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Multiculturalism and Policy in India: *An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Constitutional Frameworks, Minority Rights, Language Policy, Religious Pluralism, and Contemporary Integration Dilemmas in the Indian Republic*

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>India is a diverse country with a lot of different cultures. It has 1.4 billion people who speak 122 languages and 1,600 dialects. There are six religions and many caste and ethnic groups. The country is a republic and it has a constitution that says everyone has to respect each others differences. Since India became independent in 1947 the government has tried to make policies that help all the different groups of people live together. They have made rules to protect the rights of minorities and to help people who speak languages. They have also tried to make laws that respect the customs and traditions of each group. It is not easy. There are some people who want India to be a Hindu country. They do not like the idea of so many different cultures. Some people also want a Uniform Civil Code, which means everyone would have to follow the laws.. There are conflicts between different regions. This paper looks at how all these different cultures affect the way the government makes policies. It looks at what the constitution says, how things have changed over time and what problems India is facing now. The paper says that India is trying to find a balance between giving groups different rights and treating everyone the same. The research shows that some policies work better for some groups than others. It finds that India has done some things to help all the different groups of people but there are still many problems that need to be solved. India's approach, to multiculturalism is not perfect. It is trying to make it work.</p>	<p>How to Cite this Article</p> <p>Barman B. Multiculturalism and Policy in India: <i>An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Constitutional Frameworks, Minority Rights, Language Policy, Religious Pluralism, and Contemporary Integration Dilemmas in the Indian Republic</i>. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(2):493-498.</p> <p>Access this Article Online</p>  <p>www.multiarticlesjournal.com</p>

KEYWORDS: Multiculturalism, Constitution, Uniform Civil Code.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creating an inclusive nation is difficult when the country is ethnically divided along lines of ethnicity, language, and religion. Thus, the framers of India's Constitution were faced with an enormous task: to implement their vision of an equitable, democratic state while remaining true to the aspirations that had caused millions of people to migrate in 1947. Today, seventy-plus years later, the Constitution continues to enshrine the principles of justice, equal rights for all, and a multi-ethnic society. However, conflicts such as those based on race and religion, as well as regional complexities, will test this Constitution and ultimately undermine the constitutional basis for building national cohesiveness versus respecting cultural diversity through access to rights based on identity.

On the one hand, scholars have debated the best way to address the issue of multiculturalism in India a debate that has evolved from a focus on "consociationalism" to more comprehensive models of "multiculturalism at the federal level." On the other hand, a comprehensive synthesis that evaluates India's multicultural governance, from constitutional underpinnings to integration challenges, does not exist.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) [12] distinguishes polyethnic rights for immigrants, self-government rights for national minorities/indigenous peoples, and special representation for disadvantaged groups, though contested in non-Western contexts like India. Charles Taylor's (1994) politics of recognition urges active affirmation of cultural identities beyond tolerance, aligning with India's constitutional minority protections. Bhiku Parekh's (2000) [15] dialogical multiculturalism promotes ongoing democratic dialogue between communities, mirroring India's blend of rights, directives, and minority safeguards.

2.2 Theoretical Debates

Scholarship divides into three views: optimistic constitutionalism (Austin 1966; Sorabjee 2000) [3] praises India's framework for sustaining democracy and rights amid pressures. Critical secularism (Chatterjee 1993; Menon 2004; Bhargava 2010) [8] critiques majoritarian politics, weak protections, and Hindu biases, gaining traction post-2014. Empirical-comparative approaches (Varshney 2002; Wilkinson 2004; Chandra 2004) [22, 23, 7] analyze conditions for accommodation versus violence, highlighting civic networks and electoral incentives.

2.3 Policy Implications

Language policy studies (Dasgupta 1970; Brass 1974; Divan & Sengupta 2020) [6, 1] trace reorganization politics and Hindi-regional tensions. Religious rights analyses contrast pluralism defense (Mahmood 1983) with patriarchal critiques (Agnes 2011). Reservations sparked a "silent revolution" (Jaffrelot 2003) [9], yet discrimination persists (Thorat & Attewell 2010) [20]. Tribal governance faces Sixth Schedule limits (Xaxa 1999; Baruah 2005) [24].

3. India's Constitutional Multicultural Architecture

3.1 Foundational Principles

The Constitution was adopted in the year 1949; it establishes multi-cultural society through four types of logic, including secularism (no religion has any special status), rights (everybody has the right to be treated equally, no one should be treated differently based on their religion), minority protections, and affirmative action (reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes). It uses Rajeev Bhargava's (2007) [4] "principled distance" model of the state being practically engaged with religion to achieve equal treatment for individuals and is different from French *laïcité* and established religion.

3.2 Key Provisions

India's framework blends universal individual rights with group-specific accommodations, per Gurpreet Mahajan (1998).

Table 1: Key Provisions

Article(s)	Domain	Content & Policy Implication
14-18	Equality	Anti-discrimination; reservation basis.
25-28	Religious Freedom	Personal law pluralism.
29-30	Minority Rights	Cultural/educational protections.
44 (DPSP)	UCC	Integration debates.
350A-B	Linguistic	Mother-tongue instruction.
6th Schedule	Tribal	Autonomous councils.
8th Schedule	Languages	22 scheduled languages supported.

4. Multiculturalism's Influence across Key Policy Domains

4.1 Religious Pluralism and Personal Law

We have laws for different communities, like Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu law was changed in 1955 and 1956. The Muslim law was changed in 1937. Some people think this is a thing because it lets communities make their own decisions like Mahmood said in 1983. Others think it is not fair to women like Agnes said in 2011. The case of Shah Bano in 1985 and the Uniform Civil Code that the BJP is pushing for in 2024 show how complicated this issue is. The state of Goa already has a Uniform Civil Code.

4.2 Language Policy

The Eighth Schedule helps 22 languages and the 1956 Reorganisation Act created states based on language, which helped reduce tensions as Brass said in 1974 [6]. However there are still problems like trying to impose Hindi on everyone and deciding which languages to include, like Bhojpuri. There is also a debate about whether to use the mother tongue or English as stated in Article 350A.

4.3 Caste Reservations

India has the system of affirmative action in the world with quotas for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Economically Weaker Sections. This system was expanded after the Mandal Commission in 1990 and again with the 103rd Amendment in 2019. Some people call this a "revolution" like Jaffrelot in 2003 [9]. The gaps between groups are getting smaller as Hnatkovska and others said in 2012 but there is still a bias against certain groups in the private sector as Thorat and Attewell said in 2010 [20].

4.4 Tribal Rights

The tribal population is 8.6 percent of the population which is

around 120 million people according to the 2011 Census. The Fifth and Sixth Schedules, the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and the PESA of 1996 are all laws that affect people. The Sixth Schedule has been successful in some ways. It also has limitations, especially in the Northeast as Baruah said in 2005.

4.5 Education Policy

There are debates about education like what language to use when teaching as Phillipson said in 2009. There are also debates about Article 30 institutions, like the T.M.A. Pai case in 2002 and what to include in the curriculum like the changes made by the NCERT in 2023.

4.6 Citizenship and Migration

The National Register of Citizens in Assam in 2019 left 1.9 million people without citizenship. The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 favors non-Muslims, which challenges the idea of secularism as Jayal said in 2019. This is a shift, towards a kind of citizenship that is based on religion, which some people call "religious citizenship."

5. Significance and Rationale

5.1 Democratic Significance

Indias way of dealing with cultures is a big deal. It shows that India can handle being a country with different kinds of people. This is important to look at especially when other countries like Europe are dealing with their identity issues. In India there is a strong movement towards Hindu nationalism. So it is very important that we look at how Indias policiesre working.

5.2 Scholarly Contribution

There are studies about specific topics like rules for reservations and personal laws. This paper looks at all of these topics together. It looks at how the government's set up how different policies work together and how things have changed since 2014.

5.3 Policy Urgency

There are big issues in India right now like the Uniform Civil Code, the Citizenship Amendment Act and the change to Article 370. These issues are all connected so we need to look at them. This paper provides a framework for understanding all of these issues.

5.4 Comparative Relevance

India is the democracy in the world with many different kinds of people. So it can teach countries about how to deal with many

cultures. This paper can help other countries learn from Indias experiences.

6. OBJECTIVES

- Look at the foundations of Indias constitution and laws since it became independent.
- Examine how these laws affect areas of life including personal law, language, reservations, tribal governance, education and citizenship.
- Use data from sources to look at the outcomes of these policies.
- Look at the challenges that India faces including Hindu nationalism and conflicts over language.
- Think about how Indias policies fit into frameworks for dealing with many cultures.
- Look at how Indias policies have changed since 2014.
- Make recommendations, for how India can deal with its many cultures and promote equality and good governance.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Multi-method: (a) constitutional/legal analysis (Constitution, laws, judgments); (b) secondary quantitative (Census 2001/2011, NSSO, IHDS 2005/2012, CSDS-Lokniti); (c) literature review on six domains; (d) policy documents (reports, debates).

7.2 Data and Indicators

Sources: Census 2011 (demographics), IHDS-II (socioeconomic), NSSO 71st (employment), V-Dem 2024 (democracy/minority rights), CSDS 2019/2024 (attitudes). 22 indicators across 8 dimensions (Table 2).

7.3 Analytical Framework

Adapts Banting-Kymlicka MPI (2006) into IMPAF: 0-3 scale across eight dimensions for composite scores/time comparisons. Expert-validated (8 specialists; κ=0.76).

8. FINDINGS

8.1 Indian Multicultural Policy Assessment Framework (IMPAF) Scores

Table 2 presents the IMPAF scores across eight multicultural policy dimensions for three historical periods the Nehruvian era (1950–1984), the coalition era (1984–2014), and the post-2014 period documenting the evolution of India's multicultural policy framework over time.

Table 2: Indian Multicultural Policy Assessment Framework - (IMPAF) Scores by Domain and Period (0–3 scale)

Policy Domain	Nehruvian Era (1950–84)	Coalition Era (1984–2014)	Post-2014 Period (2014–25)	Change (2014–2025 vs. 1950–84)	Current Status
Religious Personal Law Pluralism	2.8	2.5	1.8	-1.0	Weakening
Linguistic Federalism & Rights	2.6	2.7	2.3	-0.3	Modest decline
SC/ST Reservation Policy	2.4	2.8	2.9	+0.5	Strengthening
OBC/EWS Affirmative Action	1.2	2.6	2.8	+1.6	Major expansion
Tribal Territorial Autonomy	2.2	2.1	1.9	-0.3	Slight decline
Minority Education Rights (Art. 30)	2.7	2.5	1.9	-0.8	Weakening
Citizenship Pluralism	2.9	2.8	1.6	-1.3	Significant weakening
Multicultural Curriculum Policy	2.3	2.4	1.7	-0.6	Weakening

Note: IMPAF scores rated on 0–3 scale (0=no policy, 1=weak, 2=moderate, 3=strong) by expert panel (n=8). κ=0.76. Negative change indicates multicultural policy weakening; positive change indicates strengthening.

The IMPAF data in Table 2 illustrate the complex evolution of Indian multicultural policy. Caste-based affirmative action (SC/ST and OBC/EWS reservations) has strengthened consistently. However, post-2014, four policy areas have significantly weakened: citizenship pluralism (-1.3), religious personal law pluralism (-1.0), minority education rights (-0.8), and multicultural curriculum policy (-0.6), indicating a selective

reorientation of India's multicultural framework.

8.2 Socioeconomic Integration Outcomes by Religious Community

Table 3 presents key socioeconomic integration indicators disaggregated by major religious community, drawing on Census 2011, IHDS-II, and NSSO data.

Table 3: Socioeconomic Integration Indicators by Religious Community, India (Selected Years)

Indicator	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Buddhist (ex-SC)	National Average
Literacy Rate, 2011 (%)	73.3	68.5	84.5	75.4	81.3	74.0
Female Literacy Rate, 2011 (%)	65.2	60.6	76.9	67.2	73.1	65.5
Urban Residence, 2011 (%)	32.8	35.9	31.3	27.3	38.2	31.2
Graduate+, 2011 (% of 20+ pop.)	8.9	5.7	18.2	11.3	9.4	8.2
Govt. Employment Share, 2012 (%)	9.4	5.2	14.3	7.8	11.7	8.8
Per Capita Consumption (₹/month, 2012)	2,854	2,341	3,612	3,978	2,687	2,783
Poverty Rate (MPI, 2021, %)	27.3	42.6	12.8	9.1	31.7	27.9
Representation in IAS/IPS (%)	78.2	3.1	7.4	5.3	1.8	—

Note: Sources: Census of India 2011; IHDS-II (2011-12); NSSO 71st Round; NITI Aayog MPI Report 2021. IAS/IPS representation data from DoPT Annual Report 2022. MPI = Multidimensional Poverty Index.

According to Table 3, there are considerable differences in the socioeconomic integration of India's communities. Despite constituting the largest minority group in India (14.2%), Muslims fall behind others with respect to literacy (68.5% vs. 74.0%), poverty (42.6% vs. 27.9% national average), and among all groups, there are no other countries where they have the lowest level of educational attainment (5.7% vs 8.2%). The total number of Muslims in civil service is only 3.1%. On the other hand, Christians have better outcomes across many indicators, primarily due to the existence of historical missionary schools in

some parts of the country. Overall, the finding of this report appears to confirm the conclusion of the Sachar Committee Report on the Economic Backwardness of Muslims in India (2006).

8.3 Linguistic Integration Indicators

Table 4 presents linguistic integration indicators, documenting the relationship between language policy and socioeconomic outcomes across linguistic communities.

Table 4: Linguistic Integration - Scheduled Language Population and Policy Indicators, India

Language	Speakers (2011 Census, millions)	% of Total Population	Constitutional Status	State Official Language	Medium of Instruction (Primary)	Eighth Schedule Inclusion Year
Hindi (incl. dialects)	528.3	43.6%	Union Official Language	10 states	Yes (majority states)	Original (1950)
Bengali	97.2	8.0%	Scheduled Language	West Bengal, Tripura	Yes	Original (1950)
Telugu	81.1	6.7%	Scheduled Language	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana	Yes	Original (1950)
Marathi	83.0	6.9%	Scheduled Language	Maharashtra	Yes	Original (1950)
Tamil	69.0	5.7%	Scheduled Language	Tamil Nadu	Yes	Original (1950)
Urdu	50.8	4.2%	Scheduled Language	J&K, Telangana	Limited	Original (1950)
Bodo	1.5	0.12%	Scheduled Language	None (6th Schedule)	Partial	2003
Santali	7.4	0.61%	Scheduled Language	None	Partial	2003
Maithili	13.6	1.1%	Scheduled Language	None	Limited	2003
Bhojpuri	~52	~4.3%	NOT scheduled	None	Very limited	Pending (contested)

Note: Speaker data from Census of India 2011 (Linguistic Survey). Bhojpuri figure is estimated (Census classifies many speakers under Hindi). Constitutional status and medium of instruction data from MHRD/MoE policy documents (2023).

Table 4 discusses both the accomplishments of India's language policy and the conflicts that still occur today. The addition of 8 languages to the Eighth Schedule (growing from the original 14) shows how much more formally recognized these languages have now become. The decision not to add Bhojpuri to the Eighth Schedule since there are over 50 million speakers of this language demonstrates some of the complexities related to the politics around language policy. One of the major complexities is the classification of Bhojpuri as a 'dialect' and, therefore, part of the Hindi 'family' but still a part of the 'Hindustani' language group. This was done primarily to maintain control of the politically important 'Hindi-speaking' region. The asymmetry between the number of speakers of Hindi (over 43.6% of the total

population) and other scheduled languages has created further north/south political conflict. This is exemplified by M.K. Stalin's assertion, as chief minister of Tamil Nadu, that the delimitation commission will result in a loss of representation in the Lok Sabha for southern states due to their lower population growth compared to northern states.

8.4 Public Attitudes toward Multicultural Integration

Table 5 presents selected attitudinal data from CSDS-Lokniti National Election Studies (2019, 2024) measuring Indian citizens' views on multicultural integration across three dimensions: interreligious relations, reservation policy, and national identity.

Table 5: Public Attitudes on Multicultural Integration - CSDS-Lokniti NES Data (2019 & 2024, %)

Attitude Statement	Agree 2019 (%)	Agree 2024 (%)	Change (pp)	Hindu Agree 2024 (%)	Muslim Agree 2024 (%)	SC/ST Agree 2024 (%)
'People of all religions are equally Indian'	71.4	63.8	-7.6	62.1	84.7	67.3
'Reservation policy has helped disadvantaged groups'	54.2	58.7	+4.5	42.3	63.4	78.9
'Reservation policy is no longer needed'	38.1	42.6	+4.5	52.4	28.7	14.2
'UCC would improve national integration'	44.3	49.1	+4.8	61.2	14.8	38.6
'Minorities get too many special privileges'	39.7	47.3	+7.6	58.3	9.4	32.1
'CAA is discriminatory to Muslims'	41.2	38.9	-2.3	27.4	88.3	51.7
'India's diversity is its strength'	77.3	71.8	-5.5	70.4	79.6	74.3
'Language of instruction should be regional'	62.4	64.7	+2.3	63.1	67.8	61.4

Note: Data from CSDS-Lokniti National Election Study post-poll surveys (2019 n=23,514; 2024 n=24,762), weighted to national population distribution. pp = percentage points.

Table 5 shows that there are significant changes in Indian citizens' opinion on multiculturalism. From 2019 to 2024 the percentage of people who agreed that "people of all religions are equally Indian" has decreased by 7.6% (71.4% to 63.8%). The number of Muslims that agree with this will be 84.7% while for Hindus only 62.1%, so minority communities are more likely to support universal citizenship. More Hindus (61.2%) support the idea of Universal Civil Code (UCC) than Muslims (14.8%). There was also a large increase (7.6%) in the number of people who believe that "minorities have too many advantages" to 58.3% for Hindus and 9.4% for Muslims. This indicates that the attitudes of both groups have become much more polarized.

9. Contemporary Integration Challenges

9.1 Hindu Nationalist Challenge

The BJP victories in 2014, 2019 and 2024 have advanced the idea of Hindutva, which was first talked about by Savarkar in 1923^[17] and Golwalkar in 1939. This idea sees India as a country where Hindu civilization's the main thing and minorities are secondary. The BJP has made policies based on this idea, such as the CAA, which uses criteria and the abrogation of Article 370. They have also built the Ram Temple changed the school curriculum made laws about conversion and restricted what they call 'Love Jihad' as Jaffreot said in 2021^[10].

9.2 Uniform Civil Code Debate

The BJP has said in their 2024 manifesto that they want to make a Uniform Civil Code. Uttarakhand was the state to do this in 2024. Some people like Kishwar in 1994^[11] think this is an idea because it will help with gender equality. Others, like Menon in 2004 and Agnes in 2011 think it is the BJP trying to impose Hindu rules on everyone, which would not be good for a country with many different cultures.

9.3 North-South Delimitation Conflict

After the 2026 Census, the way the country is divided into areas for elections will change. This will help the North, which has people, like UP and Bihar but it will hurt the South, which has fewer people, like TN and Kerala. The South is worried that they will lose seats in the Lok Sabha even though they contribute a lot to the economy. The Chief Minister of TN Stalin started a campaign in 2024 called 'Save Democracy' which shows how tense things are between the North and the South because of language and geography.

10. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

India is a country with different cultures and it has a system that tries to balance the rights of all these cultures.. Sometimes this system does not work very well and some groups, like the Muslims do not feel like they are part of the country. The Sachar report in 2006 said that Muslims were not doing well. After 2014 things have gotten worse. People's attitudes have become more extreme as the CSDS reported from 2019 to 2024. The gap between Hindus and Muslims on issues like the Uniform Civil Code has gotten bigger with 61% of Hindus and 15% of Muslims agreeing on it.

Here are some things that can be done to make things better:

- The government should focus on helping areas with education and economic programs like the Sachar and Misra reports suggested.
- The government should work with communities to change laws in a way that is fair to everyone, especially women.
- The government should make sure that Article 350A is followed and that the Eighth Schedule is funded so that all languages are treated fairly.
- The government should go back to having a curriculum in schools, which includes the histories of Muslims, Dalits and tribes.
- The government should keep track of how its policiesre working using something, like the IMPAF.
- The government should make sure that being a citizen does not depend on what religion you are.

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