

MINORITY STATUS OF JAMMIA MILLIA

By Dr. M.N. Buch

India is the second largest Islamic country in the world, with its Muslim population being second in number only to that of Indonesia. My submission is that can more than fifteen crore people, who number more than the population of most of the countries of world, continue to look upon themselves as a minority?

The Preamble to the Constitution states that India is a “sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic”. If we are secular can religion forms the basis of political decision making? Does equality of status and opportunity come out of making reservations or does it come out of treating everyone on the same footing? Article 25 gives the freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion. Articles 29 and 30 protect the right of minority. Article 29 (2) says that no citizen can be denied admission into any education institution either maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, etc. Article 30 allows minorities to maintain and administer educational institutions and in giving them grants the State shall not discriminate against them because they are managed by a minority. I see nothing in the Constitution which permits a minority institution to have an admission policy which runs contrary to Article 2 (a) (2) of the Constitution. Because minority includes a cultural minority and linguistic minority also as defined by Article 29 (1) of the Constitution does it mean that a Sindhi group can set up an institution in which only Sindi is taught and non-Sindis are excluded?

White South Africa adopted a policy of apartheid, which means separate but equal. Societies were divided between whites, blacks and coloured people. The blacks and coloured people could come in contact with white society only as servants of that society, freedom of movement, occupation, residence, etc., was severely restricted and the white minority formed the entire ruling class. Is our policy of declaring institutions which are wholly state funded to have minority status any different from apartheid? Is this policy not divisive? What this country needs is unification, which does not mean homogenization. It needs acceptance of all communities as part of a larger Indian whole. It means necessary action to integrate any group which has felt left out of the social or economic development of the country and for this purpose special attention needs to be given to those communities which have not kept pace with the rest of the country. However, giving the label of Islam and that too, as a minority religion, to the Jamia Millia is a retrograde step and will certainly do nothing either for promoting Muslim welfare or for bringing about integration of Hindu and Muslim society.
