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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WELFARE OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN INDIA: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

India is one of the secular and religiously diverse country in world. Constitution of India secures the rights and protection of all its citizens by providing wellbeing for all. Indian religious minority communities like Muslim consists 14.2.% of total population followed by Buddhists 0.7%, Christian Community 2.3%, Sikh Community 1.7%, & Jains 0.37% respectively. India is known as welfare state and government have taken many efforts to lead welfare and inclusion of minority communities by adopting welfare and development Programmes in meaningful way. The Constitution of India ensures the equity, equality and social justice regardless of race, religion, caste and class. But somehow welfare of religious minorities India remains a significant area of concern. Religious minority communities often face different challenges in accessing the benefits of welfare especially in socio-economical recessive communities. The core aim of this paper to access the situation of religious minorities in Indian context and analyses the various welfare programmes in terms of inclusive development of religious minorities in India. The present paper also examine the role of government in terms of empowerment of religious minorities. Paper is based on secondary source of information and explanatory in nature to access the exiting literature to identify the gaps and suggest affirmative mechanisms to lead wellbeing and welfare of religious minority communities in India.

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Introduction:-

India is among the world's most religiously inclined nations. As per census 2011 Hindu majority around 79.8%, Buddhists 0.7% Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.7%, Muslim 14.2%, and Jains 0.37%. India possesses the third largest Muslim population globally, roughly 172.2million, following Pakistan & Indonesia. India's diversity is shaped by variety of intersecting identities, encompassing ethnicity, language, caste, and tribe, along with varying degrees of religious syncretism that challenge traditional conceptions of individuality creation as well as affiliation. Numerous religious minorities in India consequently encounter diverse kinds of intersectional discrimination; for instance, Difficulties faced by minority women are exacerbated for Christians, Dalit Muslims, & other religious minorities that were additionally linguistic minorities or members of indigenous communities (Adivasis). India's religious

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minority deal with variety of degrees of violence & prejudice; Muslims are disproportionately affected by communal violence, while Christians as well as Sikhs are less affected. They also face other types of cultural, socioeconomic, and legal discrimination. The Indian Constitution's Articles 15 and 16 protect minorities' rights and forbid discrimination in accordance with sex, caste, race, class, religion, as well as place of birth. It means constitution promotes as well as protects rights of religious minorities too. Article 30 grants religious minorities' authority to found as well as manage educational establishments of their preference. These constitutional provisions are designed to ensure that religious minorities can preserve and encourage their language, religion, and culture, without facing discrimination or marginalization.

In spite of having constitutional safe guard and rights the welfare of religious minorities is a significant and multifaceted issues associated with secular structure of constitutional framework which need to be addressed properly. Country like India known for its diversity, democracy and range of various religions which is a core beauty of the India. The welfare and inclusive development of religious minorities require systematic attention to ensure the wellbeing and safeguard of minority communities. Religious minority community's often faces many challenges and issues in terms of educational, economical inequalities, social exclusion and political underrepresentation due to which they represent the less in public domain and institutional domain. Government has taken many initiatives to address the issues and challenges to lead welfare and development of the minorities. Scholarships, financial assistance, economic empowerment program, reservation and affirmative actions this are the initiatives of government ensuring protection of rights of religious minorities. But somehow urgent need for hours is to ensure the realization of Indian Constitutional Idea of equality and social justice with positive discrimination for all its citizens' regardless caste and religion.

Objectives of the paper:

1. To examine the role government in terms of empowerment of religious minorities in Indian context.
2. To analyze statistical situation of Religious Minorities in India from the census 1951-2011.
3. To ascertain potential and effectiveness welfare and developmental initiatives of government in order to inclusive development and empowerment of religious minorities in India.
4. To identify the gaps and suggest affirmative mechanisms to lead wellbeing and welfare of religious minority communities in India.

Methodology:-

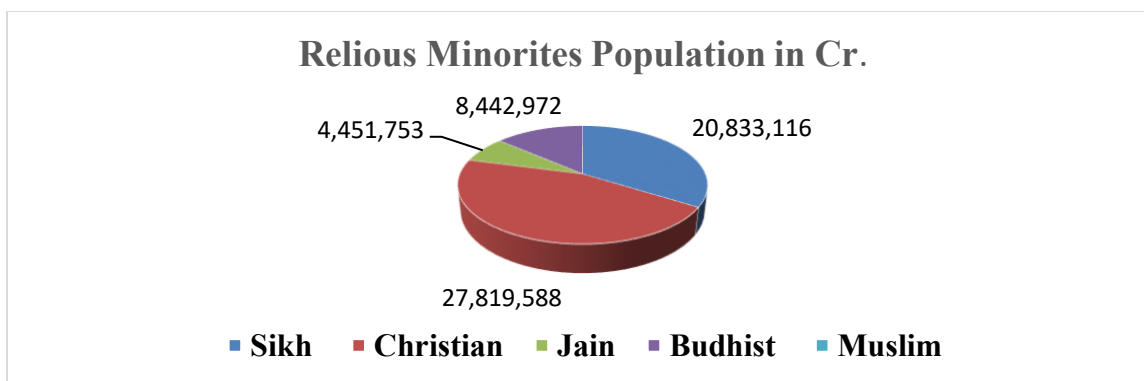
The present paper is descriptive cum explanatory in nature based on secondary sources of information in which existing literature related to the theme of the paper reviewed and analysis done of various government and institutional reports in order to explore the role of government to empower the religious minorities. The present paper also highlights the statistical analysis of total population represents by the religious minorities like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist and Jains in India based on census 1951 to 2011. Secondary source of information adopted for gathering conceptual and statistical data from annual reports, census data, articles, and government websites to fulfill the study objectives.

Statistical Overview of Religious Minorities:

TableNo.1: Statistical Overview of Religious

Religious Minority	Population
Sikh	20,833,116
Christian	27,819,588
Jain	4,451,753
Buddhist	8,442,972
Muslim	172,245,158

Source: Census 2011



Above table and figure depicts that as per the data captured from the census 2011 the population of Muslim communities higher than other religious minorities its consists 172,245,158, followed by Christian (27,819,588), Sikh population is around 20,833,116 where Buddhist having large population than Jain i.e. 8,442,972 and 4,451,753 respectively.¹

Table No.2: Statistics of Largest Religious Minorities in India from 1951-2011(In Million)

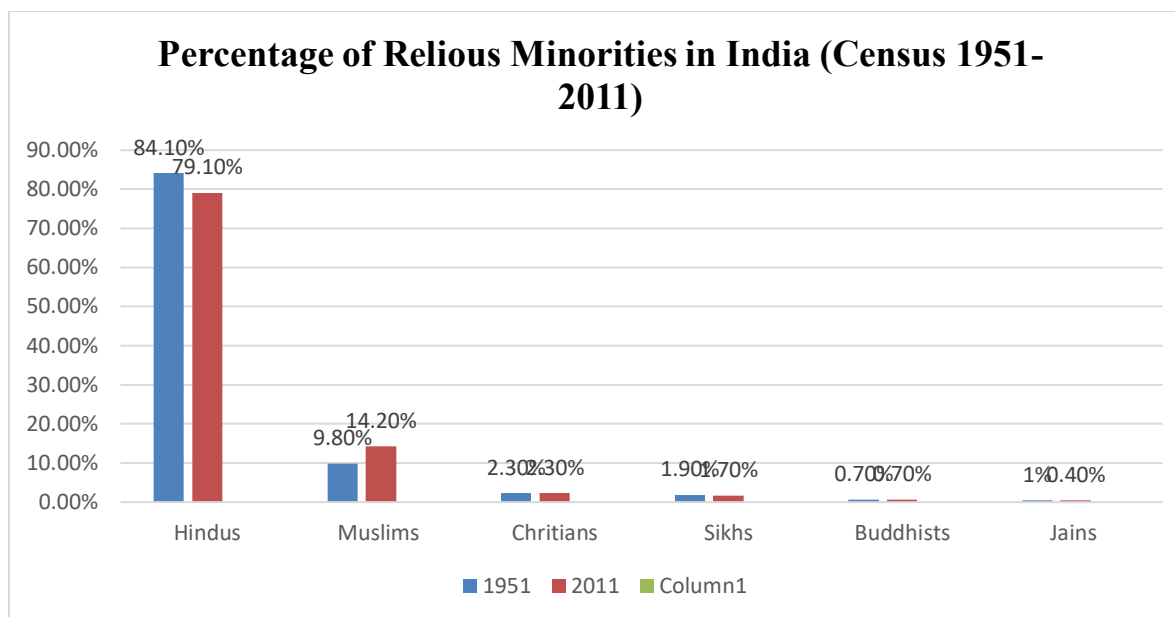
Religious Groups	Minority	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Hindus		304	367	453	562	690	828	966
Muslims		35	47	61	80	107	138	172

Source: Census of India, 1951 - 2011 Religious Composition of India

Table No. 3: Percentage of Religious Minorities in India (Census 1951-2011)

Religious Minorities	Census 1951 (%)	Census 2011 (%)
Hindus	84.1%	79.1%
Muslims	9.8%	14.2%
Christians	2.3%	2.3%
Sikhs	1.9%	1.7%
Buddhist	0.7%	0.7%
Jains	0.5%	0.4%

¹Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi in a written reply in the Lok Sabha 10th February 2022.



Source: Census of India, 1951, 2011 Religious Composition of India

The above table and figure compares the census data of 1951 and 2011 respectively. It has shown that Hindu population percentage declined 5% in census 2011 which was 84.10 % in census 1951. Similarly Muslims population percentage has been raised up to 14.20% in 2011 from 9.80% in 1951. It has been observed that other religious minority's population have not been change much since 1951. It shows that Muslim minority is one of the increasing religious minority group in India compare to other religious minority groups of country.

Geographical Locations of Religious Minorities in India:

In Indian context, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and Jains were recognized as religious minorities, collectively comprising around 19% of nation's total population. In rural regions of country during 2009-2010, 11% of families adhered to Islam, including around 12% of the population. Two percent were Christians. Similarly in urban context 13% households were following Islam and 3% households following Christians².

Socio-Economic Situational Analysis of Religious Minorities in India:

According to NSSO, in rural along with urban areas sex ratio of Muslim minorities has been declined in 2004-2005 and 2009 to 2010 respectively. Similarly sex ratio of Christians improved during this period of time. Regarding size as well as population of the household of religious minorities in rural and urban regions it has been noted that household size of Muslim minorities is larger than other religious minorities. The household's size of religious minorities in rural area is higher than urban areas. As far as concerned livelihood and employability's among the religious minorities it has shown that self-employment is one of the core sources of livelihood among the all religious minority groups. 36% of Sikh population are engaged in agriculture activities as a source of livelihood and almost 46 % of Muslims households main source of income is a self-employed. 43% of the Christians households are from regular wage and salaried employed especially in urban areas. In rural & urban areas, average monthly per capita expenditure is greatest amongst Sikhs, subsequent to Christians. In an average Sikhs spends Rs.1659 while the Muslims spends Rs.980.00.

Literacy and education is one the major concerns for integrated development of any community or groups. Education plays as a key role to empower individuals with social, economic and political point of view. The literacy rate and educational status among the Christians from age of 15 and above is the highest among the both genders in rural and urban areas followed by Sikhs. In relation to unemployment rate had been greatest among Christians (Male-3 percent & Female 6 percent) and for Sikhs it was highest (Male 6% and Female 8%) in urban areas.³

²66th Round of NSSO

³Source: Employment and Unemployment Situation among Major Religious Groups in India - NSSO 66th Round

Religious Minorities and Work Category:

The quality of life of any individual or groups is based on what kinds of livelihood source person has. For fulfilling basic needs there should be proper sources of income to maintain standard of living in all the stages of life. However, participation of work by the religious minorities has been divide in to various categories. It means majority of the religious minority groups are involved in unorganized, agricultural and non-agricultural sector for source of income.

Table No.4: Category wise Participation of Workers (In %)

Religious Minority Group	Cultivators	Agricultural Laborers	Household Industry	Other Workers
Hindus	33.1	27.6	3.8	35.5
Christians	29.2	15.3	2.7	52.8
Muslims	20.7	22.0	8.2	49.1
Buddhists	20.4	37.6	2.9	39.2
Jains	11.7	3.3	3.3	81.7
Sikhs	32.4	16.8	3.4	47.3
Other Religions	49.9	32.6	3.2	14.3
India	31.7	26.5	4.2	37.6

Source: Census 2011

The above table shows that 49.9% of total workers from other religions were cultivators, surpassing all-India rate of 31.7%. Next religious groups involved in cultivation is Hindu 33.1% followed by Sikhs 32.4 % which again higher than national rate. Muslims and Buddhist are same i.e. 20. % where 29.2% are the Christians having cultivator cataloger. Jains are less in cultivator groups they consists only 11.7%. As far as agricultural labor concerned 37.6% of the total workers among the Buddhist religion which is higher than national average of workers participation followed by other religions in agricultural laborer are 32.6% respectively. The Jain religion group percentage is less (3.3%) than rest of all religious minority groups. In household industry percentage of Muslim workers is around 8.2% which is twice national average of 4.2%. In other workers category 81.7 % are Jains which is highest than all religious groups followed by Christians 52.8%, Muslims 49.1% and Sikhs 47.3%. Buddhist having 39.2% workers in other category followed by Hindus 35.5%.

Religious Minorities and Constitutional Safe Guards:

Unity in Diversity constitutes one of beauty of Indian Nation with having different culture and many region groups' comprising Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, as well as Jains. Indian constitution ensures protection of the unity and diversity by providing numerous safeguards and protection to its all citizens including religious minorities in the country.

Table No.5: Constitutional Safeguards for Religious Minority Groups

Article No.	Article Title	Description
14	Equality Before Law	This constitution article ensures the equal access of justice and all required government service to all religious minorities long with all its citizens of nation.
15	No Discrimination	Constitution under the article 15 profits the discrimination and related treatments against general population based on religion. Every state of the nation ban on the religion discrimination practice in public and private places.
16	Equal Opportunity	Every individual is entitled to equal opportunity in government as well as private sector including minority groups. There should be no discrimination in the public employment on ground of religion, gender, race, and caste.
25	Freedom of Religion	Article 25 gives the guarantees to practice any religion activity freely.
29	Cultural and Educational Right	Its ensure protecting minority rights in terms of language, culture, traditions and script.
30(1A)	Safe Cause	Its gives guarantee to create and set up educational institutions under

		the minority rights.
30(2)	Special Provision	Every state make special provision for progression of religious minority groups by launching special welfare schemes to minority groups.
51(A)	Fundamental Duties	Citizens to promote harmony and goodwill between religious groups.

This safeguards helps to protect the interest of the religious minority in meaningful way. Somehow the need of hours is to make popular all this constitutional provisions among the citizens to ensure the equity, equality, social justice and religious tolerance. The wellbeing and welfare of citizens including minority groups is based on effective execution and practice of constitutional provisions for the betterment of the society.

Schemes and Programs for Empowerment of Religious Minorities:

The government of India is taking many initiative and putting efforts through developmental schemes and programs for empowering religious minority communities in their each sphere of life. For welfare of the religious minority groups there are many flagship programs introduced by the government to lead inclusive and integrated development of religious minorities in India. But somehow these efforts need to be channelize in effective manner right from the top to bottom level. So that each deserving minority group will get benefited without any hurdles. Lack of Execution and monitoring of the programmes and policies welfare of the religious minorities remained challenged.

Table No.6: Overview of Schemes and Programmes for Religious Minorities

Year of Inception	Program /Scheme	Description
2008-2009	Pradhan Mantri Jan VikasKaryakram (PMJKV)	Centrally sponsored scheme which known for the Area Development program. In which community infrastructure along with fundamental facilities are being created. Especially needs of minority communities undertaken by involving minority groups to lead socio-economic development of the minorities.
January 2007	Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme	It's a central sector scheme applicable to minority students studying in government or recognized private schools with annual income of parents less than 1 lack are eligible to get scholarship for IX and X class.
November 2007	Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme	This scheme applicable to minority community students who are studying in government or recognized private school and whose parents income not more than 2 lack eligible to get scholarship. This scheme covers class XI to Ph.D.
2007	Merit cum means based scholarship scheme.	Under scheme scholarship awarded for pursuing technical & professional courses at undergraduate as well as postgraduate level.
2009	Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme (MANF)	Provide fellowship to minority students who wish to seek advanced education like Ph.D. and M.Phil. In India. Amount of fellowship credited directly to students account through Direct Benefits Transfer mode.
2015	PadhoPardesh – Interest Subsidy Scheme	The main purpose of this initiative was to give interest subsidy on educational loan for minority students to pursue higher education in overseas. But somehow government has discontinued these initiatives from 2022-2023 onwards.
2021	Pradhan Mantri Viratka Samvardhan	It's an integrated central schemes and umbrella scheme converging USTTAD, Hamari Dharohar,

	(PM VIKAS)	NaiRoshni and NaiManjil. This initiative cater the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged community to lead social harmony and unity.
September 2023	Seekho Aur Kamao	Its skill enhancement programs for minorities. Under this program up gradation of skill of 14-45 years youths belongings from six notified minority groups.
2018	NaiManjil	NaiManjil provides the platform for school dropout minority youths and brings them in educational flow through open schooling.
2013	NaiRoshni	It's a leadership development initiative for the minority women. Building the confidence and empower the minority women's are the main aim of NaiRoshni.
2015	USTTAD	Enhancing training as well as skills in conventional arts & crafts for growth. HunarHaats were one of the core program under the USTTAD. In which traditional skills and training provides to minority youths to lead the entrepreneurship.
1978	National Commission for Minorities (NCM)	It became statutory body in 1993 under National Commission for Minorities Act 1992. Purpose of this body is for safeguarding interests of minorities and preserve rights and provide the protection to all religious minority groups.
September 1994	National Minorities Development and Financial Corporation (NMDFC)	It's a concessional credit scheme in which term loan, educational loan, micro finance and Virasat made available to religious minority groups.

Overview of 15 Points Program for Religious Minorities:

Welfare of Religious Minorities is one of core agenda of government, hence, many welfare initiatives have been undertaken by central government assuring all round welfare along with comprehensive advancement of religious minorities in India. Central sponsored strategies as well as flagship programs made by the government to enhance the quality of life and improve socio-economical standard of minority communities especially socio-economically disadvantaged minority groups. In 2006 government has introduced Prime Minister's 15 points program for catering needs of religious minorities in India. Through this initiatives districts where 25% population belongs from minority communities such districts called as Minority Concentration Districts (MCD).

Table No. 7: Prime Minister's 15 Point Program for Minority Community

Points	Program
Educational Vertical	
1	Equitable availability of Integrated Child Development Services. (ICDS)
2	Improving access to school education
3	Greater resources for teaching Urdu by Central assistance for recruitment and posting of Urdu language teachers.
4	Modernizing madrasa Education
5	Scholarships for meritorious students from minority communities.
6	Improving educational infrastructure through the Maulana Azad Education Foundation.
Economic and Employment Vertical	
7	Self-Employment and Wage Employment for the poor - Swarnjayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) - SwarnJayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY). - Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)
8	Up gradation of skills through technical training Locate technical institutions in areas predominantly inhabited by minority communities and upgrade them to 'Centers of Excellence'.

9	Enhanced credit support for economic activities. - Strengthening the National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC). - Ensuring an appropriate percentage of the priority sector lending targeted for theminority communities.
10	Recruitment to State and Central Services
Quality of Life Vertical	
11	Equitable share in rural housing scheme Indira AwaasYojana (IAY)
12	Improvement in condition of slums inhabited by minority communities. - Integrated Housing & Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) - Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) which was earlier Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).
Peace and Harmony Vertical	
13	Prevention of communal incidents
14	Prosecution for communal offences
15	Rehabilitation of victims of communal riots

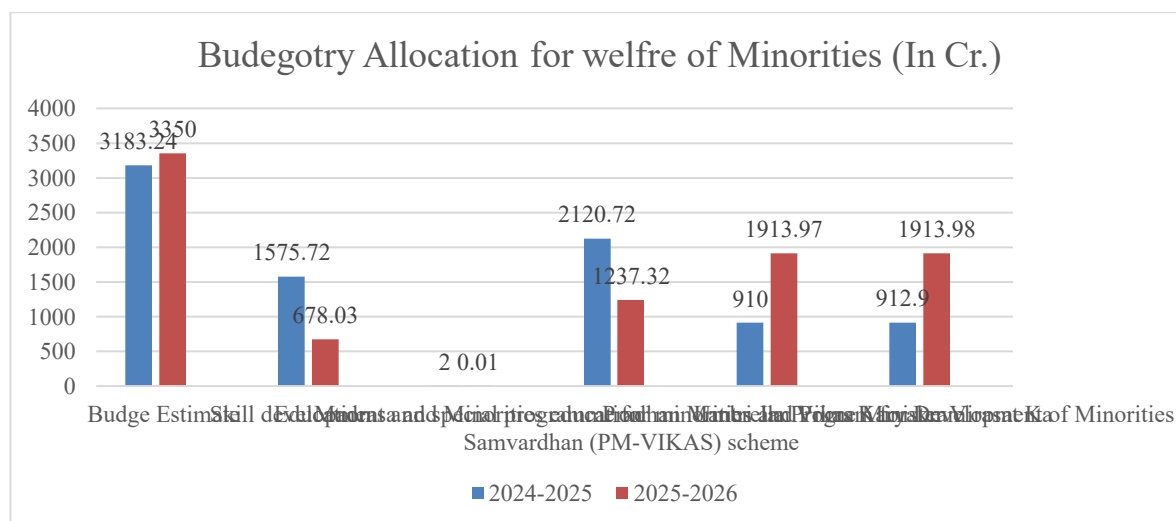
Source: Compile by the author from various sources.

Prime Minister's 15 points program is one remarkable initiative of government for the wellbeing of the religious minority communities. The clear aim of these 15 points program is to ensure the educational opportunities, economic opportunities, improving quality of life and maintain the peace and harmony among the religious minorities around the nation. Somehow the need of hours is to monitor and evaluate the 15 points program on regular basis by concerned authority right form the central to local so that overall the welfare of minority communities will not remained challenge.

Table No. 8: Budgetary Allocation for Welfare of Minorities (In Cr.)

Item	2024-2025	2025-2026
Budget Estimate for Minorities	Rs. 3,183.24 Cr.	Rs. 3,350 Cr.
Education	Rs. 1,575.72 Cr.	Rs. 678.03 Cr.
Madrasas and minorities Education Scheme	Rs. 2.0 Cr.	Rs. 0.01 Cr.
Skill development and special programme for minorities and Prime Minister VirasatKaSamvardhan (PM-VIKAS) scheme	Rs. 2,120.72 Cr.	Rs. 1,237.32 Cr.
Pradhan Mantri Jan VikasKaryakram	Rs.910 Cr.	Rs.1,913.97 Cr.
Umbrella Program for Development of Minorities	Rs. 912.90 Cr.	Rs. 1,913.98 Cr.

Source: Union Budget 2025-2025, Ministry of Minority Affairs GOI.



The above table and figures shows the budgetary allocation for welfare of minorities from previous financial years of 2024-2025 and current financial year 2025-2026. It reflects that in 2025-2026 estimate budget is increased with 5% than previous budget. Rs. 3,183.24 Cr. Estimated in 2024-2025 and Rs. 3350.00 Cr. Estimated in current financial year 2025-2026. But educational budget for minorities has been decreased against the last budgetary allocation. In 2024-2025 total budgetary allocation on education was Rs. 1575.72 Cr. this year it has decreased up to Rs.678.03. Cr. It is sharp dip in education budget for minorities in 2025-2026. Similarly budget allocation for Madrasa and Minorities education continues decreasing against last budget. Rs.2.0 Cr. allotted in 2024-2025 for Madrasa and Minority education but in 2025-2026 only Rs.0.01 Cr. has been allotted which are very low compared to previous budgetary allocation. Even skill related and livelihood related program budget decreased up to Rs. 1237.32 Cr. in 2025-2026 against Rs. 2120.72 Cr. in financial year 2024to2025. In current financial year 2025to2026 there is significance budgetary hike in other schemes like Umbrella Program & Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram for Advancement of Minorities.

Suggestive Mechanism for overall welfare of Minorities:

- Constitutional safe guards for minorities need to be protected on priority basis.
- Strengthen the mechanisms for execution of welfare and development programme to enhance socio-economic status of minority communities.
- Create the appropriate system through which proper monitoring and constant assessment can be done on various welfare programs to ensure the benefits will reach to unreach without any hurdles.
- Proper publicity and awareness generation programmes on various welfare Programmes need to be organized at local level.
- Make easy and affordable mechanism to assess the basic fundamental needs like quality education, health and livelihood opportunities to minority communities without any discrimination.
- Community, Government authority and Civil Society need to come together to empower the minority communities.
- Uphold the constitutional values of social justice, non-discrimination, equity and equality to ensure the inclusive welfare and development of minority communities.
- Follow the principle of Secularism and ensure the Leaving No Religious Minority Community Behind.

Conclusion:-

India is a welfare state and every state has to ensure their constitutional responsibility to welfare and development of its all citizens devoid of any discrimination on basis of Caste, Race, Religion, Gender, as well as Class. Each one has equal right to enjoy the constitutional right by having equal access of health, participation, employment and education in public life. The main concerns of welfare of minority communities is social exclusion, lack of representation in public domain and religious tolerance creates the environment where the welfare of religious minorities remained challenge. Despite of government initiatives and efforts in terms of welfare and developmental programmes and provisions for religious minority community's grassroots level minority communities still facing the access of services and benefits under the programs. Due to weak implementation and lack of will power among the representatives and bureaucrats welfare of religious minority groups remained challenge. It is equally important to work together by community, bureaucrats and political representatives for wellbeing of religious minorities with Working Together Approach.

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