalized. On the one hand, undermines the freedom of the minorities to practice their own religion and, on the other hand, disrupts their social security. In the case of elections, it is often observed that various restrictions are imposed on the minorities. Attempts are made to use force on minorities in all areas of candidate selection, nomination, and voting. Equality in the eyes of the law is often ignored in South Asian countries. Their freedom to worship has been repeatedly neglected. One of the essential ideals of democracy is the establishment of a welfare state, but in South Asian countries it is often seen to be governed by religion instead of welfare. Fundamental rights are enshrined in the Constitution for the development of the way of life of the people in South Asian countries. But most of the time minorities are deprived of basic rights. It is a big challenge for the governments in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc. to establish a democratic system of governance in their own country and to involve all minorities in democracy. It is an

important responsibility for all these countries to move away from radical thinking and integrate with modernization and to address the problems of minorities.

### **Human Rights and Minority**

The United Nations General Assembly on September 10, 1948, recognized a number of rights in accordance with the age of all countries in the world. These are called human rights. It is imperative to establish human rights in South Asian countries. Notable among the human rights are the right to life, liberty and personal security, The right to freedom from slavery, disease, disability and security in old age, Freedom against illegal detention and arrest, The right to equality in the eyes of the law, Right to live, family and property, Freedom of thought and expression. The right to action education and culture. In South Asian countries, it has been observed that the above human rights have not been implemented in practice. Looking at Afghanistan, for example, the recent resurgence of the Taliban in 2021 has put the lives of its people in crisis. In such a situation, the attempt to establish the personal security rights of minorities in the society is nothing but imagination. Minorities are often detained illegally in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and in Kashmir, India. In Sri Lanka too, people belonging to the Indian Tamil minority have been arrested on various pretexts. Human rights, which have been talked about in terms of housing, family formation and property rights, are severely undermined in South Asian countries. Many people belonging to the Rohingya community have been expelled from Myanmar. They have started living as minorities in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan but in most cases the majority discriminates against them. Minorities are often deprived of the right to live and property. Particularly in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Hindus are being exploited in various ways and their property is being looted. As a result, in all these countries, people belonging to the Hindu minority community have been forced to leave the country. And in all these countries the number of Hindu minorities has been greatly reduced since independence.

### **Globalization and Minority**

Most countries in South Asia gained independence after World War II. All these newly independent countries have lagged far behind in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life due to their long rule under British rule. And the plight of minorities in all these countries has worsened. After

independence, the economic situation in third world countries, especially in South Asian countries, has worsened due to the pressure of foreign loans, aid and international markets. Unemployment is a huge problem in South Asian countries. This problem has been exacerbated by globalization. Minorities in South Asian countries already have financial problems, most of them involved in small scale cottage industries, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. Globalization has led to the development of large-scale machinery, which has led to a widespread crisis in the working world of people involved in cottage industries. In the age of globalization, a sweeping change can be observed in the field of agriculture. With the introduction of sophisticated machinery for farming, farming was completed in a very short time. As a result, the minorities involved in agriculture face various problems in the workplace. Minorities in most South Asian countries distance themselves from modernity and technological advancement. In addition, globalization has increased the importance of management. It can be noticed in the workplace that emphasis is placed on the work of properly trained employees. Getting the proper training that is needed to gain training is quite costly. As a result, in most cases, minorities are deprived of training. So it can be noticed that globalization has brought a new challenge in the lives of minorities. In some cases, globalization has brought a glimmer of hope to the lives of minorities, such as the proliferation of smartphones. Besides, with the touch of globalization, the development of technology has reached every field in the rural areas and there is no doubt that modernity has developed in the lives of the minorities.

### **Migration, Citizenship and Minority**

One of the major problems of minorities in South Asian countries is the refugee problem. In countries like India, a large number of minorities live in forests or underdeveloped areas. In this case, the government often undertakes various development projects in government or private initiatives, such as forest-based projects such as horticulture, forest resources. Museum etc. many times minorities have to leave all these places. They have to get enough speed to adapt to the work and environment of the new place. And in many countries, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, terrorists inflict various forms of violence on Hindu and other minorities for religious or other reasons. As a result, the minorities of those areas were forced to leave the area. And moving to new places, they have to deal with various problems in livelihood, agriculture, and housing. In the case of Sri Lanka too, Indian Tamils have had to admit to various forms of persecution,

and they are often forced to leave the country and move to other countries as they cannot bear such persecution. Such images are not uncommon in Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal has also recently imposed various government rules on Indian Gorkhas and many times due to these restrictions they are either forced to move to India or elsewhere. Thus, the refugee problem is also emerging as a huge challenge in the lives of minorities. Ethnic problems are nothing new in South Asian countries. Many states have come up with various citizenship amendment laws in recent times. A large part of the minorities are economically backward. They are also far behind in terms of education. And far behind in terms of political participation, the recent Indian citizenship law has raised many questions in the minds of minorities. Because with CAA/NRC there are references to many documents to prove citizenship which raised many questions in the minds of the minorities.

### **Conclusion**

As a result of long colonial rule, the countries of South Asia have lagged behind socially, economically, politically and culturally. In this case, the minorities have suffered the most. Even though countries gained independence and independent governments were established, their problems have not ended in the 21st century. One of the common problems in South Asia is widespread poverty, lack of education, malnutrition, prejudice, massive population growth, terrorism, all of which have disrupted the lives of not only the majority but also the minorities. Although various ministries have been formed in many cases, commissions have been set up to ensure smooth implementation of all these issues. In many cases, arrangements have been made for teaching in the mother tongue. It is true that the United Nations has received various forms of financial assistance, but in spite of this, a complete solution to the problem has not yet become possible. The recent Covid-19 problem since 2000 and the resurgence of the Taliban in 2021 have exacerbated the problem of minorities. The same monetary system has been introduced in the European Union for the development of communication and technology between the countries of Europe, and the way of communication has been widened from one country to another. Introducing such a system in South Asia would solve some of the problems of the majority. Above all, a solution to the problems of minorities is possible only if religious bigotry, narrow-mindedness and anti-caste hatred can be changed.

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