



ROLE OF POLICE IN THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF MINORITIES: A STUDY OF MEERUT DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Minority protection is an important concern in constitutional, legal, and human-rights discourse because minority status is not determined only by numerical weakness. Minority communities may also experience social vulnerability, non-dominance, discrimination, insecurity, and limited access to institutional power. In the Indian context, minority rights are protected through constitutional provisions, especially Articles 29 and 30, which safeguard distinct language, script, culture, and educational rights. The present research paper examines the role of police in the protection of the human rights of minorities in Meerut district. The study focuses on the relationship between minority identity, public trust, police responsiveness, institutional fairness, and protection against discrimination and insecurity. Since Meerut is considered socially and communally sensitive, the role of police becomes important not only in maintaining law and order but also in ensuring equality, dignity, security, and fair treatment for minority communities. The paper highlights that police protection of minorities should be understood as both an administrative responsibility and a human-rights obligation. It argues that effective policing can strengthen minority confidence in the legal system, while biased or delayed police response may deepen insecurity and distrust. Therefore, the study emphasizes the need for impartial, sensitive, accountable, and rights-based policing for the protection of minority human rights.

Keywords

Minority Rights, Human Rights, Police Protection, Meerut District, Constitutional Safeguards, Religious Minorities, Institutional Fairness, Rule of Law, Non-Discrimination, Public Trust

INTRODUCTION

Minorities form an important part of Indian society because India is a plural country with diverse religious, linguistic, and cultural communities. The concept of minority cannot be understood only through population numbers. A minority group may be smaller in number, but its real condition also depends on its social position, access to power, cultural identity, and level of vulnerability. Therefore, minority status must be examined through sociological, legal, constitutional, and human-rights perspectives.

In India, the Constitution does not provide one complete definition of minority for all purposes, but it clearly protects minority interests through cultural and educational rights. Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution safeguard the right of minorities to preserve their language, script, culture, and educational institutions. These protections show that minority rights are not special privileges but essential parts of equality, dignity, and democratic justice.

The role of police becomes especially important in the protection of minority human rights. Police are directly responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing violence, responding to complaints, protecting vulnerable groups, and ensuring equal access to justice. In communally sensitive areas such as Meerut district, minority communities may face fear, insecurity, discrimination, or lack of confidence in public institutions. In such conditions,



fair and impartial policing can help build trust between minority communities and the state.

The present study examines how police contribute to the protection of human rights of minorities in Meerut district. It focuses on police responsiveness, fairness, accountability, prevention of discrimination, and protection of minority dignity and security. The study is significant because the protection of minorities is not only a legal duty but also a requirement for social harmony, public confidence, and democratic governance.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of police in protecting the human rights of minorities in Meerut district.
2. To study the level of trust and confidence of minority communities in police administration.
3. To analyze the challenges faced by minorities in accessing fair and timely police protection.
4. To assess the importance of impartial and rights-based policing in maintaining communal harmony.

DEFINITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON MINORITY

The definition of minority has remained a complex and debated issue in social science, constitutional law, and human rights discourse. The reason is that minority status cannot be determined by a single criterion alone. A group may be smaller in number, but numerical inferiority by itself does not explain whether that group is socially weak, politically underrepresented, culturally distinct, or legally in need of protection. Therefore, scholars and institutions have approached the term “minority” from different perspectives such as sociological, numerical, legal, constitutional, and human-rights perspectives. International human-rights discourse commonly refers to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, while also linking minority protection with equality, non-discrimination, dignity, and participation (OHCHR, 2010).

In the Indian context, the issue of definition becomes even more important because Indian society is plural in religion, language, and culture. The Constitution of India does not provide one single exhaustive definition of minority for all purposes, yet it clearly recognizes and protects minority interests through cultural and educational rights. Articles 29 and 30 are especially important because they safeguard distinct language, script, culture, and the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice (Constitution of India, 1950). Thus, the Indian understanding of minority emerges through constitutional interpretation, statutory recognition, and social reality together rather than through one rigid formula (Constitution of India, 1950).

Sociological and Numerical Perspectives

From the sociological perspective, a minority is not merely a group that is fewer in number than the majority population. It is a group that differs from the dominant population on the basis of religion, language, ethnicity, culture, or social identity and often occupies a comparatively weaker position in society. This perspective gives importance to unequal treatment, exclusion, prejudice, and lack of access to power. In other words, minority status is understood not simply through numbers but through social relations and the actual experience of disadvantage. This approach is important because it reflects the real conditions in which minority groups live and interact with the larger social order (OHCHR, 2010).

The numerical perspective, however, has traditionally been one of the earliest ways of defining minority. According to this view, a minority is a group smaller in number than the rest of the population in a state, region, or society. This



approach is simple and useful for descriptive or administrative purposes, but it has limitations. A group may be small in number and still enjoy social dominance, while another may be sizable in population yet remain weak or insecure in public life. Therefore, numerical inferiority is better treated as a starting point rather than a complete definition of minority. For the purpose of the present study, this means that minority identity in Meerut district cannot be understood through numbers alone; it must also be seen through social vulnerability and institutional response.

Minority as a Non-Dominant and Distinct Group

A more refined definitional perspective identifies minority as a **non-dominant group possessing a distinct identity**. This perspective is widely accepted because it combines both identity and power. Under this view, a minority is a community that differs from the majority in religion, language, culture, or ethnicity and at the same time does not enjoy a dominant position in the political, administrative, or social structure. The emphasis on non-dominance is significant because it explains why minorities often require constitutional safeguards and legal protection in order to secure equality in practice (OHCHR, 2010).

Distinct identity is equally important in this perspective. Minority communities generally seek to preserve their separate religion, language, script, culture, traditions, and historical memory. This desire to preserve identity is one of the central reasons why minority protection is considered necessary in democratic societies. A minority is therefore not only a weaker group but also a group whose distinct existence deserves recognition and protection. This perspective is highly relevant to the present study because police protection of minority rights cannot be evaluated fairly unless minorities are understood as both distinct and potentially non-dominant communities.

Religious, Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives

Another important definitional perspective identifies minorities according to the basis of their identity. In international and constitutional discourse, minorities are commonly discussed as religious minorities, linguistic minorities, and cultural or ethnic minorities. This classification is important because it shows that minority status may arise in different forms and that protection may be required in more than one dimension of life. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities specifically recognizes these bases of minority identity and calls upon States to protect their existence and promote conditions for the preservation of that identity (United Nations, 1992).

- **Religious minority** – A religious minority is a community whose faith, beliefs, worship patterns, and institutions differ from those of the majority population. Protection of such minorities includes freedom of conscience, freedom to profess and practise religion, and freedom from discrimination on religious grounds (United Nations, 1966).
- **Linguistic minority** – A linguistic minority is a group whose mother tongue or script is different from that of the dominant population in a particular state or region. Since language is closely linked with communication, education, and cultural continuity, its protection becomes essential for the dignity and development of the group (Constitution of India, 1950).
- **Cultural minority** – A cultural minority is identified through shared traditions, customs, practices, heritage, and collective memory. The protection of cultural minority identity is necessary because culture gives a group continuity, social meaning, and a sense of belonging across generations (OHCHR, 2010).

Constitutional and Human Rights Perspectives

In India, the constitutional perspective provides one of the strongest bases for understanding minority. Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India are particularly important in this regard. Article 29 protects the interests of sections



of citizens having a distinct language, script, or culture, while Article 30 grants minorities, whether based on religion or language, the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. These provisions show that the Constitution does not treat minority identity as separate from citizenship; rather, it protects diversity within the larger framework of justice, equality, and national unity (Constitution of India, 1950). At the human-rights level, minority rights are treated as part of universal human rights rather than as special privileges. The OHCHR has emphasized that minority protection is closely linked with equality, non-discrimination, participation, and preservation of identity. Similarly, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right of persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, profess and practise their own religion, and use their own language in community with others (United Nations, 1966; OHCHR, 2010). This perspective is especially important for the present study because it makes clear that police protection of minorities is not merely an administrative duty but also a human-rights obligation.

Working Definition for the Present Study

For the purpose of the present study, a working definition of minority is necessary. Since the study examines the role of police in the protection of the human rights of minorities in Meerut district, the definition adopted here must be broad enough to include identity, non-dominance, vulnerability, and legal entitlement to equal protection. A purely numerical definition would be too narrow, while a purely abstract theoretical definition would not be useful for empirical analysis. Therefore, in the context of this research, minority may be understood as a distinct religious, linguistic, or cultural community which occupies a comparatively non-dominant or vulnerable position in the relevant social setting and is entitled, under constitutional and human-rights principles, to dignity, equality, security, and fair treatment from public institutions, especially the police. This working definition is suitable because it connects theory with the actual concerns of the study, such as public confidence in police, minority security, institutional fairness, and protection of human rights in a communally sensitive district.

NATURE AND FEATURES OF MINORITY GROUPS

The nature of minority groups can be understood only when minority status is seen as more than a matter of numerical inferiority. Minority groups are generally characterized by a distinct identity, a comparatively non-dominant social position, and a continuing need to preserve their religion, language, culture, or traditions within a wider social order. Their position in society is often shaped by historical experience, social attitudes, political representation, and the extent to which state institutions act fairly toward them. In democratic societies, minorities form an integral part of the national community, yet their distinctiveness and vulnerability often make them dependent on constitutional safeguards, legal recognition, and institutional impartiality. Thus, the nature of minority groups is both social and legal: social because it emerges from lived relations with the majority, and legal because it raises questions of rights, protection, and equality. (OHCHR, 2010; Constitution of India, 1950).

In the Indian context, the nature of minority groups is particularly significant because Indian society is deeply plural in religion, language, and culture. Minority communities are not external to the nation; they are part of its social fabric and constitutional structure. However, the practical condition of minority groups often depends on whether their identity is respected, whether they enjoy equal treatment in public life, and whether institutions such as the police and administration protect them during times of tension. For this reason, the present study must examine not only who minorities are, but also the key features that define their status and shape their rights-based relationship with the state.

Distinct Identity and Sense of Belonging

One of the foremost features of minority groups is their distinct identity. Minority communities are generally



identifiable by religion, language, script, customs, cultural practices, traditions, or historical memory that distinguish them from the majority population. This distinctiveness is not merely symbolic; it provides members of the group with a sense of belonging, continuity, and collective existence. A minority may preserve its identity through institutions such as places of worship, schools, cultural organizations, family practices, and community networks. Because identity is central to dignity and self-respect, the preservation of such distinctiveness becomes a major concern in minority protection. The Constitution of India reflects this concern by protecting the right of any section of citizens having a distinct language, script, or culture to conserve the same under Article 29 (Constitution of India, 1950). The sense of belonging within minority groups also strengthens their collective consciousness. Members of minority communities often feel connected through shared experiences, values, and concerns, particularly when they perceive pressure from dominant social or political forces. This shared consciousness does not mean separation from national life; rather, it enables them to participate in society while maintaining their own identity. In the present study, this feature is important because a community's sense of identity often shapes how it perceives fairness, security, and institutional protection in everyday life as well as during communal tension.

Non-Dominant Position and Structural Weakness

Another important feature of minority groups is their non-dominant position. Minority communities are often not only fewer in number but also weaker in access to political, administrative, and institutional power. This lack of dominance may be reflected in underrepresentation, reduced influence in decision-making, limited trust in public institutions, or dependence on legal safeguards for protection. The minority condition, therefore, is often defined by an imbalance between identity and power. A group may have a strong internal community life yet still remain vulnerable in the wider structure of society because it does not control the institutions that govern public order, justice, and resource distribution. Minority-rights guidance from OHCHR consistently links minority protection with effective equality, participation, and non-discrimination, which shows that non-dominance is a core feature of minority status (OHCHR, 2010).

This feature has particular relevance to policing. A non-dominant group may approach the police and administration from a position of dependence rather than confidence. It may fear that its grievances will not be heard promptly or impartially. Thus, the structural weakness of minority groups makes institutional fairness critically important. In a district like Meerut, where the synopsis itself links minority rights with public faith in the law-and-order machinery, the non-dominant position of minorities becomes one of the key features for analytical study.

Vulnerability to Discrimination and Insecurity

Minority groups are often characterized by vulnerability. This vulnerability may arise from social prejudice, historical discrimination, communal polarization, economic marginalization, or unequal treatment in public institutions. Minority communities may face stereotyping, exclusion, hate speech, targeted hostility, or reduced access to justice because of their distinct identity. Vulnerability does not mean that minorities are inherently weak in every sense, but it does mean that they may be more exposed to harm in contexts where social tension, bias, or majoritarian pressure exists. This is why minority protection is considered a necessary part of human-rights protection. OHCHR materials emphasize that persons belonging to minorities often require protection against discrimination and measures that enable them to enjoy their rights effectively in practice (OHCHR, 2010).

In communally sensitive settings, minority vulnerability becomes even more pronounced. Fear of violence, lack of confidence in law-enforcement response, and concern over unequal treatment may deeply affect the everyday life of minority communities. For the present study, this feature is highly important because the role of police cannot be assessed only in relation to crime control; it must also be examined in relation to whether minorities feel safe, protected, and fairly treated under law.



Need for Legal and Constitutional Protection

A further feature of minority groups is their need for legal and constitutional protection. Since minorities often face vulnerability and non-dominance, they cannot always rely on social or political power to secure their interests. As a result, constitutional safeguards, statutory recognition, and fair institutional procedures become especially important. In India, Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution are central in this regard. Article 29 protects cultural and linguistic identity, while Article 30 grants minorities, whether based on religion or language, the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. These provisions recognize that equality in a plural society requires not only identical treatment but also protection of distinct identity (Constitution of India, 1950).

At the broader human-rights level, legal protection also includes equality before law, non-discrimination, freedom of religion, cultural rights, and access to justice. Minority groups therefore have a special relationship with the legal system: they depend upon it not as a privilege but as a guarantee that their citizenship, dignity, and identity will be protected on equal terms. This feature directly supports the focus of the present research, which seeks to understand how police, as a key arm of the state, contribute to or fail in the protection of minority human rights.

Relevance of These Features to the Present Study

For the purpose of this study, the features of minority groups must be understood in a practical and research-oriented way. Distinct identity explains why minorities seek recognition and respect; non-dominant status explains why they depend more heavily on public institutions; vulnerability explains why human-rights protection is necessary; and the need for legal safeguards explains why the role of police becomes central in preserving trust in the rule of law. These features are not abstract ideas alone; they shape the lived experience of minority communities in districts where social tension or communal sensitivity may influence institutional conduct. Therefore, minority groups in the context of the present study may be seen as communities marked by identity, relative weakness, vulnerability, and constitutional entitlement to equal protection. These features provide the conceptual bridge between minority theory and the practical question of whether police function in a fair, responsive, and rights-oriented manner toward minorities in Meerut district.

CONCLUSION

The protection of minority human rights is an essential requirement of a democratic and constitutional society. Minority communities often possess distinct religious, linguistic, or cultural identities and may experience vulnerability due to their non-dominant social position. In such circumstances, police play a central role in ensuring security, justice, equality, and dignity. The study shows that the role of police should not be limited to crime control or maintenance of law and order. Police must also function as an impartial institution that protects minority communities from discrimination, fear, violence, and unequal treatment. In Meerut district, where social and communal sensitivity makes institutional fairness highly important, police responsiveness can directly influence minority trust in the legal system. If police act promptly, fairly, and without bias, they can strengthen social harmony and public confidence. However, delayed response, partial conduct, or lack of sensitivity may increase insecurity among minority groups. Therefore, effective protection of minority rights requires accountable policing, human-rights awareness, community engagement, and equal treatment before law. A rights-based police system is necessary for protecting minority dignity and maintaining peace in a plural society.

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