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Q8(b)

## **Define minority. Elaborate the patterns of linguistic and religious minorities in India**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

5.2 Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

### **Core demand of the question**

- Define minority in political and legal sense
- Map linguistic minorities in India
- Map religious minorities
- Use constitutional articles, commissions and key judgments

### **Revision summary**

Minority is a non-dominant group in a specified unit; in education law the unit is the state (T. M. A. Pai).

- **Central religious minorities:** Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Jain.

Linguistic minorities sit under **Articles 29, 350A and 350B** and the **Eighth Schedule** plus unscheduled tongues.

- **Patterns follow regions:** North-East Christians, Kerala mix, Hindi-belt Urdu, migrant cities.

Sachar, Bommai and personal-law cases are the contemporary legal weather.

### **Introduction**

A **minority** is a group that is fewer and politically vulnerable in a given unit, not a group that is culturally thin. In India the unit may be the **Union or a state**: Hindus are a majority nationally and a minority in some states. The Constitution protects **religion and language** more clearly than it defines the word.

### **Body**

#### **Definition**

UN usage stresses non-dominant groups with distinct identity. **T. M. A. Pai** (2002) and **P. A. Inamdar** (2005) treat minority as **state-wise** for educational rights under **Articles 29 and 30. National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992** notifies **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains** (Jains added later) as religious minorities at the Centre. Linguistic minorities have a **Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities** under **Article 350B**.

- **Minority is relational:** Tamil speakers are a minority in Delhi and a majority in Tamil Nadu.

#### **Linguistic patterns**

The **Eighth Schedule** lists scheduled languages; many more are unscheduled (**Santhali is scheduled; many tribal languages are not**). **Patterns:** Hindi belt states with Urdu,

Punjabi, tribal languages; **South** with linguistic states after Fazal Ali, yet with Urdu, Tulu, Lambadi; **North-East** with English as associate and many unwritten languages; **Mumbai and Bengaluru** as migrant-language cities.

**Article 29** protects distinct language and culture; **350A** asks for mother-tongue primary instruction. **States Reorganisation** reduced some conflicts and created new minorities inside new states (Telangana Urdu, Gorkha Nepali).

### Religious patterns

Muslims are the largest religious minority, concentrated in J&K (as it was), Kerala, Bengal, Assam, UP, Hyderabad. Christians concentrate in Kerala, Goa, and the ST hills of the North-East and Chotanagpur. Sikhs in Punjab and a diaspora belt. Buddhists include Himalayan communities and **Ambedkarite** converts. Jains are urban-trading minorities. Parsis are a tiny, high-literacy group.

**Sachar** mapped Muslim development. **S. R. Bommai** treated secularism as basic structure. **Shayara Bano, Sabarimala**, and **hijab** litigation show personal law and public space as the conflict zone. **CAA 2019** and **NRC** debates recoded some religious minorities as citizenship questions.

- **Anthropology adds:** a "minority" hamlet may be a **local majority**. Status follows the unit you choose.

### Flow diagram

Minority -> Religious gazette  
 Minority -> Language 350B  
 Religious gazette -> Arts 29 30  
 Language 350B -> Arts 29 30  
 Arts 29 30 -> State as unit Pai

### Conclusion

Minority means non-dominance in a named unit. India recognises religious minorities by gazette and linguistic minorities by language rights. **Articles 29, 30, 350A-B**, T. M. A. Pai and Sachar are the working kit. The pattern is regional, not a single national pie chart.

### Facts & figures

#### Articles 29 and 30

Protect cultural and educational rights of minorities, including the right to establish institutions.

#### T. M. A. Pai 2002

Supreme Court held that minority status for education is determined state-wise.

#### Article 350B

Provides a Special Officer (Commissioner) for linguistic minorities.

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