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## SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE OF MUSLIM MINORITIES IN TRIPURA

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### Abstract

This paper presents socio-political profile of the Muslim Minorities in the Indian state of Tripura. They form an important place in the country and its political process. At present, Muslim minorities constitute 8.60% of the total population of Tripura. Tracing the origin and settlement of Muslims in Tripura, the findings suggest that most Indian Muslims are ethnically Indian since they are the descendants of the early converts to the Muslim religion. Again, Muslim rule in India and its relation to non-Muslim rulers in Tripura also played the role to spread Muslim population across the state. Comparative demographic and socio-political statuses are presented for various minority communities to explain the differential status of the Muslims. The relative backwardness of the Muslim minority is considered as a factor in the comparatively low literacy, and low participation rates in the socio-political field observed among the Muslims. The paper goes on to examine the problem of socio-political exclusion that has characterised the Indian political scene. The present study concludes with arguments in favour of ensuring justice and development for minority communities, emphasising the importance of government policy of inclusion and the positive role they could play in enhancing the condition of the all-minority community in Tripura. The data is taken from secondary sources including the population census, reports of the election commission, and other government reports.

**Keywords:** Backwardness, Demography, Development, Exclusion, Muslim Minority Vote Bank.

### 1. Introduction

India is a democratic, secular, and republic country follows the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity for the citizens. Indian constitution recognised the unity in diversity for the multicultural groups and committed to promoting social, political and economic justice. Again, it is characterised by a variety of religious beliefs, faith and practices. However, population strength identified that Hinduism is the majority religion, and others are considered the minority. The constitution and the law provide for 'minority community' status for Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jain (NCM Act, 1993). The legislation states that the government will protect the existence of these minorities and encourage conditions for the promotion of their identities. The state governments have the power to grant minority status to minority religious groups, and Tripura have recognised the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jain communities, respectively. In Tripura, the religious minority constitutes 16.85% of the total population. The Muslims is the largest group as the religious minority who comprise of 8.60% of the total population of the state (Census, 2011). Historical evidence shows that Tripura as a princely state has a long tradition of Hindu culture among the Tribal inhabitant. On the other hand, relationship of the tribal king with the Muslim rulers of Bengal and the rest of India introduces Muslim culture and settlement in Tripura. It is evident that Tribals were the indigenous people of the land of Tripura and both Hindus and Muslims (Bengali speaking) are the inhabitants for several centuries.

Ones the Muslims of Tripura were constituted as the second largest group after Tribal population. One important reason is that the Muslim rule in India and its relation to non-Muslim rulers of Tripura played the role to spread the Muslim community across the state. It is evident that, during *Manikya* rule, the immigration of the educated Brahmins and Muslim upper class was encouraged to enhance the status of the princely state and to run its administration. Again, encouragement to lower-caste people and Muslim cultivators or sharecroppers from the then East-Bengal was only for reclaiming fallow lands, to increase revenue.

However, in the last decade of the princely rule and the merger of Tripura into India, several factors like geographical changes, the partition of India, and Bengali Hindu immigration from East-Pakistan have changed the demography of the entire state and particularly of the Muslim community. Due to demographic changes, the status of the Muslim community also rapidly changed. At present, the Muslim Minority is the most marginalised group in the state of Tripura. Several studies found that Muslims are socially, educationally, economically and politically backward group in Tripura (Rahaman, 2018; Chakrabarty, 2009). They are socially, politically and economically more backwards in comparison to SC, ST and OBC's of the state (Rahaman, 2013). The majorities of the Muslims reside in rural areas and are less literate. During the last two censuses of 2001 and 2011, data indicate that as far as the socio-economic level is concerned, they had made a negligible improvement. Again, Muslims participation in the political process is less, and their political awareness is low in the state. Muslims of Tripura are the victims of Vote bank politics lead by some political parties (Bhattacharya & Ali, 2018). Political parties use Muslims as a vote bank for them during the election and not given any focus on the socio-economic development of the community (Ahmed, 2014).



Moreover, with the recent government initiatives and development policies are changing the position of the Muslim minorities. The relative backwardness of the Muslim minority is maybe as a factor in the comparatively low literacy and low participation rates in the socio-political field among the Muslim population. Thus, the present study is an attempt to provide a demographic profile of Muslim Minorities. It includes the growth and distribution of their population across the states over the past few decades. The study will also review the contribution of the minority community to the politics, society and culture of Tripura, and then goes on to examine the problem of political exclusion that has characterised the Indian political scene. The study is in favour of ensuring justice and development for Muslim minorities, emphasising the importance of government policy of inclusion and the positive role they could play in enhancing the condition of the minority community in Tripura.

### 1.1. Aims and Objectives of the study

The main aim of the present study is to find out the status of the Muslim Minorities and their role in the present democratic politics in the state of Tripura. The specific objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To understand the demographic profile of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura;
2. To know the socio-political status of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura.
3. To suggest some inclusive remedies to improve the socio-political status of Muslim communities.

### 1.2. Methods and Materials

The data are taken from secondary sources including the population census reports, Human Development report, reports of minority welfare department and reports of the election commission. Regarding the demographic and socio-political conditions of the Muslims in Tripura, a few works conducted on different aspects in other parts of India but these kinds of work are rare ones in case of Tripura. No systematic attempt has been made to study the demographic and socio-political conditions of the Muslims except a few making some note (Chakraborty 2009, Rahaman 2013 & 2018, Bhattacharya 2009, Akter 2020). There have been some related books, and journals articles are beneficial for understanding the issues of the present study. Such books and Journal's articles can be mention to substantiate it.

Government of India (2006), "Social, Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Community of India – A Report", (Sacher Report), the report shows the overall Social, Economic and Educational conditions of the Muslims. It suggests various recommendations for the upliftment of Muslims from their backward position in Indian society. The report brought out the relative deprivation of Muslims in India in various dimensions including social-economic, employment and education. Nazeer Uddin, (2012), in his paper "Muslim Minority Exclusion and Development Issues: Need for inclusive policy", briefly reviews the current status of Muslim minorities in India. Chakraborty, (2009), in her article "Muslim Inhabitants of Tripura: A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile", she tries to uphold the demographic and socio-cultural situation of the Muslims of Tripura, with particular reference to the historical, descriptive and statistical account of diverse sociological aspects of Muslim's life and society. MijanurRahaman, (2013), in his research article "Socio-Economic Status of The Muslim Minority in Tripura", shows the deplorable condition of the Muslims in Tripura. He explored a pathetic picture of socio-economic condition with relevant data source from various reports of Muslim participation, especially in the field of education, employment and economic and political development. Rakesh Basant, (2012), in his research paper "Education and Employment among Muslims in India: An Analysis of Patterns and Trends", reviews the available evidence on the patterns of Muslim participation in education and employment.

Though there is vast, literature exists on, Minority Development and their status in the different field a vast gap yet been found in their work. The present study will make a humble attempt to cover some aspects of the demographic and socio-political conditions of the Muslims and to suggest some inclusive remedies to improve the status of Muslims.

## 2. Muslims In Tripura: A Historical Background

### 2.1. Muslim Settlement in Princely Tripura

The Muslims are the inhabitant of Tripura from several centuries. The earliest statistics on them is available in the British census report of 1874 from which we came to know that they were found in every part of the 'District Tipperah' (ruled by the British) as well as the 'Hill Tipperah' called *Swadin* Tripura– the princely state (An independent state). The early history of Muslim settlement in Tripura may be inferred from the writings of those historians who followed the book "*Rajmala*" and other administrative reports in describing the ancient history of the land. The indigenous inhabitants of Tripura were tribals, known for their tolerance and passive obedience to the maharajas of the *Manikyadynasty* for centuries. Historically, the rulers of Tripura's *Manikya* dynasty had always encouraged the immigration of and settlement of non-indigenous people, especially Bengalis to Tripura. *Rajmala* authenticates the fact that Maharaja RatnaManikya (1464-1468) was the first to settle 4000 (four thousand) Bengalis in four places in Tripura (Singha, 1896). The rulers of Tripura were so desperate to bring the land under tillage that they even introduced the "Jangal Abadi" system in this land abundant and thinly populated state. Some of the Historian said that before 1204 AD, none of the Muslim inhabitants was there in Tripura, and after that period Muslim kingdom of Bengal was securely held, waves of Muslim migration set in from Arabia and Afghanistan to Assam, Sylhet and Tripura (*Gan Choudhuri: 2004*). They told that it was in the latter part of thirteenth-century,



e.g. in 1279 A.D., Prince Ratna-Fa (named as RatnaManikya) took the help of Sultan of 'Gaur', or Bengal to conquer his father's kingdom by defeating his brothers. During his ruling period, he brought many Mohammedan families and Hindus of different castes and occupation and arranged them for permanent settlement in different parts of the land (Singha, 1896; Gan Chowdhury, 1995). It is listed in Sri Rajmala that RatnaManikya brought 10 thousand Bengalee families; they were all included in the Nabasena (Sen Gupta: 1927, p.68; Kilikdar: 1995, p.21).

Nevertheless, another source, 16th century of India recorded the epoch of the disintegration of the Hindu emperors or kings and the victory of the foreign Muslim rulers that eventually paved the way to the Muslim intervention in the affairs of the independent state of Tripura. As such in 1620 AD, the Mughal Armies of the Emperor Jahangir defeated the tribal king of Tipperah and occupied the then capital, i.e. Udaipur, known as 'Rangamati' in the past. Despite the Muslim armies' forceful displacement on account of the epidemic attack, the Mughals continued their upper hand over the kingdom for quite a period giving a clue to the Muslims' inception in the land for several centuries. In the year 1728, Tripura was attacked by *Nawab* of Murshidabad, and as a result of that a good number of people belonging to the Muslim community entered into Tripura and settled here forever (Kilikdar: op.cit., p.21).

## 2.2. Muslims during Tripura's transition from the Princely to Democracy

An erstwhile princely state, Tripura became a part of Indian Union on 15th October 1949 AD, after the signing of the "Tripura merger Agreement" on 09th September 1949. It was declared a Union territory on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1957 and elevated to the status of a full-fledged State of the Indian Union on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1972. It is the third smallest state in the country (excluding Delhi) and covers an area of 10,491.69 sq. km. Tripura is a land-locked State, surrounded by Bangladesh on its north, south and west side. The length of Tripura's international border is 856 kilometres (84 per cent of its total border), while it shares a 53 km-long border with Assam and a 109 km-long border with Mizoram. People inhabiting the small hilly land of Tripura are comprised of three significant groups of population: Tribal, Bengali and others. Tribal is called the indigenous people of the land. Bengali of both Hindu and Muslims are the permanent immigrants for several centuries, i.e., since the historical and medieval period. Others comprise of people coming from different regions of India and also outside of India. At present Muslims is the largest minority community in Tripura.

Since the princely period, they involved themselves in the decision-making functions of the state. They were members of the Privy Council of Maharaja Bikram Kishore Manikya; they were Collector and Chief Manager of *ChaklaRosanabad* Zamindary (estate); they were Minister, Colonel and Captain of the Army under Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya. They have been working as Judge, Magistrate and Lawyers. After independence, they are found as members of Tripura Territorial Council (TTC), Deputy Speaker of the Legislature, Cabinet minister, Member of Parliament (Rajya-Sabha), Chairperson of the Board, Secretary from Panchayat level to District level, Director, SDO, BDO TCS officer. They are members-workers of major political parties (e.g., Congress, CPI and CPI (M) and others. They have become Minister, Speaker, MP, M.L.A., Gram Pradhan, Upa-pradhan, Samiti- Member in the block level, Zilla Parishad Member in the district level, members of party committees, and Cadre workers in the grass root village level, district and divisional level.

## 2.3. Muslims as Religious Minority in India

Literally, the term, 'minority' is compound of the Latin word 'minor' and the suffix 'ity' meaning *inter-alia*, 'the smaller in number of the two aggregates that together constitute a whole' (Subhash, 1988; p.1)

Though the constitution of India does not define the word 'minority and only refers to 'minorities' and speaks of those 'based on religion or language. Again, the rights of the minorities have been spelt out in the constitution in detail. The constitution provides two sets of rights of minorities which can be placed in 'common domain' and 'separate domain'. The rights which fall in the 'community domain' are those which apply to all the citizens of our country. The rights which fall in the 'separate domain' are those which apply to the minorities only and reserved to protect their identity (Reports of NCM).

The expression 'minority' has been used in Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution, but it has nowhere been defined. The Preamble of the Constitution proclaims to guarantee every citizen 'liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship'. Group of Articles from 25 to 30 guarantee protection of religious, cultural and educational rights to both majority and minority communities. It appears that the constitutional guarantee for the protection of cultural, educational and religious rights of all citizens, it was not felt necessary to define 'minority'. The provision of the Constitution of India recognises only two kinds of minorities (religious and linguistic). The National Commission for Minorities notified the Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jains and Parsis (Zoroastrian) communities as "minorities" in India.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Demographic profile of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura

Muslims in India are about 17.22 Cores, comprised of 14.23 % of the total population of India (Census 2011). Muslims makes up the majority in Union Territory of Lakshadweep and Jammu & Kashmir while its population is substantial in states of



Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. In North-East India, the population of Muslims is significant, and Tripura has second-highest Muslim Population after Assam, which is mentioned in the table below. In Tripura, the Muslims are divided into two major groups, namely, Sunni and Shia, based on their faith in their religion and they are a heterogeneous community. A brief review of the social structure of the Muslims, it is found that they constituted by four primary categories, i.e., i) Ethnic and regional, ii) Linguistic, iii) Social and Occupational, and iv) Theological (Chakraborty 2009).

**Table 3.1: Muslim Population in the State, North-East, and India (2011)**

Sl. No.	State	Total Population	Muslim Population	% of Total Muslim Population
	<b>Assam</b>	<b>31,205,576</b>	<b>10,679,345</b>	<b>34.22 %</b>
	<b>Tripura</b>	<b>3,673,917</b>	<b>316,042</b>	<b>8.60 %</b>
	Manipur	2,855,794	239,836	8.40 %
	Meghalaya	2,966,889	130,399	4.40 %
	Nagaland	1,978,502	48,963	2.47 %
	Arunachal Pradesh	1,383,727	27,045	1.95 %
	Sikkim	610,577	9,867	1.62 %
	Mizoram	1,097,206	14,832	1.35 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>All N.E. States</b>	<b>4,57,72,188</b>	<b>1,14,66,329</b>	<b>25 %</b>
	<b>All India</b>	<b>1,21,08,54,977</b>	<b>17,22,45,158</b>	<b>14.23 %</b>

Source: Census 2011 (Religion Census Report).

It is observed that North-East is the home of 25% Muslim population of its total population and Tripura has the second-largest strength of Muslim population after Assam. Majority of Tripura's Muslims are Bengali speaking people, and few of them are speaks on Manipuri, Assamese, Bihari and other languages.

### 3.1.1. Population Growth

We already mentioned that Muslims are the inhabitant of Tripura for several centuries. C. W. Bolton, Political Agent of Hill Tipperah in his Administration Report for 1876-77 presented a more realistic estimate of Hill Tipperah's total population, which was 91,759 (Ganguly: 2006, p. 404). Here we find that the Muslim population was 19,504. They are the second-largest community of Hill Tipperah. Table 3.2 shows the details of the population in Hill Tipperah.

**Table 3.2: Population of Hill Tipperah during 1876-77**

Sl No.	Communities	Populations
1	Bengali Hindus	6,663
2	<b>Bengali Muslims</b>	<b>19,504</b>
3	Manipuris	7,186
4	Christians	119
5	Assamese & Gurkhas	80
6	Tribals	57,906
<b>Total</b>		<b>91,759</b>

**Source:** 1. Chaudhuri, D. K. (ed.) (1996), Administration Report of the Political Agency, Hill Tipperah 1872-1878 Vol: I (Vol. I & II), Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute and Museum, Government of Tripura, Agartala, p. 137.  
 2. Ganguly, J. B., (2006), An Economic History of North-East India 1826-1947, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, p.404

According to the above table regarding the population of Hill Tipperah, 1876-77 are divided into six categories. Here, the Bengali people were once again divided into Hindu Bengali and Muslim Bengali. From the above data, it is also clear that the Bengali Muslims were much more in number than the Bengali Hindus in Tripura in that period. Furthermore, they also formed the second-largest communities in Tripura after the Tribals.

It was carefully observed by the scholars that "the census before 1901 (1310 TE) was not accurate due to the lack of communication in the interior of hilly areas, illiteracy and ignorance among the common people of Tripura regarding census and due



to the shortage of educated working people in Tripura. The first reliable census was that of 1901, according to which the number of inhabitants was 26 per cent more than ten years before" (Census Biharani 1340 TE or 1931 AD p.26). Accordingly, Tripura started its journey of the 20th century with a population of 1, 73,325. The growth of community population from 1901 to 2011 is shown in the table below:

**Table 3.3: Muslim Population of Tripura from 1901-2011**

Year	Total population	Decadal variation	Muslim Population	Decadal variation	As % of Total Population of Tripura
1901	1,70,325	26	45323	--	26.15
1911	2,29,613	32.5	65953	45.52	28.72
1921	3,24,437	32.59	82288	24.77	27.03
1931	3,82,450	25.6	103720	26.05	27.12
1941	5,13,010	34.14	123570	19.14	24.09
1951	6,39,029	24.56	136950	10.83	21.43
1961	11,42,005	76.86	230002	67.95	20.14
1971	15,56,342	36.32	103962	-54.80	6.68
1981	24,55,305	24.44	138529	33.25	6.75
1991	27,57,206	34.30	196495	41.84	7.13
2001	31,91,186	18.78	254442	29.49	7.95
2011	36,73,917	14.84	316042	---	8.60

Source: Author's compilation based on the following:

- (1) Census report of 2001, 2011;
- (2) Census Biharani 1340 TE (1931 AD), Tribal Research and Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Re-print 1997 Editorial Column, Table No. 6.
- (3) Chakraborty, A. (2009), Muslim Inhabitants of Tripura: A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile, Folklore and Folkloristics, Vol.2; No.1, June 2009, p.2.

### 3.1.2. Religious Distribution of Population

Muslims in Tripura accounted for 8.60% population of the state, and the second-largest denomination, after Hindus who are the majority group. The population of our state is 36, 73,917 out of that the population belongs to various religious communities are Hindus 83.39%, Muslims 8.60%, Christians 4.35%, Buddhist 3.41%, Jain 0.023%, Sikhs 0.029%, Others 0.041% and religion not stated is 0.14% as per the census report of the year 2011. The details of the population data mentioned below in the table:

**Table 3.4: Religion wise Population in Tripura (2011 census)**

Religious Community	Total No. of Population	% of Total population
Hindu	3063903	83.39%
Muslim	316042	8.60%
Christian	159882	4.35%
Sikh	1070	0.029%
Buddhist	125385	3.41%
Jain	860	0.023%
Other religion	1514	0.041%
Religion not stated	5261	0.14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3673917</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Census report, 2011.

### 3.1.3. Rural-Urban Distribution of Population

In the urban population of Tripura, Muslim in the urban area is 4.83 per cent of the total urban population in 2011. The reasons for the low level of urban resident among Muslims are historical as well as social and economic. The fact that they have been living in plain areas for a long time and social contact with other groups has been limited probably accounts for their lower inhabitation in urban areas. Majority of the Muslims lives in rural areas. A total of 269621 Muslim population resides in the rural area, and only 46421 Muslims resides in Urban area.

**Table 3.5: Rural and Urban population in Tripura (Census 2011)**

Type	Total population	Muslim Population	% of Muslim Population
Rural	2712464	269621	9.94 %
Urban	961453	46421	4.83 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>3673917</b>	<b>316042</b>	<b>8.60 %</b>

Source: Census 2011 (Religion Census Report).

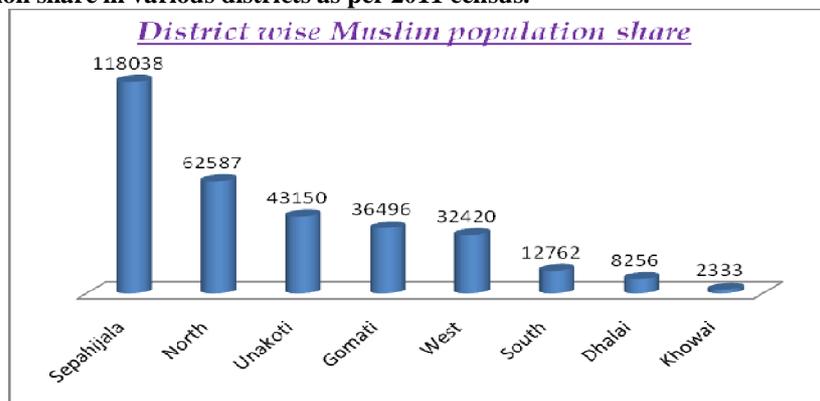
### iii) District wise Distribution of Muslim Population

Muslims of Tripura are living in all over the districts. Their population share in districts found that majority of them are living in Sepahijala, Unakoti, and North district. Gomati and West district also has a large number of Muslim Population, and only a small portion are living in south, Dhalai and Khowai district of the state of Tripura.

**Table 3.6: District wise distribution of Muslim Population in Tripura (2011)**

Name of the District	Total Population	Muslim population			% of Muslim Population
		Total	Males	Females	
Sepahijala	479975	<b>118038</b>	60040	57998	<b>24.59</b>
Unakoti	276506	<b>43150</b>	21824	21326	<b>15.60</b>
North	417441	<b>62587</b>	31494	31093	<b>14.99</b>
Gomati	383887	<b>36496</b>	18685	17811	<b>9.50</b>
West	918200	<b>32420</b>	16673	15747	<b>3.53</b>
South	492114	<b>12762</b>	6533	6229	<b>2.59</b>
Dhalai	378230	<b>8256</b>	4366	3890	<b>2.18</b>
Khowai	327564	<b>2333</b>	1315	1018	<b>0.71</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3673917</b>	<b>316042</b>	<b>160930</b>	<b>155112</b>	<b>8.60</b>

Source: Authors compilation as per data of 2011 Census Report.

**Chart-2: Muslim population share in various districts as per 2011 census.**

## 3.2. Social-economic profile of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura

### 3.2.1. Literacy and Educational Standard of Muslims

It is a matter of regret that the percentage of illiteracy among the Muslim masses is much higher than the other communities in India. It has been taken for granted that Muslims in India are educationally and economically backwards, and almost all scholars begin with this assumption. The Sachar Report shows that Muslims are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low-quality education; their deprivation increases manifold as the level of education rises (GOI: 2006). Muslims are the least educated section of the state of Tripura. There are several reasons for the backwardness of Muslims in Tripura such as large family size, lack of a link between Madrassa education and modern education, economic poverty, negative attitude towards girl's education, lack of proper Government initiatives. However, the Muslims of Tripura did not progress much in terms of modern education, attending schools outside their homes. Traditional outlook, poverty, unemployment and backwardness were the primary reason for educational backwardness among Muslim in Tripura.



The Sachar Report brought out the relative deprivation of Muslim community in India in various dimensions, including employment and education. It finds that enrolment rates in school were among the lowest for Muslim students but had improved in the recent decade. It is also consistent with the perception that the community is increasingly looking at education as a means of improving socio-economic status. This report (2006) confirmed that by most development indicators, the Muslim community is lagging behind other religious community of India.

Dropout rates are also highest among the Muslims, and this seems to go up significantly after secondary school. Higher secondary attainment levels are also the lowest among the Muslims. As we know, literacy is the first requirement in learning and knowledge building, and therefore, an essential indicator of human development.

The literacy rate among the Muslims as per 2011 census is 83.2 %. Muslim literacy is lower than General literacy rate (87.20%). The female literacy of Muslim in compare to male is insignificant. Among the religious communities, Muslims has less literacy only after Buddhists of Tripura.

**Table 3.7: Literacy among various Religious Communities in Tripura (2001 census).**

Religious Community	% of literacy (2001 Census)	% of literacy (2011 Census)
Hindus	65.5	88.2
Muslims	49.50	83.2
Christians	57	86.1
Sikhs	94	91.9
Buddhists	40.4	74.6
Jains	73	88.5
<b>State Total</b>		<b>87.2</b>

The above table shows that literacy among the various religious communities in Tripura, Muslims are less literate compare to others.

### 3.2.2. Madrasa Education and the Muslims

Madrasas in India, even after the independence have rendered invaluable services to the development of community and the country. They have played a significant role in educating millions of Muslim populations of the country. The services of Madrasas and maktabas are not limited to spreading literacy; but also encompass social, political, economic and academic fields. The educational development of the Muslim community cannot be fully imagined without the Madrasas and maktabas. Madrasa is a Centre for religious education. Though the concept is associated with Islamic education. Nowadays, this is giving general education as prescribed by the government. A large number of the students of socially, economically and educationally backward sections of the Muslim community begin their education from these madrasas and maktabas, where education is relatively cheap and, in some cases, free. Before 1978 there was no Govt. recognised Madrasa in Tripura (Report of MW Dept.). After this time, state Govt. has given special status for development of Madrasa education. The school education department has taken steps for improvement of Madrasa. At present, the total number of Madrasa in the state is 180. Out of total Madrasa belongs to 51 Grant-in-aid Madrasa are available with a total of 6925 students. In addition to this, as per Govt. of India "Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasa" (SPQEM) of 129 nos. of Madrasa with 11710 students (session 2012-13). At present Madrasas are faced many development problems like lack of infrastructure, drinking water, proper teacher and uniform curriculum, lack of financial policy and fund, lack of government initiatives.

The above study of the education of the Muslims in Tripura shows their low level of participation and low educational development. It is the need of the hour to present a picture of the educational development of Muslims in this state. Even seven decades after independence, it is observed that the researcher has taken up a little interest in this area for detailed study. It is a matter of regret that the authorities of our country as well state government are not adequately aware of this critical national problem.

### 3.3. Economic Profile of the Muslims

After more than six decades of independence and positive economic growth, it is generally felt and also corroborated by analytical reports that Muslim community is lagging behind in several outcome indicators of development, compared to the majority community. However, it appears that Muslims have failed to keep the pace of development to reap the benefits of general progress in India. These trend has been felt in every sector. It is acknowledged by most analysts, who have put forth many reasons for this state of affairs. According to the Minority Commission, the share of Indian Muslims throughout India in Public Sector employment, including the Central and State Governments and public sector units even in the lower levels of administrative hierarchy has never gone beyond 6 per cent. In other areas, as well conditions are no better. Since the independence of India, the report of different Governmental and non-governmental sources show that the positions of Muslim's in lower than other communities of India (GOI: 2005; Besant. R.:



2011). It is observed from the various sources that Muslims of Tripura are mainly poor due to lack of economic skills, limited scope in a government job, dis-interest of using modern technology in agricultural and industrial activities, and discrimination in the distribution of resources in Muslim concentrated areas.

**Table 3.8: Muslim Employee in Tripura (2012)**

DEPARTMENT/ DIRECTORATE	TOTAL EMPLOYEE	GEN	SC	ST	OBC	MUSLIM EMPLOYEE	
						Total	%
Directorate of Health Services	5384	3180	901	1303		80	1.48
SSA (Education Dept.)	48	35	07	03	03	02	4.16
School Education(SSA)	5488 (Teachers)	1761	888	2015	784	269	4.90
Directorate of Higher Education (Libraries)	137	62	31	32	04	01	0.72
Directorate of Higher Education	04	02	Nil	02	Nil	Nil	0
Election dept.	109	59	18	22	09	01	0.91
Tripura govt. Museum	06	03	02	01	Nil	Nil	0
Directorate of Minority Welfare	14	08	01	04	01	07	50
Tripura Board of Wakf	09	09				07	77.77
TPSC	65	33	16	16		Nil	0
Agartala Municipal Corporation	659	401	136	67	NA	55	8.34
Directorate of Family Welfare	1564	899	238	427	NA	29	1.85
Law Department	40	34	04	02	NA	Nil	0
Department of Agriculture	6621	3546	1162	1913	NA	238	3.59
Tripura Forest Development and Plantation Corporation Ltd.	228	134	31	51	NA	07	3.07
<b>Total 15 depts.</b>	<b>20376</b>	<b>10166</b>	<b>3435</b>	<b>5858</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>3.41</b>

Source: Author's compilation based on the following:

1. SPIO, Governments Departments, Govt. Of Tripura, (In 2012).
2. Rahman, Mizanur(2013), *Socio-Economic Status Of The Muslim Minority In Tripura*, Indian Streams Research Journal, Volume-3, Issue-9, Oct-2013

The above table shows the employment scenario of the Muslims in the 15<sup>th</sup> government departments and offices in Tripura. The data mentioned above proved that the participation of Muslims under govt. job is very low (only 3.41%). It shows the backwardness of this community. Not only this, their female participation is microscopic. Out of 15 (fifteen) dept. 4(four) dept. has no Muslim employee, 2 (two) dept. has below 1%, 6 (six) department has below 5 per cent Muslim employee, and only two offices have above 8 (eight) per cent, Muslim employee. Thus, it is proved that Muslim employment in government service is marginal, and their employment level is significantly less as per their population share.

### Sources of Livelihood

Earlier, the Muslims used to be mainly engaged in cultivation, day labourer and illegal business in border areas. However, due to government prohibition and fencing on the border area, they have been now engaged to work mainly as agricultural labourers, fishing and construction workers to earn their livelihood. Many of them are dependent on self-employment and religious services. According to the 2001 census, 29.2 per cent Muslim population was reported, workers. The total work participation was 36.2 per cent while 29.2 per cent among Muslims. In comparison to other religious groups, the work participation of Muslim community is less in Tripura. The decline in WPR was noticed for both male and female.



**Table 3.9: Work participation rate by the religious community of Tripura and India, 2001**

Religious community	India	Tripura
	Persons	Persons
<b>All Religious Community</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>36.2</b>
Hindu	40.4	36.5
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>29.2</b>
Christians	39.7	38.7
Sikh	37.7	86.6
Buddhist	40.6	43.0
Jain	32.2	41.1
Others	48.4	55.1

Source: Census 2001 & Tripura Human Development Report 2007, p. 68.

The above table shows the level of work participation of the Muslims. It is clear that Muslims has the lowest participation among all religious communities in India and also lowest in Tripura.

The Muslim society of Tripura consists of social groups based on their traditional occupation. The people like Sayed, Sheik, Mir or Mirza and Khan enjoy the high status in society in order of 1st, 2nd, third and fourth rank respectively. However, the Syed and Shiek are regarded as 'KhandaniMusalman' in Tripura. They are insignificant in number, and they have no specific occupation. They are usually professional, service holder, and business owner. The middle-rank occupational groups are- Poddar (goldsmith), Sardar (craftsman), Bhuiya/Majumdar/Chowdhury (landowner) Palawan (boxer), Darzi (tailor), Faquir (religious mendicants), Julha (weaver), Khadim (caretaker of religious places). The low-rank occupational groups are Karati (woodcutter), Karigor (sweet maker), Dafali (drum maker and beater), Dhunia (cotton carder and bedding maker), and Butcher (meat seller).

These clearly show that Muslims are more disadvantage group among religious communities. Over the years the percentage of agricultural labourer has increased while percentage depending on cultivation and household industry has consistently declined. New entrants in the labour force were mostly unskilled, and this could get employment as labourers in agricultural activities. Employment in the traditional household industry has also declined due to the availability of modern and cheap products which also likely shifted many workers to labourer category. In urban areas also most of the workers were engaged as labourers and in transport services-probably as a load carrier. Female workers were comparatively more employed as an agricultural labourer in both rural and urban areas.

### 3.4. Religious and Cultural Practices

Since the monarchical rule, Muslims have been enjoying the festivals and holidays, e.g., 'Ramjan Id' (Id-ul-Fitre), 'Bakra Id' (Id-ul-Azha), and 'Maharram'. They enjoy the 'Dargahs Utsab'. In earlier times, Dargahs Utsab was used to be held in some selected places of Tripura every year. Some other festivals are 'Jari-sari', Religious rituals, 'Milad', 'Fatheha-e-Dowajdahm' (birthday of HajratMahammed), 'WaaZ' (discussion about the religious matter), and 'Istema'. The place of Mosques or Masjids is the most important religious place for the Muslims of the world. Muslims were participating together in the 'Juma' Masjids for the weekend Namaz on Friday and observe the Islamic occasion at different times of the year.

### 3.5. Political Profile of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura

Muslim minorities are an integral part of Indian politics. They played an essential role in the democratic politics of our country. However, they are under-represented in the parliament, state legislature and local bodies. They are also having less representation in political organisations and political activities. They have significant voter percentage in some State Legislative Assembly constituencies in the state of Tripura. This is quite significant in a democratic polity. With the growth of population, the community is becoming increasingly decisive in electoral politics of Tripura and in particular, the Sepahijala, North, Unakoti and Gomati districts of Tripura.

#### 3.5.1. Political Representation in Legislature

Having people of backward community in political office is beneficial because it's a sign our political system is open and that everybody can participate no matter their position. If equal democracy is a sign of democratic openness, then insignificant representation of minorities, and especially Muslims, shows Indian democracy is less accessible or healthy system for all groups.

**Table 3.10: No. of Muslim Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Tripura and the level of Political deprivation, from 1963 -2018**

Year	Total No. of MLA	No. of Muslim MLA	% of Muslim Member	% of Muslim Population	% of Political deprivation
1963	30	4	13.33	20.14	33.81
1967	30	2	6.67	20.14	<b>66.88</b>
1972	60	3	5.00	6.68	<b>25.14</b>
1977	60	2	3.33	6.68	50.14
1983	60	3	5.00	6.75	25.92
1988	60	2	3.33	6.75	50.66
1993	60	2	3.33	7.13	53.29
1998	60	2	3.33	7.13	53.29
2003	60	2	3.33	7.95	58.11
2008	60	2	3.33	7.95	58.11
2013	60	2	3.33	8.60	61.27
2018	60	3	5.00	8.60	41.86
<b>Average</b>		<b>2.41</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>9.54</b>	<b>48.21</b>

Source: 1. Election Commission, Govt. of India.  
2. Census Reports, Govt. of India.

The above data of the table clarifies the historical deprivation of the Political representation of the Muslims in the state of Tripura. As per the population share of the Muslims, the political representation in the Legislature, the highest deprivation level was 66.88% in 1967, and the lowest deprivation level was 25.14% in 1972. The average percentage of political deprivation of the Muslim representation in the state legislature from 1963 to 2018 is 48.21%.

### 3.5.2. Muslim representation in Panchyati Raj Institution

**Table 3.11.: Muslims Members in Three-tier Panchayat (1999-2004)**

Level of Institution (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier)	% of Muslim Representation	
	1999	2004
Gram Panchayat	10.50%	10.11%
Panchayat Samiti	7.02%	8.08%
Zilla Parishad	4.88%	5.26%

Source- State Election commission, and Directorate of Panchayat, Govt. of Tripura

From the above data on Muslim representation in Panchyati Raj Institution reveals that representation of Muslim member in PRI's is unequal in various levels. Only in Gram Panchayat level, their share is high and above 10 per cent. However, Intermediate level and higher level, their representation is less in number. Thus, it is observed that their share is not appropriate as their population in rural areas of the state.

**Table 3.12.: Muslim Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan in GPs of 35 Blocks in the Tripura Panchayat Election 2014.**

Post/Position	Total No. of Pradhan/ Upa-Pradhan	No. of Muslim Pradhan/ Upa-Pradhan	% of Muslim Pradhan/ Upa-Pradhan
<b>Pradhan</b>	591	53	8.96
<b>Upa-Pradhan</b>	591	79	13.36

Source: Authors compilation based on Report of Panchayat Department, Govt. of Tripura, Tripura Gazette, 02<sup>nd</sup> September 2014.

Regarding Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan (Chairman/Vice-Chairman), it is observed that Muslim representation as GP head or Chairman/Vice-chairman is less as per their population share in village level. As per the report of state Government, there are 72 nos. of minority dominate villages having 30% of the minority population and 124 nos. of the minority-dominated village having 20% minority population exist in Tripura. Thus, their share in village-level PRI's has low representation, and they are politically backwards and not able to represent equally like as SC, ST in the state.



Again, a vast number of government's reports have underlined that the powerlessness of Indian Muslims constitutes a systematic nature (Hasan, 2009). In the absence of any such affirmative actions for Muslims, reports have observed, their participation and representation in politics has been declining since independence (Sachar Report, 2006). There is no study conducted in Tripura by the government for inquiry of the condition of Muslims. However few studies with some aspects of Muslim community reveals that, they are socially, economically, and politically deprived, and poverty, lack of education and political awareness is the leading cause (Chakraborty, 2009, Rahaman 2016, Bhattacharya & Ali 2018).

## 5. Conclusion

The present study reveals that Muslim communities are socially, economically, politically less aware due to many socio-economic problems. Another negative cause is that political parties using Muslims as vote bank without concerning the development of communities. It is also observed that the Muslims has low socio-economic status, and they belong to extreme poverty; hence there is an essential need for government initiatives. Among the religious communities, the literacy rate for the 'Others' and Muslims have been found quite discouraging. Also, the female literacy rate in case of 'Other' and Muslims was found relatively lower as compared with the corresponding values obtained for the remaining religious communities. Un-organised Muslim political voice and pressure groups is an immediate cause of their low representation in different socio-economic fields. Now, it is time for minorities to become part of the mainstream population of India. The purpose of the democratic system is to stimulate competition, increase prosperity and improve standards of living.

## Suggestions

Based on the above study, few suggestions are made to overcome the present condition of the Muslim minorities of Tripura in particular and India in general.

- Parents belonging to the religious minorities should be motivated to change their attitude in favour of education and for encouraging their children, particularly girls, for completing higher education.
- By and large for strengthening the minority religious communities, it would be meaningful if leaders of the religious minority communities take necessary and feasible steps to encourage education, economic enterprises and get involved in the constructive activities of the nation to maximise opportunities for the development of the members of their community.
- It is to be mentioned that the welfare schemes implemented for the development of Muslims through Minority welfare department should be increased regularly, keeping in pace with the increase in the Minority population.
- Minority populations are culturally backwards and un-organised. Therefore, it is to be needed to set up a cultural institution to promote cultural and tourism activities and to need health care service, farmer awareness programme for motivating for skill up-gradation. Another essential need for the economic development of minorities is to make a valid reservation policy on government service in the state.
- Social, Economic and political awareness should be promoted among the Muslim minorities.
- Attitude towards using science and technology should be increased in all sphere of life instead of narrow and traditional attitude.
- Last but not least, educated intellectuals, researchers, NGO's and agencies should take academic and research studies to draw out the actual conditions of this community and suggest appropriate measures to uplift the community. The government also should give importance and made scope for the same by providing funding to the agencies to conduct research studies and implanting the recommendations.

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