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Minorities in China and India

The concept of a ‘minority’ is not as unambiguous as it may appear at first glance. It may mean different things to different people. A jurist would be concerned about a group’s legal protection, safeguards and rights such as freedom of expression and the right to justice. A sociologist may be concerned with a group’s culture, language and ethnic identity. An economist is more concerned with the socioeconomic condition or disadvantage of a group than its religion or other non-economic attributes.

The notions of ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ may simply be a matter of perception that changes over time. Writing on India, Weiner (1998, p. 461) notes that ‘the sense of belonging to a minority depends upon where one lives, how much power and status one has, and one’s sense of community threat’. The concept of a minority may be associated with an economic, social or political disadvantage that a group may feel or actually face. In the US, besides a cultural definition a minority group is often defined in terms of socioeconomic status. Over time, this status has improved for Italian Americans and Polish Americans, who are no longer considered a disadvantaged group either by themselves or by others. They are now seen as an ethnic group (Weiner 1998).

In a narrow sense, any group that does not represent a majority population may consider itself a minority. In the context of India, anyone who is not a Hindu (that is, over 80% of the population) may be considered a minority. Furthermore, a population group may be a minority in one spatial context but not another. For example, in India the Hindus are a majority community in the country as a whole, but they are a minority in the state of Jammu and Kashmir where Muslims exceed the Hindu population. Similarly, the Han Chinese constitute a majority in the country but a minority in the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

Minorities may be defined according to a variety of criteria; namely, religion, caste, backward class and language. India's religious minorities consist of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians. Within these religious minorities, there are so-called scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBCs) recognized by the Indian Constitution as those requiring special support or positive discrimination to overcome their prolonged ill-treatment at the hands of the Hindu majority population (see below).

In China, the Muslims (Uyghur and Hui) are concentrated in Xinjiang and Ningxia, while the Tibetans are mainly Buddhists. Compared with India, where minority social discontent occurs primarily among religious minorities and backward classes, in China discontent is found mainly among ethnic minorities, which are highly concentrated in a few poor western provinces.

Below, we describe different types of minority groups in India and China in the light of these criteria.

Religious and Ethnic Minorities

Before examining the socioeconomic characteristics of minorities, we briefly describe the key minorities and social groups.

India

Religious Groups

India is a very heterogeneous country in terms of religions, social classes and languages. Besides Hindus, there are other religious denominations such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Zoroastrians (see Table 2.1). Each religion includes members of deprived castes and backward classes. The SCs, STs and OBCs are dominated by Hindus and Sikhs; among Muslims there are very few SCs and STs, but they predominate within the OBCs. Among Buddhists, the SCs are the most prominent group, whereas the STs are significant among Christians.

The prevailing concept of minority in India is that of religion. However, we have decided to also discuss social groups (for example, SCs, STs) because their economic and social situation is very similar to that of the Muslim minority. More Muslims live in urban areas than in rural whereas more Christians, Sikhs and Hindus live in rural areas than urban (see Table 2.1). There are six Indian states (namely, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) whose

Table 2.1 India: rural and urban population by religious and social groups (2011)

Religion/social group	Rural		Urban		Rural + urban	
	(nos.) (million)	(%)	(nos.) (million)	(%)	(nos.) (million)	(%)
<i>Religious groups</i>						
Hindus	684.1	82	282.2	74.8	966.2	79.8
Muslims	103.5	12	68.7	18.3	172.2	14.2
Christians	16.6	1.9	11.2	2.9	27.8	2.3
Sikhs	14.9	1.8	5.9	1.6	20.8	1.7
<i>Social groups</i>						
Scheduled caste (SC)	153.8	18.4	47.5	12.6	201.3	16.6
Scheduled tribe (ST)	94.0	11.3	10.4	2.7	104.4	8.6
All India	833.7	68.9	377.1	31.1	1,210.0	100.0

Source Census of India 2011 (GOI 2015)

Table 2.2 India: rural and urban population by religious groups in selected states with a sizeable Muslim population (2011)

State/population	Share of Muslim population in the state (2011) (%)	Hindu		Muslims		Scheduled caste (SC)		Scheduled tribe (ST)	
		(nos.) (million)	% Share in total population	(nos.) (millio)	% share in total pop.	(nos.) (million)	% share in total pop.	(nos.) (million)	% share in total pop.
<i>Jammu & Kashmir</i>	68.3								
Rural		2.5	27.5	6.3	69.2	0.75	8.2	1.4	15.4
Urban		1.0	2.9	2.2	64.7	0.17	5.1	0.08	2.5
<i>Assam</i>	34.2								
Rural		15.7	58.6	9.8	36.5	1.8	6.8	3.7	13.7
Urban		3.5	79.5	0.8	29.6	0.40	9.2	0.22	5.0
<i>West Bengal</i>	27.0								
Rural		41.3	66.4	19.1	30.7	17.1	27.5	4.8	7.8
Urban		23.0	79.3	5.5	18.9	4.4	15.0	0.44	1.0
<i>Kerala</i>	26.6								
Rural		9.4	53.7	4.2	24.0	1.8	10.4	0.43	2.5
Urban		8.9	56.0	4.6	28.9	1.2	7.7	0.05	0.3
<i>Uttar Pradesh</i>	19.3								
Rural		129.9	83.6	24.1	15.5	35.6	23.0	1.03	0.7
Urban		29.4	66.0	14.3	32.1	5.7	12.7	0.10	0.2
<i>Bihar</i>	16.9								
Rural		76.8	83.2	15.2	16.5	15.3	16.6	1.3	1.4
Urban		9.3	79.5	2.3	19.6	1.2	10.4	0.06	0.6

Source Census of India 2011 (GOI 2015)

shares of the Muslim population are well above their share of 14% in the country (see Table 2.2).

In principle, the three social categories—SCs, STs and OBCs—do not overlap, especially in the way they are defined. However, these categories are not watertight. For example, in Maharashtra some castes, such as washermen or *dhobis*, are included under OBCs, whereas elsewhere, such as in Bihar, they are included under SCs. The dividing line is untouchability (or *dalit* status), not caste status.¹

Religious Minorities

India's religious minorities consist of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The non-Muslim minorities account for a very small proportion of the total population. The main religions are described below.

Muslims Muslims are the largest religious minority in India. Historically, Muslims (from Afghanistan, Turkey and Asia Minor) ruled India for several hundred years (from the twelfth to the nineteenth century) before the arrival of the British. They enjoyed a powerful political, economic and social position, especially in greater Punjab (which included Delhi) in northern India. Muslims were also predominant in the Deccan.

The situation of Muslims in India today is in sharp contrast to their position during the centuries when they ruled the country. They are generally poorer than the Hindu majority. But their rural and urban poverty has steadily declined between 1993–1994 and 2011–2012 (see Chap. 3, Table 3.1). The gap between minority and majority poverty is much wider in urban than in rural areas. Unlike the Hindus, Muslims are much less caste-ridden. But caste and class among them are not totally absent. The Muslim nobility or the elite (*Ashraf*) originated in such Muslim countries as Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran. Some may even be the descendants of earlier Turkish rulers in India. Many other noble Muslims are converts from upper-caste Hindus. Many ordinary Muslims (*Ajlaf*) are converts from Hindus of lower castes who changed their religion to escape exploitation (for a discussion of caste and class among Indian Muslims, see Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, pp. 7–10).

India's Muslim population is much larger than that of China. However, despite their smaller numbers the Chinese Muslims, particularly the Uyghur, Kazakh and Kirgiz in Xinjiang— are politically significant as they live in border areas of strategic importance and can pose a potential threat to China's territorial integrity. They spill over into the Central Asian republics across the border. In India, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is the only Indian state in which Muslims enjoy *regional* majority, and in which Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists live as minorities, a fact often overlooked in the Western literature.

Buddhists Buddhism was born in India and flourished there until about 500 CE. However, it did not survive its original form, moving out instead to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Tibet and South-east Asia. At the time of the Muslim rule in India in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Buddhism had practically disappeared in India. It may sound surprising but the dominant Hindu religion did not allow Buddhism to grow. In 2011, there were 8.4 million Buddhists living mostly in the north-west as well as the north-east of India. In Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, they constitute about 27% and 12% of each state's population respectively. In the northwest, Buddhists form 6% of Maharashtra's population.

Sikhs Unlike Islam and Buddhism, Sikhism is quite young—only 400 years old. Followers of the religion originated in the northern Indian state of Punjab. They form less than 2% of the population, although their contribution to society, the economy and the Indian army is disproportionately large. Like the Mughals, the Sikhs ruled the Greater Punjab in the nineteenth century before the British conquered them. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who ruled from 1799 to 1839, was their most famous ruler. Brass (1974, p. 278) cites three symbols of Sikh communal consciousness: (1) the existence of Sikh kingdoms before the British conquest, (2) religious boundaries between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, and (3) linguistic symbols such as Punjabi language and Gurmukhi script. As a religious minority, the Sikhs are known to be sturdy farmers, soldiers and successful businessmen. The Sikhs and Hindus have been competing to convert people belonging to the scheduled castes to their respective religions. In fact, the acceptance of these castes into the Sikh

fold may have accounted for the rapid growth of the new Sikh religion, which was opposed by both orthodox Hindus and Muslims.

Christians Christianity arrived in India about 2000 years ago. A good proportion of Indian Christians are converts from Hinduism or Islam. Both the Portuguese (who ruled Goa) and the British missionaries spread this religion in India through conversion, which began in the fifteenth century with the arrival of European missionaries. Christians are concentrated mainly in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Manipur and Mizoram.

Zoroastrians (or Parsis) Zoroastrians migrated to India in the eighth century after the Arab conquest of Persia. The size of the Parsi population in India is extremely small: according to the 1951 Census of India there were 111,791 Parsis in India and, according to the 1951 Census of Pakistan, 5,435 in Pakistan (Jhabvala 1977). According to the 2001 Census, there were only 69,601 Parsis in India. The reasons for this decline are unclear. Is it a case of declining population or of emigration to the Western countries (UK, Canada and the US) where many Parsis live? Childlessness and migration are the two main causes of the decline in the Parsi population in India, which is highly educated, urbanized and westernized, with a literacy rate of nearly 98% compared with the national average of 65%.

Social Groups

Scheduled castes Certain castes and communities among Hindus (low in the caste hierarchy) are officially recognized by the Indian Constitution as people requiring special support or positive discrimination (see below). They are generally known as *dalits* (or untouchables), who suffered for centuries at the hands of the upper-caste Hindus. Despite the abolition of untouchability by law, as we discuss later, social ostracization of *dalits* or economic discrimination against them continues to be practised in India.

According to the 2011 Census of India, SCs constitute 201 million (or 16.6%) of the population. This proportion has remained stable for several decades. The term 'scheduled castes' actually came into

use during the British Raj (pre-independent India). In 1935, the British India Government passed the Government of India Act, which established a national federal structure. This Act, which was intended to give Indian states (then called 'provinces') greater self-rule, incorporated the notion of reservation of seats in elected assemblies for the so-called Depressed Classes (as the SCs were then called). The Act, which came into force in 1937, defined 'scheduled castes' as the group including 'such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the Depressed Classes'. After India's independence in 1947, two orders of 1950, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, provided the complete listing of SCs and STs.

Scheduled tribes Scheduled tribes (STs), generally known as *adivasis*, are often grouped together with scheduled castes in any discussion of disadvantaged or minority groups in India. Each Indian state has a number of scheduled tribes who are so listed. Mizoram in the north-east of India has the highest proportion of STs. At the other extreme is Goa with the lowest proportion of STs.

Other backward classes This group contains people who are not listed either as scheduled castes or as scheduled tribes but are economically and socially disadvantaged and marginalized. The government of India can designate any such disadvantaged caste and community as a backward class. It can also remove it, if it deems that it no longer qualifies for special treatment, which depends on social, educational and economic factors. The Indian Constitution recognizes the need to offer positive discrimination in favour of such communities for their social and economic uplift. The Constitution notes that the OBCs are 'socially and educationally backward'. Positive discrimination takes the form of special reservation in public-sector employment and higher education.

The term 'backward class' is rather vague and may overlap with the terms 'scheduled caste' and 'scheduled tribe' discussed above. 'Backward classes' are defined in different ways. First, by their occupational status—most of these classes represent peasant communities which are considered backward because they lack education. Second, they are viewed as occupying a low social status: they are socially excluded

from public and private institutions. Third, they may be economically excluded from employment and income-earning opportunities.

In the Indian literature the above social groups are generally considered alongside minorities (so-called ‘caste minority’), as their socioeconomic and political status (poverty, lack of education and of social and political participation) is similar to that of a religious minority such as Muslims (see Table 2.3). The two categories account for similar proportions of the population: 15% for the SCs and 14.2% for Muslims. Generally, both are landless, tend to be dependent on low-paid jobs and self-employment, and suffer from a high incidence of poverty (see Chaps. 3 and 4). These similarities are striking considering that the two groups have different histories and origins.

Table 2.3 India: socioeconomic features of Muslims and scheduled castes

Scheduled castes (SCs) (Hindus)	Muslim minority
Generally low formal education compared to upper-caste Hindus; low literacy rate	Low formal education compared to upper-caste Hindus; low literacy rate
Landlessness; very few SCs even today own land. However, they are found mainly in rural areas	Landlessness; not many Muslims own land or engage in farming which explains their urban residence
High poverty incidence in urban and rural areas	High poverty incidence especially in rural areas
Low-paid casual employment and self-employment SCs account for 15% of total Indian population	Low-paid dead-end jobs Muslims account for 14.2% of total Indian population
Atrocities against SCs by upper-caste Hindus	Hindu–Muslim communal riots in different parts of India
SCs suffer social exclusion and discrimination	Muslims suffer social exclusion and discrimination
SCs widely dispersed throughout India	Muslim population is less dispersed

Linguistic Minorities

Linguistic minority people are those who speak a language other than the official language of the state in which they live. They may not be officially counted as such but their perception is that they are in a minority in the state. For example, Weiner (1998, p. 467) notes that 'the Marathi-speaking population constitutes only 42.8% of Bombay and Kannada speakers in Bangalore (23.7%) [and] are outnumbered by Tamils (37.1%)'.

A number of minority linguistic groups demand that their language be recognized and included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution. This will enable them to take all-India examinations (IAS, IPS and so on) in their own language. Similarly, recognition of the language will allow them to seek state-level jobs without having to take examinations in another language. It will also enable a minority group to retain and strengthen its identity.

China

In China, there are 55 recognized ethnic minority groups with a total of population of nearly 114 million or 8.5% of the country's total population according to the 2010 Census. Thus, the Chinese minority population is much smaller than that in India, where the Muslim minority alone accounts for 14% of the population according to the 2011 Census. Although quantitatively small, the Chinese minorities, who live mainly in border and strategic areas are of great political importance. Between 2000 and 2010, the Chinese Han majority population increased by nearly 6% whereas that of the minorities by nearly 7%.

In China, the concept of ethnic minorities or 'minority nationalities' (*minzu*) is based on Stalin's definition laid down in 1913. A minority nationality is defined in terms of 'a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' (Mackerras 2003, p. 2). Thus defined, the main determinants of a nationality were common language, culture and territory. The Stalinist

definition did not include 'ethnic consciousness' as a relevant factor, which has now become important in China as well as in the rest of the world (Mackerras 2006). There are other limitations to the Stalinist definition. In China, not all ethnic nationalities belong to a common territory. For example, the Hui Muslims are widely dispersed throughout the country. So they cannot call a particular area or region their home. Their ethnicity is based more on their religion than on territory or language (they speak Mandarin).

In the 1950s, Chinese investigators were sent out to interview people and classify ethnic minorities according to the criteria noted above.² This does not imply that ethnicity did not exist before the Revolution. Local identity prevailed even then and ethnic people saw themselves as different from others, as they wore a different dress or spoke a different language.

The process of ethnic identification was guided by several considerations, namely, (i) maintenance of territorial integrity of the border regions which were ethnically very diverse, (ii) simplification of ethnic groups after the 1953 census, and (iii) opposition to the Nationalist government's policy of considering a single Chinese race. The 1954 census system had identified 400 ethnic groups, a number too large to be manageable. Also such a large number of groups could not be accommodated at the National People's Congress. So a much smaller number of 55 'nationalities' was devised (Ma 2016; Mullaney 2011).

Those not included under ethnic nationalities were categorized as Han Chinese even though they were ethnically distinct.³ Preservation of ethnic and cultural identity suggests that ethnic minorities tend to be more religious and traditional than the Han Chinese. However, even tradition-bound ethnic communities and individuals are likely to undergo a transformation with rapid economic development, better communications and enlarged educational opportunities. Postiglione (2008) notes that even the traditional Tibetan culture has been transformed, making Tibetans more like Chinese. Of course, opinions differ on the degree to which and how such a transformation takes place, and whether and how much it weakens ethnic identity and consciousness.

Thus, the Chinese categorization of minorities is quite different from that of India discussed above. The caste factor is not relevant

in China, although religion is. However, in China the state is a-religious so that there is no mention of religion as one of the criteria for defining an ethnic minority. Common language and culture are the two main criteria for defining an ethnic minority. As in India, the economic criterion of exclusion is not considered in the Chinese discourse on minorities. According to official definitions, the backwardness of ethnic minorities in China is explained by cultural factors rather than economic ones.

China's policy towards ethnic minorities was based on accommodation through multiculturalism at the time of the Revolution in 1949. Different ethnic minorities were allowed to pursue their cultures and languages. The Chinese government made a conscious effort to placate the sentiments of ethnic minorities. However, over time the multicultural and multilingual policy has gradually given way to greater assimilation of minorities into the mainstream Chinese Han society. The process of assimilation (which started in the mid-1980s) has implied a shift towards mono-culturalism and a greater concentration on teaching ethnic minorities the Chinese language instead of their own. However, some minority people prefer the Chinese language in order to gain better access to the educational system and the labour market. Nation building and national security became paramount, especially when the border regions of China (Tibet and Xinjiang) started to become restless. China's language policy is seen as one of the tools for nation building.

The officially recognized minorities are based more on ethnicity and race than on religion. Such ethnic minority groups as Uyghur, Hui, Kazaks and Uzbeks are inextricably mixed with Islam, which they practise. As in India, it is likely that their loyalties to the state are questioned by the Han majority, especially after the attacks of 9 September 2001 in the US and riots in Xinjiang (1990 and 1998–1999) where most of the Uyghur Muslims live (see Chap. 8, Table 8.2).

China's main ethnic minorities are briefly described below.

Muslims One scholar (Gladney 1996, p. 17) has noted that 'there was no consistent term in Chinese to refer to these people (Muslims) until the thirteenth century'. The Hui considered themselves as Muslims but the Chinese state had not labelled them as such. In 1950, the People's

Republic of China classified Muslims into ten specific nationalities: Hui, Uyghur, Kazak, Dongxiang, Kirghiz, Salar, Tadjik, Uzbek, Baoan and Tatar. Israeli (2002, p. 45) notes: ‘unlike other minority groups like the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Zhuang, the Muslims in China are not attached to any particular territory, although they admittedly constitute a majority or a very sizeable area of the northwest’. They can be found almost anywhere in China, which dilutes their political power and demographic density. They regard their culture as distinct and alien. Their ethnic identity is defined in terms of their religion.

The Hui form the largest Muslim minority with a total population of 10 million, according to the 2010 Population Census (see Table 2.5). They are concentrated in Ningxia, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Henan, Hebei, Shandong and Yunnan. They specialize in transport, jewellery and small food shops and the wool trade (Gladney 1995, p. 248). Chinese Mandarin is their native language, but their social customs are different from those of other ethnic groups; for example, marriage outside the Hui group is not encouraged.

The second largest Muslim minority are the Uyghur, living mostly in Xinjiang. They have their own language with characters of Turkic origin. In the past, the Uyghur followed Shamanism, Manicheism, Jing, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. However, they have been gradually converting to Islam since the eleventh century. The main grain crops of the Uyghur region are wheat, maize and paddy rice, while cotton is the major cash crop.

In contrast to the Hui, the Uyghur are primarily rural people engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. With the exception of the Kazaks (living in Xinjiang, Gansi and Qinghai), the population of the remaining Muslim minorities is insignificant.

Xinjiang is inhabited by both the Uyghur and Hui, who do not get on well, partly because of their different languages and culture.

Tibetans The Tibetans are Buddhists, like most Chinese; however, they consider themselves as Tibetans first and Chinese second. They are Mongoloid people numbering 6 million in 2010 (see Table 2.5). Before the Chinese takeover in 1950, Tibet’s monastic social structure dominated economic, social and political life. Monasteries large and small—which were closed after the takeover—formed an important part of the

administrative structure and enjoyed close administrative, educational, financial and commercial ties. Thus, religion pervaded politics and commerce, and was inextricably linked to the running of the country. Therefore, although Tibetans are a nationality or a race, their ethnicity is founded on the Buddhist religion. In this respect, their situation is similar to that of the Uyghur, whose ethnicity is based on Islam. Most Tibetans live in Tibet, but they are also to be found in such neighbouring provinces as Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai. The majority of the Tibetan people are agriculturists and herdsmen. Urbanization is limited and commerce is mostly dominated by the Han and Hui.

Miao The Miao are located in Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan, with some also living in Guangdong and Hainan. Diamond (1994, p. 95) observes that 'The Miao are mountain dwellers formerly engaged in a self-sufficient economy based on slash-and-burn farming of hardy dry land crops, varying from upland rice to cold-weather crops such as buckwheat, oats, corn and potatoes and supplemented or even overshadowed by hunting and forest gathering'. Today, however, the Miao are no longer a single unified ethnic nationality with a common culture and language, and they are known to be one of the poorest ethnic groups in China.

Zhuang The Zhuang, China's largest minority group, have a population of nearly 17 million (2010 Census). Over 90% of the Zhuang live in the south-western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, while the rest live in Yunnan, Guangdong, Guizhou and Hunan. They are primarily agricultural people farming such tropical and subtropical crops as rice and corn thanks to the mild climate and abundant rainfall.

Yi The Yi have a long history and culture. Their total population is about 9 million (2010 Census), living mainly in the hillside and basin areas in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou and the north-western part of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture. Their staple diet includes maize, buckwheat, oats and potatoes. Some poor Yi peasants live on acorns, banana roots, celery, flowers and wild herbs. The Yi areas are rich in natural resources such as coal and iron, and are also among China's major producers of non-ferrous metals (for example, tin, gold, aluminium and zinc).

Of the five ethnic minorities described above, only two, the Uyghur in Xinjiang and the Tibetans in Tibet, protest against the Chinese state

and the Han majority. Others live peacefully with the Han. There is no ethnic resistance, even among some Muslim minorities such as the Hui, who are well-assimilated.

Most minorities benefit a good deal from the affirmative action policies discussed below. Therefore, a large proportion of minorities may have only a few genuine grievances on specific issues which they are willing to voice within the law. Indeed, in the early days of affirmative action in the 1980s, many individuals and communities re-registered as ethnic nationalities to qualify for preferential treatment.

Demographic Profiles of Selected Minorities

Religious minorities in both India and China have undergone demographic change. It is generally believed that the population of religious and ethnic minorities (who are usually less-educated and poorer) grows faster than the majority population, which is confirmed by data for both India and China (see Tables 2.4, 2.5).

In India, the annual population growth rate for Muslims, between 2001 and 2011 was higher than the average for the country as a whole and that for Hindus. It also exceeded that of Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists (Table 2.5). Population growth rates declined for all religious groups.

Other demographic characteristics of the Muslim minority in India are:

- Concentration mainly in the states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal: in the Punjab, where Muslims predominated before the partition of India in 1947, there are now fewer than 1 million Muslims. Most of them migrated to Pakistan after 1947.
- Relatively younger population: 24% of the Muslim population in 2011 was below 10 years of age, and another 23.5% was between 10 and 19 years, suggesting fewer Muslims in the labour force. The corresponding figures for Christians were 17% and 19%, and for Sikhs 15% and 19% respectively.

Table 2.4 Population trends of religious minorities in India, 1961–2011

Year/ period	Total popu- lation (000)	Religious minority					
		Muslim	Christian	Sikh	Buddhist	Jain	Other ^a
<i>Year</i>		<i>Population (000)</i>					
1961	439,235	46,941	10,728	7,846	3,256	2,027	1,909
1971	547,950	61,418	14,223	10,379	3,912	2,605	2,221
1981	683,330	80,286	16,696	13,093	4,758	3,222	2,885
1991	846,388	106,715	19,654	16,426	6,476	3,355	3,701
2001	1,028,610	138,188	24,080	19,216	7,955	4,225	7,367
2011	1,210,854	175,245	27,820	20,833	8,443	4,452	7,938
<i>Year</i>		<i>Population share (%)</i>					
1961	100	10.69	2.44	1.79	0.74	0.46	0.43
1971	100	11.21	2.60	1.89	0.70	0.48	0.41
1981	100	11.75	2.44	1.92	0.70	0.47	0.42
1991	100	12.61	2.32	1.94	0.77	0.40	0.44
2001	100	13.43	2.34	1.87	0.77	0.41	0.72
2011	100	14.50	2.30	1.70	0.70	0.37	0.66
<i>Period</i>		<i>Population increase (%)</i>					
1961– 1971	24.75	30.84	32.58	32.28	17.08	28.48	45.74
1971– 1981	24.71	30.72	17.38	26.15	24.80	23.71	29.19
1981– 1991	23.86	32.92	17.72	25.46	36.13	4.11	15.84
1991– 2001	21.53	29.49	22.52	16.98	22.83	25.95	103.09
2001– 2011	17.72	26.82	15.53	8.41	6.13	5.37	7.75
<i>Period</i>		<i>Annual growth rate (exponential) (%)</i>					
1961– 1971	2.21	2.69	2.82	2.80	1.58	2.51	3.77
1971– 1981	2.21	2.68	1.60	2.32	2.22	2.13	2.56
1981– 1991	2.14	2.85	1.63	2.27	3.08	0.40	1.47
1991– 2001	1.95	2.58	2.03	1.57	2.06	2.31	7.08
2001– 2011	1.64	2.40	1.45	0.81	0.60	0.52	0.75

Sources GOI Census data. Based on population figures in India Registrar-General (2004) and interpolated values for population by religion for Assam for 1981 and Jammu and Kashmir for 1991

^aThese are persons from minority groups who have not reported religion or are agnostics

Table 2.5 Population trends of religious/ethnic minorities in China, 1953–2010

Year/ period	Total population (000)	Han	Minority					
			Zhuang	Uyghur	Hui	Yi	Tibetan	Miao
<i>Year</i>	<i>Population (000)</i>							
1953	577,856	542,824	6,864	3,610	3,530	3,228	2,753	2,491
1964	691,220	651,296	8,386	3,996	4,473	3,381	2,501	2,782
1982	1,003,941	936,675	13,383	5,963	7,228	5,453	3,848	5,021
1990	1,130,511	1,039,187	15,556	7,207	8,612	6,578	4,593	7,384
2000	1,242,612	1,137,386	16,179	8,399	9,817	7,762	5,416	8,940
2010	1,332,810	1,220,844	16,926	10,069	10,586	8,714	6,282	9,426
<i>Year</i>	<i>Population share (%)</i>							
1953	100	93.9	1.19	0.62	0.61	0.56	0.48	0.43
1964	100	94.2	0.99	0.58	0.65	0.49	0.36	0.40
1982	100	93.3	0.001	0.001	0.72	0.54	0.38	0.50
1990	100	91.9	1.37	0.64	0.76	0.58	0.41	0.65
2000	100	91.5	1.30	0.68	0.79	0.62	0.44	0.72
2010	100	91.6	1.27	0.76	0.79	0.65	0.47	0.71
<i>Period</i>	<i>Population increase (%)</i>							
1953– 1964	19.6	20.0	22.1	10.7	26.7	4.7	–9.2	11.7
1964– 1982	45.2	43.8	59.6	49.2	61.6	61.3	53.9	80.5
1982– 1990	12.6	10.9	16.2	20.9	19.1	20.6	19.4	47.1
1990– 2000	9.9	9.4	4.0	16.5	14.0	18.0	9.3	21.1
2000– 2010	7.3	7.3	4.6	19.9	7.8	12.3	16.0	5.4
<i>Period</i>	<i>Annual growth rate (exponential) (%)</i>							
1953– 1964	1.63	1.66	1.82	0.92	2.15	0.42	–0.87	1.00
1964– 1982	2.07	2.02	2.60	2.22	2.67	2.66	2.39	3.28
1982– 1990	1.48	1.30	1.88	2.37	2.19	2.34	2.21	4.82
1990– 2000	0.95	0.90	0.39	1.53	1.31	1.66	1.65	1.91
2000– 2010	0.70	0.71	0.45	1.83	0.76	1.16	1.49	0.53

Source GOC (2003, 2015)

Table 2.6 China: period growth rates of the population of selected ethnic minorities, 2000–2010

Minorities with highest population growth during 2000–2010	Population in 2000	Population in 2010	Growth rate (2000–2010) (%)	Minorities with lowest population growth	Population in 2000	Population in 2010	Growth rate (2000–2010) (%)
Gaoshan	4,461	4,009	-10.13	Xibe	188,824	190,481	0.88
Qiang	306,072	309,576	1.14	Hezhan	4,640	5,354	15.39
Maonan	107,166	101,192	-5.57	Daur	132,394	131,992	-0.30
Bonan	16,505	20,074	21.62	Manchu	10,682,262	10,387,958	-2.76
Tujia	8,028,133	8,353,912	4.06	Nu	28,759	37,523	30.47
Dongxiang	513,805	621,500	20.96	Zhuang	16,178,811	16,926,381	4.62
Gelao	579,357	550,746	-4.94	Korean	1,923,842	1,830,929	-4.83
Mulam	207,352	216,257	4.29	Tatar	4,890	3,556	-27.28
Lhoha	2,965	3,682	24.18	Uzbek	12,370	10,569	-14.56
Derung	7,426	6,930	-6.68	Dong	2,960,293	2,879,974	-2.71

Sources Compiled jointly by Department of population and employment, NBS and Department of Economy and Development, State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China "Tabulation on Nationalities of 2010 Population Census of China (GOC 2013)"

- Higher child sex ratios (females under 5 per 1,000 males under 5) than among the Hindus and Sikhs: explained by lower female infanticide among the Muslims.

In China the annual population growth rate during the inter-census period (2000–2010) was the highest for the Uyghur (1.83%) followed by Tibetans (1.49%) and Yi (1.16%) (see Table 2.5). Zhuang registered the lowest growth rate (0.45%) followed by Miao (0.53%). The population increase was also the highest for the Uyghur and the Tibetans, whose shares in population are lower than those of the Zhuang and Hui. These wide variations can also be observed in minority population shares across provinces. In 2010, the shares varied from 20% in Inner Mongolia to 37% in Guangxi, 59% in Xinjiang and nearly 92% in Tibet (see Table 2.7).

The population growth rates of minorities with a large population base (for example, Zhuang, Hui and Miao) are relatively moderate. Close connections with Han people may have led them to adopt the ‘one-child policy’ and control birth rates.

The minority share of total population has increased in most Chinese provinces. During 2000–2010, only three provinces (Jilin, Heilongjiang and Xinjiang) experienced a fall in minority share. The most significant increases occurred in Qinghai, Guizhou and Hunan. There were significant changes in the distribution of the minority population between rural and urban areas.

The urbanization rate of the minority population has been increasing steadily over the years. Nevertheless, the urbanization rate of the autonomous areas remains low compared with the national average. In 2014, about 55% of the total population lived in urban areas compared to 35% in the autonomous areas (GOC, *China Statistical Yearbook 2015*).

During 1982 to 1990, minorities living in the autonomous regions expanded rapidly, especially within the north-eastern area. In 1990, almost 76% of the total minority population in China and over 34% of the minorities in the north-eastern region lived in the autonomous areas, a significant increase from the 1982 levels. This growth may have been caused mainly by the favourable birth rate policy towards minorities (Lu 2009).

Table 2.7 China: minority population changes in the five autonomous regions, 2000–2010

Region	2000			2010			
	Total popula- tion (000)	Minority popula- tion (000)	% of total	Total population (000)	Minority population (000)	% of total	Increase in minority population (%)
Guangxi	43,854	16,830	38.4	46,023	17,108	37.2	1.65
Inner Mongolia	23,323	4,858	20.8	24,706	5,056	20.5	4.1
Ningxia	5,486	1,896	34.6	6,301	2,215	35.1	16.8
Tibet	2,616	2,458	93.9	3,002	2,757	91.8	12.2
Xinjiang	18,459	10,970	59.4	21,816	12,986	59.5	18.4

Sources Compiled jointly by the Department of Population and Employment, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Department of Economy and Development, State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China *Tabulation on Nationalities of the 2010 Population Census of China and Tabulation on Nationalities of the 2000 Population Census of China* (GOC 2013)

During 1990 to 2000, there was a clear trend of minority population movement away from these areas. Within 10 years, nearly 2% of all minorities, or nearly 8% of minorities in the north-eastern region, moved out of the autonomous areas. This may be explained partly by a decrease in the birth rates of the minority population. In addition, an increasing number of minorities moved out to such municipal cities as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, which may account for a decline in the concentration of minorities in the autonomous regions.

Regional Concentration of Minorities

Ethnic minorities are highly concentrated in the Western region of China especially in Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai and Guizhou. Specific ethnic minorities show a high degree of geographical concentration. For example, the largest ethnic group, the Zhuang, are found in just three provinces: Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan. The Uyghur, Kazak and Kirgiz Muslim minorities are concentrated in Xinjiang and the Tibetans in Tibet, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan. With the exception of the Hui, most ethnic groups are located in a few western provinces.

The case of the Zhuang is particularly interesting. They were granted the autonomous region of Guangxi in 1958. While over 15 million Zhuang live in Guangxi, 900,000 live across the border in Yunnan. Until the 1950s, they were not even considered a distinct ethnic minority. Yet, their local identity now differs across provincial borders, as they are known as Yunnan Zhuang and Guangxi Zhuang (Kaup 2002). In Yunnan, their ethnic affiliation is expressed in terms of *zhixi* groups, which are distinguished by different dialects. These groups are conspicuous by their absence in neighbouring Guangxi. Kaup argues that China's minority policy is focused more on the autonomous regions than on particular ethnic minorities or nationalities. This may explain why a given minority may find it difficult to organize activities along ethnic lines across provincial boundaries.

The degree of concentration and dispersion of minorities across China can be measured by the population of a particular ethnic minority in a province (X_i) divided by the total population of that ethnic

group (X). A perfect dispersion of an ethnic minority across all the provinces would equal 1, whereas its total concentration in a small region would equal 0. Zhang and Zeng (2005) estimate the degree and dispersion of 20 major ethnic minorities in China in two census years, 1990 and 2000. For the Han it equals almost 1, suggesting that they are distributed evenly across the country, whereas for most minorities, it is less than 0.5. For the minorities as a whole, it increased during the inter-census period: it decreased in only eight out of the 55 ethnic minorities.

In India also, a few minorities are concentrated in a small number of regions. For example, the Muslim minority is concentrated in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Kerala and West Bengal. Jammu and Kashmir is the only majority Muslim state in India, with Muslims accounting for 68% of the population. The other three states have a Muslim population ranging between 26% and 34%.

Affirmative Action for Minorities

Both China and India have recognized that minorities suffer from historical social and economic disadvantages which need to be eliminated, or at least reduced. They have, therefore, introduced policies to redress past discrimination and injustice. Affirmative action policies are based on the premise that historical disadvantages of minorities can only be removed through compensatory action or positive discrimination in their favour.

Affirmative action, which first originated in the US, refers to policies and programmes designed to increase the representation of minority groups in mainstream society; such policies may be regarded as efforts to promote social inclusion of the marginalized groups. Affirmative action is intended to provide equality of opportunity. Policies to achieve this goal may include: (i) reservations and quotas for admissions to schools and colleges, (ii) intervention in favour of targeted groups, and (iii) preferential treatment .

Below, we discuss preferential policies in India and China before presenting a comparative perspective.

India

In India, the affirmative action and preferential policies extend to social groups (SCs/STs and OBCs) but not to such religious minorities as Muslims. The historical disadvantage of low caste, rather than religion (low-caste groups and ‘untouchables’ were denied access to education), formed the underlying principle of preferential treatment. Implicit in this principle is the fear of communalizing polity and civil society (Hasan 2009, p. 7). However, affirmative action has been extended to the Muslim castes among the OBCs in Karnataka and Kerala, for example (GOI 2006, p. 198).

It is rather paradoxical that affirmative action does not recognize religious distinctions although personal law does. Why is affirmative action in the form of reservations and quotas not extended to the Muslim minority? There may be several plausible reasons. First and foremost was the primordial issue of national unity and secularism at the time of India’s independence. Second, many Indian leaders associated the creation of Pakistan as a Muslim state with the communal electorates of the British Raj. Separate Muslim electorates were provided for Muslims only.⁴ The British colonial government argued that religious minorities needed protection from each other to prevent violence, although this nevertheless occurred.

The Constitution of independent India rejected this notion of communal representation. Instead, it favoured universal citizenship, national unity and minority rights such as religious freedom and liberty to pursue minority languages and culture.⁵ Architects of the Constitution argued that religious minorities were already included in the existing political system. They are free to contest local, state and national elections, and often do so. Ahmed (2007, p. 245) notes: ‘These are fairly supportive and protective measures inherent in the civil and political systems of the country, which are not available to minorities in many other countries of the world’. The Indian Constitution provides ‘all the citizens, irrespective of their religious, linguistic or ethnic background with an enormous scope to participate in all walks of life including participation in governance’. The architects of the Constitution believed that there was no place for special treatment of minority religious groups in a secular state.⁶

The underlying principle of positive affirmative action for historically disadvantaged groups is their inclusion in political, social and educational institutions, rather than their economic betterment. In other words, the emphasis is on past non-economic or social inequalities, rather than existing economic inequalities. However, social and economic disadvantages, and inequalities, are interrelated. Improvements in social and political power relations can offer better economic opportunities. Greater representation in educational institutions can enhance the ability of deprived groups to obtain gainful employment, which is an important means of improving income.

The Indian Constitution permitted reservations for SCs and STs in the Indian Parliament (*Lok Sabha*) and in legislative assemblies of different states, as well as in government employment and public educational institutions. However, it did not allow any similar reservation for OBCs.⁷ Initially, in 1950 the Constitution provided for 10-year quotas, subject to review. Apparently, such reviews have never taken place. The system of quotas has been enforced since independence without any constitutional amendments. They were last renewed in 2010.

The untouchables (or *dalits*) have received legal protection against discrimination and atrocities through various pieces of legislation, the Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955) and Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989). But despite legal protection, discrimination against *dalits* continues. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD 2007, p. 3) noted with concern that, 'despite the formal abolition of untouchability by article 17 of the Indian Constitution, de facto segregation of Dalits persists, in particular in rural areas, in access to places of worship, housing, hospitals, education, water sources, markets and other public places'.

In 1978, the Mandal Commission was established to make recommendations for expanding the existing scheme of reservation and quotas under the Constitution.⁸ The Commission made recommendations in 1980, which were implemented several years later in 1991.⁹ It recommended 27% reservation in public employment for OBCs in addition to the 22.5% for SCs/STs. Quotas for OBCs for entry into higher education institutions (also 27%) were introduced in 2006.

Special development programmes (for example, Special Component Plans in Five-Year Development Plans) have targeted SCs and STs in addition to general programmes which have not benefited them much. However, no such programmes are available for the Muslim minority (Hasan 2009, pp. 44–46).

The Indian affirmative action is limited essentially to quotas and reservations for deprived castes and social categories in government employment and higher education.¹⁰ These measures provoked widespread protests from upper-caste Hindus on the grounds that it discriminated against them, and that it would breed inefficiency. Employers feared that productivity and economic growth would be sacrificed if hiring were not done on the basis of merit and competition. Reservations suffer from another problem: they are known to have benefited the better-off and the better-educated among deprived social classes. This privilege for a few (the so-called ‘creamy layer’) has continued for generations, which breeds inequity because it excludes the poor among the social groups who could have benefited.¹¹ It is ironical that the preferential policies which were designed to be fair and equitable are turning out not to be so. Finally, minority students who enter institutions of higher education under a quota may lack self-confidence, which may result in low retention and high drop-out rates.

Quotas for places in higher educational institutions for SCs and STs have remained unfulfilled for lack of sufficient applicants to meet the entry requirements. Even those who are admitted often drop out because of poor schooling (Nayyar 2011). It is questionable, therefore, whether the focus of government policy should not go beyond quotas and reservation to spreading high-quality schooling throughout society.

Furthermore, reservations and quotas are not targeted at poor and rural SCs/STs, with the result that urban *dalits* (generally better-off civil servants) benefit disproportionately. In the absence of targeting, the needs of the poor are not met and a ‘creamy layer’ of beneficiaries, whose need is not so great, has developed. High-quality primary education and other schooling is a precondition for the success of SC quotas in institutions of higher education. Moreover, reservations alone are unlikely to alleviate the poverty of SCs. Quotas are too small for a large SC population to make a real impact.

In principle, job quotas may alleviate poverty. But the quotas apply only to jobs in government and the public sector, which are shrinking in the process of economic liberalization. The private sector employs over 90% of the SC/ST labour force, so unless quotas can be extended to the private sector, there will be little improvement in their employment prospects.¹² The private sector is opposed to quotas mainly on the grounds of efficiency and meritocracy.¹³ However, the Maharashtra government in India has made a start by approving the reservation of jobs for SCs/STs in the private sector.

Current debates in India are concerned with the pros and cons of affirmative action and its extension to other backward classes and to the Muslim community. The protagonists (for example, Thorat et al. 2016) have defended the policy, arguing that the persistence of a high level of poverty among the SCs is not so much due to the poor performance of the reservation policy as to its low job coverage. Both private sector jobs and temporary government jobs are excluded from reservation. The antagonists (so-called 'anti-reservation' protesters) argue that affirmative action sacrifices long-term economic efficiency and quality of education for the short-term gains of equity, fairness and inclusion.

China

Affirmative action in China includes a number of policies such as preferential treatment in employment, education and family planning; tax breaks, low-interest and interest-free loans to farmers and small producers, and an increase in transfer payments¹⁴; protection of their cultural traditions through local regulations; freedom of religious belief; and the right to use and develop their spoken and written languages. Preferential policies relating to employment, education and family planning are discussed below.

Employment

The Chinese Law on Regional Autonomy provides for an improvement in the shares of ethnic minorities in public sector jobs. In 2001,

amendments to the Law included the requirement of affirmative action in respect of government positions (Mackerras 2003, p. 41). In India, there are quotas for SCs/STs in the parliament and state legislatures. There are no similar reservations and quotas for the representation of minorities in the National People's Congress (NPC), which may explain why their share in the NPC has not changed much over the years (see below).

Recruitment criteria are relaxed and preference is given to ethnic minority applicants when recruiting civil servants for ethnic self-governing localities.¹⁵ At the end of 2006, there were more than 2.9 million civil servants from ethnic minorities, which represents 6.9% of total public sector employment (CERD 2009, p. 20).

Over time with economic liberalization in China and India the share of the state (public) sector has been declining and that of the private sector (which is outside the purview of the preferential policies) has been increasing. Therefore, affirmative action has not increased minority employment as much as would have been achieved if it had been extended to the private sector as well. Proposals have been made in some minority regions to extend minority quotas to the private sector in order to overcome this flaw (Zang 2015, p. 49). The point system currently in force can easily be extended to private jobs. At present, minority applicants are awarded bonus points when they take examinations for some government positions.

As discussed in Chap. 7, the political representation of minorities has increased and a greater proportion of minority cadres have been recruited over time. With direct local elections at village level, there has been a gradual decline in the power of local officials to ignore minority rights. It is, therefore, not surprising that many individuals have tried to apply for ethnic minority status of one kind or another in order to avail themselves of the benefits of affirmative action.

Education

Policies to promote greater access of ethnic minorities to education have included lower entrance requirements at different levels of education, exemption from payment of school fees and 'bonus points' for

taking examinations in Chinese instead of a minority language (Bhalla and Qiu 2006; Iredale et al. 2001; Teng and Ma 2009; Leibold 2016). Preferential treatment of ethnic minorities may vary according to whether minority students are living in minority regions or in Han regions. Generally, higher bonus points are awarded to those (for example, Uyghur, Kazak and Uzbek in Xinjiang) who are less well-integrated than those who are well-assimilated such as the Hui, even within the same minority region. It is not clear whether these policies have actually helped narrow the gaps, and there is some evidence to the contrary (Sangay 1998). At least the policies may have prevented the majority–minority gaps from widening.

As discussed in Chap. 4, China's ethnic minorities suffer from educational disadvantage in several respects: (i) reduced access to higher education, (ii) high cost of tuition and other expenses, and (iii) lack of availability of higher educational institutions in minority areas. In higher education, the preferential treatment of minorities includes lower entrance examination requirements to enable them to obtain admission to colleges and universities. Minority students are preferred when they obtain the same score as the Han Chinese.

College admissions quotas were introduced in the early 1990s for minorities in specific areas and colleges to overcome their under-representation in higher education. However, the limited number of quotas sometimes encourages the use of political influence and bribery to obtain admission, and quotas alone are not enough. Access to higher education is restricted because of the high cost of tuition. In 1997 the Chinese government introduced a system of tuition fees for higher education for minority students as well as for others because colleges were suffering from financial shortages. Annual tuition fees and accommodation costs range from about 5,000 yuan to 10,000 yuan (or US\$740 to US\$1,500) (Teng and Ma 2009), which most ethnic minorities in the lowest income class earning a net annual income of between 500 and 700 yuan (or US\$75–100) simply cannot afford.¹⁶ Despite the fact that some financial assistance in the form of scholarships is offered to minority students, 30% have difficulties in paying the fees (Zhou 2002). The introduction of high fees means that only the better-off have any chance of obtaining a higher education.

Ethnic minority students may receive preferential treatment even at primary and secondary levels. Policies implemented in Tibet provide an illustration. Some Tibetan counties have introduced a system under which school attendance is rewarded with points which can be converted into cash by households; this is intended to reduce drop-out rates, which tend to be high (Postoglione et al. 2006). Another measure calls for the withholding of a portion of teachers' salaries to make sure that teacher attendance is maintained (Postoglione 2008). Other measures to promote minority education at primary and secondary levels include the 'three guarantees' (providing for food, clothing and living accommodation to relieve families of the cost of schooling) and 'dislocated schools' (*neidi Xizang ban*) in areas other than Tibet where bright young Tibetan students are sent to study in boarding schools for 7 years before they are returned to Tibet. Apparently, these schools have been so successful in producing good cultural ambassadors and skilled personnel that they have been replicated in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Family Planning

Ethnic minorities enjoy two types of preferential treatment in family planning: (i) flexibility in terms of age in relation to marriage and divorce law, and (ii) the choice to have more than one child. According to the one-child policy introduced in 1980, in urban areas the Han Chinese may have only one child, and in rural areas, two or more. Those who violate this rule forego many benefits. The one-child policy does not apply to ethnic minorities, who can have two children in urban areas and three in rural ones. In exceptional cases, more than two and three children may be allowed (Sautman 1998).¹⁷ The one-child urban policy has been relaxed since 2013. No wonder then that the population of ethnic minorities has risen more rapidly than that of the Han majority. Family size is much larger among ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities in rural areas tend to resist family planning on religious grounds, and in a market economy it is increasingly difficult to enforce it. Natural population growth is much higher among minorities than among the Han Chinese. As discussed above, the demographic growth rate of minorities has been quite rapid in recent decades.

Although the preferential measures were intended to be temporary and were designed primarily for disadvantaged minority groups (they have rarely applied to Koreans and Manchus, who are already quite prosperous), they have been in place for over 50 years. Some scholars (for example, Gladney 1995) claim that minorities have benefited significantly in some regions, even at the expense of the Han majority. Some minorities, such as the Hui Muslims, have taken advantage of the post-Mao economic reforms and have prospered rapidly. While this may well be true, the fact remains that most of the minority population is still much poorer than the Han Chinese, as we shall examine in Chaps. 3 and 4, which is why affirmative action remains in place.

Many Han Chinese resent the special treatment of minorities and hold a view similar to that of the Hindu majority in India that it breeds inefficiency and inequity. Some Chinese observers have recommended its replacement by a preferential treatment of 'poor areas' regardless of ethnicity. But such a shift can be destabilizing especially for very poor ethnic groups whose livelihood may largely depend on state entitlements. As noted above, the policy of hiring quotas has failed as it is restricted only to the state sector. It has also been ineffective in dealing with discrimination against ethnic minorities in the labour market.

The Chinese preferential policies for ethnic minorities are far more comprehensive than the Indian, and go well beyond employment, education and family planning. For example, regional autonomy based on self-government for predominantly ethnic areas is an important component of China's policy of affirmative action. It is enshrined in the law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy (1984). Even townships and localities with more than 30% minority population can claim local self-government. There are no similar measures in force in India. Secondly, as in India the Chinese minorities enjoy cultural autonomy: they are entitled to maintain their separate cultural and linguistic identity and ethnic customs. However, some such privileges (for example, the right to carry 'ethnic knives') have been criticized in the wake of knife attacks by Uyghur militants in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China.

Ethnic minority regions are granted preferential development aid through fiscal transfers by the central government.¹⁸ Strategic regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang receive special priority. Ethnic minorities

also receive subsidized health and medical subsidies. Hasmath and MacDonald (2016) suggest that minorities participate at a higher rate than the Han and receive higher transfers (when they do participate) from the state-provided welfare schemes. There are quotas for minorities for political representation in the National people's Congress (NPC) and the China People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). At the 12th NPC (2013) minorities Deputies were nearly 14% of the total number of Deputies and at the 12th CPPCC (2013) they accounted for 11.5%, figures which are higher than their 8.5% share in total population (see Chap. 7, Tables 7.3, 7.4).

A Comparative Perspective

Both China and India introduced affirmative action to alleviate the social exclusion and marginalization of minorities, and to redress imbalances in their access to education. However, affirmative action in India is restricted mainly to disadvantaged social groups, not to ethnic/religious minorities.

Affirmative action in China is much more wide-ranging, encompassing economic, social, legal and political representation of ethnic minorities. Measures in support of minorities and ethnic minority regions range from economic development policies to maintaining the ethnic, cultural and religious identity of minorities. Preferential policies for ethnic minorities in China include favourable treatment in family planning, education, tax benefits and so on. However, in India religious minorities such as Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are not covered by quotas and reservations. It is the scheduled castes and untouchables (*dalits*) belonging to the Hindu majority who benefit from reservations.

For several reasons, the preferential policies have been criticized in both India and China. First, those who do not benefit from them (for example, the Han Chinese in China and the Muslim minority and upper-caste Hindus in India) find these policies discriminatory, especially those giving minorities preferential access to education. The majority populations argue that such policies should be based more on socioeconomic criteria than on ethnic identity. Other observers

would argue that the policies sacrifice economic efficiency and quality of education, and breed complacency among minority groups. As reservations do not address the economic condition of minorities, they may be no more than an appeasement policy which merely perpetuates their backwardness.

In both India and China, the effects of affirmative action and preferential policies are not clear-cut. There are indications that the results are at best mixed. In India, the benefits of reservations have accrued mainly to the better-off among the scheduled castes. In China also, assessment of preferential policies suggests that they have not really narrowed the minority–majority gaps; for example, educational attainment. But these gaps would be worse in the absence of preferential policies. Chapters 3 and 4 on poverty and inequalities examine the situation of minorities in the two countries.

Notes

1. We owe this point to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat of Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi.
2. More than 400 peoples applied to the Chinese authorities for recognition as a separate ethnic nationality, out of which only 55 were officially recognized. Those who were not accepted as ‘nationalities’ were included as the Han majority nationality. During Imperial China also, many minorities existed but they were not recognized as they were considered barbarians.
3. Unger (1997) argues that before 55 nationalities were officially recognized, such ethnic groups as the Zhuang, Yao and Yi did not exist as representing whole people. Apparently, the Han immigrants into minority areas used ‘Zhuang’ as a derogatory term meaning ‘primitive’.
4. The policy of preferential treatment of deprived castes and disadvantaged groups in India has a long history dating back to British rule. The Muslim electorates were provided under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. Subsequently, the British colonial government also provided for such electorates for the Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, SCs and other minority groups. Thus, legislatures during the British Raj represented communities, rather than individuals. The Congress

Party at that time and other political representatives had opposed this system of communal electorates as smacking of discrimination and religious disharmony. Therefore, the system was abolished after India's independence in 1947.

5. The Indian Congress Party and the architects of the Indian Constitution believed that communal electorates and the representation which prevailed during the British Raj would risk the political and national unity of independent India.
6. However, it is worth noting that in its report to the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights in July 1947, the Sub-Committee on Minority Rights had recommended the system of reservations for Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in legislatures and government employment on the basis of joint electorates. However, this proposal was dropped after Partition in August 1947 (Hasan 2009, pp. 23–24).
7. Reservation for the SCs in the Indian Parliament is limited to Lok Sabha, the lower house. Rajya Sabha, the upper house, has no such reservation scheme. It is elected by the elected members (MLAs) of the State Assemblies. We are not aware of any State Assemblies using quotas for this purpose. Apart from the elected members, 12 seats are filled by eminent persons from such fields as science, art and literature. These persons are nominated by the President of India.
8. For excellent analyses of reservation and quotas, see Hasan (2009), Nayyar (2011), and Thorat et al. (2016).
9. The Mandal Commission in India was set up in 1978 during the Janata Party government at the centre. It was the second Commission (after the Kalelkar Commission) to define backwardness in terms of caste. The Commission submitted its report in 1980 when the Congress Party was in power. The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations was delayed by several years because neither Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nor the ruling Congress Party was initially in favour of the recommendations.
10. It is not clear whether the Hindu *dalits* who converted to Islam or Christianity continue to avail themselves of SC quotas.
11. Children and grandchildren of successful politicians and civil servants who have already benefited continue to use the quotas and reservations from which their parents and grandparents benefited. For example, the daughter of the former President (Narayanan) continued to invoke the SC quota to qualify for the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). So did the

former Speaker of Lok Sabha (Meira Kumar) who is a *dalit*, a former diplomat (IFS) and a daughter of the former Cabinet Minister, Jagjivan Ram.

12. A number of countries have extended quotas for minorities to the private sector. For example, in the US African Americans enjoy shares in federal contracts.
13. All 25 Indian private firms interviewed by Jodhka and Newman (2010) opposed quotas in the private sector on the grounds of economic efficiency. They argued that all workers should be recruited on merit through open competition.
14. The Chinese government transferred 54.5 billion yuan to these areas from 2000 to 2006 (CERD 2009). In 2006, transfer payments for salaries and subsidies to poor and outlying minority areas amounted to 34.9 billion yuan and 7.2 billion yuan, respectively. In 2000, the State Council established a programme of financial transfers to the eight ethnic provinces and regions as part of the Western Region Development Strategy (*ibid.*, p. 12).
15. For example, 50% of posts in Linxia and Gannan, the two autonomous prefectures in Gansu province, were reserved for ethnic minorities (*ibid.*, p. 20).
16. Official statistics for 2002 divide China's population into the following four income classes: (a) upper class (3.5% of China's population) earning an annual net per capita income of 20,000 yuan (or US\$3,000); (b) middle class (about 35% of the population) earning an annual net per capita income of 6,000–7,000 yuan (or US\$1,000); (c) lower class (45% of the population) with an annual net per capita income of 2000 yuan (or US\$300); and (d) the lowest class with a population of 100 million which earns an annual net per capita income below 500–700 yuan (US\$75–100) in rural areas. The majority of China's ethnic minorities (over 60%) fall into the lowest category (Teng and Ma 2009).
17. Even the Han Chinese living in the autonomous regions are not exempted from the one-child policy rule. Since the ethnic minorities in these regions are exempted from family planning restrictions, it implies that there are two different rules for people living in the same region, one for the majority nationality and another for the ethnic minority nationality. In 1983, an attempt to impose restrictions led to riots in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang (Sautman 1998).

18. Li (2014) and GOC (2015) estimate that six out of every ten dollars spent in Xinjiang and nine out of every ten dollars spent in Tibet consist of central fiscal transfers. The Chinese Ministry of Finance (2015) reported that 79% of Ningxia's budgetary expenditures in 2014 were fiscal transfers from Beijing. The corresponding figure for Qinghai was 62%, for Gansu, 70% and for Guizhou, 60% (cited in Leibold 2016, p. 117).

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