

Speech by: The President, Sri. Ashish Saxena

At

Allahabad Convention on Minorities

I'm honored to participate in this special occasion in this Great Hall, and I wish very much that I could be there in person.

Let me Introduce Peoples of India.

Main languages: Hindi (official), English, Urdu

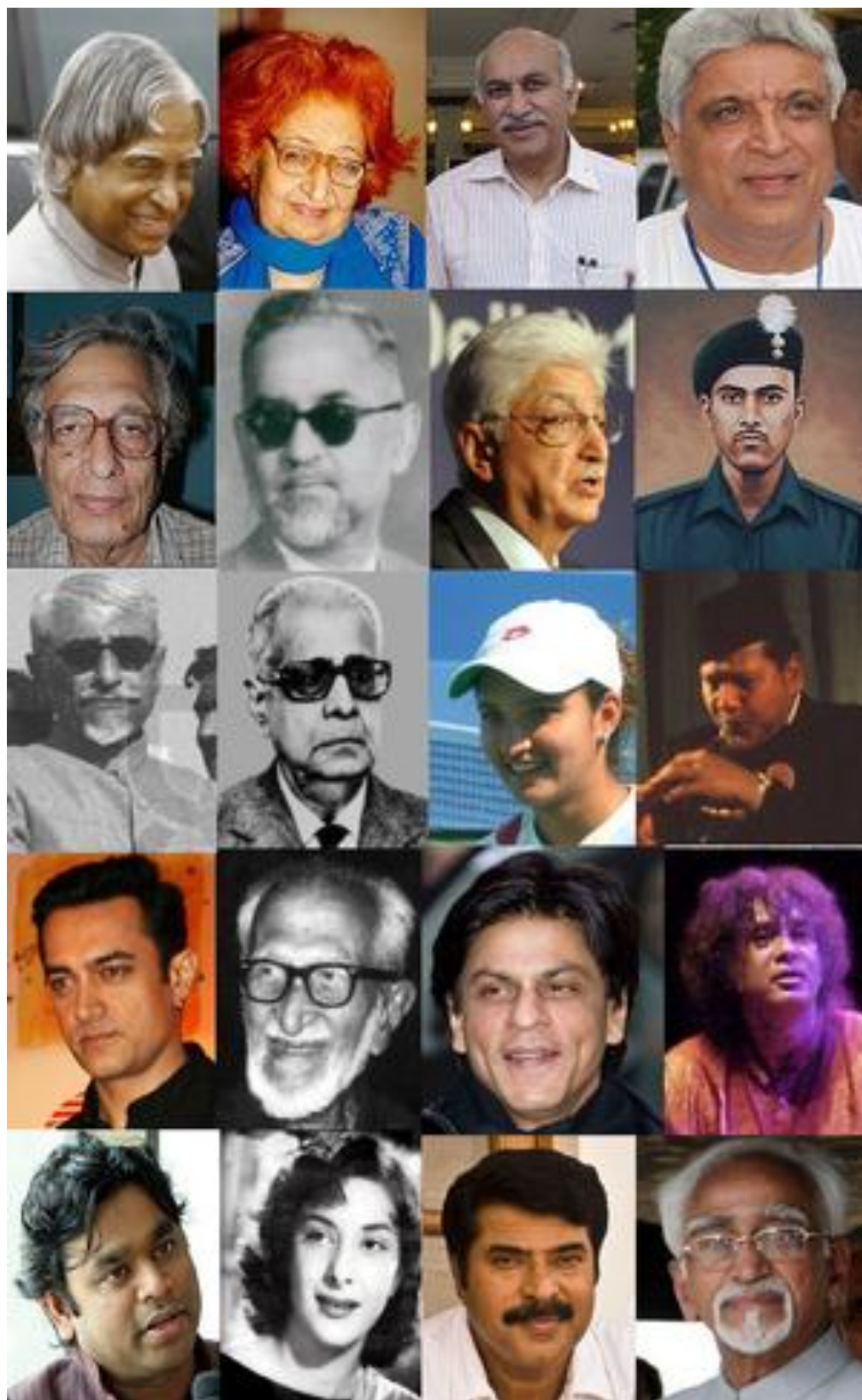
Main religions: **Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Janism, Buddhism, Judaism**

Main minority groups include Dalits (scheduled castes) 166.6 million (16%) 2001 Census, Muslims 120 million (13.4%), Adivasis (scheduled tribes) 84 million (8%) 2001 Census including Nagas 100,000 (0.1%); also Christians 25,080,000 (2.4%), Sikhs 14,800,000 (1.9%), Kashmiris 9 million (est., 0.9%); others include Buddhists, Jews 6,000 (BBC News, 2008), Anglo-Indians, Andaman Islanders, Parsis.

India is the birthplace of two of the most widely practised world religions, Hinduism and Buddhism

India is also home to the **third-largest Muslim population** in the world after **Indonesia** and **Pakistan**.

Religion	Population	Percent
All religions	1,028,610,328	100.00%
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5%
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4%
Christians	24,080,016	2.3%
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9%
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8%
Jains	4,225,053	0.4%
Bahá'ís	1 953 112	0.18%
Others	4,686,588	0.32%
Religion not stated	727,588	0.1%



Abdul Kalam	•	<u>Qurratulain Hyder</u>	•	M. J. Akbar	•	<u>Javed Akhtar</u>
<u>Irfan Habib</u>	•	<u>Zakir Hussain</u>	•	<u>Azim Premji</u>	•	<u>Abdul Hamid</u>
<u>Maulana Azad</u>	•	<u>M. Hidayatullah</u>	•	<u>Sania Mirza</u>	•	<u>Bismillah Khan</u>
<u>Aamir Khan</u>	•	<u>Salim Ali</u>	•	<u>Shahrukh Khan</u>	•	<u>Zakir Hussain</u>
<u>A. R. Rahman</u>	•	<u>Nargis</u>	•	<u>Mammootty</u>	•	<u>Hamid Ansari</u>

Rights at Stake

The rights of **ethnic and racial minorities are protected in international human rights law**

- 1) The right to be protected from racial discrimination, hatred and violence.
- 2) Right to equal protection before the law irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.
- 3) The right of racial and ethnic groups to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion and use their own language.
- 4) Right to benefit from positive steps taken by the state to promote racial harmony and the rights of racial minorities.
- 5) Right to seek asylum for reasons of a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.
- 6) The right to remedies.

The attributes of minority group is seen a relative perspective which characterized to the nature of the group as being **qualitatively weak, on-dominant and under privileged in global terms**. Since **people, community or group differ in their qualitative and quantitative characteristics** as well, so there is always a possible certainty of **being one superior and other inferior in a relative comparison**. **These relative differences thus existing between the groups create a feeling of being superior (majority group) and inferior (minority group).**

In every country, there are groups of people loosely or closely associated for some specific reason or purpose, which may be racial linguistic cultural religious political economic etc or a combination of these. In the quest for describing minority; United Nation Sub-commission on the prevention of discrimination of minorities –suggested that the term should include only those non dominant groups in population, which possess and wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious, linguistic traditions, characteristics, markedly different from those of the rest of the population.

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The problems of issues of Indian sub continent have been very peculiar. Before British rule; Muslims were ruling the Indian sub continent and they were forced out of power by Britishers. This was followed by the division of Indian sub continent better known as partition on the religious basis. Inspite of all that happened during the partition of

independent India experienced the beginning of the new era. India was declared a secular state where equality to all was provided irrespective of caste creed and religion.

These rights clearly become the part of the **constitution which is mentioned in Article 29 and 30. Article 29 states, "any section of the citizen residing in the territory of India or any part thereof, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same"** **Article 30** acknowledges **"the right of minorities based on religion or language to establish and administer educational institution of their choice"**.

If these things are put together it would appear that Indian constitution envisages three categories of minorities- **classified in terms of language, religion and culture** for which all rights are guaranteed to keep their identities intact. Differences on the ground of language or religion are understandable but it is difficult to define the word culture. **Culture means so many things** and there is so much cultural variety in India. It is difficult to **culturally determine who is minority and who is in majority**. Culture, therefore being a vague and intangible phenomenon for the determination of minorities. **But if culture is understood to be the essence which is embedded in the religion then culture and religion combined together form a rational basis for a relative emergence of majority and minority groups.**

Language and religion (including caste) or combination of both provides equally stable basis for the determination of minorities. The division is both at vertical and horizontal in majority and minority groups as well.

Among all the above minorities Muslims are the largest single minority community in India.

Since the independence due to their particular attitude or cultural ethos. There have been a slow tendency of the Muslims to respond positively modern technical and professional education or take advantage of educational developments is due to the account of their resistance to modern (scientific and professional education). **They generally prefer sending their children to a traditional Islamic educational institution rather than to a modern institution.** Such tendencies are gradually vanishing as enlightened Muslim or Muslim institution are engaged in developing awareness among Muslim parents and their children towards the acquisition of education starting from very basic Islamic traditional schooling to the acquisition of education at college or university level.

In other words there are fewer Muslims, in respect of their proportion, appearing for such courses. Thereby fair competition generating fair results do not allow the Muslim ration to grow rather their percentage comes to such levels where even the single Muslim fails to occupy a seat because of the un-proportionally unequal competition.

This is one of the major logical reasons of Muslim educational backwardness. There have been a general out cry from the Muslim minority for the proportional reservation of seats in all walks of life either education or employment. This idea is registered by some pseudo enlightened Muslims and political exploiters in general, who suggested Muslims to equip themselves for entering to the era of competition and grab their rights through their skills and talents to become more self reliant. Such things are always suggested for the Muslims but since independence there have been reservation which continues for scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. During the last one decade reservation given to the backward classes still give an advantage to the majority community as it can ensure reservation to the educationally and economically backward communities, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. Again the minority communities especially Muslims in India are at the most dis-advantageous position compare to the majority community, hence backwardness and the majority community becoming more and more affluent in the socio economic set up.

The important reason which is **purely psychological in nature** is the perception of Muslim that they are being discriminated in all spheres of competitive life against their counterparts. This psychological feeling may some times help the minority feeling which sometimes help the minority people to excel beyond the level of their competitive counterparts but mostly minority members get discouraged and they reluctantly come in the fray and consequently they remain at the un important position where they can not assert or exercise their authority and skills they have development and expansion of the nation.

The important grievances of religious minorities relate, perhaps to the ***operation of the state agencies of the law and order, welfare, education and health, public services, state contracts, credits, licenses, and the judiciary.***

The grievances of the minority are not confined only to these areas; formation other than state, such as political parties, certain so called social and cultural societies, trade associations, caste and communal bodies and others may operate to create material disabilities against religious minorities giving rise to such grievances.

The most important grievances of the Muslim community is adequate representation in various services under the control of govt. of India. In spite of the fact that the constitution of India provides equal opportunities to all irrespective of any discrimination on the basis of the religion etc. The number of Muslims recruited to various services have never been above 5% and mostly lower around two or three percent in the govt. service. The relative number of jobs held by Muslims in govt. and in industrial and commercial undertakings has been a bone of contention for a long time. There is a strong feeling among Muslims that this number has been steadily declining. Among several reasons one important factor may be also the lack of quantitative supply of really competent candidates from the Muslim community.

(No special efforts have been made to fulfill the need of education and training of the major portion of Muslim population which belongs to the lower strata of society. Modern education

neither attracts them nor serves any of their functional needs. The Indian Muslims have been caught in a vivacious circle as lack of modernization helps in perpetuating their economic backwardness. The Indian Muslims today find it extremely difficult to come out of economic backwardness lack of modernization backwardness syndrome.)

The future of our people lies in unity and integration. The minority based on religion or language should appreciate that no body is interested in encroaching on their religious and linguistic rights. They should not take up in agitational posture. Already laws have been made to prevent the use of religion for political purposes, such as election.

The minorities will earn friendship and good feeling of others if they emphasis that they are part of the whole and as such try to strengthen the composite culture which already exist, rather than try to develop a separate culture in the country. By selling such healthy examples the minorities will persuade the majority also to fraternize with them.

It is duty of all to be friendly with everyone and this requires encouragement of emotional integration. We have got too many common points on which we can base our integration which should be emphasized and strengthened rather than any of us trying to stress separately identity of religious and linguistic community.

It is the constitutional responsibility of govt. to see that educational culture of any community does not suffer from handicapped of any kind. All minorities can avail themselves of the educational facilities available equally to all citizens in the publicly financed none denominational institutions all over the country and at the same line handsome grants –in aid are also give to the educational institution run by different minorities as per the right in short in the Indian constitution. There are few universities in the country which were started by the minorities for special purpose of promoting education among the members of their communities along with their cultural and religious identities. Apart from various religious schools and other minority schools colleges, Aligarh Muslim University at Aligarh, Jamia Usmania University at Hyderabad, Jamia Milia Islamia at New Delhi, Jamia, New Delhi, Gurunanak Dev University at Amritsar are few Muslim and Sikh minority centers of learning which have been playing vital role in the service of educational and socio economical advancements of their respective communities.

Concluding Lines

With the growing intellectual wisdom and technological advancement , see saw battle among the different communities will remain prevalent as it embedded in human nature itself and consequently the problems will grow and diminish in quick succession giving rise to another problem but all will be set at a normal pace when the people of either of the communities are tolerant and realistic to the nature of creation of the world and making their life styles in combating conflicting situation through maintaining "unity among diversity" which our nation father has promised to run the nation immediately after India won freedom.

*data collected from different online sources.