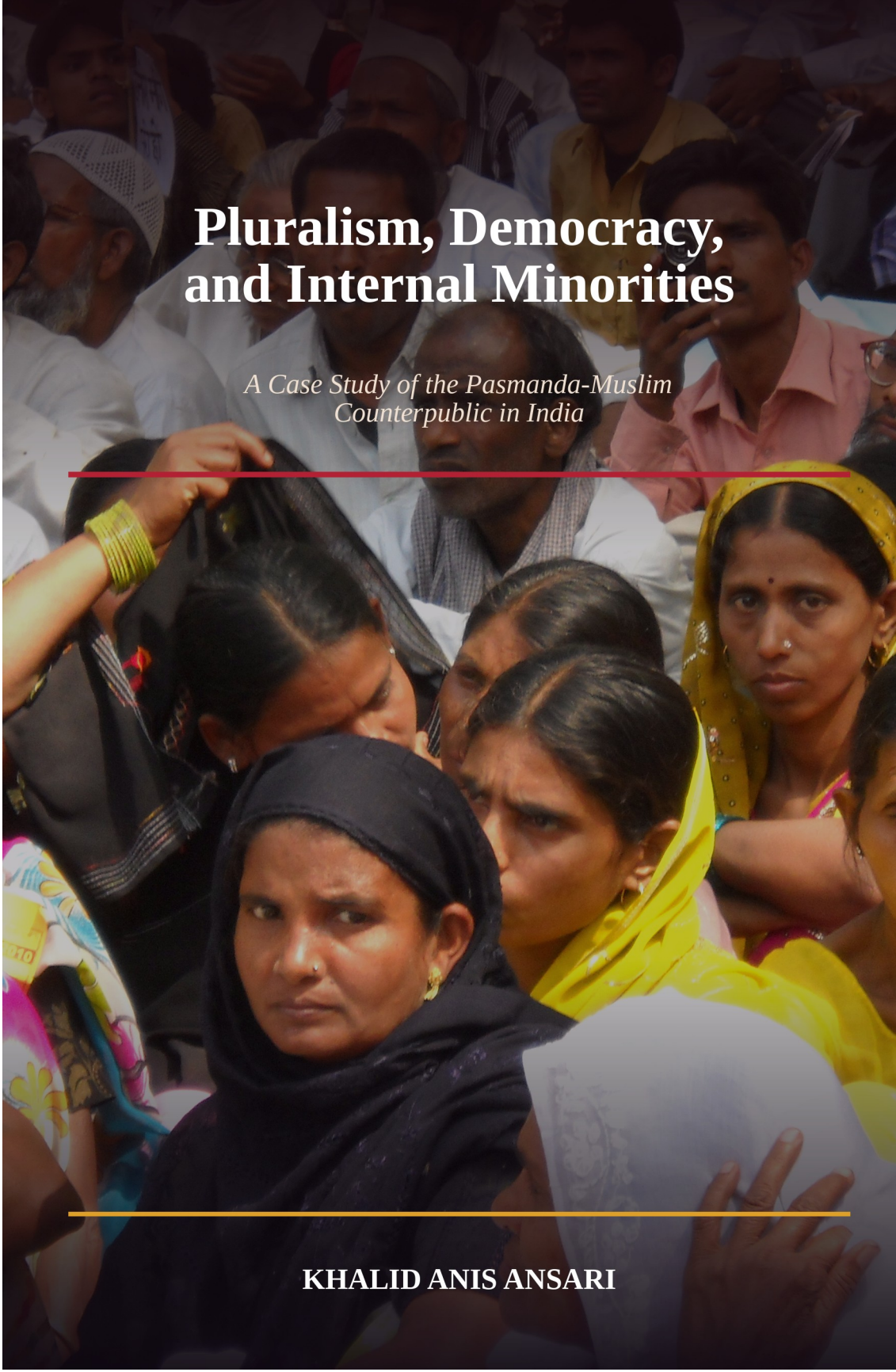


Pluralism, Democracy, and Internal Minorities

A Case Study of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic in India

KHALID ANIS ANSARI

Pluralism, Democracy, and Internal Minorities

A Case Study of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic in India

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A Case Study of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic in India

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(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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door

Khalid Anis Ansari

Born in Kolkata, India on 7 May 1975

Promotor:

Prof. dr. Harry Kunneman — University of Humanistic Studies
Prof. dr. Sitharamam Kakarala — Azim Premji University

Co-promotor:

Dr. Caroline Suransky — University of Humanistic Studies

Beoordelingscommissie:

Prof. dr. Laurens ten Kate, University of Humanistic Studies, Netherlands
Prof. dr. Hans Alma, VU (Vrije Universiteit) Amsterdam, Netherlands
Em. Prof. dr. Vinod Jairath, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
Prof. dr. Marc van den Bossche, VUB Brussel, Belgium
Prof. dr. Nabil Echchaibi, University of Colorado Boulder, US

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Summary

The Muslims constitute the most significant religious minority in India. The Muslim-Minority Discourse (MMD), entailing the articulation between the logics of "Muslim" as a religio-cultural category and "minority" as a statist-juridical category, has historically advanced the notion of a monolithic and subaltern Muslim community with unified interests. The monolithization of Indian Muslims has severe epistemological consequences for a range of repressed internal differences and is chiefly instrumental in reproducing what has been referred to as the "majority-minority syndrome."

However, since the 1990s, the lower caste (LC) Muslims, constituting about eighty-five percent of the Indian Muslim population, a majority within a minority, have deconstructed the MMD as an instrument of high caste Ashraf-Muslim hegemony. The enactment of the Pasmanda identity and the formation of All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz by LC Muslims in 1998 inaugurated radical social negativity in the Muslim-Minority space. The Pasmanda-Muslims that may be characterized as an "internal other," "minorities within minorities," or "internal minorities" have contested the entrenched MMD by constituting a "subaltern counterpublic." The Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic (PMC) has challenged the political-juridical myths of a unified community and revealed the play of caste-based privilege and subordination within.

This work advances a discourse-theoretical account of the PMC and locates it in the broader theoretical concerns around pluralism and democracy. In terms of methodology, the "post-foundational discourse analysis" developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe guides

this qualitative case study. The study explored the most relevant theoretical debates and perspectives to comprehend the relationality between pluralism, democracy, and internal minorities. It then charted the evolution of the Muslim-Minority discourse in India and traced the conditions of possibility for the emergence of caste-based contestations. Finally, it mapped and analysed the vital ideological elements and resignification strategies advanced by the PMC in the domains of a) identity, solidarity, and reform; b) security and persistence of communal violence; c) equity and empowerment (the claims for recognition, representation, and redistribution).

The study demonstrates that the “minority” category invisibilizes more than it reveals, as far as modes of misrecognition and exclusion are concerned. The emerging constellations of critique and anomalies have increasingly questioned the tenability of the minority concept and the majority-minority framework in accommodating new subaltern expressions that ground themselves in far more complex and intermeshed negotiations between difference (recognition) and inequality (redistribution). From the vantage point of the PMC, this work posits that the nature of these new critiques signals a paradigm shift concerning the field of “minority studies” and maybe tentatively captured by the term “post-minority.”

Samenvatting

Moslims vormen de belangrijkste religieuze minderheid in India. Het Moslim-Minderheden Discours (MMD), waarin de logica van de “moslim” als religieus-culturele categorie en “minderheid” als statische-juridische categorie, historisch verbonden zijn, heeft de notie van één monolithische en subalterne moslimgemeenschap met gezamenlijke belangen gepositioneerd in het Indiase debat. Deze monolithisering van de Indiase moslimgemeenschap heeft verstrekkende epistemologische consequenties ten aanzien van een reeks aan onderdrukte interne verschillen binnen de moslimgemeenschap en blijkt vooral instrumenteel in het reproduceren van wat het “meerderheids-minderheidssyndroom” wordt genoemd.

Echter, sinds de jaren negentig van de twintigste eeuw hebben moslims die tot de lagere kaste (LC) behoren – en samen ongeveer vijfentachtig procent van de Indiase moslimbevolking en daarmee een meerderheid binnen een minderheid vormen – het MMD gedeconstrueerd als een instrument in dienst van de Ashraf (hogere kaste) moslim-hegemonie. De bekrachtiging van een Pasmanda-identiteit en de vorming van de All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz beweging door LC-moslims in 1998, introduceerden een radicale sociale negativiteit in de moslim-minderhedenruimte. De Pasmanda-moslims, die gekarakteriseerd kunnen worden als “interne ander”, “minderheden binnen minderheden” of “interne minderheden”, hebben de in India diepgewortelde MMD aangevochten door een “subaltern, tegenpubliek” te vormen. Het Pasmanda-Moslim Tegenpubliek (PMT) heeft de politiek-juridische mythes rondom het bestaan van één verenigde Indiase moslimgemeenschap aan de kaak gesteld en het spel van op kaste-gebaseerde

privileges en ondergeschiktheid binnen de moslimgemeenschap geproblematiseerd.

Dit onderzoek ontwikkelt discours-theoretische kennis over het PMT en plaatst de discussie hierover in een breder theoretisch debat rondom pluralisme en democratie. Wat de onderzoeksmethodologie betreft, vormt de door Ernesto Laclau en Chantal Mouffe ontwikkelde “post-foundational discourse analysis” de leidraad voor een kwalitatieve casestudy. Het onderzoek analyseert de meest relevante theoretische debatten en perspectieven om de relatie tussen pluralisme, democratie en interne minderheden beter te begrijpen. Vervolgens wordt de ontwikkeling van het MMD in India in kaart gebracht en worden de condities getraceerd waaronder de op kaste gebaseerde geschillen konden ontstaan. Tenslotte worden de vitale ideologische dimensies geanalyseerd alsmede de strategieën die door de PMT gehanteerd zijn om nieuwe betekenis te geven aan domeinen van a) identiteit, solidariteit en hervorming; b) veiligheid en het voortduren van geweld tussen gemeenschappen; c) gelijkwaardigheid en ‘empowerment’ (de eisen ten aanzien van erkenning, vertegenwoordiging en herverdeling).

Het onderzoek laat zien dat de categorie “minderheid” meer onzichtbaar maakt dan ze aan het licht brengt, voor zover het vormen van miskenning en uitsluiting betreft. Opkomende constellaties van kritiek en anomalieën trekken de houdbaarheid van het minderheidsbegrip en van het meerderheids-minderheidskader in twijfel. Ze maken plaats voor nieuwe subalterne concepten die gebaseerd zijn op veel complexere en meer verstrengelde noties van verschil (erkenning) en ongelijkheid (herverdeling).

Vanuit het gezichtspunt van de PMC stelt deze studie dat de aard van deze nieuwe kritieken een paradigmaverschuiving inluidt op het gebied van

“minderheidsstudies” en misschien voorzichtig kan worden gevat onder de term “post-minderheid”.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Muslims constitute the most significant religious minority in India[1]. Since the 1990s, the Muslim-Minority space in India has witnessed the mobilizations of low caste (henceforth LC) Muslims against the hegemony of

[1] Broadly, the population of India is divided in religious terms into the majority Hindu community—constituting about 80 percent of India's population and numbering about 966.3 million—and minorities like Muslims, Christians, Jews, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and so on. Muslims, numbering about 172.2 million, constitute 14 percent of India's population and demographically constitute the largest religious minority. The Hindu community is widely known to follow a caste-based system of social stratification and is internally fragmented into four normative status-based caste groups or *varnas*—the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), Shudras (labourers/artisans), and a group of outcastes—the Dalits (formerly untouchables). In statist-juridical nomenclature, the Dalits are denoted as the Scheduled Castes (SC), the adivasis/tribals as Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the shudras as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) or simply "backward". The varnas are arranged in the form of a hierarchy based on the notions of purity-pollution with Brahmins at the top and the Dalits at the lowest. These varnas are further subdivided into a few thousand sub-castes or *jatis*, which are ranked, endogamous, occupational groups. In practice jatis are probably the more functional and easily identifiable units, even when their textual hierarchy is often complicated, subverted and redefined in the daily political (see Jodhka, 2012; Sharma, 1999 for a good introduction to caste). In fact, the Anthropological Survey of India's "People of India Project" has identified about 4635 jatis in India (Singh, 1995).

the so-called high caste (henceforth HC) Muslims. The resistance movement launched by the LC Muslims through the enactment of the Pasmanda identity and the formation of All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz[2] (henceforth Mahaz) in the North Indian state of Bihar in 1998 inaugurated radical social negativity in the Muslim-Minority space. Pasmanda, a Persian word meaning "those who have been left behind" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 15), refers to the Dalit, Backward, and Tribal Muslims that comprise about eighty-five percent of the Indian Muslim population. The Pasmanda Muslims that may be characterized as an "internal other" (Hirji, 2010), "minorities within minorities," (Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005), or "internal minorities" (Green, 1995) have contested the critical elements of the entrenched Muslim-Minority Discourse (henceforth MMD) by constituting what Nancy Fraser calls a "subaltern counterpublic" (1990). Through a range of contestations, the Pasmanda Muslim Counterpublic (henceforth PMC) has challenged the monolithic representations of Indian Muslims in public discourse. This work advances a discourse-theoretical account of the PMC and locates it in the broader concerns around pluralism and democracy. The three central tensions in the relevant literature—between pluralism and pluralization (Connolly, 1996a; Chambers & Carver, 2008), formal democracy and substantive democracy mediated through the process of democratic deepening (Heller, 2009; Elliott, 2003; Jayal, 2001), and minorities and minorities-in-minorities (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010)—constitute the conceptual scaffolding for this work. I argue that the discursive contestations by internal minorities like the Pasmanda Muslims have probably shifted the minority imagination in irredeemable ways. The emerging

[2] Mahaz means "front".

constellations of critique and anomalies have increasingly questioned the tenability of the minority concept and the majority-minority framework in accommodating new subaltern expressions that ground themselves in far more complex and intermeshed negotiations between difference (recognition) and inequality (redistribution) (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). From the vantage point of the PMC, this work posits that the nature of these new critiques signals a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 2012) concerning the field of "minority studies" (Robinson, 2012a) and may be tentatively captured by the term "post-minority."

Let me narrate an incident[3].

> On the night of December 6, 2007—and the date is indeed ironic, coming exactly 16 years after the destruction of the Babri Masjid[4]—members of the HC Muslim community in north Bihar's East Champaran District had set fire to six houses belonging to those from the subordinated castes of the same community, in the village of Rampur-Bairiya. The problem was reported to have begun a few months earlier, over the right to pray. One day, the HC meers/syeds (the priestly caste) and pathans (the warrior caste), both constituting the landed elite in the village, elbowed the backward-caste ansaris (weavers) and mansooris (cotton carders) to the back of the queue at the local mosque. When this was resented and challenged by the latter two groups, they were forcibly driven out of the mosque. To avoid controversy, those

[3] Revised version of an extract from Ansari, 2009.

[4] The reference is to the demolition of the 16th century mosque named Babri Masjid by the Hindu Right activists on 6 December 1992. The mosque was believed to have been constructed by the Muslim ruler Babur after bringing down a Hindu temple at the supposed birth-place of the Hindu deity Ram in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh).

> who were elbowed out subsequently built a thatched mosque so that they could offer prayers with some dignity. As time passed, however, this newly constructed makeshift mosque became something of a thorn in the eyes of the HC Muslims. As such, it was eventually assaulted, and a significant portion of the mosque was damaged. This had not been a lone incident in Rampur-Bairiya. In one previous incident, during the marriage of the daughter of an LC Muslim family, the bridegroom made the grievous mistake of arriving at the wedding in a Maruti car, a clear symbol of status in the backward village economy. In so doing, he drove through a street along which lived HC Muslims. Pandemonium subsequently broke out as henchmen of the HC community members attacked the wedding guests and mixed mud into the food. To top it off, it was not the perpetrators that were later harassed by the police, but rather the victims themselves. It turned out that the local inspector was an HC Muslim himself. A subsequent interview with the alleged architect of the Rampur-Bairiya mosque episode is telling. When the reporter asked his name, he replied, "Mohammad Idrees." But he was immediately interrupted by one of his female relatives standing nearby. "Why don't you add Syed before your name?" she asked. Interestingly, later this same woman, when speaking of members of the ansari community, kept addressing them with the derogatory term julaha. During the subsequent conversation, Syed Idrees said: "We belong to the Syed biradari [caste], which is just like the Brahmins of the Muslim community. Where does the question of our equality with them [the LC Muslims] arise?"

In both academic and popular representations of Indian Muslims, narratives that emphasize on Muslim-Muslim violence and intra-group inequalities, such as the one above, would be considered rare and counterintuitive.

Most discussions on Indian Muslims, unarguably the most significant and politically visible religious minority in India, tend to focus on Hindu (majority)-Muslim (minority) violence—termed as communalism in popular and academic discourse—and inter-group inequalities (Brass, 1996). Historically, the North Indian Muslim elites ruled the Indian subcontinent for about six centuries (1191-1757) before losing power to the British colonial regime after a century-long struggle in 1857 (Panikkar, 1963). The Muslim immigrant ruling class took pride in their West Asian ancestry and assumed the label of *ashraf* (honorable) in contrast to the native/indigenous low-caste Muslim converts—the *ajlaf* (base) and *arzal* (degraded)—that were looked upon with contempt (Saberwal, 2006). Until the last quarter of the 19th century, the "Hindu and Muslim upper classes had more in common with each other than with their lower class co-religionists" (Wright Jr, 2004, p. 28). Saberwal (2006, p. 239) suggests that "what had been the immigrant ruling class, the high status *ashraf*, had forged alliances with high status indigenous groups; but, commonly the former had kept a distance from the indigenous converts of lower caste and artisanal backgrounds, the *ajlaf*. Until the nineteenth century, the ashraf-ajlaf line was almost as sharp as that between upper and lower caste Hindus […]".

However, the colonial governmentality complex—census, ethnographic classifications, modern democratic franchise, separate electorates, reserved seats, codification of personal laws, and so on—soon unified, at least symbolically, an otherwise fragmented Muslim (and Hindu) community (Robinson, 2012; Veer, 1994). In an evolving democratic game that privileged numbers, the categories "Hindu" and "Muslim" became proxies for the interests of numerically challenged but privileged HC

sections in both faith communities. The production of Hindus and Muslims as bounded communities in perennial conflict with each other is, therefore, a quintessentially colonial divide-and-rule narrative constructed to serve the interests of the regime and coopted native interlocutors mostly pan-religious HC elites (Veer, 1994; Dirks, 2001a). The post-1857 sense of group status reversal and loss of dominance for North Indian Muslim elite continued till they transformed from a "community" to "nation" in the 1940s and launched the struggle for self-determination through the demand for a separate state of Pakistan based on the two-nation theory (that held that the interests of Hindus and Muslims were irreconcilable) (Dhulipala, 2015). In 1947 the departing British partitioned the South Asian Empire into India and Pakistan. The Muslims, constituting about a quarter of the subcontinent's population in 1947, split into a "dominant majority" in Pakistan and a "true minority" in India (Wright Jr, 2004, p. 28). Further, in 1971 Bengali-speaking Muslims took issues with Urdu language imposition and broke away from Pakistan to form Bangladesh. Muslims' association with secession constitutes a staple in the Hindu majoritarian discourse to this day (Fazal, 2020).

In postcolonial India, while the Constitution guaranteed equal citizenship and cultural protection to religious minorities, Muslims' dominant discourse stressed a story of decline and marginalization (Shaban, 2018; Shani, 2010; Hasan, 1997). Often victims of sporadic communal violence, charged with disloyalty to the nation, and facing pervasive discrimination in employment, education, and politics, it was easy for the entire Muslim community to slide into a subaltern category (Valenta, 2012). Hence, the Muslim category as a sign of alterity, marginalization, or even resistance to the assimilative

impulses of the nation-state, itself became gradually homogenized and impervious to internal power and cultural variances—caste, sect/maslaq (interpretative communities), class, gender, language and so on. The monolithization of Indian Muslims has serious epistemological consequences for a range of repressed internal differences and is chiefly instrumental in reproducing what has been referred to as the "majority-minority syndrome" (Bhargava, 2000, p. 41). At one level, the Muslim-minority is staged as a perpetually wronged subject and helpless victim of Hindu-majoritarian aggression, which has to be periodically rescued by the secular-multicultural state. The state's acceptance of Muslim demands fed into the Muslim's stereotypical images as an enraged, exceptional, and appeased subject held by the majority community (Tripathy & Padmanabhan, 2014). Kaviraj (1997, p. 22) points out, "Indeed, the constitutional provisions […] for the minorities in certain areas were used by the state, nervous about its inability to control […] discrimination, to silence a section of the minority elite by privileges, and symbolic sinecures".

While "Muslim" is a religio-cultural category, "minority," on the other hand, is a statist-juridical category. The categories Muslim and minority (just like the categories Hindu and majority) cannot be construed as essentialist from a constructivist vantage point—their invention, genealogies, and variation in signification can be historically charted (Veer, 1994; Frykenberg, 1987, 1993; Bloch, Keppens, & Hegde, 2010; Ahmed, 1981; King, 2004; Saberwal, 2006). In postcolonial India, the process of minoritization was spurred through a particular articulation between the logics of Muslim as a religio-cultural category and minority as a statist-juridical category. I have called the combination of these

two logics as the Muslim-Minority Discourse (MMD), which unifies three key and intermeshed elements—identity, security, equity (GoI, 2006, p. 3)—around the nodal point "Muslim" and signifies, stabilizes and reproduces them through particular community and state institutions. MMD has become naturalized, objectivized, and now taken-for-granted. It is in this sense that Robinson (2012, p. 32; emphasis original) states that "*Muslims* and *minorities*" have become "almost synonymous in political discourses." The MMD advances the notion of a monolithic and subaltern Muslim community with unified interests.

Yet events like the Muslim-Muslim violence in Rampur-Bairiya village mentioned above often interrogate the political-juridical myths of a unified community and reveal the play of privilege and subordination within. Caste hierarchies infect the Indian Muslim community, and yet the MMD revels in denial mode in this respect. Muslims usually use the term "zaat" or "biradari" for referring to caste (Usman, 2017), and there are about 705 biradaris according to the Peoples of India project (Jairath, 2011, p. 20). Broadly three kinds of Muslim status groups in descending order of prestige can be identified: first, those who trace their origin to foreign lands and the HC Hindu converts (ashrāf)); second, converts from clean occupational castes (ajlāf); and third, converts from the formerly untouchable (Dalit) castes (arzāl*)*. Moreover, "the *Ashraf* constitute the highest stratum within this structure […] Thus both the Sayyad and Shaikh, as competent religious pedagogues and priests, are almost identical with the Brahman; whereas both the Mughal and Pathan, being famous for their chivalry, appear to be equal to the Kshatriya" (Ansari, 1960, p. 40; emphasis original). Syedism (or Syedvaad) is now used to refer to birth-based caste supremacism in

South Asian Muslim society (Ansari, 2019a; Gautier & Levesque, 2020; Ashraf, 2019). Caste is supposed to be a Hindu category not conveniently applicable to the analysis of Muslim society. Informed by the orientalist-colonial interpretative grid that normatively defines Hinduism as hierarchical and Islam as egalitarian, caste's empirical play in organizing pan-religion symbolic, erotic and material life in South Asia is often ignored (Lindholm, 1985; Khan, 1968). Caste is the elephant in the room that South Asian Muslims don't usually talk about (Aliani, 2009).

However, since the 1990s, the LC Muslims, constituting about eighty-five percent of the Indian Muslim population, have deconstructed the MMD as an instrument of ashraf hegemony (Ansari, 2018). Caste has been increasingly mobilized as a category by the Pasmanda-Muslims to contest ashraf dominance over the symbolic and material resources of the Muslim community. The Pasmanda identity was enacted by the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (henceforth Mahaz) led by Ali Anwar, a journalist-activist, in 1998 in Bihar (Ghosh, 2007). Ali Anwar forwarded the first significant articulation of Pasmanda politics in the book *Masawat Ki Jung* (The Battle for Equality) (Anwar, 2001). The hyphenated expression Pasmanda-Muslim stages the "internal other" (Hirji, 2010, p. 28) in terms of power and a majority within a minority in numeric terms within the Indian Muslim space. Pasmanda is a negative description and confrontational identity. I have employed the term Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic (henceforth PMC) to refer to a nebulous and evolving counterhegemonic space wherein the Dalit/Backward/Tribal Muslims are increasingly contesting ashraf dominance through discursive resignifications informed by anti-caste

analytics[5] at one level and offline/online amplification practices at another. The PMC has challenged the monolithic representation of Islam and Muslim (minority) identity in public discourse. At another level, being drawn chiefly from artisan, peasantry, or working-class background, the PMC has challenged the fixation of the old Muslim elite with symbolic-cultural issues and has publicized organic social problems relating to their everyday struggles for survival. The tenuous PMC shares a constitutive relationship of antagonism with the naturalized MMD, framed by the former as an apparatus for securing and reproducing the Ashraf elite's interests by repressing the caste question in Indian Islam. The narratives circulated in the PMC have contested and resignified the critical moments in the MMD—identity, security, equity. PMC offers an exciting site to reflect on the MMD from its margins and complicates the naturalized images of Muslim subalternity.

1.1 THE PROBLEM

Pluralism as the fundamental ethos of late-modernity has posed new challenges to the idea of liberal democracy (Connolly, 2002; Mouffe, 2000). Indeed, contingency is coeval with the foundational moment of modern democracy itself. Historically, the "democratic revolution" inaugurated a radical indeterminacy and symbolic transformation juxtaposed with destabilizations in power, law, and knowledge. Sovereignty ceased to rest

[5] By "anti-caste analytics" I refer to the conceptual resources developed by anti-caste radicals like Jotiba Phule, EV Ramasamy Periyar and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, and so on, which are broadly labelled as the "Dalit-Bahujan" discourse (Rodrigues, 2008).

with the emperor or legitimized by the transcendental realm, and power became an empty place (Lefort, 1988). The "paradox of modern democracy," according to Chantal Mouffe, rests on the fact that "[…] with modern democracy, we are dealing with a new political form of society whose specificity comes from the articulation between two different traditions. On one side we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defense of human rights and the respect of individual liberty; on the other the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty. There is no necessary relation between those two distinct traditions but only a contingent historical articulation" (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 2-3).

The negotiated and mediated character of modern liberal democracy allows us to view the postcolonial translations of democracy not in terms of deviance vis-a-vis any overarching, normative Western model but instead as instances of different articulations obtaining in specific contexts (Witsoe, 2011). Sudipta Kaviraj indicates the impossibility of any homogeneous replication of modernity or democracy across jurisdictions and likens it to the learning of a new language, "Like the accents from our native languages that always stick to and embarrass our English, working from within or underneath, pulling our speech in the direction of a different speech, the background skills of earlier practices work inside and through the new ones to bend them into unfamiliar shapes" (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 16). In a way, the language of postcolonial modernity in India may be traced as a reflexive evolution of the socio-political logic set in motion by the colonial regime to govern the subject classes. Hansen (1999, p. 32) points at the operation of the colonial "double discourse" in managing India

directed at the elite and subaltern classes, respectively. Kaviraj (2010, pp. 25-29) refers to the "ontology of distinct spheres"—particularly "political" and "social"—with its laws and sets of practices. The "political sphere" was the legitimate domain of the state and was marked by—direct colonial governance with assistance from native elites in matters of property, security, and taxation; the classification and enumeration of subjects through technologies like colonial ethnography and decennial census; the consequent production of reified and bounded communities—mainly based on religion, caste, language and so on—more conscious of their numbers than ever before; the politics of representation and the limited franchise where various communities jostled for legal recognition, enfranchisement, preferential schemes, upward mobility through education and bureaucratic employment. On the other hand, the "social sphere" was framed as a complicated site of tradition—religion, culture, ritual, "internal matters"—from which the colonial regime would maintain a distance and preferably leave its management to the native elite. Here the logic of "associationism" and cultural "reform" operated. However, these new reform associations, while resembling a kind of colonial civil society, "lacked one important feature of modern associationism: membership or entry was segmentary, not universal. Only Kayasthas, for instance, could become members of the Kayastha sabhas; only Brahmos could benefit from opportunities given to the Brahmo Samaj" (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 28).

Historically, caste had been the dominant and peculiar sign of social power in India, "Everyday caste practice disciplined social conduct without frequent direct recourse to the power of the state; rather, the holders of political authority were themselves governed by the

rules of caste order and barred by its regulations from exercising legislative power over the productive arrangements of society" (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 19). The colonial governmentality made a formal transition of caste by repositioning it from being a distinct mode of organizing South Asian political economy and stratification to an invented identity/constituency increasingly seen as an internal moment of religion (Dirks, 2001). Ashis Nandy, makes a useful analytical distinction between religion as "faith" and "ideology"[6], and suggests that the "modern state always prefers to deal with religious ideologies rather than with faiths" (2002, p. 63). The colonial governmentality consolidated Hindus and Muslims as all-India communities[7]. The

[6] In Ashis Nandy's articulation while religion as faith refers to "[…] a way of life, a tradition which is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural", religion as ideology alludes to "[…] a sub-national, national or cross-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socio-economic, interests" (2002, p. 62). In this sense while the faith aspect of religion speaks to our existential and transcendental dilemmas, the ideological aspects construe religion primarily as a political identity or constituency.

[7] For instance, Pandey, "The all-India "Hindu community" (and to a large extent, the all-India "Muslim community" too) was a colonial creation for […] the social and economic changes brought by colonialism, Indian efforts to defend the indigenous religions and culture against western missionary attacks, the "unifying" drive of the colonial state […]. In spite of a widely felt sense of "Hinduness" and "Muslimness", I would suggest that until the nineteenth century at any rate, people always had to work through caste, sect and so on to arrive at the unities implied in the conception of the "Hindu community" and the "Muslim community" (Pandey, 1997, p. 316).

And, Mushirul Hasan, "[…] the act of 1909 (Indian Councils Act) was a calculated master-stroke. Separate electorates, along with reservations and weightages, gave birth to a sense

reconfigured "ethnographic plots" (Viswanathan, 1998, p. 153) that produced religion as the overarching identity affected the installation of the HC elite in both the communities as their natural representatives (Veer, 1994). Hence, "[…] religion provided the basis of primary and all-consuming group identities" (Kaviraj, 2010, p. 22). Therefore, one of the most pervasive effects of colonial governmentality efforts was in homogenizing and systematizing social identities—especially religion and caste (Dirks, 2001). Even in pre-colonial times, allegiance to particular communities was considered valuable, but these communities were fuzzier, ambiguous, and fluid. The systematization of identities and installation of differential patronage and representation regime set up a series of tensions that resulted in the articulation of contending nationalisms. The contestations for status parity between Hindus and Muslims led to the subcontinent's eventual partition into India and Pakistan in 1947 (Shaikh, 1986; Devji, 2013). However, the logics of religion-based nationalisms—both Hindu and Muslim—were also constantly challenged by the subterranean caste-based mobilizations, specifically the Dalit movement led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Maharashtra (Aloysius, 1997) and the Momin movement led by Abdul Qaiyum Ansari in Bihar (Ghosh, 2010a). The contending logics of religion and caste continue to inform the postcolonial imagination of justice in insidious ways.

The idea of minority rights coeval with the Indian Constitution refers to religious and linguistic minorities' rights. The minority is a bivalent category wherein "the numerical strength of a group

of Muslims being a religio-political entity in the colonial image —of being unified, cohesive and segregated from the Hindus. They were homogenized" (Hasan, 1998, p. 15).

is connected with its social position" (Amersfoort, 1978, p. 220). In postcolonial India, the minorities were bifurcated into religious/linguistic minorities that were guaranteed "cultural rights" and the subjugated castes and tribes [Officially designated as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)] that were conferred "political rights" (Hasan, 2009; Jayal, 2013). The religious/linguistic minorities were defined in terms of numerical inferiority, and their culture and languages were sought to be protected by the state through various constitutional provisions[8] (Jenkins, 2009). On the other hand, the SCs, STs, and OBCs were defined in terms of disadvantage. They were beneficiaries of affirmative action policies—special representation rights in the legislative bodies and quotas in public employment and educational institutions (Deshpande, 2013). The religious and linguistic minorities were envisaged as "permanent minorities" (Robinson, 2012, p. 32), and the subjugated castes and tribes were construed as ephemeral that will eclipse with the annihilation of caste. Broadly, religion-as-difference and caste-as-inequality capture the postcolonial minority imagination of the Indian state (Viswanath, 2014, p. 341). The field of minority rights was juxtaposed

[8] The Constitution upholds the rights of religious and linguistic minorities through Article 25 (freedom to practice and propagate one's religion), Article 26 (right to maintain religious institutions), 29(1) (cultural preservation), 29(2) (educational right), Article 30(1) (right to establish and administer educational institutions) and Article 30(2) (right to state aid for educational institutions).

with the official imagination of secularism as pluralism: that is, symmetrical treatment for all religions (Upadhyaya, 1992). The anti-caste and quota politics was denoted with the term social justice (Hasan, 2009).

However, despite the official neutrality of the state vis-à-vis religion, the concept of "Indianization" constituted the code through which the "nation" converged with "Hindu", and Hindu with HC "Vedic/Sanskritic tradition" in the Hindu majoritarian articulation (Fazal, 2020, p. xv). At least since the late nineteenth century onwards, the primordial identities like caste, complicating the tradition-modernity dichotomy, were forming "caste associations" (voluntary organizations formed to promote the interests of caste members) and "caste federations" (a coalition of castes) to negotiate with political modernity, and reform and empower themselves. The process of interaction of caste with modern democratic politics, and its persistence and resilience in modified forms, has been captured variously as "ethnicization" (Fuller, 1996), "democratization" (Kothari, 1970), "secularization" (Sheth, 2018), "modernity" (Rudolph, 1965) and "politicization" of caste (Jodhka, 2012; Sharma, 1999) and puts severe strains on the annihilation of caste project (Ambedkar, 2002) that envisaged the withering away of caste under modern conditions.

However, the three significant events in the 1990s—demolition of the Babri Mosque[9], the acceptance of Mandal Commission Report[10], and neoliberal economic reforms[11]—produced dislocationary effects in the official Indian ideology, especially the entrenched renderings of minority rights (and secularism), social justice (quota politics) and state socialism (Menon and Nigam, 2007). In the discourse-theoretical framework advanced by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), dislocationary events create a specific symbolic disorder where it becomes increasingly difficult for the existing discourses to confer a stabilized sense of identity to social subjects. The fracturing of sedimented structures, therefore, results in the inauguration of "new spaces of representation" (myths) that attempt to "cover over" dislocations. It also calls for a political decision

[9] Babri Mosque controversy refers to the Hindu majoritarian mobilization around the issue of Ram Janambhumi-Babri Mosque, that demolished a 16th century mosque believed to have been constructed by the Muslim ruler Babur after bringing down a Hindu temple at the supposed birth-place of the Hindu deity Ram. The mosque was demolished in 1992 and was followed by violent rioting between Hindus and Muslims in major urban centres in India.

[10] The Central government accepted the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report in 1990 which proposed quotas for LC OBC sections in central government jobs. The acceptance of OBC quota led to widespread protests by the HC Hindu students which saw the quotas as compromising merit.

[11] The New Economic Reforms, often labelled as neo-liberal reform in progressive literature, were initiated in 1991. This major policy decision, which captured popularly by the acronym LPG (liberalization, privatization, globalization), arrested India's long tradition of state socialism and centralized planning and saw the conflicting emergence of the middle classes and the growing inequalities and livelihood crisis for the working classes at the same time.

(identification) by the subjects who construct and identify with new projects, discourses, and social antagonisms (Howarth, 2002). Consequently, the ruptures mentioned above, "christened as the three Ms of Indian politics: Mandal, Mandir, and Markets" (Yadav, 1999, p. 2394), led to an acute crisis of social identity and created the space for new political subjectivities to emerge in India (Omvedt, 1994). In particular, the logic of "Mandal"—signifying LC social justice politics based on caste—contended with "Kamandal"[12]—representing HC Hindu majoritarian politics based on religion (Sheth, 2009; Omvedt, 1990). The myth of Ram Raj (rule of the Hindu deity Lord Ram) advanced by HC Hindutva politics was contended by the LC counterhegemonic myths of Bahujan Raj (ANI, 2019), Bali Raj[13] (Aloysius, 1997), and Ravan Raj (Khanna, 2019), and so on. The Mandal moment deconstructed the neutrality myth of the developmental state by revealing the disproportionate influence and control the HC sections exerted in policy formulation and redistribution of resources. The significant increase in subaltern voting percentages, in contrast to the West, and rising representation of subordinated castes in the legislature since the 1990s was dubbed as the "second democratic upsurge" (Yadav, 2000) and "India's silent revolution" subsequently (Jaffrelot, 2003). Witsoe (2013, p. 18) observes, "[…] since caste impacts the everyday experience of inequality, the politics of caste involves everything from

[12] "Kamandal" means an oblong water pot used by Hindu ascetics and yogis to carry water. It has been widely employed to refer to Hindutva majoritarian politics.

[13] "Phuley challenged the Brahminic caste ideology in toto, set up a Bali Rajya of equality of all men in opposition to Ram Rajya based on Varnashrama Dharma, and elaborated the ideology of Dravidian origin to counter the prevalent Aryan theory of race among the Brahmins" (Aloysius, 1997, p. 67).

issues of honor and dignity to relations of production, control of regional economic activity, and access to public employment and development resources".

More pertinent to the discussion here, the constitutional and policy consensus—religion as difference, caste as inequality—was seriously problematized with the inclusion of about eighty-two LC Muslim groups in the Mandal Commission Report (GoI, 1980) and therefore eligible for quotas for OBCs in public services of the central government (1990) and central higher educational institutions (2006). In contrast to the enduring orientalist-colonial legacy of framing caste as an inegalitarian Hindu institution (Dumont, 1980; Lindholm, 1986), the Mandal moment legitimized and activated the politicization of caste in the putative egalitarian minority faith traditions like Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and so on (Ansari, 2009, 2013, 2018, 2019a; Jodhka, Surinder, 2004; Webster, 1992). The missiological/theological position of normative equality within minority religious traditions has been increasingly interrogated with the ethnographic/sociological evidence of caste-based inequalities within (Mosse, 2012; GoI, 2008; Trivedi, Goli, Fahimuddin, & Kumar, 2016).

The interpenetrating logics of caste and faith in the discourses circulated in the PMC radically problematize the citizenship-minority imagination in postcolonial India by introducing new complexities. The limitations of elite framing of religion as the single window solution to all social problems are glaringly visible. PMC encapsulates several resignification practices and symbolic inversions. Firstly, there is an attempt to transcend the elite trappings of the majority-minority or the secular-communal binaries. The symbiotic relationship between

majority and minority communalism is stressed, and it is held that internal resistance to minoritarian fundamentalism is imperative to contain majoritarian aggression. The ashraf sections are criticized for being entrepreneurs of victimhood, while in most instances of communal violence, it is the subjugated Muslim castes that are the prime victims. Secondly, there is an attempt to parochialize faith-based vertical social solidarities by constructing pan-religious horizontal solidarities of LC groups based on a shared history of caste humiliation. The Pasmanda notion of solidarity is captured succinctly by the slogan "*Dalit-Pichda Ek samaan, Hindu Ho ya Musalman*" (All Dalit-Backwards are alike, whether they be Hindu or Muslim). Thirdly, there is a stress on intra-group inequality as exemplified by contestations around the Muslim quota debate and redistributive policies. Lastly, there is a realization that the community cannot be reformed unless the caste issue is addressed. The control of the HC Muslims over the hermeneutic/interpretation technologies related to the Quran and community institutions is challenged. A counter-narrative on the relation of religion with gender, language or maslaqs (interpretative communities) is advanced.

Broadly, the Pasmanda resignification and protest strategies speak to two vexed theoretical domains in contemporary social theory. The first domain is the relation between democracy and diversity. William E. Connolly, "a major figure in rethinking the pluralist imagination" (Schlosberg, 2006, p. 146), retains the concept of "pluralism" to refer to settled notions of diversity within the imagination of the territorial nation-state and contrasts it with "pluralization" to refer to the recent experience of radical contingency, diversity, and transformation in a globalizing world (Connolly, 1996, p.

53). Pluralization is marked by the "politics of becoming" that alludes to the process "by which new rights, identities, goods, and faiths periodically struggle to move from subsistence below the thresholds of legitimacy and justice onto those registers" (Connolly, 2011, p. 3). While the tension between pluralism and pluralization constitutes the contours of pluralist politics today, the "paradox of identity\difference" wherein identity is secured in a field of difference through the production of significant "others" triggers further anxieties (Connolly, 2002, p. xiv). At one level, increasing cultural differentiation has become a fact of life. There are elite restorative attempts to arrest the sliding in entrenched norms, values, and identities at another level. The drives towards pluralization are inevitably countered by fundamentalization and pose immense challenges to civility, tolerance, and solidarity (Connolly, 1996, p. 60). The process of pluralization has also enabled a challenge to the existing minority/multicultural imagination from the internal minorities. The recent works on the concerns of "internal minorities" or "minorities within minorities" have argued that multicultural accommodation often results in simplistic communitarianism reinforces ethnic boundary closure, internal homogenization and domination of self-proclaimed leaders from the group elite, subjugation of vulnerable sections under collective norms, and perpetuation of illiberal socio-cultural practices that endorse internal hierarchies and patriarchal values (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010). In particular, Susan Okin provocatively posed the question, "Is multiculturalism bad for women?" (Okin, 1997). She indicated that the politics of feminism and multiculturalism were in a state of tension that may not be easily reconciled.

The second theoretical domain is the relation between democracy and civil society. The postcolonial Indian state became "an ideal case for testing democratic theories" (Myron Weiner, cited in Jayal, 2001, p. 38). There was a distinct sense that with highly heterogeneous demography, pervasive social hierarchies, and a backward-agrarian feudal economy India lacked the cultural requisites for democracy. However, democracy in the "procedural" or "formal" sense—as a set of institutions, constitution, periodic elections, legislative assemblies, and so on—has taken root in India. While the consolidation of formal democratic institutions has been reasonably successful, India confronts democratic deficits when it comes to the questions of "substantive democracy"—equal, politically engaged, and meaningful citizenship; popular control over decision making; political accountability from the ruling sections; subaltern voice and tolerance, etc. (Jayal, 2001). Heller posits that the process of "democratic deepening" or the extension of democracy to disadvantaged social collectivities requires a closer examination of extant civil society. Popular mobilizations in civil society reinforce connections between the procedural and substantive aspects of democracy by setting redistributive agendas and integration of subjugated groups (Heller, 2009). The recent subaltern mobilizations in India have also been evaluated as a response to the limitations of modernist elite-led politics itself, particularly in the conceptual resignification and analytical distinction between "civil society" and "political society" made by Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee, 2004; Gudavarthy, 2012). Mahajan (1999) and Mamdani (1996) point out the colonial legacies of civil society and how the domination of modernizing elite often works against advancing meaningful citizenship.

Fraser dubs the public sphere's hegemonic articulation as "a specific—bourgeois masculinist—conception" (Fraser, 1990, p. 62). Since the mainstream public sphere is not a space for participatory parity in stratified societies, it helps the disadvantaged sections form what she calls "subaltern counterpublics." These are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). These subaltern counterpublics have a dual role. They act as enclaves for the subaltern groups where they can articulate their concerns and bring coherence to their demands without the supervision of the dominant groups, which concentrate, in Mansbridge's words, on "absorbing the less powerful into a false "we" that reflects, the more powerful" (cited in Fraser, 2003, p. 90). On the other hand, they also act as training grounds for agitational activities directed at the broader publics. It is in the dialectic between these two functions of the subaltern counterpublics that their emancipatory potential can be located.

The PMC offers an exciting site to reflect on the concerns of pluralism and democracy through the internal minority problematique and the role of counterpublics in informing subaltern democratic action. Mahajan reports that "In India there are at least four types of internal minorities: language-based groups, caste groups, women and denominations/sects" (Mahajan, 2005). As far as Muslims are concerned, Muslim women's question has been the centre of scholarly attention so far (Kirmani, 2011). In particular, the literature on Muslim subordinated castes and the Pasmanda movement is abysmal. Zarin Ahmad (2018, p. 210) opines thus, "Unfortunately, […] scholarship on caste among Muslims

has not produced even a fraction of what has been produced in the literature on Dalits". Broadly, the present study explores the shifting nature of the minority space in India through an examination of the PMC under conditions of pluralization and democratic deepening.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Key question:

> What light is shed on the vexed issue of pluralism and democracy from the vantage point of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic?

Subsidiary questions:

> 1. What are the most relevant theoretical debates and perspectives in comprehending the relationality between pluralism, democracy and internal minorities?
>
> 2. How has the Muslim-Minority discourse evolved in India, and what have been the conditions of possibility for the emergence of caste-based contestations and mobilizations in the form of the Pasmanda-Muslim movement?
>
> 3. What are the critical ideological elements and resignification strategies advanced by the Pasmanda-Muslim counterpublic? In what manner do they inform?—
>
> > a) The processes of identity, solidarity, and reform;
> >
> > b) The question of security and persistence of communal violence;

c) The pursuit of equity through the claims for recognition, representation, and redistribution.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Autobiographical Footnotes on Research-Activism

The conjuncture of 1989-1992 overlaps with my first recollections of personal political awareness[14]. From middle school onwards, I received what could be considered a "secular" education in a Catholic, English-medium school in the north Indian town of Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh. When I was in class twelve (1992-93) and eighteen in terms of age, the Babri mosque demolition news (December 6, 1992) reached me during the preparations for intermediate board exams. The school was shut down for several days, and there was anxiety all around, mainly due to the mediatized coverage of the inter-religious clashes that followed. The media revolution had just started with the availability of cable television. My family was not particularly religious in a conservative sense: we were encouraged to follow certain Islamic rituals, but there was no severe reproach if we skipped them. I recall that I was at a loss to make sense of what had happened and probably did not find the demolition very disturbing. But I remember pretty clearly that my "Hindu" classmates started directing satirical remarks toward me after the demolition. I was addressed as *katwa*, a pejorative term that alludes to someone who has been circumcised. Circumcision is a part of the Muslim faith. For the first time, circumstances led me to believe that I was different. I had never felt this

[14] I have drawn in this section from my interview included in Alphen & Klooster, 2010.

way before. My friends and I played cricket and other sports together or indulged in group-study just like regular students who got along. Yet following the demolition, things were never the same again. I was bracketed as belonging to a particular identity and began to develop an unprecedented sense of being Muslim.

After my board exams, I enrolled in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) for an economics undergraduate program. The AMU is based in a small provincial town of Aligarh in western Uttar Pradesh and was founded by the Muslim educational reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1875 as a school first and then elevated to university status in 1920. I joined AMU in June 1993. The day I arrived in Aligarh, I heard stories about the burning of India's national flag in the university canteen by the students to protest against the Babri demolition. This was a second shock for me within a period of six or seven months and felt like an affront to my secular sensibilities. The national flag had a special place in my heart. How could someone burn it like that?

A few days later, while I was waiting in a queue in the canteen for lunch, a classmate, whom I hardly knew, yelled at me from behind, "*Abey julahe*[15]*...jaldi kar!*" (Tr.

[15] The surname "Ansari" is a title that was adopted by the Muslim weaver caste in the late nineteenth century. The Hindustani word for weaver is *julaha*, which is usually employed in popular folklore as a synonym for someone who is an "ignoramus." Various pejorative proverbs and stories are linked to weavers. "One expression stems from a story: *Julaha bhulaile teesi ka khait* refers to the julaha who went to a mustard field by moonlight. Mistaking the blue mustard flowers for water, he dove and tried to swim. Another tale tells of a julaha who wept while listening to his family *maulvi* [religious teacher] read the Quran. The old *maulvi* was very impressed and asked which part of Quran had motivated the julaha to weep. The julaha replied, "I was looking at your

"Make it fast, you weaver!"). When I turned back and gazed at him, I saw that he was smiling, suggesting, therefore, that the remark had been made in jest. But this memory has stayed with me ever since. Later, when I discussed this incident with a few friends, I learned that *julaha*, referring to someone from the weaving caste, was commonly used in a derogatory manner, especially by the HC Muslims. I found this strange because my father was not a weaver but a civil servant. In an economic sense, I did not stem from a disadvantaged group. During my stay in Aligarh, I regularly overheard and sometimes encountered similar kinds of remarks. I realized that even the Muslim identity is not monolithic. Castes exist within it, and the so-called HC Muslims often stigmatized LC Muslims, even when they were educated and stemmed from relatively better economic backgrounds. A sense of contempt subsists against LC Muslims, which is embedded somewhere in the culture of caste-based humiliation in Indian Islam.

It is probably the intuitions supplied by such personal encounters with religion and caste—from my early life as a student and then as an activist in the social sector before I turned to academics—that have influenced my research trajectory. The deep-seated sense of dissatisfaction with the MMD that I harbored met a cathartic response when I first read the book *Masawat Ki Jung* (The Battle for Equality) authored by the Bihar-based journalist-activist Ali Anwar in around 2004. *Masawat* was the first significant critique of MMD from

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beard, which sadly reminded me of my goat, who died yesterday." Another well-known story tells of one *julaha* who was about to go on a journey with his eleven friends. They decided to count themselves before they left. The julaha began to count, but kept forgetting to count himself. He broke into tears, saying, "I am dead. Make arrangements for my burial".

the vantage point of the Pasmanda-Muslims in postcolonial India. I was at that point based in the small town of Naugawan Sadat in Western Uttar Pradesh and was associated with a project focusing on rural education. Later, when I moved to Patna, the capital of the state of Bihar, in 2006 and formed the research-activist group *The Patna Collective* with a few friends, I got more opportunities to learn about the Pasmanda movement. Slowly Muslim caste became an essential category in my activism and analysis. In terms of structural position,[16] a range of identities—middle class, caste, male, heterosexual, Muslim, etc.—were available to me. However, during my political evolution, it is the Pasmanda subject position and resistance project that I increasingly embraced.

Later, when I joined the doctoral journey at the University for Humanistic Studies (UvH), the preliminary intuitions—informed by personal experience and interactions with other fellow activists in the movement—were increasingly refined through more rigorous academic immersion in movement literature. In this sense, I reflect as an *insider*, as someone who is invested and actively involved in the movement as an interlocutor. However, the present study avoids the two methodological extremes: the first is the tendency to construe the insider perspective as a privileged one in the sense of representing a legitimate or authentic voice,

[16] "[…] an individual is structurally positioned within hierarchical social, cultural, political and economic systems by forces and institutions that are prior to her will. Further, these structural positions shape the individual's life chances, for they situate her within the relatively stable networks of power relations that shape the distribution of material resources…A "subject position" refers to the ensemble of beliefs through which an individual interprets and responds to her structural positions within a social formation" (Smith, 1998, p. 56-58).

and the second is the rival tendency to construe this as a problem from the vantage point of the claims of neutrality (Alcoff, 1992). Suffice to say here that the researcher as a subject is herself overdetermined by multiple moral and political universes. The closures in research strategy, interpretation, or critique arrive through hegemonic fixation in a complex field governed by power and exclusions. In this sense, all researchers are situated somewhere, and there is no neutral ground possible: all objectivity is "concealed power" (Smith, 1998, p. 92). From this perspective, all one could hope to offer is a meaningful conversation and insights into the research object by laying bare the trail of assumptions, logics, and evidence followed in the research process. Yet, as a pragmatic stance, "it is fruitful to try to distance oneself from one's material and, for instance, imagine oneself as an anthropologist who is exploring a foreign universe of meaning in order to find out what makes sense there" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21). In this context, it is critical reflexivity and the ethics of openness that guide me as an analyst.

Broadly, I have attempted to problematize the MMD in India through a discourse-theoretical account of the Pasmanda movement. Being an interlocutor of the movement, I also see my work as having apparent affinities with knowledge-seeking "standpoint" projects (Harding, 2006). The Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith was one of the pioneers to interrogate the "practices of power" in the discipline of sociology by employing the "standpoint of women" as a critical position (Smith, 1990). While various standpoint projects vary in their methodological approach, Harding (2006, p. 252-253) delineates three commonalities. One, standpoint projects start with the "lives" of the marginalized groups rather than with the dominant disciplinary/policy frameworks.

"Lives" broadly refers to the components of experience, structural position, or discursive articulation of the subordinated collectivities and becomes a critical element of deconstructing all knowledge as socially situated by revealing the questions/perceptions that dominant institutions have blocked through practices of power. Two, standpoint projects "study up," that is they seek to "identify the conceptual practices of power in some particular context—a disciplinary framework, a historical phenomenon, a political rhetoric, a welfare, health, education, legal, or economic policy or practice, and so on" (ibid. p. 252). Three, all standpoint projects emphasize on the necessity of the political struggle to construct the group subjectivity that could generate the "information and insight" that suppressed groups require and seek. As Harding remarks, "Feminist standpoint theory was overtly developed in part to explain better how to account for the fact that politically engaged research projects were producing empirically and theoretically better, by conventional standards, results of research than could projects that claimed social neutrality" (ibid. p. 253). In this sense, I pitch this thesis as a Pasmanda standpoint project: that is, it seeks to understand and interpret the contours of counterhegemonic strategies employed by the Pasmanda activists to deconstruct and confront the practices of power—conceptual, political, and social—institutionalized by the MMD.

1.3.2 Post-Foundational Discourse Analysis (PDA): Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The poststructuralist/constructivist assumptions guide the research and specifically the "post-foundational discourse analysis" (henceforth PDA) (Marttila, 2015b) introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their

groundbreaking work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) and developed over the years by them and other interlocutors, mainly affiliated to the Essex School of Ideology and Discourse Analysis (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Howarth, Norval, & Stavrakakis, 2000; Howarth, 2013; Howarth & Torfing, 2005; Laclau, 1990; Torfing, 1999; Marttila, 2013, 2015b, 2015a). Discourse theories —Torfing classifies them into "three generations"[17]—may

[17] The first generation of discourse theory defined discourse narrowly in the linguistic sense—as a textual unit that is larger than the sentence—and concentrated on the semantic aspects of the spoken/written text. This generation was marked by the emergence of various methods like "socio-linguistics", "content analysis", "conversation analysis", "discourse psychology" and "critical linguistics". In this phase of development of discourse theory, the linguistic analysis of semantic aspects of discourse was privileged at the expense of engagement with ideology or power. In the second generation, discourse was defined more widely to include a wider set of practices. "Critical discourse analysis" (CDA), developed by Norman Fairclough, was the most significant entry in this phase. However, while CDA brought in ideology/power in order to analyse various practices, it lacked clarity in explaining the relation between "discursive" and "non-discursive" contexts and its heavy reliance on "critical realism" reduced it to concentrate on linguistic mediation of events and causality that undermined its explanatory potential. In the third generation, marked by the works of Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and others, the meaning of discourse expands to cover all social phenomena. Discourse becomes coterminous with "the social" and the metaphysical idea of a transcendental centre that structures the entire structure while itself escaping structuration, is casted aside. Thus, the idea of an underlying essence, that is given in and by itself, and which determines all meanings/identities in a structure is disbanded to arrive at the conceptualization of discourse where meanings/identities are temporarily settled with reference to multiple provisional centres in a field where the play of meaning approximates infinitude (See Torfing, 2005, pp. 5-9).

be understood as a subset of social constructionist perspectives[18] in social sciences (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985). As per Torfing (2005, p. 1), discourse theories "emerged in the late 1970s as an intellectual response to the problematization of mainstream theory in the wake of May 1968, the critique of the structuralist theories of language, culture and society, and the crisis of Marxism in the face of the emerging neoliberal and neo-conservative hegemony". Laclau and Mouffe's version of discourse theory, which falls in the third generation, evolved through a deconstructive reading of debates in linguistics (particularly Saussure), structuralism (Barthes and Althusser), psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan), Marxism (Gramsci) and post-structuralism (Derrida, Foucault, and others) (see Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Apart from the question of "scope"—whether discourses constituted the social completely or whether they were partly formed by the social—that was employed by Torfing (2005, p. 5-9) to discriminate between various generations of discourse theories, the approaches may also vary based on their "focus of analysis" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 3). In this respect while some discourse approaches "analyse people's discourse in everyday social interaction, others prefer a more abstract mapping of the discourses that circulate in society" (ibid. p. 3). Although Laclau & Mouffe's PDA "is mostly interested in more abstract, 'depersonified' discourses, the idea that these discourses

[18] Social constructionist approaches broadly hold a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge, assume that reality is not objective but only accessible through categories, emphasize on the historical and cultural specificity of all knowledge (anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism), and accentuate the link between knowledge and social processes or action (See Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 4-6; Collin, 1997).

are created, maintained and changed in myriads of everyday practices is implicit in the theory" (ibid. p. 20). As already discussed above the key ambition of this work is to describe, interpret and critique the shifting nature of the MMD from the vantage point of the PMC. In this respect, PDA is the appropriate approach for the present study since its theoretical domain is that of conflict and struggle over identity (Walton & Boon, 2014, p. 353) and it has been used quite productively to analyze socio-political resistance projects and populist movements (Howarth et al., 2000).

PDA shares that reality is accessible only through language, discourses, and categories with other poststructuralist perspectives. Since the fundamental unit of language analysis—the sign[19]—is polysemic,

[19] Ferdinand de Saussure's "structuralist linguistics" (Saussure, 1983) marked a transformation in the field of linguistics by displacing diachronic analysis with synchronic analysis (Torfing, 1999, p. 87). In Saussure's system, the basic unit of linguistic analysis is the *sign*, which is further divided into the *signifier* (form) and the *signified* (content). Saussure argues that there is no inherent meaning or substance of a sign but rather it is derived from its relation to other signs. Hence, language is a differential system where the form of the sign varies in different languages and the content transforms contextually. The differential nature of meaning advanced by the Saussurean system also makes the relation between language and reality arbitrary as opposed to the "corresponding theories" of reality that envision a stable relation between the signifier and signified. Saussure also distinguishes between two levels of language, *langue* and *parole*. While *langue* refers to the fixed structure of language or network of signs, *parole* on the other hand is situated language use. *Parole* must always draw from *langue* in the Saussurean system. One may use the metaphor of the "fishing-net" to allude to this system where each sign has been assigned a place as one of the knots and derive their meaning in relation to other signs. However, poststructuralists dissolve the sharp distinction between *langue* and *parole* and destabilize the view

arbitrary, and precariously fixed by contestation or convention in a field of power, it follows that all constructions of knowledge, social formations, identities, and meaning are fundamentally unstable. The practice of partial fixation of meaning in a terrain of infinite differences is what Laclau and Mouffe call "articulation" and suggest that "in order to place ourselves firmly within the field of articulation, we must begin by renouncing the conception of "society" as founding totality of its partial processes. We must, therefore, consider the openness of the social as the constitutive ground or "negative essence" of the existing, and the diverse "social orders" as precarious and ultimately failed attempts to domesticate the field of differences" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 95-96). The "incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads" Laclau and Mouffe "to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of *"society"* as a sutured and self-defined totality" and society, therefore, ceases to be a "valid object of discourse" (ibid. p. 111). In other words, the idea of a pre-constituted or objective domain of society is discarded in favor of precarious and discursively constructed "social orders," and the taken-for-granted nature of discourses is challenged. Consequently, if society becomes *impossible*—"The social *is* articulation insofar as "society" is impossible" (ibid. p. 114)—then PDA is left with the task of plotting the emergence, sedimentation (institutionalization), reactivation (contestation) of provisional social orders, discursive formations and the identities assigned within and across

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of language as a totalizing structure. The poststructuralist view of language may be expressed through the metaphor of the "internet" where the sign may be seen as a link deriving its meanings in relation to other links but with the possibility that any link may be erased, deleted or transferred to other domains (See Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 9-11).

the plurality of such configurations. The role of discourses in shaping subjectivity is brought to relief, and the transformative process is understood as the alteration in power relations in favor of marginal subjects (Glynos & Howarth, 2008).

However, to stress that reality is only accessible through language or discourse does not mean that there is no reality. PDA retains the sense of "out-thereness," realism or materialism but stresses the constitution of its meaning through mediation by concepts, categories, and discourses. As Laclau and Mouffe put it:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of "natural phenomena" or "expressions of the wrath of God", depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 94).

In contrast to the "assumption of the *mental* character of discourse," Laclau and Mouffe "affirm the *material* character of every discursive structure" (ibid. p. 94). By suggesting that the practice of articulation "cannot consist of purely linguistic phenomena" but rather "pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices" the social consequences of discursive formations are duly stressed

(ibid. p. 109). Discourses, therefore, are not merely "cognitive" or "contemplative" entities but rather "an articulatory *practice* which constitutes and organizes social relations" (ibid. p. 96). Following this line of argument, PDA collapses the distinction between "discursive" and "non-discursive" to embrace all social phenomena. As discourses are central to our construction of reality, the contestation of meanings by different social actors has concrete social consequences and a bearing on transformative practices. In a way, social transformation turns out to be coeval to discursive change once the thought/reality, mind/matter, or idealism/materialism dualities have been deconstructed.

PDA may be construed as a research program with an anti-essentialist ontology, anti-foundationalist epistemology, a "conceptual tool kit" that informs the investigation of its carefully constructed research objects and the methodological stance of "constrained constructivism." Ontology refers to "a theory about what the world is like—what the world consists of, and why. Another way of thinking about ontology is to think of it as a world view" (Strega, 2005, p. 201). PDA's anti-essentialist social ontology stresses the radical contingency and structural incompleteness of all social formations. PDA dispenses with any transcendental determining center in a Derridean sense that structures the discourse without itself undergoing structuration. As an illustration, one may refer to signifiers like God, Reason, Humanity, Nature, and the Iron Laws of Capitalism that have dominantly played the role of transcendental centers in the Western intellectual tradition (Torfing, 2005, p. 13). In a Lacanian sense, every symbolic order assumes the Real's disruptive presence, which marks the impossibility of any fullness of being (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 11). The ontological

stance shapes epistemology, which refers to "the question of basic assumptions about the precondition of cognition of the world" (Andersen, 2003, p. xi). PDA's anti-foundationalist stance on epistemological issues dispenses off any singularity in terms of truth-claims. Instead, the stress is on multiple representations of reality whose verifiability or truth claims are dependent on what Foucault would call a "regime of truth." Hence, there is no universal truth deriving from any foundation or ground, but rather "*effects of truth* […] are produced within discourses that, in themselves, are neither true nor false" (Foucault, 2006, p. 152). While in his early works, Foucault developed the archaeological method that focused on discursive forms. In the later genealogical approach, he emphasizes the conditions of emergence of forms themselves and talks of the knowledge-power complexes and repressive/productive forms of power (Howarth, 2002). In this sense,

> […] truth isn't outside power or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth—that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 2006, p. 168).

PDA's fundamental concepts are discourse, hegemony, and social antagonism that are reworked versions of the traditional concepts of structure, politics, and conflict in conventional theory (Torfing, 1999, pp. 81-83). As already stated, one of the most fundamental suppositions of PDA is that all objects and actions are meaningful and that they derive their meaning through discourses. A discourse is a "differential ensemble of signifying sequences in which meaning is constantly negotiated" (Torfing, 1999, p. 85). As per Walton and Boon, "The concept of discourse is used to name and view the strategies of signification or meaning-making engaged by a set of agents as they battle to fix the presence of a particular identity of an object, subject or practice" (2014, p. 353). Hence, discourses fix or arrest meaning/identities contingently in an infinite field of possibilities. Laclau and Mouffe illustrate the discursive operations within concrete discourses that produce ordering effects through the logics of equivalence/difference, overdetermination, and the functionality of nodal points:

> […] we will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105).

The contingent fixation of meaning/identity presupposes a "field of discursivity" (or "discursive exterior") that is a domain signifying "surplus of meaning" (or floating elements). Various discourses try to fix the

meaning/identity of the contingent elements into critical internal moments even when "the transition from the "elements" to the "moments" is never entirely fulfilled" (ibid. p. 110). "This field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed, is the field of overdetermination" (ibid. p. 111). It is in this space of infinitude of possibilities that articulatory practice arrests the slide of meaning by employing "nodal points" (in Lacan's terms *points de capiton*: "quilting points"), which are privileged signifiers that bind or unify a particular chain of signification. As per Marttila (2015, p. 49), nodal points "constitute the "points of reference" that symbolize the identity of a discourse, make it possible to distinguish one discourse from other discourses, and conceive of the logic of commonality that attaches signifiers to relations of mutual differences." Laclau (1990) suggested that the nodal points are empty signifiers or a pure signifier without the signified. In a period of social crisis or dislocation, there is a proliferation of floating signifiers whose meaning has been lost. Articulatory practice reconstitutes meaning/identity through the nodal points (empty signifiers) within a discourse. The ordering effects inside a discourse also depend on the intersecting logics of equivalence and difference. While the "logic of equivalence" refers to the simplification of political space into antagonistic poles through condensation or unification of identities (metaphor), the logic of difference works through expansion of the discursive order by rupturing existing chains of equivalence and continuously incorporating floating elements (metonymy). In populist discourses, the logic of equivalence dominates, while the logic of difference informs the pluralist discourses.

Discourses, therefore, are decentred structures that provide multiple "subject positions" (and corresponding "subject roles") with which the subjects can identify. The recruitment of subjects by discourses is termed "subjectivation." However, the subject "is internal to the structure, but it has neither a complete structural identity nor a complete lack of structural identity. Rather it has a failed structural identity" (Torfing, 2005, p. 17). Therefore, the subject that is overdetermined and torn between various conflicting points of identity conferred by different discourses is fragmented or split. In Lacanian terms, it is traumatized by its lack of fullness—by its fundamental lack—and therefore perpetually strives to be whole again. In periods of dislocation or organic crisis, the subject faces a simultaneous identity crisis and identifies with new political projects. The operation where the subject attempts to heal the lack through the decision to identify with new projects/identities is the process of "identification" and constitutes its political subjectivity. However, this identification process launches the subject into collision with competing identities/discourses that block its identity (and interests). Hence, "social antagonism" manifests itself and underscores the primacy of the political in the constitution of discourses and identities in PDA. All discursive formations and identities are partially fixed against exteriority—the "discursive outside" or "constitutive outside." The partial fixation and simultaneous exclusion of alternate meanings involve the exercise of power, force, and repression: it is political and consists of the play of will, passion, and affect (Howarth, 2013). It also makes it vulnerable to the subversive return of repressed. "The construction of a constitutive outside facilitates the displacement of responsibility for the split subject's lack onto an enemy,

which is held responsible for all evil. The externalization of the subject's lack to an enemy is likely to fuel political action that will be driven by an illusionary promise: that the elimination of the other will remove the subject's original lack" (Torfing, 2005, p. 17). Social antagonism creates political frontiers or "limit points" in a discursive order. It indicates a zone of destabilization/contestation for social meanings/identities. In fact, "objectivity" or "literality" of a discursive order is simultaneously constituted and subverted by the element of antagonism, or the radical otherness that cannot be domesticated (Howarth, 2002, pp. 101-111).

While society is not possible as a sutured totality, it is possible to construe it as a collection of contingent and colliding discursive orders. It also becomes necessary to arrest the sliding of meaning for arriving at some semblance of social order. In this respect, while discourses fix meanings/identities through various discursive operations within the space of particular discourses, the logic of hegemony "achieves this fixation across discourses that collide antagonistically" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 48). Hegemony may be defined as "an exemplary form of political practice which involves the linking together of different identities and political forces into a common project, and the creation of new social orders from a variety of dispersed elements" (Howarth, 2002, p. 109). Hegemonic practice presupposes "dislocation" or the disruption of symbolic orders through events and its discursive operation involves the categories of ideology, myths, and social imaginaries. While the dominant understanding of ideology either frames it as false-consciousness or places it at the superstructure level as an epiphenomenon of the economic base, Laclau uses ideology to refer to the process of "non-recognition of the precarious character

of any positivity" (1990, p. 92). "Myths" are new spaces of representation that attempt to cover-over dislocations, and successful myths eventually become "social imaginaries." In other words, "the notions of myth and social imaginary conceptualize the ideological forms of discourse that aim to construct society and social agency as positive and fully sutured identities" (Torfing, 1999, p. 115). The concept of hegemony, therefore, comes in between "objectivity" and "the political." Objectivity refers to sedimented discursive practices and the political as the antagonistic field of power that can always problematize and subvert all objectivity and literality; objectivity and every apparent "nature" is concealed power (Smith, 1998, p. 92). Hegemony, therefore, is also an operation that organizes social consent and makes the social possible. Within the conceptual matrix laid down above, PDA offers a novel and possible solutions to the central problems in social theory like structure and agency, power and authority, and the relation between universal and the particular (Torfing, 1999, pp. 135-186)

Marttila (2015, pp. 97-117) labels the methodological stance of PDA as "constrained constructivism," which heuristically guides the researcher as to what paths to take (positive heuristic) or avoid (negative heuristic). PDA works with the logic of "discursive structuration," which refers to the dialectical relationship between discourses and articulatory practices of social subjects. The logic of discursive structuration also enables the researchers to effectuate the first methodological stance of "second-order hermeneutics" in their research. Second-order hermeneutics was influenced by Heidegger's critique of Husserl's phenomenological methodological position and emphasized the limitations

of the subject's self-conscious conceptions as the ultimate determinant of meaning. Instead, PDA attempts to locate actors' self-interpretations in a broader discourse-historical perspective by employing theoretical concepts and logics not readily available to social actors themselves. The logic of discursive structuration also enables an "epistemological break" with pre-and non-scientific bodies of knowledge: ideological prejudices and common-sense conceptions of the world. Poststructuralist approaches work with the assumption of transitive knowledge, where knowledge is not transparent but relative to a particular culture. In this sense, all knowledge is a representation and never grasps the real being of objects being analyzed. Hence, one can never escape the epistemic bias and the limits of cognition. The second methodological stance of "methodological holism" advocates the application of "theoretical models of representation" holistically so that the bias of cognition is at the same time fully realized, accepted, and thus also controlled. PDA favors applying theoretical models of representation in the empirical encounter with reality and envisages scientific progress as the continuous transgression of epistemological limits.

1.3.3 Fieldwork and Analysis

It has been widely held that while offering a robust and valuable theoretical discourse-hegemony framework Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have been relatively cavalier concerning delineating methodological guidelines or suggesting appropriate research methods/techniques for generating empirical data and their analysis (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Marttila, 2015b; Torfing, 1999, 2005). According to Jørgensen & Phillips (2002, p. 8), "Laclau

and Mouffe's discourse theory […] is short on specific methodological guidelines and illustrative examples". Marttila (2015, p. 146) suggests that apart from "exception of hints" in a few works (Glasze, 2013; Marttila, 2013) "there is hardly any information about the scientific methods that could facilitate the attainment of methodologically holistic empirical PDA." It is helpful to keep in mind that PDA is a theoretically informed approach to empirical research where the discourses' phenomenal characteristics and the process of discursive structuration are a priori conceived. The express task of PDA is to "to lend empirical visibility to all parts of discourses constituting and structuring social life" (Marttila, 2015, p. 146) and to "produce new *interpretations*" (Howarth, 2005, p. 321; emphasis original). Overall, the methods/techniques used to generate and interpret empirical data must be consistent with the theoretical and methodological suppositions of the PDA.

The present work is an exemplary "case study" that aspires to investigate a particular instance of internal minority protest from India. Case studies are usually marked by "the emphasis on study-in-depth" where the "strength […] is that it can take an example of an activity – "an instance in action" – and use multiple methods and data sources to explore it and interrogate it. Thus it can achieve a "rich description" (Geertz) of a phenomenon […]" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The first analytical task was the compilation of a "corpus of data" that could render visibility to the phenomenal structure of the PMC given the research questions. The study involved an "intensive, interview-based, "condensed fieldwork" (Walker, 1974). The primary site was the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh), and the fieldwork lasted two years (2011-2013). The

interviews were conducted in Patna, Lucknow, Delhi, Azamgarh, Varanasi, and Mau. Even though some discourse always informs articulation practices by a social subject, it is impossible to detect the discourse one adheres to merely based on a singular articulation. To reconstruct the discourse that constitutes the research object, one needs to establish patterns and coherence in the articulatory practices of various social subjects that possess subject roles in the studied discourse. However, "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 244) and "it partly depends on several factors: the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual cases, and the constraints one is operating under" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 56). In Braun and Clarke's (2013, p. 88) view, "[a] sample size of between 15 and 30 individual interviews tends to be common in research which aims to identify patterns across data". In line with many qualitative types of research, "purposive sampling" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) was undertaken, and data-cases (participant and texts) were selected based on the potential richness of information and insights that they could offer vis-à-vis the research object. During the fieldwork, 25 individual face-to-face interviews with activists, intellectuals, and other relevant participants were conducted. In the selection of the participants the technique of "snowballing" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 90) was employed where my network, references from other participants, the marginality or pronounced nature of the voice, and general guidance from "the field" played a major role. The interviews were "semi-structured," and the research questions were flexibly adhered to draw relevant information and valuable insights.

The interviews were supplemented by the compilation of an "archive" comprised of copies of the movement

journals, pamphlets, posters, handouts, memorandums to the government, newspaper reports, magazine articles, etc. The *interviews* and the *archive*, therefore, constitute the primary material for my research. To assess the analytical validity of compiled data, the idea of "theoretical saturation," derived from grounded theory, is employed. Saturation refers to the point when "fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights" (Charmaz cited in Marttila, 2015, p. 148). However, Marttila (2015, p. 148) finds the idea of saturation inconsistent with the theoretical assumptions of PDA and suggests that "the absence of any objective foundations and natural locations of discourse together with the epistemically biased nature of empirical analysis impede/restrict the possibility to assess the sufficiency of data in terms of "theoretical saturation." Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 89) state that "[s]aturation invokes a particular model of qualitative research (experiential, more positivist), where data are collected to provide a *complete* and *truthful* picture of the object of study, a theoretical position not all qualitative research subscribes to." In this respect, Marttila (2015, p. 148) suggests that the "sufficiency of the gathered data must be assessed pragmatically with regard to its empirical plausibility". Following this care was taken to ensure that the participants occupied subject roles within the Pasmanda discourse. The articulation of the participants/texts selected were broadly "representative enough to lend visibility to the entire discourse under review" (ibid. p. 148).

The second analytical stage involved the content analysis of the compiled data to address the research questions. Discourse analysis involves the systematic and structured study of texts. Hence, once the material was collected, it was selectively translated into textual form

—transcription of interviews, speeches, etc. The text analysis was informed by the method of "thematic analysis" developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke over the years (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013). The interview transcripts and other archival material were read multiple times for familiarization, and relevant extracts, information, and observations that illuminated the research questions were recorded in a template. The extracts were initially coded by using "data-derived or semantic codes" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 287) [See Appendix 1 for an example of coded transcript]. The interpretative and iterative process, in the sense that it involved a close interaction between the reader and text, eventually witnessed the merger, deletion, and addition of new codes [See Appendix 2]. The themes were generated not only based on prevalence or frequency in the data but also on their richness or capacity to illuminate the research project's central concerns. In PDA's terminology, the term "Pasmanda" was identified as the nodal point that provides identity to the discourse and quilts the various elements (moments) —subjects, practices, objects—in the discourse. Figure 1 graphically depicts the structural topology of the PMC and, in a way, constitutes the explanandum that is analyzed and explained using the conceptual tool-kit laid down by the PDA.

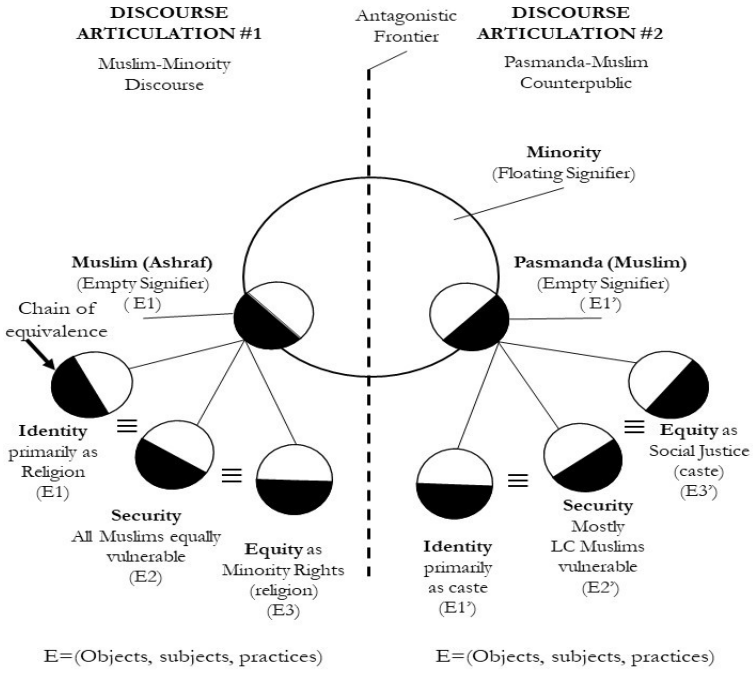


Figure 1. Topography of the Pasmanda Counterpublic

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter two, titled *Pluralism, Democracy, and Internal Minorities: A Conceptual Exploration*, discusses the relevant conceptual frames to address the "internal minority problematique" in the background of the emerging concerns around pluralism and democracy. Building on the analytical tensions embedded in the mutually imbricated dyads—pluralism/pluralization (Connolly), recognition/redistribution (Fraser), and publics/subaltern-counterpublics (Fraser)—to denote deep pluralism and democracy, C2 traces the conceptual genealogy of the internal minority question. It does this by a) the deconstruction of the homogeneous national political community and abstract citizenship to arrive at

the emergence of group rights and multiculturalism; b) the deconstruction of the cultural community and the emergence of the "minorities within minorities" or "internal minority" problematique. C2 then briefly maps the relevant conceptual resources to resolve the internal minorities' problem.

Having laid out the conceptual framework, chapter three, titled *Muslim-Minority Discourse and Its Internal Caste Others: The Emergence of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic* traces the diachronic evolution of the "Muslim" and "Minority" category and its eventual articulation and sedimentation in the postcolonial context as the Muslim-Minority Discourse (MMD). C3 demonstrates that MMD shares a constitutive relation with the repression of the Muslim caste question. MMD's advancing of the notion of Muslims as a monolithic and unified subaltern community has been contested through the resurrection of Muslim caste at two critical historical junctures: a) the "first wave" of the Pasmanda movement (1926-1947) wherein the All India Momin Conference (AIMC) contested the HC ashraf hegemony instantiated by the pro-Partition All India Muslim League (AIML); b) the "second wave" of Pasmanda movement (the 1990s onward) that was activated with the formation of the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz. C3 explores the conditions of possibility under which the Muslim caste expresses itself as a sign of counterhegemony vis-a-vis the MMD and its consequences. The genealogy of the emergence of the PMC provides the ground for the subsequent contestations of the significant moments of the MMD: identity, security, and equity.

Chapter four, titled *Like a Sackcloth Patch on Muslin Cloth: The Pasmanda Politics of Identity,* traces how the hegemonic ashraf cultural/value framework maintains

cultural imperialism wherein the perspectives, cultures, and bodies of LC Muslims are invisibilized and inferiorized. Building on the narratives of the Pasmanda activists, C4 argues that the questions of humiliation and dignity are at the core of a) the enactment of the Pasmanda-Muslim identity and the advancing of the counterhegemonic notion of solidarity of pan-religion lower castes as an exercise in redefinition; b) the PMC's emphasis on "social" (caste/gender) and "theological" reform.

Chapter five, titled *Contesting Bhaydohan: Pasmanda Discourse on Security and Communalism,* represents and analyses the Pasmanda narratives and contestations on the question of inter-religious violence and communalism. It discusses the PMC's emphasis on the instrumentalist approach to violence: communalism as pan-religion caste elite's machination to retain their sovereignty and displace the social justice demands of the subaltern and the immediate connection with electoral politics. While bringing in the class/spatial distribution of vulnerability during anti-Muslim violence, PMC asserts that while almost all victims are LC Muslims, the entrepreneurship around Muslim "sentimental victimology" benefits the Ashraf sections in consolidating their self-proclaimed leadership over the community and bargaining with the state for privileges. C5 points at the limitations of the instrumentalist approach and contends that the constitutive and psychoanalytic dimensions of violence regarding identity formation need to be paid more attention to by the PMC than it has done so far.

Chapter six, titled *The Pursuit of Masavat (Equity),* examines the PMC's narratives on the engagement with the state on issues related to recognition, representation,

and redistribution. Presenting concrete caste-aggregated data on the Muslim representation in political power, public employment, and education displaces the uncomplicated conflation of the Muslim with subalternity. In almost all spheres, the HC Muslims are overrepresented at the expense of the LC Muslims. C6 then charts out the complexity of the contestations on Muslim quota and demonstrates the limits of existing minority imagination in accommodating emerging justice issues. More particularly, the PMC's demand for the inclusion of Dalit Muslims in the SC category demonstrates the state's inability to handle two legally incompatible identities—the Muslim minority (religion) and SC (caste) in this instance.

CHAPTER TWO

PLURALISM, DEMOCRACY AND INTERNAL MINORITIES: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The contemporary ethos of pluralism has posed significant challenges to our received understanding of democracy. The vexed domains of the relationality between democracy and diversity at one level and between democracy, state, and civil society at another, are of central relevance to this study. The discussions on diversity have witnessed two significant shifts. The communitarians initially challenged the post-war liberal imagination of the homogenized national community and abstract-universal citizenship for betraying an atomistic and difference-blind understanding of the social self's constitution. The communitarian critics, arguing from the vantage point of deep diversity, created the conditions of possibility for the liberal "cultural turn" (Ray & Sayer, 1999). The subsequent emergence of liberal multiculturalism as a theoretical and policy

domain resulted in spirited advocacy of equal group rights for minor cultures and identities. However, more recently, the heterogeneities within cultural communities have been increasingly problematized in the emerging literature on the "minorities-within-minorities" or "internal minorities" problematique.

Further, the debates on engaged and meaningful citizenship have brought the relationship between democracy and civil society to a relief. In the classical Hegelian tradition, civil society was conceptualized as a space between the family and the State. Tocqueville imagined civil society as a countervailing force to the State's tyrannical and authoritarian tendencies (Elliott, 2003). While the "prescriptive" view of civil society advances the notion of its autonomy from the state, and as a universally accessible and participatory site of civic engagement, contestation, and vigilance, the "descriptive" aspects of actually existing civil society have often betrayed its domination by elite and even illiberal groups (Jayal, 2001, p. 43-44). While contesting the hegemonic rendering of civil society and public sphere, the recent subaltern mobilizations have also demonstrated the crucial role of civil society in democratic deepening by constituting a vital link in shrinking the space between formal and substantive translations of democracy (Heller, 2000). In the sections that follow, I will discuss the concepts and debates relevant to this study in the interpenetrating domains of the relationship of democracy with diversity and civil society.

2.2 PLURALISM AS THE ETHOS OF LATE-MODERNITY

In 1909, William James's opening statement in his lecture "Concerning Fechner" that "The prestige of the absolute has rather crumbled in our hands" (James, 1909, p. 133), in a way anticipated the central concern of our times: the messy encounter of the received universals of modernity with the fundamental fact of pluralism in all sectors of contemporary life. James' articulation of "radical empiricism" (James, 1912) back then, which parochialized the philosophical dominance of universalism and monism by emphasizing the incommensurability of values, visions, and reality itself, inspired a later generation of theorists that work within what has been termed as "the pluralist imagination" (Schlosberg, 2006). More recently, White emphasized that "the realization has increasingly deepened that we live in a world in which "ends collide"—both across "comprehensive conceptions" and within them" and that "we no longer have the comfort of any secure metanarratives that guarantee reconciliation" (White, 2002, p. 474).

In a way, the contemporary—which Giddens attempts to capture through terms like "late modernity," "high modernity," or "post-tradition modernity"—can be characterized as a period of speedy transformations in the struggles obtaining in the spheres of personal ("life politics") and social ("emancipatory politics") selves (Giddens, 1991, p. 9). The dynamism of change affecting pluralism effects in the last few decades have several causal factors: a) global reconfigurations after the collapse of communist states in eastern and central Europe in 1989; b) the increase in transnational mobility of labor (especially from postcolonial locations to the

centers of erstwhile empires); and c) the general acceleration of speed in transportation, communication, political mobilization and so on due to the process of globalization of economic and cultural life (Benhabib, 2002, p. 113-114; Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 37). It has been claimed that "the issue of pluralism is a central question of late-modernity" (Chambers & Carver, 2008; p. 323) and, consequently, there has been an upsurge of scholarly interest in political pluralism in recent years (Bevir, 2012, p. 1).

The modern conditions of pluralism put increasing strains on the traditional responses to identity and its relationship with significant others. William Connolly, "a major figure in rethinking the pluralist imagination" (Schlosberg, 2006, p. 146), employs the term "pluralization" to refer to the contemporary experience of radical contingency, diversity, and transformation. Connolly contrasts pluralization with conventional approaches to pluralism that, according to him, are "confined by the very nationalism its defenders often purport to transcend" (Connolly, 1996, p. 53). Reflecting on the American theorizations of pluralism, Connolly notes the influence of Tocqueville, who furthered an arboreal understanding of "national pluralism" consisting "of a national trunk of common mores rooted in the soil of Christianity" from which other notions like morality, secular reason, nation, and political imagination branch out (Connolly, 1996, p. 54). What this set of conceptual correspondences constitute, in Connolly's view, is a "core code" which the idea of America represents, and anything that "breaks the code must be forsaken or excluded" (Connolly, 1996, p. 55). While crediting Tocqueville for providing important leads in understanding pluralism, Connolly feels that the logical consequence of national pluralism is the

proliferation of "others" that often violate or collide with the code. Therefore, it is unsuitable for a mobile, globalizing and multicultural world. Connolly asks for a reworking of traditional approaches to pluralism that, according to him, endorse a "state-centered ideal" and celebrate "diversity within settled contexts of conflict and collective action" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 39).

Such hegemonic renderings of the territorial nation, mono-secular/monotheistic conceptions of life and the "normal" individual on this view are now under increasing pressure from what Connolly calls the "politics of becoming." The politics of becoming alludes to the process "by which new rights, identities, goods, and faiths periodically struggle to move from subsistence below the thresholds of legitimacy and justice onto those registers" (Connolly, 2011, p. 3). The dynamics of late-capitalism thus "helps to foment a veritable minoritization of the world as numerous constituencies of multiple types cross old borders and enter into relations with a "majority" culture that often makes up an actual minority of the populace" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 323)**.** While pluralization marks the ruptures in the entrenched norms, identities, or conceptions of life, the paradox of identity\difference betrays a move in the opposite direction. From this view, identity is imaginable only within a field of difference. Yet concomitantly, "it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty" (Connolly, 2002, p. xiv). In a way, "every drive to *pluralize* identities in the domains of sexuality, gender, religion, language, and nationality is accompanied by the corollary temptation by dominant identities to *fundamentalize* what they are" (Connolly, 1996, p. 60). Hence, while pluralization alludes to the shifting experience of radical alterity or difference, pluralism speaks for far more settled notions of diversity.

In Connolly's view, "the dissonant relation between pluralism and pluralization" could be framed "as the constitutive tension of pluralist politics itself" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 39).

One may employ Connolly's description of pluralism—notably, the strains on hegemonic notions of nation, good life, normalcy, and the centrality of identity\difference paradox—as an entry point to flag various emerging concerns around the shifting nature of democracy, citizenship, and justice. As we earlier imagined, the "state" and "society" are undergoing a phase of rapid deconstruction and resignification. Bevir, while tracing the conceptual history of modern pluralism from the 1880s onward in the context of the US and Europe, suggests that in the accounts of various categories of contemporary pluralists—liberal, socialist, empirical—the twin issues of "multiculturalism" and "networked governance" are in vogue (Bevir, 2012a; p. 17). The recent debates then attempt to capture the "drives to civil society, multiculturalism, return of the colonial repressed, transnational mobility, and pluralist tolerance" (Chambers & Carver, 2008, p. 37). Democracy, a piece in *The Economist* suggests, faces a "disturbing retreat" as more than half the countries witnessed their democratic-health index scores decline (The Data Team, 2018). Another volume gathered several distinguished scholars to discuss the state of the shifting nature of democracy (Agamben et al., 2011). The sphere of democratic theory is animated with discussions on innovative conceptions of democracy like deliberative, difference, cosmopolitan, ecological, and others with related imaginations of citizenship (Saward, 2006, p. 400).

2.3 CITIZENSHIP AND THE CULTURAL TURN

Kymlicka and Norman emphasize the neglect of citizenship in post-war debates, “In most postwar political theory, the fundamental normative concepts were a democracy (for evaluating procedures) and justice (for evaluating outcomes). Citizenship, if it was discussed at all, was usually seen as derivative of democracy and justice—that is, a citizen is someone who has democratic rights and claims of justice” (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 368). On this view, “citizenship must play an independent normative role in any plausible political theory and that the promotion of responsible citizenship is an urgent aim of public policy” (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 368). The debates around multiculturalism have been central to citizenship issues. In this context, Mahajan points at two waves of multicultural writing. While the first wave deconstructed the nation-state and contested a homogeneous political community's imagination, the second wave goes further and deconstructs the cultural community as well (Mahajan, 2005, p. 90). In other words, while the conceptual ruptures in the idea of a cohesive national political community reveal the internal diversity of cultures and multiculturalism (or minority rights) as an appropriate theoretical or policy response, the interrogation of culture reveals the problématique of “minorities-within-minorities” or “internal minorities.”

The 1990s saw an explosion of interest in citizenship among political theorists (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 352). One may set the broad horizon of these debates within the three key dimensions or components of the citizenship principle: legal, political, and identity (Carens, 2000; Cohen, 1999). As a juridical or legal status, citizenship broadly refers to the legal rights of

being a political community member. The legal dimension entails the freedom to act according to law and to claim the State's protection. The political dimension of citizenship refers to citizens' agency to deliberate and participate in the community's political institutions. The identity or the "psychological" dimension of citizenship as Carens puts it refers to the belonging or membership in a political community that could generate solidarity, civic virtue or engagement. In a way, the key debates on citizenship revolve around the different weights various approaches put on these three dimensions. As Cohen notes:

> Depending on whether they are republican or democratic theorists for whom the active participatory dimension is the most salient, liberals concerned with personal rights and matters of justice, or communitarian theorists for whom the dimension of collective identity and solidarity matters most, political theorists have focused on…one or another component when conceptualizing citizenship (Cohen, 1999, p. 248).

However, the "modern paradigm of citizenship" hegemonic in the post-war period was in the main inspired by T. H. Marshall's seminal essay "Citizenship and Social Class" written in 1949 (Cohen, 1999, p. 252). Marshall's work extended the orthodoxy of citizenship-as-rights, whose key features have been widely understood to entail civil, political, and social rights. Civil citizenship refers to equality before the law; political citizenship entails access to parliamentary institutions, and social citizenship requires a guarantee of economic and social well-being. In his essay, the centrality of "modern social citizenship" aspired to integrate the British working class by softening the impact of unemployment and adverse living conditions through welfare policies. Marshall also argued that such a shift

would ensure stability and social cohesion in the body politic (Marshall, 1994). Overall, on this view, citizenship meant the full and equal membership of all in the context of a liberal democratic welfare state, defined in legal/territorial terms. The way to ensure this was by according people an increasing number of rights. The key democratic mechanism within this imagination was formal political representation through periodic elections further circumscribed by liberal constitutionalism and the rule of law. Citizenship was universal, abstract, and equal. However, this "thin" conception of citizenship has been targeted for being disembodied ("it is one's rational and abstract capacities that count, not ones" body or gender or desires"), disembedded ("citizen identity owes little to particular context […] other than a national one in formal terms"), and difference-blind (Saward, 2006, p. 409). Besides, the passive or thin citizenship-as-status model has been criticized from the vantage point of a thick citizenship-as-activity conception that seeks an "active exercise of citizenship responsibilities and virtues, including economic self-reliance, political participation, and even civility" (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 355).

2.3.1 Deconstructing the National Political Community: The Emergence of Liberal-Multiculturalism (or the Minority Rights Regime)

Notably, the identity dimension of citizenship and the hegemonic image of a homogeneous, national political community underwent scrutiny, especially by the communitarians. Mulhall and Swift suggest the centrality of John Rawls' work in what came to be subsequently termed as the "liberal-communitarian" debates. "Both communitarian critics and defenders of versions of liberalism other than that offered by Rawls

have formulated their positions in terms that make explicit reference to his theory, so that in many ways Rawls simply *did* define the agenda and continues to do so" (Mulhall & Swift, 1992, p. 1; original emphasis). Rawls famously rearticulated the liberal focus on autonomy with justice by claiming that an "overlapping consensus" was possible between partisans of comprehensive doctrines if all take recourse to rational principles in public argumentation (Rawls, 1993). His theory of "justice as fairness" advances two basic principles: the first guarantees equal fundamental liberties to all and the second tolerates socio-economic inequalities if there is fair equality of opportunity and if they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of the society (the difference principle). He argued that individuals as reasonable citizens could work towards a just society while bracketing their cultural particularities or comprehensive doctrines. In his original position, a thought experiment, the representatives of each citizen reach an agreement on the principles of justice required to organize the fundamental political institutions of real citizens by employing the "veil of ignorance" where the arbitrary facts about the citizens are prevented from influencing the agreement (Rawls, 1971). As Carens put it, "On this account, justice requires a hands off approach to culture and identity, out of respect for the equality and freedom of individuals. The state has no business supporting or opposing any particular identity or culture" (Carens, 2000, p. 8).

The communitarians took issues with the liberal conception of the "self" as "atomistic" (Taylor, 1985a) or "unencumbered" (Sandel, 1984; Walzer, 1990). For Taylor, atomism alludes to "a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfillment of

ends which were primarily individual […] the priority of the individual and his rights over society, or which present a purely instrumental view of society" (Taylor, 1985, p. 187). Walzer paints the picture of a liberal world as one that emphasizes contractual ties, voluntarism, self-interest, and procedural justice over substantive questions of good (Walzer, 1990, p. 10). "Each individual imagines himself absolutely free, unencumbered, and on his own—and enters society, accepting its obligations, only in order to minimize his risks" (Walzer, 1990, p. 8). In this view, liberalism foments fragmentation and separateness in society. The "more dissociated individuals are, the stronger the state is likely to be since it will be the only or the most important social union. And then membership in the state, the only good that is shared by all individuals, may well come to seem the good that is "best" (Walzer, 1990, p. 17). The communitarian critique emphasized on how the community was constitutive of the "self" and formed the immediate context of morality and self-definition (Honneth, 2004). Moreover, since individuals remain embedded in their culture, history, faith and so on, the Rawlsian heuristic of the veil of ignorance was in a way an unfair articulation of justice on the communitarian view.

Charles Taylor, in the widely discussed paper "The Politics of Recognition," stressed the need to "recognize" historically marginalized identities as "misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Taylor noted that while hierarchical societies emphasized the inegalitarian and birth-determined concept of "honor," democratic societies have seen the emergence of the notions of "dignity" and "authenticity." The principle of democratic equality ensures equal dignity, rights, and entitlements

to all irrespective of their cultural attachments. However, Taylor invokes the Herderian notion of authenticity as "self-realization" as equally important, which assumes that individuals and cultures must try to "be true" to their inner nature. In this sense, "we define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (Taylor, 1994, p. 33) and what we are looking for is acceptance of ourselves by others in our identity. While recognition as a "vital human need" is part of the human condition, what distinguishes modernity from earlier historical epochs is the unique possibility that recognition might *fail* (Taylor, 1994, p. 34-35)**.** Misrecognition, therefore, could lead individuals to internalize an inferior view of themselves or develop self-loathing and could cause significant injury. Taylor suggests that at present, the difference-blind "politics of equal dignity" seems engaged in a confrontation with the "politics of difference" that takes authenticity seriously. The charge from the partisans of the latter is that difference-blind politics of dignity "is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture" or "a particularism masquerading as the universal"[20] (Taylor, 1994, p. 43-44). The inherent assimilationism of the politics of equal dignity is a denial of authenticity. Since some individuals and groups value their culture as a site of self-realization, the demand for their protection should not be surprising. Ironically, equality, apart from addressing "sameness," now also has to take cognizance of "difference." Hence, democracy "has now returned in the form of demands for the equal status of cultures and of genders" (Taylor, 1994, p. 27).

[20] For a comprehensive discussion on how liberalism is shaped by Christianity see Fawcett, 2014 and Siedentop, 2014.

Apart from the demand for cultural equality and "deep diversity," Taylor enriches the notion of liberal autonomy by making a case for the centrality of culture to individual freedom (Taylor, 1985b). Taylor problematizes Isaiah Berlin's dichotomization between positive and negative liberty (Berlin, 1969). While positive liberty refers to self-determination and therefore is an "exercise" concept, negative liberty alludes to freedom from external constraints and is therefore supposed to be an "opportunity" concept. Taylor muddies the distance between the two concepts of liberty through various illustrations. For instance, while installing a traffic light near one's house that could cause slight delays will not be construed as an obstacle to negative liberty, the same logic will not hold if one's right to worship was restricted. Taylor argues that this is so because "we have a background understanding […] of some activities and goals as highly significant for human beings and others as less so" (Taylor, 1985b, p. 218). In this sense, while all, including atheists, would consider the case of religious worship as significant, the inconvenience arising out of the installation of the traffic light, in contrast, is a "trivial" issue. Hence, Taylor suggests that "some discrimination among motivations seems essential to our concept of freedom." Since freedom is vital to us because we are purposive beings, "there must be distinctions in the significance of different kinds of freedom based on the distinction in the significance of different purposes" (Taylor, 1985b, p. 219). Taylor infers that even the advocate of negative liberty is compelled to rely on some basic understanding of what actions are significant for self-realization. In this sense, Taylor challenges the liberal view of freedom and suggests that freedom has to be more than an opportunity concept even from the perspective of negative liberty. One may

clearly infer that if freedom were just a question of negative liberty and freedom from external obstacles then society would have no place for cultural or group rights. Taylor's problematization stressed that the exercise of freedom relies intimately on our notions of culture.

The communitarian critique pushed many liberal scholars to revisit their earlier assumptions and calibrate theoretical understandings accordingly. Initially, two critical responses to Taylor's analysis of negative liberty emerged in liberal thought that invoked the concept of autonomy as an exercise concept (Pfeffer, 2015, p. 11). The first response was from Joseph Raz, who argued that for liberal autonomy to work, there must be non-coercion, development of inner capacities, and "an adequate range of options for [one] to choose from" (Raz, 1986, p. 408). Raz suggested that autonomy necessitated a public culture that formed the structure within which individuals make choices among meaningful options (Raz, 1986, p. 422). Along similar lines, in his analysis of why it is just for liberal states to use public funds to support arts programs, Ronald Dworkin emphasizes the protection of a cultural structure without privileging any particular culture or way of life (Dworkin, 1985). Both Raz and Dworkin assert the value of public (mainstream) culture but still stop protecting minority cultures. Within the liberal tradition, "cultural pluralists," as Kymlicka and Norman call them, were the first to argue the case for group rights forcefully. On this view, "many groups—blacks, women, Aboriginal peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, gays and lesbians—still feel excluded from the "common culture," despite possessing the common rights of citizenship" and that they felt "excluded not only because of their socio-economic status but also because

of their socio-cultural identity—their 'difference'" (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 370).

In this context, Iris Marion Young's conceptualization of "differentiated citizenship" was particularly influential (Young, 1989, p. 258). Young stressed that "in a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce the privilege; for the perspective and interests of the privileged will tend to dominate this unified public, marginalizing or silencing those of other groups" (Young, 1989, p. 257). Hence, she urged for a complication of the notion of citizenship and the need for a differential response to various kinds of oppressed groups who confront what she calls the "five faces of oppression": namely, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 1989, p. 261). Genuine equality for Young meant affirming group rights because some groups confront exclusion from the political process or may have distinctive needs. According to Young, some historically disadvantaged groups may demand special representation rights in the political process. Others may wish to secure their distinctive cultural forms of life or faith-based practices through multicultural rights. Yet others who see themselves as separate nationalities may demand increasing self-government. However, these rights may often overlap, and some groups may claim more than one right (Young, 1990, p. 175-191).

However, after Young's initial posing of the problem, Will Kymlicka made a pioneering and comprehensive effort in working out the cultural implications for the liberal argument. He argues that since "societal cultures"

provide individuals with a "context of choice" (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 166), it is inadequate to restrict the discussion to merely public culture. If minority cultures were not granted special protections, they would be disadvantaged when it comes to the "economic and political procedures used to translate choices into outcomes" (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 183). Mainly because "it is impossible for political institutions to be culturally neutral" and therefore, even when there is neutrality in justification for a particular decision regarding culture—for instance, in the choice of language, calendar, and history, and so on—the neutrality in effect may be compromised. In this sense, Kymlicka delineates three kinds of minorities—national minorities, polyethnic, and aboriginal groups—and argues for a system of differentiated citizenship rights (Kymlicka, 1995). Liberal multiculturalism, therefore, emerged "as a middle-of-the-road approach between the communitarian ideal of individuals embedded in their culture, and the old school liberal approach critiqued for depicting atomistic individuals" (Pfeffer, 2015, p. 14). Most liberals accept the importance of group rights now (Philpott, 2008; Raz, 1994; Shachar, 2001).

In 2001, Will Kymlicka announced that "in terms of the more general question of whether minority rights are *inherently* unjust, the debate is over, and the defenders of minority rights have won the day" (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 33). However, far from Kymlicka's triumphalist tone, multiculturalism, and minority rights continued to have their detractors. There was talk of the "retreat of multiculturalism" (Joppke, 2004). In terms of policy, the Netherlands seems to be the most studied case (Entzinger, 2007; Koopmans, 2010; Vink, 2007). At the populist level, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in the context of the increasing anxieties around

immigration, announced in 2010, "This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed"(Weaver, 2010). Reiterating her earlier position, Merkel opined, "Multiculturalism leads to parallel societies and therefore remains a "life lie" or a sham" (Noack, 2015). In fact, in most recent criticisms of multiculturalism, it is the reified, enclavist, or the "billiard ball conception of cultures" (Tully, 1995, p. 10) that has been the chief object of contestation. The critique ranges from multiculturalism being responsible for the weakening of national cohesion and solidarity; the rise of aggressive majoritarian racism; misrepresentation, simplification and stereotyping of complex minority cultures (especially Muslims as illiberal); and the silencing of concerns of vulnerable internal minorities or "minorities-within-minorities" (Phillips, 2007).

David Miller, for instance, has raised concerns that radical multiculturalism works against the cohesion, mutual trust, and solidarity of the national community, which in the time of retreat of the welfare state is detrimental to the struggle for redistributive justice (Miller, 1995). Richard Rorty takes on the "cultural left" in America for being too engrossed in questions of identity, recognition, or fighting stigma when compared to issues concerned with poverty, unemployment, and so on. He suggests that "the Left should try to mobilize what remains of our pride in being Americans. It should ask the public to consider how the country of Lincoln and Whitman might be achieved" (Rorty, 1998, p. 92). Multicultural policies have faced resentment for giving undue privileges to immigrants or other minorities. In the literature, the connections of multiculturalism to "culture wars," "multicultural backlash," "racism in a neoliberal age," or the "white backlash," particularly in the context of the rise of Islamic terrorism, is widely discussed

(Benhabib, 2002; Hewitt, 2005; Lentin & Titley, 2011; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Shryock urges us to rethink the Islamophilia/Islamophobia binary and go beyond enemy and friend politics (Shryock, 2010). Anne Phillips feels that the reified understanding of minority cultures lends credence to the problematic stereotyping of minority cultures as illiberal and the Western cultures as liberal in contrast. "Overt expressions of racism were being transformed into a more socially acceptable criticism of minorities said to keep their women indoors, marry their girls off young to unknown and unwanted partners, and force their daughters and wives to wear veils. People not previously marked by their ardent support for women's rights seemed to rely on claims about the maltreatment of women to justify their distaste for minority cultural groups, and in these claims, cultural stereotypes were rife" (Phillips, 2007, p. 2). Taking a cue from the cosmopolitan argument (see Waldron, 1992) but also differentiating from its neglect of cultural issues, she argued that "people are not so very different from one another the world over" (Phillips, 2007, p. 24). If one does not accept this principle, then when Western people beat their wives, it becomes a question of deviation, while a Muslim resorting to the same practice problematically becomes an illiberal and against fundamental democratic values. In a bid to make sense of the rising rage against cultural minorities, Zizek connects multiculturalism to the global ascendance of capital and the dismantling of the welfare state and calls it the "the cultural logic of multinational capitalism" (Zizek, 1997; Zizek, 2010). He suggests that the left and liberal parties have accepted the dominance of the logic of capitalism unquestionably and

> At the very moment when, according to the official ideology, we are finally leaving behind the

> "immature" political passions (the regime of the "political"—class struggle and other "out-dated" divisive antagonisms) for the "mature" post-ideological pragmatic universe of rational administration and negotiated consensus, for the universe, free of utopian impulses, in which the dispassionate administration of social affairs goes hand in hand with aestheticized hedonism (the pluralism of "ways of life")—at this very moment, the foreclosed political is celebrating a triumphant comeback in its most archaic form: of pure, undistilled racist hatred of the Other which renders the rational tolerant attitude utterly impotent. In this precise sense, contemporary "postmodern" racism is the symptom of multiculturalist late capitalism, bringing to light the inherent contradiction of the liberal-democratic ideological project (Zizek, 1997, p. 37).

The terms multiculturalism and minority have also been challenged at the semantic level. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff suggest that "the term "multicultural(ism)" is insufficient to describe the fractious heterogeneity of postcolonies" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003, 456). They propose the terms "ID-ology" and "policulturalism" as postcolonial substitutes for the modernist terms ideology and multiculturalism. While ID-ology refers to "the quest for a collective good, and sometimes goods, sanctioned by, and in the name of, a shared identity," "the prefix, spelled "poli-" in policulturalism "marks two things at once: plurality and its politicization" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003, 456). Amersfoort (1978, p. 220) suggests that "[…] the concept of minority implies that the numerical strength of a group is connected with its social position". The coupling of numeric with power in the minority concept opens it to "such a variety of meanings and contradictory properties […] in the scholarly literature that we can hardly speak of a concept

that can serve as an analytical tool" (ibid. p. 218). In Nibert's (1996, p. 131) view,

> […] the term "minority group," a social scientific euphemism for the victims of widespread exploitation, injustice and incalculable hardship and suffering, garnered widespread acceptance. Labeling unjust societal arrangements as majority/minority group relations diminishes attention to both the causes of this phenomenon and the experiences of oppressed people. Such "objective" terminology facilitates a social scientific sleight-of-hand, transforming socially created, oppressive social relations into what appear to be natural and inevitable aspects of human social existence. The use of a sanitized concept largely forecloses the consideration of repression, injustice and exploitation and the misery inherent in such social arrangements—that is, the reality of oppression.

Nibert further asserts that "It is time that social scientists use a more appropriate term in place of "minority group" or "subordinate group"—"oppressed group." […] Finally, instead of using the terms "majority" or "dominant" group, it is more appropriate to refer to most of those who are the beneficiaries of unjust social relations as "privileged groups" (ibid. pp. 134-135). Wilkinson asks for a "systematic questioning of ingrained seductive words and value-based constructions like minority" from an Afro-American perspective (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 115). She criticizes the term "minority" for being "non-scientific", "devoid of conceptual clarity and empirical validity", "imprecise", "devoid of historical specificity" and because it "simply does not enable understanding of the immense cultural and racial heterogeneity that typifies American society" (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 117-18). Since the term is imprecise and overladen with meanings, it is

unfit for policymaking. Hence, "researchers, clinicians, and teachers must seek ways to incorporate race and ethnicity in all relevant contexts and omit entirely the "minority" concept" (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 124-125).

2.3.2 Deconstructing the Cultural Community: The Problématique of Internal Minorities

While the discontent with multiculturalism was sketched briefly, the emerging criticism from a "minorities-within-minorities" or "internal minorities" vantage point is central to the present work (Benhabib, 2002; Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005; Kymlicka, 1995; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010). The driving concern in this literature is that often the attempts to accommodate cultural minorities through multicultural policies have led community leaders to embark on a communitarianism "that reinforces ethnic boundary-closure, internal homogenization as well as subjugation under collective norms" and the perpetuation of practices that "endorse internal hierarchies and highlight patriarchal values" (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010, p. 102). It was felt that "efforts to develop reasons why political relations between mainstream majorities and minorities ought to be renegotiated tend to present contending interests as though they are uncontroversial within the groups that hold them" and therefore the "issue of minorities within minorities is left unaddressed" (Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005, p. 3).

While the question of internal minorities was discussed by Green (1995), Kymlicka (1995), and Phillips (1992), it was the writings of Ayelet Shachar and Susan Okin that propelled it to academic recognition in the late 1990s. Shachar pointed out the "paradox of multicultural vulnerability," where high costs of multicultural

accommodation are often borne by vulnerable individuals or sections, like women and children, in these groups (Shachar, 1998). Susan Okin's provocative essay "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" published in 1997, drew considerable academic attention to this theme (Okin, 1997; citations from the same text unless indicated). Okin provocatively posed the question: "What should be done when the claims of minority cultures or religions clash with the norm of gender equality that is at least formally endorsed by liberal states (however much they continue to violate it in their practice)?" Building on the public controversy in the late 1980s in France over whether post-pubescent Magrbin girls could attend the school with headscarves or not, she observes that while the votaries of secular education in alliance with feminists and the far right opposed the move, the old left endorsed it from the framework of multicultural diversity. The left, moreover, accused the opponents for their racism or cultural imperialism. For Okin, it was paradoxical that contemporaneously there was public silence on another major issue: the French government's silent approval of polygamy for French Arab and African immigrants since the early 1980s. This policy led to the presence of about 200000 polygamous families in Paris with a huge burden for the wives with respect to hostility between them for want of private space and bad living conditions. When confronted with the strains the policy put on the French welfare state, the government withdrew it abruptly in the mid-1990s, recognizing only one wife and annulment of the other marriages, which imperiled the lives of the concerned women further. This particular instance, for Okin reveals the problem with the assumption in progressive groups that "feminism and multiculturalism are both good things which are easily reconciled." On the contrary, Okin suggests that "that

there is considerable likelihood of tension between them —more precisely, between feminism and a multiculturalist commitment to group rights for minority cultures."

Okin refuses to enter into a conversation with two kinds of scholars. One, those who justify group rights for "illiberal" cultures that are those flout the rights of vulnerable members, at the pretext that "their minority status endangers the culture's continued existence" (Margalit & Halbertal, 1994). Two, those that, despite opposing special rights for groups, condone illiberal practices citing their "right to be "let alone" in a liberal society" (Kukathas, 1992). Both claims, in her view, run contrary to the liberal value of freedom, which entails that "group rights should not trump the individual rights of their members." Following this, her object of engagement is primarily those defenders of multiculturalism who confine their defense of special rights to groups that are internally liberal. She bases her argument on a simple observation that since most cultures are patriarchal with significant asymmetries of power between men and women, the men usually articulate the group's beliefs, practices, and interests. In such a scenario, "group rights are potentially, and in many cases actually, antifeminist" for they may compromise the freedom and dignity of women. The reason why this simple critique of group rights is not adequately addressed owes to the treatment of cultural groups as largely monolithic and because little attention is paid to the private sphere. The assumption of cultures being monolithic invisibilizes the gendered nature of most cultures, especially illiberal cultures, and the privileging of the public sphere at the expense of the private sphere disadvantages women because most of the patriarchal practices may be located in the domestic,

reproductive, or personal lives of women. Since the "personal law" (the laws of marriage, divorce, child custody, division and control of family property, and inheritance) are the focal attention of most minority cultures, the defense of "cultural practices" is "likely to have much greater impact on the lives of women and girls than those of men and boys." Besides, she elicits several illustrations from world cultures and religions to suggest that "most cultures have as one of their principal aims the control of women by men." However, in Western liberal cultures, while patriarchal practices do persist, women are at least "legally guaranteed many of the same freedoms and opportunities as men." In this sense, "most cultures are patriarchal, then, and many (though not all) of the cultural minorities that claim group rights are more patriarchal than the surrounding cultures."

Within this context, she takes issues with Will Kymlicka's defense of cultural rights for minorities. I have already discussed Kymlicka's justification for cultural rights earlier, and therefore one only needs to introduce his distinction between "internal restrictions" and "external protections." In Kymlicka's work, internal restrictions are claims that are "intended to protect the group from the destabilizing impact of *internal dissent* (e.g., the decision of individual members not to follow traditional practices or customs)" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 35). In contrast, external protections "protect the group from the impact of *external decisions* (e.g., the economic or political decisions of the larger society)" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 35). While Kymlicka endorses certain external protections for minorities from the vantage point of fairness between groups, he rejects internal restrictions that "limit the right of group members to question and revise traditional authorities and practices" or "restrict the basic civil or political liberties of its own members"

(Kymlicka, 1995, p. 37). Kymlicka summarizes his position thus: "a liberal view requires *freedom within* the minority group, and *equality between* the minority and majority groups" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 152).

Okin finds Kymlicka's argument to be wanting since while it takes cognizance of and rejects fundamentalist or illiberal groups that normatively do not believe in equality between men and women or publicly violate their civil or political rights, it is impervious to covert forms of discrimination practiced against women in the domestic sphere. As Okin puts it, "the subordination of women is often informal and private, and that virtually no culture in the world today, minority or majority, could pass his (Kymlicka's) "no sex discrimination" test if it were applied in the private sphere." Okin, therefore, argues that "special care must be taken to look at within-group inequalities" and that "there can be no justification for assuming that the groups" self-proclaimed leaders—invariably mainly composed of their older and their male members—represent the interests of all of the groups" members." Overall, she cautions that "It is by no means clear, then, from a feminist point of view, that minority group rights are "part of the solution." They may well exacerbate the problem."

Okin's provocation—encapsulating the tension between feminism and multiculturalism, the monolithization of cultures and domination of group elite, the devaluation of the private sphere and the problem of illiberal minorities—met a series of mixed responses (for the entire debate, see Cohen, Howard, & Nussbaum, 1999). Kymlicka felt that since both feminism and multiculturalism were making "the same point about the inadequacy of the traditional liberal conception of individual rights" (Cohen et al., 1999, p. 32), Okin's sharp

opposition between multiculturalism and feminism was "regrettable." Defending the distinction between internal restrictions and external protections in his work, he felt that the demand for a "constructive elaboration of this distinction" was "no reason to reject the underlying principle" itself. Instead, Kymlicka urged to "see multiculturalism and feminism as allies engaged in related struggles for a more inclusive conception of justice." If a few multiculturalists have undermined feminist concerns, some feminists have been blind to cultural differences. More broadly, Kymlicka insisted on being reflexive about liberalism's "similar theoretical mistakes" in both the case of gender and minority concerns and stressed that both the feminists and multiculturalists "have a common interest in fighting these liberal complacencies" (Cohen et al., 1999, p. 34). The response from Azizah Al-Hibri was particularly harsh. She felt that Okin's paper was "written from the perspective of the dominant cultural "I," a Western point of view burdened with immigrant problems and the human rights conflicts they engender." According to Al-Hibri, Okin's argument betrayed stereotypical assumptions about the "Other," a conflation of distinct belief systems and were in conflict with American constitutional principles "such as the separation of church and state and the freedom of belief." Sharply reacting to what she felt was Okin's cavalier conflation of religion with culture, Al-Hibri maintains that since freedom of conscience was central to American democracy, "people of faith are entitled to their religious beliefs whether secular feminists approve of these beliefs or not." Benhabib later suggested that while "Okin was right in raising these issues, but the tenor with which she criticized cultures for being more or less all patriarchal and, above all, the militant insensitivity she showed in

her depiction of many religious practices among Orthodox Jewish and Muslim groups, raised hackles" (Benhabib, 2002, p. 100).

Okin must be credited for triggering a productive debate on the problem of "minorities-within-minorities." Tragically, Okin passed away before the publication of the first significant volume on the issue titled *Minorities within Minorities: Equality, Rights and Diversity*, and the editors graciously dedicated the book to her memory (Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005). The volume, apart from exploring the conceptual themes like toleration, equality, individual autonomy, self-determination, and democracy from the vantage point of various case studies, listed "many different types of "minorities within," including women, children, gay men, and lesbians, religious dissenters and linguistic minorities within minorities" (Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005, p. 5). Pfaff-Czarnecka sums the issues with internal minorities well:

> In the current epoch of minority self-assertion, majorities and minorities are caught in struggles that are often antagonistic, but that are nevertheless mutually accommodative. In course of mutual negotiations and contestations, readjustments of discourses take place that often have solidifying effects in governmentality constellations. Collective categories are created along which collective identities are endorsed and from which collective claims to rights ensue. These dynamics buttress often reviving traditional practices. "Traditional" positionings tend to privilege internal hierarchies and discourage dissidence by "minorities-within-minorities", that is, challenging established gender-roles, sexual norms, or shunning religious conversion (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010, p. 109).

2.4 APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF INTERNAL MINORITIES

Broadly, three different approaches to resolving the problem of internal minorities emerge in the literature: a) libertarian exit and liberal "meaningful" exit; b) secularist and individualist "re-universalizing citizenship" approach and c) a "liberal democratic accommodationist" or modernizing approach (Bader, 2004, p. 319; Pfeffer, 2015, p. 100). The first set of discussions concern the "right of exit" of vulnerable members from their cultural collectivities. There are two approaches in this matter. The first is the libertarian argument most forcefully advanced by Chandran Kukathas (Kukathas, 1992; Kukathas, 2003). Kukathas insists that the emphasis should be on the protection of individual autonomy and not groups. His argument entails treating groups as voluntary associations and for a more robust interpretation of freedom of conscience and freedom of association. Broadly, if the groups are insular or illiberal, the autonomy principle dictates that there should be no interference from the state. If the individuals find the group practices unacceptable or their position to be vulnerable, freedom of exit should be available. As Kukathas puts it, "In this regard, respecting liberty of conscience requires freedom of association, for it requires letting people dissociate from those with whom they could not, in good conscience, associate. Freedom of association has to be understood not as the freedom to enter into association with others (since those others may be unwilling to associate) but as the freedom to dissociate from those one does not wish to be with" (Kukathas, 2003; 155). Kukathas holds a homogeneous

view of groups and accepts if the groups discourage internal diversity or set a high cost of exit to express their freedom of conscience. Pfeffer points out the contradictions in his position by suggesting that, "Of course, if one conscientiously chooses to join a group that has high exit costs, then this act is an expression of one's freedom of association. The problem, however, is that children born into such a group are not members as a result of their freedom of association" (Pfeffer, 2015, p. 101). Besides, one may surmise how Kukathas could reconcile his position against group rights with his endorsement of setting a high cost of exit that is a condition for group cohesiveness in the first place (Pfeffer, 2015, p. 101).

The liberal multiculturalists aspire to keep the threshold higher and insist on a "meaningful" right to exit (Pfeffer, 2015). For instance, Spinner-Halev argues that the state should ensure minimum educational or health standards in all groups so that the individual can choose to leave the community after reaching the majority age. On this view, the state must not interfere with communities who do not subscribe to liberal values because that would tantamount to violating their freedoms of conscience and association. However, the individual must enjoy the right to exit that gives her a meaningful life, free from financial barriers and so on, afterward (Spinner-Halev, 2005). Weinstock feels that the votaries of meaningful exit like Spinner-Halev underestimate the psychological attachments that people might have with their ascriptive communities and why it is difficult to leave one's group (Weinstock, 2005). Okin also points out that exit may not be an appropriate strategy for women because the cost would be too high for them (Okin, 1994). Reitman feels that exit would make things worse for women because exit would ease the pressure on the state to demand

justice from the groups for their vulnerable members (Reitman, 2005).

Brian Barry is one of the most illustrative thinkers in the "re-universalizing citizenship" approach. He shares the heavy reliance on state-interventionism with other secular individualists and feminists in addressing issues of justice. Barry's liberal-egalitarian conception of justice militates against the culturalization of group identities. He supports group rights for racialized minorities, working-class children, and the differently-abled as a redistributive measure that ensures equal opportunity. However, beyond that, he is unwilling to cede any space for cultural or religious minorities: "If not culture, what is the problem and what is the solution? In many cases, there is no problem in the first place, so no solution is called for [...]. The problem is invented out of nothing by multiculturalists [...]" (Barry, 2001, p. 317). On this view, culture is not a solution but rather a problem. Other secular feminists and liberal individualists share with Barry this inability to appreciate background understanding and cultural concerns and have advanced uniform civil codes and other state-imposed measures as solutions. The re-universalizing citizenship approach advocates have been censured for their context-insensitive approach and assimilationist tendencies (Bader, 2004, p. 320).

That brings us to the third set of ways of resolving the conflict: liberal democratic accommodationist approaches. Here the repertoire is extensive, and therefore I will restrict it to a few relevant thinkers. Broadly, there are three kinds of interventions: those that tilt towards either liberal or democratic approaches and those that combine the two in some form of institutional restructuring (Okin, 2005). For those who prefer liberal

group sensitive alterations in policy or juridical structures, Will Kymlicka's and Ayelet Shachar's work are representative. Kymlicka, as I indicated earlier, conceives differentiated citizenship rights for three categories of groups—national minorities, polyethnic and aboriginal. To address the question of vulnerable members within minority groups, he distinguishes "external protection" and "internal restrictions," which Okin criticized for being incognizant of the way patriarchal aspects of culture operated in the private sphere. Ayelet Shachar aspires to avoid the two traditional responses to the problem of internal minorities: one, the choice between culture and rights [the framework of exit: "your culture or your rights" (Shachar, 2001, p. 90)] and, two, and the intervention of the state in community affairs through coercive regulation, which according to her ignites the forces of "reactive culturalism." Consequently, threatened *nomoi* or ascriptive communities might further close ranks, which will have a negative bearing on vulnerable group members. Shachar's proposal assumes that individuals have multiple facets to their identities in the sense that they have ties to their immediate communities and the larger political community by being a citizen. Following this, she favors a legal pluralism that allows communities to have their judicial systems institutionalized. In this no-monopoly and joint-governance model, the individual will choose adjudication between the community legal institutions and the state judiciary. Shachar feels that this will pressure the community institutions to modernize and move closer to liberal values due to the possibility of losing their constituency to a competing legal jurisdiction. Hence, communities will be able to modernize themselves, "transformative accommodation," as she calls it, without any direct

intervention from the state. Through such a move, she feels that the paradox of multicultural vulnerability could be resolved as the state and community mutually alter themselves through this competitive interaction (Shachar, 2001).

The second set of interventions operate within a broad "democratic institutional pluralism" framework, and here Veit Bader's "Associative Democracy" (AD) model is representative. Bader has reworked Hirst's initial reflections on associative democracy to arrive at his model that he feels "provides better resolutions than the alternative approaches to minority within minority problems" (Bader, 2005, p. 322). AD's core idea is that with the growing complexity of governance issues, the service delivery mechanism—especially, education and health—needs to be devoluted to the community or faith-based associations. In this middle-road approach between the laissez-faire and welfare-state capitalism, the state as the tax-levying institution must fund community-based associations that will provide social services to their constituencies. The allocation of funds follows a per-capita criterion, and different organizations compete for funds with their constituencies and the state. In this model, "Each of these welfare institutions would cater to the different ways of life of individuals and groups, but also be based on common entitlements. Such organizations would be democratically self-governing. Some would be highly participatory, while others would not be. All members of these organizations would have the basic right to elect the governing council and, periodically, would have the option to exit if dissatisfied" (Bader, 2005, p. 323). Thus, communities turn into autonomous associations in which the state does not interfere except to ensure the standards of "minimum morality": fundamental liberties like the rights to

association and conscience and so on. AD aspires to reconcile autonomy for the individual and communities. Pfeffer feels that AD imagines communities as silos and does not take group integration seriously. Besides, there is an inherent bias towards large groups (the per capita principle for allocating funding). Their associations will eventually win on this model because of the economies of scale involved in providing services. Pfeffer's model of "group integration" supports funding to communal organizations but not in a bid to provide services, but rather in lobbying the government for policy change and so on (Pfeffer, 2015).

The third set of interventions loosely clubs together those who emphasize deliberative and agonistic struggles as the key mechanisms for resolving group justice issues. I take Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Partha Chatterjee as illustrative thinkers in this context. All the three share the fundamental anxieties about essentialist renderings of cultures—they see identities as constructed, fluid, and interpenetrative and aspectival—and stress on the role of deliberative and agonistic struggle in civil society (also see Deveaux, 1999, 2006; Tully, 1995). To begin with, Benhabib argues against what she dubs as "strong multiculturalism" or "mosaic multiculturalism," a view of cultures as clearly delineated or bounded, from a sociological constructivist vantage point and suggests that inter-cultural justice between groups should be defended in the name of justice and freedom and not on the grounds of cultural preservation. In contrast to a "visual" metaphor as in mosaic multiculturalism, she prefers an "auditory" metaphor to capture the processes of complex cultural dialogue (Benhabib, 2002, p. 7-8) and employs the insider/outsider distinction to make her case for cultures as dynamic and aspectival:

> What distinguishes my critique of cultural essentialism from these efforts is the *narrative view of actions and culture* that informs it. In my view, all analyses of cultures, whether empirical or normative, must begin by distinguishing the standpoint of the social observer from that of the social agent. The social observer—whether an eighteenth-century narrator or chronicler; a nineteenth-century general, linguist, or educational reformer; or a twentieth-century anthropologist, secret agent, or development worker—is the one who imposes, together with local elites, unity and coherence on cultures as observed entities. Any view of cultures as clearly delineable wholes is a view from the outside that generates coherence for the purposes of understanding and control. Participants in the culture, by contrast, experience their traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools, and material living conditions through shared, albeit contested and contestable, narrative accounts. From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather, it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it (Benhabib, 2002, p. 5).

The task of democratic equality for her entails the creation of "impartial institutions in the public sphere and civil society where this struggle for the recognition of cultural differences and the contestation for cultural narratives can take place without domination" (Benhabib, 2002, p. 8). Extending a deliberative model based on Habermasian discourse ethics, she advances a "dual-track approach to politics" that on the one hand emphasizes established institutions like the legislature and judiciary and on the other hand on political activities, social movements and groups in civil society. It is the public sphere, located within the civil society, which forms the critical locus for resolving multicultural dilemmas through opinion and will formation (Benhabib,

2002, p. 106). In contrast to the Rawlsian "overlapping consensus" model, Benhabib avers, the deliberative model encourages dialogue across the public/private distinction, is more sensitive to background cultural understandings, and stresses non-coercive and non-final processes of opinion formation in an unrestricted, public sphere (Benhabib, 2002, p. 109). In contrast to the democratic theorist who "is concerned with the public manifestation of cultural identities in civic spaces," the multiculturalist "is interested in classifying and naming groups and then in developing a normative theory on the basis of classificatory taxonomies" (Benhabib, 2002, p. 18). In this sense, Benhabib feels that creative institutional proposals like the ones advanced by Brian Barry or Ayelet Shachar privilege the legal at the expense of the political and cultural, which restrict the processes of reconciliation between contending political subjectivities:

> Multicultural accommodationism may result in a kind of multicultural cold war: there may be peace but no reconciliation; there may be bargaining but no mutual understanding; and there may be stalemates and standoffs, dictated less by respect for the positions of others than by the fear of others. It is unlikely that there will ever be politics in liberal-democratic societies that will be settled beyond such dichotomies; power is ubiquitous and will remain so. Precisely because multiculturalism, in so many of its manifestations, challenges key assumptions of liberal democracies, it needs to release its conflictual and explosive potential in the public civil sphere through the dialogue, confrontation, arid give-andtake of ordinary citizens (Benhabib, 2002, p. 129).

Nancy Fraser's work focuses on the struggle between varying justice claims. In one of her influential paper titled "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation" (Fraser, 1998), she problematizes the conflict between "redistributive" and "recognition" claims, where the former refers to a more equitable distribution of resources and the latter to an acknowledgment of difference and safeguards from assimilation into dominant cultures. She contends that while redistribution has a more extended history, in recent times, it is the "politics of recognition" that seems to trump the former, and the relation is posed as an irreconcilable tension between the "cultural politics of difference" and the "social politics of equality." Fraser (ibid. p. 1; original emphasis) suggests that this is a "false antitheses" because "justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition, as neither alone is sufficient."

Redistribution and recognition, in her framework, assume different conceptions of justice. One, while redistribution may allude to exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation, recognition, on the other hand, refers to cultural domination, non-recognition/invisibilization, or humiliation. Two, the two orientations propose different remedies for injustice—economic restructuring in the case of redistribution and cultural or symbolic change in the case of recognition. Three, both assume different conceptions of collectivities that suffer injustice—while recognition refers to "status," redistribution refers to "classes." Four, the two orientations take different understandings of group differences. While in the case of redistribution, group differentials emerge from unjust political economy, and, therefore, the task is to eradicate difference and not

preserve it. In the case of recognition, groups could be arranged historically in terms of a value hierarchy or could be constructed contemporaneously through a discursive framework of binary oppositions. In the former's case, the politics of recognition celebrates group differences, whereas the latter aims to deconstruct the terms in which differences are currently elaborated. However, Fraser suggests that the distinction between the two approaches is only analytical, and both redistribution and recognition are mutually imbricated and interpenetrate. In this sense, most disenfranchised communities face socio-economic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition in various degrees and must be seen as “bivalent collectivities” (Fraser, 1998).

While positing that recognition should be seen as a matter of justice and not self-realization Fraser conceptually synthesizes both redistribution and recognition by advancing a bivalent conception of “justice as participatory parity.” “According to this norm, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers” (Fraser, 1998, p. 5). For participatory parity to be possible, other than formal legal equality, two different conditions are necessary: a) the objective situation, which means that “the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants’ independence and “voice.” (ibid, p. 5); b) the intersubjective condition which “requires that institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem” (ibid.). It is based on the norm of participatory parity that social justice claims can be evaluated and remedied. The norm of participatory parity has the advantage that it prevents both the pitfalls of culturalism and economism.

Later, Fraser introduced a third term, “representation,” referring to the inclusion or exclusion of people from the decision-making in the political sphere (Fraser, 2009).

Fraser dubs the public sphere's hegemonic articulation as “a specific—bourgeois masculinist—conception” (Fraser, 1990, p. 62). Since the mainstream public sphere is not a space for participatory parity in stratified societies, it helps the disadvantaged sections form what she calls “subaltern counterpublics.” These are “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). These subaltern counterpublics have a dual role. They act as enclaves for the subaltern groups where they can articulate their concerns and bring coherence to their demands without the supervision of the dominant groups, which concentrate, in Mansbridge’s words, on “absorbing the less powerful into a false “we” that reflects, the more powerful” (cited in Fraser, 2003, p. 90). On the other hand, they also act as training grounds for agitational activities directed at the broader publics. It is in the dialectic between these two functions of the subaltern counterpublics that their emancipatory potential can be located. In general, these counterpublics expand the discursive space in stratified societies, enable discursive contestation, and construct a ground for participatory parity, which the imagination of a single, comprehensive public sphere is at a loss to address.

Mahajan (2005, p. 95) points out that most Indian commentators have embraced the models favoring deliberative consensus within the community. Partha Chatterjee, for instance, is one of the critical exponents

of the "reforms from within" approach. One of the significant strategic questions for Chatterjee today is to decide to choose

> […] legal reform through state initiative from the top or mobilization of initiatives within the relatively unmobilized spaces of the communities themselves. To choose the former is to underscore the moral primacy of the modernizing state. To advocate the latter is to accept the risks of walking through a normatively uncertain political terrain. If my critics demand that I state my preference between the two, I would say that while the former strategy has not necessarily exhausted itself, I believe that the real challenge lies in exploring the possibilities of the latter" (cited in Gudavarthy, 2012)

Chatterjee makes an analytical distinction between "civil society" and "political society" to highlight a possible tension between modernization and democratization. Civil society refers to self-organized associations and movement organizations set up in the heydays of colonial modernity and are usually governed by elite classes who would like to see India in the club of highly modernized nations. On the other hand, political society alludes to contingent and fluid political formations such as community pressure groups or other contestants for power, who are generally identified with their ability to represent and work to realize the popular demands of the subaltern groups in their struggle for survival. Thus, the former can be seen as a site for "modernization" and the latter as the site for "democratization" (Chatterjee, 2004). Chatterjee argues against state-led reforms of the Muslim community and advances a "strategic politics of toleration" which works on the principle that "if the struggle is for progressive change in social practices sanctioned by religion, then that struggle must be

launched and won within the religious communities themselves" (Chatterjee, 1998, p. 377). In other words, he rests his hope on internal reform carried by community institutions themselves that "must satisfy the same criteria of publicity and representativeness that members of the group demand of all public institutions having regulatory functions" (ibid., p. 376). Moreover, the community institutions' representativeness "could only achieve their actual form through a political process carried out primarily within each minority group" (ibid.). Chatterjee sums up his formula of "a twofold struggle" as: "resist homogenization from the outside, and push for democratization inside" (ibid., p. 378).

2.5 CONCLUSION

The survey above indicates the complexity of accommodation of the justice claims of internal minorities within existing imaginations of pluralism and democracy. The comprehension and resolution of the internal minority problematique necessitate a new conceptual grammar and analytical framework. In this evolving process, Connolly's conceptualization of "pluralization" and "politics of becoming," Fraser's framework of "justice as participatory parity," and the idea of "subaltern counterpublics" are helpful conceptual tools to understand the nature of mobilizations and justice claims advanced by internal minorities like the Pasmanda-Muslims. All the three modes of resolution of the internal minority question discussed above—the right to exit, re-universalizing citizenship, and liberal democratic accommodationist approaches—have their weaknesses and strengths. However, the necessary institutional and policy changes concerning internal minorities can only be effected once their discourses,

claims, and narratives acquire popular legitimacy. In this context, the role of subaltern articulations and mobilizations in the space of civil society becomes a focal point. The following chapter charts out the genealogy of the Muslim-Minority Discourse and analyses the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the Pasmanda-Muslim as an internal caste "other" and counterhegemonic subject.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSLIM-MINORITY DISCOURSE AND ITS INTERNAL CASTE OTHERS: THE EMERGENCE OF THE PASMANDA-MUSLIM COUNTERPUBLIC

3.1 INTRODUCTION

While the Indian Muslim community is plural and diverse in its composition, it is often treated as monolithic in public discourse (Jairath, 2011, p. 1). One key reason is the entrapment of the community in mutually contending and reinforcing "majoritarian" and "minoritarian" discourses (Sheth, 2009). Broadly, the interplay of this contending totalitarianism is damaging to any nuanced understanding of either community. The monolithic renderings and often negative stereotyping impact the Indian Muslim community, particularly its most vulnerable members. While the Hindu-Muslim conflict has a long history going back to the colonial period, there is little doubt that the negative portrayal of Indian

Muslims has also been recently amplified owing to the imperial repositioning—both ideological and strategic—through the "clash of civilizations" thesis in the wake of the demise of the former Soviet communist bloc (Huntington, 1993). The resultant proliferation of binaries like "Islamophobia/Islamophilia" (Shryock, 2010) or "good Muslim/bad Muslim" (Mamdani, 2002) indicate, what Amartya Sen terms the "solitarist approach" to identity, "the illusion that Muslims everywhere deal with matters of existential concern only through the prism of religion and the view espoused by some Muslims that they *should* do so"(cited in Hirji, 2010, p. 5). Carl W. Ernst suggests that "due to the uncritical broadcast of fundamentalist screeds by well-meaning but uninformed media outlets, Islamist ideology has managed to be the only form of Islam that most non-Muslims have encountered" (cited in Jairath, pp. 1-2). Hirji (2010, p. 4) opines that,

> in seeking to make sense of the situation, Muslims and non-Muslims have propelled various terms and labels into the public sphere, including "umma," "the Muslim Community," "Sunni," "Shia," "Sufi," "Salafi Islam," "Wahhabi Islam," "Quietist Islam," "British Islam," "French Islam," "American Muslims," "Fundamentalist Muslims," "Liberal Muslims," "Moderate Muslims," "Radicalized Muslims" and "Jihadis"[…] Few terms, if any, reference identity in terms of other markers such as occupation, economic status, gender and language group, and a previous generation of ethnic identity markers, such as "Arab," "Persian" and "Turk," seem to be increasingly (for better or for worse) absent from public discourses or are used as synonyms for Muslim, without qualification.

In the debates around Islam, emphasis has usually been placed on its significant Others at the expense of the

"other within" (Hirji, 2010). This erasure has severe epistemological consequences for the internal minorities, like the Pasmanda-Muslims. Foucault emphasized the relationality between power and knowledge "[such] that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (cited in Howarth, 2002). In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault marks a distinction between "traditional" and "effective" history, with the latter "being without constants" (1984, p. 87). If the practitioner of effective history or the genealogist "refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is "something altogether different" behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (ibid. p. 78). Once the supra-historical and objectivist pretensions of traditional history are done away with, the genealogist is left with the task of exploring the historical emergence and formation of discourses, categories, social constructions, and so on. In this chapter, I will explore the conditions under which Muslim caste becomes a sign of counterhegemony vis-à-vis the entrenched Muslim-Minority Discourse and emerges in the form of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic. The idea is not to undertake an exhaustive historical survey but rather to locate the key conditions of possibility—moments, ruptures, interventions—in the spirit of Foucault's understanding that the "final trait of effective history is its affirmation of knowledge as perspective" (Foucault, 1984, p. 90).

3.2 COMMUNITY FORMATION AND MODES OF CONVERSIONS TO ISLAM

The earliest Muslims, Arabs that is, reached South Asia through two routes and with different motivations within a century of the first Muslim state's constitution by Prophet Muhammad in Hijaz (Western Arabia) in the early seventh century. The region of Kerala (or Malabar) on the south-western coast had maritime trade links with Arabia, particularly spice trade, long before the advent of Islam. Islam is supposed to have reached Kerala in the seventh century itself through the efforts of Arab merchants who married local women and initiated a small Muslim community named the “Mappilas” (or “Moplahs”). In the north-western regions of the subcontinent, Islam first appeared in the form of imperial conquest when Muhammad bin Qasim, an Arab general under the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 AD), conquered Sind in 711 AD. However, the significant influx happened when the Turks, reflecting an Arab-Persian cultural synthesis, were driven out from the Central Asian regions (particularly Khorasan) due to Mongol invasions around the early thirteenth century. This push factor coerced the Turks to move to the Indian subcontinent through the Turko-Persian migration corridors (Eaton, 2002). Delhi became an important Islamic center primarily after Baghdad's sack (the capital of Abbasid Caliphate) in 1258 by the Mongols. The formation of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) and later the Mughal Sultanate (1526-1707) with its capital in Delhi witnessed the waves of immigration of Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Persians, Arabs, and Africans to the subcontinent: primarily as military adventurers, soldiers, slaves but also as merchants (horses and silver), literati and mystics (Panikkar, 1963, pp. 117–152).

However, the large Muslim population in South Asia (about one-third of the world's Muslim population) cannot be explained through invaders/immigrants (and their descendants) alone, and, therefore, the issue of the modes of conversions or the process of recruitment of the native-indigenous population to Islam becomes pertinent. Richard M. Eaton (1985) classifies the three critical theories of mass conversions to Islam as the "religion of the sword theory," "political patronage theory," and the "religion of social liberation theory" and critiques them *inter alia* from the vantage point of the geographical concentration of subcontinental Muslims. The "religion of the sword" theory accentuates the role of violence employed by the Turko-Persian regimes (1200-1765) in expanding the Islamic community through conversions. The theory owes its existence to the reliance on a literal translation of the primary Persian accounts of the "Islamic conquests" by orientalist historians (ibid. p. 107). According to Panikkar, "We would get a very inaccurate and altogether false view […] if we depend on the court chroniclers and annalists of Delhi. Historians […] were primarily anxious to picture their heroes as the patterns of Islamic orthodoxy and virtue. The stories of temples desecrated[21], idols demolished and Hindus converted or massacred which they relate must therefore be read in the light of their desire to show to an orthodox Islamic world for which they wrote, the glory of these monarchs and their zeal in dealing with the kafir" (Panikkar, 1963, p. 130). In all likelihood, the putative Muslim regimes were far more pragmatic in dealing with their subjects than the theory proposes. The agrarian and commercial structure was hardly disturbed. The population of Muslims in Uttar

[21] See Eaton, 2000 for a nuanced take on temple desecrations during the Muslim rule.

Pradesh, the heartland of Turko-Iranian rule for over 600 years, was only 14 percent around partition in 1947. For Panikkar, "the evidence is incontestable that forcible conversions were few and the lot of Hindus could not have been exceptionally hard" (Panikkar, 1963, p. 133). However, the main problem with the theory is its incongruence with the geography of conversions as the demographic distribution of Muslims in South Asia "reveals an inverse relationship between the degree of Muslim political penetration and the degree of conversion to Islam" (Eaton, 1985, p. 108). The densest conversion to Islam occurred in West Punjab and east Bengal regions that lay at the fringe of the Muslim political frontier. In contrast, the upper Gangetic Plain, unarguably the Indo-Muslim regime's heartland, witnessed a very low incidence of conversions (ibid. p. 108).

The political patronage theory suggests that the natives converted to Islam "in *anticipation* of economic opportunity, or of political favours, or of escaping disfavour; or it could be a consequence of proximity to rulers" (Saberwal, 2010, p. 44; emphasis original). The problem with this theory is that it explains the light incidence of conversions in the political hinterland, particularly of the native political elites. Still, it fails to illuminate the peasantry, tribal, or forest peoples' mass conversions on the empire's fringes. The social liberation theory suggests that the native populations converted to the Islamic tradition to escape the inequitable Hindu-Brahmanical caste system. This theory "elaborated by British ethnographers, Pakistani nationals, and Indian Muslims among many others" (Eaton, 1985, p. 109) suffers from four key weaknesses. Firstly, it attempts to project the present values to the peoples and events of the past. It is doubtful that the modern notions of equality

would guide the pre-modern Hindu society. On the contrary, it seems to be "more influenced by what Louis Dumont calls the principle of *homo hierarchicus*, or of institutionalized inequality, than by the principle of *homo equalis*" (Eaton, 1985, p. 110).

Secondly, the Persian sources suggest that the Muslim intellectuals emphasized Islamic monotheism in opposition to Hindu polytheism rather than Islamic equality in contrast to Hindu caste inequality. Thirdly, there seems to be little evidence that the status of the native subordinated castes in the social hierarchy changed after conversion. In K. M. Ashraf's view, "With his conversion to Islam, the average Muslim did not change his old environment, which was deeply influenced by caste distinctions and general social exclusiveness" (cited in Hardy, 1977, pp. 193-194). And, fourthly, the geographical argument applies here as well. The four significant regions before the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947 with the densest Muslim populations were Baluchistan, Northwest Frontier, Western Punjab, and Eastern Bengal. Since Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier were mainly inhabited by descendants of immigrants from the Iranian plateau, it is Western Punjab and Eastern Bengal that were the main conversion sites. However, these were also the regions that were not integrated into the Hindu-Brahmanical agrarian and literate tradition. "In Bengal, Muslim converts were drawn mainly from Rajbansi, Pod, Chandal, Koch, or other indigenous groups which had had but the lightest contact with the Hindu religious or caste structure, and in the Punjab the same was true for the various Jat clans that came to form the bulk of the Muslim community" (Eaton, 1985, p. 110). The theory that suggests Islam as an emancipatory force for the LC Hindus fails to convince because the bulk of Muslim

converts were at the point of conversion not integrated into the Hindu social structure.

It seems clear that the bulk of mass conversions to Islam occurred not in the upper Gangetic plains but in the pastoral plains or forested regions that lay at the fringes of both the Muslim political frontier and the socio-ecological frontier of the Hindu agrarian society. Eaton advocates "an understanding of mass conversion as a process whereby preliterate peoples on the ecological and political frontier of an expanding agrarian society became absorbed into the religious ideology of that society" (Eaton, 1985, p. 111). He further breaks this into two subprocesses: "accretion" and "reform." While in the accretion stage, people either identify with or add new deities or supernatural agencies to the existing entities in their cosmology. In the reform stage, the earlier gods or agencies are repudiated in favor of the more recent Islamic ones. However, "Whereas the simplest model of a conversion movement would be one beginning with accretion and ending with reform, we should not see this process as any necessary or irreversible march from the first to the second. A closer examination of individual cases of Muslim conversion movements in India reveals more complex patterns—some, for example, oscillating back and forth between accretion and reform, others stuck on accretion indefinitely, remaining unaffected even by the powerful reform currents of the nineteenth century" (ibid.). In Francis Robinson's view, "[…] the progress of Islam has never been triumphant: the drives behind Islamization have faltered and been thrust back" (Robinson, 2000, p. 53). The conversion agents were the Qadi (Muslim judge) and the Sufi (spiritual master). While the Qadi represented the literate aspect of Islam and underscored on a quotidian basis the status of Islam as a religion of the Book, the Sufi—and especially the

tomb of the deceased Sufi, which was often converted into a shrine—was a figure/site that acted as a conduit between Allah and the believer through charisma and the ability to work miracles. A growing body of anthropological research has established the appeal of an incoming literate tradition for preliterate societies (Eaton, 1985, p. 116). It is also important to stress that the accretion stage betrays a regional dimension; a nominal attachment to Islam is couched in local idiom and is broadly syncretistic and accommodative. In contrast, the reform stage crosses the second-order integration where the believer is sought to be embedded in Islam's global world with Mecca as the spiritual center and an increased emphasis on ritual exclusiveness and distinctness.

The process of mass conversions recounted above illuminates the outward expansion of Turko-Iranian rule from the Delhi-Doab region to Punjab, Kashmir, Gujarat, Deccan, or Bengal, and so on. Broadly, the Muslim regimes encountered at one level the agrarian societies well integrated into the Brahmanical-literate traditions and at another the unirrigated plains or uncleared forest regions inhabited by non-Hindu tribal and other indigenous peoples. In the former, the Hindu emperors had already established an agrarian infrastructure for surplus extraction. Therefore, the question was a political one: the capture of urban centers, setting up military garrisons, demoting the emperor to a tribute-paying subject (*zamindar*), and so on. The land system and commercial structure were hardly altered. Since the regions were tightly integrated into the Brahmanical-literate tradition, Islam's appeal was not as great, and therefore the mass conversions were not forthcoming. However, in the unirrigated plains and uncleared forest regions like Western Punjab or Eastern Bengal at the

fringe of Brahmanical-literate tradition, the Qadi and Sufi became extremely attractive to the indigenes. In various ways, in direct or indirect assistance with the Sufi and the Qadi, the Muslim state was instrumental in bringing these regions into the agrarian circuit. "To the extent that this was the case, Islam, in India at least, may properly be termed more a religion of the plough than a religion of the sword, as formerly conceived" (Eaton, 1985, p. 119). This expansion method by tribal absorption was also how the Hindu society evolved in historical time (Bose, 1974). In the words of D. D. Kosambi, "The major historical change in ancient India was not between dynasties but in the advance of agrarian village settlements over tribal lands, metamorphosing tribesmen into peasant cultivators, or guild craftsmen" (cited in Eaton, 1985, p. 119). What needs to be underscored is that Eaton's explanation or model of recruitment of the indigenes to Islam does not necessarily reject other modes of conversions—conversions through intermarriage between immigrants and local women, conversions due to love, conversions for secular gain, or conversions as an outcome of organized missionary activity or *dawah* campaigns and so on. It only brings to sharp relief the inability of other processes to explain mass conversions to Islam.

Two critical issues need to be flagged here. Firstly, the Turko-Persian invaders/immigrants and their descendants, labeled as Ashraf (noble) and constituting about one-tenth of the total Muslim population, stressed their foreignness as a status enhancement mechanism which marked their distinction from indigenous populations irrespective of religious affiliation (Saberwal, 2010, p. 53). However, neither the Muslim immigrants nor the natives were monolithic groups. There were inner power and status differentials at work

that was often instrumental in forging various pragmatic and cross-group alliances. One could detect three broad layers of power during the medieval era: the top layer consisting of the Turko-Iranian nobility and aristocracy, the second layer of native high caste Hindu elite that mostly worked at the lower levels of bureaucracy ("the *patwaris*, the accountants, the treasurers") in the earlier Delhi sultanate period but was incorporated in the nobility during the Mughal sultanate period, and the third layer of the subordinated peasantry, forest/hill peoples, craftsmen and so on across religions (Panikkar, 1963). In this context, "what had been the immigrant ruling class, the high status *ashraf*, had forged alliances with high status indigenous groups; but, commonly the former had kept a distance from the indigenous converts of lower caste and artisanal backgrounds, the *ajlaf*. Until the nineteenth century, the ashraf-ajlaf line was almost as sharp as that between upper and lower caste Hindus […]" (Saberwala, 2010, p. 39). Also, the power conflict between the Muslim nobility was as pronounced as the conflict between Hindu rajahs and Muslim sultans or various Hindu rajahs. The later colonial representation of medieval history primarily through the lens of Hindu-Muslim conflict needs to be complicated. Eaton (2002, pp. 2–3) indicates the problems with the colonial view succinctly,

> Not only is Islam often portrayed as an alien intrusion in India; for many, religion emerged as the defining characteristic of north India's dominant ruling class from the thirteenth century on. Modem textbooks routinely characterise the advent of Persianised Turks in India as a "Muslim conquest" and the entire period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century as India's "Muslim Era." That is to say, the agent of conquest is construed not as a *people* defined by their ethnic

> heritage or place of origin, but rather, as a religion: Islam. Moreover, the "arrival" of this religion is repeatedly held to constitute the most cataclysmic rupture in South Asian history prior to the rise of British power in the eighteenth century. One sees how striking this formulation is by framing it against other, comparable historical encounters. For example, although sixteenth century Spaniards justified their conquest of Mexico in religious terms, modern texts never speak of a "Christian conquest" of America; nor is the post-1492 period ever called America's "Christian Era." Rather, one hears of a "Spanish conquest" of Central and South America, and of "European settlement" in North America. How, one might then ask, did the notion of an "Islamic" conquest of India find such a secure hold in the historiography of South Asia? The notion of a deep fault-line running between India's "Islamic" and "pre- Islamic" eras is traceable in good measure to the views of medieval Indo-Persian chroniclers, most of whom served Indo-Muslim rulers. Contemporary Rajput, Brahman and other Indian elites, however, saw things differently. From the eighth to the fourteenth centuries, as we know from contemporary Sanskrit sources, such elites referred to invaders or immigrants from the Iranian plateau not by their religion, but by their linguistic identity—most typically, as Turks ("Turuska").

Secondly, while some form of reference to the normative global unity of Islam may have always been present in the speech-acts of the Islamic conversion agents—the Qadis and Sufis in particular—it was from the 17th century onwards that the revivalist/reformist movements gained strength due to the innovations in transportation and communication technologies. The increased traffic to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage and the advent of print capitalism and controversial debates around religion,

particularly in competition with the later European missionary efforts to spread Christianity, helped instigate an increased sense of belonging to Islam and the Muslim community. The process of a vibrant Islamic reform at one level was ironing out the fuzzy/syncretic/hybrid existence of most Muslims at the earlier accretion stage. At another level, it was Arabizing Indian Islam and the Muslim ritual space. This trajectory's sum effect was to lay the foundations of a distinct and exclusive Muslim communal space that would later be projected as “Muslim nationalism” during the British colonial period (Robinson, 2000).

3.3 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL STRUCTURE OF INDIAN ISLAM

Broadly, the Indo-Muslim space’s socio-cultural content may be envisaged as the outcome of the encounter between the cultural sensibilities of the immigrant Muslims and the indigenous environment of the Indian subcontinent. The immigrant elements in this cultural efflorescence would include the Arab religious inheritance, Turkish contributions to law, government, dress, food, Persian literature, fine arts, mysticism, philosophy, and so on (Buehler, 2012). In terms of social imagination, Islam struggles with egalitarian and hierarchical ideas: both in terms of text and contextualized manifestations (Marlow, 1997). If we take the central text, the Quran, then at one level there is undoubted normative stress on piety as the determinant of individual/collective value: “O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him”

(49:13). While the above verse is usually cited as evidence of Islam's moral objection to social hierarchy Marlow (1997, p. 4) remarks that "[…] while the Qurān frequently points out the meaninglessness of differences in rank in terms of the afterlife, it certainly does not attempt to abolish them in the present world. On the contrary, it might be observed that the Qurān endorses several forms of worldly inequality […]". Imtiaz Ahmad cites the believer/non-believer (*kafir*), Allah/believer, husband/wife, master/slave dichotomies in the Quran as instances of hierarchy. According to Ahmad, "On even the most casual reading of the Islamic scriptural text one is struck that quite irrespective of the emphasis it places on equality of human beings Islam's orientation is remarkably hierarchical" (Ahmad, 2015, p. 7). One may also consider the following two Quranic verses as endorsing social stratification; "[Nay, as] it is We who distribute their means of livelihood among them in the life of this world, and raise some of them by degrees above others, to the end that they might avail themselves of one another's help" (43: 32); "Behold how We bestow [on earth] more bounty on some of them than on others: but [remember that] the life to come will be far higher in degree and far greater in merit and bounty" (17:21).

The textual positions of the Quran notwithstanding, it seems clear that in the early Islamic-Arab society, the social status and prestige of individuals and groups were usually governed by descent and ancestry—expressed through principles of genealogy (*nasab*) and inherited merit (*hasab*) (Marlow, 1997, p. 5). Particularly, the Islamic principle of equality of status in marriage (*kafa*) has been used to justify Hanafi jurisprudence's social hierarchies (Buehler, 2012). Also, the Syeds, descendants of Prophet Muhammad, hold high prestige in Muslim societies. According to Morimoto Kazuo, "it is

well known that they [Syeds] have dispersed and settled in virtually all areas inhabited by Muslims. These kinsfolk of Muhammad are also known by another common honorific title, "*sharīfs*," and we may thus refer to a diaspora of *sayyid/sharīfs* […]. Wide dispersal is not the sole feature of the *sayyid/sharīfs*. They have also enjoyed positive differentiation and reverence in most instances" (Kazuo, 2004, p. 88). El-Zein's paraphrasing of A. S. Bujra's work on politics of social stratification in the southern Arabian town of Hureidah (in Hadramut) provides a glimpse to the social role of Syeds in the putative Islamic world:

> In the case of Southern Arabia, it is the *Sadah*, or descendents of the Prophet Mohammed, who traditionally stand as the religious elite […]. Through claiming a necessary correspondence between religious knowledge and the concept of privileged descent, they possess the authority both to create the content of religious ideology and to enforce this ideology among the people. According to the *Sadah*, descent from the Prophet passes on to them a superior knowledge with which they create the content of a system of religious symbols […] Access to this knowledge is further controlled in a closed system of religious education. Although theoretically such training is open to all social groups by tradition, it is available only to the *Sadah* or to those whom they consider capable of religious knowledge, the *Mashaikh*. The Sadah then enforce their own dominating position and perpetuate the religious ideology which they have constructed by means of certain social and political controls over the other groups within their society, and they legitimize these powers in terms of religious authority […] By means of these controls based ultimately on religious ideology, the *Sadah* accumulated political power, social

> prestige, and economic superiority (El-Zein, 1977, p. 235).

In a way, most Muslim societies have their social stratification models couched and legitimized through an Islamic idiom. In the context of South Asia, it has been surmised that the Turko-Persian immigrant Muslims, with their own set of hierarchical ideas based on descent/pedigree/lineage (even purity and shame in some versions), would probably have been little surprised when they first encountered caste stratification based on purity/pollution in the Indian subcontinent (Delage, 2014). Over the years, South Asian Muslims have evolved a complex social stratification system based on caste or caste-like collectivities called *biradaris* or *zaat*. Ghaus Ansari's *Muslim Caste in Uttar Pradesh: A Study of Culture Contact* (Ghaus Ansari, 1960), the first sociological work "to focus on the presence of caste among the Muslims" (Imtiaz Ahmad, 1973, p. xvii), points out that the "clear demarcation between the two main categories of Indian Muslims, that of foreign extraction and that of Indian origin, reflects in the term *Ashraf* or *Shurafa* which is used to designate Muslims of superior stock (mostly those of foreign extraction, Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal, and Pathan) in direct contrast to those of Indian origin. Both the terms, *Ashraf* or *Shurafa*, are the plural form of the Arabic word *Sharif*, meaning honourable" (Ansari, 1960, p. 30). Thus, there are broadly four kinds of Muslim status groups: One, those who trace their origin to foreign lands, two, the converts from Hindu higher castes, three, the converts from clean occupational castes and four, the converts from the Dalit (formerly untouchables) castes and tribal (Adivasi) communities. Ansari also suggests that "the *Ashraf* constitute the highest stratum within this structure. Their position and rank within the Muslim

caste system is almost identical with that which the Brahman and Kshatriya grouped together are granted in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Thus both the Sayyad and Shaikh, as competent religious pedagogues and priests, are almost identical with the Brahman; whereas both the Mughal and Pathan, being famous for their chivalry, appear to be equal to the Kshatriya" (ibid. p. 40). In Ansari's view, "every Hindu caste has its fixed place within the Hindu caste system, and so every Muslim caste in the parallel Muslim caste system" (ibid. p. 59) his work suffers from the limitation that he primarily relies on the Census Reports (1881-1931) for his data and does not speak from the authority of independent field-work. However, it was the volume *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims*, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad, that brought in evidence from the field in terms of endogamy, occupational specialization, and hierarchical religious ideas in subcontinental Islam (Ahmad, 1973).

Indeed, in a stratified Indo-Muslim space, the culture of the elite and ruling immigrant classes—usually referred to as the *ashrafia* or *sharif* culture—attained a hegemonic status and became synonymous with "Muslim culture." Dhulipala paraphrases K. M. Ashraf's views on this question,

> Thus, in one of his essays [K. M.] Ashraf controversially denied that there was anything like a "Muslim culture" that could be identified with the seventy million Muslims of India. A great majority of Indian Muslims, he argued, derived their origins and culture from the Hindus. The culture of these neo-Muslims who formed 85 percent of the country's Muslim population was thus different from what was popularly known as "Muslim culture." "Muslim culture" […] was a category that changed according to historical

> contexts. In pre-British times it was the culture of the "Badshahs" [emperors], while now, it had become the culture of feudal elites, a microscopic minority who claimed descent from the Arabs. Hence, "Muslim culture" in both its medieval and modern contexts was elitist and had nothing to do with the culture of the Muslim masses" (Dhulipala, 2015, p. 64).

The Ashraf (or sharif) culture, developed most intricately during the Mughal period, broadly entailed four key features. Firstly, there was a disdain for manual labor[22]: "All of the *Ashrāf*, like feudal nobility in Europe, tried to avoid occupations requiring manual labor and Syeds incurred a reputation by the British period for sloth" (Wright Jr., 1999, p. 653). Secondly, language—Arabic, Persian, and later Urdu—played an important role as a boundary maintenance mechanism and preservation of the status quo in favor of the Ashrafs. Buehler (2012, p. 235) reports that "Early Bengali literary sources indicate an opposition to translating Persian and Arabic religious

[22] "South Asian Sufis have almost always avoided any identification with the trades or attaching professional attributions (nisbas) to their names because tradesmen were considered to be at the lower rungs of Muslim social strata. One apt "ashrāfī" translation of this lower strata, ajlāf, is "coarse rabble," which includes tradesmen such as weavers, cotton carders, oil-pressers, barbers, and tailors. In prominent hagiographical compendia of South Asia, almost all of the major hagiographic works make a point of mentioning the high pedigree of the leading shaykhs. This situation contrasts sharply with Sufis coming from the Iraqi–Khurasan–Bukhara region where it has been common to mention the person's profession. Farīd al-Dīn Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221) or Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (mart. 309/922) are famous Sufis who come to mind immediately as a druggist/perfumer and cotton carder respectively. In South Asia there is a virtual non-existence of professional nisbas among prominent Sufis" (Buehler, 2012, p. 234).

texts into Bengali, the rationale being that doing so would profane these holy texts." Thirdly, the Syeds as a class were revered and eligible for special government privileges like land grants and official stipends. In fact, by "the latter part of the sixteenth century, there was a special post of niqābat created and filled by a distinguished Sayyid who had the authority to look into the authenticity of Sayyid claims and who issued certificates of genealogy to those who were legitimate" (Buehler, 2012, p. 235). Wright Jr. (1999, p. 652-653) accounts thus,

> What of the roles of the Syeds (*Sadat*) in South Asia? The ideal, as with Brahmins, was to be religious functionaries (*qadi, imam, "alim, mufti, mawlavi*) or Sufi practitioners teaching and advising their *murids* and pilgrims to the ancestral *dargah*. In reality and increasingly with modernisation, most Syeds entered other occupations, some remunerative, others not and some non-Syeds performed religious functions because of their Islamic learning and piety. In the feudal period, Muslim rulers made grants of land and village revenue to Syed families which became hereditary and were occupied for generations just as other ashraf received zamindari and jagirdari in return for military and administrative services.

Fourthly, *sharāfat*, the set of values entailed in sharif culture, also referred to particular modes of piety, character building, and taste.

> Sharāfat also defined character: a sharīf man was one of dignified temperament, self-confident but not overly aggressive, appreciative of good literature, music, and art, but not flamboyant, familiar with mystical experience, but hardly immersed in it. Sharīf social relations involved a pose of deference, but were above all a matter of

> virtuosity within the highly restricted bounds of etiquette (Lelyveld, 1996, p. 30).

The subject classes are usually entangled in two contrasting cultural universes, or in other words, what W.E.B. Du Bois has called "double consciousness"—"this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (cited in Young, 1990, p. 60). Dominant cultures evoke both attraction and repulsion from the subaltern. At one level, the indigenous Muslims felt a certain distance from Ashraf culture's values because they were alien to its grammar. In K. M. Ashraf's view, "If you don't wear a particular type of dress or don't speak high flown Urdu it becomes difficult for you to be seen as a proper Muslim. The truth is that pure and minted (*taksali*) Muslims are only those fortunate people who were raised in the atmosphere of Delhi or Lucknow or if they wear the dresses of Deoband or the Firangi Mahalis" (cited in (Dhulipala, 2015, p. 64). At another level, the Ashraf culture also became a culture of desire and aspiration for indigenous Muslims' descendants. "Ashrafization,"[23] a

[23] "…Ashrāfization", however, is more than just gaining social status and prestige. It is a means of moral and religious improvement that involves living a more devout Muslim life… On the economic level, a family aspiring for status in the modern context must keep women in seclusion, demonstrating that they earn enough money that the women do not have to work…On the village level, ashrāfization often involves Muslims abandoning what are interpreted to be so-called "Hindu customs" In contemporary post-partition Indo-Pakistan, there are more and more Muslims who are differentiating themselves from their non-Muslim neighbors. The ashrāfization process…involving low-status Muslims (julāhās) changing their names to Anṣārīs is a way to consolidate the minority Muslim community and distance it from the Hindu majority" (Buehler, 2012, p. 241).

term coined by Vreede de Steurs (1968) and a neighboring concept to the word "Sanskritization" used by M. N. Srinivas, alludes to the efforts by upwardly mobile LC Muslim groups to imitate Ashraf culture by adopting Ashraf surnames, practicing seclusion of women through veiling, and manufacturing of community pseudo-histories that connect LC Muslims with early Islamic history and so on (Buehler, 2012).

The sociological debate on Islam and caste[24] entails "differing interpretations of the degree to which caste is: a) a purely Hindu 'survival' in post-conversion communities; b) a 'learnt' or newly reproduced institution due to the influence of surrounding Hindu society; and c) the product and expression of tendencies internal to Islam" (GoI, 2008, p. 9). Ahmad contends, "But if caste among the Muslims owed itself entirely to Hindu influence, then the Islamization of Muslim groups over the centuries should have resulted in the slow and gradual elimination of caste principles and ideology. However, such evidence as is available suggests that Islamization serves to reinforce rather than weaken or eliminate caste distinctions"(Imtiaz Ahmad, 1973, p. xxx). The failure of the process of Islamization in eradicating caste according to Ahmad resides in the fact that the "proclaimed egalitarianism of Islam remained largely an ideal" and the Islamic law were in fact informed by hierarchical principles. So "caste among the Muslims in India owes itself directly to Hindu influences, but it has been reinforced by the justification offered for

[24] See the following important works on the theology and sociology of caste and Islam: Ahmad, 1973, 2015; Buehler, 2012; Kazuo, 2012; Lee, 2018; Lindholm, 1986; Mines, 1972.

the idea of birth and descent as criteria of status in Islamic law" (Imtiaz Ahmad, 1973, p. xxxi). Robinson however critiques Ahmad for adopting the "snapshot technique, or what is sometimes called the synchronic view" and for giving little weight to the "moving film—the historical dimension" and suggests that the process of Islamization must be seen as "painfully gradual" and, citing Geertz, suggests that over time it would eventually result in a "victory of an orthodox, orthoprax great tradition over a heterodox, heteroprax little tradition"(Robinson, 2000, p. 45). Islamization, according to Robinson, means the sedimentation of the model of perfection presented by the Prophet Muhammad and reinvigorated in time through the revival/reformist interventions of various Islamic theologians and mystics (Robinson, 2008). Following Eaton, one could see the relationship between "accretion" and "reform" not in linear terms but rather in terms of mutual negotiation and contamination, victories, and reversals.

3.4 THE EVOLUTION OF THE MUSLIM-MINORITY DISCOURSE

After the death of the Mughal emperor Aurungzeb in 1707, the Muslim regimes' power in the subcontinent began to decline. The European naval forces—Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English—had already established their operations as trading companies since Vasco Da Gama landed in Calicut in 1498. However, the English eventually trumped the other European powers in their colonizing ambitions. Through a series of strategic, commercial and military interventions, the big local players like the Muslim "Mughals" and "Hindu" Marathas were displaced. By the early 19th century, the

British East India Company had become the significant power in the subcontinent, involved frantically in the drain of India's wealth. In 1857 the English faced a mutiny, last-ditch restorative attempt by the Mughals and Marathas. Sections of the pauperised artisans and peasantry joined, which was subsequently crushed. Eventually, the Crown displaced the British East India Company and took over India's Government—thereby initiating the British Raj—in 1858 (Panikkar, 1963).

It has been suggested that "the eighteenth-century Muslim space in the subcontinent was even more diverse and unorganised than the then Hindu social space" (Saberwal, 2010, p. 52). However, the English colonial regime made several symbolic, institutional, and policy interventions that had an acute transformative effect on the cultural or political imaginaire of various subcontinent sections, including the Muslims. The colonial interventions in the sphere of law between 1833 to 1864—the displacement of Muslim criminal law, amendments in the Muslim civil law (the *Shariat*), abolition of the institution of Qadis (Muslim judges), and Persian as the court language—hit the two influential sections of Muslims, the nobility and religious scholars, hard. Lackadaisical in taking to the new learning, particularly the English language, in contrast to the Hindu elite classes and suspect in the colonial regime's eyes, particularly since the rebellion of 1857 the Muslims confronted an acute symbolic and existential crisis. More or less, the "British Government till 1875 was mildly pro-Hindu, looking upon the Muslim as their implacable enemy" (Panikkar, 1963, p. 219). In the context of this symbolic and material displacement of the leading classes of Muslims, two primary responses emerged. The first response was the articulation of a reformist orthodoxy which the religious scholars led. Inspired by

the reformist/revivalist ideas of Islamic scholars and campaigners like Shah Waliullah and Syed Ahmad Barelwi, this response privileged literalist interpretations and advocated a return to authentic Islamic piety (W. C. Smith, 1943). In other words, in its bid to purge Islam of local elements, the trajectory of Islamization unleashed by the reformers, usually reinvigorated after a return from recent pilgrimage to Mecca, was more Arabized, exclusivist, and anti-British. The course of reformist orthodoxy found its institutional expression in the Islamic school founded in Deoband in 1867. The second response was that of Islamic modernism led by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Acutely aware that the Muslim Ashraf classes had fallen way behind in modern learning compared to the Hindu elite and in no position to confront the British's might, Sir Syed launched a campaign for educational uplift and scientific temper in close collaboration with the British. The trajectory of Islamic modernism was institutionalized in the form of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 (which later turned into the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920). The Aligarh movement was chiefly instrumental in developing an elementary sense of Muslims as a political community, elevating Urdu as the language of Muslims and convincing the British Raj by the 1890s that the Muslim elite classes were a source of strength when compared to the more vocal anti-colonial tones of the Hindu liberal classes since the formation of the Congress in 1885 (Panikkar, 1963).

The interventions of the reformist orthodoxy and Muslim modernizers, despite their distinctive ideological approaches and contestations enabled by print capitalism, were instrumental in setting the trajectory for the imagination of a distinctive Muslim political community (Robinson, 2000). This nascent trajectory

was, however, decisively bolstered by the colonial policy that privileged "numbers" and "community" over the individual in negotiating power and governance (Cohn, 2004). Notably, colonial ethnographers' knowledge production and the decennial census's operations, since 1872, introduced an innovative formulation of community through enumeration and classification of subject populations. Pandey (1997, pp. 305–306) reports,

> The new "communities" were now often territorially more diffuse than before, less tied to small locality, less parochial, on account of changes in communications, politics and society more generally. They were at the same time historically more self-conscious, and very much more aware of the differences between themselves and others, the distinctions between "Us" and "Them." The new "community," or "enumerated community" [...] also became increasingly a part of a rationalist discourse —centrally concerned with numerical strength, well-defined boundaries, exclusive "rights" and, not least, the community's ability to mount purposive actions in defense of those rights.

The colonialists, under orientalist influence, had mapped India through the civilizational grid—chiefly the "Hindu-Muslim" binary (Pandey, 2012). More than the numbers that served the purposes of governance directly (Appadurai, 1993), it was the politics of representation that had a lasting impact, "But to count these communities and to have leaders represent them was a colonial novelty, and it was fundamental to the emergence of religious nationalism" (Veer, 1994, pp. 19–20). The fashioning of Muslim nationalism from the late 19th century onwards has various key interrelated moments.

The first census of 1872 burst the "longstanding colonial myth that Indian Muslims were originally a group of immigrants who had ruled over the great Indian masses" (Veer, 1994, p. 26). Most British observers and writers had since then "accepted the proposition that in referring to the "Mahomedans" they were referring to the "reigning nation," that is to the politically dominant component of India's peoples" (Hardy, 1977, p. 179). However, the census returns revealed that the majority of Muslims in India were not the descendants of the immigrants but rather the descendants of indigenous converts. Two, the construction of the "myth of Muslim decline into backwardness" (Brass, 1974, p. 140) which can be traced back to Sir W. W. Hunter's *The Indian Mussalmans* (Hunter, 1871), wherein the entire Muslim community arguably was spuriously characterized as disadvantaged based on the exceptional data of Bengal (Sarkar, 1983, p. 77; Rodriguez, 2017, pp. 58-59; Kuran & Singh, 2013, p. 504). Brass (1974, pp. 150–151), for instance, demonstrates that between 1881 to 1921, the proportion of Muslims in public employment went up from 34.8 percent to 47.2 percent, while during the period the population of Muslims varied between 19 percent (1881) to 23 percent (1921) respectively (Mondal, 2000, p. 92; also see Khalidi, 2006, pp. 16–32 for a detailed account of the adequate representation of Indian Muslims in British India). Suppose one takes into account the class/caste variations within Muslims in British India. In that case, most of the public employment and education positions were likely cornered by the HC Muslims. Despite relative erosion in political power for the HC Muslims, the story was one of privilege and not disadvantage in terms of numeric representation in public positions in employment and education. Three, the All India Muslim League's formation in 1906 to defend

the civil rights and political interests of the Muslims. The ensuing discourse of Muslims as a "backward community" (Peshkin, 1962, p. 158) offered the background rationality for Muslim nationalists' key demands to be accepted. The Minto-Morley reforms (1909) that introduced a restricted number of Indians in the central and provincial legislative councils accepted the demand for a separate Muslim electorate advanced by the Muslim League in 1906. The granting of a separate Muslim electorate ensured that Muslim representatives were to be elected by Muslims and legitimized separatist politics. Subsequently, giving a 25 percent quota in government services to Muslims in 1926 to reflect their 24 percent population (Wright Jr., 1997, p. 852) and the codification of Muslim personal laws in 1937 (Robinson, 2012) further buttressed Muslim enclavism. However, it were the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms (1919) that accepted direct elections and the expansion of the communal franchise which really marked the shift from elite to mass politics. Numbers and expansion of the Muslim community gained urgency to counter the Hindu majority and therefore the converted Muslim indigenes became an object of attention. As per Hardy (1977, p. 191),

> The English-knowing Muslim of service, professional, and landlord family who was able confidently to assert, or to take for granted, his descent from an immigrant ancestor, took little or no interest until the 20th century in the Muslims descended from indigenous converts to Islam. Only after a generation of British talk of the political importance of "the Muhammadan community" in the British empire in India, and after the British-sponsored all-India census reports had revealed the size of that community and of the convert-descended element within it,

> did educated Muslims see the existence of large numbers of South Asian Muslims of convert origin as a historical fact for the former themselves, one which might define their own social existence and shape their own aspirations to leadership. Earlier, such well-known self-appointed Muslim spokesmen as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Nawwab ʻAbd al-Latif of Bengal, and Justice Amir ʻAli appear not to have mentioned the Indian Muslim convert explicitly, but to have referred vaguely and generically in Urdu to the ʻ*awamm*, the commonalty, or, in Victorian English, to the "lower classes" or "uneducated classes of Musalmans." It would seem that not until the 1920's did the English-knowing or English-educated Muslim, the Muslim who wished to enter into political dialogue with his British rulers and who wished to promote a distinctively Muslim political entity in an India moving on British-laid rails towards greater autonomy, if not independence, begin to claim the converted Indian Muslim as a feather in the cap of Islam in India.

Four, the formal shift from a "community/minority" to a "nation" expressed in the Muslim League's Lahore declaration (1940) that laid down the establishment of a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India as its key goal (Devji, 2013). Throughout this period, the critical conceptual motif was the Muslim League's repudiation of the liberal principle of representative democracy based on a shifting majority. The League reconfigured Muslims as a nation and "postulated its demand for representative parity, independent of numerical proportions, on the inherent dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims" (Shaikh, 1986, pp. 544–545). Ghosh suggests that the positions of the Muslim League "whose right to be represented was disengaged from numerical criteria" were informed by Ashraf sensibilities and the self-perception of the elite

Muslims as belonging to a superior race and therefore commanding deference by default (Ghosh, 2008a, p. 2). According to Rasheeduddin Khan,

> The Muslims in the sub-continent have never been a dormant or inconspicuous minority, but on the contrary, had almost continuously been an active and for centuries also a leading segment of India's cultural and political life [...] Muslim mass-psychology (however irrational and factually untenable) [...] reveals a subjective awareness of their collective superiority [...] born out of the indelible memory of seven hundred years of Muslim hegemony in the Indo-Gangetic plain and in the Deccan (cited in Wright Jr, 2004, p. 32).

The 1946 elections, in which the Muslim League won handsomely and which in the popular imagination indicated the Muslim consensus on Pakistan, eventually paved the way to the tragic partition of British India into India and the Islamic State of Pakistan in 1947 accompanied by large-scale inter-religious violence (Dhulipala, 2015). In a way, the naturalization and resultant competitive relationality of religious identities, informed by the interests of the colonial regime and that of the native religious elite, was chiefly instrumental in the country's Partition (Hasan, 2000, p. 148). The Muslims, constituting about a quarter of the subcontinent's population in 1947, split into a "dominant majority" in Pakistan and a "true minority" in India (Wright Jr, 2004, p. 28).

More pertinently, the Partition fixed the terms "majority" and "minority" with clear referents and designated Muslims as a monolithic community in perpetual trial for having divided the country. According to Pandey,

> The other terms of Indian political discourse that require some attention are "minority" and

> "majority." […] What Partition and Independence did was to fix these terms in a national, country-wide sense for Indian society and politics. The Muslims were now the minority […] on account of their much smaller numbers. The Muslims were now the "minority" even in districts, cities, or towns where they were a numerical majority […] (Pandey, 1999, p. 610).
>
> Few people now cared to differentiate carefully among the Muslims of India. The regional, caste and occupational markers by which generations of Muslims had been known-and privileged, denigrated, or even declared to be only "half-Muslims"—seemed to lose much of their significance. The Muslims were now, more and more-in official documents, in journalism, and in common conversation-simply "Muslims," and all of them were suspect as open or closet Pakistanis (Pandey, 1999, pp. 614–615).
>
> There was the redesignation of local castes and communities: those who had long adhered somewhat loosely to the label of Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh were now categorically named as one or the other. The Meos of Mewat, the Momins of U.P. and Bihar, the Mapillas of Malabar—all became simply "Muslims," and for a while nothing else (Pandey, 1999, p. 626).

In fact, in the backdrop of this colonial legacy of competitive antagonisms, one of the most urgent tasks that confronted the policy makers of the nascent Indian nation-state was the management of enormous diversity of the Indian social scene and incorporation of various minority demands for recognition within the citizenship regime. While universal and equal citizenship was upheld as the constitutional ideal, exceptions were made to accommodate minorities —especially religious, linguistic, caste, and indigenous tribal groups.

Interestingly, in India, the minority rights framework was adopted by the constitution in 1947, much before discussions on multiculturalism became vogue in western academies (Kaviraj, 2010b, pp. 36–37). Minorities were subdivided into sections that were granted "cultural rights" (referring to religious and linguistic groups) and "political rights" (referring to caste and indigenous tribal groups) (Robinson, 2012, pp. 9–10). In particular, religion's historical association with secession was instrumental in framing religion as a suspect category, especially Islam, for policy purposes. It marked the end of Muslim reservations in independent India. As per Jenkins (2003, p. 110), "Partition, the ultimate reification of communal politics, also renewed the commitment of Indian politicians such as Jawaharlal Nehru to the construction of a secular state. This vision of secularism was incompatible with reservations on the basis of religion" (also see Bajpai, 2011, pp. 31–115). In this sense, minority religions, like Islam or Christianity, were constituted as permanent minorities and became a subject of "minority rights."[25] Caste and indigenous tribal groups, on the other hand, were conceptualized in terms of hierarchy, disadvantage, or stigma and therefore necessitated annihilation. Hence, castes and tribes became the subject of "social justice" and beneficiaries of positive discrimination policies (reservations or quotas) in parliamentary institutions, employment and education (Hasan, 2009).

[25] The Constitution upholds the rights of religious and linguistic minorities through Article 25 (freedom to practice and propagate one's religion), Article 26 (right to maintain religious institutions), 29(1) (cultural preservation), 29(2) (educational right), Article 30(1) (right to establish and administer educational institutions) and Article 30(2) (right to state aid for educational institutions).

In postcolonial India, the process of minoritization was spurred through a particular articulation between the logics of Muslim as a religio-cultural category and minority as a statist-juridical category. I have called the combination of these two logics as the Muslim-Minority Discourse (MMD), which unifies three key and intermeshed elements—identity, security, equity (GoI, 2006, p. 3)—around the nodal point "Muslim" and signifies, stabilizes and reproduces them through particular community and state institutions. It is in this sense that Robinson (2012, p. 32; emphasis original) states that "*Muslims* and *minorities*" have become "almost synonymous in political discourses." In MMD, religion is advanced as the overarching identity, and all Muslims are projected as having unified interests. Syed Shahabuddin (1935-2017), one of the tallest Muslim leaders and ideologue, stated once, "For a Muslim, at the personal level, his religious identity is supreme, rising above race, language, geography or political jurisdiction. Indeed he is not prepared to trade his religious identity at any price—bread, profession, vocation, political ideology or national identity […]" (Cited in Hansen, 1999, p. 152). The majority community and state are often charged with cultural imperialism, stereotyping, stigmatization, and advancing a colored narration of history through school textbooks vis-à-vis the Muslim community (Shaban, 2018; Robinson, 2012). Fazal (2020, p. xiv) suggests that the subject of minorities is intimately connected with the idea of nation and secularism. The minorities, particularly Muslims, face challenges from the assimilative imagination of majoritarian Hindutva nationalism and the difference-blind assumptions of secular nationalism. Both interestingly converge in devaluing or invisibilizing Muslim culture. The more conventional option of composite nationalism and

secularism as pluralism, which vouches for symmetrical treatment of all religions, has frequently been under siege (Fazal, 2020; D. Kumar, 1994; Upadhyaya, 1992). In the MMD, cultural-emotive issues like the granting of minority character to the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), preservation of Urdu language, the Ram Mandir-Babri Mosque controversy, or resistance to the state encroachment in the Muslim Personal Laws often finds traction (Alam, 2003). The Hindu majoritarian politics also adopts an aggressive stance by constantly leveling charges of appeasement of Muslims by the State and so-called secular-left parties; framing Muslims as potential fifth-columnists for their role in the tragedy of Partition; polemicizing demographic anxieties related to Islamic practices of family planning, religious conversions and proselytization; prohibition of cow slaughter, and so on (Robinson, 2012, pp. 18-21). In terms of security, the perennial presence of episodes of communal violence, Islamophobic attacks and lynchings, and alleged arrests of innocent Muslim youth in terror cases have been regularly emphasized (Hashmi, 2011; Shahabuddin, 2006; Gudavarthy, 2019). As far as equity questions are concerned, the discrimination against Muslims in housing, education, health and employment, and so on have been amplified (Bose, 2018; Robinson, 2007). Since the 1990s, “a new demand for Muslim reservations” in public employment and educational institutions have been increasingly asserted (Wright Jr., 1997). Broadly, the MMD characterizes the Muslim as a monolithic and subaltern community that is a victim of pervasive majoritarian discrimination and violence. In the following section, I will advance a description of the Muslim caste's return as the colonial repressed through anti-caste mobilizations against MMD in British India and, more

recently, with the emergence of the Pasmanda Movement.

3.5 CONTESTING ASHRAF-MUSLIM HEGEMONY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE PASMANDA-MUSLIM COUNTERPUBLIC

3.5.1 The First Wave: All India Momin Conference (1913-1950)

In North India, the Julahas (or weavers) were the first among the LC Muslims to organize themselves against Ashraf hegemony from the early twentieth century onward (Ghosh, 2010a). The Julahas were pauperized as the colonial policies and industrialization process had hit the textile and handloom sector severely, thereby ruining the fate of most weavers and artisans (Anwar, 2001, pp. 104-105). The Muslim aristocracy, supported by the British imperialists, exploited and oppressed the Julahas (Ansari, 1989, p. 2). Considered socially inferior by the HC Muslims, the Julahas were often victims of caste atrocities and indignities (Arfi, 2016, pp. 41–42). Papiya Ghosh reports,

> Muslims of weaver descent were regarded as among the lowest of the biradaris and in many areas forced labour was taken from them freely. The zamindars of Gaya and Shahabad, for example, employed them as customary porters. An illegal tax, *kathiari*, was exacted on their handlooms by zamindars, and a royalty was levied on the net profit of a loom per month, called *masarfa*. In many villages zamindars claimed an illegal house tax known as *ghar-dwari*. The stories and proverbs that

> circulated both in Urdu and colloquial dialects at the expense of Julahas were common to U. P., Bengal and Bihar, and were widely perceived as confirmation of their oppression by the sharif (Ghosh, 2010, p. 90).

In North India, the Julahas were mainly located in Bihar, United Provinces, and Punjab. From the late nineteenth century onwards, they had started rejecting the title Julaha altogether in favor of more respectable titles like Momin (meaning faithful), Ansari, Momin-Ansar, or Sheikh-Momin (Ghosh, 2010a). In this ashrafization process, there were also attempts to manufacture an Arab ancestry (Arfi, 2016, pp. 46–53). In about eight years from the formation of the All India Muslim League (1906), the Ansaris founded their first caste association named Falah-ul-Momineen in Calcutta in the year 1914. However, the organization lost steam in a few years and was followed by the formation of Calcutta Jamiat-ul-Momineen in 1923. The Calcutta Jamiat later evolved, and in its conference held in 1926, the All India Jamiat ul-Momineen or the All India Momin Conference (AIMC) was born. The notable members in the formation of AIMC were the three "Yahyas"—Maulana Md. Yahya from Sasaram, Bihar; Md. Yahya, from Sheikhpura, Bihar; Maulvi Yahya—and Ali Ahmad Buland Akhtar; Abul Hassan Kashif, Bismil Arvi, Abu Shams Abdul Ghafoor, and Asim Bihari, among others (Arfi, 2016, pp. 84–85). Maulana Ali Husain "Asim Bihari" (1890-1953), one of the founding members and a skilled orator and mass organizer, was widely held to be the main

inspiration behind the growth of the AIMC (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 105–106). The AIMC, which had its headquarters in Kanpur, had a membership of two lakhs and more than 500 branches in the United Provinces alone (Ansari, 1989, p. 8). The AIMC mainly worked as a reformist organization until 1937, when it turned political after the first provincial elections were conducted in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. In 1938, the charismatic Abdul Qaiyum Ansari (1905-1973), already a member of the Congress Party, joined the AIMC and reoriented its political direction. The AIMC, which claimed to be representing the interests of Momins, that constituted about 50 percent of Indian Muslim population[26] (Ansari, 1989,

[26] Papiya Ghosh reports that Momin were the only Muslim biradari for which statistics were tabulated in the 1931 Census in Bihar and they constituted 25 per cent of the Muslim population (Ghosh, 2010a, p. 89). In terms of the Momin population, A. Q Ansari remarks, “The members of the Momin (Ansar) community alone number about four and a half crores, forming almost half the population of the Muslim India, while the rest of the Muslim occupational classes taken together form over one third of the total Muslim population in the country. The authenticity of these figures is, however, being doubted and disputed by the Superior-Group Muslims who, to prove that the population of the Momins and others is much smaller than what is given out here, cite in evidence the last census figures of the population of the Momins and other like classes; the figures shown in census records being much lower than what is mentioned above. Anyway, the fact is that the number of the Momins is never less than about four and half crores as stated above; but the reason for the low figures as shown in the Census is that, in order to escape the agonising humiliation and degradation of being counted and classified among the inferior or low castes, a vast number of the Momins and others got themselves recorded in the Census papers as 'Shaikhs,' that is, the fourth or the last class of the Superior

pp. 1–2), increasingly took on anti-Muslim League overtones, especially with the communal turn (*firqaparasti*) of the latter (Anwar, 2001a, p. 113). The Muslim League was characterized as an organization representing the "Muslim feudals, capitalists and upper classes" that "ignored the interests of the general Muslim masses or the Muslim commonalty" (Ansari, 1989, p. 6). In a situation overdetermined by "the emerging nationalist political environment, the late colonial state and the rising tide of communal politics" (Rai, 2012, p. 61), the AIMC contested the Ashraf hegemony represented by the Muslim League. Abdul Qaiyum Ansari, wrote a letter to Rajendra Prasad (who later became the first President of independent India) in 1939 where he says:

> However, it is a fact that in India certain powerful sections of the followers of that very Islam that preaches the doctrines of equality of man and brotherhood of all Muslims, owing to their utter selfishness and love of power and domination and for their own interests, cast the laws of Islam to forewinds and, though themselves in a minority,

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Group Muslims, and in a few cases, even as 'Syed' or 'Pathan'. Yet another reason as to why a much lower figure than the actual number of the Momins has been mentioned in the Census Report is that only those among the Momins who were actually engaged in the textile-weaving trade at the time of the Census operations were entered as Momins or Ansar while those others who have taken to some other calling but who form almost a half of the entire Momin population were recorded as other than the Momins or Ansars. Thus, in fact, the Census figures itself are wrong and misleading and do not truly reflect the correct number of the Momins and other Muslim occupational classes" (Ansari, 1939).

> turned a vast majority of their co-religionists carrying on various occupations in this country into low and backward communities, having denied them all facilities of receiving education and shut out to them all the benefits and amenities of good social life. At that time, however, these occupational classes did not care much for these social humiliations and disabilities but kept themselves engaged in their various professional pursuits. The result of all this is that today out of nine crore of Muslims in India over eight crore are socially fallen and degraded having been classified among the low castes. They have been systematically exploited by the upper class Muslims who had even been demanding and obtaining special privileges from the Government of the day on behalf of these very eight crore low, poor and backward Muslims but have always usurped what they got to enjoy only themselves (Ansari, 1939).

A. Q. Ansari also articulated AIMC's major demands known as "Nukat-i-Momin" or the "The Six Points," which were forwarded to the colonial regime and the Congress Party in 1939,

> (1) One minister at least of the Central (or Federal) Government and of each of the Provincial Governments be taken from the Momin Community;
> (2) Fifty percent of the seats in the Central (or Federal) Legislatures reserved for the Muslims be allotted to and reserved for the members of the Momin Community;
> (3) Seats in local self-governing and civic bodies be reserved for members of the Momin Community proportionate to their population in the area served by such body;
> (4) Appointments in Government and Semi-government services be reserved for the Momins in proportion to their population;

> (5) Special facilities be provided by Government for imparting general as well as technical education to Momin boys and girls and;
> (6) State protection and State aid be provided for the handloom textile industry owned and carried on by the Momins (Ansari, 1989, p. 11).

The AIMC challenged the bi-nationality thesis—that the interests of Hindus and Muslims were irreconcilable—endorsed by the AIML and stressed regional patterns of cross-community coexistence (Ghosh, 2010a, p. 93). In 1939, A. Q. Ansari wrote to Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad, where he repudiated Mohammad Ali Jinnah's leadership and the Muslim League's claim to represent all Muslims (ibid. pp. 94-95). Specifically, the AIMC consistently interrogated the legitimacy of the Muslim League's claim to represent the LC Muslims, particularly Momins, which formed the majority within the Muslim population—"the aksariyat (majority) within the aqalliyat (minority)" (Ghosh, 2010, p. 109). In 1939, the AIMC also demanded universal adult franchise and a separate electorate for Momins as opposed to being accommodated within the separate Muslim electorate,

> […] on the ground that the electoral roll prepared on the basis of existing suffrage or franchise rested on property, tax paying and educational qualifications and protected the interests of the higher class Muslim capitalists and landed aristocracy represented by the Muslim League who besides owning property had very high percentage of literacy. This voting qualification deprived the Momins, who were mostly poor, landless laborers and artisans, of the right to vote. Thus the existing system of franchise worked against the principles of British justice and democracy by "turning the minority among Muslims into majority" (Ansari, 1989, p. 16).

Humayun Kabir opined that the AIMC "is attempting to use against the League precisely the weapons which the League has employed against the Congress" (cited in Ansari, 1989, p. 11). The AIMC perceived it to be a nationalist and secular organization compared to the secessionist and communal AIML. The gravitation of the AIMC towards the Congress was also aided by the Gandhian semiotics and emphasis on the cottage industry. According to Paul Brass, "The Muslim League, dominated by elite Muslim leaders, had no appeal to the Momins, whereas the Congress, with its Gandhian symbol of the spinning wheel and its pledges of support to indigenous handicrafts, appealed to the economic interests of the Muslim handloom weavers" (cited in Ansari, 1989, p. 89). Even when the Julahas were the vanguard of the movement there was an attempt to reach out to other LC Muslim occupational groups in a bid to forge a "transformative non-ashraf collective" (Ghosh, 2010, p. 103).

On March 22, 1940, IUML passed the resolution in Lahore for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan and asked the Muslims to celebrate March 23 as Pakistan Day. In response, the AIMC organized a large demonstration in Delhi in May 1940 to protest the demand of Pakistan by IUML, where about 40000 Momins participated (Anwar, 2001a, p. 111). In 1941, AIMC contested the AIML's exhortation to Muslims to only mention their religion and not their caste in the decennial census returns (Ghosh, 2010a, p. 102). The AIMC was disappointed when despite repeated pleas to the Congress Party not to recognize AIML as the sole representative of Muslims, Mahatma Gandhi eventually met Jinnah in 1944 and accepted his claim to represent Muslims (Anwar, 2001a, p. 111). The AIMC was already in a tight spot when from the late

1930s onwards, Congress functionaries' role, particularly at the lower level, in fomenting communal riots against Muslims—the overwhelming number of victims being Momin themselves—was becoming clear (Rai, 2012, p. 64). Consequently, there were demands within the AIMC to maintain a distance from both the AIML and Congress politics, and the movement witnessed splits and internal rifts during this turbulent period (Ghosh, 2010, p. 61-64). A few Momin leaders also joined the Muslim League (Ghosh, 2010, p. 64).

Partition's tragedy could not be averted as the 1946 election, also hailed as a referendum on Pakistan, involved a restricted electorate (Chiriyankandath, 1992). Therefore the results were skewed in favor of the AIML. In Bihar, the AIML won 33 out of 40 seats reserved for Muslims. The AIMC contested 18 out of 40 seats under the "Momin Party" banner and won 6 seats. The Congress candidate won 1 seat with the support of the AIMC. At the national level, AIML bagged 427 out of 491 seats (Anwar, 2001, p. 115). Sarkar point at the "[…] extremely limited franchise (about 10% of the population in the provinces, less than 1% for the Central Assembly) […]. […] The League won its demand for Pakistan without its claim to represent the majority of Muslims being really tested, either in fully democratic elections or […] in sustained mass movements in the face of official repression […]." (Sarkar, 1983, p. 427). It is estimated that only about 13 percent of Muslims were allowed to vote (Anwar, 2001a, p. 114). Ali Anwar puts the burden of Partition and the subsequent violence on the Ashraf classes and remarks that the AIML would have significantly been weakened had the Congress Party took the AIMC's "six points" seriously (Anwar, 2001, p. 111).

In Independent India, the AIMC dissociated from politics and restricted itself to social-reformist activities (Ansari, 1989, p. 7). A.Q. Ansari and A. A. Noor, both tall leaders of the AIMC, formally joined the Congress ministry and continued to work for LC Muslims. It is due to their efforts that 500 Backward Muslim Welfare Maktab (schools) and 1200 Bunkar Sahyog Samitis (weaver cooperatives) were established, and the Bihar government made the provision for free education and reservation of seats for Momins in medical colleges (Anwar, 2001a, p. 108). In 1948, A. Q. Ansari, in a speech in Patna, said, "there is no reason why the Indian Muslims should fall a victim to inferiority complex. They should banish from their minds the thought that they are in a minority and consider themselves as citizens of the Indian Union" (Ansari, 1989, p. 71). Ansari continued to stress that "Communalism had to be fought on all fronts, be it of the minority community or of the majority community" (ibid. p. 31). However, despite minor gains, AIMC was co-opted by Congress, and soon the movement was fragmented and its momentum lost. After this phase, the LC Muslim politics remained largely subdued and silent, primarily due to the overbearing anti-Muslim sentiment prevalent at the national level produced by the Partition holocaust.

3.5.2 The Second Wave (the 1990s onwards)

The second wave of the Pasmanda Movement was triggered by the Mandalization of Muslim politics and was catalyzed by the establishment of Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz in 1998 in Bihar. However, two LC Muslim organizations, the All India Muslim OBC Organisation (AIMOBCO) in Maharashtra and the All India Backward Muslim Morcha (henceforth Morcha) in Bihar, can be

seen as significant precursors that inspired the articulation of the Mahaz.

All India Muslim OBC Organization (Maharashtra)

In the early 1990s, the first instance of LC Muslims' mobilization was registered in Maharashtra. However, this assertion's initial inspiration did not lie in any explicit political mobilization but rather in the literary movement anchored by Marathi-Muslim writers, poets, and intellectuals, namely the Muslim Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (henceforth MMSS). According to the 2011 national census, Maharashtra is the second most populous state in India, with about 112 million (9.28 percent of India's population). Hindus (80 percent) and Muslims (11.5 percent) constitute the major religious collectivities. Narendra[27] Pawar[28], who has watched the growth of MMSS closely, divides the population of Muslims in Maharashtra into the Urdu-speaking "migrant" Muslims (migrated in the last 40-50 years) and the Marathi/Dakhani-speaking "native" Muslims. The migrant Urdu-speaking Muslims, particularly from the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, constitute only about 30 percent of Muslims in Maharashtra but control the community's cultural, political and social life. As a result, the Urdu language problematically assumes the entire Muslim community's language in the public sphere. The formation of MMSS in 1989, which publicized both historical and contemporary contributions of Muslims to Marathi literature, was pathbreaking as it counterhegemonically stressed that

[27] All interviews and most of the textual archive was in Hindi and unless otherwise indicated were translated into English by me.
[28] Interview, Narendra Pawar, 8 July 2011, New Delhi. Section 3.5.2.1 is based on this interview unless stated otherwise.

the mother tongue of the majority of Muslims in Maharashtra was Marathi and not Urdu.

In Maharashtra, there was a longstanding tradition of literary and cultural forums being employed to deliberate on critical political issues by the Dalit-Bahujan movements. The MMSS, whose core team comprised of social activists and intellectuals like Vilas Sonawane, Prof. Fakhruddin Bennur, Dr. Aziz Naddaf, and Dr. Basharat Ahmad, among others, ensured that the movement was not restricted to only Marathi-Muslim writers or literary concerns but also embraced all those interested in the so-called "Muslim question." Narendra Pawar finds it curious that a Dalit who critiques the Brahmin is considered a "rebel" while a Muslim adhering to the same practice is marked as "communal." In these differing parameters of evaluating the rebellion's content, the MMSS was instrumental in crafting a dialogic space between contending religious communities. Even when Muslims needed a "new interpretation of rebellion," the Marathi language's very association with the Muslim community was in itself quite radical. In Pawar's view, "A Muslim poet even writing pure love poetry in Marathi ought to be considered a rebel because he is breaking the dominant illusion that his language is Urdu and not Marathi." The broad aspiration in the early years was to counter Muslims' Othering and bring them to the "mainstream."

However, the MMSS, which was complicating the Muslim identity based on language and region, soon encountered the Muslim community's caste question. The informal list of Muslim castes that the members of MMSS drew ran to 118 castes that included about 54 nomadic groups. The presence of caste within Muslims posed a dilemma for Ambedkarites. The thesis of

"conversion-as-liberation" advanced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who himself converted to Buddhism along with half a million followers in 1956, was radically problematized. "How will conversion annihilate caste when caste is still alive and kicking in those [Muslims] who converted 1400 years (sic) back?" asked Pawar. Narendra Pawar had been once loosely associated with the OBC Organization, which acted as a pressure group and organized political workers from backward castes across political parties to implement the Mandal Commission Report. The OBC Organization included cross-party figures like Janardhan Patil, Gopinath Munde, Comrade Koli, Chhagan Bhujbal, etc. The persistent attempts of the OBC Organization to rope in Muslim OBCs failed due to the hegemony of migrant Muslims over the community. The migrant Muslims who saw themselves as "pure" were overrepresented in political parties and controlled the community's cultural and educational institutions, including the Urdu schools and imamate of the mosques. The migrant Muslims bitterly resisted the idea of caste, and due to their enormous influence over native Muslims, membership from Muslim OBCs was not forthcoming.

However, the Mandal Commission Report's acceptance by the V. P. Singh government in the 1990s started to change that. By recognizing 82 Muslim castes as "backward," the report accorded official recognition to Muslim caste stratification. A separate Muslim OBC organization was mooted at the second Muslim Marathi literature conference, held at Nagpur in 1992. A detailed plan was finalized in the next meeting in Ratnagiri in 1993 (Vora, 2008, p. 46). The All India Muslim OBC organization (AIMOBCO) was finally established in 1993 by the founding members of the MMSS in consultation with Maharashtra OBC organization leaders. The Mandal

judgment of the Supreme Court in 1992, apart from upholding caste-based reservations for OBCs, also instructed the various governments to update their OBC lists. As part of this updating, nine Muslim castes already included in the Maharashtra State OBC list since 1967—like Julahas, Banjaras, Tambolis, Khatik, Bagwan, etc.—were ejected. Since these nine Muslim castes were already availing reservation benefits, their sudden ejection created discontent amongst them. The AIMOBCO, headed by their newly assigned President Shabbir Ansari, tapped into this discontent and organized about 4500 public meetings in areas dominated by native Muslims between 1992 and 1994. The first statewide convention of AIMOBCO was held at Jalna on May 1, 1994, followed by conferences and rallies in Usmanabad (gathering of 3000), Solapur (crowd of 10000 people), and Sangli. Apart from the discontent due to Muslim castes' ejection, there was also a leadership vacuum among Muslims as their traditional leadership had failed to arrest the demolition of the Babri Mosque. The consistent mass mobilization by AIMOBCO pressurized the Congress government headed by Sharad Pawar to issue a Government Resolution for inclusion of Muslim OBC castes on December 7, 1994, just a few hours before the imposition of the code of conduct for the Maharashtra Assembly elections due in 1995. In the second convention of AIMOBCO held at Aurangabad on the eve of the 1995 assembly elections, Sharad Pawar was thanked in absentia for extending reservations to OBC Muslims.

Apart from reservations, at the policy level, other demands like access to educational and financial facilities, a housing and development corporation for Muslim OBCs, easing the process of generating caste certificates, protecting and modernizing traditional

skilled occupations, and so on were also raised. On a social level, Muslims were persuaded to break down caste walls, and inter-caste marriages were encouraged. Maharashtra's Muslim OBCs were inspired by Mahatma Jotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar's anti-caste radicalism and Islam's egalitarianism. By constructing an identity based on "backwardness," the AIMOBCO parochializes the "ghetto mentality" of Muslims and forges solidarity of subaltern castes across religious lines. Vora (2008, p. 56) is hopeful that the "caste-majoritarianism project" envisaged by AIMOBCO will be able to contest both "Hindu majoritarianism of the BJP" and "minoritism of the Muslim community" and lead to the forceful emergence of the "majoritarianism of the oppressed."

After tasting success in Maharashtra, the AIMOBCO was all set to play a more critical role at the national level. On 29 August 1996, the AIMOBCO organized its first national convention in New Delhi, which was a massive success as it witnessed participation from 22 states. The movement received a big boost when the widely respected thespian Dilip Kumar advanced his support in 1996. The Aurangabad conference he attended witnessed a gathering of over a lakh. Dilip Kumar later also graced the AIMOBCO conference held at Lucknow in 1997 (Anand, 2017). However, by the time of Maharashtra assembly elections in 1999, tensions within the AIMOBCO became acute, with Prof. Fakruddin Bennur and Vilas Sonawane distancing themselves from the organizational activities. The founding leaders of the AIMOBCO were worried about the rise of the organization's undemocratic culture and the increasing compromises that were being made due to the participation of AIMOBCO in electoral politics. Shabbir Ansari secured five tickets from the Indian National

Congress for AIMOBCO members, three registered victories. The split was formalized after 1999 with two parallel Muslim OBC organizations functioning since then—the Shabbir Ansari-led organization (based in Jalna) and the Iqbal Ansari-led organization (based in Pune). While the Shabbir Ansari faction dabbles directly in electoral politics, the Iqbal Ansari-led faction has restricted itself to socio-cultural empowerment and lobbying on policy issues.

All India Backward Muslim Morcha (Bihar)

Bihar is one of the poorest states in India and is marked by deep caste/class divisions. Historically, it has also been witness to the radical left and socialist resistance movements. In the Mandal phase, the first stirrings of mobilization of LC Muslims were registered with the All India Backward Muslim Morcha (Morcha) formation at Patna on 1 May 1994 (Sikand, 2002). The Morcha led by Dr. Ejaz Ali, a medical doctor belonging to the Raeen (vegetable growers) caste, included Ghulam Sarwar Azad, Soni Halalkhor, Dr. Noor Hasan Azad, Noor Mohd. Noor, Ali Kalal and Yahiya Hawari as the core founding members (N. H. Azad, 2009, p. 9). Morcha claims to champion the cause of "Dalit-Muslims," which, according to its estimate, comprises 29 different LC Muslim groups and constitutes about 90 percent of the state's Muslim population (Sikand, 2004, p. 50). In demographic terms, Bihar is the third most populous state in India, with a population of about 104 million, according to Census 2011. Muslims constitute 17 percent (17 million) and Hindus about 82 percent of the total population. Most Dalit-Muslims work as daily wage laborers, manual workers, artisans, and petty peasants.

Ali grew particularly bitter with the "traditional, and largely "upper" caste, Muslim leadership" after the Babri Mosque demolition in 1992 for "having only further complicated matters by playing into the hands of Hindu militants and as misleading the Muslim masses for their own petty gains" (Sikand, 2004, pp. 50–51). Ali sees "all the ingredients of the Brahminical order" in the Indian Muslim community and accuses the "high" caste Muslim leadership of "playing the "minority card" and practicing the politics of "minority-ism" in order to garner power for themselves while claiming to speak on behalf of all Muslims, the vast majority of whom are Dalits" (ibid. p. 58). He exhorted the Dalit-Muslims to develop their leadership and concentrate on bread-and-butter concerns rather than remaining confined within the emotional/symbolic issues—like Urdu, minority character of Aligarh Muslim University, Muslim Personal Law or the Babri Mosque—consistently raised by high caste Muslim leadership (D. M. E. Ali, 1997). According to Ali, communal conflicts (*maslaqi jhagda*) are bound to fail. Only through caste agitations (tabqati jhagda) can the Dalit-Muslims secure their educational, economic, and political rights. The Morcha aspires to organize a "Dalit Force," which refers to the pan-religion solidarity of Dalits (constituting about 40 per cent of India's population)[29].

In 1995, Morcha protested outside the Parliament in New Delhi. On 4 October 1998, it organized the "Jihad Conference" at Patna. It gave a call for a non-violent struggle (*Jihad*) to attain its crucial demand: the inclusion of Muslims and Christians of Dalit origin in the SC list by scrapping Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950. The order, which had initially

[29] Interview with Asif Saifi, 17 June 2012, New Delhi

ejected all non-Hindu Dalits from the SC list, later reincluded Dalits belonging to Sikh (1956) and Buddhist (1990) communities, thereby leaving only Dalits-Muslim and Dalit-Christian communities from the list. Morcha articulated the exclusion of Dalit-Muslims and Dalit-Christians from the SC list as a case of discrimination on the grounds of religion and in violation of the principle of secularism enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 was seen as usurping Dalit-Muslims and Dalit-Christians' rights by rendering them ineligible for reservations and other welfare policies accruing to the members of the SC category (Ali, 1997, p. 11).

With its headquarters based in Patna (Bihar), the Morcha emerged as an umbrella group of various biradari associations with branches in different states like Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra (ibid.). Morcha has consistently organized signature campaigns, conferences, public meetings, protest marches and lobbied with the political parties to push forth its key demand: inclusion of Dalits-Muslims and Dalit-Christians in the SC list. Several pamphlets and handbills have been regularly circulated as pedagogical interventions, and the pamphlet titled *Jihad* became quite popular. As the editor of the Urdu daily *Sangam*, Ejaz Ali has also employed its columns for publicizing the concerns of Dalit-Muslims. He has also been instrumental in publishing the Hindi fortnightly *Backward Morcha*[30]. In 2001 the Morcha renamed itself as All India United Muslim Morcha (N. H. Azad, 2009, p. 13). Ali also dabbled in politics and was a member of the Rajya Sabha during 2008–2010.

[30] Ibid.

All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Bihar)

While campaigning for Dalit-Muslims' cause, Dr. Ejaz Ali had befriended Ali Anwar, a left-leaning journalist in his early forties. Anwar, who had earlier worked with newspapers like *Janashakti* and *Navbharat Times,* was with the Hindi daily *Jansatta* when he met Ali. Anwar had a specialization in movement journalism (*abhiyani patrkarita*) and was well known in Patna journalistic circles (Suman, 2017, pp. 30, 49). In 1996 Anwar was awarded the prestigious K. K. Birla Foundation Fellowship to research Dalit-Muslims of Bihar (Sunil Jha, 2006). The annual fellowship provided him an opportunity to reflect deeply on Dalit Muslims' condition that one seldom affords in journalism's immediacy. Anwar felt that "Owing, among other factors, to caste prejudice, "upper" caste Muslim writers, Syeds, Shaikhs, Mughals and Pathans, as well as non-Muslim scholars, have displayed little or no interest in writing about the non-ashraf Muslims" (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). Since relevant material was absent in the official archives and libraries, Anwar primarily relied on interviews, oral histories, and statistics during his research. When a section of the study was published in the form of a booklet titled *Sar ke Bal Khadi Muslim Siyasat* (Muslim Politics Standing on its Head) on 3 July 1998, it created ripples in the political waters of Bihar (Arunranjan, 1998; Correspondent, 1998; K. K. Jha, 1998; Kishor, 1998). The traditional Muslim leadership, both political and religious, did not receive it kindly. The ex-MP Syed Shahabuddin and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind's organ *Dawat* criticized the booklet in no uncertain terms. Ali Anwar was lambasted for breaking the unity of Muslims, and even religious spaces like the mosques and madrasas were used to vilify him (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 13–14).

A story by Ali Anwar on fake caste certificates by some HC Muslims to fraudulently corner government jobs otherwise reserved for OBCs caught public attention. Around the same time, applications were filed in the Bihar State Backward Classes Commission to include HC Muslim “Mallick” and “Neo-Sheikh” castes in Annexure I of the Backward Classes list. Two distinct trends were visible. At one level, efforts were being made to get HC Muslim groups included in the BC lists. At another level, politicians like Syed Shahabuddin had become proponents of treating the entire Muslim community as backward and chalking out a separate quota for them (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 14–15). The activists associated with the Morcha were against both these moves. However, in the Jihad conference organized by Morcha at Patna on 4 October 1998, Dr. Ejaz Ali arbitrarily supported Mallick Muslims' reservation without consulting the other key members. After the Jihad Conference got over five disillusioned activists—Ali Anwar, Usman Halalkhor, Dr. Noor Hasan Azad, Ghulam Sarwar Azad, and Yahya Hawari—gathered together in Gandhi Maidan, Patna and decided to form a new organization (N. H. Azad, 2009, pp. 12–13).

The Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz was formed on 25 October 1998 at an MLA Club meeting, Patna. “Pasmanda” is a Persian word that means “those who have fallen behind.” Mahaz means “front.” In this meeting, a decision was taken to organise “Arakshan Bachao Rally” (Save Reservation Rally) on 13 December 1998 at Miller School, Patna, to protest the proposed inclusion of HC Mallick Neo-Sheikh castes in Annexure I of the BC list. The activists of the Mahaz were also furious that a Justice (retired) Syed Ali Ahmad, an HC Muslim, was made the Chairperson of the Bihar State Backward Classes Commission. Mahaz alleged that Justice Ahmad was

partisan and was instrumental in getting one or two HC Muslim groups included in the BC list. The Arakshan Bachao Rally was successful (Kishore, 1998) as the government shelved the idea of inclusion of Muslim HC groups in the BC list and asked Justice Ahmad to step down from the Chairmanship of State Backward Classes Commission (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 15–16).

Buoyed up by these initial gains, the Mahaz started to raise the question of (under)representation of Pasmanda-Muslims in political and religious institutions more vibrantly, thereby creating a stir in the Ashraf classes (*tabka-e-ashrafiya*). Within a month of the formation of the Mahaz, a few elite Muslim social scientists gathered for a conference at Patna, where the Mahaz was declared a dangerous organization for Indian Muslims. After this, the All India Milli Council (AIMC) organized an international "Fiqh (jurisprudence) Conference" where the Mahaz was targeted without explicitly naming the organization (Correspondent, 1999). The Muslims were appealed to stay alert to conspiracies to divide them. The previous conferences were followed by a week-long "Ittehad-e-Millat" (unity of the Muslim community) campaign spearheaded by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), where various appeals to preserve Muslim unity were made by the venerated theologian Ali Miyan and other ulema associated with organizations like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and All India Milli Council (Anwar, 2001a, p. 16).

In 1999, during the run-up to the Parliamentary elections, five organizations—Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-ul-Ulema Hind, AIMPLB, AIMC, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat—released the "Muslim Agenda—99" in New Delhi. The document outlined the agenda of Muslims to be presented to all political parties. It raised

the issue of declining Muslim representation and advanced the demand for a Muslim quota. The Mahaz countered it by releasing "Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Nayi Sadi ki Or" (Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Towards Next Millennium)[31] on 16 August 1999 (ASS, 1999). The Mahaz rejected Agenda—99 and speculated about the "extra-ordinary situation" that "prompted the […] five religious organizations to form "the grand political alliance." Mahaz document stated, "It appears that the strange ripples and ramifications caused by the social reformation movement for equality (*masavat*) initiated by the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj, has sent tremors to the above-mentioned organizations." It underscored that Agenda 99's commitment to secularism and efforts to counter sectarian politics were shallow and asked, "But can they achieve such a goal through leaders like S. Shahabuddin and parties like Jamat-e-Islami—which have gained notoriety for communal politics."[32] The Pasmanda Muslim Agenda stressed that the Muslim community was not monolithic or backward in its entirety and constituted a "conglomeration of various castes and communities" with differential levels of social, political and economic development.

Moreover, since 80 percent of the Muslim population was already covered in the Mandal Commission Report's reservation, the Mahaz underlined that the phrase "reservation for all Muslims" was a euphemism for the demand to include HC Muslims in the quota. It likened the demand of Muslim reservations to the colonial idea of a "separate electorate." It raked the memories of the consequent communal violence during the Partition to

[31] I am thankful to Mr. Ali Anwar for sharing an English translation of the document.
[32] Ibid.

alert the present dangers of a communal polarisation resulting from such a demand. The Pasmanda Muslim Agenda instead urged the political parties to give tickets to Pasmanda Muslims in proportion to their share in population and listed 17 issues and demands worth pursuing[33]:

1. Accordance of SC status to Dalit Muslims so that among other benefits their representation would increase because of reservation in legislative bodies for SCs;
2. ST status to those Muslims who have historically converted from native tribes;
3. Measures to check the high caste Muslim practice of availing of public employment through fake caste certificates;
4. Measures to check the practice of forward castes trying to get registered in BC list;
5. Caste-based census;
6. Proper infrastructure and financial support to the sick handloom and other sectors impacted negatively due to the advent of multinational companies in the wake of the new economic policy;
7. Concrete government plan to upgrade the condition of various Muslim professional castes;
8. Adequate policies for workers in the *bidi* (thin local variant of tobacco-filled cigarettes) industry due to its hazardous nature and the large involvement of women labourers;
9. Education and health care facilities for Pasmanda Muslims;
10. Quota to be fixed for Pasmanda Muslims in welfare schemes like the red card, Indira Awas Yojna and so on;
11. Promotion of inter-caste marriage by the government;

[33] Ibid.

12. Progressive and pro-women changes in Muslim Personal Law;
13. Removing the moratorium on elections to local bodies and panchayats so that grassroots leadership of subordinated castes may emerge;
14. Implementation of reservation policies in minority educational institutions and need to take stringent measures to check malpractices and violation of norms in admissions and appointments, particularly in engineering and medical educational institutions;
15. Special package to be announced for the poor among Muslim forward castes;
16. Urdu and Ram Mandir-Babri mosque controversy are not merely Muslim issues. Rather they are national issues and must be settled in accordance with national interest;
17. The need to counter the politics of fear and Muslim vote-bank which eventually bolsters Hindu vote-banks and the votaries of a Hindu state.

Though Mahaz was not a political organization and did not participate directly in electoral politics, the construction of political consciousness (*siyasi shaoor*) and awareness (*bedari*) among Pasmanda-Muslims was one of its key objectives. According to Ali Anwar, the political and religious leaders of the Ashraf community left no stone unturned to ensure the defeat of Pasmanda-Muslim candidates in the 1999 parliamentary elections. However, while none of the Pasmanda-Muslim candidates could register a victory, the number of Ashraf parliamentarians declined from 5 to 3. In the 2000 assembly elections, due to the probable influence of the Mahaz, the number of tickets allocated to Pasmanda-Muslims increased. Also, the number of Muslim MLA's risen from 23 in 1995 to 30 in 2000. After the 2000 assembly elections, probably for the first time in the

history of the Congress Party, a Pasmanda-Muslim Furqan Ansari was made the Congress Legislature Party leader. Anwar also feels that it is probably due to the emergence of the Pasmanda movement that the Ashraf classes shifted Muslims' religious leadership to Bihar since the death of Ali Miyan—Maulana Mujahidul Islam Qasmi was made the President of the AIMPLB. At the same time, Maulana Syed Nizamuddin was already its general secretary. In this way, "the religious leadership of the country is now in the hands of Bihar. Whether these religious leaders contest elections or not, they certainly practice politics" (Anwar, 2001, p. 18; Tr.).

The issue of Dalit-Muslim reservation was one of the main Mahaz demands. On 1 July 2000, the Mahaz organized an event at Patna to celebrate Baba-e-Qaum Abdul Qaiyum Ansari and Veer Abdul Hamid's birth anniversary[34] in which RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav and renowned socialist thinker Kishan Patnayak participated (Special Correspondent, 2000b, 2000c, 2000a). Laloo Yadav assured to take up the issue of Dalit-Muslims in the conference. True to his promise, on 3 July 2000, Laloo Yadav tabled a non-official bill in the Bihar legislative assembly to demand the central government to accord SC status and facilities for Dalit-Muslims (Anwar, 2001a, p. 18). The House passed the bill on July 21, 2000 (HTC, 2000) and later by the Bihar cabinet on December 6, 2000. In this context, Bihar became the first state to make such a demand from the central government. As a

[34] Abdul Hamid, (1933–1965), belonged to the Idrisi (tailor) caste and was an Indian Army soldier who posthumously received India's highest military decoration, the Param Vir Chakra, for his actions during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. The prefix "Vir" with is name denotes bravery. He is a Pasmanda icon and his birthday is celebrated every year along with that of Abdul Qaiyum Ansari on 1 July.

sign of his rising popularity in political circles, Ali Anwar was nominated as the Backward Classes Commission member on 4 September 2000 (Special Correspondent, 2000d). By employing the facts that emerged from the research, all the major political parties were apprised of the concerns of Pasmanda-Muslims. The long-forgotten Pasmanda icons like Abdul Qaiyum Ansari, Maulana Ateeq-ur-Rehman Arwi, Miyan Abdul Malik Danapuri, and others were rediscovered, and their pictures started appearing in posters and pamphlets. Bihar government announced a literary award worth ₹51 000 named after Abdul Qaiyum Ansari. The central government had to confer the Bharat Ratna to Ustad Bismillah Khan, a renowned musician belonging to the Halalkhor (sweeper) Muslim caste (Anwar, 2001a, p. 19).

In Ali Anwar's words, the story of the Mahaz is "the transformation of research into a movement" (ibid. p. 16, Tr.). While parts of the research had already started appearing in the form of newspaper articles and booklets from 1997 onwards, the complete book *Masawat ki Jung—Pasemanzar: Bihar Ke Pasmanda Musalman* (The Battle for Equality—Background: Pasmanda Muslims of Bihar) was released in the Patna Book Fair on 8 December 2001. The ex-Prime Minister of India, V. P. Singh, was the book launch ceremony's chief guest. Ali Anwar regretted the late publication of *Masawat* and attributed it to his involvement in activism (Anwar, 2001a, p. 20). In the foreword to the book, Hemant (Anwar, 2001, pp. 11–12, Tr.) noted,

> In the course of his research on Dalit Muslims of Bihar, when Ali Anwar presented facts and figures reflecting the truth about Muslim society to many colleagues-friends like me, we were shocked […] During the research sections of the book were

> published in newspapers and magazines of Bihar and the country […]. It created a furor in the Dalit-Backward politics and society of Bihar! There was a commotion in political parties and elections. The word "Pasmanda" became the talk of the town! However, in that agitated scenario, there was another response—"How such familiar things remained unfamiliar for so long?"

Hemant stressed that the purpose of the book was not to be instrumentally employed for any political profiteering but rather to "foreground that question in the agenda of contemporary politics and society which the Muslim politicians and their secular (*sarva dharma sambhav*) and other collaborators in various brands of secular/communal parties had hitherto repressed. That is the question of the economic, social and political life of Pasmanda-Muslims which has been the victim of poverty, exclusion, inequality, and political conspiracies" (ibid. p. 12). Ali Anwar expressed that he was well aware that "books on their own cannot usher in revolutions. But they can at least create the ground for revolutions" (ibid. p. 13, Tr.).

The Mahaz continued to publicize Pasmanda concerns through protests, sit-ins, public meetings, conferences, rallies, pamphlets, etc. (see Table 1 for a chronology of key events). However, in 2004 it decided to go national and added the prefix "All India" to its title on the insistence of activists from Uttar Pradesh (Suman, 2017, p. 59). Subsequently, the Mahaz decided to organize the "Dalit Muslim Mahapanchayat" (Grand Assembly of Dalit Muslims) at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi, on 4 December 2004 (Staff Reporter, 2004, p. 5). The next day the Mahaz was to participate in the celebrations on International Dignity Day organized by the World Dignity Forum. Mahaz reiterated its critical agenda: SC status for Dalit

Muslims, state protection for cottage industries and artisans, and proportional share of Pasmanda-Muslims in political power. Ali Anwar's second book *Dalit Musalman* and the Mahaz's journal *Pasmanda Awaaz*[35] (Voice of Pasmanda) were launched on 5 December 2004 (Shivani Singh, 2004; SNB, 2004).

The Bihar assembly elections were held twice in 2005 due to a fractured verdict in the February 2005 elections. In the February 2005 elections, the Mahaz had not supported any particular party and had asked the voters to support LC Muslim candidates and those parties that were relatively judicious in ticket distribution to LC Muslims. However, before fresh elections were held in October-November 2005, after an interim President's rule, parleys between Mahaz and Janta Dal United[36] (JDU) leader Nitish Kumar had already started owing to the initiative taken by another JDU leader Prem Kumar Mani[37]. Mahaz and Momin Welfare Society jointly organized the "Arakshan Bachao Mahasammelan" (Save Reservations Conference) on 23 July 2005 at Patna to protest the constitution of the Ranganath Mishra Commission[38] and the 5 percent reservation for all

[35] The "Pasmanda Awaaz" was published irregularly from December 2004 to February 2008 after which it was discontinued.
[36] Nitish Kumar led Janta Dal United (JDU) and Laloo Prasad Yadav led Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) are the two main political parties in Bihar. RJD held power from 1990 to 2005 and was dislodged from power by JDU in 2005.
[37] Interview, Mohd. Sajjad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).
[38] National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, also known as the Ranganath Mishra Commission was constituted by Government of India on 29 October 2004 to look into various issues related to Linguistic and Religious minorities in India.

Muslims accorded in the state of Andhra Pradesh[39] (Correspondent, 2005a, 2005b). In this conference, both the arch-rivals Laloo Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar were invited with the understanding that while Nitish Kumar will inaugurate the conference, Laloo Yadav will grace the closing ceremony to avoid a standoff between the two leaders. Both Nitish Kumar and Laloo Yadav supported the demand of according SC status to Dalit-Muslims and Dalit-Christians. However, while Nitish Kumar explicitly endorsed the abolition of the Ranganath Mishra Commission, Laloo Yadav proposed a meeting of the Mahaz with the Congress leadership at the center to clarify the issues with the Commission. After intense internal discussions, the Mahaz declared its open support for the JDU (Correspondent, 2005c) and campaigned for the party extensively[40] on the promise that if JDU came to power, it would enforce a 20 percent quota for the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), that includes the majority of LC Muslim groups, in the three-tier local bodies: district boards, panchayat samitis, and gram panchayats. When the results were declared the JDU-BJP alliance had decimated RJD and brought fifteen years of its rule to an end. After the victory Nitish Kumar openly acknowledged Mahaz's support for his victory and rewarded Ali Anwar by making him the Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) on 4 April 2006. Nitish Kumar kept his promise and soon announced a 20 percent reservation for Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) in local bodies. In 2010 JDU returned to power for a consecutive second term, and Ali Anwar's membership of Rajya Sabha was renewed in 2012.

[39] Mahaz has held Muslim quota to be illegitimate and supports the inclusion of only LC Muslims for reservations in public employment and education.
[40] Interview, Mohd. Sajjad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).

Ali Anwar has consistently stressed that the fight of the Pasmanda is for "rozi roti [livelihoods], for dignity, human rights, peace" (Anand, Hingorani, & Basu, 2005, p. 13). In an interview (Anwar & Sikand, 2005), he summarized the key themes in his writings,

> I have tried to show, with the help of interviews, oral histories as well as statistics, that although the Backward Caste/Dalit Muslims form the overwhelming majority among the Muslims of Bihar, they are victims of pervasive discrimination and, on the whole, are economically and educationally extremely marginalized. The state has done little, if anything, for them, and, instead, has sought to promote ashraf or so-called "upper" caste Muslims, who form only a small minority among the Muslims, as Muslim "leaders." I tried to highlight the nexus between the state and the so-called ashraf political and religious leadership in Bihar, a phenomenon that can be observed in other parts of India as well. This explains […] how under various governments in Bihar non-ashraf Muslims have hardly received any representation, whether in successive ministries or in government services. Most of the few Muslims who have been so represented have been from the so-called ashraf, and they do little, if at all, for the non-ashraf Muslims, being hardly concerned about their plight at all. In addition, I have highlighted the fact that in large parts of Bihar the Backward Caste/Dalit Muslims continue to face social discrimination at the hands of both self-styled ashraf Muslims as well as so-called "upper" caste Hindus. I have shown how the leadership of large Muslim religious organizations is almost completely in the hands of the so-called ashraf Muslims.
>
> […] the Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims are hardly organized at all and […] they have few effective leaders. Till now they have been following the lead

> of the so-called ashraf, both professional politicians as well as maulvis […] Like their "upper" caste Hindu counterparts, they want us to focus only on communal controversies or narrowly-defined religious issues, and in this way seek to completely displace the harsh reality of the lives of Dalits and Backward Castes from political discourse.

Ali Anwar feels that the term Pasmanda has gained currency in the political sphere. He took a jibe at the senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid's statement during the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections when he campaigned for his wife Louise Khurshid, a candidate from the Farrukhabad constituency. Salman Khurshid, an HC Muslim, was facing a challenge from many Pasmanda activists campaigning against his wife. At this juncture, Salman Khursheed said that "he would ensure the rights of Pasmanda Muslim community even if the Election Commission "hangs" him" (PTI, 2012). To this, Anwar remarked, "The term Pasmanda has gained so much currency that Salman Khurshid had to give a statement during Vidhan Sabha elections that he will even hang himself for the Pasmandas […] that was his love for Louise, not for Pasmanda"[41]. In Pasmanda narratives, there is evident discomfort with the leadership and politics imposed from above, and the tone and tenor are usually sharp and incisive. "Those politicians and candidates imposed by the political parties from above are not loyal to their communities/constituencies but their respective parties and its leadership. That is why a social movement is required. Those emerging from social movements are the

[41] Ali Anwar, Speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012; recorded copy with the author.

ones who can help their communities in substantive terms. Political parties are formed in the crucible of social agitations" (AIPMM, 2005, p. 9). Though the self-perception of the Mahaz is that of a social movement, it is keen on forming a political party for Pasmanda Muslims, sooner or later. However, that party, it is held, will not be an exclusivist party (in terms of religious identity) like the Muslim League, but one that will incorporate Dalits and Backward sections from other religions (Anwar, 2005c, p. 4). Indicating displeasure for being taken-for-granted by political parties, a Mahaz document laying down the political agenda stresses, "We should always be looking out for better alternatives. The days of the non-negotiated settlement are long gone. Now we want nothing less than a "negotiated settlement"! (AIPMM, 2005, p. 9). In an interview, Ali Anwar says unequivocally, "We want political empowerment. We have our votes. We will not abide by the *fatwa* (opinion) of politicians or the *maulvis* (clerics). Our votes should reflect our numbers" (Anand et al., 2005, p. 13).

TABLE 1 CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

Date	Event
1993	All India Muslim OBC Organization (AIMOBCO) established Shabbir Ansari in Maharashtra
May 1 1994	All India Backward Muslim Morcha established by Dr. Ejaz Ali in Bihar
February 3 1998	Ali Anwar completed "Sir ke Bal Khadi Muslim Siyasat" a research work supported by Birla Foundation.
21-22 August 1998	Programme in Kochas (Shahabad), Momin Conference Sammelan, Master Mukhtar Ansari, Haji Sattar presided; Khalid Anwar, Khalid Rashid, Ali Anwar participated.
October 25 1998	Formation of Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz; Mallick reservation as the catalyzing factor

December 13 1998	"Arakshan Bachao Rally" organized by Mahaz in Patna to oppose reservations for HC Mallicks and Sheikhs.
July 1 1999	"Dalit Adhikar Diwas" observed by Mahaz in Patna.
August 16 1999	Mahaz releases "Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: 21veen Sadi ki Or" to counter "Muslim Agenda 99" released by JIH, JUH, AIMC, AIMPLB, AIMMM.
September 30 1999	Prof. Khalil Ahmed Raini disappeared never to return again. He was Vice President Mahaz and Mahasachiv, Minority Cell, JDU.
July 1 2000	Birth Anniversary celebrations of Abdul Qaiyum Ansari and Abdul Hameed; Venue: Shri Krishna Memorial Hall, Patna; Organizer: Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz Bihar; Laloo Yadav as Chief Guest
July 3 2000	Laloo Yadav (RJD) endorses reservations for Dalit-Muslims.
July 22 2000	Bihar RJD government passed the proposal (through a non-official resolution) and recommended to the Centre to grant SC status to Dalit Muslims.
September 4 2000	Ali Anwar nominated as Member of State Backward Classes Commission, Bihar.
November 19 2000	Second anniversary of Mahaz celebrated in Amrapali Nagar (Townhall), Hajipur.
December 6 2000	Bihar cabinet (Laloo Yadav's government) endorses the demand to accord SC status to Dalit Muslims and recommends to the Centre.
December 8 2001	"Masawat Ki Jung" released in Patna Book Fair. Ex-PM V. P. Singh was the Chief Guest in the ceremony.
July 1 2003-July 1 2004	Celebrated as Abdul Qaiyum Ansari centenary year
March 20 2004	Mahaz's "Pasmanda Jagao aur Mulk Bachao Maharally" in Gandhi Maidan Patna; Main speakers: Medha Patkar, Sandeep Pandey, Fauzia Sayeed
March 21 2004	Mahaz presents its demands in "Sampradayikta aur Globalization Virodhi Rashtriya Sammelan", AN Sinha Institute Patna. 14-point memorandum.
August 24 2004	Day-long Mahadharna by Mahaz organized opposite Vidhan Sabha Lucknow to raise the issue of weavers and other cottage industries and SC status for Muslims.
October 13 2004	National Coordination Council of OBC Muslim Organizations" formed in Bhopal.
December 4 2004	Dalit Muslim Mahapanchayat, Ramlila Maidan, New

	Delhi; organized by World Dignity Forum. "Dalit Musalman" book and "Pasmanda Awaz" magazine released. [
July 23 2005	"Arakshan Bachao Mahasammelan"; Venue: SRK Memorial Hall, Patna; Organizer: Mahaz & Momin Welfare Society. Historic conference as both Laloo and Nitish participated. Mahaz resolved to support JDU.
September 18 2005	Mahaz declares support for JDU in Bihar Vidhan Sabha elections.
February 13 2006	Mahaz protested against Ranganath Mishra Commission's Patna visit.
February 19 2006	Establishment of All India Pasmanda Employees Association by the Mahaz.
April 20 2006	Mahaz protested against the manhandling of a Pasmanda journalist by Imam Bukhari in Delhi. Venue: Dakbangalow Chauraha, Patna
December 6 2006	UP government (Mulayam Singh Yadav's government) gets the demand to accord SC status to Dalit Muslims endorsed by both houses and recommends to the Centre.
February 10 2007	Pasmanda Mahapanchayat, Jantar Mantar, New Delhi; Organized by Mahaz and others.
June 14 2008	Mallick (Muslim) caste enlisted in Backward Classes Annexure-II list by the Bihar state government gazette 371 on the recommendation of State Backward Classes Commission.
July 1 2008	"Pasmanda Waqar (Swabhiman) Rally"; Venue: SRK Memorial Hall, Patna; Organizer: Mahaz, Bihar
August 21 2008	"Dalit Adhikar Sammelan" on the occasion of the death anniversary of Ustad Bismillah Khan (Shehnai Maestro); Venue: Ravindra Bhavan, Patna; Organizer: Dalit Muslim Muhim
October 18 2008	Factionalism in Mahaz; Ali Anwar symbolically expelled by one faction of Mahaz.
February 2 2010	"Vichar Goshthi—Ranganath Mishra Commission aur Humari Laparvahi"; Venue: Shibli National Inter College, Azamgarh; Organized by Mahaz
March 15 2010	"Arakshan mein Dharmik Bhedbhav tatha Bunkaron ki Bhukhmari ke Khilaaf: Jangju Pradarshan"; Venue: Jantar Mantar, Delhi; Organizer: Mahaz, All India Meo Vikas Sabha
April 12 2010	"Vishal Dharna Pradarshan"; Venue: Rickshaw Stand,

	Collectorate, Azamgarh (Demand of Butchers included)
July 1 2010	"Pasmanda Adhikar Sammelan"; Venue: Shri Krishna Memorial Hall, Gandhi Maidan, Patna; Organized by Mahaz
July 7 2010	Hearing by State BC Commission to include Sheikhs in BC list
January 20 2011	Rejection of the demand for inclusion of Sheikh caste in BC list by Bihar Backward Classes Commission.
January 27 2011	"Pasmanda Jagao-Desh Bachao Sammelan"; Venue: Ravindralaya, Charbagh, Lucknow (UP); Organized by Mahaz (UP) and All India Mansoori Samaj [Pamphlet Archive 4]
May 15 2011	UP State office of Mahaz inaugurated in Lucknow.
May 31 2011	State Backward Classes Commission orders hearing on the issue of objection to inclusion of Mallick caste in Annexure II.
July 1 2011	"Pasmanda Samman Sammelan"; Venue: S. K. Memorial Hall, Patna; Organizer: Mahaz (Salim Parwez Faction)
November 30-31 2011	7 Pasmanda killed in Jamui district.
December 11 2011	"Dalit-Pichda Muslim Mahasammelan", MAH Inter College, Ghazipur (UP); topic: "Pasmanda Musalmanon ka Itihas, Dasha aur Disha"; Organized by Mahaz Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh) unit
May 8 2012	"Bunkar Samar Shankhnad"; Venue: Talkatora Indoor Stadium, New Delhi; Organizer: Bunkar evam Karigar Prakoshth, BJP
July 10 2012	Mahaz's President Ali Anwar's Asthan [District Pratapgarh, Tehseel: Kunda] visit for fact-finding on a communal event in a LC Muslim village.
August 1 2012	Parliament March & Dharna for Article 341; Venue: Ram Lila ground to Jantar Mantar; National Council of Dalit Christians, Mahaz etc.
January 19 2013	"Pasmanda Samaj par Hatya, Zor, Zulm wa Shoshan ke Khilaf Ek Divasiya Dharna"; Venue: Kargil Chowk, Gandhi Maidan, Patna; Organizer: Mahaz (Mohd. Heshamuddin Faction)
February 17 2013	Seminar on the occasion of the 25th death anniversary of Jannayak Karpoori Thakur; Topic: "Maujooda Siyasat aur Pasmanda Musalman"; IMA Hall, Delhi; Organized

	by Mahaz (Hesamuddin faction)
February 24 2013	"Pasmanda Swabhiman Sammelan"; Venue: Baburi, Pani Tanki ke Paas, Chandauli (UP); Organizer: Mahaz Chandauli Unit (Uttar Pradesh)

SOURCE: Compiled by Khalid Anis Ansari

3.6 CONCLUSION

C3 started with the proposition that the monolithization of Muslim-Minority identity has severe epistemological consequences for the justice issues related to internal minorities like the Pasmanda-Muslims. From the vantage point of a deconstructive reading of the hegemonic MMD, C3 pointed at its intimate relation with the Muslim caste question's repression. In the construction of the MMD, the role of colonial governmentality and the Islamic discourse/institutions was vital. However, the Muslim caste as the colonial repressed staged a comeback in British India, through the Momin identity, and in Independent India, through the Pasmanda identity. The broad description of anti-caste Muslim mobilizations above demonstrate a deep-seated discontent with MMD and Ashraf hegemony, and stage the LC Muslim desire to pursue more organic issues related to everyday struggles for survival. In the following chapters—C4, C5, and C6—I will attempt to critically map and evaluate the LC Muslim concerns on questions of identity, violence, and equity through a close examination of the counter-hegemonic narratives of the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, the leading organization within the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic.



PLATE 1 MAHAZ CORE MEMBERS IN HYDERABAD 2003 L-R Mohd. Usman Halalkhor, Ali Anwar, Mohd Hishamuddin, Haji Sattar; Back L-R Mohd Mukhtar Ansari, Dr Noor Hasan Azad

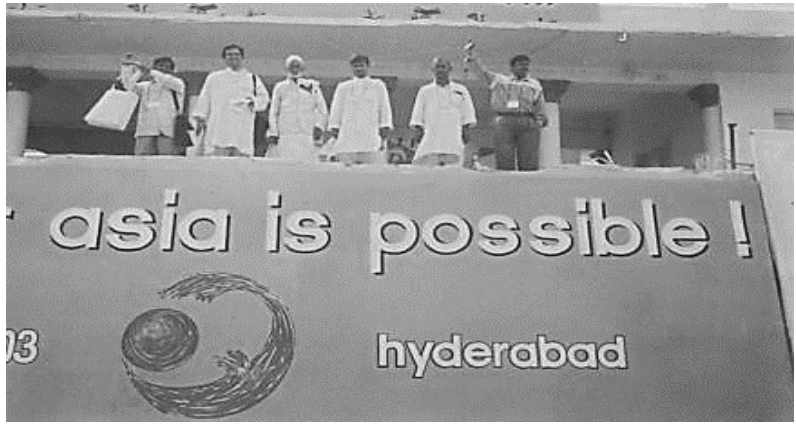


PLATE 2 MAHAZ MEMBERS IN HYDERABAD 2003

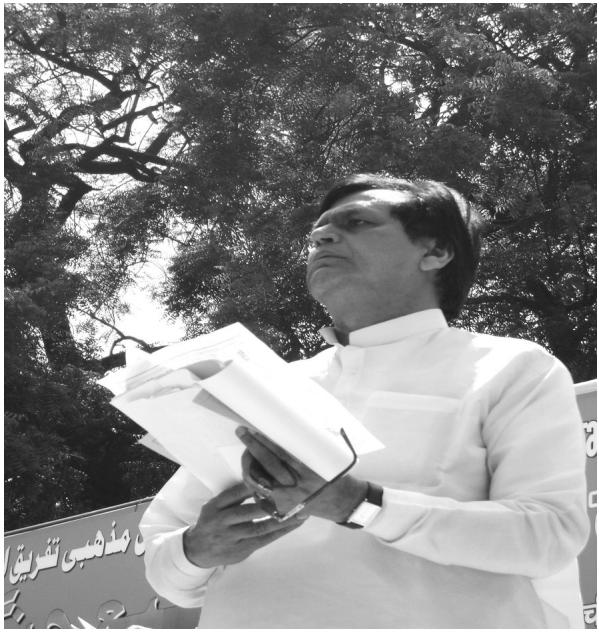


PLATE 3 ALI ANWAR IN A MAHAZ RALLY ORGANIZED IN NEW DELHI ON MARCH 15 2010

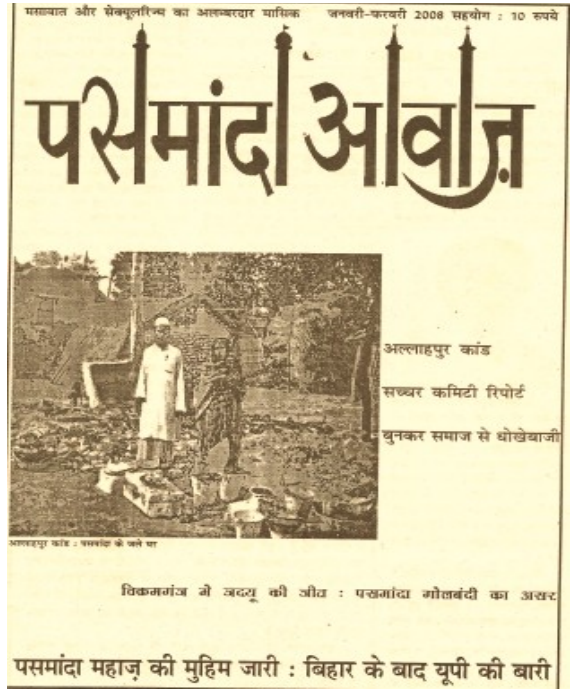


PLATE 4 MAHAZ' JOURNAL "PASMANDA AWAAZ" (THE VOICE OF PASMANDAS)



PLATE 5 GLIMPSE OF THE MAHAZ RALLY IN NEW DELHI 2010



PLATE 6 GLIMPSE OF THE MAHAZ RALLY IN NEW DEHI 2010

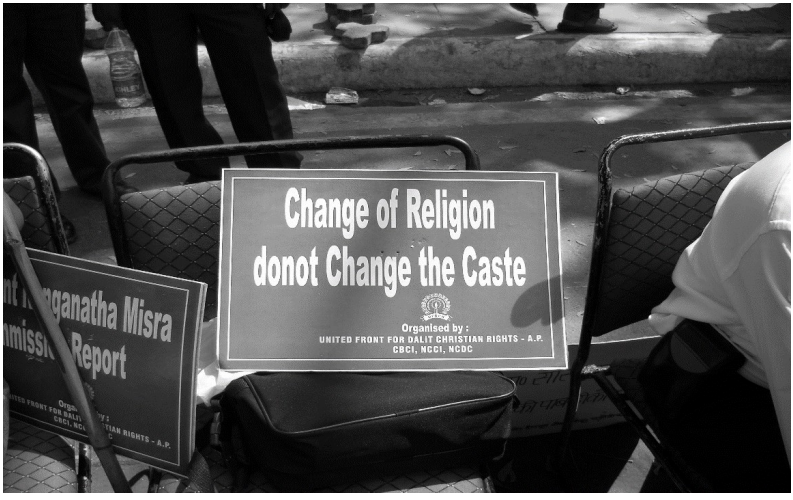


PLATE 7 A PLACARD FROM PASMANDA RALLY NEW DELHI 2010



PLATE 8 MAHAZ POSTERS

CHAPTER FOUR

LIKE A SACKCLOTH PATCH ON MUSLIN: THE PASMANDA POLITICS OF IDENTITY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The genealogical account of the emergence of the PMC, discussed in C3, wherein the emphasis was on identifying the conditions of possibility of the activation of Muslim caste as a sign of counterhegemony to the MMD, clears the ground for a synchronic analysis where the question of form, structure or topography of the discourse becomes significant (see Figure 1 in C1). In terms of PDA, the signifier "Pasmanda" is detected as the nodal point that offers an overarching identity to the discourse and unifies or organizes the various other moments—that is, subjects, objects, and practices. C4 examines the first moment in the PMC identity, while C5 and C6 investigate security and equity concerns, respectively. The Ashraf cultural/value framework (discussed in C3) constitutes the hegemonic norm in Indian Muslim society, and the perspectives, cultures, and bodies of LC Muslims are invisibilized and inferiorized. Young (1990, pp. 58–59), in her discussion of "five faces of oppression," employs the

term "cultural imperialism" to refer to the experience where "the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other." According to Young (ibid. p. 59), "Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm." Fraser (2003, p. 36) refers to the "intersubjective" condition of participatory parity, which "requires that institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem." The enactment of the Pasmanda identity by LC Muslims symbolizes the discontent with Ashraf cultural imperialism and a bid to attain status parity. The Mahaz, in this pursuit, has advanced narratives related to violations of dignity, resignified and inverted received notions of identity and social solidarity, and publicized concerns related to theological and social reform.

4.2 THE PURSUIT OF DIGNITY

The LC Muslims comprise laboring classes—peasants, artisans, service, manual, and menial workers—are often victims of blatant stereotyping and othering. Ali Anwar finds it ironic that the sections "who are considered to be the most hard-working and self-reliant are made fun of in our society" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 38). Anwar's book *Masawat Ki Jung* (henceforth *Masawat*) discusses the practices of stereotyping—denigrating stories, popular idioms, jokes, proverbs—associated with LC Muslims like Julaha (weavers), Halalkhor (sweepers), Lalbegi (sweepers), Bhatiyara (innkeepers), Gorkan (gravediggers), Bakho (gypsies), Mirshikar (hunters and

trappers of birds and small animals), Chik (butchers), Rangrez (dyers), Darzi (tailors), and Nat (professional dancers, singers, and acrobats) (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 37–64). The hegemonic imposition of stereotypes attempts to fix the nature and lifeworlds of LC Muslims in devalued terms.

The Julahas (weavers) are characterized as foolish and unreliable. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the renowned Muslim educationist, and reformer referred to them as "*badzaat,*" which has connotations of being low-born, lousy disposition, ill-bred or mean, in his analysis of the anti-colonial rebellion of 1857 (Anwar, 2001, p. 38). Pandey (1983, p. 19) suggests that the British worked with "essential types" and "the "bigoted Julaha" was a firmly established colonial stereotype in northern India by the end of the nineteenth century." William Crooke, an official in the colonial government, stated that "The Julaha generally bears the character of being cowardly, pretentious, factious and bigoted" in 1896 (ibid. cited in p. 19). While the word Julaha probably has a Persian origin (*julah* means weaver), in the nineteenth century India "many observers sought to derive the name from the Arabic *juhala*, meaning the "ignorant class," to bring it in line with popular notions of the weavers" stupidity" (ibid. p. 21). One story which portrays the weavers as dumb-wits goes like this, "One Julaha was sitting with his eleven friends to go on a journey. It was decided that before leaving they should count themselves. He started counting but repeatedly he forgot to count himself. At last, he started weeping, saying I am dead. Hence, arrangement should be made for burial" (Anwar, 2005a, p. 17). Pointing at the two numerically significant LC groups, Hindu Ahirs/Yadavs (milkmen) and Muslim Julahas, Anwar infers that "it can be safely assumed that, through a well-planned conspiracy, the leaders of both

the communities tried to demoralize" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 16) these caste groups through coining various derogatory phrases and idioms because of the challenge they posed to HC supremacy.

Other LC Muslims suffer from similar prejudices. The Halalkhors and Lalbegis, being involved in the profession of sweeping, are mocked for being engaged in dirty occupations or residing in unsanitary areas and are often victims of the practice of untouchability. The womenfolk of the Bhatiara caste, which were traditionally keepers of inns, are supposed to be of suspect sexual character. It is believed that the Gorkun caste members, who dig graves and act as caretakers of the graveyards, rejoice on hearing of someone's demise as their livelihood depends on the practice of burial. The Rangrez, or dyers, are mocked for their menial work and association with a foul smell that remains because the base material (*saresh*) used for printing is made by decomposing leather. Even the titles of various Muslim castes are used as invectives and curse-words (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 37–64).

At times the culture of caste discrimination infects burial practice in graveyards (Sahay, 2003) and spiritual spaces like the mosques (K. A. Ansari, 2009b). A recurrent theme in Pasmanda narratives is the existence of separate cemeteries for Muslims of various castes and the clashes that have followed LC Muslims' attempts at the burial. In multiple locations, LC Muslims cannot occupy the front rows in the mosques during prayers. Noor Hasan Azad, one of the founding members of the Mahaz, recalls:

> Our neighborhood had a specific spatial arrangement. There were different cemeteries for different castes. Here, I would like to emphasize

> the subtle element of untouchability present in this organization of cemeteries. It is important to note that all the land was in the possession of the feudal landlord (*zamindar*). He gave away that land to be employed for this purpose but he insisted or rather condoned the division of cemeteries on the basis of caste (Azad & Ansari, 2011).

Masawat records a conflict over burial in the village of Muhabbatpur in Vaishali district on 19 February 1995. Jugal Khalifa, an older person, belonging to the Nat caste of acrobats and performers, died in an accident. Though Khalifa was a resident of Sherpur village, about ten kilometers from Patna, his relatives went to the nearest cemetery at Mohabbatpur to prepare the grave for burial. The high caste Sheikh Muslims of Mohabbatpur and adjoining villages protested against the funeral, saying: "Let's see, how dare the Nat community bury the corpse here?" When the district officials learned of the commotion around the burial, the police force was called in. At first, the Sheikh community members claimed that the land of the cemetery was their personal property. When the government officials investigated their claim, they discovered that the cemetery land belonged to the government. Once the confusion over ownership of the cemetery land cleared, the district officials instructed the Sheikh community to withdraw from their protest and allow Jugal Khalifa's burial peacefully. The Sheikhs persisted, and it was only after the police used force and arrested about ten persons that the funeral could take place (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 60–61). Noor Hasan Azad, who belongs to the Pamaria caste, reports that in the Makandu village of Lohardagga district, his caste members are elbowed back during the Friday congregational prayers. The children also face discrimination in the religious seminaries (madrasas)

(ibid. p. 67-68). Mohd. Sultan Pasi, who comes from the caste of toddy tappers, narrates that other Muslims often complain of foul body smell and push them to pray in the rear rows during Eid prayers. As a result of this humiliation, many Pasi community members have stopped participating in the ritual Eid prayers (ibid. p. 68).

The resistance to these indignities and discriminatory practices result in an open conflict which could take the form of social boycott, caste atrocity, or extravagant revenge extracted by HC Muslims. In 1995, the HC Mallick's attacked the LC Raeens in a village near Bihar Sharif. Since the Raeen's were pre-informed about the designs of the Mallick's, most men had already fled the village. When the Mallick's found the men missing, they abused and humiliated the women and left. However, about ten days later, they attacked again and ransacked the houses, and physically beat the Raeen men. Due to the fear, about twenty Raeen families left the village forever and moved to the nearby cities (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 68–69). As mentioned in C1, the town of Allahpur in Bihar witnessed HC Muslim violence against the LC Muslims owing to the right to pray in. Jha (2018) reports episodes of more recent inter-caste violence between Muslims in Bihar's Muzaffarpur,

> In Bihar's Muzaffarpur, a Muslim mohalla has a road that has been split into two. People living in the area have divided the road that divides them by building a wall. Half of the road now belongs to the Sheikhs, considered upper caste, and the other half to the Ansaris, considered lower in the caste order among Muslims. […] Damodarpuri Tola in Panapur Haveli panchayat in Muzaffarpur's Kanti is a Muslim-dominated village. Sheikhs among them have had their domination questioned by

> Ansaris. Recently, on 18 November, a wedding in an Ansari household led to a fight between the two communities within the community. The Sheikhs did not like the Sheikh-level pomp and show on the Ansari side. A quarrel turned into a free for all. The ensuing mediation round returned a verdict that ended in construction of a wall dividing the road and prohibiting entry into each other's turf. Speaking to our reporter, Naseeruddin Ansari accused the Sheikhs of mistreating them. He is happy with the wall because, well, "we don't want to do anything with them." "We cannot go to offer namaz to that side. It's an irony that people who follow one religion and one book have erected a wall that divides them into two. What can be worse than this?" Salim said.

As Ambedkar remarked, "It is your [LC] claim to equality which hurts them [HC]. They want to maintain the status quo. If you continue to accept your lowly status ungrudgingly, continue to remain dirty, filthy, backward, ignorant, and poor and disunited, they will allow you to live in peace. The moment you start to raise your level, the conflict starts" (Ambedkar, 2010). Caste discrimination within Muslims takes other forms too. There are reports of conflicts during love, particularly inter-caste marriages (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 159–166). Muslim Caste also expresses itself in spatial segregation of community neighborhoods. The very titles of Muslim settings sometimes carry caste rubrics—Mir Sarai, Julhatti, Mohalla Banjarian, Quraishi Muhalla, etc. The Muslims who converted from Dalit castes in historical time continue to face untouchability in their everyday lives from both the HC Muslims and Hindus due to their professional status (Anwar, 2004; GoI, 2008).

Mohd. Ibrahim[42], who has travelled across the length and breadth of the state of Uttar Pradesh as an activist, asserts that "I did not find even a single place which has not faced the exploitation (*shoshan*), repression (*daman*) or torture (*atyachar*) by the Ashrafs." Ibrahim uses the terms *karahiyat* (contempt) and *ghin* (scorn) to capture the ashraf attitude towards the subjugated Muslim castes. He adds:

> They [ashrafs] feel a certain contempt (*karahiyat*), hatred (*ghrina*) […] I mean scorn (*ghin*) […] because these people [Pasmanda] perform lowly work […] they weave […] get drenched in sweat […] their clothes emanate foul odor […] they clean filth […] or sell meat […] their clothes and utensils are different[43].

Zakir Naik feels that

> They [Ashrafs] are allergic towards the backward [Muslims]. They don't want to liquidate or remove them […]. They want them to live amidst them but with the status of a servant. If three-four people [ashrafs] are sitting, then they expect them [Pasmanda] to sit on the ground rather than on the chair [with others] […]. That is their mentality. [The Ashrafs] want [Pasmanda] womenfolk to work as maids, broom their houses, and cook their food […] be docile […] keep their heads lowered. That is the nature they like if you are like this, you are good and could get a few more facilities. But nothing beyond that. They intend that they [Pasmanda] should not study, and their wards should not become doctors, engineers[44].

[42] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Interview, Zakir Naik, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).

According to Ali Anwar, Muslim caste is not merely a North Indian issue but rather an issue faced by Indian Muslims in other states too. A few poems addressing the caste question within Muslims in Andhra Pradesh/Telangana have been translated by Naren Bedide (Kuffir Nalgundwar), editor Round Table India, from Telugu to English. Kavi Yakoob, in his poem "Awwal Kalima" (Kavi, 2010), eloquently captures the sense of caste-based discrimination and derision attached with the titles and occupations of LC Muslims:

> *Scentusaabu, Uddandu, Dastagiri, Naagulu, China Adaam,*
> *Laaloo, Pedamaula, Chinamaula, Sheik Srinivasu,*
> *Bethamcharla Moinu, Paatikatta Malsooru- aren't these our names.*
> *Sheikh, Syed, Pathan- flaunting the glories of your khandaans*
> *did you ever let us come closer to you!*
> *Laddaf, Dudekula, Kasab, Pinjari…*
> *We remained relics of the time when our work bit us as caste.*
> *We became "Binishtis" carrying water to your homes*
> *and "Dhobis" and "Dhobans" who washed your clothes,*
> *"Hajaams" when we cut your hair*
> *and "Mehtars, Mehtaranis" when we cleaned your toilets*
> *as relics of the age when our work bit us as caste we remained.*
> *As you say, we're all "Mussalmans"!*
> *We don't disagree—but what about this discrimination?*

Khaja, in his poem "Ek Ekulam" (Khaja, 2010) blames the "Manumullahs," "Maulvi Sahabs" and "Khandani conspirators" for sowing the seeds of division within Muslims who otherwise follow an egalitarian faith,

Like dividing the Masjid into four domes
this is the tale of how the Manumullahs
tore the thread of faith which united all
into unequal parts
The betrayal of Moulvi Saabs
who threw pepper into the eyes of Allah who said everyone's equal
The cunning of the Khandaani conspirators
who found impurity in my Kalma

The poet who had the self-perception of being a "Muslim" as defined by Ashraf sensibilities, underwent a severe crisis of identity when he confronted caste discrimination meted out to him by his high caste coreligionists because of his lowly occupation of cotton carding,

And before I could adjust the collar of my Nawabgiri
it threw me as a carpet beetle into cotton bales
The pride of my Moghlai-ness
evaporated like incense on burning coals

On discovering the play of caste within Muslim culture, he "*was born for the second time as the one who cleans cotton*." In another poem, Khaja (Gupta, 2009) laments the false consciousness due to "*a system where survival is impossible without Brahminisation*" and regrets that he too "*became a bearded Brahmin and asked my elder brother to move away / Considered my younger brother inferior*." As an exercise in symbolic inversion, he reclaims his caste identity and membership of the vast majority of subordinated castes across religions: "*I am declaring that I belong to the majority / Though I am a Muslim by religion I assert that I am a Dalit by caste*."

Sheikh Peeran Boraywala (Boraywala, 2010), belonging to the caste of gunny bag/sack weavers, complains,

You avoided all relations with me

because of my caste and lifestyle
You considered me unfit
I mingle amidst you
but still you look at me with derision
and talk differently with me
interact coldly with me and show
scorn for my occupation

It is owing to such contempt and discrimination in Muslim society that forces people to hide their caste identities in the public sphere. Israr Mohammad[45], a school teacher and activist belonging to the Jogi (mendicant) caste, points out,

> If someone belongs to the Jogi caste, or Faqeer, Nat, Madari, Kalandar, Dafali, Bhat, Pamariya […], these *biradaris* face so much humiliation that they have to hide their identity if they wish to live with respect. That is why their actual numbers often go underreported [in census and government surveys].

4.3 REDEFINING IDENTITY AND SOLIDARITY

The devaluation and invisibilization of LC Muslims' experiences created the ground for enacting a new identity, Pasmanda-Muslim, as an exercise in redefinition. Most of the Pasmanda activists recall some caste discrimination episodes that they encountered, partly explaining their recourse to anti-caste activism. In an autobiographical tract, Dr. Noor Hasan Azad (2009) mentions an early episode when he submitted his caste certificate for high school registration. After he was admitted, the headmaster, on learning that his caste Pamariya was enlisted in the SC list, included his name

[45] Interview, Israr Mohammad, 23 April 2012, Lucknow.

in the scholarship list for SC students. However, the scholarship amount released was soon returned due to the intervention of a clerk who cited the rule that Pamarias belonging to Islam could not avail of benefits accruing to the SC category. "This event during my childhood created such a lasting impression that I vowed to struggle to get the Dalit-Muslims, just like Dalit-Hindus, included in the SC list at all costs," says Azad (Azad, 2009, p. 2). Azad recalls another incident wherein his village Mainpura (originally "Moinpura" named after the Muslim landlord Moinuddin in Patna) a controversy erupted around the construction of the village well. The landlord wanted the well to be constructed within the premises of his mansion to regulate access to the well. Many people objected to it as the properties in possession of the mosque were meant to be open for public use. The issue got heated at that time (1967) as there used to be a shortage of drinking water in Patna, and people were dependent on drinking water, primarily on the wells like this. In this controversy, the landlord filed cases against the families of Noor Hasan Azad and Usman Halalkhor. However, the two families persisted along with other villagers, and finally, the landlord had to concede to the demands of villagers (N. H. Azad, 2009, p. 4).

According to Azad,

> [W]e are not fighting any new battle, and it is not that we are making untouchability and discrimination an issue (out of nothing). These are age-old issues but remained concealed under the curtain. *Ham pardah uthane ki koshish kar rahe hain* (We merely want to raise the curtain!) […] We are highlighting the issue, invoking the same category of caste, which was earlier maintained to sustain inequality, to demand justice (*haq*) (Azad & Ansari, 2011).

Usman Halakhor, formerly General Secretary of the Mahaz, narrates an incident where some Muslim sweepers from Gorakhpur had visited Delhi to meet a Muslim cabinet minister and discuss their concerns. The minister sarcastically replied, "*Kya makhmal mein taat ka paiband lagana hai*?" (Do you want me to stitch a sackcloth patch on muslin cloth[46]?). Halalkhor remarks that such statements reflect the perverse hierarchical mentality of present-day Ashraf Muslim leaders (Halalkhor, 2004). Sarwar Alam[47], a journalist, recalls his discovery of the dominance that merely five percent of HC Muslims exerted over the vast majority of Muslim weavers of Mubarakpur when he was about 18-20 years of age. Sarwar Alam recounts that the weavers were utterly dependent on HC *Khan Sahibs* and *Sheikh Sahibs* for getting even minor works done from government departments and police stations.

In most cases, the Ashraf mediators exploited the weavers' ignorance. They made a quick buck by threatening in the name of the police officers, who often were not even aware of the issue. Alam took to journalism as a means to contest these indignities as "there was no one to wield the pen in my biradari. If you look at the religious books, they [Ashrafs] constitute 99 percent of the authors […]. They have written according to their interests. Had the pen been in their [Pasmanda] hands, they would have raised their concerns, and their condition would have been different"[48]. Alam feels that the LC Muslims should become aware and struggle for their rights. Instead of being like *dooba ghaas* (a form of

[46] The coarseness of sackcloth signifying the Pasmanda-Muslims and the fineness of muslin alluding to the HC Muslims.
[47] Interview, Sarwar Alam, 29 May 2013, Mau (Uttar Pradesh).
[48] Ibid.

grass) that is being grazed upon and crushed under the feet for centuries, they should turn into *kaante* (prickly thorns) that will prick the moment someone steps on them. "They (Pasmanda) will be successful only when they turn into thorns. As long as they remain like the grass, they will never be successful and continue to be devoured like a morsel of food by others"[49].

Since the 1990s, the ideologues and activists associated with the Mahaz have attempted to reinterpret and symbolically invert the naturalized notions of identity and solidarity in the mainstream Muslim space. In these narratives, the indigenous roots of the Pasmanda-Muslims are stressed, and sons-of-the-soil arguments are invoked. "All the Dalits, irrespective of religion, belong to the same race and the blood of their common ancestors flows in their veins. Unlike the so-called ashraf Muslims, who take great pride in their claim of foreign extraction, the Dalit and Backward Caste Muslims are all of indigenous origin, being descendants of converts from the oppressed castes", says Ali Anwar (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). Dr. Ejaz Ali too stresses that a mere "change of religion does not alter blood relations" (Ali, 1997, p. 5). Anwar privileges caste instead of faith-based identity, "First Pasmanda and then Muslim afterward. We are Pasmanda first. We are *shuddars* [shudras] first"[50]. Drawing parallels with the enactment of the Momin identity by the LC Muslims to counter the elite politics of All India Muslim League in British India, Anwar stresses the need for a separate Pasmanda identity to contest the Ashraf-driven minority politics at present:

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ali Anwar, speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012; recorded copy with the author.

> At a national level, and especially in north India, it [the politics of the Muslim League] became irrelevant. So a new politics started after independence—minority (*aqaliyat, alpsankhyak*) politics. In this brand of politics, the minority leaders in all [political] parties are forward caste Muslims […] whether it be Naseemuddin Siddiqui (BSP), Azam Khan (SP), Mohsina Qidwai (INC), Salman Khursheed (INC), Farooq Abdullah (NC), Syed Shahnawaz Hussain (BJP) or Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi (BJP) […] yes, in all parties, the same politics everywhere. So I thought a counter word should be given: Pasmanda! So now, just by invoking Pasmanda, people understand […] nothing more needs to be said […] [they know] that this is something related to backward caste Muslims […] that this is their game even when their voice is weak. The difference becomes apparent. It is because of this reason that many people get irritated. Previously when they used to approach […] political parties, they used to say, "we are a minority, and this should be our share [in tickets]." Due to the circulation, howsoever slow [of the term Pasmanda] people [parties] have started asking: What are you within minority? […] Are you Ansari, Mansoori, Darzi, Dhapali […]? What are you?[51]

In contrast to the notion of a majority or minority defined based on religion, Ali Anwar advances the idea of a "caste majority" based on the pan-religion solidarity of subordinated castes,

> We Dalits and Backward Castes are not a minority at all. In fact, taken together, we are in the majority, the "Bahujan," forming over 85% of the Indian population, despite the fact that we might follow different religions (Anwar & Sikand, 2005).

[51] Ibid.

> Now the time is ripe for Pasmanda-Muslims to craft their own identity. The identity of Pasmanda-Muslims was hitherto obscured in the name of the minority. Now we fear the word minority and feel that it is a fake (*chaliya*) word. In the name of a minority, either someone terrorizes us (the HC Hindus), or someone snatches away our rights (the HC Muslims) (AIPMM, 2005, p. 9; Tr.).

> In real terms, we are the majority (Bahujan) in this country […] there is a bond of pain between Pasmanda-Dalit Muslims and the Pasmanda–Dalit sections of other religions. This bond of pain is the supreme bond. We face the same issues. That is why we have to shake hands with the Dalit and Pasmanda sections of other religions (AIPMM, 2005, p. 9; Tr.).

In India's present political context, articulating a shared, collective caste-based identity across faiths is a radically subversive innovation. While the HC groups have invested in the reproduction of vertical solidarities based on religion, Anwar favors horizontal solidarity of subjugated castes/classes across religions based on the "bond of pain," or the collective experience of stigmatization and discrimination. In *Masawat,* several social references bolster the new logic of solidarity. In the section on Lalbegi (sweeper) Muslims, the family of the late Abdul Ghani Miyan, Lalbegi Muslims living amidst Hindu Doms for many generations, is discussed (Anwar, 2001a, p. 45). Parveen Bano, the wife of late Abdul Ghani Miyan's son Hannu Miyan informs that "even though our coreligionists avoid us, but the neighboring Hindus (Dom) do participate in events like marriage ceremonies, funerals and other festivals" (ibid. p. 45, tr.) She also expressed that they have never worried about communal riots or violence in the locality. In the controversy over the burial of Jugal Khalifa

discussed earlier, while most Muslim Sheikhs were against the funeral, the Hindu Dalits had openly stood in support of the Nat community (ibid. p. 61). Castes like the Nats may be categorized as fuzzy communities because they often practice Hindu and Muslim rituals or celebrate festivals together. Avtaro, a lady belonging to the Nat community, informs that even when many Nats have got their children circumcised (an Islamic practice), "they still keep on chanting *Bhagwan-Bhagwan* (a Hindu practice)" (ibid. p. 63). While Bhagwan Nat stresses his Hindu identity, he simultaneously states that no one eats *haram* (pork) meat (ibid. p. 64). *Masawat* also mentions a few historical Muslim LC figures that could become symbols of subaltern secularism. The first is the poet Taju, belonging to the Rangrez (dyer) caste. Anwar quotes Ram Manohar Lohia, "I have recently heard of the poetess Taju, dyer by trade and Muslim by birth around the time of 1857, whose Krishna poetry matches Mira's devotion. There seems almost to be a law that approximation is more often the work of persons of low caste or learning, and estrangement that of the ruling or more learned castes […]" (ibid. p. 57; Lohia, 2000, p. 9). The second is the Saint Daryadas belonging to the Muslim Darzi (tailor) caste, who had spoken against religious and caste-based discrimination in the late seventeenth century and had followers from all communities (ibid. p. 58-59).

In contrast to the stress on the sociality of marginalized castes and spaces, Anwar marks the campaign undertaken by both the Hindu Mahasabha (1931) and Muslim League (1941). The Hindu and Muslim communities were urged to mention their religion and not caste in the census returns. The fear was that if the caste of subordinated castes were recorded, their large numbers would be revealed, thereby increasing their

political importance vis-à-vis the colonial regime. Anwar asks, "Does this not prove that just like the common sensibilities of the oppressed sections, whether Hindu or Muslim, the elite classes, whether they be *pundits* or *maulana*, too think and act alike?" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 27). Asif Saifi opines that "the Ashraf classes (*tabka-e-ashrafiya*) has always cheated the Muslims. By "Muslims," I mean it has deceived the majority of Muslims. The Partition of the country into India and Pakistan was also an act of deceit"[52]. Wajid Ali[53] feels that "the Ashraf usurp our [Pasmanda] rights everywhere." Ali Anwar contrasts the Pasmanda values and aspirations with those of Ashrafs[54],

> We are not among those that divide, but instead, we unite people […]. The divisive forces are those that think they are superior or venerable and consider others as base (*razeel*) and beggars (*faqeer*) […]. We don't have resources. Our people don't speak much, and our not shrewd […]. We are poor but self-respecting people. We don't believe in conspiracies.

Ali Anwar critiques the notion of Dalit-Muslim unity in one of his speeches[55],

> Brother, solidarity is possible between similar people. How is the unity between Dalits and Muslims possible? The Muslims who claim that they have ruled this country for hundreds of years […] that they have been rulers […] will they accept your [Dalit] leadership? That is why I said [in a conference], "Our Syeds are more treacherous,

[52] Interview, Asif Saifi, 17 June 2012, New Delhi.
[53] Interview, Wajid Ali, 27 May 2013, Patna.
[54] Ali Anwar, Speech in Pasmanda Waqar Rally, 1 July 2008, Patna; recorded copy with the author.
[55] Ali Anwar, Speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012..

> more cunning than your Brahmins! Those that have enslaved your Thakurs and Brahmins […] will they accept your [Dalit] leadership?

In the same speech citing names like Usman "Halalkhor," Mansoor "Kunjda" or Hashim "Pasmanda," Anwar noted that many Pasmanda activists were now reclaiming caste titles previously thought to be denigrating. He welcomed this symbolic inversion and requested the audience, "Please don't call us a minority. Call us Shuddar, call us Pasmanda, you can even call me Julaha […] I would like that. But if you will call us a minority, our identity will be lost. We have crafted this identity [Pasmanda] with great efforts"[56]. For Anwar, "the difference between Hindu and Muslim Pasmanda is just like plywood. Not very strong"[57]. Mohd. Ibrahim[58] likens the relationship between the LC Muslims and Hindus to the Bollywood movies of the 1970s where brothers are separated from their parents and each other in childhood by some villain and then raised in different faiths only to unite again later and settle their scores with the villain. The "villain" for Ibrahim are the HC's across religions. The notion of horizontal solidarity is captured succinctly by the Pasmanda slogan "*Dalit-Pichda Ek Saman, Hindu Ho Ya Musalman*" (All Dalit-Backward are alike, whether they be Hindu or Muslim). In this context, Anwar has repeatedly stressed that "Pasmanda" is not a term that designates caste or religion but rather denotes a class (*varg, jamaat*) or group (*samooh*)[59]. In this sense, anyone oppressed belonging to any faith can be a Pasmanda. He also expects to drop the word "Muslim" from Pasmanda

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.
[59] Ali Anwar, Speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012; Tr.

Muslim Mahaz and launch the "Pasmanda Samaj Party" in the future[60].

However, while the supremacy of the Ashraf sections is vibrantly questioned, the elements of reverse casteism or ressentiment are also reflexively checked,

> We are not setting the Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims against the so-called ashraf Muslims. Our movement is not directed against them. Rather, we seek to strengthen and empower our own people, to enable them to speak for themselves and to secure their rights and justice from the state. We welcome well-meaning people of so-called ashraf background as well as non-Muslims who are concerned about the plight of our people to join us in our struggle […] Yet, I cannot help saying with deep regret that while several "upper" caste Hindus have been supporting the Dalit movement in different ways, very few "upper" caste Muslims have taken any interest in the concerns of the Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims (Anwar & Sikand, 2005).

4.4 THE QUESTION OF REFORM

The Pasmanda narratives have taken issues with various regressive socio-cultural practices and accentuated the need for social reform. Ali Anwar points at the social stagnation in the community and bemoans that "There have not been many changes in the Muslim society even as we are on the verge of the twenty-first century" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 9). Particularly on the question of caste, Anwar contends that "the false pride about there being no discrimination in the Muslim society on the grounds of caste […] and there being no untouchability, prevented efforts at the religious and non-governmental

[60] Ibid.

level concerning social reform (*islah muasshrah*)" (ibid. p. 23). Any voices that counter the invisibilization of caste-based practices are declared as "enemies of Islam" and targeted for "fomenting disunity in the Muslim community" (ibid. p. 30). The malaise has only deepened because of the lack of a culture of "critique and introspection" *(alochna aur atmalochna*) in the community (ibid. p. 30).

4.4.1 Reform in Faith-based Interpretative Practices and Institutions

In *Masawat,* Anwar points out that whenever the practice of casteism (*biradriyat*) in the Muslim community is raised, people respond by citing verses from the Quran that support the egalitarianism of Islam (ibid. p. 30). However, the debate is not on Quran or Islam per se but instead on the paradoxical presence of caste within Muslim society when in principle, the notion of hierarchy (or "high and low") is rejected (ibid.). In other words, it is the gulf between normative Islam and actual social practices in Muslim societies that need to be addressed. The practice of casteism or untouchability becomes "more dangerous" in Muslim communities where there is no legitimacy to the varna-order as in the Hindu society (ibid.).

Anwar points out the three assumptions on Muslim caste widely held by HC Muslims—a) Muslim caste is more flexible vis-à-vis Hindu caste as there is a greater play of economic factors; b) Casteism in Muslims is superficial and not as severe as among Hindus; c) Muslim caste is a legacy of conversion from erstwhile Hindu castes, particularly subordinated castes (ibid., pp. 30-31). While economic prosperity certainly does affect one's social status, "but where caste is […] determined by birth does

a little change in economic conditions change caste, does it efface the distinction between high and low?" asks Anwar. "The son of a Jolaha-Dhuniya (weaver-cotton carder) remains Jolaha-Dhuniya even if he progresses and establishes a cotton-factory or a power loom. Similarly, the son of a Syed is called a Syed even if he manufactures and sells shoes" (ibid., p. 31). Chapter 2 of *Masawat* titled *Haqeeqat* (reality) (p. 37-70) produces a rich ethnographic account of Muslim caste that documents not only the severity of casteism in Muslims but also stresses the unenviable condition of certain Dalit-Muslims that face untouchability from both the Hindus and Muslims without similar policy support as for the Dalit-Hindus. In accordance with Ambedkar's "imitation thesis" (Ambedkar, 1979), Anwar rejects the disproportionate burden placed on the erstwhile LC converts for the presence of casteism and states that "the disease [of casteism] has traveled from the top to bottom. The feelings of casteism among Backward and Dalit Muslims is a consequence of their imitation of the [caste practices] of Ashraf Muslims" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 32).

The attribution of notions like *hasab-nasab* (inherited merit and noble descent), *aala-adna* (high-low), and *tafreek* (discrimination) present in Muslim society to the influence of Hindu culture is only a "half-truth" (ibid. p. 73). The terms like *ashraf*, *ajlaf, arzal* are based on Arabic roots *sharf* (*shareef* or noble), *jalf* (*neech*, base or low), *razl* (*nikrasht*, abominable) themselves indicate the presence of inegalitarianism in Arab society (ibid. p. 73). "In studies on Indian Muslim society, a tendency to impose the burden of caste-based discrimination on Hindu society is noticed. However, this is not the truth" (ibid. p. 74).

To bolster his argument, Anwar locates a legitimating vocabulary for inegalitarian practices in classical Islamic texts like Imam Al-Hafiz Al Kamal ibn al Humam al Hanafi's *Fath al Qadeer* (a commentary on the most influential compendia of Hanafi jurisprudence *al-Hidayah* written by Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani in the twelfth century). In this work, the occupational groups like barbers, weavers, and dyers are referred to as *dani*, a word marking their lowly status, whereas the position of Syeds is exalted (ibid. p. 74). In the early Islamic period, the Arabic society was arranged in hierarchical terms. The early converts that is the Bedouin Muslim Arabs and the confidantes of the Caliph ranked the highest, followed by the *mawalis* (late-converts), *dhimmis* (non-Muslims like Christians and Jews that enjoyed legal protection on payment of the *jizya* tax), and slaves (ibid. pp. 74-75). All the four righteous caliphs belonged to the Quraish tribe (the tribe to which Prophet Muhammad belonged), and there are contested Hadith (collection of Prophet's sayings and exemplary practices) that lay down the principle that the ruler preferably should be from the Quraysh tribe (ibid., p. 85). The tribal social stratification and antipathy between the Arabs and mawalis were the internecine civil war source that extended for about three hundred years and witnessed the murders of three of the four early righteously guided caliphs (ibid. p. 86). Despite the normative egalitarian thrust of Islam, slavery could only be officially abolished in Muslim countries in the twentieth century, with Saudi Arabia being the last to do so in 1962.

In the Indian subcontinent, most Ashraf scholars claiming foreign extraction—Arab, Central Asian, Iranian, Afghan, etc.—asserted their superiority over indigenous converts to Islam in the medieval era. While the Ashrafs comprised the nobility, the native converts,

mostly subordinated castes, constituted the peasantry, artisans, and laboring classes. In this respect, exemplary work is the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* written by the fourteenth-century Turkish scholar Ziauddin Barani (1285-1358), who was also a key courtier of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1290-1351), the emperor of Delhi. *Fatawa* is the only known Indo-Persian treatise exclusively devoted to political theory from the Delhi Sultanate period. Barani legitimizes Ashraf supremacy through repeated references to the Quran (Sikand, 2004, p. 22). He advises the emperor against providing the Ajlaf access to knowledge so that they are not able to challenge ashraf hegemony:

> Teachers of every kind are to be sternly ordered not to thrust precious stone's down the throats of dogs or to put collars of gold round the necks of pigs and bears that is, to the mean, the ignoble and the worthless, to shopkeepers and to the "low"-born they are to teach nothing more than the rules about prayer, fasting, religious charity and the Haj pilgrimage, along with some chapters of the Qur'an and some doctrines of the faith, without which their religion cannot be correct and valid prayers are not possible. But they are to be taught nothing else, lest it bring honor to their mean souls.
>
> They are not to be taught reading and writing, for plenty of disorders arise owing to the skill of the lowborn in knowledge. The disorder into which all affairs of the religion and state are thrown is due to the acts and words of the lowborn who have become skilled. For on account of their skill, they become governors, revenue collectors, auditors, officers and rulers. If teachers are disobedient, and it is discovered at the time of investigation that they have imparted knowledge or taught letters or writing to the lowborn, inevitably the

> punishment for their disobedience will be meted out to them (Sikand, 2004, p. 29).

Such a supremacist and hierarchical articulation of Islam by Ziauddin Barani and other Muslim scholars—Anwar calls them "Manu of Muslims" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 86)—had consequences. Throughout the medieval period, the native Muslims were not able to acquire high positions in the services. There are recorded instances of officers' termination if their humble origins were discovered (Buehler, 2012). Bernier, a French traveler, notes strict endogamous caste-based marriages among the Muslims in the 17th century (Anwar, 2001, p. 91). The discrimination against native Muslims continued until the Mughal period (ibid. p. 89). The relatively recent works of venerated theologians like Maulvi Shah Ashraf Ali Thanwi's *Beheshti Zewar*, Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi's *Majmoo-a-Fatawa*, Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi *Fatawa Mahmoodiya*, Maulana Mohd Shafi Deobandi *Nehaytul Arab Fi Gaytoon Nasab* or *Fatawa Darul Uloom Deoband*, and so on, are marked by hierarchical and casteist interpretations and fatwas (ibid., p. 125). Particularly notorious is their inclusion of caste in the interpretation of "kufu," which is the rule for evaluating compatibility in marriage. For instance, Thanwi's *Beheshti Zewar* lays down the following rules:

> Equality in lineage is that the Shaykh, Sayyid, Ansari [HC Ansaris], and "Alawi are all equal to each other. In other words, although the status of a Sayyid is more than the others, if the daughter of a Sayyid marries a Shaykh boy; it will not be said that she did not marry someone who is of her family relations. Instead, it will also be regarded as if she has married one of her relatives. […] (Thanwi, 2005, p. 413)

> The Moghuls and Pathans are regarded as one nation and are not of the same class as that of the Sayyids and Shaykhs. If the daughter of a Sayyid or Shaykh gets married with one of them, it will be said that she married someone who is of a lower social standing than her (ibid. p. 414).
>
> Equality in occupation is that, e.g. weavers are not regarded as equal to tailors and are accorded a status that is lower than that of tailors. Similarly, barbers, washermen, etc. are not regarded as being equal to tailors, but are regarded as being lower than tailors (ibid. p. 415).

Masood Alam Falahi's *Hindustan Mein Zaatpaat aur Musalman* (2007)*, in particular, attempts to* historicize Indian Islam and offers an early interrogation of the supposed egalitarianism of textual Islam in India. His work is a rich compendium of fatwas (religious opinions) and positions of the ulema (religious scholars) of various schools of Islam. It reveals the caste bias in their interpretative efforts. Falahi says,

> I also read the works of numerous Indian *ulama*, who are seen by many of their followers as great intellectuals […]. I was shocked to discover that most of them actually championed the notion of caste superiority based on birth and gave fatwas about this that went totally against the Quran…It is no different from the Hindu case, where religious sanction is provided for caste discrimination and oppression. […]. On the other hand, providing quotations from works which were written in the so-called Islamic period of Indian history, I tried to show how Muslim kings, and the Muslim ruling elites more generally, in collaboration with so-called upper caste Hindus, supported the caste system and the oppression of

> the so-called low castes, both Hindus and Muslims. […] they refused to allow so-called low or razil castes, both Hindus and Muslims, to be educated or even to enter their courts, which were preserved as a monopoly of the "high" caste Hindus and Muslims. […]. So, the point is that the so-called golden period of so-called Islamic rule in India, which most Muslim writers never tire of extolling, was essentially the rule of the Manuvadi[61] Muslim and Hindu elites, who dominated and oppressed the so-called low castes, both Hindus and Muslims (Sikand, 2008).

The persistence of caste-based discrimination is attributed to the complicity and silence of the ulema-e-din (clerics) and faith-based organizations (madrasas and organizations like AIMPLB, All India Milli Council, Imarat-e-Shariah, Idara-e-Shariah, Imarat-e-Ahl-e-Hadees, etc.) controlled by them (Anwar, 2001a, pp. 130–136). "Why don't the ulema launch a jihad (struggle) against the disease of casteism? Our various ulema and religious organizations are indeed themselves infected by this disease" (ibid. p. 32). Religious scholars have been criticized for their increasing intervention in electoral/political affairs and developing a taste for a luxurious living (ibid. p. 32-33). The ulema and religious institutions used to be somewhat connected to the people's daily needs when they depended on community funds (*fitra, zakat, chanda*) for sustenance. However, in the last few decades, they have increasingly relied on "petrodollars" from Middle-East, and elitism has gripped

[61] "Manuwadi" refers to those following the spirit or letter of the *Manusmriti*, the text laying down the rights and duties of various castes. It is seen as a hierarchical text sanctioning the caste system in Hinduism and much critiqued by the subordinated caste groups.

them. While the foreign funds involved may add a certain extravagance to the new mosques and institutions' architecture, a severe threat is posed to spirituality and sociality concerns. The Ashraf sections dominate most religious institutions, and nepotism is rampant [See Appendix 3]. They lack democratic functioning, organizational transparency, and internal accountability and work like a few privileged clans' fiefdoms. Invoking a harsh comparison in the context of the undemocratic functioning of the Muslim religious institutions, Anwar remarks that "even the Brahmanical (*manuwadi-brahmanwadi*) establishments within the Hindu society have probably never worked with such audacity" (ibid. p. 135).

While the leading clerics are mostly Ashrafs and control the network of mosques/madrasas, most students and followers come from LC Muslim sections[62]. In Alam's view, the emerging clerics from the Pasmanda community are the "*muqallids*" (slaves) of the *shurafa* ulema" and victims of the culture of "*peeri-mureedi*" (master-disciple relationship)[63]. The madrasa training privileges the principle of "*taqlid*" (blind imitation) of leading theologians and emphasizes rote learning instead of fostering a critical attitude[64]. Since most of the leading theologians legitimize hierarchy and notions of piety that emphasize uncritical imitation, that is the culture circulated and sedimented in the Pasmanda communities. Alam feels that most of the religious instruction in the madrasas runs against the emphasis on knowledge and egalitarianism in Islam. Mohsin Hamid,

[62] Interview, Sarwar Alam, 29 May 2013, Mau (Uttar Pradesh).

[63] Ibid.

[64] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.

an LC cleric himself, thinks that "the ulema are the biggest roadblocks in the work of the Mahaz. They [ulema] have complete domination over the Muslim society"[65]. According to Mohd Ibrahim,

> We are only memorizing the Quran but not trying to understand it. […] the Quran […] is asking us to observe and contemplate […]. But the maulanas are not telling us to conduct research. Instead, they are asking us to memorize the Quran and earn heavenly rewards (*sawab*)…I have been consistently critiquing the syllabi of madrasas… Teach science and technology there so that there is progress…The syllabi must change…The same old syllabus is being followed for centuries because ashraf control that…they [ashrafs] only want to keep us like slaves […] so that we keep on acknowledging their supremacy…so that we keep on following the Syeds and Syedism (*Syedparasti*)[66].

Most of my respondents expressed grave concerns about the increasing vibrancy of conflicts based on *maslaqs* (sects; communities of interpretation) like Deobandi, Barelwi, Salafi, Wahhabi, Ahl-e-Hadeeth, Shia, Sunni, and so on. Mohd Ibrahim reports that the maslaqi differences have taken a toxic turn, particularly in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. While earlier Muslims used to pray in different mosques aligned exclusively with the maslaqs they followed, people have even stopped greeting each other, enter into matrimonial alliances, or even eat *halal* meat offered by someone from a rival maslaq. These clashes are often instigated by the elite Muslims to jeopardize LC Muslims' efforts to organize and improve their situation. Mohd. Ibrahim wonders why these maslaqi associations conduct their polemical

[65] Interview, Mohsin Hamid, 29 May 2013, Mau.
[66] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.

debates (*munazarah*) mostly in LC Muslim neighborhoods[67]. Nanhe Miyan stresses that the founders of all maslaqs are HC Ashrafs[68]. As per Shaheen Sultana, "The sectarian clashes are being deliberately manufactured to dissuade the mind of the people away from the movement of […] Pasmanda-Muslims in the country today […]. These ulema divide the people in the name of various sects but join ranks for political bargaining. […] They [Ashraf ulema belonging to different maslaqi orientations] are all one when it comes to cornering tickets for the superior castes" (Sultana, 2005, p. 14). Suheil Waheed stresses that "Actually, the issue is not that of Shia-Sunni or Barelvi-Deobandi. The issue is only of caste and that of "high" and "low" (Waheed, 2005, p. 18).

Historically, the culture of theologically sanctioned hierarchy/inequality and social division has not gone entirely uncontested. In 1940 Hafiz Tabarak Hussain and Hafiz Deen Muhammad from Betia (Bihar) had published a booklet titled *Khoon-e-Masawat* (The Murder of Equality), where they condemned the casteist fatwas and stressed that they were against the Quran and Hadeeth (Anwar, 2001a, p. 128). In 2002 Maulana Abdul Hamid Naumani, a senior leader of the Jamiat ul-Ulama-i-Hindi, published *Masla-I Kufu aur Ishaat-I Islam,* where he critiqued caste-based interpretations of the concept of kufu (Sikand, 2004, pp. 29–31). In 2007 Masood Alam Falahi's magnum opus (Falahi, 2007) was published, which is a grand expose of the play of caste as far the practice of religious hermeneutics in South Asian Islam was concerned. In 1997 the Imarat-e Ahl-e-Ansar was established as a faith-based institution by Muslims from

[67] Ibid.
[68] Interview, Nanhe Miyan, 23 April 2012, Lucknow.

weaving castes as an alternative to ashraf-driven organizations like the Imarat-e-Sharia but could not sustain for long (Anwar, 2001a, p. 145). Anwar insists that the ulemas should identify all the discriminatory fatwas and declare them as invalid in one go (ibid. p. 130). Mohsin Hamid feels that the Prophet and Quran urge the Muslims to side with the oppressed. In the Quran the term for *mustakbireen* is used for the oppressor, while the term *mustazafin* stands for the oppressed. In this context, Hamid contends that if the ulema stands with the 85 percent of lower caste Muslims, it will be ideally in sync with Islamic ethics[69]. Overall, as Ali Anwar states,

> We Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims are believing Muslims. We take our faith in Islam seriously. Islam, as the Qur'an says and as the Prophet Muhammad showed in his own life, stands for social equality and justice. It is completely opposed to social hierarchy. So, when we are protesting against inequality and injustice, how can we be said to be going against Islam? On the contrary, what we are doing is, in my view, actually mandated by our religion. On the other hand, those who keep silent on the plight of the Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims are actually working against Islam, for they are indifferent to its mandate of social justice and equality […] So, all this while the so-called ashraf have been championing caste and division among Muslims based on caste, but this does not strike our opponents as "casteism" or as "un-Islamic, but the moment we non-ashraf begin to…oppose this system of ashraf hegemony we are dubbed as divisive and "anti-Islam" and so on. This reaction is no different from that of many "upper" caste

[69] Interview, Mohsin Hamid, 29 May 2013, Mau.

> Hindus, who brand the Dalit movement as "divisive," accusing it of reinforcing caste, simply because the Dalit movement seeks to do away with "upper" caste hegemony (Anwar & Sikand, 2005).

4.4.2 Reform in the Social Domain

As a consequence of the census operations and semi-parliamentary practices installed by the colonial regime from the late nineteenth century onwards, identity and demographic strength acquired salience. Many subordinated caste Muslims too formed "caste associations" (like Jamiat-ul-Ansar, Jamiat-ul-Raeen, Jamiat-ul-Quresh, and so on) as educational instruments and cultural advancement, status up-gradation, and political lobbying. The processes of Ashrafization and Islamisation (discussed in C3) broadly encompass the efforts of the upwardly mobile LC Muslim communities to acquire new Islamic surnames instead of the stigmatized occupational titles, repressing their original castes and returning themselves as HC (particularly as Sheikhs) during the census operations, imitating Ashraf culture (use of Urdu language, the practice of veiling, etc.). Historically, we know that even this social reform process based on Ashraf socio-cultural norms was resisted vociferously by the Ashrafs as it condensed their cultural distance from LC Muslim communities (Buehler, 2012). The process of Islamisation/Ashrafisation, which inducts the LC Muslims into the culture of piety and offers them prospective hope of a non-stigmatized existence, continues unabated. While the contribution of Ashrafization/Islamisation to status reversal of subordinated Muslim castes is debatable, in the last few decades, various castes have undergone this process: for instance, the Bhatiaras have adopted the surname Farooqi and established the organization Jamiat-ul-Farooq, the Bakkhos have established Bihar Rajya

Bakkho Samaj Sewa Sangha, the Ranjrez have adopted the title Sabbag and launched Jamiat-al-Sabbag, and so on (Anwar, 2001a). These reformist organizations probably have a mixed impact. At one level, they inspire confidence and strength to the otherwise dispersed community members due to the sheer fact of "getting organized," facilitate matrimonial alliances, organize educational scholarships and loans, lobby for getting their demands reflected in government schemes, etc.

On the other hand, the strengthening of Islamic identity also expands their distance from different religious communities. The process of Islamisation/Ashrafization grips the LC Muslims through a "culture of piety" (Mahmood, 2005) that privileges the high Arabic-Persian translations of Islam at the expense of indigenous versions, thereby creating a distance from the neighboring Hindu community. The process has a correspondence with what Natrajan (2012, p. 5) calls "culturalization of caste" wherein "caste groups (led by caste elites) attempt to (re)construct and (re) present themselves as cultural groups such that caste comes to be viewed, narrated, embodied, and performed by social actors simply as pre-existing "natural" cultural difference or identity rather than as socioculturally constructed relations of ascribed status and antagonism (inequality, domination and exploitation)". The Mahaz has chosen to work with such organizations and engage them in a dialogue to move from the level of segmented castes to that of a conscious "political class"—"*jati se jamaat tak* (from caste to class)," as Ali Anwar says[70].

[70] Ali Anwar, Speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012; recorded copy with the author.

The entangled nature of caste, gender, and faith emerges quite clearly in various entries in Pasmanda literature. In *Masawat*, the author dedicates an entire chapter "*Pyar Nikah par Zaat ki Pahredaari*" (Caste Surveillance on Love Marriage) that foregrounds the issues of caste patriarchy, honor, and surveillance through various reports/cases of tensions around love marriages within the Muslim community (Anwar, 2001, pp. 159-166). "There has not been even one percent incidence of inter-caste marriages though sanctioned by religion" (ibid. p. 9). Questions have been raised on practices like dowry, the condition of Pasmanda women in India, and the gulf between the theory and practice of Muslim representative bodies such as the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on the issues of Muslim women. In a letter to the editor, Kahkashan Ahmad Hawari, hailing from the Dhobi (laundry person) caste, recalls her experience in the madrasa where the teacher openly expressed his dislike for her friendship with another girl student belonging to higher Sheikh caste when she was studying in fifth class (Hawari, 2004). Another letter by Shabana Azmi hits hard at the veiling practice that, according to her, is an obstacle for girls in pursuing higher education (Azmi, 2005). While there are entries that vigorously contest caste-based endogamy and restrictions on commensality within Muslims (Alam, 2005), there are recurrent critiques of the discriminatory practice of "triple talaq" (divorce in one sitting) and especially the All India Muslim Personal Law Board that legitimizes it (Nadwi, 2005; Sultana, 2005). Jamila Bano argues in favor of the formation of a separate Pasmanda Personal Law Board altogether:

> This four-forked split in AIMPLB is based on sect and gender. If one were to look at their leadership's social location closely, it is apparent

> that all of them come from *ashraf* sections. There is no representation of men-women from Pasmanda communities. It is well-nigh probable that the men-women of the Pasmanda communities would have to create another personal law board for themselves (Bano, 2005, p. 7).

Noor Hasan Azad was asked whether Urdu was the mother-tongue of Muslims says, "You talked about Urdu. I will ask whether Urdu is an issue of Dalit-Muslims […]. Of course not! The mother tongue (s) for Dalit-Muslims is region-based. I went to Darbangha, a district of Bihar. All the conversations happened in Maithili, even though they know that I speak Urdu. Similarly, people speak Bhojpuri or Bangla in different regions. It is a false claim that Urdu is the mother tongue of Muslims. Neither Urdu nor Hindi is their mother tongue. *Unki matra bhasha to kshetriya hai* (their mother tongue is regional)" (Azad and Ansari, 2011).

4.5 CONCLUSION

The Pasmanda critiques contest the Ashraf cultural imperialism and the naturalized notion of a monolithic and reified Muslim identity. Gopal Guru (2009, p. 10) remarks that "the struggle for humiliation and its contestation becomes more acute under the modern conditions." The caste-based culture of humiliation within Muslims is invisibilized because of the control exerted by the Ashraf classes over the means of interpretation and communication in the community. The Ashraf monopoly over community institutions like the mosques, madrasas, newspapers, pressure and lobby groups, social media spaces, NGOs, state institutions run for the welfare of minorities, and so on, ensure that the Muslim community is represented in specific ways in the

public sphere—as a monolithic and unified community or as followers of an egalitarian faith tradition—Islam. Such renderings of Islam or the Muslim community seldom correspond with the Pasmanda-Muslim experience. However, in their efforts to reinterpret Islam from the vantage point of the marginalized, one could term it liberation theology, the Pasmanda thinkers still work with the distinction between "real" and "deviant" Islam. In this frame the regressive casteist/patriarchal practices are explained away as deviance from some objective, authentic Islam. While the pragmatic aspect of such a position may be understandable, it may also foreclose various hermeneutic possibilities. Perhaps, it could be more fruitful to see Islam as a "discursive tradition" and understanding it "not by…asserting a dichotomy of universal Islam gleaned from a study of the texts and assigning as local and un-Islamic all that does not agree with it…but by studying the discourses that establish or attempt and compete to establish orthodoxy in any given locality, with special attention to the material, political-economic constraints that influence any discursive exercise" (Anjum, 2007, p. 671).

The Pasmanda as a political subject has inaugurated new counterhegemonic solidarities on the horizon. However, forging these solidarities will not be easy. One, Pasmanda is an aspirational conglomerate of several LC biradari collectivities. These communities are themselves hierarchically organized through the process of what Ambedkar termed as "graded inequality" (Ambedkar, 2002). These biradaris are themselves undergoing a process of "ethnicization" and "culturalization" and remolding themselves as self-enclosed communities with well-defined interests and historical mythologies of origin. The intra-Pasmanda competition ranges against the quest for political

solidarity transcending these rifts. Ambedkar likened castes to “gangs” that work on self-interest, caste envy, and mutual competition. For instance, the Dalit Muslims have expressed anxieties about being dominated by the “backward Muslims” within the Pasmanda movement’s space (Azad and Ansari, 2011). Secondly, the Pasmanda subject is trapped in what Du Bois terms “double consciousness.” At one level, it is emphasizing its Indic roots and the collective subaltern experience of shared pain of labor, indignity, and humiliation, at another, it is also vulnerable to the processes of Islamization and Ashrafization. The latter processes constantly interrupt its notion of pan-religious subaltern solidarity by creating a purer Islamic faith subject and a distance from neighboring communities (along with the parallel process underway in the Hindu community). Third, and most importantly, the constant majoritarian threat also forecloses avenues for reform.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTESTING BHAYDOHAN[71]: PASMANDA DISCOURSE ON SECURITY AND COMMUNALISM[72]

> When Bashir cheats Ahmad, Ahmad thinks Bashir is a cheat. When Moti Lal cheats Ahmad, Ahmad thinks Hindus are cheats. Similarly, when the (Muslim) Bengal Government prohibits cow-killing in many places, as a preventive measure against riots, protests are feeble and anti-government; when a Congress government takes similar steps, protests are strident and anti-Hindu, and the cry is raised (and believed) that Islam is being emasculated and down-trodden (Smith, 1943, p. 208).

[71] Profiteering from fear.

[72] This chapter is a revised version of my paper Ansari, 2018.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The epigraph from Wilfred Cantwell Smith's classic *Modern Islam in India*, written in the crucible of the anti-colonial struggle in the 1940s, sets the tone for this discussion. Smith indicates how similar conflict events are interpreted variously when the performers' religious location is considered. An episode of deception in the interpersonal domain where the protagonists belong to the same religious community is treated differently compared to one where they belong to a different one. The same logic applies to a bureaucratic move where the government is perceived to be managed by a political party supposedly representing the adversarial community's interests. The epigraph indicates the deep-seated suspicion between "Hindus" and "Muslims" and provides a glimpse into what could be said to constitute the field of "communalism" in India. An early attempt by Smith to define communalism holds it as "that ideology which emphasizes as the social, political, and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion, and emphasizes the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups; the words "adherent" and "religion" being taken in the most nominal sense" (ibid. p. 185). A relatively recent review (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012) posits that "communalism has been commonly understood in the literature as conflicts over secular issues between religious communities, particularly between Hindus and Muslims" and that most "deliberations around communalism" link it with "the colonial period" such that "the concept has acquired a *definite* and *definitive* association" (ibid. p. 35; emphasis original). While acknowledging the empirical evidence of inter-religious conflicts in the pre-colonial period, they propose that those instances "cannot be said to have taken the form of full-blown communalism" (ibid. p. 35).

However, as the definitions above suggest, communalism is variously presented as a concept ("ideology"), phenomenon (violence/riots/pogroms) or even as an attribute ("full-blown communalism"), each with porous borders that witness frequent sliding of meaning from one element to another[73].

Berenschot (2011, pp. 19-38) catalogs six approaches employed to explain communalism in India: namely, the primordialist, ideological, instrumentalist, social-constructivist, social-psychological and relational. The "primordialist approach" concentrates on the force of ethnicity to form one's world-view and enable social action. The primordialist view is by and large an essentialist view as it construes primordial attachments to be an intrinsic part of human nature unamenable to alteration. It foregrounds a thick conception of cultural difference and argues that solidarities necessarily forge around these cultural markers, and the process of Othering is a natural state of affairs. Hence, present-day riots are explained by relating them to past conflicts between religious groups. One may note that this is also the classic colonial position and is often invoked by religious nationalists, Hindu and Muslim alike

[73] Pathan quips at the "peculiarities of scholarship on "communalism": "Communalism" seems to suffer from contradictory characteristics: It is a modern phenomenon which is the result of colonialism or one which can be dated back to age-old conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims since the medieval era. It is a product of modernity versus a remnant of "primitivism" in modern India. It has been considered the nemesis of secularism or the means to achieve secularism**;** a lack of secularism as well as an excess of it. "Communalism" is the result of the failure of education or the regrettable success of Western education. It is majoritarianism, but politics of a similar characteristic have been expressed by minorities as well (2014, p. 1).

(Gaborieau, 1985; Robinson, 2000, 2008). The "ideological approach" explains communal violence's recurrent incidence to communal ideology's pervasiveness in the public sphere. In the contemporary period, the proponents of Hindutva and Islamism represent this approach. Those building their politics on communal ideology concentrate on "organization" and "propaganda" to serve their ends (Ahmad, 2010; Chandra, 1984). The "instrumentalist approach" articulates communal violence as a political strategy that serves powerful elites' interests. Paul Brass, who has noted the presence of "institutionalized riot systems" in significant towns where communal violence has been endemic, stresses "the functional utility of the persistence of Hindu-Muslim riots in India for a wide variety of interests, groups, institutions, and organizations, including ultimately the Indian state" (2003, p. 24). The close relation between elections and the occurrence of communal violence has also been emphasized (Wilkinson, 2004). The proponents of the "social-constructivist approach" argue that communal identities are social constructs. In their reading, communal antagonism is not a "given" reality. Still, it has formed over time through a complex interaction between state policies (colonial and postcolonial), political maneuverings, and broader socio-economic developments. The constructivists have especially foregrounded the role of discursive frameworks (cultural interpretative systems) in making sense of communal violence (Hansen, 1999; Pandey, 1990). The "social-psychological approach" privileges the actor's point of view and focuses on the motivations and drives of those who participate in violence. In short, riots occur because they serve various psychological needs (Kakar, 2000). The last one, the "relational approach," underscores the

shifting patterns of social interaction between and within conflicting communities and locates violence in the network of relations that produce solidarity and fragmentation in society. This approach encompasses economic, civil, and institutional arguments (Basu, 2015; Engineer, 1995; Varshney, 2002).

Explaining communalism has been a prolific academic enterprise[74] , and one could tend to concur with the suggestion that "no single causal explanation of Hindu-Muslim riots and anti-Muslim pogroms will suffice to explain all or even most instances of such collective violence in India" (Brass, 2003, p. 22). At the same time, most of the literature on communalism has been "centrally concerned with causes" (*why*?) (Pandey, 1990, p. 12), Brass and Pathan focus on the production of riots (*how*?) (2003, p. 16) and the conceptualization of communalism (*what*?) (2009, p. 2) respectively. The purpose of C5 is not to contribute directly to questions of why, how, or what of communalism but rather to examine and interpret the Pasmanda articulations. Here, the attempt is to explore through the Pasmanda narratives how the issue of communalism is discussed in the margins of the Muslim social space.

5.2 PASMANDA DISCOURSE AND THE QUESTION OF COMMUNALISM

Most current social pathologies, including communalism, can be traced back to the encounter of the Indian subcontinent with British colonialism and particularly the developments in the nineteenth century. That does not mean that the pre-colonial period was devoid of social

[74] See Heehs, 1997 and Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012 for useful reviews.

divisions or conflicts (Bayly, 1985a). The colonial-orientalist knowledge/pedagogical project reconfigured social knowledge and consequently social relations with radical novelty (Cohn, 2004; Dirks, 2001b). In comparison with earlier regimes, three particular features marked out the efforts of colonial governmentality. First, the emergence of the importance of numbers (Appadurai, 1993), sharpening of cultural boundaries, and the construction of an all-India "Hindu" or "Muslim" community by the end of the nineteenth century. As Peter van der Veer remarks, "The odd effect of the census was that it simultaneously cut the society up into infinitesimal units and yet created a huge Hindu majority, together with several minorities, of which the most significant was the Muslim. Political elites, who had to respond to the new facts of life, tried both to enlarge the communities they represented and to define their boundaries more clearly" (1994, p. 26). Two, the installation of a remarkably centralized and interventionist state which was "more self-consciously "neutral"—standing *above* society, and not really part of it—than any previous state" (Pandey, 1990, p. 16). In this sense, the colonial self-image was that of an impartial evaluator of claims advanced by various communities. And, three, the treatment of communalism as "a subcontinental version of nationalism" by colonial historiography was undergirded with the assumption that "nationalism, nation-ness, was a Western attribute, unlikely to be found or easily replicated in the East" (Pandey, 1990, p. 1). Obviously, the caricaturing of subcontinental populations as traditional, passionate or communitarian in contrast to modern, rationalist or individualist imagination of colonial power was an essential element in the regime's legitimacy building exercise. However, even when the nationalist

historiography protested against the colonial assumption of communalism being a natural state of affairs by pointing at the British divide-and-rule policy or colonialism as a smokescreen for materialist interests, it shared a common belief with colonial historiography: the givenness of communalism as a tangible phenomenon with readily identifiable causes and its Others—rationalism, liberalism, secularism or nationalism (pp. 12-13).

Abdul Qaiyum Ansari (1905-1973), one of the most prominent Momin movement leaders, held on to an anti-Muslim League position till the very end. In his articulation of communalism, Ansari distinguishes between "communalism" and "communal riots." In his view, while communalism is "a way of thought and continuous operation," the communal riot "is the logical result of this operation" (Azizi, 2004, p. 75). Communalism is that "preparatory period that is wrongly regarded as the peaceful times" and when "power-hungry communalist leaders cunningly remain engaged in amassing the heap of gunpowder at another place [...] through writings, speeches, reports and rumours and await proper time to set fire" (ibid. p. 75). Marking a broad distinction between communalism as ideology and communalism as an event, Ansari asserts that "the ignominious and accursed riots cannot be prevented without demolition of the castle of communalism" (ibid. p. 75). In Ansari's view, the "origin of the communal bias, massacre and plunder starts from the Britishers' two-nation theory and consequently the birth of Pakistan" (ibid. p. 76). While emphasizing the centrality of communalism in his political struggle, Ansari says,

> I have always fought against communalism in the field. I have greatly sacrificed for this [...]. On one side, I had to face the oppression of the British

> government just after entry into the political life. On the other, I set my face against Mr. Jinnah's two-nation theory as well as League's communalism. Mr. Jinnah had claimed that with the establishment of Pakistan, all the Muslim problems would be solved. Communalism won and Pakistan was founded in course of time. But the question is: were the total problems of Muslims cured and solved? Not to speak of the solutions to all the problems, even a single problem has not been solved as yet (ibid. p. 79).

In another place, Ansari opines:

> If we have to put an end to communalism, the idea of two-nation theory should be buried. RSS and Jana Sangh are the largest banner bearers of Jinnah's two-nation theory in this country. So I have been emphasizing on the matter that all parties functioning on communal ground, should be legally banned whether these are RSS, Jana Sangh, Jamaat-e-Islami or Muslim League. But I do not think that mere legal ban on communal parties will solve the problem […]. Today we see that there is no department of life fully free from communalism. Therefore, on the national level, a countrywide movement is needed along with ban on communal parties (ibid. p. 83-84).

Ansari, a champion of composite nationalism (*muttahida qawmiyat*), positioned himself against the forces of religious nationalism. While seeing the "communal issue" as "basically the problem of law and order" to be handled by the administration, he brings to relief the role of "known professional communalists" in the majority community for fomenting riots and inciting violence against Muslims. However, he stresses that "it cannot be denied that there are also professional communalists among Muslims whose motto of life is to endanger and damage the nation" (Azizi, 2004, p. 87). For Ansari,

"Communalism had to be fought on all fronts, be it of the minority community or of the majority community" (Ansari, 1989, p. 31).

In 1942 the *Hindustan Standard* carried a report of the third Champaran Momin Conference where Ansari "laid much stress on the Hindu-Muslim unity and asked the poor, whether Muslims or Hindus, to unite against their exploiters, the rich, be they Hindus or Muslims, who were united in protecting their own interests by oppressing the poor to whichever community they belonged" (Azizi, 2004, p. 40). Ansari also offered a vibrant critique of the "educational system, another legacy of the Britishers" for "a number of text-books tended to create a feeling of hatred among one community against another." In his view "the educational system itself should be thoroughly reoriented to foster the spirit of nationalism among every Indian" (Ansari, 1989, p. 22). In another space he says "some people simply raise the question: what is communalism? My clear-cut answer is that everything that comes in the way of being a nation is communalism. Our basic trouble is that trifle loyalties dominate over us" (Azizi, 2004, p. 74). Overall, he advocated strong administrative measures, mass movements, and pedagogical interventions to offset communalism.

The second wave of the Pasmanda movement (the 1990s onwards) continued with most of the themes already introduced by the Momin Conference. In the context of communalism, Ali Anwar says,

> We see that the politics of communalism, fuelled by both Hindu and Muslim elites, is aimed at dividing us, making us fight among ourselves, so that the elites continue to rule over us as they have been doing for centuries. This is why we in the

> Mahaz have been seeking to steer our people from emotional politics to politics centred on issues of survival and daily existence and social justice, and for this we have been working with non-Muslim Dalit and Backward Caste movements and groups to struggle jointly for our rights and to oppose the politics of communalism fuelled by Hindu and Muslim "upper" caste elites (Anwar & Sikand, 2005)

Ali Anwar's articulation construes communalism as an epiphenomenon that masks the ruling caste elite's machinations across religions to maintain their hegemony. To challenge that, he emphasizes "politics centered on issues of survival and daily existence and social justice" and forging counter-hegemonic solidarity of subordinated castes across religions. The Pasmanda slogan "*Dalit-Pichda Ek Saman, Hindu Ho ya Musalman*" (All Dalit-Backwards are alike, whether they be Hindu or Muslim) captures this radical notion of horizontal solidarity succinctly (Ansari, 2013a). In conversations with other Pasmanda activists, I discovered that such readings of communalism were shared quite widely by most activists in the Mahaz.

Mohd. Ibrahim[75], says that "when we were very young, about ten years back, we used to feel that these are Hindu-Muslim riots." But the Mau riots (2005), which Ibrahim experienced first-hand, altered his views dramatically. He discovered that the riot victims were all Pasmanda-Muslims, and "none of the Syeds were killed, not even one Pathan was killed." Holding the local Muslim mafia-don and politician Mukhtar Ansari[76] as

[75] Interview, Mohd Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.

[76]Mohd. Ibrahim quickly adds that despite using the surname "Ansari" mostly used by subordinated weaver caste Mukhtar Ansari was actually a higher caste Muslim Sheikh.

equally responsible for riots, he says, "the riot happened because of him (Mukhtar Ansari) and also because of *savarna* (high castes) from the other (Hindu) community [...] *jo dono taraf ka ashrāfiya tabka hai unhi ki milibhagat se ye sab dange ho rahe hain"* (The riots are happening because of the collaboration of higher castes from both the communities). Ibrahim sees a more sinister plan at work and feels that the riots are being deliberately manufactured to damage lower castes' solidarity across religions since the Mandal moment. He feels it is not in the higher caste Muslims' interest if the Pasmanda sections become aware that they are now entitled to reservations in the government jobs along with Hindu OBCs. Hence, the emotional riot discourse comes in handy for the elites in obliterating the issues of empowerment. Ibrahim says, "Brother, whether it is Shankaracharya (Brahmin) or Imam Bukhari (Syed) [...] they decide sitting in the same room what each has to say [...], and then they come and give speeches, and the riots start. Afterward, they have tea together".

I met Tilawat Hussain[77], an activist with the Mahaz and the Julaha caste, just a week after Khalid Mujahid[78] was buried. Tilawat looked extremely saddened with what he thought was a cold-blooded custodial murder of Mujahid. Khalid Mujahid, Tilawat informed me, was from a lower

[77] Interview, Tilawat Hussain, 30 May 2013, Mau (Uttar Pradesh).

[78] Khalid Mujahid was an under-trial who was arrested in 2007 in connection with bomb blasts in UP earlier that year. Mujahid died on 19 May, 2013 when he was being escorted by a team of the Uttar Pradesh state police from a court in Faizabad to Lucknow jail. His death while under police escort was seen as a clear case of custodial killing (Chishti, 2013; PUDR, 2013; TNN, 2013).

caste Muslim Dafalis (tambourine players) neighborhood in Madiaon town and belonged to the Muslim Halalkhor (sweeper) caste. Citing another murder of DCP Zia-ul-Haque[79], who belonged to the Saeen/Faqeer (mendicant) caste, Tilawat complained of the lackadaisical response from the Muslim politicians, mostly higher castes, to these tragedies. "*Agar aaj humari biradari Dalit quota men shamil hoti to poore Hindustan mein bhoochal mach gaya hota* (Had our community been included in the SC quota today, the entire country would have felt the tremors). Tilawat here indicates the possibility of an increase in Dalit-Muslims' representation had legislative seats been reserved for them just like Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalits. Tilawat suggests that with the increase in cases where intelligence/security agencies have picked up Muslim youth on alleged charges of terrorism, Muslim organizations headed by Ashraf sections, like the Ulema Council, have a fresh lease of life. "*Yeh hamare mein RSS hain* (These organizations like Ulema Council are just like RSS amongst us). They are the ones that benefit. See, whenever they unite the Muslims, the Hindus get united too. And these organizations profiteer from that while it is we (the Pasmanda) who face the brunt". Tilawat recalls,

> When Sadhu Baidyanath (name changed) visited Azamgarh, a person from the (Muslim) butcher community (*chikwa*) was killed. On that issue, none of the (Muslim) higher castes launched a movement, neither did they agitate [...]. His (Sadhu Baidyanath) bodyguard had fired at him.

[79] DSP Zia-ul-Haque was shot dead on March 2, 2013 in the constituency of mafia-don turned politician Raja Bhaiya. Senior police officer Haque had prepared a list of cases against the MLA. Raja Bhaiya, whose real name is Raghuraj Pratap Singh, was accused of conspiring in the murder of Zia-ul-Haque (A. Chaturvedi, 2013; A. Khan, 2013).

> This occurred about three years back. Nothing happened. Now take the example of the Ulema Council [...]. This happened the day before yesterday. They went on a rampage (*tod-phod*) in *Rani ki Sarai* (a neighborhood). But the cases were filed against us (the Pasmanda).
>
> Another instance is that of the "truck episode." Here in Mau. I am an eyewitness to that tragedy. A truck that came from Hajipur had entered the city. It ran over four youths, and they died. After that, the local people got furious and went berserk. The police fired, and an additional four youths got killed. Cases were subsequently filed. In one of the cases, even the DM and SP were accused. However, the local (Muslim) elite worked closely with the government to save the prominent officers' skin. But our young people (Pasmanda) are still accused. Whenever an incident happens, these people (the higher caste Muslims) make a hue and cry over relief for a few days, but after that, our people are left to fend for themselves. This is what I have been experiencing from the beginning [...] Our *ulema* (clerics) keep us involved in emotional issues, and we pay the price [...].

In my field visits, Manoj (name changed), belonging to the Muslim Jogi (mendicant) caste, narrated a revealing story[80]. The locality where he lives has about a hundred huts belonging to the Jogi families. It is contrasted by the locality of high caste Pathans that live in *pucca* (bricked) houses at some distance. The Pathan*s*, according to Manoj, do not intermix with the Jogis and view them as inferiors ("*hum ko sahi nazar se nahin dekhte hain*") and only fit to work as laborers for them. He recounted the night's horror when the village was looted by the neighboring Hindus ("Chamar, Yadav, Khatik") in the

[80] Conversation with Saroj, 1 June 2013, Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh); recorded copy with the author.

early 1990s. The tension started with the sacrifice of a buffalo by the Pathan community on the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha. The local Hindu community's religious sensibilities were hurt (they probably thought that the holy cow was slaughtered) and attacked the Jogi locality. On asked why the Jogi locality and not the Pathan locality was struck, Manoj said, "They (Pathans) are powerful (*dabang*). We are weak. Everything was looted. The door, utensils, cows, buffaloes…"

On top of that, the Pathans, Manoj believes, actually approached the government and other donors in Saudi Arabia seeking compensation on behalf of Muslims. According to Manoj, none of the funds received were ever shared with the Jogis, the actual victims, and the Pathans cornered all the compensation. "They (the Pathans) said to the government that our village was looted and made houses for themselves (from the money received) […] *jogiyon ka gaon lut gaya hai kah ke saara rupya daba ke baith gaye*".

In one of his recent lectures, Ali Anwar urged the Pasmanda sections to be cautious of Muslim communalists. "Someone plans from the old Hyderabad city…someone utters an irresponsible statement from Dilli 6…someone uses the sermons from the religious pulpit (*mimbar*) irresponsibly. All this is counterproductive. There is a reaction"[81]. Noor Hasan Azad, a senior activist from the Muslim Pamadia (folk singers) caste, says that while "Babri Masjid may have

[81] Ali Anwar's lecture "Political Perspective of Country and Role of Opposition", Organized by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Conference Hall Markaz Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, 5 August 2017, New Delhi; copy with the author.

been an issue of all Muslims," but "the politics that happened over it are Muslim upper caste politics. They use mosques, especially Friday sermons, for their politics. This is a real threat to Islam" (Azad & Ansari, 2011). Sardar Alam says, "While Muslim politicians like Imam Bukhari and Syed Shahabuddin add the *jodan* (starter yogurt), it is left to the Hindu fundamentalists to prepare the yogurt of communalism. Both of them are responsible. We oppose the politics of both Hindu and Muslim fanaticism"[82]. In another interview, Ali Anwar opined,

> Muslims are specially targeted for a purpose…and those who are being killed are Pasmanda Muslims. You can see for yourself…those who were lynched in Jharkhand they were Pasmanda Muslims, those who were killed in Mewat were Pasmanda Muslims, Najeeb who was abducted from JNU, is a Pasmanda…Look at the history of violence. Those who live in protected localities, those in possession of licensed weapons, or those who live in posh colonies… are very rarely victims. Those who sleep in the footpaths, those who walk back from the railway station or the bus stand…they are the ones who are attacked (Maududi & Ansari, 2017).

Shafi Ahmad[83], a Patna-based activist from Julaha caste, feels that most riots are engineered in those locations where the Pasmanda sections are doing well economically. He goes on at length to describe the Bhagalpur riots (1989). Ahmad says that "All the *Marwaris* (Hindu merchants) have taken over the business. Those who were entrepreneurs earlier (the

[82] Interview, Sardar Alam, 1 June 2013, Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh).

[83] Interview, Shafi Ahmad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).

Pasmanda) have been reduced to the laboring class now". He opines that previously one used to witness "communal riots" where "there used to be riots between two communities (*samaj*)." Still, increasingly, we are seeing what could be dubbed as "people versus administration (*prashasan-public danga*) riot." In this new form of violence he feels that the police (*khaki vardi*) is now killing Muslims with impunity. Danish Mohammad[84], a journalist, argues that the fear of communalism will not cease until the Muslims are treated as a consolidated vote-bank by secular parties. According to him, when various Muslim castes start voting for different political parties, "that will be a perfect and secure day for Muslims." Danish feels that a community is democratically underdeveloped if it votes any particular party as "a chunk." So "when Pasmanda movement will become strong, secularism will also get strengthened. The fear of communalism will also be minimized".

In Pasmanda discourse, while secularism is embraced as a desirable norm, there is also a realization that powerful caste groups dominate the actually-existing secular politics. The inaugural issue of the Mahaz "s journal *Pasmanda Awaaz* proclaims, "secularism is not only our motto, but rather it's an article of faith for us" (Editor, 2005, p. 2). However, this initial enthusiasm subsides in other writings, "Now to keep on reiterating secularism day in and day out won't do. One will also have to be democratic. Some people only know how to get our votes. Now they will have to learn to give us votes" (Anwar, 2005b, p. 4). In another instance, during the run-up to one of the elections, the Mahaz asked the Pasmanda voters not to be hoodwinked by secularism. They should

[84] Interview, Danish Mohd., 27 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).

look at the qualities of individual candidates and not just vote based on claims of secularism.

Moreover, Mahaz asked the Pasmanda voters to check the attempts made towards vote bank politics based on "Muslim" identity (Correspondent, 2004). While providing security to citizens is mandated upon the state by the Constitution, it has become a case for "*bhaydohan*" (profiteering from fear) by reproducing a captive Muslim "vote-bank." "Should one stop talking of social justice because of the fear of violence?" asks Anwar (2001, pp. 184-188).

NOTES ON FORBESGANJ VIOLENCE[85]

On June 3, 2011, five Muslims were killed in indiscriminate police firing in Bhajanpur village, which falls in Forbesganj town (Araria district in Bihar). The background of the incident was that about sixty years back, the villagers of Bhajanpur and Rampur, the twin adjoining villages predominantly populated by Muslims, donated their land, money, and labor to build a road that reduced the distance from their villages to the primary Forbesganj market (from eight to one kilometer). ANHAD reported that in 1984 Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority (BIADA) acquired 105 acres of agricultural land from the villagers, which was meagerly compensated for thereby resulting in local farmers' pauperization (from small landholders to agricultural laborers). In 2010, the Bihar government led by JDU-BJP combined approved an industrial unit to manufacture starches from maize to M/S Auro Sundaram International Company. Incidentally, one of the directors on this company's board was the son of a BJP politician. What sparked the tension in the area was that the road the villagers had themselves built on their land was arbitrarily given away to the company by the government. The villagers understandably resisted this.

On June 1, 2011, in a tripartite meeting between the company, the villagers, and the administration, the villagers showed their generous spirit by agreeing to forgo their right over the village road provided an alternate road was built. The three parties agreed to this. However, on June 3, the company, in connivance with the local administration, breached the compromise formula and erected a wall on the existing road without providing

[85] This note is a revised version of our article Yadav & Ansari, 2011.

for the alternate road. Consequently, the villagers, after returning from the Friday prayers, protested against this breach of trust. The administration, in collaboration with the company, resorted to indiscriminate firing on the hapless villagers. Five people were killed, including a pregnant woman, and fifteen persons were grievously injured. A petty police officer was caught on camera kicking and dancing on a young victim's injured and unconscious body. The boy, considered dead, was sent for postmortem, where the doctor noticed life in the body. However, he later succumbed to the injuries.

After the occurrence of this dreadful incident, the so-called "secular" parties got into action. They started campaigning against the "communal" state government (since it was a collaboration of "socialist" JD (U) and "right-wing" BJP). Political figures like Ram Vilas Paswan, who once favored the idea of a Muslim Chief Minister in Bihar, and Laloo Prasad Yadav, who enjoyed power for fifteen long years by flaunting the so-called MY (Muslim-Yadav) equation, never visited the spot. The striking feature was that the opposition parties and voices' entire campaign were run around the "anti-minority/communal" character with no mention of developmental violence whatsoever. The opposition parties conveniently chose to underplay the link of the Forbesganj event with the chain of developmental violence in other jurisdictions (Singur, Nandigram, Bhatta-Parsaul, etc.). About the same time, one witnessed the exciting use of the discourse of communalism at the national level when the Congress suddenly discovered that Baba Ramdev, who was agitating at that time on the issue of corruption in Delhi, was an RSS agent and the news that RSS was conspiring to burn the camp in the midnight hours to foment nationwide riots was broken not by the security agencies

but by a famous Muslim "secular" activist. While one may have agreed or disagreed with Ramdev's or Hazare's anti-corruption movement, the way "communalism" was skillfully employed to polarize or deflect public opinion was remarkable. In a similar vein, in the case of Forbesganj violence, while capitalist raiders forcibly grabbed the villagers' land and road was reduced to a non-issue, the victims' religious identity (why not caste?) was constantly played up. Interestingly, none of the media reports mentioned that all the victims of police firing were Pasmanda-Muslims.

Subsequently, the state government lodged a murder case against the police officer who stepped and danced over the young boy's unconscious body. The state government was forced to do this because the video clip of Suneel Kumar Yadav, the police officer in question here, was uploaded on YouTube (and was later broadcasted by TV channels). As is primarily the case in India, the low-ranking police officer was slapped with a murder case. In contrast, no case was lodged against the higher police/administrative officers or the company management present on the spot and was allegedly primarily responsible for the firing. But there is also a historical and sociological background to such selective action by the state machinery. Nitish Kumar, who had succeeded Laloo Yadav as the chief minister with the support of the BJP, had also ordered an inquiry into the Bhagalpur riots earlier. One news portal had reported on April 13, 2010, that, "The only thing the Nitish Kumar government could do is to get Kameshwar Yadav (an OBC), a local goon, arrested and jailed. However, the big fish in the Bhagalpur riots are still free." In another related judgment, fourteen persons were convicted of rioting and murdering Muslims at Sabour near Bhagalpur. Of these fourteen persons, twelve were

reported to be belonging to the lower-caste Kushwaha community. The same news portal had reported on September 2, 2010, about the award of rigorous imprisonment for an attack on a police party during the days of the Bhagalpur riots. The news report has reproduced all the ten accused names, and all of them are OBCs. There is remarkable consistency in these cases where the masterminds of violence against minorities are seldom brought to justice. It is only the lower-caste foot soldiers from the majority community that are routinely axed. Neither Nitish Kumar nor Laloo Yadav, earlier, could muster enough courage to lay their hands on the riots' masterminds.

As indicated earlier, the Forbesganj violence was represented in most reports in the public sphere through the frame of "communalism," and the other dimensions, like development or caste/class locations of victims, were repressed. The representation of such events also betrays how for all practical purposes, secularism in India has been thoroughly trivialized and reduced to the stand one takes regarding the "Indian Muslim." So any formation which takes a pro-Muslim stand, even for the sake of public consumption, is paraded as secular. On the other hand, those formations that publicly interrogate or abuse the Muslim identity are labeled as communal. Thus, the Congress Party is framed as "secular" even when there is overwhelming historical evidence implicating it in numerous riots against Muslims simply because it never mouths anti-Muslim jargon. In contrast, the BJP is supposed to be unequivocally "communal" because its growth as a political party has so far depended on its anti-Muslim rhetoric.

In the Bihar context, the Pasmanda Muslims who were the victims in this incident had greatly facilitated the

NDA government's formation in 2005 and 2010. It is probably due to this reason that the “secular parivar” saw the tragedy as an opportunity to beat the government with the secular stick to send a strong message to the Pasmanda social block that their security is guaranteed only in a non-NDA regime. The Congress and its allies’ political interests probably goaded them to capture the entire Forbesganj episode in a monochromatic frame: the epic battle between the “fascist” BJP and the Muslim, the good and hapless victim. This version of the event is further reinforced by a BJP politician’s involvement in the facts of this case and the visit of the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar from BJP to the spot five days before the event. In most cases of such violence, the Dalits and OBCs are selectively punished in symbolic actions to appease the Muslims’ hurt feelings and ultimately ensure their votes. This selective handpicking of the accused belonging to subordinated castes also symbolically subverts the attempts of horizontal consolidation of lower castes across religious affiliations. This becomes an important dimension. Since the inauguration of the Pasmanda movement in the post-Mandal phase, lower castes’ attempts to forge inter-religious horizontal solidarity have gathered momentum. It seems that the representations of Forbesganj violence offered yet another example where the dominant discourse of communalism fed into hegemonic identity politics rather than informing any processes of counter-hegemonic peoples’ solidarity.

5.3 THREE KEY ISSUES

5.3.1 Deorientalising the Caste-Communalism Debate

Menon connects the "pursuit of that obscure object of desire—modernity" with the simultaneous "repression of the persistence of the primordial" in modern India's story (2007, p. 60). In his view, it is the exigent need to construct the "secular self" in the context of the postcolonial "national project" that may be responsible for "a reluctance to engage with what is arguably an intimate relation between the discourses of caste, secularism and communalism" (p. 61). The following hypothesis is offered to explain communalism,

> That Hinduism is a hierarchical, inegalitarian structure is largely accepted, but what has gone unacknowledged in academic discourse is the casual brutality and organized violence that it practices towards its subordinate sections. What we need to explore is Hindu-Hindu violence as much as Hindu-Muslim violence; and acknowledge that the former is historically prior. The question needs to be: how has the employment of violence against an internal Other, that is, the lower caste, been transformed into one of aggression against an external Other, that is, the Muslim (the question being both relational as well as historical). *Is communalism a deflection of the central, unaddressed issue of violence and inegalitarianism within the Hindu religion? Is communalism the highest stage of casteism?* (p. 61; emphasis original)

Bringing in historical evidence, Menon suggests that "in the period from 1850–1947, communal violence has always followed periods of lower caste mobility and assertion" (ibid. p. 65). The crux of his argument is that the internal challenge of upwardly mobile subordinated

Hindu caste groups to higher-caste Hindus from the mid-nineteenth century onwards was resolved by closing ranks on symbolic issues like cow protection and deflecting this resistance towards the Muslims (ibid. p. 65). Patel too concurs with this view and, while reflecting on the postcolonial Indian context, posits, "The emergence of communalism as a substantial political force is a direct consequence of ruling groups (i.e., upper castes controlling social, cultural, and economic power), and especially the bureaucracy, desirous, in an attempt to perpetuate their dominance, to ride two horses—i.e. to *mobilize* the lower castes and at the same time *control* their political aspirations" (1996, pp. 171-172). In a sense, both Menon and Patel indicate how the internal democratic challenge to high caste hegemony is contingently resolved by suborning the lower castes into a homogeneous communal discourse and associated violence. As Ambedkar noted, "A caste has no feeling that it is affiliated to other castes except when there is a Hindu-Muslim riot. On all other occasions each caste endeavours to segregate itself and to distinguish itself from other castes" (2002, p. 267).

However, while the role of caste in the construction of Hindu communalism has received scholarly attention, the play of caste and Muslim-Muslim violence in the construction of "Muslim communalism" is left unaddressed in most discussions. How is the challenge that the assertive subordinated Muslim castes posed to high caste ashrāf hegemony in British India, for instance, through the Momin Movement, related to the construction of Muslim communalism? Is Muslim communalism also connected to Muslim-Muslim violence, in the sense that internal inegalitarianism or violence within Indian Islam—for instance, against subordinated castes, women, and dissenters—was

sought to be managed by the Ashraf elite through the *Othering* of Hindus[86]? The role of caste, and Muslim caste in particular, in the construction of competing

[86] There is some evidence that Muslim higher castes have resorted to spectacular violence against subordinated Muslim castes in both the British period and the post-1947 phase. One work indicates how the members of Momin Conference clashed with the Muslim League after 1937 election results: "In places like Kanpur, relations between the Muslim League and the Momin Conference were becoming worse. In a 4 September meeting of Jamait-ul-Mominin, the Muslim League was severely criticised. The very next day, a clash occurred between some Momins and "Muslims", resulting in the death of one Momin, three days later. It was alleged that the Mohammedan *gundas* of the Muslim League were responsible for that" (Rai, 2012, p. 65). My fieldwork in Naugawan Sadat town in district Jotiba Phule Nagar (Amroha), Uttar Pradesh too revealed clashes between the subordinated caste Muslims with landed Shia Syeds during the provincial elections held in 1946. Interestingly, the Syeds employed the "Hindu" Dalits from valmiki (sanitation workers) caste as foot soldiers in the attacks on Muslim julahas (weavers), qassabs (butchers) and lohars (carpenters and ironsmiths). I must add that the status of valmikis and the Muslim subordinated castes mentioned above were just like ryots and they offered their services or labour to the Syed landlords in exploitative terms. For a relatively recent case of intra-Muslim caste violence in Allahpur (Bihar) see (Ansari, 2009) and for another interesting story on a high caste Muslim Pathān led feudal private army, the *Sunlight Sena*, active in Bihar in the 1980s see Ghose, 2015 (I am thankful to Shahnawaz Ansari for pointing this out to me.). For other revealing episodes of Muslim-Muslim caste and gender clashes in Bihar see Anwar, 2001. The southern state of Tamil Nadu also witnessed the murder of Muslim turned atheist H. Farooq by the Islamists in 2017 (See Janardhanan, 2017). On the basis of my own engagement with the Muslim social space for over a decade now I am tempted to point out that while the media professionals or academics are trained to record Hindu-Hindu caste clashes or Hindu-Muslim violence as "caste atrocity" or "religious riots", the cases of Muslim-Muslim caste violence are usually treated as a quotidian law and order problem and brushed aside.

communalisms and eventual restructuring of the region into India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh merits more scholarly attention than it has[87].

Interestingly, most Dalit-Bahujan engagements with communalism also seem to share the reluctance to employ caste *inter alia* in understanding "Muslim communalism" (Ilaiah, 2004; Rajshekar, 2007; Teltumbde, 2005). One could speculate that this overlooking of the caste question in understanding Muslim communalism emerges from the grip of orientalist assumptions in the production of knowledge about subcontinental Islam and Muslims. Gottschalk makes an interesting distinction between "*routes* religious groups…travel" and "the *roots* they establish" when discussing South Asian Muslims (2004, p. 4; emphasis in original). As a result, "academicians steadfastly connect religions primarily with their places of origin no matter how transnational the traditions may be. For instance, scholarship too often fastens upon the Middle East as the "natural" context of Islam. This seems particularly odd in the face of the fact that more than half of the world's Muslims live East of Afghanistan. Although Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are home to the world's largest Muslim populations, the academic study of religion has commonly labelled these as "Muslims on the periphery" or "Islam from the edge"(p. 9). If routes are privileged, then Islam and Muslims must consequently be framed as outsiders and "Hindu, then becomes the only indigenous religious category, encompassing almost all religions that originate in South Asia, such as Jainism and Sikhism, while people of other religions are tacitly excluded from the national category

[87] For rare historical enquiries that record Muslim caste in the discussions on Partition see Ghosh, 2007, 2008, 2010; Sajjad, 2014.

by associating them with a foreign religious category"(p. 12). Suppose the hegemonic grip of the notion of "India=Hinduism" and "Islam=Middle East" in South Asia's sociological production is conceded. In that case, it will not be difficult to appreciate why caste becomes a suspect category in studying South Asian Islam. If caste is Indian, and therefore by default Hindu, it can only be posed as a regrettable variation. It is only when knowledge production about subcontinental Islam/Muslims is deorientalized that caste could emerge as a structural mode of exclusion and disciplining—central to the distribution of wealth, desire and power—which applies not only to Hindus but to all sections of the subcontinent, including Muslims (even when there are differences in legitimating vocabularies used for caste in different faith traditions). Also, for the most part, studies on Islam have overemphasized its normative-egalitarian dimensions and the play of hierarchy in Muslim intellectual-social space, other than probably gender inequality one would suggest, has received little attention (see El-Zein, 1977; Kazuo, 2004; Marlow, 1997; Kazuo, 2012; Falahi, 2007 for valuable discussions). One may hope that the sharpening of the Pasmanda contestations in the public sphere will push the discussions in new directions and parochialize the domination of the normative-theological with more grounded historical-sociological investigations of subcontinental Muslims, particularly caste (for a pioneering attempt, see Ahmad & Reifeld, 2004; Ahmad, 1973). Once this is accomplished, the connection of caste to Muslim communalism could be posed with more confidence.

5.3.2 Competing Communalisms: The Equivalence Argument

How should one talk of "Muslim communalism" in a setting where the Hindu right-wing, mainly since the 1990s, is ascendant? In the face of the escalating incidents of communal violence against Muslims organized by the right-wing Hindu sections, should the liberal-left and Dalit-Bahujan groups consider communal Muslim (or Islamist) organizations as potential allies? To address this question, it will help contrast the career of Muslim communalism in the British period with that of the post-1947 phase because historical memory often animates the contemporary in convoluted ways. In the early 1940s, Smith had remarked that "Muslim communalists" were "highly conscious of the Muslims within India as a supposedly single, cohesive community, to which they devote their loyalty" and it matters little "whether the individuals included are religiously ardent, tepid or cold; orthodox, liberal or atheist; righteous or vicious; or to whether they are landlord or peasant, prince or proletarian" (1943, p. 185).

B. R. Ambedkar, one of the most astute observers of political developments in the British period[88], compiles several cases of murders of Hindus by Muslim fanatics for having offended the latter's religious sensibilities[89].

[88] "However, these nationalist *ulama* as well as the most ardent supporters of Pakistan were greatly indebted to someone, who more than anybody during the 1940s shaped the debate on Pakistan imparting it with coherence, discipline and stability. This was the other constitutional lawyer from Bombay, B. R. Ambedkar. His enormously influential *Thoughts on Pakistan* was quoted by both Gandhi and Jinnah as the authoritative treatise on Pakistan when they met for their famous series of meetings in Bombay in 1944" (Dhulipala, 2015, p. 18).

[89] Ambedkar: "It is a notorious fact that many prominent Hindus who had offended the religious susceptibilities of the

Of these, the controversy over the pamphlet *Rangila Rasul* (The Colourful Prophet) is particularly instructive. *Rangila Rasul* was written by Prashaad Prataab (under the pen name of Pandit Chamupati Lal) in response, as Ambedkar informs us, to the inflammatory pamphlet *Sitaka Chinala* "written by a Muslim alleging that Sita, wife of Rama, the hero of Ramayana, was a prostitute" (2014, p. 169). The pamphlet that takes pot-shots at the intimate life of Prophet Muhammad was published by Rajpal in 1923 under the condition that he would not reveal the author's identity. It understandably incensed Muslim public opinion, and the matter was taken to the courts. After a long-drawn legal battle, Rajpal was able to escape a sentence by the Lahore High Court. There were massive protests by the Muslim community, and in a retaliatory move, Rajpal was eventually stabbed by Ilm Din, an unlettered carpenter, on April 6, 1929. Mohammad Ali Jinnah fought Ilm Din's case. The only case Jinnah lost, and he was eventually executed. While placing Ilm Din's body in the grave with teary eyes,

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Muslims either by their writings or by their part in the Shudhi movement have been murdered by some fanatic Musalmans. First to suffer was Swami Shradhanand, who was shot by Abdul Rashid on 23rd December 1926 when he was lying in his sick bed. This was followed by the murder of Lala Nanakchand, a prominent Arya Samajist of Delhi. Rajpal, the author of the Rangila Rasool, was stabbed by Ilamdin on 6th April 1929 while he was sitting in his shop. Nathuramal Sharma was murdered by Abdul Qayum in September 1934. It was an act of great daring. For Sharma was stabbed to death in the Court of the Judicial Commissioner of Sind where he was seated awaiting the hearing of his appeal against his conviction under Section 195, I. P. C, for the publication of a pamphlet on the history of Islam. Khanna, the Secretary of the Hindu Sabha, was severely assaulted in 1938 by the Mahomedans after the Session of the Hindu Maha Sabha held in Ahmedabad and very narrowly escaped death" (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 156).

Allama Iqbal, the highly esteemed Muslim poet, is supposed to have proclaimed: "*Asi wekhde reh gaye, aye, Tarkhaana da munda baazi le gaya*" (We kept sitting idle while this carpenter's son took the lead) (U. Ali, 2015). Interestingly, "Ilamdin grew into a folk hero of sorts" in Pakistan, "inspiring popular accounts of his exploits in many formats: film, poetry, prose, and what can only be described as fan fiction. In the 1970s, an unabashedly hagiographic biopic titled *Ghazi Ilamdin Shaheed* hit cinemas, directed by Rasheed Dogar, whose later credits would include the salaciously titled *Pyasa Badan, Husn Parast* and *Madam X*" (Kohari, 2017). Raza Rumi recently noted that "Ghazi Ilmudin Shaheed, who killed a Hindu writer for blasphemy in the early twentieth century, is a national hero of Pakistan's collective memory" (2014). Ambedkar notes that "the leading Moslems, however, never condemned these criminals. On the contrary, they were hailed as religious martyrs, and agitation was carried on for clemency being shown to them" (2014, p. 157). The Muslim response to such controversies as *Rangila Rasool* is instructive because it blurs the conceptual distinction between "communal" and "nationalist" Muslims and demonstrates a social class's operation with common interests[90]. While

[90] An interesting take from a slightly simplistic liberal-modernist viewpoint is offered by Hamid Dalwai in the section "Muslims: The so-called Nationalists and the Communalists" in *Muslim Politics in India* (1968, pp. 63-78). Dalwai makes the following remark: "For in an undivided India a specially privileged Muslim community would have vigorously continued a movement for the Islamicization of India. In such a situation, it is most likely that the Muslim League and the so-called "Nationalist Muslims" would have joined forces…What was the difference between Jinnah [the communalist Muslim] and the nationalist Muslims? While Jinnah wanted a separate state, the nationalist Muslims wanted the whole of India" (pp. 70-71).

reflecting on the incidence of communal rioting from 1920s onward Ambedkar complains of

> [t]he adoption by the Muslims of the gangster's method in politics. The riots are a sufficient indication that gangsterism has become a settled part of their strategy in politics…So long as the Muslims were the aggressors, the Hindus were passive, and in the conflict they suffered more than the Muslims did[91]. But this is no longer true. The Hindus have learned to retaliate and no longer feel any compunction in knifing a Musalman. This spirit of retaliation bids fair to produce the ugly spectacle of gangsterism against gangsterism (p. 269).

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[91] Also: "These acts of barbarism against women, committed without remorse, without shame and without condemnation by their fellow brethren show the depth of the antagonism which divided the two communities. The tempers on each side were the tempers of two warring nations. There was carnage, pillage, sacrilege and outrage of every species, perpetrated by Hindus against Musalmans and by Musalmans against Hindus *—more perhaps by Musalmans against Hindus than by Hindus against Musalmans*…What is astonishing is that these cold and deliberate acts of rank, cruelty were not regarded as atrocities to be condemned but were treated as legitimate acts of warfare for which no apology was necessary" (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 186; emphasis added)

"Even a superficial observer cannot fail to notice that a spirit of aggression underlies the Hindu attitude towards the Muslim and the Muslim attitude towards the Hindu. *The Hindu's spirit of aggression is a new phase which he has just begun to cultivate. The Muslim's spirit of aggression is his native endowment and is ancient as compared with that of the Hindu.* It is not that the Hindu, if given time, will not pick up and overtake the Muslim. *But as matters stand to-day, the Muslim in this exhibition of the spirit of aggression leaves the Hindu far behind"* (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 249; emphasis added).

Ambedkar indicates the competitive nature of communalisms when he opines that, “The Muslims are howling against the Hindu Maha Sabha and its slogan of Hindudom and Hindu Raj. But who is responsible for this? Hindu Maha Sabha and Hindu Raj are the inescapable nemesis which the Musalmans have brought upon themselves by having a Muslim League. It is action and counter-action. One gives rise to the other” (p. 359). The preceding assessment of “Muslim communalism” in the colonial phase presents the historical context to evaluate the category's operation at present. While the Muslim communalists appear to be a vital force before 1947, it has been pointed that “partition sent a disproportionate segment of the North Indian *Ašrāf* elite including Syeds to East and West Pakistan” with the consequence that the “Indian Muslim community was effectively decapitated for a generation” although this is less true of South India where…Thangals remained in Kerala and Syeds among the Urdu-speaking population of Madras, Bangalore and even Bombay” (Wright Jr., 1999, p. 655). It is within such a shift that one can infer “that just as before 1947 the main damage to national unity was inflicted by Muslim communalism, so after 1947 it is Hindu communalism which poses the main threat to India’s unity and democracy”[92] (Chandra, 2004, p. 38).

Hindu and Muslim communalism cannot be considered *equivalent* (Mannathukkaren, 2016), as right-wing Hindu groups are prone to insist for two reasons. One, Muslim communalism's impact is mainly on its internal others—

[92] See the resignation letter of Jogendra Nath Mandal, a Dalit and Pakistan’s first law minister, to get a glimpse of how riot technology was employed in Pakistan against the Hindu minorities, mostly Dalits (Mandal, 1950).

subordinated castes, women, and dissenters[93]. Two, Muslim communalism is not in a position to take over the State. However, the Pasmanda narratives point towards that Muslim communal speech and action often provide a legitimating vocabulary to the Right-wing Hindu groups. In this context, the alliance of a few left/liberal/secularist or Dalit-Bahujan groups with Muslim communal groups often feeds into Muslim appeasement charges and strengthens Hindutva further. Ambedkar had remarked in the context of murders of Hindus by Muslim fanatics: "What is not understandable is the attitude of Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi has been very punctilious in the matter of condemning any and every act of violence and has forced the Congress, much against its will to condemn it. But Mr. Gandhi has never protested against such murders. Not only have the Musalmans not condemned these outrages but even Mr. Gandhi has never called upon the leading Muslims to condemn them" (2014, p. 157). Hamid Dalwai, a humanist Muslim reformist voice from Maharashtra, too lambasted the uncritical engagement of secular groups with Muslims: "It appears that all so-called secular political parties in India are agreed upon keeping Indian Muslims in their mediaeval state" (1968, p. 76). Speaking of the left, Dalwai says that "Muslim communalists in India and Indian communists have always remained strange, but inseparable, bedfellows" (p. 79). While the silence of a significant section of the secularists/liberals/leftists/bahujans when it comes to Muslim communal groups requires an analysis of class/caste content of the leadership of these groups, it is essential to underscore that the Pasmanda voices have in principle urged maintaining a distance from both contending communalisms. When the Pasmanda groups

[93] See note 25 above.

challenge both Muslim and Hindu communalism, they are not in principle establishing a relation of equivalence between the two for the power differentials are too prominent. The Pasmanda critique points towards the symbiotic and co-constitutive nature of competing communalisms and the strategic and self-defeating blunder of tackling majoritarianism without simultaneously taking on minorityism.

5.3.3 Muslim Communalism: Elite Politics and Subaltern Footsoldiers

The Pasmanda narratives stress that in instances of communal violence, the Pasmanda sections have been the critical victims (Pasmanda, 2013, p. 11). It is only recently that the caste location of victims of communal violence has received some academic/media attention. At least two papers on the Muzaffarnagar riots (2013) have employed the caste category in their analysis. For instance, Ahmad says, “The questions of Muslim caste-diversity and public presence are equally important aspects to understand the victimhood of Muslims in these riots (though this point has been almost entirely ignored in most of the discussions)…As per an unofficial estimate, most of those Muslims who died in the present violence were backwards” (2013, p. 11). And, Singh: “The victims of the riot by and large belong to the poorer class of Pasmanda Muslims, generally engaged in non-agricultural occupations” (2016, p. 94). In some communal episodes in Dadri, Bijnor, and Jharkhand, and elsewhere, some commentators have emphasized Muslim victims' lower caste location (Sajjad, 2016; Naqvi, 2016). Even if one concedes that during episodes of communal violence, the perpetrators may have only the Muslim targets' religion in mind, the *ascriptive* aspect of the violence could be complicated by the

spatial/class distribution of vulnerability. In episodes of communal violence, it is primarily the poor individuals/families, neighborhoods, slums, or villages that are attacked.[94] In the light of the close correlation between caste and class (Vaid, 2012), one may ask which Muslim caste groups inhabit these spaces. Jairath (2014, p. 395) urges us to "look at the demographic and geographical features of various groups and their differential participation, involvement and victimisation in communal riots." Interestingly, a scholar-activist from Kashmir has recently employed the caste category to make sense of violence in the insurgency-infected state:

> To this day the Syeds dominate the bureaucracy and the invisible apartheid continues. The Islamic revivalist movements that spread their network in Kashmir, including Jamaat-e-Islami, too were dominated by the Syeds as they had the privilege and legacy of Islamic teachings…At one point, the resistance movement against India too was dominated by the Syeds though the insurgency was started by the non-Syeds and they continue to offer sacrifices and become cannon fodder, with the Syeds ruling the roost and enjoying the leadership privilege. Few Syeds and Khojas lost their lives or took part in the insurgency, but both United Jihad Council and Hurriyat Conference are dominated by Syeds, who want the sacrifices from the non-Syeds and luxurious lives for their wards and extended family. *They have used every mechanism to keep the masses occupied with the conflict so that they don't engage with the larger questions associated with it, including caste and privileges* (Sikander, 2017; emphasis added).

[94] According to Pandey "…when riots have occurred in any urban concentration anywhere in the world, the densely-populated, ill-serviced and poorer localities of the lower classes have generally burned most fiercely" (1990, pp. 70-71).

What the above observations in the context of the extreme situation of Kashmir and the Pasmanda narratives indicate is the probable distance between the actual victims and the beneficiaries of the politics of Muslim victimhood at one level and the displacement of social justice issues through violence at another. Quaiser employs the term "elite Muslim restorational politics" (2011, p. 52) to capture this and speculates if the high caste Muslims are "really *concerned* with communal riots or general backwardness of Shudra Muslims? Hasn't the aggressive Hindutva communalism provided them with an opportunity to make their presence felt more prominently and make assertions to recover some of the lost *location* in whatever forms possible?"(p. 53; emphasis original).

5.4 CONCLUSION

However, the emphasis on elite machinations still does not adequately explain subordinated castes' suborning as foot soldiers in communal violence. What explains the recruitment of someone like Ilm Din, the carpenter in communal violence, when the beneficiaries theoretically are the Ashraf classes? One could tentatively indicate three directions to pursue better explanations. Firstly, one needs to make a distinction between the "structural positions"—the positions of an individual within hierarchical social, cultural, political, and economic systems by forces and institutions that are prior to her will and which shape the individual's life chances—and the "subject positions" (or identities) through which she lives out her structural positions (Smith, 1998, p. 56). While the essentialist argument holds "authentic" interests to be flowing directly from structural positions and explains the failure of the subject to see this as an

instance of false consciousness, the constructivist argument would emphasize the mediation of various competing political discourses, interpretative frameworks, desire and even personal accidents in subject formation (pp. 58-59). Secondly, on identity formation, so far, the role of state and politics has been emphasized. But Peter van der Veer rightly asks us "to escape from the hegemony of the discourse on state hegemony" and realize that "community formation has a variety of sources, but in the case of religious nationalism we have to focus more than we often do on religious movements and institutions, as well as on the disciplinary practices connected to them" (1994, p. 201). In this sense, one needs to explore what bearing the process of Islamization/Ashrafization or piety (Mahmood, 2005) have on the questions of empowerment/agency of subordinated castes and women within the Muslim social space in India.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PURSUIT OF MASAWAT (EQUITY)

Council mein bahut Syed, Masjid mein faqat Jumman!

(The viceroy council is full of Syeds, but the mosques are packed only with *Jummans*[95])

—Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921)

"Don't put them [Ashraf] in our camp [for reservation purposes]…Ours is a reserved compartment."[96]

—Ali Anwar, President All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Mahaz)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In deeply stratified societies, like India, the concern of "democratic deepening," that is, "the extension of democracy to previously subordinated groups," assumes vital importance (Elliott, 2003, p. 22). It has been argued that difference-blind policies can produce conservative outcomes in unequal societies because notions of formal

[95] Jumman refers to "the Julahas, the lowly weaver" (Alam, 2016).
[96] Anand, Hingorani, & Basu, 2005, p. 12.

equality or procedural democracy are insensitive to the background and structural inequalities faced by marginalized communities (Connolly, 1996, p. 62; Young, 1990, p. 165; Taylor, 1994, pp. 39-40). Hence, some form of group-differentiated citizenship (Kymlicka, 2009), which is capable of grasping inequality both in its symbolic (recognition) and material (redistribution) manifestations, becomes imperative to ensure substantive renderings of democracy (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). In this sense, concerns of equity are deeply intermeshed with identity claims. As Moya (2000, p. 8) opines, "The significance of identity depends partly on the fact that goods and resources are still distributed according to identity categories. Who are we—that is, who we perceive ourselves or are perceived by others to be—will significantly affect our life chances: where we can live, whom we will marry, (or whether we can marry) and what kind of educational and employment opportunities will be available to us […] an ability to take effective steps toward progressive social change is predicated on an acknowledgement of, and familiarity with, past and present structures of inequality—structures that are often highly correlated with categories of identity".

In order to address historically accumulated inequalities, such as racism or casteism, many countries have adopted varying versions of affirmative action (AA) policies (Wyzan, 1990; Nesiah, 1997; Jenkins, 2003). AA policies are "anti-discrimination measures intended to provide access to preferred positions in a society for members of groups that would otherwise be excluded or under represented" (Deshpande, 2013, p. 8). As a mechanism for preferential treatment or compensatory discrimination, AA targets altering the composition of the "power elite" and making it more socially representative

(Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2018). In this respect, AA is usually distinguished from conventional universal redistributive measures, primarily focusing on a more just allocation of wealth and assets. AA strives to ensure "some members of the disadvantaged communities a voice in decision making, by placing them in prestigious jobs and elite educational institutions, it provides the community with say" (Deshpande, 2013, p. 10). The access of disenfranchised groups to preferred positions in society democratizes the deliberative or decision-making spaces and facilitates the reflection of subaltern aspirations in the policy domain.

In India, the AA policies have taken the form of "reservations" (or quotas) in public employment, higher education, and legislative bodies and have been chiefly framed as an instrument to compensate for historical oppression against subjugated caste groups (Galanter, 1984). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, an anti-caste intellectual and key architect of the Indian Constitution, had characterized the caste system as not "merely division of labor" but rather a "division of laborers" which works on the principle of graded inequality, in other words, a "hierarchy in which the division of labourers are graded one above the other." He further added that the caste system does not recognize merit and talent as it "is an attempt to assign tasks to individuals in advance, selected not on the basis of trained original capacities, but on that of the social status of the parents [...] this stratification of occupations which is the result of the caste system is positively pernicious" (Ambedkar, 2002, p. 263). Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, one of the tallest socialist leaders in India, held that "*shrinkage and contraction of opportunity and ability is a necessary accompaniment of caste*. Whatever bureaucratic ability there is in the country is to be found among Brahmins

and Kayasthas, and business ability among Vaisyas, and *90 percent of the country's population and its natural abilities in these spheres have become atrophied and paralyzed*. […] *Caste means depriving the people of their abilities and that is the most important reason why the Indian people are so backward and so often have been enslaved*" (Sheth, 2002, p. 124-125; original emphasis). The Indian Constitution has broadly made a distinction between "cultural rights" for religious minorities and "group rights" (positive discrimination) for the disadvantaged castes. The religious minorities are covered within the framework of minority rights that ensure the freedom to practice and propagate religion, the right to establish their own educational institutions with or without state support, and legal pluralism through official endorsement of personal laws in the spheres of marriage, inheritance and so on. On the other hand the disadvantaged castes are located within the framework of social justice that makes them eligible for reservations (Hasan, 2009, p. 5; Jayal, 2013, p. 21). Apart from these group-based interventions, universal redistribution policies or "class-based government programs, such as anti-poverty or employment-generation programs, designed to ameliorate poverty or provide livelihood support" (Deshpande, 2013, p. 10).

The Constitution had initially crafted three categories for reservation policy—the "Scheduled Castes" (SCs), "Scheduled Tribes" (STs), and the "Other Backward Classes" (OBCs). The SCs comprising of the untouchable castes ("Dalits" in contemporary parlance) with 18 percent population, were granted 15 percent quota, and the STs referring to the tribal or aboriginal peoples (Adivasis) with 8 percent population, were given 7.5 percent quota in public employment, higher education and legislative bodies in 1947 itself. However, the OBCs,

a residue of socially backward castes/communities with a population of 52 percent, were allocated a 27 percent quota in central government jobs with the acceptance of the Mandal Commission Report (henceforth, MCR) by the V. P. Singh led government in 1990. The OBC quota was pegged at 27 percent, almost half of its population, due to the Supreme Court's ceiling of 50 percent on reservations. However, while the OBC quota in central government jobs took almost 43 years to materialize after Independence, by 1978, about 13 states had already granted reservations to the OBCs (Galanter, 1984, p. 87). The acceptance of MCR led to widespread public protests by upper caste (UC) student groups as they felt threatened with the dwindling of their share in central government jobs (Omvedt, 1990). The populist mobilizations by the Hindu Right on Ram Temple-Babri Mosque controversy and the acceptance of neoliberal economic reforms by the Central government around the same time produced social dislocations that catalyzed the emergence of new social movements and subjectivities (Menon & Nigam, 2007; Omvedt, 1994).

The mandate of AA policies for the SCs, STs, and OBCs was premised on historical and persistent discrimination and violence against them at one level and the strong correlation of material inequalities with caste on the other (Vaid, 2012; Jaoul, 2008; Deshpande, 2013, pp. 24-42; Bayly, 1999, pp. 8-10). However, the AA regime in India has been contested at multiple levels. Firstly, there have been consistent objections and protestations by privileged caste groups that characterize AA policies as violative of merit and efficiency in governance structures (Omvedt, 1990). Secondly, there are animated debates on the state's overreliance on the caste category to define backwardness and the need to replace or expand it by including other categories like economic class, religion,

gender, and so on (Hasan, 2009). In this context, through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, Article 243 introduced reservations of seats in rural and urban local bodies for women in 1993 (Buch, 2009), whereas through the 103rd Constitutional Amendment, a new quota for the "Economically Weaker Sections" (EWS) other than SCs, STs and OBCs were chalked out, thereby including economically weaker sections from forward and dominant castes (Chatterjee, 2019). Thirdly, there are demands for "categorical revisions" (Jenkins, 2003, p. 4) in the form of sub-quotas in extant categories—SC, ST, OBC—by various castes and tribes themselves (Gopani, 2018). The brief overview indicates the complex positive discrimination and redistribution regime in India that subaltern groups, like the Pasmanda Muslims, have to contest and negotiate to address equity concerns. The following sections will attempt to chart out and analyze the Pasmanda narratives and protests, particularly that of the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, on recognition, representation, and redistribution.

6.2 RECONFIGURING POWER: PASMANDA CONTESTATIONS ON REPRESENTATION AND POLICY

"*Jazbati Sawalon ke Baraqs—Rozi-Roti, Samajik Barabari aur Satta mein Hissedari ke Liye*" (In contrast to emotive issues—for livelihoods, social equality and share in power) is a slogan often reproduced in Mahaz's agitational material[97] [See Exhibit 1]. The slogan indicates a disenchantment with the overemphasis on religio-cultural concerns at the expense of organic bread-

[97] Interview, Hannan Ansari, 22 June, 2012, New Delhi

and-butter ones in the Ashraf-led Muslim politics[98]. In this respect, the adverse impact of neoliberal economic policies on the Pasmanda communities—mainly comprised of artisans, peasants, and the working class—is often stressed[99]. The impact of globalization, automation, and competition from multinational and transnational companies is felt intensely and linked to vanishing livelihoods, labor migration, and difficult daily survival circumstances. While emphasizing that "Our politics is related to economics," Ali Anwar lamented during an event to commemorate the World Dignity Day in New Delhi in 2004:

> Our artisans are dying of hunger. Wives of weavers are selling their blood. Many are committing suicide. Tailors, dyers, vegetable vendors, butchers, cotton workers […] If the mattress is made of foam and so is the quilt how will the cotton worker earn? If vegetables and fruits are imported how will vendors make a living? In Seelampur, we were told even embroidery is being handled by computers. The sari industry in Benares and Mhow (sic) is in crisis. Threads are coming from China. Mulayam Singh, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, promised regular electricity and correct meters in Mhow (sic) and Benares to weavers in a public meeting during the last elections. They are still

[98] "Historically the upper class/caste Indian Muslim political leadership have consciously played the "politics of identity" centered around a few cultural-emotive issues. Prominent among these issues are Aligarh Muslim University, Babri masjid, Muslim Personal Law and the question of Urdu" (Alam, 2003, p. 4883).

[99] 14-point memorandum presented by Mahaz in the "Sampradayikta aur Globalization Virodhi Rashtriya Sammelan" (National Conference against Communalism and Globalisation), A. N. Sinha Institute, March 21 2004, Patna (Bihar).

> waiting. We don't get electricity. Entire villages in Bihar have been depopulated. In Delhi there is a Sitamarhi colony and a Nalanda colony. We migrate because our livelihoods are vanishing (Anand, Hingorani, & Basu, 2005, p. 13).

"Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Nayi Sadi Ki Or" (Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Towards Next Millennium) (ASS, 1999), released in the wake of the 1999 general elections, included various demands for sectoral upliftment like:

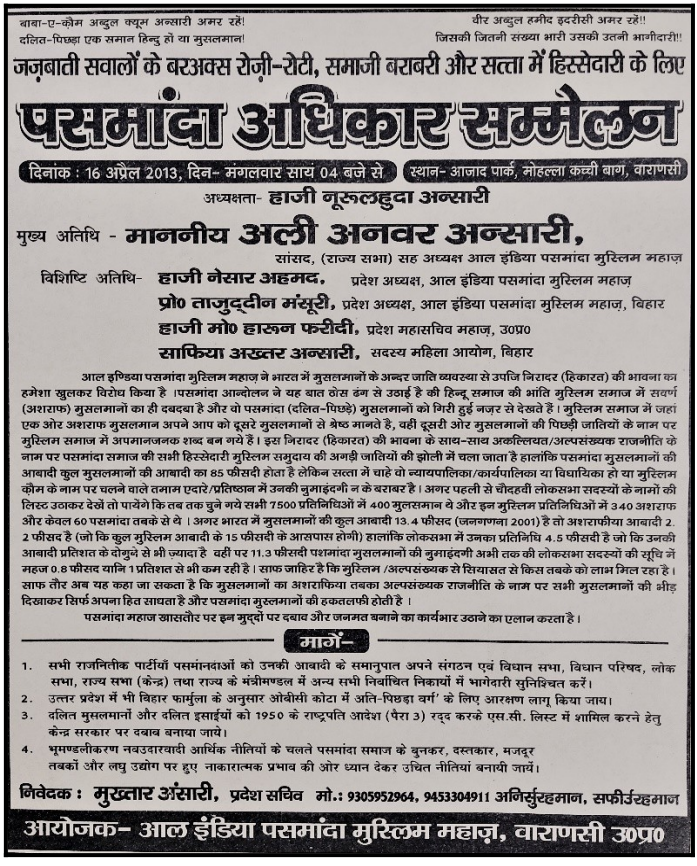
- Proper infrastructure and financial support to the sick handloom and other sectors impacted negatively due to the advent of multinational companies in the wake of the new economic policy;
- Concrete government plan to upgrade the condition of various Muslim professional castes;
- Adequate policies for workers in the *bidi* (thin local variant of tobacco-filled cigarettes) industry due to its hazardous nature and the large involvement of women labourers;
- Education and health care facilities for Pasmanda Muslims;
- Quota to be fixed for Pasmanda Muslims in welfare schemes like the red card[100], Indira Awas Yojna[101] and so on.

[100] The red card refers to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card which is issued to those families whose families earn less than ₹24,000 per annum and live below the poverty line.

[101] Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), is the flagship housing programme of the Ministry of Rural Development and works toward constructing houses for the below-poverty-line (BPL) population in rural India.

Apart from the emphasis on redistributive and welfare measures, the Mahaz has consistently amplified the concerns of a fair share for Pasmanda Muslims in public employment and education through reservations (or quotas). As I discuss in the next section, the Mahaz has challenged the extant quota arrangements in all the three key categories—the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC)—and sought categorical revisions to secure an adequate proportion of government jobs and educational seats for the Pasmanda sections. However, with the increasing retreat of the state from the sphere of employment and dwindling public sector jobs, the Mahaz has endorsed reservation in the private sector. Ali Anwar states, “We are in full support [of reservations in the private sector]. Even multinationals will have to toe the line. They have affirmative action in the US so why not in India? The same social standards should apply. Companies will find themselves alienated if they don’t do it” (Anand et al., 2005, p. 13). While the concrete issues related to livelihoods and survival are constantly raised, a favorable policy regime will not be possible without the Pasmanda community's empowerment through proportional representation in political power. The positive impact of the Mandal wave post-1990s on the political representation of Hindu OBC castes in North India is well documented and has been hailed as “India’s silent revolution” (Jaffrelot, 2003). However, Anwar (2001, p. 169) complain s that despite a symmetrical population ratio in terms of backward-forward population within Hindu and Muslim communities, the share of backward Muslims in political power is almost negligible compared to the Hindu backward castes. In this sense, “the Muslim society is standing on its head.

The need to turn it right side up again is being felt intensely" (ibid, p. 169, tr.).



बाबा-ए-कौम अब्दुल क्यूम अन्सारी अमर रहें!
दलित-पिछड़ा एक समान हिन्दु हो या मुसलमान!

वीर अब्दुल हमीद इदरीसी अमर रहें!!
जिसकी जितनी संख्या भारी उसकी उतनी भागीदारी!!

जज़्बाती सवालों के बरअक्स रोज़ी-रोटी, समाजी बराबरी और सत्ता में हिस्सेदारी के लिए

पसमांदा अधिकार सम्मेलन

दिनांक : 16 अप्रैल 2013, दिन- मंगलवार समय 04 बजे से | स्थान- आज़ाद पार्क, मोहल्ला कच्ची बाग, वाराणसी

अध्यक्षता- हाजी नूरूलहुदा अन्सारी

मुख्य अतिथि - **माननीय अली अनवर अन्सारी,**
सांसद, (राज्य सभा) सह अध्यक्ष आल इंडिया पसमांदा मुस्लिम महाज़

विशिष्टि अतिथि- **हाजी नेसार अहमद,** प्रदेश अध्यक्ष, आल इंडिया पसमांदा मुस्लिम महाज़
प्रो० ताजुद्दीन मंसूरी, प्रदेश अध्यक्ष, आल इंडिया पसमांदा मुस्लिम महाज़, बिहार
हाजी मो० हारून फरीदी, प्रदेश महासचिव महाज़, उ०प्र०
साफिया अख्तर अन्सारी, सदस्य महिला आयोग, बिहार

आल इण्डिया पसमांदा मुस्लिम महाज़ ने भारत में मुसलमानों के अन्दर जाति व्यवस्था से उपजि निरादर (हिकारत) की भावना का हमेशा खुलकर विरोध किया है ।पसमांदा आन्दोलन ने यह बात ठोस ढंग से उठाई है की हिन्दू समाज की भांति मुस्लिम समाज में सवर्ण (अशराफ) मुसलमानों का ही दबदबा है और वो पसमांदा (दलित-पिछड़े) मुसलमानों को गिरी हुई नजर से देखते हैं । मुस्लिम समाज में जहां एक ओर अशराफ मुसलमान अपने आप को दूसरे मुसलमानों से श्रेष्ठ मानते है, वही दूसरी ओर मुसलमानों की पिछड़ी जातियों के नाम पर मुस्लिम समाज में अपमानजनक शब्द बन गये हैं । इस निरादर (हिकारत) की भावना के साथ-साथ अकलियत/अल्पसंख्यक राजनीति के नाम पर पसमांदा समाज की सभी हिस्सेदारी मुस्लिम समुदाय की अगड़ी जातियों की झोली में चला जाता है हालांकि पसमांदा मुसलमानों की आबादी कुल मुसलमानों की आबादी का 85 फीसदी होता है लेकिन सत्ता में चाहे वो व्यायपालिका/कार्यपालिका या विधायिका हो या मुस्लिम कौम के नाम पर चलने वाले तमाम एदारे/प्रतिष्ठान में उनकी नुमाइंदगी न के बराबर है । अगर पहली से चौदहवी लोकसभा सदस्यों के नामों की लिस्ट उठाकर देखें तो पायेंगे कि तब तक चुने गये सभी 7500 प्रतिनिधिओं में 400 मुसलमान थे और इन मुस्लिम प्रतिनिधिओं में 340 अशराफ और केवल 60 पसमांदा तबके से थे । अगर भारत में मुसलमानों की कुल आबादी 13.4 फीसद (जनगणना 2001) है तो अशराफीया आबादी 2.2 फीसद है (जो कि कुल मुस्लिम आबादी के 15 फीसदी के आसपास होगी) हालांकि लोकसभा में उनका प्रतिनिधि 4.5 फीसदी है जो कि उनकी आबादी प्रतिशत के दोगुने से भी ज्यादा है वही पर 11.3 फीसदी पशमांदा मुसलमानों की नुमाइंदगी अभी तक की लोकसभा सदस्यों की सूधि में महज 0.8 फीसद यानि 1 प्रतिशत से भी कम रही है । साफ जाहिर है कि मुस्लिम /अल्पसंख्यक से सियासत से किस तबके को लाभ मिल रहा है । साफ तौर अब यह कहा जा सकता है कि मुसलमानों का अशराफिया तबका अल्पसंख्यक राजनीति के नाम पर सभी मुसलमानों की भीड़ दिखाकर सिर्फ अपना हित साधता है और पसमांदा मुस्लमानों की हकतलफी होती है ।

पसमांदा महाज़ खासतौर पर इन मुद्दों पर दबाव और जनमत बनाने का कार्यभार उठाने का एलान करता है ।

मांगें-

1. सभी राजनितीक पार्टीयाँ पसमांनदाओं को उनकी आबादी के समानुपात अपने संगठन एवं विधान सभा, विधान परिषद, लोक सभा, राज्य सभा (केन्द्र) तथा राज्य के मंत्रीमण्डल में अन्य सभी निर्वाचित निकायों में भागेदारी सुनिश्चित करें।
2. उत्तर प्रदेश में भी बिहार फार्मुला के अनुसार ओबीसी कोटा में अति-पिछड़ा वर्ग' के लिए आरक्षण लागू किया जाय।
3. दलित मुसलमानों और दलित इसाईयों को 1950 के राष्ट्रपति आदेश (पैरा 3) रद्द करके एस.सी. लिस्ट में शामिल करने हेतु केन्द्र सरकार पर दबाव बनाया जाये।
4. भूमण्डलीकरण नवउदारवादी आर्थिक नीतियों के चलते पसमांदा समाज के बुनकर, दस्तकार, मजदूर तबकों और लघु उद्योग पर हुए नाकारात्मक प्रभाव की ओर ध्यान देकर उचित नीतियां बनायी जायें।

निवेदक : **मुख्तार अंसारी,** प्रदेश सचिव मो.: 9305952964, 9453304911 अनिर्सुरहमान, सफीउरहमान

आयोजक- आल इंडिया पसमांदा मुस्लिम महाज़, वाराणसी उ०प्र०

Plate 9. Pamphlet released by the Mahaz, Varanasi (UP), 2013

Anwar (2001, pp. 171-73) disaggregates the data of Muslim legislators of Bihar Legislative Assembly from 1952-1995 in caste terms to support his argument (See Table 2). The eleven elections that were held during this period returned 246 Muslim MLA's out of which 198 were upper castes (UC), and 47 were low castes (LC). The proportion of the UCs was 80.8 percent. In comparison, that of LCs was 19.2 percent which is almost

an inverted representation of their population shares [Population ratio of UC Muslims: LC Muslims is 15:85][102]. Among the LC Muslims, no Dalit Muslim was elected, only five castes out of about 45-50 castes were represented, and the highest number of legislators belonged to the Ansari (Julaha, weaver) caste, which is still low since the Ansaris have the highest population among the LC Muslims in Bihar[103] (Anwar, 2001a, p. 173).

TABLE 2 MUSLIM LEGISLATORS (MLAS) IN BIHAR ASSEMBLY (VIDHAN SABHA): 1952-1995

Caste/Year	'52	'57	'62	'67	'69	'72	'77	'80	'85	'90	'95	Total	Percentage
Sheikh	14	14	10	6	8	15	15	16	17	11	14	140	**56.71**
Syed	5	6	3	4	5	2	2	3	3	1	1	35	**14.22**
Pathan	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	4	2	0	23	**9.34**
Mallick	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	**0.4**
Ansari	4	3	5	1	0	2	2	3	5	1	4	30	**12.9**
Shershah badi	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	5	**2.03**
Kulhaiya	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	6	**2.43**
Raeen	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	**1.21**
Mukeri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	**1.21**
TOTAL	**25**	**25**	**20**	**12**	**17**	**24**	**23**	**29**	**31**	**17**	**23**	**246**	

SOURCE: Anwar, Ali. (2001). Masavat Ki Jung (The Battle for Equality), p. 172

[102] See the section "Chronology of Events" in Chapter 3 for the list of protests, sit-ins, and dharnas and so on that the Mahaz has organised on redistributive issues.

[103] See the discussion later in this chapter on how this population ratio has been arrived at.

In the period 1952-1999, there have been 106 Muslim ministers, out of which 78 (73.6 percent) were UC Muslims, and 28 (26.4 percent) were LC Muslims. Even the recent Bihar Legislative Assembly Election 2020, a highly polarized one where the discourse of Muslim underrepresentation was sharply foregrounded, returned 19 Muslim MLAs out of 243 seats. Following these figures, one could infer that the Muslim representation was 7.8 percent, far below their population percentage of 16.9 percent in Bihar as per the 2011 Census. However, once the data is disaggregated in caste terms, it reveals a different picture. Out of these 19 Muslim MLAs, 16 are UC Muslims, and only 3 are LC Muslims (See Table 3; the shaded entries are LC Muslims). Once the UC Muslims: LC Muslims (15:85) population ratio is applied to these figures, it turns out that the representation of UC Muslims, with a population share of 2.5 percent, had a representation of 6.7 percent, while the LC Muslims, with a population share of 14.4 percent, had a representation of just 1.1 percent.

TABLE 3 BIHAR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2020: CASTE PROFILE OF MUSLIM LEGISLATORS (MLAS)

S. NO.	NAME	PARTY	CASTE
1	Akhtarul Iman	AIMIM	Surjapuri (Sheikh)
2	Abidur Rahman	Congress	Kulhaiya
3	Mohammad Anzar Nayeemi	Congress	Surjapuri (Sheikh)
4	Syed Ruknuddin Ahmad	AIMIM	Syed
5	Mahboob Alam	CPI-ML	Surjapuri (Sheikh)

6	Mohd. Zama Khan	BSP	Pathan
7	Md Kamran	RJD	Mallick
8	Shahnawaz	AIMIM	Kulhaiya
9	Shakeel Ahmad Khan	Congress	Pathan
10	Mohammad Israil Mansuri	RJD	Mansoori
11	Md. Afaque Alam	Congress	Sheikh
12	Izaharul Hussain	Congress	Surjapuri (Sheikh)
13	Muhammed Izhar Asfi	AIMIM	Surjapuri (Sheikh)
14	Shamim Ahmad	RJD	Sheikh
15	Ali Ashraf Siddiqui	RJD	Sheikh
16	Mohammad Nehaluddiin	RJD	Sheikh
17	Akhtarul Islam Shahin	RJD	Syed
18	Yusuf Salahuddin	RJD	Sheikh
19	Saud Alam	RJD	Surjapuri (Sheikh)

SOURCE: Khalid Anis Ansari

Gilles Verniers, one of the rare scholars who has disaggregated data about Muslim electoral performance in caste terms, summarises his findings for the state of Uttar Pradesh:

> An examination of the profile of Muslims MLAs over the last 20 years [1993-2012] reveals a striking trend. While *Ashrâfs*, or upper caste, Muslims make for roughly 20 per cent of the total Muslim population, they occupy more than 70 per cent of the seats won by Muslim candidates over the period. Interestingly, the ratio increases as the representation of Muslims improves. The surge in the number of Muslim candidates elected to the

> Assembly in 2007 and 2012 has largely benefited upper caste Muslims, as compared to other caste groups (Verniers, 2018).

The situation is not much different in the Lok Sabha (or lower house) of the Indian bicameral Parliament. As per one analysis (Ansari, 2004), of the 7500 elected representatives from the first (1952) to the fourteenth (2004) Lok Sabha, 400 were Muslims. From 1952-2004 the average population of Muslims was around 11 percent (Farooqui, 2020). Their political representation at 5.1 percent is low. However, disaggregating the data in caste terms, out of the 400 Muslim MPs, 340 were UC Muslims, and 60 were LC Muslims. This means that UC Muslims, with a 1.65 percent share in the national population, represented around 4.5 percent. On the other hand, the LC Muslims with a population share of around 9.35 per cent had a mere 0.8 percent representation in Parliament. Hence, the Ashrafs turn out to be more than doubly represented in the Lok Sabha. The broad trend of Pasmanda exclusion has continued in the 17th (2019) Lok Sabha as well. Out of 25 Muslim MPs, 18 were UC Muslims while 7 were LC Muslims. Again, the UC Muslims were adequately represented with just over 3 percent representation, while the LC Muslims' representation was around 1 percent (Ansari, 2019).

However, the political underrepresentation of Pasmanda Muslims is also related to the low preference for Pasmanda candidates by various parties during ticket distribution. Jaffrelot and Verniers (2012) attempt a caste-wise breakup of Muslim candidates for the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly elections 2012 (See Table 4). As per their data, out of the 88 Muslim candidates fielded by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in an assembly of 410 seats, the number of UC Muslims was 58, LC

Muslims was 11, and the caste location of 19 Muslims could not be identified. The Samajwadi Party (SP) fielded 83 Muslim candidates: 70 UC Muslims, 11 LC Muslims, and two unidentified. The Congress Party (INC) fielded 20 Muslims: 17 UC Muslims and 3 LC Muslims. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), well known for its anti-Muslim stance, only fielded 1 UC Muslim. Verniers (2018) offers the following explanation for skewed ticket distribution against Pasmanda candidates:

> The domination of *Ashrâfs* has a historical rooting. They tend to be wealthier, richer, more educated, belonging to former ruler families, possessing land and, sometimes, nobility titles. More importantly, they are seen by mainstream parties as the legitimate "rulers" of their own community, more apt to exert patronage on their constituents. This party bias and a phenomenon of elite capture of the political space allotted to Muslims by a small number of *Ashrâf* families account for their disproportionate representation.

TABLE 4 CASTE PROFILE OF MUSLIM CANDIDATES ACROSS MAJOR PARTIES

PARTY & CATEGORY	CANDIDATES	ELECTED	RUNNER-UP
BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY (BSP)			
Muslims	88	15	88
UC Muslims	58	12	22
BC Muslims	11	3	4
Unidentified	19	0	12
SAMAJWADI PARTY (SP)			
Muslims	83	43	13

UC Muslims	70	39	11
BC Muslims	11	4	2
Unidentified	5	2	1
CONGRESS PARTY			
Muslims	20	3	3
UC Muslims	17	1	3
BC Muslims	3	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0
BHARATIYA JANTA PARTY (BJP)			
Muslims	1	0	0
UC Muslims	1	0	0
BC Muslims	0	0	0
Unidentified	0	0	0

SOURCE: Adapted from Jaffrelot & Verniers, 2012

While acknowledging the role of the post-1990s Mandal phase in the political awakening of Pasmanda Muslims—often characterized as the "Mandalisation" of Muslim politics (Quaiser, 2011, p. 62; Upadhyay, 2012; Alam, 2003, p. 4885)—Ali Anwar (2001, p. 169) interrogates the role of so-called "secular" and "social justice" political parties for the political underrepresentation of Pasmanda Muslims. Historically, as discussed in C3 earlier, Mohammad Ali Jinnah led the All India Muslim League (AIML) had endorsed the "two-nation theory" and spearheaded the separatist movement for the Muslim state of Pakistan in the pre-1947 period. The AIML was

overwhelmingly supported by the "communal" Muslims —mostly Ashraf landlords, capitalist, and aristocratic classes—and challenged by "nationalist" Muslim groups like the Abdul Qaiyum Ansari-led All India Momin Conference (AIMC) that represented the LC Muslims. AIMC had allied with the Congress Party in Bihar to take on the enclavist politics of the AIML. After the Partition in 1947, most Ashraf Muslims had left for Pakistan (ibid. p. 169). However, the "Muslim Leaguers" who could not relocate to Pakistan turned Congress supporters overnight by "donning the Gandhi cap," and the others underwent a "*hridyaya parivartan*" (change of heart) through the efforts of the tall but Ashraf nationalist leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Due to Azad's efforts, Ashraf AIML leaders like Syed Jafar Imam were made ministers in the Congress government. The communal Muslims bagged more seats than the nationalist Muslims on Congress symbol in the first Lok Sabha elections in Independent India held in 1952. Ali Anwar deconstructs the discourse of "mainstreaming Muslims" employed by the Congress Party at that time as the rehabilitation of the communal UC Muslims within the Congress Party at the nationalist backward Muslims' expense. By recruiting the guilt-ridden, docile ex-Muslim League, Ashraf politicians, the Congress Party also arrested the evolution of any futuristic organic and assertive Muslim leadership whatsoever. In Anwar's (2001, p. 171, Tr.) words, "The very sections of the Muslim society that sacrificed the most for the Independence of the country, that fought against Mr. Jinnah's two-nation theory, were thoroughly marginalized in Independent India."

Apart from emphasizing the historic betrayal of the Congress Party, Ali Anwar has also accused the social justice parties like the Laloo Prasad Yadav led Rashtriya

Janta Dal (RJD) and Ram Vilas Paswan led Loktantrik Janta Party (LJP) of not maintaining social balance in the distribution of tickets, ministries and state benefits to the Muslims. Anwar characterizes the Laloo Yadav's "M-Y" (Muslim-Yadav) alliance (Explained Desk, 2020; IANS, 2020) as being, in essence, an "FM-Y" (Forward Muslim-Yadav) alliance (Singh, 2015) as the UC Muslims cornered most tickets and benefits during his regime in Bihar (1990-2005).

According to Yogendra Yadav, a psephologist and socialist activist close to the Mahaz, "Since the BJP came into politics, Muslim politics has become bonded. Parties like the Samajwadi or the Congress know that they will corner the Muslim vote. They get bonded to the creamy layer. There is no discussion of the problems being faced by Muslim backward communities" (Anand et al., 2005, p. 12). The negligible presence of Pasmanda Muslims in the corridors of power is connected to the eclipsing of their concerns in the domain of policy (Suman, 2017, pp. 66-67). Tabish Hussain, a Mahaz sympathizer from Khairabad in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, told me

> The upper caste Muslims will garner our votes in the name of being "Muslim," and when they reach there [in the Parliament and Assemblies], they will benefit the high castes at our expense. They will help the *Shurafa* (UC) Muslims, and for the Arzal (LC) Muslims, their attitude will be like…these are Dalit Muslims. They deserve nothing[104].

[104] Papiya Ghosh, in the context of Bihar, reports, "Though the Julahas [Ansaris] were the largest *biradari* in the 1891 Census their number was believed formerly to have been much larger than that returned that year […]" (Ghosh, 1997, p. 25). Further, "According to the 1931 Census Hindus comprised 83 per cent of the population and Muslims 10.1 per cent. […] The Julahas (who called themselves Momins since around the turn

The Ashraf *ulema* (clerics) and politicians are criticized for their vested interest in keeping the Pasmanda Muslims disempowered (Anwar, 2001, p. 24). One hears consistent complaints of discriminatory voting behavior and even active campaigns to defeat Pasmanda candidates during elections. Ali Anwar remarks,

> It is often observed that when some candidate from the Ashraf sections contests elections, then the talk of Muslim unity is repeated ad nauseam. On the other hand, when a Pasmanda Muslim contests elections efforts are made to defeat him by labelling him as Julaha, Dhuniya, Kunjda [titles of LC Muslims] (Anwar, 2001b).

> The post-Independence experience of various elections in Bihar demonstrates that the so-called Ashrafs consider it better to tear apart the ballot paper than to vote for *julaha* (weaver), Dhuniya (cotton carder), Kunjda (vegetable vendor), Kabadi (scrap seller). Many have been heard saying—"We have not yet become so miserable to vote the Julahas-Dhuniyas." When leaders like Syed Shahabuddin [an HC Muslim] contest elections, they are dubbed as the entire Muslim community's leaders (*qaum*). However, if a Julaha, Dhuniya, or Kunjda [low caste Muslims] secures a ticket, he suffers the caste stamp (Anwar, 1999, Tr.).

Karrar Ahmad, associated with the Mahaz, reveals his experience of contesting the local body elections,

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of the century) were the only biradari for which statistics were tabulated; in that Census they fell just short of 25 per cent of the Muslim population" (Ghosh, 1997, p. 21). The 1931 decennial census in the colonial period was the last census that recorded caste-wise data.

> I have contested elections twice. When we go to their [Ashraf] population, we become zero…Once the seat was reserved for OBCs and they [Ashraf] said you are the most deserving candidate. We will vote for you. But only God knows what happened… all of them voted for the Yadav (Hindu caste) candidate. The next time it was a general seat. I contested again. Their candidate secured votes from our people, but I was again zero in their population. It was not a matter of five or ten votes…so that is their attitude[105].

The Ashraf clerics and religious preachers are indicted with openly backing Ashraf politicians during elections and employing religious and faith-based organizations to defeat Pasmanda candidates[106]. Karrar Ahmad feels that "if there were less religiosity (*dindaari*), then the Mahaz would have progressed multifold times." The Mahaz has consistently demanded the political parties allocate a proportional share of tickets to Pasmanda Muslims to increase their representation (ASS, 1999). In particular, the need to develop women's leadership has been stressed (Anwar, 2001c) and Mahaz has developed its women wing to integrate them in the movement and eventually in the political process (Suman, 2017, p. 69). Ali Anwar (Suman, 2017, p. 61) also claims to have persuaded the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to grant a 20 percent quota for the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), that includes the majority of LC Muslim groups, in the three-tier local bodies: district boards, panchayat samitis and gram panchayats (TNN, 2006; Witsoe, 2015). Danish Mohd., a journalist and Pasmanda

[105] Interview, Tabish Hussain, 29 May 2013, Khairabad (Uttar Pradesh).
[106] Interview, Karrar Ahmad, 29 May 2013, Khairabad (Uttar Pradesh).

activist based in Patna, suggests that the EBC reservations in local bodies benefitted the LC Muslims squarely, even more than LC Hindus in terms of demographic proportion[107]. Mohd. Sajjad[108], informs that due to the EBC quota, almost all the LC Muslim group's got representation in the local bodies, and it was like a "revolution from below." Because of the EBC reservations that in 2010 Afzal Imam, an LC Muslim belonging to the Nalband caste[109], became the first Muslim mayor in Patna in almost 58 years (Staff Correspondent, 2010). According to Mohd. Sajjad those *mukhiyas* [chief of village council or *panchayat*] associated with the Mahaz worked earnestly for the LC Muslims. He cites the example of a *mukhiya* named Salim in Kaimur district of Bihar who got 450 BPL cards made for LC Muslims out of 800 cards allocated to him. Salim was instrumental in allocating 60-70 houses out of 100 for LC Muslims and also assisted them in securing employment in village schools and so on. When the feudal sections objected to Salim's ameliorative measures for the Pasmanda community, he rebutted them by saying that this is the first chance he has got to serve his community and he is after all doing nothing illegal[110].

In Mahaz's narratives, there is evident discomfort with the politics imposed from above, and the tone and tenor are usually incisive. The established Muslim religious and political leadership is criticized for their caste bias and not taking Pasmanda welfare initiatives. It is argued

[107] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi.

[108] Interview, Danish Mohd., 26 May 2013, Patna (Bihar).

[109] Interview, Mohd. Sajjad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar)

[110] ibid.

that the Ashraf politicians in various political parties persuade them not to take Pasmanda concerns seriously by flagging the fear of the fragmentation of Muslim "vote-bank" (Anwar, 2001a, p. 28). Even otherwise, "Those politicians and candidates imposed by the political parties from above are not loyal to their communities/constituencies but their respective parties and its leadership. That is why a social movement is required. Those emerging from social movements are the ones who can help their communities in substantive terms. Political parties are formed in the crucible of social agitations" (Mahaz, 2005, p. 9). Though the self-perception of the Mahaz is that of a social movement, it is keen on the question of political autonomy and forming a political party for Pasmanda Muslims, sooner or later. However, that party, it is held, will not be an exclusivist party (in terms of religious identity) like the Muslim League, but one that will incorporate Dalits and Backward sections from other religions as well (Anwar, 2005; Suman, 2017, p. 196). The Pasmanda strategy of pan-religion solidarity of lower castes is encapsulated in the slogan "*Dalit-Pichda ek saman, Hindu ho ya Musalman*" (All Dalits-Backward are alike, whether they be Hindu or Muslim) [See Exhibit 1 above].

According to the Mahaz the Pasmanda Muslims "should always be looking out for better alternatives. The days of non-negotiated settlement are long gone. Now we want nothing less than a "negotiated settlement"!" (Mahaz, 2005, p. 9). Ali Anwar asserts, "We want political empowerment. We have our votes. We will not abide by the *fatwa* (dictates) of politicians or the *maulvis* (clerics). Our votes should reflect our numbers" (Anand et al., 2005, p. 13). The Pasmanda slogan "*vote humara, fatwa tumhara, nahin chalega*" [Our votes and your (Ashraf)

dictates will not work] encapsulates the disenchantment with Ashraf leaders and clerics (Suman, 2017, p. 62). Referring to the 2005 Bihar Assembly elections where the Mahaz's support to the Nitish Kumar led JDU was instrumental in the vote shift of Pasmanda Muslims and the eventual collapse of the fifteen years long Laloo Yadav led RJD regime, Anwar says with pride, "Pasmanda had become a political force in 2006. […] It was the success of our movement that the Pasmanda identity gained currency and we proved that Pasmanda community can ensure victory or defeat of others [political parties] […]" (Suman, 2017, p. 62, Tr.). Mohd. Ibrahim, sums up the Pasmanda concern for political autonomy sharply, "Don't give them [Ashraf politicians and clerics] *bheed* (crowds), votes and notes [donations]...these are the three *mantras* […]. If you memorize these three mantras, then Pasmanda will be liberated, and the [power of] Ashraf classes will be destroyed"[111].

6.3 THE MUSLIM QUOTA DEBATE: THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF RELIGION AND CASTE

With the possibility of reservations based on religion being shut out, the Muslims had to explore options within the extant relevant categories for reservations: namely, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The SC category encompasses the castes that have historically faced untouchability and are now termed as Dalits. The SC list, enacted through Scheduled Caste Order, 1950, initially

[111] ibid.

had excluded non-Hindu caste groups through Clause 3. However, with subsequent amendments, it included the Sikh Dalits in 1956 and Buddhist Dalits in 1990, thereby leaving out only the Muslims and Christians of Dalit origin from its ambit (GoI, 2008). The ST category refers to the aboriginal peoples referred to as the Adivasis in popular parlance. As per Galanter (1984, p. 147), "The general notion is that this category should include those groups distinguished by "tribal characteristics" and by their spatial and cultural isolation from the bulk of the population." The third category OBC was mainly left ambiguous, and Article 340 of the Constitution authorized the President to appoint a Backward Classes Commission to identify the backward classes. While there have been animated debates on the nature of groups that could be considered as OBCs (Bayly, 1999; Galanter, 1984), Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of the principal architects of the Constitution, thought that "[what] are called the backward classes are […] nothing else but a collection of certain castes" (Zwart, 2000, p. 235). Despite there being a history of reservation policies for the OBCs in various states (Bayly, 1999), the category was activated at the central level only with the acceptance of the Mandal Commission Report (MCR) by the Prime Minster V. P. Singh in 1990 (Dirks, 2001, p. 7). Broadly, while ST and OBC categories are religious-neutral and in principle can and do include Muslim castes and tribes, the SC category is not. Since the 1990s, various Muslim community sections have contested and sought categorical revisions within SC, ST, and OBC categories.

The MCR had enlisted 82 Muslim groups as backward and therefore eligible for 27 percent reservations in public employment, at par with Hindu OBCs (Mondal,

2003, p. 4894). It had evolved two criteria for identifying non-Hindu OBCs: "(i) All untouchables converted to any non-Hindu religion, and (ii) Such occupational communities which are known by the name of their traditional hereditary occupation and whose Hindu counterparts have been included in the list of Hindu OBCs. (Examples: Dhobi, Teli, Dheemar, Nai, Gujar, Kumhar, Lohar, Darji, Badhai, etc.)" (GoI, 1980, p. 56). While the term "caste" was not employed by the report to designate non-Hindu groups, it was clear that the Muslim groups included were castes—referred to as *zaat/biradaris* among Muslims (Usman, 2017). The MCR, following the tradition of the report of the first Backward Classes (Kaka Kalelkar) Commission (1953-55), had "rejected the representations from some Muslim organizations seeking that all Muslims should be treated as backward" (Krishnan, 2010, p. 49). The criteria employed by the MCR consequently paved the way for the recognition of so-called Ajlaf (backward) and Arzal (Dalit) Muslim groups as OBCs. Ashraf Muslim classes were characterized mainly as privileged groups and hence excluded from the OBC category. After a stay order for two years following widespread protests and litigation, primarily by HC student groups who saw the Mandal recommendations as a threat to their hegemony in public employment (Omvedt, 1990), the Supreme Court, in its landmark judgment,[112] upheld the 27 percent reservations for OBCs on 16 November 1992 (Krishnan, 2010, p. 51). While various states had already chalked out reservation policies for backward classes, at the Central level, reservation for OBCs started on 13 August 1993, nearly 44 years after the adoption of the Constitution (ibid. p. 51). In principle, the LC Muslims, forming the vast majority of Muslim population, were

[112] Interview, Mohd. Ibrahim, 26 March 2013, New Delhi

included in the OBC category and only a small minority of HC Muslims were left out.

The issue of Muslim reservations, which had "rested for a half century," was reactivated in the Mandal context "when suddenly a new demand for Muslim reservation" emerged with the formation of the Association for Promoting Education and Employment of Muslims (APEEM) in 1994 (Wright Jr., 1997, p. 853). The APEEM, founded by the stalwarts of the Muslim community like Syed Shahabuddin (Janata Dal [JD] MP), Syed Hamid (former vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University), Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait (Muslim League MP), and Maulana Mohammed Shafi Moonis (vice president of the All-India Muslim Majlis-i-Mushawarat), among others, held its first Convention on Reservation in New Delhi on October 9, 1994 (ibid.) "with the tacit support of the Congress" (Hasan, 2005). The APEEM preferred "a separate quota for Muslims" rather than accommodation in the extant categories (Jenkins, 2003, p. 111). Syed Shahabuddin, an Ashraf Muslim belonging to the most revered Syed caste among Muslims and one of the key members of the APEEM, unambiguously stressed that "the entire Muslim community in the country forms a backward class" (ibid.). While demanding a separate quota for Muslims, APEEM held that the benefits of the proposed quota should accrue to the Muslim castes already identified as OBCs on a priority basis and "emphasized the necessity of "cutting the cake" not just horizontally by class and caste, but also vertically by religion" (Hasan, 2005).

The demand for Muslim reservations got a shot in the arm with the tabling of the reports of the two Commissions—the prime minister's High Power Panel,

popularly known as the Sachar Committee (GoI, 2006) and the National Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities" (NCRLM) (GoI, 2007)—that were constituted by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2004-05. While the Sachar Committee Report (SCR) submitted in 2006 broadly focused on analyzing the socio-economic status of the Muslim community, the NCRLM report submitted in 2007 emphasized solutions (Alam, 2014, p. 218). Concerning reservations for Muslims, the NCRLM report endorsed that "the minorities –-especially the Muslims—[…] should be regarded as backward […] within the meaning of that term as used in Article 16 (4) of the Constitution—*notably without qualifying the word "backward" with the words "socially and educationally*" (GoI, 2007, p. 152; original emphasis) and proposed a quota of 10 percent for Muslims and 5 percent for other minorities in public employment (ibid., pp. 152-53). However, the report added: "We are convinced that the action recommended by us above will have full sanction of Article 16 (4) of the Constitution. Yet, should there be some insurmountable difficulty in implementing this recommendation, as an alternative we recommend that […] in the 27 percent OBC quota an 8.4 percent sub-quota should be earmarked for the minorities with an internal break-up of 6 percent for the Muslims […] and 2.4 percent for the other minorities […]" (ibid. p. 153). As far as the "religion-neutral" ST category was concerned the report advocated the assessment of minority presence in it and to take remedial measures to correct imbalances (ibid. p. 153). However, for SC category the NCRLM report recommended "that Para 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 […] should be wholly deleted by appropriate action so as to completely de-link the Scheduled Caste status from religion and make the

Scheduled Castes net fully religion-neutral like that of the Scheduled Tribes" (ibid. p. 154).

While reservations (or quotas) appear to be a popular desideratum in the community, there is little consensus on the mode of reservation policy to be adopted as such. Broadly, there are two kinds of claims that have been advanced: one, as noted above, reservations on community qua "community" (or religious identity) basis by those who privilege the dimension of inter-group inequality, and two, reservations for the community mediated based on "caste" by those who believe that the dimension of internal inequality is far more critical (Fazal, 2017; Alam, 2014; Hasan, 2009). On 11 June 2007, a Joint Committee of Muslim Organisations for Empowerment (JCMOE) was formed to lobby with the government to catalyze the implementation of the SCR and NCRLM reports (Vasfi, 2010). After the formal tabling of the NCRLM report in December 2009, the JCMOE launched the National Movement for Muslim Reservations (NMMR) on 10 February 2010 in New Delhi under the convenorship of Syed Shahabuddin (ibid.). The NMMR vowed to campaign for a 10 percent quota for Muslims and reiterated the positions endorsed by the APEEM in 1994 (Subrahmaniam, 2010; Vasfi, 2010). However, the positions on reservations taken by Muslim organizations from 1994 onward have been consistently contested by the Ali Anwar-led Mahaz. The collision between the Ashraf and Pasmanda groups has sometimes gone beyond discursive battles and witnessed physical violence. Ali Anwar (Suman, 2017, p. 60, Tr.) recounts the attack on him and other Mahaz activists during the Sachar Committee's visit to Patna in 2006. In one of the public hearings on Muslims' socio-economic conditions by the Sachar Committee, Ali Anwar was assaulted by UC

Muslims when he began to raise the concerns of Pasmanda Muslims. Anwar feels it was a pre-planned attack and implicates an HC Muslim IAS officer for lending tacit support to the mob, "The punch-up was going on just adjacent to a police station. The hands and teeth [of Mahaz activists] were broken. My life was saved as I was escorted out through another door".

6.3.1 Total or Sectional Reservations?

Alluding to the varying response of the community to the inclusion of Muslim LCs by the Mandal Commission, Ali Anwar (2001b, pp. 25-26, Tr.) observes, "A large section of Muslims consider the recommendations of the Mandal Commission as God's blessing. However, a section, howsoever small, also considers this as an instrument of sowing division". While sharply critiquing leaders like Syed Shahabuddin and Muslim organisations like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and All India Milli Council (AIMC) for "singing the tune of "total reservation"" Anwar asks "Is it not the case that the demand of total reservations has been raised to suppress the demand of Muslim Dalits?" (Anwar, 1999a, Tr.). When the Andhra Pradesh government granted 4 percent quota to Muslim backward castes in 2007, after their move to grant 5 percent reservations to the entire Muslim community was rejected twice by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in 2004 and 2005 respectively, the Muslim religious and political organisations vehemently objected to it (IANS, 2007; TNN, 2007; UNI, 2007). The United Muslim Action Committee had said "Such division on caste basis was unacceptable under Shariat (Muslim Personal Law)". About six Islamic seminaries had issued "fatwa" against the quota and the Asaduddin Owaisi led Majlis-e-Ittehaadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) held that the

quota was an "unwarranted attempt to create divisions among Muslims" and labelled Muslim caste groups as ""artificial" groups" (Das, 2007). The Minister for Minorities Welfare Mohammed Ali Shabbir had clarified that the revised quota will cover 90 percent of Andhra Pradesh Muslim population "except Syeds, Mughals, Pathans and other sections which are equivalent to upper castes among the Hindus" (ibid.). Anwar (ibid. Tr.) challenges the notion of a monolithic Muslim community and brings into sharp relief the graded inequalities within, "The Muslim society comprises of various kinds of forward-backward, backward within backward sections. There is one section whose condition is even worse than Hindu Dalits. This section has been labelled as *arzal* (degraded), *kameena* (rascal) and whatnot". The presence of status-based power differentials within the Muslim community forms the core basis for challenging the idea of a "separate quota" (total reservations) for the entire community and advance the demand for "sectional reservations" (*vargiya arakshan*) for subjugated caste groups (Anwar, 2001a, p. 25).

However, there are other anxieties and rationalities for opposing a religion-based quota. A quota for all Muslims is framed as "un-constitutional." It is argued that there is no provision for reservations on religious grounds (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). Such a demand is labeled as "separatist" (*prathakwadi*) (Anwar, 2001b). It is feared that it would "fuel the fires of communalism and Hindu-Muslim conflict, which would inevitably hurt the Dalit/Backward Caste Muslims the worst, they being the principal victims of communal violence" (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). In instrumentalist terms, there is an anxiety that the Ashraf Muslims, endowed with cultural capital, "would inevitably hog the lion's share if a separate quota in jobs and educational institutions was

made for all Muslims" (ibid.). While a separate Muslim quota is challenged for the reasons mentioned above, Ali Anwar is also sceptical about crafting a sub-quota specifically for the LC Muslims within the OBC category, a vertical split so to say. Such a quota is often proposed on the ground that Pasmanda Muslims have not been able to benefit proportionately from the general OBC quota. At one level Anwar frames it as "a crafty move to create and promote communal strife between Hindu and Muslim Backward Castes" (ibid.). On another level, he argues that "The claim that Muslim Backward Castes have not been able to benefit much from the 27% quota set apart for Backward Classes by the Mandal Commission because these benefits have been cornered by some more powerful and influential Hindu Backward Castes first needs to be established. We have to conduct surveys to show this, and this is something that has not been done so far" (ibid.). On 22 December 2011, the UPA government had announced a 4.5 percent sub-quota for backward sections within minorities in the overall Central OBC quota in the wake of elections in five States, including the crucial State of Uttar Pradesh (IANS, 2011). A month before the formal announcement, Congress spokesperson Rashid Alvi had commented, "Around 64 percent Muslims are already eligible to get a reservation in the 27 percent quota for OBCs but merely three percent are able to avail of it. Because of illiteracy and extreme backwardness, Muslims cannot compete with Yadavs and Kurmis [Hindu OBC castes] who corner the maximum gains. It is important Muslims get a sub-quota, which we are committed to give" (S. K. Jha, 2011). In a speech in 2012, Ali Anwar opposed the 4.5 percent sub-quota for minorities[113].

[113] *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, Supp (3) SCC 217 (1992).

Since the majority of Muslim LC groups were accommodated in the Central OBC list by the Mandal Commission and are beneficiary of reservations since 1993 after the Supreme Court upheld the OBC quota in the landmark judgment in the *Indra Sawhney*[114] case, it would not be unfair to assume that the renewed demand for Muslim quota since 1994 was prompted by the concerns for inclusion of the UC Muslim sections. Can the UC Muslims be included in the category "Other Socially and Educationally Backward Classes" (OBC)? As per the Constitution, there are only two relevant factors for including a group in the OBC category. Firstly, it should be underrepresented in the services under the State [Article 16 (4)][115]. Secondly, it must meet the criterion of being a "socially and educationally backward" class [Article 15 (4)][116]. The SCR (GoI, 2006) has collected data on the representation of Muslim-General (HC) and Muslim-OBCs (LC) in public employment (See Table 5). However, reliable data on the caste demographics of Indian society, including the Muslim community, is not available as the caste category was officially dropped from the census exercises since the colonial Census of 1931 (Donald, 2018, p. 69). In the absence of credible figures, one has to rely on the data

[114] Ali Anwar, Speech in an event organized by the *Social Brainwash* magazine, Lucknow, 27 May 2012; recorded copy with the author.

[115] *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, Supp (3) SCC 217 (1992) [hereinafter *Indra Sawhney*]

[116] Article 16 (4): "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State".

collected by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) and "guesstimates" (GoI, 2008, p. 23).

TABLE 5 REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN MUSLIMS IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Department/Undertaking/Institution	M-Gen (%)	M-OBCs (%)
Central Security Agencies	1	3.6
Railway	4.5	0.4
Central PSU	2.7	0.6
SPSC-Recommended for Selection	0.9	0.9
University Faculty	3.9	1.4
University-Non Teaching	3	1.7

SOURCE: Sachar Committee Report (GoI, 2006, p. 210)

According to NSSO 61st round (2004-05), the data used by the SCR, the population of OBC Muslims (Dalit Muslims included) was 40.7 percent of the total Muslim population (the population percentage for General Muslims, in that case, turns out to be 59.3 percent) (GoI, 2006, p. 203). Since the total Indian Muslim population was computed as 13.4 percent of the national population in Census 2001, the General Muslim population can be calculated as 6.76 percent of the national population. Suppose one compares the population share of General Muslims—6.76 percent—with the figures for their share in public employment [see the shaded column (M-Gen) in Table 4]. In that case, the UC Muslims turn out to be underrepresented in all the sectors.

However, once the data is further interrogated, it reveals a complicated picture. The SCR had derived the

population data for Muslim OBCs from the 55th (1999-2000), and 61st (2004-05) round of NSSO returns. Independent data about the OBC category was obtained. From the 55th round returns, the population of Muslim OBCs was estimated at 31.7 percent of the Muslim population (for General Muslims, it was 68.3 percent). From the 61st round returns, the estimate of Muslim OBCs was 40.7 percent of the Muslim population (for General Muslims, 59.3 percent). This shows a growth of about 9 percent in the Muslim OBC population in just five years (GoI, 2006, p. 203). In Uttar Pradesh's case, the growth in the Muslim OBC population was from 44.4 percent (55th round) to 62 percent (61st round)—a jump of 17.6 percent in five years. In the case of Bihar, the growth in the Muslim OBC population was from 40.6 percent (55th round) to 63.4 percent (61st round)—a jump of 22.8 percent in five years (GoI, 2006, p. 204). Since the NSSO relies on "self-reporting" by the respondent, as do most surveys, the Muslim OBC population's significant growth indicates the increasing sedimentation of the official OBC category among Muslims, primarily due to the administrative interventions and the impact of the Pasmanda movement.

P. S. Krishnan, a high-ranking career bureaucrat with considerable experience of social justice policy (Krishnan, 2018), observes, "There is no census of the population of communities/groups of Muslim BCs and their proportion to the total Muslim population of each state. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) has made estimates, but it has got methodological limitations and, therefore, many of its figures, mentioned in Sachar Committee's report, are underestimates. It is, in fact, in the range of 80 to 85% in the northern states and even higher in the southern states […]" (Krishnan, 2010, p. 52). The National Movement for Muslim

Reservation, led by Syed Shahabuddin, estimates that "Only 10 to 15% of the Muslim community belongs to the so-called Ashraf while 85% to 90% are non-Ashraf [...]" (National Movement for Muslim Reservation, 2010). The Pasmanda organizations have also held that OBC Muslims constitute 85 percent of the Muslim population (Pasmanda Awaz Bureau, 2004, p. 6). Since the guesstimates for the share of Pasmanda Muslims in the overall Muslim population range from 80-90 percent in the related literature[117], and the lower bound in the figures held by the key Ashraf and Pasmanda organizations is 85 percent, a UC Muslim: LC Muslims population ratio of 15:85 seems like a more realistic estimate. Now reworking figures according to the 15:85 ratio the Muslim population of 13.4 percent (2001 Census) can be disaggregated into 2.01 percent General Muslims (instead of the earlier 6.76 percent) and 11.39 percent OBC Muslims. The reworked figures reveal that the UC Muslims are over-represented in at least four sectors and almost represented half of their population in the remaining two sectors. In striking contrast the LC Muslims are grossly underrepresented in all sectors.

[117] Article 15 (4): "Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes".

TABLE 6 TEACHING STAFF STREGNTH OF ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

Details of the Faculty	Total Numbers	Percentage of Total
Total Faculty	1288	100
Upper Caste Muslim Faculty	1138	88.35
Muslim OBC Faculty	62	4.81
Non-Muslim Faculty	87	6.75
Others	1	0
Muslim OBC as Percentage of Total Muslim Faculty		**5.17**

SOURCE: Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh as on 31 March 2016. [(Alam & Kumar, 2019, p. 90)

The discrimination against Pasmanda Muslims is evident in even those "minority" institutions that, though publicly funded, are controlled and administered by the Muslims themselves. In the context of Bihar, Ali Anwar (2001b, pp. 145-150, 243-247) lists seven Muslim run institutions —Urdu Academy, Waqf Board, Minority Commission, Urdu Advisory Board, 15-Point Programme Committee, Minority Financial Corporation, Madrasa Board—and demonstrates the domination of the UC Muslims. The employment data from the Aligarh Muslim University, a Muslim-minority institution funded by the central government, is also revealing [See Table 6]. The data establishes that out of total faculty strength of 1288, the number of UC Muslim faculty was 1138 (88.35 percent), and the OBC Muslim faculty was merely 62 (4.81 percent)—an almost inverted representation when

compared to the UC Muslim: BC Muslim population ratio of 15:85.

Let us now explore if the Ashraf Muslims constitute a "socially and educationally backward" class. It is useful to recall that while the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were coherently defined in the Constitution, the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category remained vague and was relegated to the backburner for decades at the Central level (with the exception of various states) before it was reactivated in the 1990s. In this respect, the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the *Indra Sawhney* case in 1992 has informed most debates around OBC reservations. The *Indra Sawhney* judgment states:

> The expression "backward class" in Article 16(4) takes in "Other Backward Classes," S.Cs., S.Ts. and may be some other backward classes as well. *The accent in Article 16(4) is upon social backwardness.* Social backwardness leads to educational backwardness and economic backwardness. They are mutually contributory to each other and are inter-twined with *low occupations in the Indian society*. A caste can be and quite often is a social class in India. *Economic criterion cannot be the sole basis for determining the backward class of citizens contemplated by Article 16(4)*" (emphasis added).

Further, the judges have opined:

> A caste can be and quite often is a social class in India. If it is backward socially, it would be a backward class for the purposes of Article 16(4). *Among non-Hindus, there are several occupational groups, sects and denominations, which for historical reasons are socially backward.* They too represent backward social collectives for the purposes of Article 16(4) (emphasis added).

Another relevant extract from the *Indra Sawhney* judgment arrests the meaning of the term "backward" used in the Constitution:

> Further, if one keeps in mind the context in which Article 16(4) was enacted it would be clear that the accent was upon social backwardness. It goes without saying that in Indian context, social backwardness leads to educational backwardness and both of them together lead to poverty which in turn breeds and perpetuates the social and educational backwardness. They feed upon each other constituting a vicious circle. It is a well-known fact that till Independence the administrative apparatus was manned almost exclusively by members of the "upper" castes. The Shudras, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and *other similar backward social groups among Muslims and Christians* had practically no entry into the administrative apparatus. It was this imbalance which was sought to be redressed by providing for reservations in favour of such backward classes […]. We are, accordingly, of the opinion that *the backwardness contemplated by Article 16(4) is mainly social backwardness. It would not be correct to say that the backwardness under Article 16(4) should be both social and educational*" (emphasis added).

Quite clearly, Indra Sawhney's accent is on "social backwardness" defined based on the lowly status of a caste or occupational group across religions. Based on the logic above, about 82 Muslim occupational or caste groups were recognized as "backward" classes by the Central OBC list in 1993, and HC Muslims were duly excluded. The SCR notes, "Thus, one can discern three groups among Muslims: (1) *those without any social disabilities, the ashrafs*; (2) those equivalent to Hindu OBCs, the ajlafs, and (3) those equivalent to Hindu SCs,

the arzals. Those who are referred to as Muslim OBCs combine (2) and (3)" (GoI, 2006, p. 193, emphasis added). Ali Anwar asks, "[…] Mughal, Syed, Sheikh, Pathan have ruled this country for centuries. Can anyone deny this?" (Anwar, 1999a, Tr.). Further, "The Constitution explicitly says that the reservation policy is meant for socially and educationally marginalized communities. How can anyone seriously argue that all Muslims in the country are socially and economically backward?" (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). If the Ashrafs are characterized as a historical ruling class and as "those without any social disabilities" at present, then their case to be recognized as OBC becomes fragile. Historically, apart from the exceptional states of Kerala and Karnataka which include most Muslims (sans the creamy layer) in the OBC list[118], the first and second Backward Classes Commissions, various court judgments and state OBC lists have all recognized only the LC Muslims for reservation purposes under the OBC category (Hasan, 2009, p. 171).

Yet the social logic endorsed by the Mandal Commission, *Indra Sawhney* judgment, and later the Sachar Committee Report has been consistently sought to be subverted by the hegemonic Ashraf-led Muslim organizations, often with the support of the secular/social justice parties, particularly the Indian National Congress. In the Convention on Reservation organized by the APEEM in 1994 in Delhi "Sitaram Kesri, the Congress Party's minister of Welfare in

[118] "It is estimated that about 90 per cent of Muslims in India are the descendants of converted forefathers" (Mondal, 2003, p. 4893); "However, sociologists and anthropologists have suggested that about 80–90 per cent of Muslims are descendents of converts who belonged to untouchables" and lower-caste Hindus" (Alam, 2014, p. 221)

the Union cabinet and himself an OBC member, stated the case for Muslim reservations before the convention, with the tacit consent of the Rao government, on the grounds of economic, social, and educational backwardness" (Wright Jr., 1997, p. 853). Syed Shahabuddin, the convener of the National Convention on Muslim Reservation held in 2009 in New Delhi, expressed "gratitude to the secular parties [..] in particular to the Indian National Congress (INC) for including the demand for reservation in its Manifesto of 2004" (Shahabuddin, 2009). While the SCR was hesitant in recommending any scheme of reservations for Muslims, the subversive logic of total reservations and vertical split based on religion found its full expression in the NCRLM report. The first point in terms of reference of the NCRLM report was "To suggest criteria for identification of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities" (GoI, 2007, p. 1). The insertion of the term "economically" was unusual as the phrase used in Article 15 (4) is "socially and educationally backward classes." It is useful to recall here that the *Indra Sahwney* judgement had held that "Economic criterion cannot be the sole basis for determining the backward class of citizens contemplated by Article 16(4)." It was on this basis that the judges had rejected P. V. Narasimha Rao government's proposal of 10 per cent reservation for "economically backward" sections in September 1991 (Mohan, 2019). Further, the NCRLM report recommended a 10 percent separate quota for all Muslims as the first preference and suggested that the Muslims "be regarded as backward […]– *notably without qualifying the word "backward" with the words "socially and educationally"* (ibid. p. 152-153: original emphasis). Yet, the NCRLM appears to be skeptical of its key recommendation as it registers that

"[…] should there be some insurmountable difficulty in implementing this recommendation […]" (ibid.) before suggesting the alternative: a sub-quota for OBC Muslims within the OBC quota, or in other words, a vertical split on the lines of religion. One may speculate if the "insurmountable difficulty" that the NCRLM foresees in getting its crucial recommendation of a separate Muslim quota endorsed is that it runs against the position of the MCR and the subsequent *Indra Sawhney* judgement of the Supreme Court.

Pasmanda Protests on Ashraf Encroachment in Bihar State Backward Classes List[119]

The recognition of the "Mallick-Muslim" caste in Annexure-II of the Bihar Backward Classes (BC)[120] list in 2008[121] by the Nitish Kumar led Janata Dal-United (JDU) government led to a fresh wave of protests by the Pasmanda Muslim organizations (IANS, 2008). The protest's rationale was that the Mallick's were seen as a socially advanced group and therefore ineligible for reservations. The Pasmanda organizations contended

[119] There are basically three models of positive discrimination policies being followed by various states: a) The Karnataka and Kerala model, where all Muslims (minus the creamy layer) have been included in the OBC list; b) The Tamil Nadu model, where reservations have been granted on the basis of backward caste/*biradari*, and most Muslim groups have been included; c) the Bihar model, where the OBC list has been bifurcated into BC and MBC with most lower caste Muslims finding place in the latter (Hasan, 2009).

[120] This is a revised version of our article Yadav & Ansari, 2011.

[121] The Other Backward Classes (OBC) category in Bihar has been divided into two groups: Most Backward Class (MBC) and Backward Class (BC). MBC (Annexure I) gets 18 percent and OBC (Annexure II) gets 12 percent reservation respectively.

that the Mallick's had stealthily sneaked into the BC list through procedural violations, suppressing facts, and political connivance with the ruling regime[122].

Interestingly, the objection to the inclusion of an Ashraf Muslim caste like the Mallick's was not only raised by the Pasmanda Muslim organizations but Soroor Ahmed, a well-known journalist, belonging to the Mallick caste himself, raged against the decision. Ahmed (2011) held that the Mallick's were the "most developed of all the Muslim castes of Bihar" and "called themselves Syeds as they are the progeny of Arab general Syed Ibrahim Mallick Bayah, who conquered Nalanda district several centuries back. Many Mallicks would not accept Zakat (charity) on the plea that they are Syeds […]" (S. Ahmed, 2009b). Mohammad Younus, the first Chief Minister of Bihar in 1937 in British India and an owner of a bank and railway line, was a Mallick. During Partition, many rich Mallicks migrated to Pakistan and Bangladesh and rose to prominent military, bureaucratic, and literary fields. The Mallick diaspora scattered in the Gulf, the United States, and other developed destinations is well-networked and emotionally attached to their roots in Bihar. There is no dearth of an educated middle class in the community, and historically the Mallick caste had the highest number of *zamindars* (feudal landlords) (S. Ahmed, 2009a, 2009b). The colonial Census identified Mallick's as a privileged UC Muslim category within Muslims[123]. Irshadul Haque, a Patna-based journalist, and Pasmanda activist asks, "Mallick means *Malik*

[122] Gazette No. 371, 14 June 2008.

[123] Petition submitted to Bihar State Backward Classes Commission by *Arakshan Bachao Abhiyan*, Bihar to reconsider the inclusion of Mallick (Muslim) caste in Annexure II of Backward Classes list, 6 March 2011.

(master, feudal lord). How can a master be backward?" (Kumar, 2009, p. 68).

Sections within the Mallick community had made efforts for inclusion in the BC category in the late 1990s. Even at that time, the Pasmanda Muslims had protested, and the issue of recognizing Mallick's as backward castes had catalyzed the formation of the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz in 1998 (Azad, 2009, pp. 12-13). The Mahaz had organized the "Arakshan Bachao Rally" (Save Reservations Rally) in Patna on 13 December 1998 to oppose the inclusion of UC Muslim groups like the Mallick's and Sheikhs (Kishore, 1998). In the light of the protests and based on their surveys, the Bihar State Commission for Backward Classes (henceforth, SCBC) had rejected Mallick's application for inclusion in the BC list in 1999. The SCBC had carried out field surveys and had found that the literacy rate in Mallick-dominated villages was around 90 percent, and most of the houses were *pucca*[124]. It also found that the Mallick's enjoyed the same social status as other UC Muslim groups like Syeds, Sheikhs, and Pathans. The Mallicks were mainly found occupied in agriculture, services, and business. Usually, they abstained from working in the field themselves and hired field laborers from other lower castes to get their agricultural work done. SCBC report also produced a litany of historical sources that suggested that Mallick's and Syeds were not different. The report also hinted at foul play when it noted that in the photocopies of the historical sources submitted by the Mallick organizations, the word "Syed" was deliberately deleted.

Interestingly, while the applicants claimed that Mallick's were a marginalized section, they also paradoxically registered that no case of atrocities against them was

[124] ibid.

pending in any law court. Every backward caste is associated with a specific caste occupation. But in Mallick's case, the applicant failed to provide any historical association with a trade considered socially inferior (A. Yadav & Ansari, 2011b).

The rejection of Mallick's claims to be BCs by the SCBC in 1999 did not dampen their spirit. The Mallick organizations once again knocked the SCBC in 2008 after contriving an occupation for themselves—"teli" (oil pressers). However, the SCBC"s field surveys revealed that the Mallick claim of being oil-pressers could not be maintained. Curiously, this time the SCBC, in contrast to its findings, recommended Mallick's inclusion in the BC (Annexure-II) list. No reference was made to the previous SCBC report (1999) on the issue. The Pasmanda and other OBC organizations charged the SCBC with grave procedural violations and the recommendation's politically motivated nature[125]. There were speculations that Naushad Ahmad, the Chairman of the Bihar State Religious and Linguistic Minority Commission and a Mallick himself, was instrumental in the Bihar government's favorable decision in this matter (S. Ahmed, 2009b). Ahmed (2011) attributes electoral considerations for the decision, "Such a step was taken because the Mallick's form a sizeable percentage of the Muslim population in the chief minister's home district of Nalanda as well as in Jehanabad, Patna, Nawada, Munger and Gaya." Interestingly, Maulana Aneesurrehman Qasmi, General Secretary *Imarat-e-Sharia* (Bihar, Orissa & Jharkhand), which is the most

[125] *Pucca* houses are durable houses built with cement, mortars and bricks and are contrasted with *Kutcha* houses that are built with readily available material like wood, stones, clay, mud, leaves, thatch or crops residue.

prominent faith-based organization of Muslims in the region, wrote a congratulatory letter to Nitish Kumar in 2008 for recognizing the Mallick's as BCs and requested him to include the remaining three Muslim castes in the BC list as well[126]. When the letter was leaked in 2010, the Pasmanda organizations charged the *Imarat-e-Sharia* for its pro-Ashraf leanings despite its non-partisan public posturing[127]. Maulana Qasmi confirmed to a reporter that he had indeed written that letter. But he defended his stand by saying that, "I don't want to get into the complicated issue of OBC. What I had said was that Syed, Pathan, and Shaikh [UC Muslim groups] should get reservation because of the overall social educational backwardness of the Muslim community itself, a fact which has been proved by Sachar report and again by Ranganath Mishra Commission report" (Ali, 2010).

Immensely encouraged by Mallick's success in entering the BC list, the UC Sheikh Muslims also approached the SCBC for their inclusion in 2010. However, this time the OBC Hindu and Muslim organizations were vigilant enough, and they jointly protested against this move (A. Yadav & Ansari, 2011b). Nihora Prasad Yadav, a member of SCBC, informed that "around 8 representations by various organizations, including Triveni Sangh, have been made to the Commission against the Shaikh community's application" (M. Ali, 2010). Consequently, the petition of Sheikhs was rejected by the SCBC after due verification on 20 January 2011[128]. With the

[126] *Arakshan Bachao Abhiyan petition*, op. cit.

[127] Letter by Maulana Aneesurrehman Qasmi, General Secretary Imarat Sharia (Bihar, Orissa & Jharkhand) to Mr. Nitish Kumar Chief Minister Bihar congratulating him on giving the status of Annexure II to Mallick caste and requesting him to include the other three upper castes soon [Reference No: 180/08; Dated: 03/06/2008]

[128] Interview, Mohd. Sajjad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar)

acceptance of their social logic by the SCBC in the case of the Sheikh community, the OBC Muslim and Hindu groups reinvigorated their efforts for the exclusion of the Mallick's from the BC category. The SCBC agreed to reopen the Mallick case and held some rounds of hearing from 1 June to 3 June 2011, in which Ali Anwar, now MP (Rajya Sabha) from the JDU, also appeared. The SCBC took a favorable view this time and recommended excluding the Mallick's from the BC category in 2012. However, the Bihar government has developed cold feet on this issue, and there has been no decision by the Cabinet thus far[129].

6.3.2 Scheduled Caste Quota and the Question of Religious Neutrality

The inclusion of Muslims and Christians belonging to Dalit origin in the Scheduled Caste (SC) quota has been a key demand raised by the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Mahaz)(Anwar, 2001a). Article 341 (1) of the Indian Constitution confers the authority of identifying the SCs to the President. Hence, on 10 August 1950, the President issued the Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, wherein certain castes from across the country were identified as SCs. In practical terms, “castes of those who have been the victims of “untouchability” have been classified as SCs” (Krishnan, 2018, p. 2). Clause 3 of the Presidential Order, 1950 stated that “no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of the Scheduled Castes” (GoI, 2008, p. 65). However, the

[129] Letter by Damodar Prasad, Member Secretary SCBC to Adil Asghar, Patna District President, Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Parvaiz Saleem faction) (undated)

Order was subsequently amended in 1956 and 1990 to include the Sikhs and Buddhists of Dalit origin in the SC category, respectively (GoI, 2007, p. 139). The Dalit Muslims (henceforth DM) and Dalit Christians (henceforth DC), the only two significant communities practically left out from the SC list, have protested against their exclusion for the last seventy years (Jebaraj, 2020) and framed Clause 3 as violative of the provisions of fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (equality before the law), 15 (prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion), 16 (equality of opportunity in matters of public employment) and 25 (freedom to profess and practice any religion) of the Constitution (GoI, 2007, p. 142).



Plate 10. Sketch representing the exclusion of DM and DC from SC category

The rationale for the exclusion of Dalit Muslims (DMs) and Dalit Christians (DCs) from the SC category hinges on the dominant reading of caste as being a Hindu institution and, therefore, the inapplicability of the practice of untouchability to egalitarian faiths like Islam and Christianity (GoI, 2007, p. 143). Curiously, Sikhism and Buddhism, which are considered normatively egalitarian and anti-caste traditions, have been included through a contested extension of Article 25 (2) (b)[130] that subsumes them in the Hindu category for particular purposes (GoI, 2007, p. 169). The exclusion has been contested by DM and DC groups on various grounds. It has been argued that conversion from Hindu to other faiths like Islam and Christianity does not eradicate caste-based discrimination, and "Dalitness" clings and follows the DMs and DCs even post-conversion (Arora, 2020). Ali Anwar asks, "Pasmanda have got OBC status. In some states, we are classified as scheduled tribes. Now a Hindu washerman belongs to the scheduled caste. So why can't a Muslim washerman be scheduled caste too? Why is the Muslim, who does the same work and has the same social status excluded? Buddhist Dalits and Sikh Dalits have this status" (Anand et al., 2005, p. 13). In this line of argument, caste is perceived to be autonomous from religion in South Asia, and the prejudice and bias against DMs and DCs are seen to be a consequence of the "the traditional work undertaken by them or due to their birth into a particular family" (Arora, 2020). The notion of untouchability must therefore be broadened to encompass and become applicable for DMs and DCs. The Presidential Order, 1950 (Clause 3) also violates the right to freedom of conscience and belief and touches on the question of agency. If a Hindu Dalit converts to Islam or Christianity, then s/he has to forsake

[130] Interview, Mohd. Sajjad, 25 May 2013, Patna (Bihar)

the benefits accruing to Hindu/Sikh/Buddhist Dalits: namely, benefits from reservations (in education and jobs) and other development schemes; protections against violence under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989; and, political reservations in legislative bodies. The inclusion of DM and DC in SC category could also have a favorable impact on their political representation, "Not a single Dalit Muslim has become an MLA or MP […]. About 119 seats of the Lok Sabha and 1050 seats of the State Legislatures are reserved for SC/ST, but no Muslim can contest theses seats" (Anand et al., 2005, p. 12). In a way, the Presidential Order, 1950 "penalises Dalits for choosing a religion or rejecting a faith tradition" (Arora, 2020).

So, if a DH converts to Islam or Christianity, s/he loses all state benefits. Simultaneously, if DCs or DMs revert to Hinduism, even after having a historical association with Islam or Christianity across generations, s/he is eligible for all benefits accruing to the SC category. In the context of vibrant campaigns of *ghar wapsi* (homecoming) launched by the Hindu Right, wherein Muslims and Christians with a Hindu ancestry are supposed to be purified (*shuddhi*) and reconverted to Hinduism, many fear that Clause 3 "could be used as an incentive to allure specific groups to convert to Hinduism" (Samarendra, 2016, p. 38). Bhat (2017, p. 178) feels that "the exclusion is not so much based on the empirical evidence of socio-economic marginalization of low caste groups among Muslims and Christians, than a combination of definitional fiat and political ideology." However, Ali Anwar holds that the Hindu fear of conversions and an unfavorable demographic shift are misplaced, "The historical experience suggests that the relation of human beings to religion, particularly the

poorer sections, is not so weak as to sacrifice one's religion for petty economic allurements. […] If you consider the Muslim and Christian Dalits then despite being victims of injustice after 50 years of [Indian] Independence they have not converted to the Hindu religion for securing the benefits of reservations" (Anwar, 2001c; Tr.). Since Clause 3 introduces legal inequality between similarly placed groups and violates the secularism principle of symmetrical treatment of all religions, the DCs and DMs have demanded the delinking of the SC status from religion and make it religion-neutral like the ST/OBC/EWS category (Thomas, 2020).

Clause 3 of Presidential Order, 1950 also runs against the shifts in judicial reasoning over time (Samarendra, 2016) and the positions of various reports submitted by the commissions/committees constituted by the Government of India (Arora, 2020; Mukhopadhyay, 2020). Samarendra (2016, p. 19) divides the Supreme Court's deliberations on the relationality of caste and religion in the last forty years into three distinct stages. In the first stage, the Court affirmed the idea of caste being contingent on religion. In the next stage, caste was framed to be connected with but yet separable from religion. In its recent judgments, the Supreme Court has held caste to be autonomous of religion[131]. It follows that the recent judicial reasoning of the Supreme Court contradicts "the assumption implicit in the acts relating to the subject of reservation for the Scheduled Castes. The acts submit that caste exists only within the specified religions. The verdicts of the Court, in contrast, affirm

[131] "Criteria for inclusion of any community in the list of scheduled castes is that such a community should suffer from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of traditional practices of Untouchability" (GoI, 2008, p. 68).

that caste remains unaffected by a change of religion and thus its presence is not contingent on religion" (ibid. p. 46). The distinction between the acts and the recent judicial reasoning of the courts may also be attributed to the fact that while the acts were informed by the "scriptural notion of caste" anchored in the colonial framing of caste as being a Hindu institution, while the courts have begun to foreground "lived social experience" in their deliberations (Samarendra, 2015, p. 15). In the crucial *Soosai v Union of India* 1985,[132] the Supreme Court had held,

> To establish that paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 discriminates against Christian members of the enumerated castes it must be shown that they suffer from a comparable depth of social and economic disabilities and cultural and educational backwardness and similar levels of degradation within the Christian community necessitating intervention by the State under the provisions of the Constitution. It is not sufficient to show that the same caste continues after conversion. It is necessary to establish further that the disabilities and handicaps suffered from such caste membership in the social order of its origin – Hinduism – continue in their oppressive severity in the new environment of a different religious

[132] Article 25 (2): "Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law […] (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus"; […] "*Explanation II*.—In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly".

> community. References have been made in the material before us in the most cursory manner to the character and incidents of the castes within the Christian fold, but no authoritative and detailed study dealing with the present conditions of Christian society have been placed on the record in this case. It is, therefore, not possible to say that the President acted arbitrarily in the exercise of his judgment in enacting paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) order, 1950.

Since the *Soosai v Union of India* 1985 judgment, the scientific and ethnographic material on caste within Muslim and Christian community has grown manifold and has offered compelling evidence to support the inclusion of DMs and DCs in the SC category (Trivedi, Goli, Fahimuddin, & Kumar, 2016; Ahmad, 2017; Lee, 2018; Mosse, 2012; Mirza, 2018; Jairath, 2011; GoI, 2008; Webster, 1992; Mahadeviah & Dinesha, 2011). The reports of the various commissions and committees constituted by the government—National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (GoI, 2002); Prime Minister's High-Level Committee for Preparation of Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India (Sachar Committee) (GoI, 2006); National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Ranganath Mishra Commission) (GoI, 2007); Post Sachar Evaluation Committee (Kundu Committee) (GoI, 2014)—have endorsed the scrapping of Clause 3 of the Presidential Order, 1950. The DM and DC groups have taken both the legislation and litigation route to pursue their demands (GoI, 2007; Bhat, 2017). However, despite support from most political parties, except the BJP and Shiv Sena (Suman, 2017, p. 66), the matter could not be addressed satisfactorily in the Parliament. The present BJP regime is opposed to it

because it touches on the crucial issue of conversions. The matter is still pending in the courts. While the SC category is not open for Muslims, the ST category on the other hand is religiously neutral. Ali Anwar, during his tenure as MP (Rajya Sabha), had consistently raised the issue of communities like the Meo and Vangujjar Muslims being included in the ST category (Suman, 2017, p. 128, 157).

6.4 CONCLUSION

The legitimacy accorded to the category of "Muslim caste" through the Mandal moment enabled the Pasmanda practitioners to challenge Ashraf hegemony and claim agency for themselves. In this respect, Mahaz's strategy has been threefold. Firstly, it has attempted to demonstrate that the Ashraf Muslims, an erstwhile ruling class and old elite, are still dominant and constitute a power-elite. In the political sphere, government employment, and publicly-funded Muslim-minority institutions, it is overrepresented. In other spheres like education, health, and either the disaggregated data on caste terms are not available or face severe methodological limitations. In this context, the Mahaz has consistently demanded a caste census to make reliable data available and used to gauge the level of socio-economic inequalities within Muslims (Suman, 2017, p. 157). Secondly, Mahaz has focussed on the severe underrepresentation of LC Muslims in political power and has sought to rectify it by acting as a pressure group that amplifies its concerns and trains activists. In this respect, at one level, it has interrogated the ideological and ethical basis of mainstream secular/left/social justice parties by circulating data on

their skewed distribution of tickets that favor the UC Muslims at the expense of LC Muslims.

On the other hand, it has kept its dream of an independent political party alive in alliance with similarly placed non-Muslim caste groups like the Mahadalits and Extremely Backward Castes EBCs). Thirdly, it has contested and sought categorical revisions within the extant SC, ST, and OBC quota through lobbying and political mobilization. Their limited success in getting the UC Sheikh Muslims excluded from the Annexure-II (BC) quota and getting a favorable report in the Mallick case in Bihar attests to their enhancing skill in operating levers of power.

In the sphere of reservations, the Mahaz has consistently opposed the employment of the "religion" category both for inclusion purposes (the case for Muslim quota) or exclusion purposes (the case for Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians). Due to historical reasons, religion as a political identity and ideology, as opposed to its faith dimension that assists in the navigation of existential dilemmas, has turned out to be a euphemism for pan-religion high caste elite interests (Veer, 1994). Higher castes/classes in India hegemonize most religious institutions. In this respect, the Mahaz has endorsed the Mandal logic that advances social categories like caste as opposed to religion. In contradistinction, the mainstream secular and social justice parties have often acquiesced or plotted with the Ashraf-led minority politics on this issue[133]. The Congress party, in particular, has been notorious on this count. However, with the introduction of the subcategory of "Economically Weaker

[133] See for instance: *Mohammad Sadique v Darbara Singh Guru* (2016): Civil Appeal No 4870 of 2015, the Supreme Court of India, Date of Judgment 20 April 2016.

Sections (EWS)" and the allocation of a 10 percent quota for them in 2019, the Ashraf demand for either a separate Muslim quota or inclusion of UC Muslims within the OBC category has collapsed as UC Muslims are now covered under the new EWS quota. From the Pasmanda vantage point, what survives is the question of internal justice within the SC, ST, and OBC categories and the expansion of universal redistributive policies.

In this context, P. S. Krishnan's (2012, pp. 64-65) advice to the Muslim leaders is instructive:

> It is true that Muslims have not received a fair deal in the field of social justice, including reservation. But it is desirable that the leaders of the community move for remedial action in a manner that is constitutionally valid and judicially sustainable. This means they should try to secure reservation and other measures of social justice for BC Muslims, along with a scheme of categories that will ensure BC Muslims cease to be exposed to competition with BCs who are less backward. In matters like religious freedom, cultural freedom and freedom from violence, all Muslims and other minorities have the same entitlement. But in the matter of reservation and other measures to ensure social justice, it is only the socially and educationally BCs of Muslims and other minorities who have valid entitlement.

In the light of the above discussion, the following policy options may be suggested:

6.4.1 Subcategorization[134] within the Central and State OBC Quotas

Let us take the issue of the marginalization of LC Muslims within the Central/State OBC quotas. The argument often made is that the dominant Hindu OBC groups corner most of the benefits, leaving Muslim OBCs with an inappropriate share. Therefore the latter should be accommodated in a separate sub-quota. While convincing data has not been available to back this claim but even if it is true and intuitively convincing, this logic applies to non-dominant Hindu OBCs as well because arguably only a few castes included in the Central OBC list can be assumed to be dominant[135]. Hence, the best recourse is to raise internal inequalities within the extant OBC category and club similarly placed caste groups across religions in the various subcategories[136]. Mahaz supports the subcategorization of the Central OBC list based on the Bihar formula: that is, dividing the OBCs into BCs and EBCs (Anwar & Sikand, 2005). However, drawing from P. S. Krishnan's (2012b) suggestions, one may propose at least three subcategories within the OBC category: "Most Backward," "More Backward," and the "Backward." The "Most Backward" may refer to those sections that have no asset base but have skills. The "More Backward" castes may include castes of small peasants, especially tenants without rights. Moreover,

[134] *Soosai etc v Union of India and Others*", Writ Petition No 9596 of 1983, the Supreme Court of India, Date of judgment 30 September 1985

[135] For instance, the demand for 18 percent quota for Muslims often raised by the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh (Qureshi, 2016).

[136] In 2017 the Rohini Commission was constituted by the Central government to look into the matter of subcategorization in the OBC category. The Commission has not submitted its report so far (Staff, 2020).

the "Backward" may refer to those castes with a relatively substantial asset base but are nonetheless backward. Most Muslim artisanal groups can be included in the Most Backward and More Backward subcategories along with other similarly placed caste groups from other religions.

6.4.2 Inclusion of Dalit and Adivasi Muslims within SC and ST Quota

The DM could be delisted from the OBC list and incorporated into the SC list. After Independence, by the Presidential Order of 1950 (Clause 3), most non-Hindu Dalits were ejected from the SC list. However, in 1956 the Sikh Dalits and in 1990, the neo-Buddhists were integrated, thereby debarring only DM and DC from the SC list. This violates the principle of secularism enshrined in the Constitution, and the NCRLM has advocated the scrapping of the 1950 Presidential Order (Para 3). In terms of identification of Muslim caste groups that should be included within the SC list, the NCRLM recommends "…that the Scheduled Caste net should also cover all those groups and classes among the Muslims and Christians, etc. whose counterparts among the Hindus, Sikhs or Buddhists, are included in the Central or State Scheduled Castes lists. If any such group or class among the Muslims and Christians, etc. is now included in an OBC list, it should be deleted from there while transferring it to the Scheduled Castes – placing the same persons in the Scheduled Caste list if they are Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist but in the OBC list if they follow any other religion – which is the case in many States—in our opinion clearly amounts to religion-based discrimination" (GoI, 2007, p. 154). The ST category is religion-neutral, and the Muslim tribals must be

identified—like the Meo and Vangujjar Muslims—and duly included.

6.4.3 Universal Redistributive Measures beyond Quota

The SCR had stressed innovative anti-discriminatory measures beyond quota like the formation of a National Data Bank (NDB), an independent Assessment and Monitoring Authority (AMA), and an Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to address the equity-related concerns of marginalized communities. Some policy analysts have argued in favor of a "diversity index" and to link it to specific incentives for educational institutions, the private sector, etc. There are other SCR recommendations relating to education, employment, credit, housing, infrastructure, etc., that the Pasmanda Muslims may appropriately consider. Alam (2014) urges to take the "sectoral approach" seriously where policies are framed not based on ascriptive identities but based on sectors of economy or occupations where the disadvantaged group in question displays a higher concentration. Such policies are inclusive in design and not prone to legal or political controversies. According to Alam,

> […] a large number of Muslims are artisans and run home-based enterprises. There are certain enterprises or occupations in which Muslim workers are disproportionately engaged. These enterprises include carpentry, butchery, weaving, lock-and brass-making, carpet-and perfume-making, leather work, etc. Many of these enterprises face the problems of raw materials, financial capital, spatial segregation, lack of availability of appropriate modern technology and exploitation by big traders and so on. The onset of globalization and liberalization accompanied by unbridled powers of traders has further worsened

> the conditions of those employed in these occupations. Thus, a policy package that provides for up-scaling and modernizing small-scale enterprises by making capital available; up-skilling manpower (to use technology) by providing training; putting in place a mechanism to do away with exploitation by traders and so on may help large number of Muslims and may have multiplier positive effects on their lives (Alam, 2014, p. 224).

Broadly, the Pasmanda mobilizations on equity concerns were catalyzed by state identifications and governmentalities at one level. Still, on another level, they have also strived to subvert and negotiate the extant AA and redistributive regime to their favor, albeit with limited success. The fundamental line of conflict between the Ashraf and Pasmanda organizations on AA policies has been on the category to be privileged—religion or caste? The Mahaz has stressed that religious populism thwarts Pasmanda aspirations, and a regime of peace and justice is more conducive for the developmental concerns of Pasmanda Muslims. Ali Anwar says, "Since Independence, a middle class has emerged within Muslims which will definitely secure its place in politics and public employment. One does not need provocative slogans for achieving this"(Anwar, 2001c). However, such contestations may have their redeeming features too. As Jenkins (2003, p. 120) comments, "It is the cross-cutting competition between and within groups that can prevent a large scale mobilization of "us" versus "them." Overall, if Muslim quota were merely a "policy" (technical or procedural) issue, its resolution would have been far easier. What makes the issue vexed is its obvious interpenetration with the political and the status of extant hegemonies in the Indian political sphere. As Deshpande and Bapna point out, "[…] when it comes to determining the entitlement of a particular caste or

community to some benefits or special treatment, social scientific evidence is rarely decisive. Such questions are, not surprisingly, fundamentally *political* issues – they can hardly be otherwise" (GoI, 2008, p. 7).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study's key objective was to understand the vexed issue of democracy and pluralism through the vantage point of a discourse-theoretical account of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic (PMC). "Pasmanda" as an identity symbolizes the concerns of LC Muslims that inhabit a marginal position within the entrenched Muslim-Minority Discourse (MMD) and can be characterized as "minorities within minorities" or "internal minorities" following the literature on the subject. However, the constitution of the PMC as an expression of counterhegemony vis-à-vis the MMD has potentially complicated the received minority imagination in India. It has resonance with the broader debate on the questions of pluralism and democracy. The study explored the most relevant theoretical debates and perspectives to comprehend the relationality between pluralism, democracy, and internal minorities. It then charted the evolution of the Muslim-Minority discourse in India and traced the conditions of possibility for the emergence of caste-based contestations and mobilizations in the form of the Pasmanda movement. Finally, it mapped and discussed the vital ideological elements and resignification strategies advanced by the PMC in the domains of a) identity, solidarity, and reform; b) security and persistence of communal violence; c) equity and empowerment (the claims for recognition,

representation, and redistribution). I will briefly discuss the findings of this study in the sections that follow.

7.1 KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

7.1.1 Pluralism, Democracy, and Internal Minorities

In the era of late capitalism, the augmented velocity of cultural and financial exchanges in a globalizing world has challenged our received understanding of pluralism and democracy. The brisk transformations in personal and social spheres have led to an enhanced sense of precarity as far as self and identity questions are concerned. C2 discusses the work of William E. Connolly, who retains the concept of "pluralism" to refer to settled notions of diversity within the imagination of the territorial nation-state and contrasts it with "pluralization" to refer to the recent experience of radical contingency, diversity, and transformation in a globalizing world. Pluralization is marked by the "politics of becoming" that alludes to the process "by which new rights, identities, goods, and faiths periodically struggle to move from subsistence below the thresholds of legitimacy and justice onto those registers" (Connolly, 2011, p. 3). While the tension between pluralism and pluralization constitutes the contours of pluralist politics today, the "paradox of identity\difference" wherein identity is secured in a field of difference through the production of significant "others" triggers further anxieties. At one level, increasing cultural differentiation has become a fact of life. There are elite restorative attempts to arrest the sliding in entrenched norms, values, and identities at another level. The drives towards pluralization are inevitably countered by

fundamentalization and pose immense challenges to civility, tolerance, and solidarity.

Moreover, the concerns of difference (recognition) are intimately connected with the play of inequality (redistribution). The hegemonic democratic consensus faces vulnerability through the demands for a shift from "procedural democracy" to "substantive democracy" informed by the process of "democratic deepening" that entails the inclusion of subjugated groups within the circuits of power and policy. The idea of a passive citizen concerned with just periodical voting and consumerist satiations is being contrasted with more engaged and meaningful renderings of citizenship. The limits of the elite, masculinist, and the bourgeois public sphere in ensuring "voice" for the marginalized sections have become too obvious. Therefore, the oppressed sections have often constituted what Nancy Fraser terms as "subaltern counterpublics," which act as sites to contest dominant narrations of identity, norms, and practices.

Since the 1990s, there has been a raging debate in Western political theory scholarship on citizenship, multiculturalism, and the rights of minority groups. In what came to be termed as the "liberal-communitarian" debates, while liberals emphasized the individualistic legal and political dimensions of citizenship, the communitarians stressed the identity and collective dimension—community as the context of the constitution of the self, social solidarity, civic virtue, and active civic engagement. The notion of universal-abstract citizenship was critiqued for assuming a shared public culture that dovetails with the nation-state project's homogenizing ambitions. Charles Taylor, for instance, felt that the "politics of equal dignity" privileged sameness and contended that the "politics of difference" must be taken

seriously. Since the cultures of privileged groups usually masquerade as the national public culture, there is a danger that the nationalist imagination of culture may misrecognize minor cultures, thereby leading to a sense of inferiority or self-loathing in the latter. Since culture is the binding site for the development of self and the realization of ethical or good life, such misrecognition may cause grievous injuries. Iris Marion Young interrogated the difference-blind approaches to citizenship as endorsing the worldviews and preferences of the privileged. She advocated the concept of "differentiated citizenship" for the oppressed groups. Consequently, liberal multiculturalism emerged "as a middle-of-the-road approach between the communitarian ideal of individuals embedded in their culture, and the old school liberal approach critiqued for depicting atomistic individuals" (Pfeffer, 2015, p. 14).

In this conceptual background, liberal multiculturalism sharpened the boundaries between "national" and "minority" cultures and advocated equality between them. In contrast to the earlier nationalist emphasis on assimilation of alterity, the multicultural theorists advocated respect for heterogeneity and sought recognition (and protection) for minority cultures. Minority cultures have consistently nurtured a grievance that the national culture has a majoritarian bias and selectively privileges the languages, interpretations of history, national heroes, and symbols of the powerful. However, multiculturalism as a theory and state policy has been vociferously criticized for endorsing a reified, enclavist or 'billiard ball conception" of cultures; the production of multicultural backlash and cementing of majoritarian racism owing to allegations of minority appeasement; compromising national cohesion and solidarity; misrepresentation of complex minority

cultures, and; silencing of concerns of internal minorities or minorities-within-minorities like women, dissenters, children, sexualities, linguistic groups and so on. The recent works on the concerns of "internal minorities" or "minorities within minorities" have argued that multicultural accommodation often results in simplistic communitarianism reinforces ethnic boundary closure, internal homogenization and domination of self-proclaimed leaders from the group elite, subjugation of vulnerable sections under collective norms, and perpetuation of illiberal socio-cultural practices that endorse internal hierarchies and patriarchal values. In particular, Susan Okin provocatively posed the question, "Is multiculturalism bad for women?" She indicated that the politics of feminism and multiculturalism were in a state of tension that may not be easily reconciled. Broadly, C2 indicated that the conceptual shift from pluralism to pluralization, formal democracy to substantive democracy through the process of democratic deepening precipitated by subaltern counterpublics, and from minorities to internal minorities constitute the theoretical scaffolding for this study.

7.1.2 Muslim-Minority Discourse and Internal Caste Others: The Emergence of the Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic

The express object of C3 was to account for the constitution and topography of the Muslim-Minority discourse and explore the conditions of possibility for the availability of caste as a sign of counterhegemony and mobilization for subaltern Muslims. Drawing from relevant historiographical works, a diachronic-deconstructive examination of the evolution of the "Muslim" as a religio-cultural category and "Minority" as

a state-juridical category was attempted, which revealed several vital trajectories.

The immigrant Muslims who started arriving in the Indian subcontinent from the seventh century onwards, mainly military adventurers and merchants, were not a monolithic group. They were internally differentiated on ethnicity lines (Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Persians, Arabs, and Africans) and status/occupation markers (monarchs, courtiers, soldiers, slaves, merchants, literati, and mystics). While there was a supremacist hierarchy between the immigrant Muslims, that were collectively labeled as Ashraf (honorable), vis-à-vis the native "Hindu" and other subject populations, the Muslim regimes in the quotidian conduct, expansion, and consolidation of the empire shared a more pragmatic relationship with the native HC Hindu sections. Caste, which was the critical storehouse of power in the subcontinent and symbolically organized the domains of social stratification, political economy, and sexual relations, was hardly disturbed and, more importantly, was resignified in an Islamic idiom. However, the Muslims' large population in the subcontinent can only be explained when one adds the native/indigenous Islamic converts to the immigrant Muslims. In Richard Eaton's view, the mass conversions to Islam cannot be described by royal patronage, imperial violence, or Islam's framing as a theory of liberation from "Hindu" caste inequality. While these three factors may explain isolated instances of conversions, Eaton proposes that mass conversions to Islam occurred by incorporating tribal/aboriginal (presumably non-Hindu) populations located in the North-Western and Eastern frontiers of the empire into the agrarian circuit through the clearing of the forests. This was a joint operation of the regime's bureaucrats and Islamic missionaries and was reasonably successful because of the appeal of an incoming literate tradition for illiterate aboriginal

populations. In this sense, Islam was not a "religion of the sword" but rather a "religion of the plough." The native Hindu population was also internally distributed on status (caste), regional, linguistic, and sectarian basis.

On the other hand, the neo-converts to Islam were contemptuously labeled as Ajlaf (base). The term Arzal (degraded) was specially employed to designate the converts from untouchable/unclean Dalit castes. The Ashraf high-culture was contrasted with the native plebeian culture and entailed four main features: the disdain for manual labor; the employment of language, particularly Arabic, Persian, and later Urdu as a boundary maintenance mechanism; the reverence for Syeds, who claimed a lineage from Prophet Muhammad, as a class; the articulation of "Sharafat" referring to distinct practices of piety, sartorial and culinary traditions, refined speech and daily conduct, and so on. The pre-colonial image of the subcontinent betrays liminality and differentiation of the social space with the possibility of various cross-group alliances. The social markers like ethnicity, caste, region, language, and sect played a far more vital role when compared to religion in the quotidian management of the so-called "Muslim" empire.

Two, the subsequent production of "Islam" and "Muslims" (also Hinduism and Hindus) as unified entities in the British colonial period (19th century onwards) may be attributed to three critical factors: a) the colonial knowledge, classification/enumeration, and patronage project for governmentality; b) the revivalist/reformist process of Islamization activated due to print capitalism and radical innovations in transportation technologies; c) the persistent inter-religious (communal) violence. The colonial knowledge/pedagogical project, informed by orientalism, reworked the subcontinent's historiography from a simplistic Hindu-Muslim lens. In a bid to gain moral *legitimacy* for the regime and *displace* the

immediate Muslim-Mughal ruling class, it selectively constructed and conflated the "medieval Muslim" period with violence and despotism, particularly against Hindus. The colonial desire to *govern* the subject classes through the policy of "divide and rule" resulted in a distinct classification/patronage regime that profiteered from the accentuation of extant social and class faultlines. The ambiguous and fuzzy social collectivities, particularly religion and caste, were systematized into bounded political constituencies that jostled for power and privileges. More pertinently, caste, which was the dominant sign of symbolic and material power in the subcontinent, was repositioned as an internal moment of religion. This process of "religionization" (Larson, 1995), where religion became an overarching space for identity and meaning, was instrumental in fashioning subsequent religion-based nationalisms. As the colonial repressed, Caste was launched into a relation of antagonism with religion, which turned into a euphemism for the interests of pan-religion HC elite. In the late colonial period, the "myth of Muslim decline into backwardness" was constructed by the colonial regime aided by HC Ashraf interlocutors, which, coupled with other governmentality interventions, chiselled out the image of an objectified-subaltern Muslim community directed by self-appointed Ashraf leadership. The crucial moments in this reconfiguration were—the establishment of the All India Muslim League as the representative body for Muslims (1906), the granting of a separate electorate for Muslims (1909), a 25 percent Muslim quota in public employment and education (1926), and codification of Muslim law (1937). Besides, two other sources that were simultaneously influencing the enclavism of the Muslim category were the revivalist/reformist process of Islamization that was purging the ritual space of local contaminations to create a purer Islamic religious subject distinct from the neighboring Hindu, and the internecine communal violence that enabled the

characterization of the Muslim as a pure victim of majoritarian Hindu violence. In particular, the operation of semi-parliamentary politics, based on a restricted electorate qualified by income and educational qualifications, transformed the Muslim category as a proxy for the interests of the numerically inferior but privileged HC Muslims that constituted only about 10-15 percent of the Muslim population. As discussed in C3, the HC Muslims were overrepresented in public employment and education, and as mentioned in C5, the primary victims of communal violence have historically been LC Muslims. In this genealogical background, the combination of the 'Muslim' as a unified religio-cultural subject with 'Minority' that has connotations of numerical inferiority and subalternity produced a formidable Muslim-Minority discourse that obscured the objective power relations within the Muslim community. MMD became a conceptual sleight of hand, a sign of elite "sentimental victimology" employed by the HC Ashraf elite to bargain with the colonial state for privileges. The last significant demand by the Muslim nationalists in the late colonial period was crafting a separate Islamic state of Pakistan. Based on the Jinnah-led Muslim League's "binationality thesis," it construed that Hindus and Muslims' interests were irreconcilable, the subcontinent was partitioned with disastrous consequences for the vulnerable sections. It must be stressed here that the construction of the MMD did not occur in isolation. It corresponds to a similar genealogy of the production of the Hindu-Majority discourse (HMD) that forms its constitutive outside. At one point, despite their symbolic relation of antagonism, both the MMD and HMD coincide —the repression and deflection of the caste question.

Three, the constitution of the MMD shares an intimate relationship with the repression of the Muslim caste. In the late colonial period itself, the LC Muslims had realized that the MMD secured the interests of the HC

Muslims by invisibilizing and displacing the symbolic and material interests of the former. In the postcolonial period, the MMD has persisted with the same consequences. I have designated LC Muslims' mobilizations against Ashraf hegemony and MMD in the colonial period as the "first wave" of Pasmanda politics and the post-1990s mobilizations in the postcolonial period as the "second wave." The leading organization in the first wave was the Abdul Qaiyum Ansari-led All India Momin Conference (AIMC) that took part in the anti-colonial freedom struggle led by Gandhi and challenged Jinnah-led All India Muslim League's binationality thesis and the demand for Pakistan. As discussed in C1, the post-1990's "second wave" was reactivated by the three coeval rupturing events—Mandir, Mandal, and Markets—that displaced the official Indian ideology of minority rights secularism, social justice, and state socialism. The Mandalization of Muslim politics produced three LC Muslim organizations, the Shabbir Ansari-led All India Muslim OBC Organization (Maharashtra), the Dr. Ejaz Ali-led All India Backward Muslim Morcha (Bihar), and the Ali Anwar-led All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (Bihar). C3 advances a description of these three organizations and foregrounds their vital concerns. While all the three organizations have challenged Ashraf hegemony and share discontent with the MMD, the Mahaz has had the most significant public impact.

7.1.3 Pasmanda-Muslim Counterpublic: Contestations and Resignification Strategies

As noted in C1, the counterdiscourses circulated in the PMC by the Mahaz have contested and resignified the critical moments of the MMD—identity, security, equity—and unified these moments in a chain of equivalence through the nodal point "Pasmanda." The PMC operates in a terrain where the MMD is its constitutive outside, but as indicated and discussed in Figure 1 in C1, the

Dalit-Bahujan Counterpublic (DBC) and the Hindu-Majority Discourse (HMD) find presence in the "order of discourse" and also influence its articulation. The broad objective of C4, C5, and C6 was to map and examine the Pasmanda contestations and resignification strategies on identity, security, and equity-related concerns.

7.1.3.1 Identity

C 4 critically examined the Pasmanda narratives on identity, focusing on the enabling and constraining elements in the formation of Pasmanda as a legitimate political subject. The Mahaz has made three significant moves in this context. First, it has amplified the concerns related to cultural imperialism by contesting the dominance of Ashraf cultural framework (discussed in C3) and practices that violate the dignity of the LC Muslims. The assumption of an egalitarian Muslim socio-cultural space is challenged by revealing hierarchical caste practices that devalue, invisibilize, and inferiorize LC Muslims' complex lifeworlds. Several denigrating stories, popular idioms, jokes, and proverbs regularly attempt to naturalize and reproduce LC Muslims' stereotypes. The socio-cultural discrimination against the LC Muslims is manifested in practices like their surnames being used as invectives and curse words; discrimination during burials in the graveyards and community prayers in the mosques; caste-based spatial segregation of community neighborhoods; violence during inter-caste love marriages; social boycott, caste atrocity and extravagant revenge, and so on.

Second, the Mahaz has foregrounded the question of community reform (*islah muassharah*). In this context, it has a) raised the issue of women empowerment by

emphasizing education and challenging patriarchal practices like endogamy, dowry, and instant triple divorce; b) countered the hegemonic rendering of the Urdu language as the mother tongue of all Muslims by emphasizing regional languages; c) publicized the need for reform of caste-infested Islamic theological hermeneutics/interpretative technologies and democratization of faith-based institutions that are monopolized by the Ashraf sections.

Third, the Mahaz has resignified the notion of identity and solidarity through symbolic inversions. It has emphasized the indigenous (*moolnivasi*) roots of the LC Muslims in opposition to the overseas West Asian origins of the HC Muslims. The installation in the circuits of indigeneity led to a symbolic inversion of identity wherein caste was privileged in place of religion. In contrast to the hegemonic notion of vertical solidarity on the axis of faith endorsed by HC-led politics, the Mahaz has advanced the idea of horizontal pan-religion solidarity of LC's based on the shared experience of labor, indignity, and pain. The relocation from the overarching category of religion to that of caste also enabled a critique of the "minority" category, which was characterized as *chaliya* (fake) because it exposed the LC Muslims to exploitation from the minority elite at one level and communal violence orchestrated by the majority elite at another.

However, the pursuit of the Mahaz to consolidate the Pasmanda as a legitimate political subject by transcending the majority-minority dichotomy through resignification of identity and solidarity faces several countervailing logics. One, the Pasmanda subject is trapped in what Du Bois terms "double consciousness." At one level, it is emphasizing its Indic roots and the

collective subaltern experience of shared pain of labor, indignity, and humiliation, at another, it is also vulnerable to the processes of Islamization and Ashrafization as discussed in C3. The latter processes constantly interrupt its notion of pan-religious subaltern solidarity by creating a purer Islamic faith subject and a distance from neighboring communities. Secondly, Pasmanda is an aspirational conglomerate of several LC biradari collectivities. These communities are themselves hierarchically organized through the process of what Ambedkar termed as "graded inequality." These biradaris are undergoing a process of "ethnicization" and "culturalization" and remolding themselves as self-enclosed communities with well-defined interests and historical mythologies of origin. The intra-Pasmanda competition ranges against the quest for political solidarity transcending these rifts. Ambedkar likened castes to "gangs" that work on self-interest, caste envy, and mutual competition. Hence, to use a Marxian metaphor, the transition from caste-in-itself to caste-for-itself through an overarching pan-religion subaltern majority is not easy. C4 ends by pointing at these aporias.

7.1.3.2 Security

C5 scrutinized the Mahaz narratives on questions of communal or Hindu-Muslim violence. In the PMC, communal violence is framed as a machination of the pan-religious caste elite to deflect the subaltern communities' organic social justice issues. Hindu (majority) and Muslim (minority) fundamentalism are held to be symbiotic and co-constitutive. There is a sense that the former cannot be delimited without contesting the latter simultaneously. Muslim communalism is captured through the metaphor of "starter yogurt" that prepares Hindu communalism's yogurt when added to

the milk. The so-called "secular" parties are criticized for *bhaydohan* (profiteering from fear) as they harvest a captive Muslim vote-bank through the fear of the Hindu majoritarianism with little concern for the social justice or development aspects of the majority of poor Muslims whatsoever. In this sense, the gap between secularism-as-it-is and secularism-as-it-exists is pointed. While bringing in the class/spatial distribution of vulnerability during anti-Muslim violence, the narratives assert that while almost all victims are LC Muslims, the entrepreneurship around Muslim "victimology" benefits the Ashraf sections in consolidating their self-proclaimed leadership over the community. Communal violence legitimizes and reproduces elite Muslim restorational politics.

Broadly, the Mahaz has emphasized the instrumentalist approach to violence. However, the relation of communal violence with identity construction and solidarity is complex. Violence, rather than a struggle between settled identities, may also be construed as the critical factor in the production and consolidation of politicized religious identity itself. C5 points out that the recruitment of pan-religion LC sections as aggressors/foot-soldiers in violent incidents needs to be explained beyond the instrumentalist, patronage, and false-consciousness approaches. A careful analysis of the psychoanalytic dividends or the revelry in one's dehumanization that might accrue to subaltern foot-soldiers during their involvement in violence would have a profound bearing on the question of subaltern agency and solidarity. Beyond impressionistic understandings, one needs more empirical accounts of the social content —class/caste/gender locations—of communal violence victims.

7.1.3.1 Equity

C6 examines Mahaz's contestations on questions related to equity. In PMC, there is stress on engaging the state as a site for advancing democratic demands. In a neoliberal economic order with greater penetration of capitalist markets, the vital link between caste and occupation has weakened. A far lesser number of the workforce finds itself associated with traditional caste occupations—weaving, oil pressing, cotton carding, pottery, and so on—since either these occupations are dwindling due to mechanization/automation or they are facing international competition and change of customer preference/taste/demand for their products. The workforce that has been edged out from the traditional occupations is seldom adequately educated or skilled enough to find decent livelihood in the economy's modern sectors. This has resulted in the wide pauperization of the workforce, and the Mahaz has advanced welfare and redistributive demands and shifts in policy for this LC Muslim precariat: reskilling, subsidies for small scale enterprises and raw materials, short term loans at low interests, housing, education, health, power supply, and so on. Apart from the redistributive demands, the Mahaz has advanced the question of adequate representation for LC Muslims in public employment and education by contesting the existing affirmative action (quotas/reservations) regime. The Mahaz has consistently challenged the Ashraf demand of "Total Muslim Reservations" for five key reasons: a) Muslims are a differentiated community in terms of status/class, and the Ashraf Muslims cannot be a beneficiary of reservations since they are socio-economically empowered and adequately represented in public employment/education; b) Ashraf Muslims do not constitute a "socially and educationally backward class"

because of their high caste location and historical membership of the ruling class; c) Most LC Muslims are already recognized in the OBC and ST category at the center and most states; d) If Muslims are clubbed together as a separate category for reservations then the HC Muslims will corner most of the benefits at the expense of the LC Muslims owing to their cultural capital of the former; e) A separate Muslim quota will lead to the charge of Muslim appeasement by the Hindu Right and result in communal polarization. Mahaz frames the demand for a separate Muslim quota as a proxy for Ashraf interests.

Moreover, a religion-based quota is less likely to be endorsed because of the nation's secular sensibilities and historical secessionism associated with the "Muslim" category. Still, it also derails LC Muslims' demands that seek recognition due to socio-economic disadvantage and not cultural difference. In this context, the Mahaz seeks a) deepening of existing OBC quota by "subcategorization" where similarly placed caste groups across religions may be accommodated; b) inclusion of non-recognized Muslim caste groups in the OBC and ST category; c) parity with Hindu/Sikh/Buddhist Dalits through the inclusion of Muslims and Christians of Dalit origin in the extant SC quota by scrapping Clause 3 of the Presidential Order 1950. Clause 3 had ejected non-Hindu Dalits from the SC category to include Dalits belonging to the Sikh community in 1956 and the Buddhist community in 1990. The continued exclusion of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians from the SC category is seen as a violation of secularism, which entails symmetrical treatment of all religions. However, the exclusion continues because of the anxieties related to proselytization/conversions raised by the Hindu Right and the latent conceptual distinction between

"foreign/indigenous" religions that inform public policy. Lastly, the Pasmanda organizations have mobilized for a proportional share in political power. The existing secular/left/social justice parties favor the HC Muslims during ticket distribution and ignore the LC Muslim candidates. By advancing concrete data, the Mahaz has demonstrated that the HC Muslims are overrepresented in legislative bodies while the LC are grossly underrepresented. A captive Muslim vote bank's idea due to the perpetual security threat consolidates Ashraf political leaders' hold over the community who bargain with various political parties on their behalf. The Mahaz has taken issues with this siege mentality and has asserted that it will have negotiated settlements across the political spectrum on behalf of the LC Muslim's interests. Overall, the Mahaz has interrogated the notion of Muslim as a monolithic and subaltern category by stressing the internal hierarchies and class differentiation.

7.2 TOWARDS A POST-MINORITY CONDITION?

The main question that this study pursued was to understand how subaltern counterpublics like the PMC inform the broader understanding of pluralism and democracy. The Pasmanda counterdiscourses on identity, violence, and equity deepen the already intermeshed lines of recognition and redistribution. In a way, "by pluralizing the category of oppression" (Young, 1990, p. 63), the PMC also conceptually shakes the foundational consensus on the conceptual infrastructure of the nation, majority-minority, and secularism-communalism in India.

This study showed how the PMC elucidates that the aforementioned conceptual matrix is elite-driven, and that the dichotomies staged constitute and reproduce its control despite the contrarian rhetoric. The subaltern aspiration to transcend this foundational consensus is often arrested through violence. The persistent episodes of communal violence which create a "state of exception" (Agamben, 1998) where the democratic institutional laws are suspended, can be framed as what Walter Benjamin calls "law preserving violence" (Benjamin, 1986, p. 285). The laws are suspended so that the foundational elite consensus or *the* Law may be preserved. William Connolly also points to the dialectical relationship between pluralization and fundamentalization (Connolly, 1996). More pertinently, the Pasmanda narratives indicate that the "minority" concept is the pivot around which this consensus revolves.

The narratives in the PMC have interrogated the extant MMD and have conceptually indicated the limits of the minority concept and majority-minority framework. As discussed in C2, there is an issue of semantics here. The term minority has both demographic and power reference. The PMC betrays a deep dissatisfaction with the term minority as it clubs the unequal together. It obscures the empirical relation of numerical inferiority with privilege in HC Muslims and numerical superiority with subalternity in LC Muslims' case. As indicated in C2, the dissatisfaction with the minority concept has resonance elsewhere too.

The PMC also presents a complexity that may not be accommodated within the extant majority-minority framework. In the case of internal minorities like the Pasmanda-Muslims, the right to exit and re-universalization of citizenship are not feasible options. As discussed in C2, the Indian debates have privileged the "reforms from within" approach to redress concerns of minorities-within-minorities. Partha Chatterjee's

advocacy of a "strategic politics of toleration" that argues against state-led reforms and the need to resist homogenization from outside and push from democratization inside the Muslim community clearly has its limits the PMC demonstrates. The question of caste is not only about the cultural difference but is also imbricated with power. The HC Muslim elite has an innate interest in maintaining the dominant cultural/power matrix that radical transformative voices may undercut. When a group's hegemony is challenged, it is more likely to close ranks and turn reactionary than aligning with reformist voices. In the case of Indian Muslim women, this is very clear as they were finally successful in getting instant triple divorce proscribed through legislative and judicial action. The lesson from the PMC is that instead of banking on internal community reform, the internal minorities may find it more beneficial to exhaust all the available avenues—the state, civil society, community institutions, and so on. As discussed in C4, while the caste's politicization has been much discussed, the recent evidence suggests its increasing "culturalization." More and more LC groups across religions are now developing their mythologies of origin, replacing symbolisms of humiliation with pride, tracing their heroes/icons, and reconfiguring community norms/practices. Here caste is reinvented as a cherished identity, indeed a community in its own right with all its implied holistic meanings, and ceases to be a marker in the main implied injury. The Pasmanda-Muslim space encapsulates many caste groups that are increasingly undergoing the simultaneous process of politicization and culturalization. Is the minority space capable enough of accommodating the symbolic and material aspirations of such a large number of groups? In Mahaz's key demand of inclusion of Dalit-Muslims in the SC category, one witnesses the collision of two incompatible legal categories: Muslim minority and SC.

In the Indian context, one may ask if a single-window transaction around religion, privileged by the majority-minority dyad, the most appropriate way to address the emerging concerns around justice. The lesson from the PMC is that the minority category probably invisibilizes more than it reveals as far as modes of misrecognition and systematic exclusion are concerned. The critique of the minority concept displaces the semantic legitimacy of the terms "minorities within minorities" or "internal minorities," too. The imagination of pan-religion solidarity of subjugated castes advanced by PMC breaches the limit of "internal" and transcends the boundaries designated by the extant minority imagination. Andersen (2003, p. IX) suggests,

> We frequently find that our categories do not suffice; they seem inadequate. They appear to point to a former order of society that no longer exists. […] We analyse the future by the standards of the past. Our experiences of the insufficiency of categories encourage us to take a step back in order to look at the categories themselves - their construction, their history and their position within the fields of our focus.

The number of issues that cannot be accommodated within the majority-minority dyad is expanding exponentially. If there is a proliferation of exceptions, the norm needs to be revisited. Following Kuhn (2012), one may suggest that the nature of these new complexities signals a paradigm shift concerning the field of "minority studies" (Robinson, 2012a). I, therefore, suggest that the extant socio-political conditions that circumscribe the democratic aspirations of Pasmanda-Muslims have probably exceeded the context that legitimated the earlier imagination of the minority space. Therefore the ensemble of emerging critique and contestations around majority/minority and secular/communal duopolies may be provisionally captured through the

term “post-minority.” It does not necessarily mean negating earlier concerns around assimilation or violence that quintessentially defined the minority space, but rather an appreciation for the dynamic nature of social space and the democratic possibilities opened by subaltern counterpublics like the PMC.

The destabilization of the minority concept, as substantiated in this study, may be central to the democratic aspirations of subaltern communities, including the Pasmanda-Muslims. This study confirms the limitations of the settled notions of pluralism and democracy indicated by the emergence of new conceptualizations like “pluralization” and “subaltern counterpublics” to capture the complexities of new transformative spaces and justice claims. What the Pasmanda struggle indicates is the need for a new consensus on the foundational concepts like nation, majority-minority and secularism. As Chantal Mouffe has repeatedly urged, this consensus cannot only be rational but has to necessarily be a precarious and “conflictual consensus” (Mouffe, 2013, p. XII). The findings in this research indicate that in developing a new conflictual consensus through a democratic grammar, the role of subaltern counterpublics should play a key role.

7.3 LIMITATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The experience of the past two decades of Pasmanda mobilizations has led to enhanced public visibility of the discourse and enabled more comprehensive discussions in academic and policy circles. When the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke for Pasmanda Muslims in the BJP Orissa conclave in 2017, it signaled clearly that the Pasmanda resistance project was beginning to

receive official attention[137]. However, despite the more comprehensive visibility and circulation of Pasmanda concerns, as C6 demonstrated the movement has registered only a modest success. To explain this, one needs to further engage with the interpenetrating sources of identity formation: religious discourse and the micropolitics of faith-based institutions, the role of state governmentality, and violence. The organizational dynamics and mobilization strategies crucial to a movement's success were outside this study's scope. Future research could look into this aspect more closely. Also, it would be interesting to conduct further research in different jurisdictions where comparable questions around democracy, pluralism and internal minorities play a role.

[137] "Not all castes among the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), entitled to reservations are reaping the same benefits. The Indian Express reported today that 97 per cent of all jobs and admissions, reserved under the OBC category have been claimed by just under 25 per cent of sub-castes. 983 communities—37 per cent of the total—did not get a single job or admission, the report said. Interestingly, just 10 communities in the OBC category have availed of as much as 24.95 per cent of jobs and admissions. As many as 994 OBC sub-castes have a total representation of only 2.68 per cent in recruitment and admissions. […] The prime beneficiaries of reservation include Yadav, Kurmi, Jat (Jats of Rajasthan except those of Bharatpur and Dholpur district are in central OBC list), Saini, Thevar, Ezhava and Vokkaliga." (BS Web team, 2018).

APPENDIX A EXAMPLE OF CODED TRANSCRIPT

Transcript	Codes
Khalid Anis Ansari: Tell us something about yourself, your native place, education and upbringing... **Respondent:** My full name is [...]. I was born in Rajapur, Patna, in Bihar. I got my initial education from Bihar Vidyapith. I also studied in a madarsa for a while. After that I received my education of Hindi and English at home. Our neighbourhood had a specific spatial arrangement. There were different cemeteries for different castes. Here, I would like to emphasize the subtle element of untouchability present in this organization of cemeteries. It is important to note that all the land was in the possession of the feudal landlord (*zamindar*). He gave away that land to be employed for this purpose but he insisted or rather condoned the division of cemeteries on the basis of caste. To quote another incident, the *zamindar* donated a well to the village mosque. But he wanted it to be within the premises of his mansion, again to regulate the access to the well. Many people objected to it as the properties in the possession of the mosque were meant to be open for public use. The issue got heated at that time (1977-78) as there used to be a shortage of drinking water in Patna and people were dependent for drinking water primarily on the wells like this. My father was prominent among those involved in this battle around the issue of the well, probably because he was the only educated person from my caste. *Aadmi padhne ke baad ghulami bardasht nahi karta* (A man cannot accept servitude after he is educated!). So,	

(the point I want to make is that) we are not fighting any new battle, and it is not that we are making untouchability and discrimination an issue (out of nothing). In fact, these are age old issues, but remained concealed under the curtain. *Ham pardah uthane ki koshish kar rahe hain* (We merely want to raise the curtain!). **K:** A question that is widely echoed is that the "pasmanda movement is producing division among Muslims and that it is funded by some external groups. Would you like to comment?	
Respondent: The movement known as Pasmanda *tehreek* (movement) is not coming with (any new divisions like those along) caste. In fact, the division is produced and maintained by the elite Muslim castes as it is in their interest. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, an upper caste, who also got entitled as Khan Bahadur by British Government, can be seen backing the inequality of the caste system. Many scholars (*vidwaan*) and priests (*mulla*) remain instrumental in this hierarchical construction. We are highlighting the issue, invoking the same category of caste, which was earlier maintained to sustain inequality, to demand justice (*haq*).	
	Caste discrimination in Muslim cemeteries
	Feudal context of caste discrimination

	Tradition of anti-caste resistance in family Education and empowerment
	Untouchability within Muslims an old issue Invisibilization of Muslim caste
	Publicization of Muslim caste
	Pasmanda as identity
	Elite high caste Muslims responsible for casteist practices

	Role of Muslim intellectuals and theologians in reproducing caste Employing caste identity to root out caste injustice

APPENDIX B CODING

1. Identity	2. Security and Communalism	3. Equity
1. Dignity, Caste and Lived Islam The reverence for Syeds; Syeds=Brahmins	**1. Communalism** Communalism as elite conspiracy; Ashrafs as the profiteers of victimology	**1. All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz as the Vehicle of Empowerment** Challenges Ashraf hegemony; Minority politics=Ashraf (high caste Muslim) politics; Thinking beyond the majority-minority, secular-communal
Disparaging and contemptuous stories, jokes and folktales; Caste titles as abuses; Spatial segregation; Caste endogamy and hypergamy within Muslims; Untouchability; Discrimination because of "smell/odor"; Discrimination in mosques and in graveyards; stereotyping) Social boycott, caste atrocity, extravagant revenge; Graded inequality	Dangers of communal polarization due to religion-based reservation; Dalit Muslim reservations, religious conversions and communal conflict Spatial and lived solidarities between Dalits of different religions; Parochializes communal cleavages **2. Secularism**	Not a political organization but a social organization Modes of protest: rallies, sabhas (discussion meetings), seminars, dharna (sit-ins), pradarshan (protests) A Pasmanda political party
2. Social Identity and Solidarity Muslims not a monolithic community; The enactment of the	Secularism hegemonized by HC sections; Need for subaltern secularism;	Movement Literature: Books create ground for revolution; The story of the transformation a

Pasmanda identity; caste primary, religion secondary pan-religious LC solidarity; spatial and lived solidarities	research into a movement; oral history and limitations of official archive; Retrieval of Pasmanda icons and leaders lost and unregistered in official history
	2. Representation in the State Institutions The quest for reservations of Dalit Muslims in SC quota by making it religious-neutral;
Ashraf allegations of Pasmanda movement causing Muslim disunity	Contestation of Ashraf demand of reservation for all Muslims; the issue of fake caste certificates; Representation in legislative bodies, education and public employment; Ashrafs don't vote for Pasmanda candidates during elections
3. Muslim History and Sociality genealogy, lineage (*hasab-nasab*) and inherited rank-hierarchy in early Islam;	
	3. Representation in Community Institutions Reservation policy in minority educational institutions; Discrimination in government organizations and institutions run for Muslims: Caste-based Census
Imitation theory; Muslim caste flexible or weak (severity) in comparison to Hindu society? Caste a South Asian problem that cuts	**4. Engagement with the Policy Framework** Bread-and-butter issues versus emotional issues

across religions

3. Social and Theological Reform

Muslim society lacks the culture of critique and self-introspection;

The lackadaisical role of ulema (theologians); Why don't they launch a jihad against caste?; Politicization of ulema

Upward mobility through Ashrafisation; Caste associations and social welfare

Progressive reform in gender relations; Love marriages; kufu, haddi, shijra;

Contesting Urdu sectarian (maslaqi) conflict

Democratization of Religious Associations

APPENDIX C LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

S. No.	Pseudonyms	Date	Location
1.	Narendra Pawar	July 8 2011	Delhi
2.	Mohd. Nauman	Oct 30 2011	Lucknow
3.	Mohd Ibrahim	Mar 19 2011 March 26 2013	New Delhi New Delhi
4.	Danish Mohd.	May 26 2013	Patna
5.	Darakshan Anjum	May 31 2013	Azamgarh
6.	Mohd Zakir Mohd. Qasim	May 27 2013	Patna
7.	Nannhe Miyan	Apr 23 2012	Lucknow
8.	Mohsin Hamid	May 29 2013	Mau
9.	Tabish Hussain Karrar Ahmad	May 29 2013	Mau
10.	Mohd. Sajjad	May 25 2013	Patna
11.	Zakir Naik	May 25 2013	Patna
12.	Tilawat Hussain	May 28 2013	Mau
13.	Wajid Ali	May 27 2013	Patna
14.	Shafi Ahmad	May 25 2013	Patna
15.	Kamran Mohammad	May 26 2013	Patna
16.	Sardar Alam	May 31 2013	Azamgarh
17.	Zeba Khatoon	May 26 2013	Patna

18.	Bhagwan Das	May 29 2013	Mau
19.	Raees Mohammad	May 30 2013	Mau
20.	Sarwar Alam	May 29 2013	Mau
21.	Tajammul Mansoori	May 29 2013	Mau
22.	Hannan Ansari	Jun 22 2012	New Delhi
23.	Asif Saifi	Jun 17 2012	New Delhi
24.	Mohd Farman	Apr 22 2012	Lucknow
25.	Israr Mohammad	Apr 23 2012	Lucknow

NOTE: All the interviewees gave me verbal consent to use the content of their interviews under conditions of anonymity.

APPENDIX D SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION[138]

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF ALL INDIA MUSLIM PERSONAL LAW BOARD (AIMPLB)

S. No	Name	Social Class	Designation
1	Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi	HC	SADAR
2	Maulana Kalbe Sadiq	HC	NAIB SADAR
3	Maulana Abdul Saud Ahmed	HC	NAIB SADAR
4	Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Nadvi	HC	NAIB SADAR
5	Maulana Sirajul Hasan	HC	NAIB SADAR
6	Maulana Muzaffar Hussain Kachauchvi	HC	NAIB SADAR
7	Maulana Syed Nizamuddin	HC	GEN. SECRETARY
8	Abdur Rehman Qureshi	LC	SECRETARY
9	Abdur Sattar Yusuf Shaikh	HC	SECRETARY

[138] Justice Rajinder Sachar too favours this proposal as the following extract from a news report suggests: "Justice Rajinder Sachar, who headed the committee that looked into the socio-economic status of Muslims in the country, feels the government should have created a "most backward category" which would have automatically brought almost 80 per cent of the Muslims under the quota" (Manoj, 2011).

10	Maulana Wali Rahmani	HC	SECRETARY
11	Maulana Abdul Karim Parekh	HC	TREASURER

Note: Maulana Nadvi has died. In his place Maulana Mujahid ul Islam has been made Sadar. (Anwar, 2001a)

Members of All India Muslim Personal Law Board Working Committee

S.. No	Name	Social Class
1	Maulana Abdul Saud Ahmed	HC
2	Maulana Kalbe Sadiq	HC (SYED)
3	Maulana Sirajul Hasan	HC (SHEIKH)
4	Maulana Muzaffar Hussain	HC (SYED)
5	Maulana Syed Nizamuddin	HC (SYED)
6	Maulana Abdul Karim Parekh	HC
7	Abdur Raheem Qureshi	LC
8	Abdus Sattar Yusuf Shaikh	HC (SHEIKH)
9	Maulana Wali Rahmani	HC (SYED)
10	Sabir Bhai Nooruddin	HC (SYED)
11	Ibrahim Suleman Sait	HC
12	Maulana Asad Madani	HC (SYED)
13	Maulana Mujahidul Islam Qasmi	HC (SHEIKH)
14	Maulana Mohammad Salim Qasmi	HC (SHEIKH)
15	Ghulam Mehmood Banatawala	HC
16	Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi	HC
17	Maulana Burhanuddin Sambhali	HC (SHEIKH)
18	Yusuf Hatim Muchhala	HC (SYED)
19	Maulana Mohammad Rabe Nabi	HC (SYED)
20	Mufti Mohammad Zafar Uddin	HC (SHEIKH)
21	Manjur Alam	HC (SHEIKH)

22	Maulana Hamiduddin Aqil Heshami	HC
23	Zafaryab Jilani	LC
24	Ghulam Mehmood Memon	HC (SHEIKH)
25	Maulana zillur Rahman siddiki	HC (SHEIKH)
26	Maulana Tayyab ur Rehman	HC (SHEIKH)
27	Maulana Abdul Hafiz Junaidi	HC (SYED)
28	Mufti Fazlur Rahman Hilal Usmani	HC (SHEIKH)
29	Syed Shahabuddin	HC (SYED)
30	Maulana Mukhtar Ahmad Nadvi	HC (SHEIKH)
31	Maulana Ahmad Ali Qasmi	LC (IRAQI)
32	Ameenul Hasan Rizvi	HC (SYED)
33	A.K. Abdus Samad	HC
34	Maulana Mohammed Jafar	HC
35	Mufti Ashraf Ali	HC
36	Hakeem Irfan ul Hussaini	HC (SYED)
37	Mufti Ahmed Khanpuri	HC (SHEIKH)
38	Abdul Mannan	HC (SHEIKH)
39	Prof Riaz Umer	HC

All India Milli Council - Executive Committee Members

S. No	Name	Social Class
1	Maulana Mujahiduddin Islam Kasmi	HC (SHEIKH)
2	Syed Maulana Mohammed Nizamuddin	HC (SYED)
3	Maulana Abdul Wahab Khilji	HC
4	Kamal Farooqui	HC (SYED)
5	Ameenul Hasan Rizvi	HC (SYED)
6	Dr Manjur Alam	HC (SHEIKH)
7	Maulana Asraul Haq	LC (KULHAIYYA)
8	Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait	HC (SYED)

9	Maulana Abdullah Mungeri	HC (SYED)
10	Maulana Mujibullah Mungeri	HC (SYED)
11	Dr Syed Kalbe Sadiq	HC (SYED)
12	Zafaryab Jilani	LC
13	Syed Ali Mohammad Naqvi	HC (SYED)
14	Dr Naeem Hamid	HC (SHEIKH)
15	Professor Nafees Ahmad	HC (SHEIKH)
16	Maulana Khalil ur Rahman Sajjad Nomani	LC
17	Dr Syed Abdul Bari	HC (SYED)
18	Suleman	HC (SHEIKH)
19	Prof Muqeem Uddin	HC (SHEIKH)
20	Khan Wahid Ali	HC (PATHAN)
21	Abdus Sattar Yusuf Shaikh	HC (SHEIKH)
22	Sabir Bhai Nooruddin	HC (SYED)
23	G. M. Banatvala	HC (SYED)
24	Abdul Gani Atlaswala	HC (SHEIKH)
25	Yusuf Hatim Muchhala	HC (SYED)
26	Abdul Hafeez Khan	HC (PATHAN)
27	Abdul Raheem Qureshi	LC
28	Maulana Sulaiman Sikander	HC (SHEIKH)
29	Maulana Rizwan ul Qasmi	HC (SHEIKH)
30	Kamrul Islam	HC
31	Ibrahim Khalil Ullah	HC (SYED)
32	Hakeem Irfan ul Hussaini	HC (SYED)
33	Ahmed Hassan Imran	
34	Maulana Farooq ul Ahmed	HC (SHEIKH)
35	Maulana Tayyab ur Rehman	HC (SYED)
36	Hafiz Raseed Ahmed Choudhury	HC
37	J.M. Khan	HC (PATHAN)

38	Manjur Alam	HC
39	Abdul Qayyum Akhtar	HC
40	Captain N.A. Amir Ali	

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, EDARA-E-SHARIA

S. No	Name	Social Class
1	Kari Shamshul Hoda	HC (SYED)
2	Syed Mohammed Aftab	HC (SYED)
3	Syed Iqbal Rasool	HC (SYED)
4	Abdul Mannan Khan	HC (PATHAN)
5	Syed Mohammed Ansarul Haq	HC (SYED)
6	Mohammad Jamaluddin Asarfi	LC (RAEEN)
7	Mohammad Shamim Akhtar Rizvi	LC (MUKERI)
8	Mohammed Mansoor Sahab	HC (SHEIKH)

EDARA-E-SHARIA, SULTANGANJ (PATNA) OFFICE BEARERS

S. No	Name	Social Class	Designation
1	Maulana Arsdul Qadri	LC (ANSARI)	SARPARASTE ALA
2	Mufti Anees Alam	HC (SYED)	AMIR-E-SHARIA
3	Maulana Jamal Ahmad Qadri	HC (SYED)	SADAR
4	Alhad Syed Sanaullah	HC (SYED)	NAZIMIALA
5	Alhad Gulam Raja alias Munne Sahab	HC (SYED)	NAIB SADAR

6	Mohammed Junaid Hussain	HC (SHEIKH)	KHAZIN
7	Mohammed Wali Uddin Rizvi	HC (SHEIKH)	NAIB SADAR
8	Haji Mohammad Rustam Ali Rizvi	LC (MANSOORI)	NAIB SADAR
9	Haji Faizullah Khan Razvi	HC (PATHAN)	NAIB SADAR
10	Haji Mohammed Ilyas Hussain	LC (ANSARI)	NAIB SADAR
11	Maulana Zia Ullah Jaalvi	HC (SYED)	ADVERTISEMENT SECRETARY

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Curriculum Vitae

Khalid Anis Ansari's primary research pertains to social and cultural theory, focusing on democracy and counterpublics, sociology of caste and religion, and minority studies. He received an MBA in Human Resource Management and BA Hons. in Economics from the Aligarh Muslim University, India. Later he acquired an MA in Sociology from Annamalai University, India, and qualified for the UGC-National Eligibility Test in 2013. He was awarded the HIVOS Ph.D. Fellowship—Pluralism Knowledge Programme in 2010 anchored by the University of Humanistic Studies (UvH), the Netherlands.

Khalid has expertise in teaching social anthropology for about eight years in diverse classroom settings. Before joining academics, he worked in leadership positions in the social sector for almost twelve years and coordinated several community development projects supported by international donor agencies such as the HIVOS (the Netherlands), Mensen Met Een Missie (the Netherlands), Action Aid (UK), and the Gandhi Foundation (United Kingdom). Khalid has published widely in reputed academic journals and popular spaces like the Economic & Political Weekly, Critical Philosophy of Race, The Women Philosophers' Journal (UNESCO), The Indian Express, The Hindu, The Print, Outlook, and The Wire. Besides, he has delivered invited talks at prominent universities like the Michigan University (US), Harvard University (US), University of Humanistic Studies (the Netherlands), University of Free State (South Africa), and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (India), and so on.

Khalid heads the Dr. Ambedkar Centre for Exclusion Studies & Transformative Action (ACESTA) at the Glocal University, India, and is also Research Advisor to the US-

based policy and advocacy group South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT).