CHAPTER FOUR:

THE CONTEMPORARY STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN INDIA

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J. Massey stated,

"There are legal and constitutional provisions for the protection and welfare of minorities. But at the practical level, the minorities are generally treated as a nuisance which have to be pacified with empty promises and impotent structures, and exploited to the hilt during election times."\(^{10}\)

This comment can be taken as a summary of the problem of minorities - including religious minorities - in India. They suffer major common problems like backwardness and discrimination; and moreover, they subdue a style of subordinated life and hostile general attitude against them.

In election matters religion as a factor is not expected to be given any consideration. Concerning the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha no data is allowed to be prepared from a religious point of view. The position of religious minorities (particularly Muslims, Christians and Sikhs) vis-à-vis the majority population (Hindus) is not satisfactory in the Lok Sabha, as they are not proportionately represented, population wise. There is no reservation of seats for the minorities in the matters concerning political appointments as well.

Concerning education, religious minorities are in a better position, as they were recognized for the running of their own institutions. Moreover, the University Grants Commission is supposed to support the maintenance and development of these institutions. Such institutions are like the Aligarh Muslim University, which is sponsored by Muslims, and the Guru Nanak University of Amritsar, sponsored by the Sikhs. In respect of this study each of the three communities is going to be considered separately.

1. MUSLIMS:

The major problem of Indian Muslims as a religious minority group is remarkably with the majority Hindu population. Each of the two groups conceals immense hostility and historical dislike towards the other. The factor that intensifies the problem is that the two groups live together, side by side in a very intermingled way in almost every state, village and street within the Indian Union. In spite of this factor the two societies undergo a situation of complete social segregation, mutual dissociation and communal alertness. The millions of Indian Muslims believe themselves to be treated as second-class citizens, not allowed to enjoy any of the provisions of democracy, equality, freedom or socialism. Sir Abdur Rahim stated,

"Any of us Indian Muslims travelling in Afghanistan, Persia,... would at once be made at home... On the contrary, in India we find ourselves in all social matters total aliens when we cross the streets and enter that part of the town where our Hindu fellow-townsmen live."

The tension between Hindus and Muslims can be attributed to many factors: social, religious, economic and political. All these reasons together had caused, and intensified the problem of Muslims as a religious minority in India.

The social factors can be attributed to the fact that the Hindu majority and the Muslim groups have unlike traditions and different historical backgrounds. Each group of the two is absolutely proud of its past, and hence interprets history from its own angle, which in many cases bring out several distorted pictures about the other community. The communal schools of each side are lacking the sufficient awareness, and do not play a big role in removing or improving the situation.

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One of the major causes of tension between Hindus and Muslims in India is the factor of religious differences between the two groups. Religious practices are the immediate cause of arising hostility in the community. While for the Hindus the cow is a sacred animal, the Muslims tend to slaughter and consume it as a major source of meat. The slaughtering of the cow is considered a religious practice for the Muslims, particularly in the Adha Eid, which is a major Islamic religious occasion. For the Muslim communities this Eid commemorates the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Isma'il, and is connected with Haj or pilgrimages to Mecca. The cow, sheep or goat is usually slaughtered as a symbol of sacrifice for Prophet Isma'il, and as a sign of commitment and religious devotion.

Language is another important social factor that increases the tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The language diversity in India is so immense and complicated that it separates not only the Hindus and Muslims, but also the Hindus from Hindus and the Muslims from Muslims. Yet, Muslims on the one hand are not ready to study Sanskrit for cultural purposes, and the Hindus on the other hand do not take any effort to study Persian, Arabic or Urdu.

The Urdu language is very essential for the Indian Muslims. It is written in the Arabic/Persian script, which for them is the link to the intellectual and religious current in the Arab countries (the initial origin of the Islamic faith) and Iran. Urdu as a major Muslims' tongue had always been the mode of communication among the Muslim intellectuals. It has in fact been the lingua franca of Muslims in India, and it is a supra-regional language that successfully connects the Muslim population all over the Country.

The linguistic problem of the Muslim community in India is that although Urdu has been recognized as one of the main languages in the Indian Constitution, yet, the Muslims believe that there are serious attempts to liquidate it. This view is supported by the fact that the Urdu language has been banished from all the governmental offices and courts, a thing that placed it as
an irrelevant language to the economic prospects, like government jobs, for example. Urdu was also either totally banished from schools - both primary and secondary, replaced by Hindi or taught in difficult situations like being offered only as an alternative to English language. Omar Khalidi stated in this regard,

"The act of banishing Urdu was executed tactfully. We may call it conspiracy."\textsuperscript{112}

The result of these measures has been the sharp decline in the learning as well as publication in Urdu. Consequently, its writers are greatly diminishing in number. Hence, the survival and development of the Urdu language has become a major problem in realizing the Muslims' self-identity in India. One of the strong points raised by Muslims in this regard has been their belief that a severe injustice was done to their language, and that it should be instantly removed. As a result of that all the attempts that were undertaken to impose the Devanagari script on the Urdu language were met by severe opposition and resistance from the side of the Muslims.

Another cause of tension between the Muslims and the Hindus in India has been the extreme segregation that they are facing from the side of the Hindu majority. The outcome of this has been a status of complete ignorance, misunderstanding and hatred that they exchange with the Hindus. Cases of inter-marriage between the two communities almost do not exist, and moreover, are absolutely opposed and regarded as unfavorable or religiously unacceptable for Muslims. The Hindus and the Muslims, who live together in one village or region, resemble in their type of interaction people belonging to two separate nations.

Scholars like Professor Clifford\textsuperscript{113} put the blame on the press, for using methods that appeal to and enhance notions of narrow communalism, which in turn arise segregate passion and increase the bilateral hatred. In fact the

\textsuperscript{112} O. Khalidi, \textit{opcit.}, p. 399.

\textsuperscript{113} M. Clifford, \textit{opcit.}, pp 38 - 39.
cleavage between the two sides is so acute that in several incidents it had overblown into severe communal riots that would usually result in destroying property and killing of several civilians and children. Peaceful coexistence is increasingly becoming a difficult situation to preserve for a long period of time.

S. Sabarwal\textsuperscript{114} dates back the rise of communalism and social hostility between the Hindus and Muslims in India to the milieu of 1700s and 1800s. The logic that he follows for this conclusion was that the 1800s had witnessed the beginning of growth and change in the Indian social framework. In the previous times the different religious groups used to live separately with tight boundaries of exclusion. Such boundaries were rarely crosscut by the necessity of need for co-operation only in obligatory times. The emergence and the rapid expansion of the metropolitan centres brought the different groups into a position to live side by side in one place. Yet, these migrants had carried with them their deep-rooted previous senses of social separation, distinctiveness and religious antagonism. Sabarwal confirmed,

"With older restraints weakening, and newer linkages forming separately in an era of unprecedented economic shifts... Local interfaces between Hindu and Muslims tended to become much wider and more active oppositions.\textsuperscript{115}"

Muslims and Hindus intentionally stick to customs and practices that distinguish them from each other. Each society insists on behaving, dressing and eating in a totally contradicting way to the other. The logic for the majority group is expressed in that Muslims are the initiators of such behaviors of segregation. Muslims are accused by the Hindus to have adopted a foreign culture, alien civilisation and an unacceptable mode of morality.


\textsuperscript{115} S. Sabarwal, \textit{ibid.}, p. 350.
Muslims are therefore believed to have chosen a un-Indian/anti-Indian style of life, and that they do not consider India to be their main homeland. They are blamed for obtaining their moral and ethical support from outside the Country whereto they have diverted their allegiance. They are also blamed for discarding their 'Indianness' and the Indian culture in general, and they are thought to have lost even the will to unite and co-operate with Indians. The Hindus also think that they are the absolute majority, so they have the right to rule and be unrivaled in their own Country. Based on all these factors, the Hindu majority group undertook the attitude of complete social boycott of the Muslim minorities in their own homeland.

Muslims, on the other hand, regard the Hindus as *kafirs* or idols who believe in several gods. Such type of people for Muslims should either be converted to Islam, kept at a distance or severely fought. They are thought to be untrustworthy, due to the fact that they have false beliefs and practices that are not related to the reality of life requirements. The Hindus in their "false" convictions of the devotion to several gods, the banning of eating the beef and the slaughtering of the cow are accused of being strict and unwilling to compromise.

Further accusations against the Hindu people are directed towards the negligence of the feelings and the religious sentiments of the Muslims. The Hindus are frequently using high sound music in their religious rites and social performances, and they insist on holding musical processions during these presentations. This music is considered as a genuine source of disturbance to the prayers of Muslims at mosques. Although the Hindus and Muslims use two different calendars and they do not follow the same system, yet in several cases their occasions coincide, and this often leads to tension and conflict.

The economic causes of tension between the Hindus and Muslims in India are mainly based on the fact that India is basically an agricultural Country, and one of the most important problems connected with this is the land problem, and its revenue. In the Mughuls time all land was considered as
belonging to the State, except for certain plots of land, which were granted to the zamindars, based on the condition that the State could resume or transfer it any time it thought suitable. With the passing of years, the right to the land became a hereditary matter.

When the East India Company came into control, it confirmed the same system of land ownership that it had previously found, because the redistribution of land on any other base was believed to cause major social disturbances. Hence, with time the land started to pass from its hereditary agricultural people to a non-cultivators category of owners, whose interests centered on profits and revenue. Consequently, the problem between the farmers and the landlords intensified. When the landlord - who is believed to be the oppressor- is a Hindu while the tenants are Muslims (or vice versa), the tension turns into a communal issues whereby a Hindu-Muslim conflict arise.

Poverty is another problem adding to the tension. The Muslim community in India is characterized by a severe status of poverty. Muslims accuse the Hindus of continuously trying to permanent them at a stage that forces them to live near to the subsistence level. The majority Hindus mainly monopolize the system of money lending, and hence it becomes an important source of oppression. Although in Islam interest or usury is forbidden, yet Muslims find themselves obliged to deal in a way that contradicts their religious beliefs. The Muslims accuse the majority group of misusing their poverty status to force them to deal in the usury bases of interaction, due to the necessity of need, and hence help in doubling their burden.

Communal tension based on economic background is not only a rural phenomenon. In urban centres also the low standard of living create conflict. This occurs particularly in the case of industrial workers, whose situation is one of severe poverty, and who are mostly exposed to the oppressive practice of money-borrowing. The situation here is in fact worse due to the factor that the interest rate in the city is higher than that in the rural areas.
One of the most serious problems of Muslims in India is that they claim to suffer a state of inadequate representation in civil services under the control of the Government of India. In spite of the clear constitutional provision of equality of chances, Muslims recruitment to the various services has been unstable. The proportion of the number of posts occupied by the community is less and insignificant as compared to the proportion of the number of Muslims in the Country, based on the different censuses. Professor Wadhwa stated,

"The ideal of 'equality of status and opportunity' is not fulfilled. The causes may be many but communal discrimination has decidedly been at work especially in the lower posts filled by department heads."\(^{116}\)

These factors, which are believed by Muslims to be unfair employment practices, leading directly to problems of unemployment and educational backwardness in the Indian Muslims community. The partition of 1947 had led to the migration of Muslim elites and educated middle class groups to Pakistan, thus reducing the number of eligible Muslims who would compete for higher jobs. Muslims interpret the representation in higher Government services as the index of progress and social success for their community. Yet, the Indian Muslims as a remarkable social group remain to be largely a non-competitive society, due to its great social as well as educational backwardness.

Another major problem facing Muslims in India is that of the Muslims' Personal Law. Article 44 of the Indian Constitution states,

"The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."

The application of this Article created a problem for the Muslims, and brought out the issue of the Personal Law of the different religious minority groups. A uniform civil code secured by the State indicated matters like marriage, divorce, adoption, guardianship, and custody of children, inheritance

and succession. The justification of the Government for this Article was that all sections of the Indian population should be governed by the same set of laws. For Muslims this was not acceptable, due to the factor that Islam has provided its own laws that are supposed to govern its adherents.

In December 1970 representatives of the Muslim organizations in India passed a resolution to oppose the application of a uniform civil code for the Country. They unanimously believed that the Parliament has no right to interfere in the Personal Laws of Muslims, which were driven from the Quran and Sunnat. Marriage and other social affairs are part of the Islamic teachings, and they are well organized by the religious orders. The Muslim parties had publicly opposed the enacting of a common civil code based on Article 25 of the fundamental rights of all the communities. In 1955 and 1956 the Hindu Personal Law had been codified by passing several enactment in most of the social matters, but still the Muslim Personal Law was not affected. The Muslim leaders and society continue to insist in the absolute implementation of their own Personnel Laws on their community.

The most serious and significant political outcome of the communal conflict in India was the great Partition of 1947, by which the united nation was divided into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, based purely on religious and communal grounds. This partition was led by the All-India Muslim League who had mobilized the Muslim community in the Country towards a communal separatism based on 'The Two Nations Theory.' The conflict thus turned into a regional issue. Since this partition was implemented the remaining Muslims in India were designated by sociologists as a 'problematic minority.'

In fact, all the current socio-cultural statistics conducted in the Country show that Muslims remain to represent one of the most backward groups in India. In terms of literacy, higher education, per capita income, representation in higher posts, legislature and judiciary, the participation of Muslims has been declining. The Annual Reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs have been indicating discouraging figures considering these regards. From the several
discussions undertaken with this religious group, it can be deduced that the outcome of these facts was the immense feeling of the Muslim community in India as greatly aggrieved and socially frustrated.

Another post-partition development was the abolishment of the system of 'communal electorates' introduced by the British. The option for a secular Republican Constitution had encouraged the attempts for the integration of all communities. Again from the discussants' accounts, it appears that the Muslims still feel that their rights were menaced, and that their votes are greatly exploited by the secular (and Islamic) parties for their own political ends. They claim to feel lost in their political choices, and that they were immensely exposed to the endless political race to grab the biggest share of their support in elections through the policy of the 'joint electorate'. The Muslim community also accuses its own elites and leaders as to be making use of the situation, and giving lots of unfulfilled promises. They are also blamed by the common Muslims for utilizing the poverty and need of the people for their own communal gains and political purposes. The Muslim community, hence, are strongly complaining that without being given any fair role or participation, they came to find themselves exposed to a severe kind of - what they called - a 'political exploitation system'. In support for this point Professor R. Gupta had previously commented that,

"The Muslim voters became a pawn in the political chess of elections."

The imposition of the "Emergency Rule" in 1975, and its political aftermath, and the Parliamentary Poll of 1977 turned the Indian Muslim masses against the ruling Party, at that time. This can be considered as a major factor in the victory of the Janata Party Opposition of the Jayaprakash Narayan.

117 For details in this regard, see S. A. Akbar, Religion and Politics in Muslim society, London, 1983.
After that almost every election witnessed some kind of communal tension. At earlier years, the Indian Muslims used to prefer the Congress (I) Party. The problem with this Party started after the elections of 1983 of the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly, whereby their Kashmiri leader and State Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah broke away from the Congress (I) Party. From that time on, the faith of the Muslim community in the Party had been shaken. As it appears from the discussion held by the researcher with several factions of the Muslim community, they seem to remain with the feeling of suspicion in almost all the ruling parties. They accuse these different parties, particularly the Congress, that most of the pledges given to the community were not fulfilled.

Within Hinduism, Islam and almost all religions there are groups, parties and movements that work hardly to establish the communal interests of its people. The second half of the Nineteenth Century had witnessed the beginning of the awakening of Hinduism and the Hindu biased tendencies under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj. In the last quarter of the same Century other movements have evolved like the Arya Samaj, which emphasized the genuine return to the Vedas; and strongly tried to direct the Hindus towards a counter-attack against the challenges of Islam and Christianity. Another similar movement is the Maha Sabha, which can be regarded as one of the most active missionary societies of Orthodox Hinduism. This Movement gave rise later to all the Hindu-based organizations that call for a united front against its rivals, particularly Islam.

Muslims confronted such activities by similar Islamic-based movements to defend Islam and advocate Muslim unity, like the Central Khilafat Organization. Recently, many similar movements were formed to protect Muslims and the cause of Islam against its declared as well as hidden enemies. In the last few decades, the world and India, have witnessed a serious trend towards the resurgence of Islamic revivalist movements. In India this is accompanied by a continuously growing interest in spreading religious we well
as general education for Muslims. The Indian Muslim discussants mainly attributed these trends to the failure of the secularist tendencies to answer the Muslims' material as well as spiritual appeals. They stated that the severe suffering of Muslims from social inequality and lack of respect for their ethnic identity, language and ways of life continued and deepened, and therefore they had to resort to their own efforts to improve their status.

The groupings of Muslims that had institutionalized itself into political parties are like Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen (A.P.), Muslim Majlis-Mushawarat (U.P.), Jamat-e-Islami Hind, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamial-e-Ulama e'I Hind, Jamat-e-Ahle-Hadis, Anjuman Tanzeemul-Momineen, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (Kashmir) and several others. Many of these movements and parties are in strong support of the independence of Kashmir, and the changing of the line of control that demarcates the Indian part of Kashmir from the Pakistani one, into an international permanent boundary. They generally hold a pro-Pakistan attitude in several matters that involve the two countries.

The most dangerous problem of the communal conflict between the Hindus and Muslims in India is remaining to be the renewed claims for the complete secessionism of the Kashmir State. This issue directly affects the status of national integration of the Country and endangers all attempts at stability and welfare. Those who are pro-partition believe that Kashmir should have initially gone to Pakistan by the logic of partition itself, because it is a state of a Muslim majority population (In Kashmir Muslims outnumber the Hindus by the ratio of three to one). The other difficult option that they offer is the complete independence of the State of Kashmir based on a mandate system. The danger of these options to national integration appears with the fact that almost all the Muslims who were approached for research discussion, and who were randomly chosen, were in favor of one of these two options.

To sum up we can perceive that after all the years of independence and the several achievements of the Country, the Muslims of India, as the most
remarkable religious minority, remain to believe that their conditions are to be considered among the worst, concerning almost all fields of life. Although they represent the second largest community in the Subcontinent, yet they suffer a severely high level of backwardness with almost no strides in the fields of education, economy or civil services.

The Indian Muslims are still at the stage of accusing the Government of undertaking multi-dimensional strategies against them, and its attempts to perpetuate their status at a semi-literate, backward and poverty level. The Indian Government is also seen as working towards depriving them of any kind of promotion and employment in high-standard jobs. In the Central Ministries and Departments, recent statistics shows that there are almost no Muslims to be traced in Group D of the employment ranking, which is considered to be the lowest. At the Central Electricity Authority, for example, out of 297 employees only 3 (1%) were found to be Muslims.

Added to that, even in the disbursement of states loans, out of 3000,000 cases only 2,800 are found to be Muslims, and they receive less than 4% of the total sums of loan. Muslims who own businesses or factories are very few like Hashim Premgi who owns the WIPRO of the Computer Software, Dr. Hamid of the Medicines and Mr. Mirza Tanner of the leather goods. Such examples are very few particularly if calculated in proportion of the total Muslim community in India.

The percentage of Muslim matriculates is about 4.5-6.0% of the total, while women graduates in the community are less than 1%. These figures indicate also the standard of advancement in the community. In the Lok Sabha out of 544 only 29 representatives are Muslims. In the State legislatures Muslims are normally in a status of being under-represented. Out of 29 states, around fourteen have no Muslim representation in their legislatures. Such states are like A.P., M.P., Gujarat and Nagaland. Muslims complain that their percentage in the population has increased from one percent at the time of independence to twelve percent at the recent periods, and yet their
representation remains to be the same as before. Moreover they also strongly raise the point that their shares in wealth and the allocation of the national resources and developmental schemes are also not fairly distributed.

For all the above reasons, Muslims in India feel that they are isolated and discriminated against in almost all fields of life. These are some of the replies they give for the Hindu accusation that they feel more belonging to the outside nations where their identity is the source of their respect, unlike in their own homeland. Hence, Indian Muslims have confessed in their discussion with the researcher that they tend to support any movements protecting the Muslims and supporting their rights, dignity and existence, to the extreme of backing the secessionism of the Motherland, and risking the cause of national integration.

THE KASHMIR QUESTION:

The most serious culmination of the religious minorities problem, particularly the Muslims, after the secession of the nation in 1947, is the issue of Kashmir. The State of Jammu and Kashmir covered over 80,000 square miles of terrain. It had been characterized by a large variety of population as well as environmental and climatic conditions. Maharajara Gulab Singh, a Dogra Rajput and a Hindu Personnel put all these factors together, during the Sikh wars of the mid-Nineteenth Century.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir had included a major Muslim population, with an essential Brahmin community in the Kashmir Region, and with a remarkable number of Buddhists in the Ladakh Plateau that borders the Tibet. The total number of the Kashmiris now is around 5.9 millions. Muslims comprise about 63% of the total population in the Kashmir Region (97% of Kashmir Valley). The people speak a variety of languages and dialects, the most dominant of which is the Kashmiri language.

The practice of Islam in the Region is very different from that of other Muslims in the Subcontinent. The cultural features like the dressing, eating,
and drinking patterns are of special characteristics. Moreover, the festivals and hosting procedures are unique in the Region's Islamic habits and rituals. Hence, the Muslims in the region developed and are still preserving their own distinctive Kashmiri identity.

After the partition of 1947 was set, a revolt broke out in the region, particularly in Gilgit and Baltistan declaring allegiance to Pakistan, which was finally granted. Muslims in the remaining parts, particularly in the South Western regions started demanding 'Azad Kashmir' or Free Kashmir, and strengthening their links with the tribesmen in the North-West Frontier of Pakistan. These groups together proceeded to invade that region of Kashmir. India had accused Pakistan of encouraging such activities, and soon after independence, the two countries were confronting each other with great hostility. The cease-fire line, which was concluded between the two sides in July 1949, (later modified) has become an international frontier separating the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir from the Pakistani territory of Azad Kashmir.

In 1957 the Kashmir Assembly had declared the State to be an integral part of India. Yet, the process of political integration between Kashmir and the Indian Union came to be a difficult task, which was hostile and frequently characterized by disputes. The prevailing social, cultural and political situation between the two sides helped in intensifying the problem. The political leaders in the State are accused of aiming at pursuing their group interests rather than the interest of the whole nation. This accusation was reciprocated by the Kashmiri political units who started blaming the Center leaders of marginalizing their cause, and not giving the Kashmir problem the required importance. The Kashmiris also accuse the Government of imposing on them several political leaders and regimes in an absolutely undemocratic way.

Based on that the local leaders (Congress Party) started feeling marginalized, and hence they did not attempt any work towards the creation of some kind of social, cultural, economic, political or psychological conditions
towards the integration with the Union. Consequently, the region and the people of Kashmir became isolated from the national Union, and the bilateral contacts became almost confined to the elites' level.

Thus, Kashmir had witnessed a phenomenon of the appearance and dominance of certain families who became very influential in the region and determined the political development as well as the process of decision-making. These families are accused of hindering the process of national integration, as they are believed to have been blackmailing the Center, and exploiting the consciousness of the Kashmiris towards their (the families') own decisions.

After the dismissal of the Government of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, the imposed political leaders intensified the antagonism between the Central Government and the Kashmiri masses. These leaders were mainly concerned about their continuity and hardly played any role in the process of national integration or harmony development between themselves and the people, or between the people and the Center. This isolation had created a great degree of political instability, educational backwardness and socio-cultural exclusiveness in the Region.

In the 1970s the situation in Kashmir developed with the broad changes that were occurring in India itself. The ethnic distinctiveness of Kashmir was acknowledged and accepted as part of the plurality and diversity of the whole Indian Subcontinent. The Kashmir Accord of 1975 was a serious step towards integration. The societal support for it also came from the big families whose interests in the fields of trade, business and commerce benefited from the integration.\footnote{B.A. Dabla, "Ethnic Plurality and National Integration in India: A Study of Kashmir," in M.G. Hussain, (ed.), \textit{Ethnic Diversity and National Integration}, Manak Ltd., 1996, pp. 130-137.} In the 1980s, and after the process of acknowledgement and integration of Kashmir with the Union, this unity faced several tension. Such conflicts were mainly due to the contradictory and unstable behavior of the political leaders and the conflicting positions of the political parties. Hence, the
difficult political environment in the Region led to the emergence and strengthening of negative feeling and ethnocentric ideologies.

As a result of the tense situation in the Region and the emerging feelings of mistrust, several Islamic fundamentalist groups came to existence. Such groups are like the Muslim United Front, which is composed of religious as well as non-religious political figures. It started to acquire shape, and act seriously against the secular parties like the National Conference and Congress. The legitimizing slogans under which such groups were working was the unquestionable cause of defending the distinctive Muslim identity of Kashmir. Thus the masses as well as the politicians started raising issues like the lifting of the severe poverty situation, the urgency of equality of chances of participation in the political and the socio-economic development procedures and the acquisition of an equal share in the benefits of the nation's economic resources. All these demands were placed in return for complete national integration and its common benefits.

The issue of Kashmir and its distribution is the most sensitive one in the relationship of India with Pakistan. It has always spoiled the bilateral relations, increased the feeling of rivalry, hostility and mutual mistrust between the two nations throughout the years. Neither of the two countries recognizes the jurisdiction of the other over the region. It has even led to direct clashes between the two. Hence the two nations exchanged several attacks that started shortly after independence and continued up to the day. One of the most serious wars that took place between the two neighbors over the same issue was the one of 1965, due to the renewed tense discussions over Kashmir. Apart from the direct war, a separate dispute took place over the boundaries issue in the Rann of Kutch, also involving armed clashes.

Up to the present day the tension over Kashmir is extremely high, and the issue itself is considered one of national dignity and security by the two nations simultaneously. In the Region itself the situation is also tense, and the security of the civilians is at complete menace, due to the random attacks that
would start in an abrupt manner. Raids are continuous from the Pakistani, Indian and *jihadi* militants in the Region, which always come in the expense of the local people. Moreover, the issue of direct war is always in a state of renewal, including the threat of using nuclear weapons against each other. The discussions conducted for the purpose of this research paper proved that even within the integration itself and inside the big Union, several anti-Indian movements and hostile feelings are vivid and active.

B.H. Farmer summarizes the problem as 'a dispute between two principles': one is the issue of self-determination in the form of the right of the Muslim majority groups close to Pakistan to decide whether to accede to it or not. The second involves the right of the recognized ruler of Jammu and Kashmir to accede to the territorial Union of India (supported by the law). The strategic importance of Kashmir in relation to both China and Russia and its position as the source of the headwaters of the Indus Valley system intensify the conflict and strengthen the claim of each side, and thus increase the problem of the religious minority in the Region.¹²⁰

2. CHRISTIANS:

Indian Christians are believed to be the most forward community in the Country. The life-style undertaken by the several sections of Christians, and their percentage among the urban elites are indicators of their social status. The Indian Christians are distributed in almost all the States and Union territories of the Country. Within themselves the Christians are also divided into different groups based on the social culture and racial classifications.

Professor Massey¹²¹ argues that the Christian community is neither qualitatively nor quantitatively well educated. The North India Christians

are mostly of Dalit or Tribal backgrounds, and stay in rural areas. He also stated that more than the $\frac{3}{4}$ of these communities are illiterate. A survey conducted by the Christian Institute of Religious Studies and the Batala and Ditt Memorial Centre in Amritsar in the 1990s showed that only 31% of the Punjab Christians are literate, against the whole Punjab literacy rate of 57.14%. The ratio is also very low against the national literacy rate, which is 52.11% according to the 1991 Census.

Scholars mainly describe the Indian Christians as having many and various but not drastically serious problems. The Christian community in India suffers from communal as well as internal tension. Their lives are affected greatly by their denominational classifications. While the Anglo-Indians, for example, are considered as a very distinctive group with regard to language and culture, the Dalit Christians (with Scheduled Caste origins) and those of the Scheduled Tribes suffer from a doubled discrimination status. This is because they are regarded as Dalits in the general terms of the concept, and they are also denied their fundamental constitutional rights in terms and basis of religion. The Tribal Christians also share the same problems as the Hindu tribes, and in addition to that, they are denied their rights to land, water, forests and their identity as indigenous people.

The main problems faced by the Indian Christians can be classified into:

(a) The problems related to Educational Institutions:

This is considered with regard to the minority status, government grants and recognition. Christians claim to face problems in running their educational institution. The Governments and State authorities are highly interfering in the appointment of teachers, system of admission of students and running of their educational institutions. The interference also is significant in the decision about the acceptance of principles, and the appointment of a 'controller' to supervise closely the management procedures. Christians find it difficult to get
minority certificates. Moreover, governments are accused of continuously attempting to impose upon them the system of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservation in the admission of students, and in the appointment of teachers. Such imposition procedure is also practiced in the cases of the enforcement of surplus staff. The Christian minorities in the educational fields are threatened by the penalty of non-compliance, withdrawal of financial aid and assistance under the various minority schemes. They are also threatened that the minority status would be withdrawn from them.

(b) The problem of Christians Personal Law:

This includes:

i. The Indian Christians Marriage Act of 1872.

ii. The Indian Christians Divorce Act of 1869.

iii. The Indian Succession Act of 1925.

The three Acts are deeply concerning the Christians Personnel Law. They had been enacted during the British Rule, and had great relevance to issues of that time. Moreover, they were greatly influenced by the English Law. The Christians claim that these Acts proved to be harmful to the contemporary community issues. The Indian Succession Act of 1925, for example, imposes a restriction on widows to inherit property. The Christian community became aware of this problem and forwarded it to the authorities. They are claiming that this problem is one of the proofs of inequality before the law, and constitutes a serious obstacle to their religious progress. Church pastors also complain of facing problems in getting licenses for the celebration of marriages.
(c) The issue of Equal Rights of the Dalit Christians:

This problem is believed to be gradually becoming deeper and more serious with time. Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes and Dalit Christians represent more than 75% of the Christian population of the Country. Dr. J. Massey categorizes the problem of these groups of the Christian community into three sections which are directly related to the Constitution:

I. The Right of Freedom of Conscience, and to profess any Religion:

   Article 15 of the Constitution points out this as:

   "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them."

   Also Article 25 states:

   "All person are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion."

   The factual difficulty is that Christians of the Scheduled caste origins are denied the right of conscience and the choice of religious faith. They are only allowed to enjoy the status of Scheduled castes if they continue to belong to the Hindu religious group. As Christians they are not entitled to get any of the benefits allocated to them through the reservation policy.

II. The Right to Protect Personal Life: This is mainly based on Article 21 which tackles this issue as:

   "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."

   Dalit Christians in fact do not enjoy these rights of protection of life and personal liberty to a great extent. This is due to the fact that the different governmental Acts and Rules concerning this issue, such as the
Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955) and The Protection of Civil Rights Rule (1977) do not include the Christians of Scheduled Castes.

III. The change of Religion and Altering One's Social and Economic Conditions: This is mainly based on the Third Paragraph of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes Order of 1950). This Paragraph reads as:

"Not withstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who profess a religion different from Hindu, shall be deemed to be a member of a 'Scheduled Caste'."

In this paragraph religion should be used as the main factor to determine Scheduled Caste affiliation. According to that, only those people who are socially and economically backward, and who are professing Hinduism are regarded as Scheduled Castes. Other categories of people with the same conditions but who believe in other faiths are not under consideration here. In 1956 and 1990, and due to the Parliamentary amendments, the Sikhs and the Buddhist religious groups were included into these categories. This Paragraph is believed to contradict Articles 15 and 25 of the Constitution, a thing that led to the suffering of the Dalits under the Christian faith, and their deprival of the protection of the law.

(d) The problems related to the Church properties:

These types of problems include the blocking of Christian graveyards deliberately by the majority landlords and stopping the community from taking their dead bodies there. It also includes the influencing of court decisions in favor of the majority group in cases of conflict, and the disrespect of the Christians religious constructions. In December 1996 members of the majority group in the villages of
Kahnuwan had demolished a Christian Church. This was suspected to be done with the help of the political leader of the area. The Church as well as the Christians there did not receive any kind of protection from the District Office, and finally the case was ignored. Christians in general accuse the district and civil administration, headed by the district magistrates and police officers of completely failing to provide any kind of protection for the minorities, their religious rights and the Church properties. In December 1996, three churches were attempted to be demolished in Ahmedabad by the majority religious group. Churches and statues of the Mother Virgin Mary were burnt, the Christian families threatened and attacked and their properties forcibly taken. Christian religious places and institutions are strongly held under the majority community and government machinery.

(e) The problem of Propagation of Christian Faith:

This issue is concerned with the several obstacles that emerge in the way of the Christian religious spreading methods. Religious groups are deprived from holding religious meetings. Some authorities, like the Government of Madhya Pradesh, issued a Government Act of Anti-Conversion, which the Christians believe is directed against them. Indian Christians mainly rely on the missionary work to propagate their faith. Even these sides of activities were continuously hindered from performing their work freely. They are faced by inequalities, ill treatment, lack of skill and narrow opportunities. The missionary work had intensified its work in India by the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, and then continued to increase in number and intensity. European missionaries and their indigenous followers and successors are accused of being hostile to the beliefs of the majority and also to the views of the uneducated masses. The Hindu majority communal groups
alleged that the missionaries indulge intensively in conversion of the Hindu people using the covers of medical, social and educational aid and services. Thus several anti-missionary agitations have evolved in various places, a thing which led to the formation of specific committees to supervise and follow the Christian missionary work. The forcible acts of conversion and neglect of the masses led the Christian minorities to feel misfortunate, backward and subordinated. American organizations are accused of playing a big role in the social polarization of the people and the encouragement of religious fundamentalist trends among the Christian groups. Hence, the Indian governments became greatly suspicious of the motives underlying the Christian aid and missionary work. Christians, on the other hand, accuse the Government of deliberately hindering the work of these organizations, and thus blocking the welfare of the Indian Christian community. The Government is also accused of directly interfering in the work of all kinds of Christian institutions. This accusation is extended to include the State Governments and the political authorities at all levels. This is regarded by Christians as direct violations of Article 30 of the Constitution, and its grant of religious rights and the running of religious institutions in accordance with their (the certain religious group's) own laws. The officers and the authorities declare always that the programmes prepared for minorities, and the decisions concerning them need a lot of work as well as long procedures and clearances from the several departments of states, and in the absence of all these procedures nothing could be done. These procedures take a lot of time to be fulfilled.

Beside these problems Christian minorities have several social as well as political difficulties. In their social interactions, the Indian Christian minorities are deprived of their right to land. The Government had issued a policy stating that land beyond the ceiling limit should be handed over to the tillers.
Landlords are accused of avoiding the implementation of this law as much as they can. This is done with the support of the district authorities. District authorities are also accused of neglecting the social issues of Christian minorities like the great delay and ignorance of the senior citizens of the community regarding matters of providing old-age pensions. Pension was provided to all other religious communities except the Christians.

Another issue in the social regard of the Christian minorities concerns the families in the villages. These families who are mainly involved in agriculture have been forcibly evicted from the agricultural lands. The members of the majority community continuously harass them, particularly their women. They are denied the right to water, forests and labor. The Christian minorities who own agricultural lands do not exceed the average of 5.36%, while the remaining portion of the people is constituted of landless laborers. In the urban centers they also face difficulties to get government jobs, because they are either categorized as 'unqualified' or rejected directly at the interview stage.

At the political level the Indian Christians have played an inconspicuous role. This can be attributed to the fact that large numbers of these Christians have come from the backward classes whose interests in political affairs are not big. The other reason is that the Christians, in general, prefer to be linked with their foreign sources and missionary organizations, whose major concerns are rather religious, and thus it encourages trends of fundamentalism among the Christian youth, and keeps them away from the political scene.\textsuperscript{122}

In spite of the fact that the Indian Christians have participated in the national struggle for independence, yet they did not associate themselves with any of the political movements that undertook Hindu symbols as slogans for their activities, like Gandhi's Ram Rajya, for example. Hence, the Christian groups in India deliberately did not urge themselves to form any kind of a

Christian political party. Yet it can be concluded that they are strongly supporting the notions of secularism and the separation between religion and politics.

Economically, the Christians, like many other religious minority communities, are faced by the situation of severe inequalities in the distribution of resources, education and welfare, skills and opportunities. The continuous expansion of the administration, commerce and industry had gradually been increasing and enlarging, and thus the social differences between and among the different social groups have also widened. The intense trends and constant processes of rural-urban migration among the Christian community members have added to their socio-economic problems. These factors have directly led to the growth of a strong and dominant middle class, which has gradually become prevailing in the Church, and greatly influencing its trends and discourses.

It can therefore be concluded that the Indian Christian minorities are facing several and multi-dimensional problems. They face social, economic and religious problems and in addition they are politically powerless. The problematic situation of the Christian community incorporates several serious issues, like the controversy about the local political leaders forcible confiscation of the plots of land granted to them by the Government. The problems also include many of the other rights, which the Indian Christian minority groups claim to be publicly denied.

3. THE SIKHS:

The Sikhs constitute an important religious minority group in India. They are scattered throughout the Country, but around 85% of them are found in the Punjab Region. They were previously favored by the British Rule, and as a result of this were given several concessions during that period like agricultural land, water channels and many facilities that made their standard
higher than all other groups in the area. During the First World War they constituted more than 20% of the Indo-British army. Later, they joined Gandhi's Movement of peaceful resistance to ask for independence. The reason behind this anti-British turn was the several difficulties that arose between them and the Colonial Government.

Since the advent of independence and the partition of the Country along religious bases, the major political aim for the Akali Dal, the main Sikh political party had been the demand for a 'Punjabi Saba', or a Punjabi-speaking State. The Akali Dal Manifesto for the first elections stated,

"The Shiromani Akali Dal... holds it as a question of life and death for the Sikhs for a new Punjab to be created immediately."

The main reasons for the strong demand of creation of a Punjabi-speaking State, as presented by the Sikhs were mostly communal. They stated:

(a) It will remove all causes of unrest and discontent, eliminate language controversies, enable the imparting of education in the mother tongue and help the people to grow and advance.

(b) It will be a geographically compact unit, financially viable, surplus in food and rich in resources.

(c) It will be a homogenous State inhabited by sturdy people, and as such would strengthen the defence of the Northwestern border.

(d) It will secure for the Country a contented Sikh community.

The process of the creation of the Punjabi-speaking State turned into a communal Hindu-Sikh debate, particularly during the Census procedures, when many people had repudiated Punjabi language as their mother tongue, and shifted to Hindi.

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123 Quoted by: B.R., Nayar, Minority Politics in the Punjab, Princeton, USA, p.89.
The problem had intensified by the media in the form of the two extremist papers, the 'Prabhat', which represented the Akali views, and the 'Partap', which represented the Hindi side. Both papers were published in the Urdu language.

After ten years from the first submission of the States Reorganization Commission Report (1955), the Punjab State was created thus fulfilling the major aim of the Sikh community. The Sikhs believed that there had been strong discrimination processes practiced against them, and the only solution would be through the creation of a separate State in which they would become the influential political power. For them this was the way to assure justice for the Sikh community. The discrimination against the Sikhs was thought to be directed towards four dimensions of life:
(a) The constitutional and legal rights
(b) The political and social rights
(c) The public services
(d) The Government patronage to business and industry.

After the creation of the Punjab State in 1966, both the Punjab and Haryana Sikhs made progress in different fields of life. Yet, in the overall concern they still face the disadvantages of the description 'minority'. Scholars attribute the rebirth of today's communalism in the Punjab due to the path of economic development after 1947, and mainly the stagnation in the agricultural and industrial developments. This hindered the investment chances in the industrial as well as trade fields. Thus communalism has turned into a tool to mobilize the people and to enhance and maintain their economic and political powers.

Yet, it can be stated that the rapid agricultural growth and the rise of a large number of movements in the 1950s and 1960s, which were mainly economic in nature and secular (communist) in trends were direct causes for the rise of internal communal trends. The growth of agriculture created an abundance of surplus in the hands of the capitalist farmers and the rich peasants much higher than the need. Hence, they shifted and expanded into trade in agricultural products, and to small and medium industrial investments. These factors led to
the creation and intensifying of competition. The resort to communalism was an inlay to mobilize the people, and give the communal issue a political dimension. Hence, each side of the competitors intensified the attempts to give its appeal some social strength.124

One of the difficulties that the Sikh communalism is facing is the problem of factionalism within the movement itself. A section of the Akali Dal parted from the main group and started fighting its opponents within the Party by bringing out the caste issue and looking for support from the Jat Sikhs. This group mainly represents the big and middle farmers of the 1970s Green Revolution. The struggle for socio-economic as well as political hegemony between the agrarian and the capitalist interests were from the basic motives of the communal movements.

The social conditions also play a big role in enhancing the problem of the Sikh minority. The Sikh families were continuously evicted by the majority groups from the agricultural lands and deprived from their basic rights. They are not treated equally in issues concerning water distribution and the enfranchisement of the migrant laborers. Their houses were deliberately demolished for reasons like widening the roads or for public services without any kind of compensation like in the case of Madhya Pradesh (October, 1997).

In the political level the Sikh communalism is believed to be used as an instrument (both political and ideological) in the hands of vested interest groups so as to maintain their dominance and hegemonic position. Political parties in the Punjab are accused of continuously changing their social base and political fortunes. Communal parties like the RSS, the BJP and the Akali Dal are basing their claims on a biased ideology, and thus they propagate for their trends, through which they (intentionally or unintentionally) enhance the minority versus majority tensions. Their main goal is to obtain the maximum number of votes regardless of the consequences.

Another socio-political problem of the Sikhs minority group in India can be seen in their serious accusations of the Government of unequal share in the national wealth, and some services. Also the Government is blamed for its great and limitless interference in the internal affairs (including religious) of the community. Reference here is directed towards the Government intervention in their relationship with the Sikh Harijans. The authorities are hence blamed for the ill-treatment, severe neglect and complete deprivation of these groups from all the general privileges granted to the Hindu Harijans. The Government's point in this regard is that Sikhism, as a religion and belief, does not acknowledge the caste system.

The only few attempts undertaken by the Hindu and Sikh groups to share power occurred in 1967 and in 1969, and such a decision was reached due to the desperate willingness of both sides to get a hand in political power. The two attempts had failed due to the realization of the both sides that their communal base was not precisely matching the communal adjustments that they had reached. These measures brought out negative results as they enhanced extreme communalism in the long run.

The secular parties, particularly the Congress Party are also not free of blame. It is accused of contributing to the spread and intensifying of communalism in the Punjab, and thus to the problems of the Sikh minority group. The Congress Party had witnessed some weaknesses in spite of the fact that it does not propagate or support communalism.

One of the weaknesses counted against the Congress Party can be concluded in the accusation directed against it as undertaking an opportunistic attitude towards communalism, particularly for electoral and political purposes. In 1948 and in 1956 the Akali Dal Party dissolved itself and tried to merge with the Congress into a joint coalition.125 This strategy failed and again led to the emergence of extreme communalism in the reformation of the Akali Dal. It has

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125 This coalition policy with the Congress Party was known as "The Policy of Accommodation".
also strengthened Hindu communalism outside the Congress Party. Pramod Kumar commented,

"Thus the politics of accommodation had the double effect of strengthening Hindu and Sikh communalisms in the state and communalising politics within the Congress."\(^{126}\)

The leftist parties are accused of their failure to understand the nature of communal politics. They are believed to have adjoined themselves with the parties that are having communal trends so as to attain electoral gains while failing to provide solutions for the social problems. They neither opposed nor supported communal ideology, groups and parties.

The Sikhs minority groups accuse the majority people of giving only short-term compromises, which would only push the communal trends within any community towards extremism. The Hindu majority, in turn, accuses the Sikh minority group of misusing any compromise concluded with them for the purpose of creating new and more extremist and difficult demands as issues of extreme importance and urgency that had to be solved.

The problems of the Sikh community had culminated in the 1980s during the rule of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In order to put an end to the communal tension, the Premier had ordered the raid of the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Sikh clashed with the Government forces and around 1500 people from the Sikhs were killed. The maximization of the situation occurred when the private guards (Sikhs) had murdered the Prime Minister in revenge for the raid of the Temple, an incident that led to the death of more thousands of people and the increase of communal tension.

One of the remarkable characteristics of the Sikh minority group is that their difficulties and tension are not only with the majority group, but with other minority sectors also, particularly the Muslims. The two groups had witnessed several clashes against each other. Moreover, in areas where the

\(^{126}\) P. Kumar, et al., *op. cit.*, p. 300.
Sikhs represent a majority community, the Muslims suffer from several difficulties and deliberate problem creations. Such tension activities against the groups of other faiths and the Muslims in particular, are like the endless attempts at hindering the religious performances of these groups, and stopping the establishing of religious constructions. Generally the Sikhs and the Muslims exchange bilateral feelings of hostility - hidden and declared - in any place throughout the Subcontinent.

Since the 1980s, the Sikhs have formed a Committee responsible of supervising and pursuing their different interests. Some of the duties of this Committee were like the establishment of religious constructions, the building of schools and the reservation of seats in colleges and universities. It would also care for the teaching of the Sikh religious faith and the spread of its history in the different educational establishments. A major claim and dream of the Sikh minority group today is the establishment of an independent Government of their own, and preferably an independent Country.127 For the Sikh community, the building of their own State is an aim that represents a religious belief to be fulfilled and brought into a realistic truth. This dream of the Sikh minority group can be regarded as the most dangerous inclination in their communal trends, because it involves a covered secessionist goal underneath.

It can therefore be concluded that the Sikh minority group in India are having several and various types of difficulties. These include political, social, economic as well as religious. All these problems are summed up in their difficulty to adjust and accommodate themselves in a community where they form a minority group, and also in the difficulties that they are facing in attaining their several rights within this society. The ultimate goal of the Sikh community, hence, has become the dream and the endeavors to achieve the formation of their own sovereign Sikh Khalistan Country.

127 The Sikhs plan to form Khalistan, a sovereign and independent Sikh State. Now they are continuously reciting the fulfillment of the dream of its establishment one day.
MINORITIES IN THE SUDAN

INTRODUCTION:

The Republic of the Sudan is the largest country in the Continent of Africa, and in the Arab World, with an area of 967,500 square miles, i.e. around 2,503,890 square kilometers. This area represents about 8.3% of the total area of Africa and 1.7% of the total world surface area (11th in rank). The Sudan occupies most of the Northeastern part of Africa. Its length is 1,300 miles (2,100 kms) from the vast sand desert in the North to the Tropical Rain Forests, 3° North of the Equator in the South, i.e. it lies between latitudes 40-220° North, and longitude 220-380° East. Its largest width (East-West) is 1,100 miles i.e., 1,750 km. It has a 670-kilometers-long coastline along the Red Sea. The vast width of the Sudan and its immense extended surface area gave it an enormous variety of natural resources as well as of climatic conditions.

Besides all these facts, the Sudan can be considered as what scholars like to call it “the microcosm of African communities,” due to the fact that it possesses a unique geographical position, described as “a gateway to both worlds, the Arab and the African”. The Sudan shares international boundaries with nine different countries: Egypt and Libya in the North, Zaire, Uganda and Kenya in the South, Ethiopia and Eritrea in the East, Chad and the Central African Republic in the West. It opens into the Red Sea in the extreme North East and faces Saudi Arabia across the Red Sea. The River Nile, which stretches across the Country from South to North, constitutes the most important geomorphologic phenomenon in the Sudan.

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128 This expression was initiated by Ali Mazrui in “The Multiple Marginality of The Sudan”, in Y. F. Hassan, (ed.), Sudan In Africa, Khartoum University Press, 1971.
129 This description is frequently emphasized by Scholars like Agree Jaden, the President of the ‘Sudan African National Unity’ – SANU.
The Nile extends for over 1,700 kilometers covering together with its Valley and tributaries an area of 215 million hectares, i.e., around 25,000 square kilometers. This is considered the most essential source of water, as it provides about 85.6 billion cubic meters of annual water flow, and it also spares a large area of arable land around its shores.

The factual status of the Sudan i.e. its Afro-Arab particularity helped greatly in creating a kind of duality in the Country’s identity classification, and in building the immense diversity in its internal composition. This diversity characterizes both the geographical regions that constitute the Country as well as its population set up. The most recent Census of the Sudan estimated the population of the Country to be approximating 30 millions, with an annual growth rate of 2.8%. This puts the status quo as ten persons in every square kilometer.

Ethnic groups in the Sudan are divided geographically, racially, tribally, linguistically and religiously. Hence the social reality of the Country brings many groups under the status of minorities. In a general classification the population is divided into the Arab majority of the Northern parts with its various sub-divisions and who are mainly Muslims (two-thirds), and the Non-Arab non-Muslim minority groups of the Southern region (one-third).

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE SUDAN:

THE ARABS:

Throughout the historical periods, the Arabs of Northern Sudan had come through the Red Sea or Egypt, mainly as migrants from the Arab Peninsula. This led to the creation of the Arab-originated majority in the Northern parts of the Country. The appearance and spread of Islam in the Arab World and North Africa added strength and ideological dimensions to these movements, and thus gave these groups a common religious identity. The
present day Northern Sudan is, therefore, inhabited by a hybrid race that is united by a common language (i.e. Arabic), culture and religion.

This Afro-Arab-Islamic combination resulted in a kind of amalgamation of Afro-Arab Muslims who professed Islam, retained their Africanity and adopted Arabization in a magnificent form of equilibrium between religious and socio-political standards. They are culturally, linguistically and religiously related to the Arab Muslims of the Northern and Eastern parts of Africa and the Middle East, while ethnically they are related to the African non-Arabs of the Southern neighborhoods. These were the bases of the ethno-religious formation of the Sudanese society in its Northern regions.

Within themselves, the Arabs of Northern Sudan are divided into two large clans, namely, the Jai’aliyeen (the large family grouping including the tribe of the Ja’aliyeen) who are mainly commercial workers and traders, and the Juhayna groups who include the Arab nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of the Central and Western deserts and the Steppe areas. Besides these two large groups, there are other scattered tribes who are also identified as Arabs. These tribes include the Kawahla, Kenana and the recent immigrants of the Rasha’idah groups.

The Arabs today represent almost 40% of the Sudanese population. Although they are not an explicit majority in the Sudan, yet their culture and language are the strongest and most dominant since the Sixteenth Century. Even in the international context Northern Sudan is considered as an Arab Country by which the Sudan became a member of the League of Arab Nations.

THE BEJA:

The Beja tribes dwell the Eastern highland regions, along the Red Sea Coast and Eastern Sudan. They represent about 6-7% of the Sudanese population. Although the nature of the their geographical location made them the earliest recipients of the Arab and Islamic cultures, yet, the Beja tribes
strongly preserve their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. Within the big clan, the Beja are classified into several tribes. The most significant of these are the Ababda, the Bishariyyin, the Hadandowa and the Bani A’amir.

THE NUBIANS:

These tribal groups generally relate to Nubia, the area located around the Nile Valley in the Northern most regions of the Sudan and the Southern most parts of Egypt, and they relate back to the ancient Egyptian pharaohs.

The Nubians constitute about 3% of the Sudanese population. Outside the Sudan and in the international representations, the Nubians classify themselves as Northern Sudanese Arabs. Yet within the Sudan, they strongly preserve their special Nubian identity. Again within themselves they have several identifications based on clans, local racial groups, regional placement and dialects.

THE NUBA OF THE NUBA MOUNTAINS:

The Nuba Mountains region covers most of the Central part of South Kordofan region. It lies between latitudes 29-31° West, and longitude 9-12° North. The Nuba are mainly Muslims and Christians, and represent about 5% of the total population. The Muslim Nuba tribes include the Nuba of the Southern Mountains (Jebal) like the Talodi and Tira, the Central Nuba like the Kadaru, Ghulfan, Debi, Miri, Abu Hashim, and others like the Korogon, the Dilling, the Tacho, the Otoro and the Heiban tribes. The groups who professed both faiths and intermixed as Muslims and Christians are the Moro, Tulushi, Kalibi, Tira, Katcha and Nyimang.

Among themselves the Nuba are divided into several heterogeneous sub-tribes and sub-groups. They speak ten entirely different languages with fifty dialects, which are mutually unintelligible. Many Nuba groups adopt Arabic as
their mother language. Other proportions speak Arabic with their local jargon. The Nuba tribes as described by R.C. Stevenson\textsuperscript{130} combine ‘Nubaness’, ‘Africanness’ and ‘Arabness’ at the same time.

**THE WEST AFRICAN GROUPS:**

These groups represent about 5\% of the population of the Sudan. They are mainly immigrants who came from West and Central Africa as individuals or groups in their way to the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina (Saudi Arabia) for pilgrimage, and then settled down in the Sudan. In modern Sudan, they are mostly found in the Central and Eastern parts of the Country. The West African groups are mainly Muslims and exercise herding and cultivation for livelihood.

**THE FUR AND WESTERN SUDAN GROUPS:**

The Fur tribes, who inhabit Western Sudan, mainly Darfur, represent about 2\% of the total population. Yet, they have a remarkable historical significance. They succeeded to establish a strong Islamic State (Sultanate) in Western Sudan, which continued for almost 300 years from as early as the Fifteenth Century up to the time of the Turko-Egyptian Rule in the Sudan (1650-1874). The Fur are of black African origins, mainly herding animals and strongly advocating Islam.

Other tribes that inhabit Western Sudan, particularly Darfur Region, are the non-Arab groups of the Masalit, the Gimr, the Daju, the Tuigur, the Midob, the Baygu, the Zaghawa, the Barti, the Bidayat and the Birgid. These Muslim groups use the Arabic language as their lingua franca. Yet, according to

scholars like P. Doornbon, these tribes have been “Sudanised” rather than “Arabised”.  

MINORITIES OF SOUTHERN SUDAN:

The Southern Sudan Region is the part of the Country, which lays South of Latitude 10° North, and extends southwards to the Ugandan border. The area of Southern Sudan is about 250,000 square miles, i.e. over one-fourth of the total area of the Country. It has borders with Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Zaire and the Central African Republic. The Southern Sudan region is considered as one of the richest areas in the Country and in Africa in terms of mineral wealth, oil production as well as natural resources.

The people of Southern Sudan constitute one-third (40%) of the total Sudanese population, and they belong to the purely originated African ethnic groups of the Negroids of the Eastern parts of the Continent. They differ completely from the hybrid of the Arab race of the North in origins, features, color, culture, racial affiliation, religious backgrounds and all basic systems and traditions. They further differ among themselves and are sub-divided variously. The largest groups among them are the Dinka, the Nuer, the Bari and the Shilluk.

The population of Southern Sudan is mostly non-Muslims. Many tribes in the Southern parts are neither Muslims nor Christians. They adopt their own local religions and their inherited tribal belief systems. To facilitate the study of these groups, scholars and social anthropologists have divided the inhabitants of the Region into larger groups based on linguistic and cultural similarities.  

The main groupings of the Southern Sudan people are the Nilotes, the Nilo-Hamites and the Western Sudanic tribes. These groups have their sub-

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divisions and sub-groups throughout Southern Sudan. The total numbers of sub-groups in the region reach up to 572.

The Nilotes groups who are mainly cattle breeders, are known as the Central Southerners. They comprise tribes like the Dinka, Nuer (almost 5% of the Sudan’s population), the Bari (2%), the Shilluk (1%) and the small group of the Acholi.

The second group or the Nilo-Hamites is the Eastern Southerner tribes. This group was further divided into three major sectors based on cultural affinities as:

1. The Latuho speaking groups: They include the tribes of the Kokoya and the Luluba.
2. The Bari speaking groups: They are constituted of the Bari, the Mundari, the Nyangwara, the Pojulu, the Kakwa, the Nyepu and the Kuku.
3. The Murle-Didinga speaking groups: They are represented by the Toposa, Donyiro, Jiye and Turkana.

Out of all these tribes only the Toposa live completely in Southern Sudan in the Kapoeta District, North of the Didinga Hills, while the others spill over the several borders of the Country.

The third grouping of the Southern tribal combination include the Sudanic tribes of Southern Sudan and are divided into:

1. The Azande-speaking groups: mainly composed of the Azande tribes, who form a collection of several cultivators clans, who constitute about 2% of the total population.
2. The Madi Moru groups: composed of different internal classifications and form about 1% of the total Country population. They are further divided linguistically into three sub-groups:
   (a) The Moro who occupy the Meridi and Amadi districts.
   (b) The Avukaya and the Kaliko who live in Yei District extending into the Congo and Uganda.
(c) The Madi who inhabit the Opari and Nimule areas, and who spill over into Uganda.

3. The Bongo-Baka-Bagirmi groups: They live near Wau district, and are mainly animal herders. They have numerous tribal branches.

Other small groups like the Bari, the Niangora, Mandari, the Foglo, the Moro and the Laloba are constituted from a mixture of the Nilotes, the Nilohamites and the Sudanic origins, but none of them is powerful enough to have an independent sovereignty or influence.

**THE DINKA TRIBES:**

The Dinka Tribes of the Central Nilotes Southerners form the largest and most significant group in the Region. They represent more than 10% of the total Sudanese population, thus ranking as the second largest group in the Sudan, after the Arabs. They occupy the largest area compared to any other tribe in the Southern Sudan and extend as far as South Kordofan in the North. Moreover, The Dinka Tribe comprises about twenty-five separate groups and sub-groups which include the Cic, the Bor, the Aliab, the Agur, the Atwok, the Twig and the Atot.

From the above account it can be concluded that the tribal combination of Southern Sudan is very heterogeneous and diverse. Groups differ not only in their language and cultures, but also in their population settings, size, environmental conditions and the socio-cultural history of each. The laws that control the interrelationships among different tribes are mainly rival, and in most cases hostile over issues like sovereignty, land or cattle. One of the main characteristics of the Southern Sudanese tribal groups is that many of them spill over the borders of the Sudan into the neighboring countries. This is based on
the fact that the present political boundaries of the Sudan were arbitrarily
drawn by the Colonial Rule, regardless of the social settings of the people.\textsuperscript{133}