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CHAPTER I
WHAT IS MINORITY?

I) Meaning and definition of minority:

The term ‘minority’ has a very broad meaning but it is usually restricted to a thinly populated group compared to a densely populated one. The terms ‘Majority’ and ‘Minority’ are more related to the differences among the two than the actual population. For example, in Africa the population of Whites is less than that of blacks but as the blacks are deprived of their right for a better life, they are called as ‘Minority’. ‘Minority’ is a modern political term.

Sociologists generally define a ‘minority’ as

\[
\text{a group of people – differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion or language – and consider themselves to be different from the majority, and are though by the majority as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence are subjected to certain exclusions, discriminations and other differential treatment}.\]

The important element in this definition are a set of attitudes.- those of group identification from within the group and those of prejudice
from without — and a set of behaviours — those of self-segregation from within the group and those of discrimination and exclusion from without.

The common tendency among people is to take the word ‘minority’ literally and simply to say that a minority is a small group of people who live in the midst of a large group. At least two defects make this definition useless, first, groups are not ‘naturally’ or ‘inevitably’ differentiated; cultures (either of the minority or majority, or usually both) must define them as differentiated before they are so. People of different races, nationalities, religions, or languages can live among on another for generations, amalgamating and assimilating themselves. Like everything else that is social, minority groups, must be socially defined as minority groups, which entails a set of attitudes and behaviours. Second, relative numbers in and out of the group have not been found to be definitionally important. It makes no sense to say that Negroes are not a minority group in those few countries of Mississippi, Albama and South Carolina where they constitute a numerical majority of the population but that they are a minority group in the rest of South. Likewise even though the Bantus constitute around 80 percent of the population of South Africa, sociologists have defined them as ‘minority group’ because they occupy a subordinate position. Many nations have no single ‘majority group’ in terms of numbers. Thus it is necessary either to counterpose a ‘minority’
to a dominant group in terms of power, or to abandon the term 'minority'; although and call it a 'sub-ordinate group'.

II) Social Stratification and origin of minorities:

In every society some men are identified as superior and others as inferior: patricians and plebeian, the twice born and once born, aristocrats and commoners, masters and slaves, the classes and the masses. These contrasts between higher and lower, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, constitute the substance of social stratification.

*Stratification may be considered a process, a structure, a problem; it may be seen as one aspect of the differentiation of roles and statuses in society, as a division of society into social groups or quasi groups, as the social arena in which the problem of equality and inequality presents itself or as all of these. Stratification is based on 'class, status and power'*.  

**Class:** A class is a group possessing the same economic position in society. In all states there are three elements: one class is very rich, another very poor, and a third is a mean or middle class, neither rich nor poor. By virtue of their position in the economic order, members of each class share common experiences, a more or less distinctive way of life,
and certain political and economic interests. We may define a class, then as a number of persons sharing a common position.

**Status:** Although wealth and occupation are often significant bases for prestige or social status but they are not the only criteria in terms of which men assess one another's social worth, or even necessarily the most important other values such as ancestry, education, race, power, or style of life may provide alternative or additional bases of social ranking. The system of status, the ranking of roles and their incumbents – therefore constitutes a dimension of social stratification.

In any society division of labour is based upon age and sex, their roles vary in prestige they carry and the rewards they provide. These differences in status derive from many sources: The power of authority attached to some roles, the relative importance assigned to alternative roles by society, the number of persons capable of performing the requisite tasks, the rewards they carry.

The status of individual, may be ascribed based upon relatively fixed criteria over which they have no control – ancestry, inherited wealth or ethnic affiliation. Even ascribed status puts strong pressure upon the individual to acquire the appropriate manner and skills so as to remain at the social level to which he is born. The aristocrat who inherits his rank and is brought up to follow the requirements of his position may fall from
his elevated status if he fails to confirm to the requirements of his status or disregards the obligations placed upon him.

**Power:** Power, the capacity to control the actions of others, authority, a recognised right to command are the features of most social structures. Many roles and statuses carry with them some prescriptions of authority or an approved freedom of action that affects the behaviour of others. State possesses the legal monopoly of force in all modern societies, all other forms of power and authority are presumably subject to political control. Close and significant relations are likely to exist between political institutions and activities of government.

**III) The Indian Caste System:**

Caste in India – with its rigid rank order, clearcut differences among the castes, status ascribed at birth and virtually unchanging and unchangeable, minimal or non-existent individual mobility and institutionalised relationships among the castes has provided the model for the sociological definition of caste in general. The term

'**Caste** originally had only a local meaning.

*The Portuguese who came to India in the sixteenth century applied their word 'Casta' (race or lineage) to the different Indian groups they encountered. In time the attributes of Indian caste gave the term a general*
significance, releasing it from its Indian context
and allowing its application to other more or
less similar social structures.

Indian society is usually divided into four inclusive castes – the
‘Brahmin’ or priests, the ‘Kshtriya’ or warriors, the ‘Vaishya’ or
merchants, and the ‘Shudra’ or peasants and workers. And through this
social stratification arise the Caste system and different minorities.

India is a land of multiple religions, races, cultures and languages.
This variety gives India its beauty but also it gives rise to the formation
of various minority groups.

IV) Patterns of Ethnic Groups:

Many social and ethnic groups are often described as ‘Minorities’
when they occupy a subordinate position in society. In many societies
racial and ethnic groups constitute important components of the social
order, and the relations among them create significant social problems.
Membership in racial and ethnic groups can affect men’s status and their
relations with others. Skin colour of distinctive cultural traits often fix
men’s place in their society and constitute grounds for differential
treatment, or discrimination. Yet on occasion minorities are not
discriminated against the French and Italians in Switzerland, for example
and sometimes the “minority” is in fact larger than the ostensible
‘majority’, the blacks in the Union of South Africa, for example constitute about two-thirds of the population.

Relations between majority and minority, or superior and inferior, are often, marked by conflict and hostility. The differences that set groups apart form one another contain the seeds of such conflict, for commitment to one set of values and institutions can readily render others suspect. At the other extreme, racial and ethnic minorities have sometimes been brutally treated. In most situations, however, conflict and hostility are contained within a system that holds members of ethnic groups to a particular place in the social order and regulates their relations with others. Many types of circumstances affect the structure of ethnic group relations, of which three appears to be of particular importance: first, the number and size of several groups, second, the nature and extent of both physical and cultural differences and third the arena of competition i.e. the resources and values for which the minority and majority compete. As Wagley and Harris remarks:

The advantages which the majority seeks to derive from the presence of the minority and perpetuation of its subordinate status, the general opportunities or barriers to upward mobility inherent in the larger society’s
economy, social organisation and ideological settings.

Cultural contrasts – in language, religion, tradition, customs are not in themselves grounds for hostility and conflict. Many groups and persons condemn ethnic differences and look favourably upon the melting pot in which distinctive cultural traits are merged to form a new culture.

When a group’s wealth, power or status can be challenged by others, or when members of different ethnic groups are competing for scarce values such as power or wealth, conflict is likely to develop and racial or ethnic differences easily become a basis for hostility. By excluding minorities from access to political power, by confining them to menial occupations, or by stigmatising their colour, caste or creed, a dominant group or majority monopolizes political, economic and social values for themselves. Patterns of discrimination or subordination are often created to gain such values and once a system of superior-inferior relations between ethnic groups is created, it is difficult to change.

V) Origin of National Minorities:

The origin of the term ‘national minorities’ can be traced to Europe, where it was applied to various national groups who were identified with particular territories by virtue of long residence in them.
but who had lost their sovereignty over these territories to some more numerous people of a different nationality. As Freedman Maurice remarks,

In some cases the minority groups cea a
altogether to occupy their original territories
and were dispersed throughout the nation of
which they were now subjects.°

More often they stayed in the same place but in a subordinate position, since the dominant political and economic institutions were now run mainly for the benefit of the larger national group. The larger group usually enacted laws to regulate the political existence of the minorities, for instance, they might have to send their own community leaders to the national assembly, instead of being able to vote individually for candidates in a national election. Even the areas in which they could live or the occupations they could pursue might be determined by law, at the least the dominant nationality regarded them with suspicion.

VI) Types of Minorities:

As I have stated earlier that minority doesn’t only mean thinly populated group as compared to a densely populated one, but it has various connotations. The definition of minority is not a rigid one but it has changed giving rise to various groups that can be labelled as
minorities, hence for our convenience we will divide them according to their definitions.

a) Numerical Minority:

It is a thinly populated ethnic group living in a densely populated group which is different from the minority in terms of culture, tradition, language, dress code etc. For example ‘Parsis’ living in Bombay prior to the British. The earliest known Parsi was Dorabji Nanabhoy who arrived in approximately in 1640 and was a tax collector first for the Portuguese and then for the British. Though they have made Bombay their home, but still they maintain their own distinct style of living and dressing gracefully. Parsis are considered to be the richest minority in India.

b) Occupational minority:

It is a community or a group having the same occupation. The increasing saliency of a certain occupation for example can set apart the people who practice that occupation if occupations are more or less hereditary in society and cause them to be considered a minority group. For example, the ‘Marwaris’ allegedly originating in Rajasthan were merely another occupational caste until the late eighteenth century. They were moneylenders and small merchants, who were of no great importance in the social structure than any other occupational caste until the rise of capitalism gave a great new importance to their economic functions. The new economic salience of hereditary occupation created
salience of the people who practiced the occupational and made them into a despised, feared and envied minority. The process was aided by the increased geographic dispersion of the group caused by a broader demand for their occupational services.

c) Language minorities:

Language differentiation based on geographic dispersal has been going on in India since time immemorial within two great language stocks, the Dravidian of Southern India and the Indo-Aryan of Northern India. The differentiation of Dravidian into Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada and several dozen lesser languages was not marked by definite historical events any more than was the differentiation of Latin into Italian, French, Spanish and Rumanian. The modern development of political boundaries, which occurred at first under the British for administrative convenience and after 1948 under the independent government of India, made language a salient basis of differentiation because the political boundaries were drawn as closely as possible to language boundary lines. Thus it has been largely within the past few decades that language has became one of the most distinctive marks of a minority in India and the basis of considerable group conflict. Some groups in the United States speak a language other than English, although they are not recent immigrants, indeed they have continued to speak their own language over many generations. They are therefore best designated
as "language minorities", although they tend to have other distinctive cultural trait, it is principally their language that sets them apart from the majority of the population.

The outstanding example of such a minority is the Spanish speaking people who live in the sparsely populated rural areas of New Mexico and Southern Colorado. Their position is similar to that of some European national minorities, since most of their ancestors were originally Mexican citizens whose territories were incorporated into the United States after the Mexican War of 1846-48. They have been able to maintain a distinctive way of life because they are both isolated and poor; this same isolation tends to protect them from discriminatory attitudes of the dominant, English speaking population, who have not, on the whole, found it necessary to impose any legal or political liabilities upon them.

Language variations in a society was considered unimportant for thousands of years but a service of political events can so sharpen the
religious or linguistic distinctions that the followers of one variation who happen to be without much power in the society or thereafter considered a minority.

d) Religious Minorities:

Discrimination on grounds of religion, although expressly forbidden by the Constitution, has long been practiced in various parts of the world especially in India. India is a country with different religious minorities. It is like a garden with flowers of different varieties which lends a charm to it. The various religious minorities in India are Parsis, Sikh, Christians, Muslims and various castes among the Hindus.

*Among the National religious minorities are*

*Jews, Muslims, Christians of the Eastern orthodox church and various protestant and orthodox sects*.\(^8\)

Roman Catholics too show some of the disadvantages of minority, group status though to a decreasing extent. One special feature of membership in a religious minority is that it can be acquired voluntarily, regardless of racial or national origin, though most members, of course are following the religion of their parents. Religious differences are still a prime source of minorities. Perhaps the most destructive conflict of the post World War II period has been the one between Hindus and Muslims in India and
a most bitter though small scale conflict has been that between the Muslims and Jews in Palestine. The Jews, who have been the most persecuted minority in modern times are still the subject of considerable prejudice and discrimination in several countries in Europe. Religious minorities also include the Christians in Muslim countries, Pagans and atheists in Christian countries, the minor religious groups of the Indian sub-continent and several others.

The characters depicting religious minority in this research work are Buta Singh, Sabhrai, Jugga belonging Sikh religion and Mir Nihal, Asghar and Laila belonging to the Muslim religious minority.

e) Racial Minorities:

Racial groups are distinguished from each other by their possession of certain physical features inherited as a result of endogamy over a long period. Few races however are biologically pure, nor do most people are strictly biological criteria in deciding that a Persian belongs to one racial group rather than another. Thus in the United States, a Negro is defined as some one of whom it is known that at least one of his ancestors was a Negro: the definition will hold even if, to all appearances, the individual is a “white”. Moreover, although the Principal racial minorities of the United States – the American Indians, the Chinese, the Philippines, the Negroes and the Japanese – all have members with some Caucasoid
ancestry, they are still regarded as “non white”. The dominant white majority generally chooses to overlook the fact that they too, are not “pure” since many whom they accept as White have some Negroid or Mongoloid ancestry.

The characters depicting racial minority in this research work are Henry Winton, Ruby Miranda, and Eddie Trevor

f) Under Privileged or Exploited Minorities:

This is just an extension of occupational minority that it a group performing menial labour. This minority is the outcome of the ‘Varna’ system which privileges the few on upper levels creating the elite and the lower castes i.e. Shudras or property-less lower class.

The lowest class is of Panchamas, whom even the Shudras consider inferior have been ill-treated, oppressed and exploited more than Shudras for ages. They were considered untouchables and forced to live far away from caste Hindus.

But fortunately over a period of time this system has changed. The Constitution gives equal rights and opportunities to all. But still there exist an underprivileged and exploited minority, not as a result of Caste system but because of class system based on economy. At present the conflict is not between Caste-Hindus and Untouchables but between haves and have-nots. The privileged and the under-privileged.
The characters under privileged minority in this research work are Bakha, Gangu and Munoo.

VII) Minority Groups in the United States:

In the United States, the term

*Minority groups can be applied only in an extended sense. All citizens of the United States belong legally to a single American nationality. There are no laws that regulate the political status of any group of citizens according to their ancestors national origin. Moreover, there is no single nationality group in the United States that either forms a numerical “Majority” or enjoys political dominance. This is not to say, however that discrimination and prejudice are unknown in the United States, but that since there is no one “Majority group” with a special claim to American nationality, the handicaps faced by American “minority groups” cannot be explained in terms of their national origin as such*. 

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The crucial factor would appear to the degree to which any group has been allowed to become assimilated into the mainstream of American life and enjoy the same opportunities as the majority of Americans. Most immigrant nationality groups suffered some discrimination during their early years in the country but were later assimilated.

*Those groups that were not allowed at assimilate – notably the Negroes have continued to be objects of prejudice for most of their fellow citizens, and in this sense they constitute “minorities” even though the numbers of Negroes far exceeds that of many a group that does indeed have a common national origin outside the United States but now thinks of itself as American*.\(^{10}\)

**VIII) Functioning of Minority in Society:**

**a) Assignment to a Lower Status:**

A minority position involves exclusion or assignment to a lower status in one or more of four areas of life. The economic, the political, the legal and the social associational that is minority will be assigned to lower ranking occupations or to lower compensated positions within each occupation, it will be prevented from exercising the full political privileges held by majority citizens, it will not be given equal status with
the majority in application of law or justice, or it will be partially or completely excluded from both the formal and the informal associations found among the majority. Not infrequently, the minority also voluntarily excludes itself partially or completely from participation in these areas of life, partly as a means of maintaining traditional cultural differences. Accompanying the objective subordination and segregation of the minorities are usually to be found some subjective attitudes of mutual hostility, although these may sometimes be publicly denied and camouflaged. "Majority – Minority" relations invariably involve some conflict, although this may take varied forms and operate on different levels.

b) Attitude of Hostility Towards Minority:

There seems to be three types of attitudes of hostility with which the dominant group regards the majority and with which the minority may attempt to counter the dominant group.

*The first is an attitude in which power is the main element, the second attitude is ideological and the third attitude is racist*.^{11}

**POWER:** The dominant group wishes to exploit the minority for economic or political purposes, or for prestige, and the minority group seeks to escape their exploitation.
IDEOLOGICAL: The dominant group believes that it has a monopoly on the “truth” (as may the minority group also) the achievement of ascendancy by one ideological group over the other results in drastic efforts to convert the minority to the dominant group’s version of the “truth”.

RACIST: The dominant group believes itself to be biologically superior to the minority group and it stereotypes the minority in terms of negatively valued characteristics. The minority may have the same attitude towards the dominant group, but since it lacks power, this has few or no behavioural consequences.

Different social systems of conflict accompany these three different attitudes of hostility. For example, the Caste system is generally associated only with the racist attitude, this system prohibits mobility across group lines and equal status, relationships and requires endogamy, systematized display of inferiority by the minority, and occupational division of labour. Racism also has a pathological form which insists on the physical extermination of the minority race because it is alleged to threaten the “purity” of the dominant race. Where power seems to be the main ingredient in the conflict between dominant and minority groups, there is one form or another of exploitation. Ideological conflict is at once the most brutal and the most generous toward the minority, depending on whether or not the minority will accede completely to the
beliefs of the dominant group. In the contemporary world, the religious minorities of India offer examples of ideological conflict.

IX) Role of Minority in Social Change:

The different roles of minorities in the society will affect their impact on general social change. In general, the existence of minorities in a society offers a constant stimulus and a constant irritant that for several reasons provoke social change.

Minorities are often carries of a culture different from that of the dominant group, and the contact and clash of culture have long been hypothesized as a source of social change. Even when minorities carry no traditional alien culture, their partial exclusion from the general society serves as a basis for the development of some deviant culture.12

In addition, apart from their cultural differences, minorities are sources of social dissatisfaction and social unrest, which are conditions for social change. Some minorities probably include a disproportionate number of inventive and otherwise creative individuals, because their alienation from the society in which they are forced to live without full participation gives such individuals a perspective that is not possible for the more fully
integrated. If necessity be the mother of invention, minority members are influenced by this creative aspect of necessity.

These general sources of social changes created by the existence of a minority in a society are probably best seen in that situation where power considerations by the dominant group maintain the existence of the minority. Where power and material exploitation are not involved, the dominant group is often either generous or unconcerned about letting the minority group go its own way, and that may often create the stimuli for social change.

On the other hand, where ideological or racist considerations maintain the existence of a minority in a society, there is less freedom for it to create conditions that are conducive to social change.

But it should not be assumed that the existence of a minority in a society operates solely to create social change. Majority-minority relations often inhibit change. They tend to make the dominant group rigid in maintaining the 'status quo'. The existence of an exploited or repressed minority makes event he most powerful dominant group fearful, and fear can discourage all forms of social change.

X) Prejudice and Discrimination Against Minority:

That prejudice exists is all too obvious. The question of why it occurs, however is more complex. Why do so many people hold negative views about the members of specific social groups? What factors or
conditions foster such reactions and lead to their persistence? Many different answers to these questions have lead to their persistence? Many different answers to these questions have been proposed.

One of the perspectives on the origin of prejudice begins with the basic fact that people generally divide the social world around them into two distinct categories – ‘us’ and ‘them’. In short, they view other persons as belonging to either their own group (usually termed the ingroup) or another group (the outgroup). Such distinctions are based on many dimensions, including race, religion, sex, age, ethnicity, occupation, and income to name just a few.¹³

It is a general tendency of the people to look down upon a minority group and are often prejudiced against them and develop a negative feeling towards them. If the process of dividing the social world into various group – social categorization stopped there. It would have little bearing on prejudice. Unfortunately however it does not. Sharply negative feelings are attached to the minority group. Minority groups are
assumed to possess more undesirable traits and are often strongly disliked.

Prejudice may well stem from a basic aspect of the way in which we think about the social world; a strong tendency to perceive others as belonging either to our own group or to some other minority group – outsiders.

What happens when we define others as different, that leads us to view them in biased and mainly negative ways? The answer to this can be individuals seek to enhance their self esteem by becoming identified with specific social groups. This can succeed only to the extent that the persons involved perceive their groups as some how superior to others, other groups. Since all individuals are subject to the same forces, the final result is inevitable. Each group seeks to view itself as somehow better than its rivals, and prejudice arises out of this clash of social perceptions.

a) Prejudice and Discrimination: What They are and How They Differ?

In every day speech the term ‘prejudice’ and ‘discrimination’ are used interchangeably. Are they really same? Most social psychologists draw a clear distinction between them.

*Prejudice refers to a special type of attitude –
  generally a negative one – toward the members*
of some social group. In contrast, 'discrimination' refers to negative actions towards those individuals\textsuperscript{14}.

Prejudice is an attitude (usually negative) towards the members of some groups (usually minority) based solely on their membership in that group. In other words, a person who is prejudiced towards some social group tends to evaluate its members in a specific manner merely because they belong to that group. Their individual traits or behaviour play little role, they are disliked simply because they belong to a specific social group.

*Individuals who are prejudiced towards particular groups tend to process information about these groups differently from the way they process information about other groups.*

*Information consistent with their prejudiced views often receives more attention and hence prejudice only grows stronger over a period of time. Prejudice involves more than negative evaluations of the groups toward whom it is directed. In addition it may involve negative feelings or emotions on the part of prejudiced persons when they are in the presence of or*
merely thinking about, members of the group they dislike.\footnote{15}

Prejudice may also involve beliefs and expectations about members of these groups – specifically, ‘stereotypes’ suggesting that all members of these groups demonstrate certain characteristics and behaviour in certain ways. Finally it may involve tendencies to act in negative ways – or intentions of doing so – towards those who are the object of prejudice.

When most people think about prejudice, they tend to focus on its emotional or evaluative aspects they emphasize the strong negative feelings and irrational hatreds that so often characterize racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice. Such reactions are important and play a key role in many forms of prejudice.

Prejudice can also lead to draw false conclusions about others, to place them in convenient, if inaccurate categories, and to rely on existing conclusion rather than attempting to adjust these to reflect social reality more accurately viz., once a person holds negative stereotypes about members of a specific social group, we tend to evaluate persons belonging to that group unfavourably on dimensions relating to those stereotypes simply because they belong to this group. Prejudice is often a reflection of deep-rooted hatred, strong emotions and rampant ill will.
b) Discrimination: Prejudice in Action

In many cases, persons holding negative attitudes towards the members of various minority groups cannot express these views directly, laws, social pressure, fear of retaliation – all service to deter from putting their prejudiced views into open practice. Then the negative beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies referred to above may find expression in overt actions. Such ‘discrimination’ can take many forms. A relatively mild levels it involves simple avoidance – prejudiced persons simply avoid or minimize contact with the objects of their dislike. While such discrimination may seem relatively mild, it can sometimes have serious consequences for its victims. At stronger level discrimination can produce exclusion from jobs, educational opportunities or neighbourhoods. Finally, in the most extreme cases, prejudice leads to overt forms of aggression against its targets. Terrorism and racial and ethnic violence is an example of it.

c) Subtle Forms of Discrimination: Prejudice in Disguise.

Two forms of prejudice can be taken under this head 1) Tokenism and 2) Reverse discrimination.

Tokenism : Small benefits, high costs:

Here, we can take the example of persons hired on job. In almost every institution there is a reserved quota for minority groups. Sometimes a person belonging to minority group may be selected to fill
the quota. Though he may possess all the qualifications required for that job. But once the joins, the people from the other group discriminate him often doubting his eligibility for that job, only because they think that he got the privilege of belonging to a minority group. And a person is upset when he discovers that he is a victim of ‘tokenism that he has been hired solely as a token member of a racial, ethnic or religious group rather than on the basis of their qualifications and consequently his job satisfaction reduces and also his efficiency.

Findings indicate that persons who are hired or promoted because of their gender, race or ethnic identity may actually receive lower performance ratings from others in their company, since others tend to attribute them to the special hiring or promotion factors rather than to hard work\(^6\).

Tokenism can be damaging to the self esteem and confidence of the targets of prejudice, including those few persons who are selected as token or who receive minimal aid. Clearly then tokenism is one subtle form of discrimination worth preventing.
d) Reverse Discrimination: Giving with One Hand Taking with the Other:

A second type of subtle discrimination occurs in situations in which persons holding at least some degree of prejudice towards the member of a minority group lean over backward to treat those group members favourably. At first glance such behaviour may not seem to fit our definition of discrimination. After all, it yields positive rather than negative outcome for its victims. On one level this is certainly true, people exposed to reverse discrimination do receive raises, promotions and other benefits. But on another level, such favourable treatment may prove harmful, especially over the long run, it may lead some people of the minority group to conclude that they are doing better than they actually are and to become over-confident about the likelihood of future success. The anguish that follows when these hopes are dashed can be devastating. Reverse discrimination – subtle or otherwise can be as harmful as the more obvious forms of discrimination at sometimes replaces.

XI) Attitude Towards Minority: Attitudes are Learnt and not Inborn:

Do babies enter the world with political preferences, racial hatreds and the diverse preferences they will express as adults? The answer is NO. Most people believe that attitudes are acquired in a gradual manner through experience. Attitudes are primarily learned.
One source of our attitude is obvious. We acquire them from other persons through the process of ‘social learning’. We acquire many of our views from situations in which we interact with others or merely observe their behaviour e.g. a young child sees her mother frown and show other signs of displeasure each time the mother encounters members of a particular minority group. With her mother’s negative emotional reactions, however produce classical conditioning. Gradually the child comes to react negatively to these visible stimuli, and so to the minority group itself. A quick review of human history indicates that prejudice and discrimination have always been a part of human society. Despite the best efforts of philosophers, poets, historians and others, the nature and causes of prejudice remained unclear until very recent times.

XII) Influence of Minority on Society:

At the beginning of most social movements a small minority will sometimes sway, and then even become the majority. All history is a record of the power of minorities, and of minorities of one. Think of Copernicus and Galileo, of Martin Luther of the Suffragettes. The American Civil Rights movement was ignited by the refusal of one African – American woman, Rosa Parks, to relinquish her
Cultural situations mould us, we also create and choose these situations that while pressures to confirm sometimes overwhelm our better judgement, blatant pressure can motivate us to assert our individuality and freedom, and while persuasive forces are indeed powerful. We can resist persuasion by making public commitments and by anticipating persuasive appeal.

**What Makes Minority Persuasive?**

What makes a minority persuasive? What might Arthur Schlesinger have done to get the Kennedy group to consider his doubts about the Bay of Pigs invasion? Experiments initiated by Serge Moscovici in Paris have identified several determinants of minority influence: Consistency, self-confidence, defection.

**Consistency:**

A minority that sticks to its position is more influential than a minority that wavers. Moscovici and his associates (1969, 1985) have found that if a minority consistently judges blue slides as green, member of the majority will occasionally agree. But if the minority wavers saying ‘blue’ to one third of the blue slides and ‘green’ to the rest. Virtually none in the majority will agree with ‘green’. Moscovici believe that a
minority following the majority usually reflects first public compliance but a majority following a minority usually reflects genuine acceptance. In public, people may wish not to align themselves with a deviant minority view. Minority influences us by making us think more deeply. Minority influence is therefore more likely to take a thought filled control route to persuasion. A minority may stimulate creative thinking with a dissent from within one’s own group. People take in more information, think about it in new ways and often make better decisions. One need not win friends to influence people. A persistent minority is influential even if not popular, partly because it soon becomes the focus of debate. Being the center of conversation allows one to contribute a disproportionate number of arguments. The position supported by the most arguments usually wins.

**Self Confidence:**

Consistency and persistence convey self confidence. Furthermore, any behaviour of a minority that conveys self confidence for example, taking the head seat at a table – tends to raise self doubts among the majority. By being firm and forceful, the minority’s apparent self assurance may prompt the majority to reconsider its position.

**Deflections from the Majority:**

*A persistent majority punctures any illusion of unanimity. When a minority consistently doubts*
the majority wisdom members of the majority who might otherwise have self-censored their own doubts feel free to express them and may even switch to the minority position. Experiments found that a minority person who had defected from the majority was more persuasive than a consistent minority voice, once defections begin, others often soon follow, initiating a snowball effect\(^\text{18}\).

Minorities are more likely to convert people of accepting their views. But the stress of being in minority differs from the majority’s more relaxed attitude.

If minority view point never prevailed, history would be static and nothing would even change. A minority is more influential when consistent and persistent in its views, when its actions convey self-confidence and when it begins to elicit some defections from the majority’s views, they will increase the majority’s self-doubts and prompt it to consider other alternatives often leading to better, more creative decisions. Through their task and social leadership, formal and informal group leaders exert disproportionate influence. Those who consistently
press towards their goal and exhibit a self confident charisma often engender trust and inspire others to follow.
References


5. A phrase coined by Israel Zangwill in 1906.


15. Ibid., p. 230.