

## **Persecution and Challenges Faced by Hindu Minority Women in Pakistan: Unveiling the Issues and Struggles**

**MOHAN LAL MEENA\*<sup>1</sup>, PRIYANKA SINGH<sup>2</sup> AND ANAMIKA SHARMA<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1&2</sup>CSSEIP, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India)

<sup>3</sup>Director, Vertus Foundation, New Delhi (India)

### **ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the issues and challenges of minorities in Pakistan especially Hindu women minority. The research aims to reveal the obstruction of religious minorities and the causes connected with them. It discusses the common problem of minorities and their consequences or the effect of the partition on minorities largely with Hindu women. It deals with the amendment and policies of Pakistan and the Constitutional provision of Pakistan for the protection of minority rights or whether they are really getting these rights or not. In what context religious minorities are able to enjoy their religious freedom, practice, tradition, customs etc. This paper also focused on some narrative of Hindu people and their discrimination and how far the role of Human Rights Group and Rights Group are crucial for the protection of minority in Pakistan.

**Key Words :** Persecution, Challenges, Hindu Minority Women, Pakistan, Issues, Struggles

### **INTRODUCTION**

After Partition of subcontinent, two independent countries were formed in 1947: Pakistan and India. The separation of both nations resulted into extreme effect on minorities in both countries especially the migration of almost 14 million people moving across the borders and receiving more than 8 million Muslims from the India. The originator of Pakistan Mohammad Ali Jinnah disclose regarding religious freedom and equal opportunities in eyes of the Constitution. Pakistan Constitution provide fundamental rights, legal and social rights, political justice and equality opportunity before the law, freedom of thought, faith, belief, worship and association and public morality. Jinnah expressed 'Pakistan will not become theocratic state to be ruled by priests because there is non-Muslims, Hindus, Christians' and Parsis or they all are citizens of Pakistan and they will obtain equal rights and freedom as any other Muslim citizen but march 1949 streamline the foundation of an Islamic State. Pakistan is a plural country where multiple cultures, traditions, ethno-

linguistic, religions, sects and sub sects are followed. The 96.47% of the total population of Pakistan followed the Islam. The Constitution guarantee religious freedom and equality irrespective of any religion. But over the coming decades especially in the 1970's and 1980's, the state rather guaranteeing equality and freedom being to encourage obscurantist powers. The 1951 census found that 15% of population of Pakistan was Hindu and today only constitute 2.14% Hindus.

Islam is the first largest religion of Pakistan but Hinduism is also second largest religion in Pakistan but almost 96% of Hindu population in Pakistan are the poor and marginalised. Hindu minorities in Pakistan suffers a lot of exclusion, violence, force conversions and property seizure. In Pakistan most of the targeted violence against women. They are exploited discriminated force conversion, rape etc. Hindu women minorities even are not getting legal protections and adherence most of the incidents of exclusion and sexual violence are reported and ignore by administration and government. Force conversion of Hindu women in Islam is big problem in

Pakistan. There are a lot of incidents reported to abducted, forcibly married, sexual assault, harassment not only with Hindu woman but also with all minorities in Pakistan. These violence are spread through religious extremist group and majority people of Pakistan who use violence, brutality, operation to intimidate the Hindus minorities and others minority.

Hindu minorities are suffering from economic and social backwardness and they are under BPL so they are not able to fulfill their fundamental needs like health and sanitation or employment, education and households etc. Minorities are frequently discriminated and treated as a second citizen of Pakistan. Nowadays there have been some act to remove their violence against Hindu minorities in Pakistan. For Example, in 2019 a Sindh government pass a law for criminalising force conversion. However, there is need to equal and undiscriminating legal medications and protection in actual practice to ensure that the incidence of inequality and ferocity should abolish. The Pakistan executive and administration take initiative to address the economic and social discount of the minorities and Hindu minorities to strength liberating unity between different religious group in the country. Pakistan constitution provides fundamental rights equal opportunities, legal, social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought, expression belief, faith, worship and associations. Pakistan is a nation of diverse culture; rituals native tongue sects and sub-sects. Islam is a state religion of Pakistan which is performed by 96.28 percentage off the population and religious freedom is assured by constitution which established equal rights to all Pakistani civilians. Minorities face discrimination and misuse of blasphemy law and violence. Religious minorities decrease by 23% to 2.1% of the population due to violence and social exclusion. Hindu is the second largest religion in Pakistan, 90% of the Hindu population in Pakistan society are multiple separated and this article portrayed the issue of different challenges like discrimination transportation, education, health, occupational inequalities, force marriage, conversion, abduction and rape. This all are the issues are facing minorities and especially Hindu women minorities in Pakistan. However, much more need to do for the preservation of minority rights and Hindu women rights. There is a requirement of better legal provisions and investigation system to ensure the incidences of violence and discrimination and offenders get punishment. The government take initiative to identify the economic and social marginalization of Hindu

minorities and to promote tolerance and unity among different religious people in the Pakistan.

### **Partition and Minorities:**

The partition of subcontinent in 1947 from the two separate nations: India and Pakistan. The partition had affected both the country. Due to partition, Mass expulsion of millions of people across Hindu and Sikh migrating from Pakistan to India and Muslim migrating India to Pakistan. This consequence in to the emergence of refugee issues, livelihoods, loss of lives and family. The emergence of two independent nations marked by extensive violence, riots and massacre which resulted into the death of millions of people. The partition resulted into the extreme loss of life and an unparalleled migration between two states. Women affected most due to partition. The sexual violence was extensive. Approximately, during the partition between 75,000 to 100,000 women were abducted, raped and murdered. In March 1947 in Rawalpindi, where systematic violence against Hindu women were targeted by Muslim mobs. Brutally kidnapped, raped and murdered. The official data of death in Rawalpindi around 2263. The Indian Government estimated that in Pakistan 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women is kidnapped and raped during partition. Urvashi Butalia, a historian and scholars stated that violence against Hindu and Sikh more that Muslim women. She gave the data that almost 25,000 to 29,000 Hindu and Sikh women were abducted as compare to Muslim women was 12,000 to 15,000.

The period of partition witnessed highest scale on violence against women. Women are kidnapped, raped, sexually assaulted, genitalia mutilated, physically abused and many more forms of attacks. High number of women committed suicide to protect her chastity and dignity. This was the initial stage of violence against women. Their bodies were subject to raped, abduction and physical abuse. Jisha Menon on her book *The Performance of Nationalism: India, Pakistan and the Memory*, argued that “the female body served as the terrain through which to exchange dramatic acts of violence. The gendered violence of partition thus positioned women between symbolic abstraction and embodiment. Their breasts were branded, and their bodies and genitalia were tattooed with triumphal slogans or religious symbols”. The kidnapped women forced to change in become slave and sex prostitution. This conditions very prevalent in Pakistan.

Partition is not only impacted the physically but

psychological also and create a sense of mistrust between two religion that headed is still continue. The segregation of two nations generated the pluralization in the religious death. Hindu religion in India and Muslim in Pakistan notion was created but this was unsuccessful. Religious minorities is dealing with multiple issues such as unemployment, worst education system, unable to access public services which lead to the socio culture, political and economic marginalization. The blasphemy law has created religious minorities differently and misuse this law to build supremacy of dominated religion. Blasphemy law has been used to defend the operation of minorities like prison and death sentences punishment. Even the misuse of force conversion and false marriage of minorities girls are major problem and the kidnapping and rape of Hindu minority girls. These issues are strengthened by extremist religious group and dominated class people. The minorities people in Pakistan have politically inactive, there are disregard for represent the government and administrative system. This affects the lack of choice and less participation of minorities in policy making and decision-making process.

After the partition the condition of minorities is worst. Partition led to widespread violence, communal riots and massacre which resulted in to the death of thousands of people. Partition emerges as a narrow focus on discrimination and conservation. All minorities are equally victim of a perceived mass disallowance on every place of Pakistan society and state. The prevalent recitation on 'victimhood' is unclear that minority people are having overlapping identities.

### **Constitutional Measures for Minority and Hindu Women:**

Pakistan Constitution provide fundamental rights, equal opportunity, economical- social, political justice, freedom of thought and expression, belief, faith, worship or associations and public morality to its citizen. Jinnah Speech on 11 August 1947 in first constituent assembly of Pakistan

... "you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in the state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed- that has nothing to do with the business of the state... We are starting with this fundamental principle: that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state. Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of

time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not so in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual but in the political sense as citizens of the state." This is the vision of Jinnah on the religion of Pakistan.

There are several provisions in the Constitution of Pakistan for the equal rights and freedom.

Article 20: ensure the freedom of profess, practice of any religion equal opportunity, public order and morality. This article guarantees that minority religion without any discrimination and oppression.

Article 22: This article prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion in employment. This ensures that minority communities have equal opportunities in employment and are not discriminated against on the basis of their religion.

Article 25: This article guarantees equality of citizens before the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, or sex. This provision ensures that minority communities are treated equally under the law and are not discriminated against on the basis of their religion.

Article 36: This article guarantees the protection of minorities and their rights to practice their religion and culture. It also ensures that no law can be made that goes against the fundamental rights of any citizen, including minority communities.

Article 37: This article directs the state to promote the welfare of the people, including the social and economic upliftment of minority communities. This provision ensures that the state is responsible for the welfare of minority communities and takes steps to promote their well-being (Source Constitution of Pakistan).

While this constitutional provision provided but the reality is totally different. These inspiring provisions don't reveal the existing truth of the religious minorities in Pakistan. Minorities face discrimination, violence, forced marriage and conversion, attack on temple and church etc. Hindu women and other minorities women face sexual violence, abduction, rape, exclusion. They are not able to manage educational, healthy career and basic needs of their life. Hindu women are not getting recruitment in school as a teacher and guide. This is the practices which is very different from provisions. The demolished of Hindu temple, facing wrong accusations of blasphemy law (a crime that carries a mandatory death penalty) target killing, lack of effectiveness of legal

mechanisms. These are the common problem which minorities are facing in Pakistan. Jinnah vision to make Pakistan liberal state, impartial government and inclusive nation. Jinnah speech was whitewash by policy makers and not even printed by several years by the administration. In 1956, the constitution of Pakistan only giving reference to Islam. The president could only be a Muslim, the Islamic research and study institutions were to be formed. The religious discrimination found in the article 41(2) which says “A person shall not be qualified for election as president unless he is a Muslim” and 91(3) “After the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the National Assembly shall, to the exclusion of any other business, proceed to elect without debate one of its Muslim members to be the Prime Minister”. This article stated that non-Muslim cannot be head of the state and head of the government only Muslim can be elected on these two most powerful seats. Zia- ul Haq rule 5 August 1988 and 12 August 1997 this decade was the turning point for the Islamization of Constitution which affects the minorities like Blasphemy law sec 295c “forbids insults to “the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.” The minimum penalty is a mandatory life sentence; the maximum penalty is death. In 1990, Pakistan’s Federal Shariah Court ruled that the death penalty should be mandatory.” The provisions of the ordinance overriding of the Constitution, it may be recalled that in 1991 a federal state was promulgated whereby Shariah became the supreme law of the land. Blasphemy law have been in the statute book since 1860 but General Zia’s amend them to take advantages of it and consequence the maximum harm of minorities by false accusations. In 2019, first attacked Hindu properties and temple in the southern Sindh and second allegations of ‘blasphemy’ were made against a Hindu school principal and a Hindu veterinarian. However, minorities in Pakistan continuously tolerating many challenges including exploitation, violence, discrimination, injustice, dogmatism etc. Therefore, there is need for liberal changes to practice these constitutional provisions fairly and have the feeling of uniformity, Harmony, tolerance and brotherhood.

#### **Evidences in Literature Review:**

The role of women is important in the progress of family, society and state. Hindu women in Pakistan are dealing with various obstruction in the day-to-day life. Hindu women are facing multiple discrimination, sexual

violence, Eve-teasing, abduction, rape, forced marriage and conversion because of their religion.

#### **Below are some incidents which depicts the reality of Hindu women condition in Pakistan:**

##### ***Exclusion on the Basis of Religion:***

The identity of Hindu woman minority is very different from Muslim women. Hindu women are prosecuted and sexually molested due to their dress up. Married Hindu women are restricted to wearing cultural dresses such as sari and ghagra choli along with sindoor, mangalsutra and bindi. Hindu women used to do work in factory and share that Harman male muslim colleagues ask her don’t you feel unethical wearing such dresses shame on you and your males who don’t stop wearing naked clothes. ‘The phrases of naked clothes means exposing the tummy and neck.’ As above issue portrait the problem of exploitation based on dress and appearance intersects with violence and sexual harassment and restrict the freedom of Hindu women. Dominated men usually pass comments and make fun of Hindu religion. Men hurt and exploit the Hindu women through bullying and teasing or force them to convert in Islam. Few Hindu women used to wear scarf while going to public places because this reduces them from identify Hindu woman. Granthi was the daughter of MLA Gurudwarai in Pakistan. She was forcibly Married by a Muslim youth and converted to their religion in Islam. We should understand that how much the situation is serious when a person is daughter of MLA of that country is unable to live there. Minorities women faced discrimination and sexual exploitation. The real threat of Hindus women and ladies being kidnapped and forced to change to Islam. Hindu women and girls have very limitation on job recruitment and mostly they are preferring for working as sanitation work and house maids. Lal Chad Mahi, a member of National Assembly in umrekh district of Sindh noted that forced conversion are routine and therefore there is requirement of formal mechanism to protection from these atrocities in Pakistan.

##### ***Sexual Harassment and Molestation:***

Hindu women are sexually harassed and bullied on public sphere. One participants of Hindu woman shared that when she was passing out to get down from the buses the conductor pushed her stomach knowingly when she opposed him then conductor said don’t lie otherwise, I will beat you and said you Hindu woman besharam and

begairat ashamed and dishonoured by wearing these dresses and showing neck and stomach. Teenage Hindu girls' incidence of harassment, abduction, rape and conversion. Hindu communities rarely keep permission for mobility to their women because of kidnapping, sexual harassment and conversion. Schooling Hindu girls had to keep distance from Muslim classmates and they don't share seats and avoid eating with them. One incident was the case of doctor Namrata Jani shows Hindi final year of dental college. She was sexually assaulted and murdered by Muslim boy but police ignore and said that her death was suicide despite having the evidences and her parent claimed that she was killed because she is a Hindu girl. Sexual harassment and bullying wider society were identified as being particularly prevalent on public transport, which due to their economic exclusion and religious identity. However, it was acknowledged that no one is ready to take step to speak about the violence against Hindu women in public sphere. It was desired that women should not expressed their voice against dominated religious people and they feel fear also to raise a voice against them.

Pakistani lawyer Saif ul Malook fight for the right of minorities in Pakistan. He mentioned that abduction, rape, kidnapping, forcible marriage and conversion of Hindu and Sikh women have become the daily routine in the Pakistan society and state. Some days ago Sikh teacher was abducted and married her against her consent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan and minor Hindu girl was shot dead for resisting her abduction and rape. The minority women in Pakistan live their whole life in fear and threat. However, state institutions ignore their complain and don't provide protection to the victims and interpret constitutional provisions. Next incident was the gang rape of eight year old Hindu minor girl. Her eyes were gouged and her face was burned. The incident was followed by another rape of Hindu girl who was returning coming to take the ration. However in Pakistan a journalist Nasrullah Goddani was arrested because she used to exposed the cruelty in Pakistan. When flood came in Pakistan 2021 many more Hindu women tortured and sexually assaulted. This is the cause of decrease of population of Hindu Minorities in Pakistan. In addition to violent attack, a core issue is abduction and force conversion in Islam of Hindu girls and women. Although the scale of violence is more because most of the cases are unreported and undocumented.

### **Some Incidents of false accusations:**

There are many false accusations of blasphemy case. An MLA of Imran Khan's Party Baldev Singh came to India and refuse to back to Pakistan due to persecution; violation of human rights continues on minorities in Pakistan. He said, I can't tolerate it and I want Indian citizenship. In 2016 Baldev Singh was arrested in connection with murder of sitting MLA but after investigation it was cleared that he is not guilty. According to Baldev, the Hindu minority of Pakistan don't have security and they are treated as 'second class citizens'. In 2021, a 20-year-old Hindu boy become the victim of blasphemy law. In 2021, Alam Ram Bheel went nearby mosque to drink water some local landlords beat him and his family and hosatge them again for "violating the sanctity".

Never any issue occurs minority people hope to government for the enforcement of justice but the government of Pakistan doesn't take proper action for violation of abduction, conversion, sexual assault and exploitation. The blind institutions don't engage with minorities people, the correct administration is not giving equal justice to those victims and misleads to minorities to not Belief their administrations and institutions. Police do not stop elite for committing crime and dominate target Hindu properties and the change the lands document by using their influence, top many Properties.

### **Society Perception on Hindus and Hindu Women:**

The perception of majority people towards minorities and Hindu women are very complex problem that has appeared overtime effected by several reasons including historical, traditional and political and economic. Dominated people make fun using words for Hindu about their caste in violently call kafar derogatory term for non-Muslims which make them feel ashamed and sad. Commonly men from muslim community tease Hindu women the way they dress like choli ke peache kya hai. Ohh ghagra wli new many more slung words. Most of the muslim keep distance from Hindu especially Muslim women don't like to eat and share anything. Minorities are often considered as lower- and second-class citizen in textbooks. They consider partition was based on religious group. Textbook expose Hindu in unbalanced manner it is building negative thinking among minorities from all territory of Pakistan. Large number of minority religion feel that they are eliminated from cultural and social practices. The literature trying to Hindu as a

extremist and biggest enemy of Islam and their cultural and traditional practices is based on immorality and inhumanity. But Islam spread a piece of justice and strength. Muslim people abuse them such as humko bacha for char Kafar and every time told them kafar oe kafar. “Discriminatory teaching promotes the violent religious belief among the students. This will continue to weaking the religioius freedom, national and regional instability and global insecurity” said Leonard Leo the chairman of US Commission on International Religioius Freedom. Hence 2005 report by the National Commission for justice and peace revealed that Pakistan studies textbook in Pakistan spreading hatred that Hindu’s are the biggest enemy of the Pakistan and policy makers also strengthening this myth in whole country. After the partition muslim people in Pakistan had very misconceptions and misunderstanding about the Hindus and politics was the main factor. On the other side Pakistani media also spread hatred and feeling of revenge towards Hindu community.

#### **Human Rights Group and Other Organization:**

The contribution of Human Rights Group, Minority Group and Civil Societies is vital for the upliftment of minority and Hindu women in Pakistan. There are some real incidents that exhibit the role of Right groups. Right Groups have claimed that Pakistan contribution is insufficient to protect the rights and freedom of minorities, example: demolition of temples, invasion in business, violence, attack on individual, kidnapping of young Hindu women. They are always uncovered and unreported. International Minority Rights Group has indicated the yearly ranking of minorities under jeopardy since 2008, Pakistan is under the one of the top rankings where violence is always on peak, there are various reasons included to discrimination against minorities and religion-based violence in country. Dr. Amaranth member of Human Rights Group stated that in Pakistan approximately 20 to 30 minority girls monthly have been kidnapped and converted in Islam and rapes, sexual violence, loots frequently happening with Hindu minorities ladies in Pakistan. Minority Rights Group argued that almost 5000 Hindus leave Pakistan every year because of discrimination and violence. Rashid Rehman worked with Human Rights Group, representative of women, religious minorities and other unable people. Rashid provide legal support to minorities when no lawyer is ready to present then in court. Rashid received threats because he represents minorities, in Pakistan not only minorities

are facing this problem but also those who are advocate of Human Rights and Justice. Pakistan Hindu Council, Pakistan Hindu Panchayat, Pakistan Hindu Welfare Associations provide platform to express their requirements, distrust and problems. Provide legal, administrative and educational support to Hindu minorities for growth of their community.

There are some incidents that depicts the role of these Rights Group in promoting the liberation of minorities and Hindu women minorities in Pakistan.

#### **The Case of Rinkle Kumari:**

Rinkle was a Hindu minority girl who was allegedly kidnapped and coercively changed to Islam in 2012. The case was prevailing across the border and demand for her protection. This case went to court and court ordered that Rinkle Kumari will go her family. However, the verdict was debatable and raised the demand for protection of minorities in Pakistan.

#### **The Aurat March Movement:**

This is a yearly women’s march that takes place in multiple places all over the Pakistan. The movement focus the problems such as sexual violence, exclusion, prosecution, protection of women’s rights including minorities women. The march spreading the awareness and advocating about their rights.

#### **The Work of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP):**

HRCP is a independent organization that advocate the Human rights violence in Pakistan, added to those against minorities and Hindu women minorities. The organization has vital role to reveal and plead against malpractice such as forced conversions, unequal law and violence against women minorities.

#### **The Aurat Foundation:**

This foundation decided to women rights group in Pakistan that has especially decided to promote the rights of minorities women. They provide legal support and counselling for discrimination and prosecution and have worked to raise the awareness and consciousness about the Hindu minorities women and women.

#### **The Women’s Action Forum (WAF):**

WAF is a feminist’s association that worked to strengthen the gender equality and women rights in the

country. They are monitoring the rights of Hindu women and minorities and demanding the equality for them.

### **The Murder of Shahzeb Jillani:**

Jillani was a journalist murdered because he was highlighting the issue of forced conversion of Hindu girls. In this case Rights Group play vital for advocating the justice.

Minority groups and leaders contribution is crucial for advocating the rights of minorities. They have assembled lobbied politician, protests and collaborated with human rights groups and civil societies to raise awareness of the issues faced by minorities especially Hindu women. They have promote interfaith and understand between different communities, which can reduce discrimination and strength harmony. Despite these attempts, challenges are still prevalent for upliftment of the minorities. The legal and institutional frameworks are not effective for the protection of minorities and to stop the violence and discrimination. However, the role of Human rights groups, minority groups and rights group are essential because these organization has helped to minorities to understand the core of the problem, create a platform where minorities can raise a voice and promote the Peace and unity in the Pakistan.

### **Conclusion:**

Pakistan has been noticed as failed for implementation of most of the policies, constitutional provisions and amendment which discourages the equalities of minorities. The participation of minorities in government and institutional level is low it affects can be found on their lives, their limits and position in the society. Religious minorities are facing physical violence, abuse, exploitation and sadly the minority women condition especially Hindu women is living in pathetic condition. The women minorities are suffering from religion as well as from gender level also. The Hindu woman face more hurdles in the workplace compared to men because they are continuous targeted, discriminated, violence and harassment. These are the consequences of misuse of policy and provisions which are practiced by dominated religious person. The education system distortly supporting islamization teaching which are creating unparallel and different treatment among minorities. In the legal, administrative and educational system of the Pakistani state and society are creating discriminatory laws which is affecting minorities condition and day to day life. These

helped majority to create their monopoly and hegemony on minorities. Overall minority Hindu women in Pakistan are discriminated and prosecuted and do not have equal citizenship status in reality. They are less representation in government and public institutions and Hindu women are double discriminated and exploited in Pakistan, the state needs to implement comprehensive strategy for the emancipation of Hindu women and upliftment of minorities and create awareness for enabling environment conducive for a reduction in violence against Hindu women and minorities.

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