

**THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE  
MUSLIMS OF CALCUTTA, 1876-1921**

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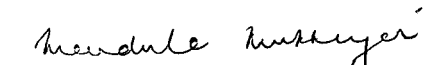


### CERIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE MUSLIMS OF CALCUTTA, 1876-1921**” by **OSAMAZAID RAHMAN** is in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. To the best of my knowledge this is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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(Supervisor)

  
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*Dedicated to*

*Abba*

*and*

*Amma*

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# *Introduction*

The vast urban space settled along the banks of the Hooghly forms the core of the modern urban experience in India; not only in the sense that it was the first of its kind but also in that it presents, from the very beginning a 'microcosm'<sup>1</sup> of a new and modern urban life. Established and settled by the British it never became a city of the British. It was a city of those who settled there, both permanently and temporarily. Calcutta never asked them to shed their individuality, or separate identity, but it adopted, assimilated or rather wove them into its own life. As a result we find all shades of life in existence in the city, some discordant others more integrated. Within this urban microcosm one can easily look for the individual shades of identity which different communities carried and maintained. Calcutta, its history and its urban culture, have been subjected to extensive research. This dissertation will focus on group of people inhabiting Calcutta and their lived experiences of the city, i.e. the Muslim community, inhabiting this vast urban sprawl. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been chosen as the time frame for this dissertation. The choice of the topic and the time frame need justification.

Among the vast array of literature on Calcutta, very few have been written on the Muslim community residing there. The recently published volumes on Calcutta edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri<sup>2</sup> contain very scanty reference to the Muslims. Though the authors in the volume deal in detail about various aspects of the city, some with very limited written history, the references to the Muslim community do remain scanty. The only substantial historical work about the Muslims of Calcutta is to be found in Kenneth McPherson's study monograph.<sup>3</sup> So there is some scope for a full length dissertation on

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<sup>1</sup> The work microcosm was used by Kenneth McPherson in his study on the Muslims of Calcutta, though his use of the term refers exclusively to the Muslim community residing there, the term here is used as a synonym for the different communities residing with in the same urban space. See Kenneth M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918-1935*, (Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1974)

<sup>2</sup> Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Calcutta The Living City*, Volume I. The Past & Volume II. The Present and Future, (Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990)

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm*, op. cit.

the subject. This dissertation will explore the formative phase of institutionalized politics of the Muslim community and will try to link that to the social profile of the community. As the formative phase of Muslim politics was shaped by with the educational and economic depression of the community in the late nineteenth century, this dissertation will focus on the education of the Muslim community of Calcutta, focusing on the premier institution of Muslim education in Bengal, i.e. the Calcutta Madrassa. The dissertation will take into consideration the pattern of Muslim migration and settlement into the city and the changes that occurred during the concerned period.

## II

There is no other historical work directly on the Muslims of Calcutta. However, a lot has been written on the Muslims of Bengal in general. As will be seen in the following chapter that there was a huge amount of Muslim migration into Calcutta from Bengal proper than from the other provinces. A brief survey of the literature on the Bengal Muslims in general is attempted here. It should be made clear from the very beginning that such Muslim migration from the districts of Bengal was always of those who were located at the lowest rung of the economic ladder. For McPherson the unskilled labour force migration from different quarters of India is viewed against the background of the "relative prosperity in rural Bengal" as against the "rural unemployment and under-employment" in other provinces of the subcontinent.<sup>4</sup> Coupled with this, a better "road and rail communication"<sup>5</sup> between Calcutta and the Gangetic Valley, rather than with its own hinterland and other districts of Bengal, enabled labour flows from the other provinces of India than from Bengal proper. While this may hold true for the general migration pattern of the city for Muslim migration to the city this thesis might not be applicable. McPherson at no point ever attempts such an endeavour, his analysis of the Urdu speaking Ashraf holding the political reins in Calcutta, indirectly connects with this

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<sup>4</sup> M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm*, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm*, p. 3.



hypothesis. It should be noted that the penetration of Mughal culture into Bengal proper and the adoption of this culture by the Muslims notables in the mofussil enabled the Urdu speaking Muslims to impose their political culture as a given fact of the cultural life of the elite Muslims of Bengal. However, the Bengali speaking Muslims of the city was economically so depressed that to form a block of their own becomes an unthinkable job; particularly against the fact the their leaders in the mofussil adopted the cultural of this Urdu speaking Ashraf of Calcutta.

W.W. Hunter's work could be regarded in the historiography as the first work published on the Bengali Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Though entitled *The Indian Mussalman*, the work really focuses on the Bengal Muslims. The Bengal Muslim is seen by Hunter as a 'Rebel Camp'<sup>7</sup> inside the British territory, which provided both men and money for the Islamic jihad against the British Empire. The explanation which Hunter proposed for such a state of affair is the gradual deterioration of the Muslims under the British. This deterioration is impelled by many causes, some of which are directly connected with the administration the British sponsored in India. The coming of the British rule destroyed the structure of privileges enjoyed by the Muslim elite which had undermined their social and economic bases of power. The loss of these privileges by the British brought the community to a gradual state of deterioration, which they attributed to the coming of the British rule. The others causes are directly connected with the psychological makeup of Muslims in India, their sense of rulership and bygone memories of past power that had been destroyed by the British. Hunter proposes the remedy to this 'source of chronic danger to the British Power in India'<sup>8</sup>: the improvement of the educational and economic condition of the Muslims under colonial auspices in Bengal through the efforts of the British government which will convert the potential 'danger' into loyal subjects of the British Empire in India. Both in the *Indian Mussalman* and through the later educational commission which he headed, this policy of cooption was strongly recommended.

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<sup>6</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalman*, Second Edition, London, 1872.

<sup>7</sup> W.W. Hunter, 'The Indian Mussalman', p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> W.W. Hunter, 'The Indian Mussalman', p. 3

Richard Eaton's<sup>9</sup> work is an important early thesis to begin with. In the entire region of Bengal, an exceptional development, according to Eaton, was that "a majority of the indigenous population adopted the religion of the ruling class, Islam."<sup>10</sup> Eaton endeavors to explain this phenomenon in terms of the political advent of the Muslims in the region along with the type of condition it presented to different 'audiences'<sup>11</sup> in the political, ideological and cultural realm. In the entire discussion, Eaton's 'audiences' in Bengal who responds to Islam are clearly marked into well structured political compartments, having their own idiosyncrasies and notions of political sovereignty. A pattern of political compromises arose not so much from the evolution of syncretism but from the cohabitation of different audiences in a single political platform (though the platform was condition and ruled by the one upon the other i.e. the Mughal upon the rural masses). Though Eaton is himself aware of the segregation of royal power from the popular, this does not prevented him to refer to the Muslims conquerors as Bengal quite apart form its religious brethren on the throne.<sup>12</sup> "In Bengal, Muslim converts were drawn mainly from Rajbansi, Pod, Chandal, Kuch, and other marginal indigenous groups that had only been lightly exposed to Brahmanic culture."<sup>13</sup>

Eaton's study intermingles many areas of historical reasoning in an attempt to answer the paradox "why did such a large Muslim population emerged in Bengal"<sup>14</sup>. He divides the entire period of Muslim rule into pre-Mughal and Mughal

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<sup>9</sup> Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*, (Oxford University Press, 1997)

<sup>10</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier', p. xxii

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier' p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Eaton in order to separate the two sites of power refers to with different adjectives however his tone so indicate a distinct identity for the Muslim rulers of Bengal. P.35, Referring to the invasion of Bengal by Sultan Firuz Tughluq in 1353 and 1359, and the successful evasion of the attempts by the Ilyas Shahi rulers, Eaton uses the phrase "Bengali kings" in reference to the Ilyas Shahi rulers, which clearly convey the message that Eaton wants to construct a separate identity for the Muslims conquerors of Bengal to the extent that they became culturally distinct from their north Indian counterparts, though having the came religion and coming form the same racial stock. p. 41

Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier', p 118 [for the similar kind of groups in Punjab see Eaton's "The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid" in Barbara D. Metcalf *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1984)]

<sup>14</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier', p. xxii

period<sup>15</sup> that is clearly noticeable through the division of the book into parts - the Sultans and the Mughals. Referring to the various travelogues prior to the sixteenth century Eaton comes to the conclusion that, by the end of the sixteenth century, large numbers of rural Muslim communities did not exist on the rural landscape of Bengal as the Censuses made clear after 1872. Though Islamization was never the official policy of the Mughals, the administrative officers were interested in enhancing agricultural productivity in order to increase the state revenue, which created a situation that introduced Islam as the aftereffects of administrative and agrarian changes introduced by the Mughals in Bengal.<sup>16</sup>

Eaton's study intermingles many areas of historical reasoning in an attempt to answer the paradox "why did such a large Muslim population emerged in Bengal"<sup>17</sup>. He divides the entire period of Muslim rule into pre-Mughal and Mughal period<sup>18</sup> that is clearly noticeable through the division of the book into parts - the Sultans and the Mughals. Referring to the various travelogues prior to the sixteenth century Eaton comes to the conclusion that by the end of the sixteenth century large number of rural Muslim communities were not seen to exist in the rural landscape of Bengal as the Censuses made clear after 1872. Though islamization was never the official policy of the Mughals, the administrative officers were interested in enhancing agricultural productivity in order to increase the state revenue, which created a situation that introduced Islam as the aftereffects of administrative and agrarian changes introduced by the Mughals in Bengal.<sup>19</sup> The political expansion of the Mughal rule in the delta was not met with prolonged resistance but "by the adoption of a distinctly Islamic identity"<sup>20</sup>. "In the Dkaha region, Muslim peasant communities were reported as early as 1599"<sup>21</sup>. This phenomenon is explained by taking up different areas of investigation. The first is the

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<sup>15</sup> Eaton does not however follow the conventional pattern of divided Muslim rule in Indian history. This division is in response to the ecological, administrative and agrarian changes occurring in Bengal after the coming of the Mughals to political supremacy.

<sup>16</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier., p. 134

<sup>17</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier., p. xxii

<sup>18</sup> Eaton does not however follow the conventional pattern of divided Muslim rule in Indian history. This division is in response to the ecological, administrative and agrarian changes occurring in Bengal after the coming of the Mughals to political supremacy.

<sup>19</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier., p. 134

<sup>20</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier., p. 192

<sup>21</sup> Richard M. Eaton, 'The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier., p. 192

extension of Bengal ecological frontiers eastwards enabling communities to convert forested land into agricultural lands. According to Eaton, this was not a natural phenomenon but was conditioned by human efforts. Due to the environmental changes, the active population of the west started shifting east of the delta, leading not only to the change in the pattern of settlement, but also enabling the eastern population to swell at an extraordinarily high pace. Centrally located in this development are the pioneering efforts of the Muslim pirs who championed the cause of the cleaning and settlement of these forested land, and made Islam “a civilization-building ideology associated both with settling and populating the land”.<sup>22</sup>

Asim Roy's<sup>23</sup> seminal monograph on the syncretic traditions in Bengal underlines the process of Islamization as a ‘historical phenomenon’<sup>24</sup> as well as analyzing it ‘in a given situation’.<sup>25</sup> Locating the varied forms which Islam took in its progress from Mecca to various other parts of the globe especially within the context of Bengal, he emphasized the emergence of the cultural mediators in translating the basics of the religion into a cultural and a language very much alien to the basics of the Islamic religion. For Roy the ‘indigenous and low-origin of the Muslim masses in Bengal’ coupled with the ‘social and cultural considerations’, are important factors in determining the pattern of Islamization in the region. The role of the pirs is emphasized by Roy as a medium of translating the alien culture with an alien language to the local converts in rural Bengal. These *pirs* not only adopted the Bengali language in their attempt to purify Islam among the rural masses but they also adopted non-Islamic idiom and symbols in order to make the rural mass more acquainted to what they were teaching. This constitute for Roy two different ‘Traditions’ (i.e. the Greater and the Little Traditions), where the Little traditions did follow the Greater tradition but in a pattern very much from the basic parameters of the Greater Tradition. This again for Roy, raises the fundamental question of what constitutes being a Muslim. This question takes us to the analysis of yet another

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<sup>22</sup> Richard M. Eaton, ‘The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier’, p. 226

<sup>23</sup> Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Asim Roy, ‘The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition’, p. xi

<sup>25</sup> Asim Roy, ‘Islamization in South Asia with Special Reference to the Bengali-Speaking Region: A Conceptual and Historical Re-evaluation’, in Geoffrey A. Oddie, ed., *Religious Traditions in South Asia: Interaction and Change*, Curzon, 1998, p. 29.

exponent of the same situation (i.e. Rafiuddin Ahmed<sup>26</sup>) though his book was published two years before Roy's.

Rafiuddin Ahmed's introductory remarks about the Muslim population of present day Bangladesh and West Bengal and the question of the emergence of a sense community within them, may make the topic Bengali Muslims such a complex one that at moment the two words 'Bengali Muslims' appear to be contradictory to each other. Ahmed clearly shows that at different epoch diverse aspect of his (the Bengali Muslims') personality became highlighted and expressed. At one moment he was a Muslim, at other he was a Bengali emphasizing the language he spoke and the socio-cultural environment he possess, and still at another he expressly states the nation he inhabit.<sup>27</sup> It should be thus seen that his framework contains many separate identities characterizing the Bengali Muslims. Emphasizing one will definitely leave many others, which at moment appears to be conflicting, if not belligerently related, to the one thus emphasized. Is it then correct to compartmentalize any discussion on this Muslim population, inhabiting a particular geographical space at a particular time and in a specific contextual sitting? It should be remembered that Ahmed is theorizing within the contextual framework of a few centuries, during which much of what we now call specific traits of Bengali Muslims emerged, got strengthened and expressed themselves in explicit terms. It should also be remembered that the nineteenth century (more specifically the later half of the century), was a period of transition for the Bengali Muslims. It was then that they became aware of their being Muslims, as being different from their Hindu neighbors not only in spirit but also in social norms and cultural mores, it was then that the language they spoke became solidified as a part of their identity, and it was then that they became aware of the statistical strength they occupies within the geographical space of Bengal. As the century progressed and crossed itself, they slowly but gradually came to possess the different traits of their public identity which now form a solid background for any such theorization. The nineteen century (especially the last two decade of the nineteenth century) did produce, despite the cultural ambivalence that have characterize the Bengali

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<sup>26</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 A Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981.

<sup>27</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Emergence of the Bengal Muslims', in Rafiuddin Ahmed, ed. *Understanding the Bengal Muslims, Interpretive Essays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p 3-4.

Muslim history since the medieval period<sup>28</sup>, a self conscious community defining itself primarily as Muslims by the early part of the twentieth century, but the dichotomy between the Bengali and the Muslim did continue for a long time to be eventually expressed in belligerent terms.<sup>29</sup>

Ahmed focuses on the Bengali Muslim *puthi* literature produced during the nineteenth century, by both the traditional *mullahs*, who wanted to preserve 'the traditional practices in the Sunni Muslim society'<sup>30</sup>, and the 'reformist' who wanted to 'educate the masses on religious matters'.<sup>31</sup> The publishers of these tracts were often too poor to publish them. Thus finances were provided from within the villages and they were sold at cheap prices. They were often read out loudly, at the assemblage of villagers, for those who could not read themselves. Ahmed highlights the sense of social, political and communal solidarity created by these writings in the mind of the ordinary rural folk. They started to segeagate themselves from their cultural brethren who had unfortunately become their religious rival.

Pradip Kumar Lahiri's<sup>32</sup> book on the Bengali Muslim's thought between 1818 and 1947 covers a long period and gives a survey of the political trends which took place in the thought of the Muslims of Bengal. For Lahiri the proposition that the coming of the British rule "deprived the Muslim gentry of their.... Privileges"<sup>33</sup> is an established fact. While the Hindus adjusted themselves to the new situations opened by the introduction of Western education, the Muslims remaining attached to their time honoured customs and manners. Lahiri explores the nature of the thought process among the Muslim intellectuals of Bengal. An important aspect of the book is its comparative nature. Lahiri at moments compares Muslim thought with the Hindu socio-political thought emanating from personalities such as Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda and others. So in Lahiri's analysis there appears to be particular yard stick to judge the liberal

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<sup>28</sup> Asim Roy, 'The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal', pp. 58-83.

<sup>29</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Emergence of the Bengal Muslims', p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906', p. xvi.

<sup>31</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906', p. xvi

<sup>32</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, *Bengali Muslim Thought (1818-1947) Its Liberal and Rational Trends*, K.P. Bagchi & Comp., New Delhi, 1991.

<sup>33</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, *Bengali Muslim Thought (1818-1947) Its Liberal and Rational Trends*, K.P. Bagchi & Comp., New Delhi, 1991, p. 2

content thought such comparison among the Muslim of the province. Thus Mir Moshraf Hossain's *Gojiban* (1888) appears in the writing to be a very liberal treatise as he urged the Muslim community to stop cow-slaughter in order to maintain cordial relations with the Hindu.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand Pandit Reazuddin Ahmed Mashadi's work *Agnikukut* represents orthodox ideas as he defended cow-slaughter.<sup>35</sup> Such arguments are very commonly found in the book. For Lahiri movement such as the Wahabbi, Faraizi, Tariqah-e-Muhammadiya represents the reformist trend in the Muslim world, while those who opposed such movement, for its expressly militant character, were termed as traditionalists. Thus Abdool Luteef's criticism of the Fazaizis is clubbed along with the Ulamas of Bengal who condemned the Faraizis and regarded them as 'ignorant and misguided'.<sup>36</sup> Lahiri's work is mainly based on the secondary literature with very few references to the primary sources on the topic. However it is an excellent survey of the existing literature about the Muslim of nineteenth century Bengal.

Sufia Ahmed's<sup>37</sup> study on the Muslim community of the Bengal Presidency takes into account the period 1884-1912. The book follows a very conventional division into educational, economic, social and political activities of the Muslims of Bengal. The book has a separate chapter on the Muslim Bengali writing between the concerned period of research. In the field of education Ahmed is of the opinion that the Muslims of Bengal did "make a drastic advance"<sup>38</sup>. The advance was both in terms of locating the "deficiencies in their own system of schools"<sup>39</sup> and the shifts from an archaic to a modern syllabi handed over by the British Government. The Government of Bengal was also aware of the problem of Muslim education during the concerned period. In terms of the political advance of the Muslim, Ahmed projects the period as one of realization. She is of the opinion that the Partition of Bengal was an event more important for the Muslims of Bengal than the formation of the Muslim league. The annulment of the Partition dashed all hopes of the Muslim community.

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<sup>34</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, 'Bengali Muslim Thought', pp. 44-45.

<sup>35</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, 'Bengali Muslim Thought', pp. 45-46.

<sup>36</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, 'Bengali Muslim Thought', p. 33

<sup>37</sup> Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, OUP, Dacca, 1974.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 370.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. 370.

Among the other books on the Muslims of Bengal during the nineteenth century mention could be made of Pradip Kumar Lahiri's<sup>40</sup> efforts to sketch the political thought of the community from 1818 to 1947. Though a very long period of study, Lahiri tries to wean different current of thoughts into a single story, often comparing them with the Hindu thought then prevalent. Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi's<sup>41</sup> study of the South Asian politics from 1876 to 1892 concentrates more on the leaderships that grew, within the Muslims of Bengal, after the revolt of 1857. The book has a lot of discussion in terms of the Muslim leadership that evolved in Bengal after 1857. Jayanti Maitra's work on the Muslim politics in Bengal, between 1855 and 1906, is important from the point of view of Muslim associations that evolved during the period. Maitra discusses extensively the policies undertaken by these associations in Bengal. Asim Pada Chakrabarti's<sup>42</sup> monography deals with the phase of Muslim politics after the annulment of the Partition. He tries to show how the annulment created dissatisfaction among the Muslim of Bengal towards the British government, leading to their participation in the Congress.

The first historiographical reference to the Muslims of the city is to be found in S.N. Mukherjee's<sup>43</sup> article on Calcutta. Mukherjee quoting from Finch's<sup>44</sup> article on Calcutta give evidence of linguistic categorization of the Muslims of the city into Bengali and Western Muslims. He says that during 1837<sup>45</sup> there was 45, 067 Bengali Muslims as against 13,677 Western Muslims<sup>46</sup>. Mukherjee rewrite the graph given in Finch without any explanation of what the term Bengali Muslims and Western Muslims implies. Similarly the Hindu community was divided into Bengali Hindus and Western Hindus. It seems that these terms are linguistic categories and are indicative of people speaking Bengali and other languages. Bengali Muslims thus being two and a half times

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<sup>40</sup> Pradip Kumar Lahiri, *Bengal Muslim Thought (1818-1947)*, K.P. Bagchi and Comp, New Delhi, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, *Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia 1876-92*, Islamabad, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Asim Pada Chakrabarti, *Muslim Identity and Consciousness, Bengal Legislative Politics 1912-36*, Minerva, Calcutta, 1993.

<sup>43</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Classes, Castes and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38' in Edmund Leach & S.N. Mukherjee, eds. *Elites in South Asia*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970)

<sup>44</sup> C. Finch, 'Vital Statistics of Calcutta', in *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. 13, 1850.

<sup>45</sup> Estimate made in 1837 by W. Birch, the Superintendent of Police in Calcutta, on the basis of the report made by the assessor of house tax. See S.N. Mukherjee, 'Classes, Castes and Politics', p. 37. Also see H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1976, p. 5-8.

<sup>46</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Classes, Castes and Politics', p. 37.



more than Western Muslims which seem to be the non Bengali speaking Muslims. But the Hindu population was four time as large as the Muslim population with “[t]he total Bengali Muslim population .....(being) less then half the total Bengali Hindu population.”<sup>47</sup> Mukherjee firstly tries to demolish Hunter’s thesis of Muslim backwardness in Bengal. The commonsense belief that the British administration took away the existing privileges of the Muslims and deprived them educationally and economically depressing irrevocably their economic condition, does not fit the general tenor of history during the Nawab’s reign in Bengal. For him, Muslims, even in the days of the Nawab’s “never had a monopoly in all branches of administration”. They held the highest executive positions in the “government and controlled the army and the administration”. However, this control, for him, did not make the “the Hindus” “a deprived class”.<sup>48</sup> Hindus “monopolized the administration of the revenue (*dewani*)”.<sup>49</sup> Muslims were deprived in the British rule because of the colonial context over the “established native agencies”, which affected the Muslims more than the Hindus. Regarding the condition of the Muslims in Calcutta, however, Mukherjee presents a picture in which the Muslims were educationally much backward than the Hindus with Muslims being one to eight to the Hindus in respect to education.<sup>50</sup> Quoting Adam’s report he says that “there was no ‘account or record of any private institutions for Mahomedan learning either in Calcutta or in the surrounding districts’,”<sup>51</sup> and there was no “rich Muslim community in Calcutta (which) neither was willing to patronize traditional education nor was there a class eager to receive such education.”<sup>52</sup> Mukherjee, however, never clearly testifies the economic condition of the Calcutta Muslims in the 1830s, but he suggest that there was an absence of any community support to higher education. But he does not discuss the Calcutta Madrassa at all and does not explain why a group of Muslims requested Warren Hastings to establish the Calcutta Madrassa under the supervision of Maulavi Mudgid-O Din; and why Hastings responded to such a request

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<sup>47</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 39.

<sup>49</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, ‘Classes, Castes and Politics’, p. 42.

if there was no demand for higher education among the Calcutta Muslims. At the same time on this particular question colonial records are particularly silent.

Mukherjee's later work engrossed.<sup>53</sup> Mukherjee believed that "Calcutta.....had close links with its rural setting.....because it was through Calcutta that the British Capitalist system operated in India and left its imprint upon the city."<sup>54</sup> Thus for him "life in the city was [also] conditioned by the social mores of rural Bengal"<sup>55</sup> Mukherjee based his study on two sources: (i) Survey Records preserved at the India Office Library and (ii) House Assessment Books preserved at the Library and Record Room of the Calcutta Corporation. Mukherjee gives the detail of the properties owned by different communities during 1806. The nature of Muslims existence in Calcutta could be gathered from the fact that the "Muslim owned the largest number of straw huts ..... the largest number of vacant plots ....lower roomed houses,.... and commercial premises."<sup>56</sup> "The non-Bengali and Muslims constitute the bulk of the urban-lower order, living mostly in straw huts and tiled huts and most probably employed in the transport service. It is highly likely that the majority of the people in this area were Muslims. They held the largest number of lots and premises, not very valuable property, and there were 13 mosques."<sup>57</sup> Though that amounted to considerable property, the low value of these holdings reflects the economic condition of the Muslim community. But there were rich Muslims too. Mukherjee further writes that "[t]he Brahmins, Kayasthas and Muslims owned property in every street and they owned all types of premises, which perhaps indicates that these are very broad categories including rich, middling and poor classes."<sup>58</sup> Mukherjee takes into consideration a very limited area of Calcutta, encircling Cossitolah Street, Chitpur Road, Mudden Dutta lane, Colinga Moochipara lane, which, according to Mukherjee was "fairly densely populated" and "cosmopolitan in character".<sup>59</sup> Owing to this limited in focus, a comprehensive picture could not be

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<sup>53</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806: An Essay on the Urban History and the Computer' in S.N. Mukherjee, *Calcutta, Essays in Urban History*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1993.

<sup>54</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', p. 12.

<sup>57</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', pp. 13-14.

<sup>59</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Calcutta in 1806', p. 7.

formed. However, it reveals the presence of a large body of Muslim within the city could be testified from these records. He also clearly indicates a substantial property holding for the Muslim community as a whole when compares with the estates of the wealthy Hindu castes of the city.<sup>60</sup> But there existed a diversity of economic categories of Muslims in the city during the period, a substantial number of whom were small holders with vary low rented value of their property.

McPherson's<sup>61</sup> work on the Muslims of the city focuses on a much later period (i.e. 1918-1935), but a very important one. It covers the time the growth and development of a separatist politics in the city was taking shape, which culminated in the partitioning of the infant Indian nation in 1947. McPherson's work being from the eventful years of the post World War I scenario and ends with 1835, a history of approximately seventeen years in which he traces the growth of the Muslim community in the city. For McPherson, the Muslims of the city were a divided community at the beginning of 1918. He tries to trace a history of the development of the concept of community within the Muslims, when the old leadership was replaced by a new leadership which again was trying to achieve a supra interest group identity of its own.

For McPherson the Calcutta Muslims of the 1918 was a 'linguistic microcosm' where "Bengali was hard pushed to hold its own".<sup>62</sup> The most important aspect of McPherson's study is the focus on the change and complete transformation in the pattern of leadership within the Muslim community. Until 1918 Calcutta's Muslims were "a divided community" where it recognised leaders look for their own coterie of interest groups without the least sign of organised mass politics of the community within the city. They came from 'a variety of background' which included exiled Royalty as well as profession men and merchant. All upheld the sectional group interests above the interest of the community at large. However, from 1913 there appears a change in the traditional leadership of the community, with western educated and the mercantile class aspiring to represent not only their respective group but the entire Muslim community

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<sup>60</sup> S.N. Mukherjee, 'Owners and Premises 1806-1852', in S.N. Mukherjee, *Calcutta, Essays in Urban History*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1993.

<sup>61</sup> M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918-1935*, (Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1974)

<sup>62</sup> M. McPherson, 'The Muslim Microcosm', p. 2.

settled in the city. Park Circus developed as an exclusive settlement of the newly emergent western educated class in the city. McPherson's study relates with more with the political process in the city than with the social aspect of Muslim settlement. Though he very skilfully moves within the political and the social, his construction of the political history of the city's Muslims is more through the political than the social. Along with this McPherson provides stray reference to the settlement pattern of the Muslims, through no logical between Muslim settlements, their politics and the different social organization is drawn in his work. However, it gives an excellent history of the city's Muslims after the end of the First World War.

This dissertation has three chapters. The first Chapter discusses the Muslim population in Calcutta, during 1872 and 1921. A lot of weight is put on the Census of Calcutta and an attempt is made to tabulate the growth among the Muslim of Calcutta; their settlement pattern in the city; and pattern of Muslim migration during the concerned period. The economic condition of the community in Calcutta has also been dealt with, thought a survey of the type of occupations the Muslims are involved in.

The second chapter takes into consideration the formation of the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781 and the consequent policies of the British government towards Muslim education in Calcutta. The chapter also tries to locate the demands of the community both before and after 1857. Calcutta Madrassa has been the centre of discussion in the chapter and the Muslim politics towards education has been located within the ambit of the institution.

The third chapter tries to locate the political development among the Muslims of Calcutta, especially after 1857. The various associations that grew in Calcutta after the revolt have been discussed thoroughly. An attempt is made to locate the politics of the community along the line of these associations.

*Chapter 1*

*The Muslims in Calcutta:  
1876-1921*

## I

### ESTABLISHMENT OF CALCUTTA

In 1687, Job Charnock, an agent of the English East India Company, and the chief of the English factory in Cassim Bazar, received permission to establish a factory in Sutanuti. A peace treaty was signed between the Mughals and the Company in 1690. The foundation of Calcutta was laid with the establishment of an English Factory at Sutanuti, a village on the bank of the Hooghly river, by the English Factor Job Charnock on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1690<sup>1</sup>, which later expanded along with the addition of the villages of Sutanuti, Govindapur and Kalikata along with the factory.<sup>2</sup> In 1698, Aurangzeb appointed his grandson Mohammed Azim Al Din as Bengal's Subedar (Governor) and in the same year the Company bought the Zamindari (rights to collect land revenue) of Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindapur from the Subarna Chowdhury family. The union of three villages - Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindapur came to be known as Calcutta. There are, of course, several other theories about how Calcutta got its name. However, immediately after acquiring those rights the English started fortifying the area. The Company completed the construction of the first Fort William (named after King William I) in 1699.

Meanwhile, Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the Subedar of Bengal in 1700. The death of Aurangzeb in 1707, led to a gradual weakening of the Mughal Empire and its hold over the provincial Subedars like Murshid Quli. Murshid Quli Khan shifted the capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Murshidabad. The Nawabs of Bengal slowly became independent of the Mughals. In 1707, Calcutta became a separate presidency under the control of the directors of the East India Company, London. In 1717, the Company obtained from the Mughal Emperor Farukhsiyar, the confirmation of duty free trading right over the province of Bengal against a sum of Rupees three thousand. Along with this, the Company got the permission to purchase 38 villages which extended down

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<sup>1</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", in *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> The Mughal Prince Azim-Us-Shan in 1698 gave permission to Charnock to purchase the two adjoining villages (Govindapur and Kalikata) along with Sutanati which laid the foundation of Calcutta.

both sides of the Hooghly for a distance of 10 miles.<sup>3</sup> This agreement was resented by the local zamindars, who, along with the Bengal Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, objected to the integration of the villages, and prevented the Company in going forward with their design of expanding the area of Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> Although relations between the Nawab and the Company were strained, Calcutta became an important port and trading centre, and, by 1730, the population rose to 100,000.<sup>5</sup> The plan of expanding the area of Calcutta was accomplished with the involvement of the Company in the internal politics of Bengal, and, thereby, the attainment of an authoritative position after Plassey, which compelled Nawab Mir Jafar to allow the Company to purchase 55 villages which collectively came to be known as Dihi Panchanna Gram<sup>6</sup>. After Buxar and Clive's return in 1765, a treaty was signed between the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Robert Clive, on the 12th of August 1765, resulting in the British getting the Diwani (right to collect revenue) of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In return, the Mughal emperor was promised a yearly payment of two hundred sixty thousand rupees.

After the events of Plassey and Buxar, the Company started the construction of a new Fort William which was completed in 1773 after sixteen year's labour. As the fortunes of the Company and its revenue area in eastern India increased, so did the importance of Calcutta, the company's administrative headquarter of this region. These events led to the rise of Calcutta and consequently the decline of Murshidabad.

In 1773, with the passing of the Regulating Act in the British Parliament, Warren Hastings was appointed the first Governor General with de facto control of the other regions. Calcutta became the capital city of British India and the Madras and Bombay presidencies came under its control. In 1774, the British Parliament established a Supreme Court in Calcutta with Sir Elijah Impey as the Chief Justice. The Company continued with its policy of expansion and consolidation of its base in India. 1784 saw the passage of the Pitt's (William Pitt, Prime Minister of Britain) India Act whereby the

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<sup>3</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", p. 404.

<sup>4</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", p. 404.

<sup>5</sup> H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, p. 26.

Crown gained the administrative control of India's affairs. Calcutta's importance increased further with the passage of the bill. The events of 1857 led to a sea change in the politics of India. The last emperor of the Mughal Dynasty - Bahadur Shah II - was deposed and died in Burma. Queen Victoria assumed the Government of India on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1858. Calcutta became the Royal Capital of India, ruled by a Governor General and Viceroy. Queen Victoria became the Empress of India on 1st January 1877 and Calcutta became the Imperial Capital.

As the empire's second city, Calcutta's importance continued to increase and Calcutta became a municipality in 1852<sup>7</sup>. Imposing buildings were built and Calcutta became the "city of palaces". The city got a telegraph line in 1851 and railway service in 1854. The University of Calcutta was established in 1857, public sewerage system in 1859, filtered water supply in 1860, horse drawn tram carriages in 1873, the Hogg Market in 1874, the telephone exchange in 1882, the electricity supply in 1899, followed by electric trams in 1902. Calcutta grew as an important trading centre in Asia, with the East India Company having a monopoly in jute, tea, saltpeter, indigo and opium.

Along with the increase in the political and administrative importance of Calcutta, the city also grew in importance in the matter of culture and education. The Asiatic Society was established in 1784 by Sir William Jones. William Carey, a missionary, established a printing press in 1799. Bengali language, literature and culture went through a period of renaissance and Calcutta became the center of what is generally known as the Bengal Renaissance. Many of India's modern reform movements started in

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<sup>7</sup> This municipal government of Calcutta was reconstituted by an act of the Bengal legislature, passed in 1899. Previously, the governing body consisted of seventy-five commissioners, of which fifty were elected. Under the new system modeled upon that of the Bombay municipality, this body, styled the corporation, remains comparatively unaltered; but a large portion of their powers is transferred to a general committee, composed of twelve members, of whom one-third are elected by the corporation, one-third by certain public bodies and one-third are nominated by the government. At the same time, the authority of the chairman, as supreme executive officer, is considerably strengthened. The two most important works undertaken by the old municipality were the provision of a supply of filtered water and the construction of a central drainage system. The water-supply is derived from the river Hooghly. The drainage-system consists of underground sewers, which are discharged by a pumping-station into a natural depression to the eastward, called the Salt Lake. Refuse is also removed to the Salt Lake by means of a municipal railway. (Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Calcutta: The Living City*, Volume I. The Past, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990.)



Calcutta. Calcutta became a centre of the modern Indian intelligentsia. Similar was the case in the national struggle for independence. The partition of Bengal on 16 October, 1905, led to the beginning of the struggle against the British Government. Finally, in 1911, King George V revoked the partition. A Presidency of Bengal was set up with Calcutta as the capital. The capital of India was shifted to New Delhi to safeguard the Government from the Bengali nationalists. But the struggle continued in other forms and the beginning of Indian independence was marked by intense participation by the Bengali public. The symbolic importance of Calcutta could be gathered from the fact that Gandhiji decided to start the Non-Cooperation, after a special Congress session in Calcutta in 1920. Calcutta became a nerve centre of the Indian independence movement.

Until the attainment of Indian independence Calcutta remained an important city of India. Even after the shift of the capital to Delhi, the importance of Calcutta did not diminish. As this dissertation will however focus on the people residing in Calcutta especially the Muslim section of the city's population, I wish to begin with a brief account of the expansion of the city's population, starting from the various estimates to the carrying out of the first census of India in 1872. I will also try to analyze the rate of annual expansion of Calcutta's population based on the censuses from 1872 to 1921, and will try to figure out the pattern of this expansion. Lastly, I will try to analyze the volume of Muslim population growth in the city and the pattern of their settlement.

## II

### ESTIMATES OF THE POPULATION OF CALCUTTA

The population of Calcutta has been assessed time and again much before the actual Census operation started in 1872. The first such estimate that could be properly dated was that of Walter Hamilton in the year 1710. He estimates the population of Calcutta to be between 10,000 and 12,000. Taking into consideration the time period in which the estimate was taken and the actual figures given, it could properly be said that Hamilton only guessed the population of Calcutta without giving much thought or time to

the actual troubles of calculating the population of the city. Nothing can be known regarding the method Hamilton applied to evaluate the population, and his figures remain totally within the realm of observation. It could be that Hamilton calculated only a part of the city's population. Calcutta even during 1710, was a major trading center and was not expected to hold a population of barely 12000. This became clear with another such assessment coming just two decades after Hamilton's figures.<sup>8</sup>

Beverley, in his report to the Census of Calcutta, 1876, cites another estimate taken in 1730. The author, of this estimate can not be identified as Beverley writing in 1876 was not sure about him. He cites that the estimate was conducted in 1730 without giving much of its history. This particular estimate divides the entire city into two compartments, i.e. that of the Company's land and that of the zamindar's land. According to it Calcutta had an estimated population of 100,000 souls in the Company's land, and a projected 200,000 souls in the land owned by the zamindars. These figures are merely estimates which could be easily gathered from the fact that in twenty years the population of the city is not expected to increase in the proportion as shown in these two estimates.<sup>9</sup>

Beverley provides us with a list of six attempts to map the population of Calcutta before the Justice of Peace along with the Calcutta Municipality estimated the population of the city in 1821. The first was that of some Mr. McKintosh in the year 1782, who thought the population to be 500,000. D. Grandpre in 1789 computed the population to be least 600,000 souls. In the year 1800, a Police Committee was formed to estimate the population that put the population of the city at 500000, which evidently was about a 100,000 less then what Grandpre evaluated about eleven years before. The City Magistrates, two years after this (in 1802), estimated the population figures to be at 600,000. Fourth in the list comes Edward Hyde, who, in the year 1814, calculated the population to be 700,000. The East India Gazetteer in the year 1815 puts the figures at 500,000, about 200,000 less then what Hyde estimate it about a year before. It was only in the year 1821 that some attempts was made to tabulate the population of the city over

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<sup>8</sup> H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

and above those of estimates. The Justices of Peace tabulated the population and puts it at 230552; a relief from gross estimates given in zero figures. However, the methodology through which this particular calculation was done could not be known from Beverley's account. A year after that, in 1822, another estimate came into the scene in which the tabulators calculated the House Rate Books of the Calcutta Municipality and put the figures at 179917. It could not be known whether they put the number of persons in each houses as constant or they calculated the entire population form the House Rate Books. This calculation provides much lower figures than that given by the Justices of Peace; it was almost a quarter less then what was estimated about a year before. The reasons for this could easily be gathered from the way in which this particular estimate was assessed. By and large, House Books could be said to give figures of only those sections of the society who paid regular taxes to the Municipality and thus were permanently rooted in the city and had a stake in the city's life. They are not expected to say anything about those sections who migrated or who seasonally migrated to the city for jobs, living thus as rent payers to different house owners. In 1831, Captain Steel, the Superintendent of Police, calculated the figure at 187,081. According to Beverley, this could be regarded as a reliable figure; reasons about such a belief, Beverley himself is not very clear about.<sup>10</sup> In 1837, another Superintendent of Police, Captain Birch, attempted to tabulate the population of the city. He puts the figures at 229,714. This was the first time that any attempt was made to divide the population on the basis of sex. Birch put the males at 63 percents and the females at 37 percent.<sup>11</sup> In 1840 another attempt was by the Fever

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid* p. 7

<sup>11</sup> In the Census of The City of Calcutta, 1911, a very different kind of report is given regarding Birch,s estimate. It thus says, "Captain Birch, the Superintendent of Police, made a rough census extending over eight months, and returned the aggregate at 229305, of whom 144493 were male and 84812 were females" (p. 1). This figure does not matches with that provided in the Census of 1876. Later quotation of Birch's figures in the Census of 1911 gives a quite different picture about Birth's estimates. It also puts a question mark on Beverley's belief on the approximate reliability of Birch's figures. Commenting on the daily influx of laborers into the city the Census of 1911 quotes from Birch figures says that, "The daily influx of workers from outside as also characteristic of Calcutta in the first year of Queen Victoria's reign an enumeration held by Captain Birch showing that 177000 persons the town between 4 a.m. and 11 p.m." (p.1) (Birch's earlier figures are quoted in the Census of 1911 from 'Bengal and Agra Gazetteer, 1841). To what extent the later figure of the influx of workers is exaggerated could be found when we match the later figures of Birch with the estimated population of Calcutta. Though a difference of about a decade the influx of Workers could not be expected to be approximately 75 percent of the estimated population of 1837. [ref. Census of India, Volume VI, City of Calcutta, Part I Report, by, L.S.S. O'Malley, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913)

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Hospital Committee<sup>12</sup>, which divided the population into Fixed and Floating, indicating perhaps the large number of migrants inhabiting the city. This estimate puts the Fixed Population at 200,000 and the Floating Population at 300,000. Though approximate numbers, they clearly indicate to the large number of migrant workers who inhabit the city for jobs and leave the city during specific seasons. The Floating Population could also be that population which lives at the fringes of the city, working in the city during the day and leaving at night. Three more attempts were made before the proper census was conducted in the year 1876. The first was of J.H. Stocquelor in the year 1844 and the second was that of the City Magistrate in 1850. Stocquelor put the population at 200,000 and the city Magistrate puts it about a decade after it at 413,182. S.W. Sims, in the same year (1850), tried to calculate the native population of the city, as apart that of the British population, and puts the figures for the Native population at 361,369, leaving aside completely any desire to tabulate the British population, which could have been much easier a task. However, it was only in the year 1872 that the first proper census was conducted. Unfortunately, detailed figures for the city are not available for that year. The Census of 1872 gives details of the Suburbs of Calcutta and provides us with just a tabulated total population of the city for that particular year. The detailed Census for the city was conducted for 1876, from which date we have complete figures of the population of the city.

The population of Calcutta as enumerated in the Census of 1872 was 447,601.<sup>13</sup> Though nothing concrete is written in the Census report of 1872 about the Census in the Town of Calcutta, the Census of 1876 mentions the actual number of persons enumerated in the census of 1872. It also gives the following table<sup>14</sup> (Table 1) which gives the impression that prior to 1872 there was an attempt by the government to tabulate the population of the city. However, the unreliability of the Census of 1872 is clear from the following table as between four year of the two censuses (i.e. 1872 and 1876), the population of a capital city like Calcutta is not expected to decline at such an alarming rate. This was clear to Beverley himself as among the reasons for conducting a

<sup>12</sup> Nothing in Beverley's account is known about this committee or its composition of the reasons behind its formation.

<sup>13</sup> H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.12.



census at the middle of a decade (i.e. in 1876) the unreliability of earlier census and the destruction of all the census papers of 1872 were foremost.<sup>15</sup>

Table 1

POPULATION OF CALCUTTA	1866	1872	1876
Town Proper	358622	428458	409036
Fort William	3878	2453	2803
Port	15384	16660	17696
Total	377924	447601	429535

At the beginning of 1876, the population of the city proper was 429,036 souls. The average density of the city was 109 souls per acre.<sup>16</sup>

Table 2

1876 Population	Male	Female	Total	% male	% female	% difference
Town Proper	262455	146581	409036	64.2	35.8	28.3
Fort William	2408	395	2803	85.9	14.1	71.8
Port	17643	53	17696	99.7	0.3	99.4
Total	282506	147029	429535	65.8	34.2	31.5

From the very beginning, the population of the city revealed the character of a migrant population with the male exceeding the female by 31.5 percent of the total population. This aspect will be dealt with in more detail later. For now, the growth of the population up to 1921 is an important aspect which cannot be overlooked. During 1881 and 1921 the population of the city grew at an Average Annual Compound Growth<sup>17</sup> Rate

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p. 2; see also H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town and Suburbs of Calcutta. Taken on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1881*, (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1881), pp 3-5.

<sup>16</sup> H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> The Average Annual Growth Rate is calculated in the Excel Sheet as follows  $AGR = (EXP((LN(CURRENT YEAR) - LN(BASE YEAR)) / T) - 1) * 100$  where EXP=exponential, LN=natural logarithm, T=time period or rather the gap of time. The simple rate of growth will however differ from this compound rate of growth in the way that it takes into account only the volume of population without much. The formula for this particular calculation is simpler than the above one and is represented as follows:  $PR = (V \text{ present} - V \text{ past}) / V \text{ past} * 100 / N$ ; where PR = Percent Rate, V present = Present Population, V past = past population and N = number of years. As for example the simple rate of growth between the two periods (1881-1921) will be as follows. There is a slight difference in the rate of growth computed through these two methods. I have used the above method in my calculation of percent growth as it gives a compound growth rate rather than compute the difference between the population of two periods.

Increase in the total population of the city 1881-1921			
	1881	1921	% growth
City	401671	885815	3.01
Fort & Maidan	3348	2756	-0.44

of 1.67 percent, (Table 3) differing in the respective criterion in which the population of the city was assessed. The following table clearly shows that there was an overall increase in the population of the city, while the selective areas give a very different picture. The decline in the Fort and Maidan areas of the city cannot be explained as this particular area was not subjected to administrative changes which other areas were subjected to. The city experienced an increase on 2.0 percent annually in its overall population. However, such an increase can be explained by the fact that the area of the city was increased in 1886 by the inclusion of seven wards within the municipal administration of the Calcutta Corporation, which earlier was within the purview of the Suburb. Similarly, the Suburban population declined because the population got enumerated at a different place under a different head. Coming to the decline in the population of the area enlisted under the port and canal, it will be seen, later, when the population of a particular community will be considered, that the population of the Port and Canal declined because of the overall decline in the Hindu population of these areas. The picture will be clear when we separately deal with the different census figures coming at intervals of ten years. I have not taken the census of 1876 in these calculations, as, firstly, the difference between 1876 and 1881 is not of ten years but five which make it illogical to compare the comparative calculations between the censuses starting from 1881; and secondly the census of 1876 gives distorted figures, as when compared to the census of 1881 it shows decline in the rate of growth.

**Table 3**

Percentage Increase in the total population of the city 1881-1921			
Area	1881	1921 <sup>18</sup>	% Increase
<b>City</b>	401671	885815	2.00
<b>Fort &amp; Maidan</b>	3348	2756	-0.49
<b>Port &amp; Canal</b>	28200	19280	-0.95
<b>Suburb</b>	251439	224395	-0.28
<b>Total</b>	684658	1327547	1.27

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Port & Canal	28200	19280	-0.79
Suburb	251439	224395	-0.27
Total	684658	1327547	2.35

<sup>18</sup> The total population of 1921 given here will not correspond with the Census figures as I have subtracted the population of Howrah thus given in the census the population of that area could not be found in any of the previous censuses.

Starting from 1881, the city experienced different rates of growth between the different census periods which is stated below (Table 4). It is observed from the table that the population of the city proper grew at an alarming rate during the earlier period but, the rate of growth declined from the advent of the twentieth century. During 1881-1891 the rate of growth in Calcutta proper was 4.92 which got down to 2.22 during 1891-1901 and during 1901-11 it got down to just over half a percent annually going down further to 0.28 percent during 1911-21.

**Table 4**

% OF TOTAL ANNUAL GROWTH 1881-1921				
Area	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21
Town Proper	4.92	2.22	0.63	0.28
Fort William	0.35	2.89	-0.44	-4.59
Port	0.17	1.78	-1.26	-4.37
Suburb <sup>19</sup>			3.81	4.30
Grand Total	4.64	2.21	0.95	0.82

A similar trend is visible in the male and female population of Calcutta between 1881 and 1921. Both male and female growth in the city started at an alarming rate of 4.46 and 4.98 respectively. Both declined to 2.41 and 2.51 respectively during 1911-21. During 1891 and 1901, the female growth was much lower than the male growth, particularly when the period that preceded and that followed registered a rate of growth higher than the males. This also indicates an increased migration, particularly male migration, during 1881 and 1911. This particular aspect of migration will be dealt with later. At present we can regard this growth as fixed, particularly taking into account the absence of growth figure for the Suburbs during the years 1881-91 and 1891-1901.

**Table 5**

Percentage of Growth between 1881-1921, Male and Female								
Areas	male				female			
	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21
Town Proper	4.88	2.37	0.90	0.38	5.00	1.95	0.12	0.08
Fort William	0.38	2.26	0.05	-4.31	0.09	7.39	-3.67	-7.20
Port	0.19	1.76	-1.24	-4.35	-4.49	5.74	-5.16	-16.25
Suburb			3.78	4.43			3.85	4.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>4.98</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.84</b>

<sup>19</sup> The Census of 1891 does not give figures for the population of the Suburbs, thus the total population for 1881 and 1901 is here tabulated by subtracting the population of the Suburbs as given in the Census.

Taking the changes in the overall area of Calcutta which took place between 1881 and 1901, we should consider minutely whether this rate of growth could be regarded as a given fact. The increase at a rate of 1.27 percent during 1881-91 could also be explained from the point of view that during 1886, seven suburbs were added within the jurisdiction of the Justices of Peace, which could be the possible reason for an increase in the rate of growth during that period. But even if we subtract the population of the seven wards thus added from the overall population of 1891 (Table 6), there will be an overall growth of about 2.5 to 3, percent annually during the period under consideration. Coupled with this we observe that there is a growth in the suburbs.

Table 6

GROWTH IN THE 14 WARDS <sup>20</sup> BETWEEN 1881-1901			
	male	female	total
total 1901	225992	141639	367631
total 1881	144213	104138	248351
Average annual rate of growth	2.27	1.55	1.98

Though the exact figures for the suburban growth during 1881 and 1901 could not be calculated because of the unavailability in the census of 1891 of the suburban figures (details of the calculation could be had from the footnotes attached to the Suburb), the figures could be roughly tabulated on the basis of the figures available for the years 1881 and 1901. However, they also could not be regarded as exact figures of growth as the statistics for 1881 contain the population which later got transferred to the Calcutta Municipality. Similarly, suburban figures for 1901 do not contain those areas. However, for the sake of indicating the trends in the Suburbs between 1881 and 1901, I have segregated the population of the fourteen wards<sup>21</sup> which were assessed under the Suburbs in the census of 1881 and tried to locate them in the Census of 1901, where only Cossipur & Chitpur, Maniktollah and Garden Reach exist within the category of the Suburb while all others were incorporated in the main Calcutta population. The only exceptions were the areas of Ooltadanga and Ballighatta, the areas of which were

<sup>20</sup> The wards / areas taken in this calculation are Cossipur, Chitpur, Ooltadanga, Maniktollah, Ballighatta, Entally, Baniapookur, Ballygunge, Tollygunge, Alipore, Watgunge, Ekbalpore and Garden Reach.

<sup>21</sup> The fourteen wards in the Census of 1881 are Cossipur, Chitpur, Ooltadanga, Maniktollah, Ballighatta, Entally, Baniapookur, Ballygunge, Tollygunge, Alipore, Watgunge, Ekbalpore and Garden Reach.



divided and added into many adjacent wards of the Calcutta municipality.<sup>22</sup> In the census of 1901, there exists a category of added areas which I have added to the main body of this particular calculation, as most of these areas which were added to Shampukur, Bartala, Sukea Street and Muchipara existed within the suburbs of 1881.<sup>23</sup> However there is also a growth in the area of the respective wards of which the Census of 1891 does not provide any detail and, therefore, it becomes impossible to segregate them through the census of 1901. Keeping this problem as constant, the trends in the growth of the Suburban population give the following results for the years 1881 and 1901. It should be made clear that these could just be regarded as trends and are not exact calculation of the population of the areas. The trends do indicate that there was an overall increase in the population of the suburbs during 1881 and 1901. However, this increase attained an alarming pace after 1901 when there registered a growth of 3.81 and 4.30 during 1901-11 and 1911-21 respectively. The conclusion that could be deduced here is that after 1901 there is a specific trend in the settlement pattern. The population settles more in the suburbs than in the main Calcutta wards. Whether these are migrant population from outside the city, or are inter-migration between the city and the suburbs, are one of the many questions which could not be answered though the existing censuses. The reasons could be the cost of living in Calcutta proper, or problems in the administration: the suburbs have its separate administrative body with its separate rules and regulations that were different from the Calcutta Corporation.

<sup>22</sup> Between 1891 and 1901 there was an addition of some Suburbs into the main body of some of the wards of Calcutta with a total transfer of 471 acres containing a population of 45363 souls, the details of which are here given:

Added in the Census of 1901					
Added Areas	Added To	Area in Acre	Male	Female	Total
Ooltadangah	Shampukur	66	5275	3231	8506
Maniktollah	Bartala	124	7864	5608	13472
Balliagatha	Sukea Street	84	6921	4755	11676
Balliagatha	Muchipara	197	7958	3751	11709
Total area added		471	28018	17345	45363

However the total added area including the seven Wards of Entally, Baniapookur, Alipore, Ballygunge & Tollygunge, Watgunge, Ekbalpore and Garden Reach amounted to 8188 acres with a population of 266283 souls.

<sup>23</sup> See the above mentioned footnote.

Such an increase cannot be just through a natural increase. Taking the fact that Calcutta was an important urban center not only of Bengal but of the entire subcontinent, remaining the Capital of the British Indian territory up to 1911, a good amount of migration would have occurred. The important question at present is whether this increase is solely due to inter provincial migration or was a mixture of the natural growth of the city along with the migration that took place. Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya's article<sup>24</sup> on Calcutta tries to answer this basic question. For him, internal migration is one of the three basic factors of population change, the two other being fertility and mortality.<sup>25</sup> From the Census of 1881 till that of 1951, however, it was the change of birth place, not the change of the place of residence, which was considered as the criterion of internal migration in India.<sup>26</sup> Early Census Reports distinguish between five different types of migrations – casual, temporary, periodic, semi-permanent and permanent – though the relevant Census Tables do not show the volume of migration separately under each such type, showing only the number of persons born or found in one place but enumerated in another.<sup>27</sup> The preponderance of male over female in the population of Calcutta indicates that the growth of the population of Calcutta could not just be ascribed primarily to natural increase.<sup>28</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya brings out this aspect of Calcutta urban life.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", in *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 404-446.

<sup>25</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Internal migration is conveniently defined as the physical mobility of persons within the political boundary of their own country but across the frontier of their home province or home districts, such a mobility resulting in a change of the usual place of residence. See Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 2

<sup>27</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", in *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 408.

<sup>29</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", in *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 404-446.

Table 7

Year	City				Port			
	Male	Female	% of male	% of female	male	female	% of male	% of female
1876 <sup>30</sup>	276809	157769	63.7	36.3	19358	84	99.6	0.4
1881 <sup>31</sup>	260780	144239	64.4	35.6	28037	163	99.4	0.6
1891 <sup>32</sup>	418158	234711	64.0	36.0	28588 <sup>33</sup>	103	99.7	0.3
1901 <sup>34</sup>	528561	285020	65.0	35.0	34035 <sup>35</sup>	180	99.5	0.5
1911 <sup>36</sup>	577625	288287	66.7	33.3	30049	106	99.6	0.4
1921 <sup>37</sup>	598328	290243	67.3	32.7	19262	18	99.9	0.1

SUBURB				
Year	male	female	%male	%female
1876 <sup>38</sup>	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1881 <sup>39</sup>	147205	104234	58.5	41.5
1891 <sup>40</sup>	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1901 <sup>41</sup>	62259	39089	61.4	38.6
1911	90193	57047	61.3	38.7
1921 <sup>42</sup>	139067	85328	62.0	38.0

<sup>30</sup> The city population here includes just the population of the eighteen wards and that of Fort William which here is expressed as one figure.

<sup>31</sup> The city population here included the population of the eighteen wards which existed prior to the arrangements of 1886. The population of Fort William is here added along with that of the Town proper and is represented as one figure

<sup>32</sup> The figures for the population of the city is here taken from the abstract of the population of Calcutta which included the population of the twenty-five wards of the Calcutta Municipality. The configuration of the figures differs from the earlier figures in the way that most of the areas which were earlier declared as under the Suburbs are here represented as being under the Municipality of Calcutta. The figure here also included the population of Fort William which is enumerated in a separate column in the Census. See Report and Table of the Census of 1891

<sup>33</sup> Port figure here includes the population of Canal which was represented in a separate column in the census of 1891 for the first time. The same is the case with the female figure here.

<sup>34</sup> The city population here includes the population of the twenty-five Wards along with the population of Fort William and Maidan which was represented as one figure in the census. See Census of 1901

<sup>35</sup> Included the population of Port and Canal.

<sup>36</sup> Included population of the Calcutta Municipal Area, along with the population of Fort William and Maidan. The Port population here included the population of the Port and the Canal area. See Census of 1911

<sup>37</sup> Included the same style of calculation as it existed in the Census of 1911.

<sup>38</sup> The figures for the Suburbs are not enumerated in the Census of 1876. Suburban figure are to be found in detail in the Census of 1872. It is given here as not documented as Census figure for 1872 are totally unreliable, coupled with the difference of time between the two censuses. See H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of the Town of Calcutta 1876*, Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1976, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Suburbs figures here included the population of many areas which later got incorporated into the Calcutta Municipal Area after 1886. Thus most of the Suburbs are in the Census of 1891 are enumerated as consisting within the municipal body of the Calcutta Corporation.

<sup>40</sup> The Census of 1891 does not contain any figures for the population of the Suburbs.

<sup>41</sup> Included the population of Cossipur-Chitpur, Maniktolla and Garden Reach. See Census of 1901

<sup>42</sup> Included the population of Cossipur-Chitpur, Maniktolla, Garden Reach, Tollygunge, South Suburbs and Howrah City. See Census of 1921

It could be observed from the above mentioned tables (Table 7, City, Port and Suburb) that the males far surpassed the female in the over all population of the City of Calcutta as well as its adjoining areas. In 1876, the percentage of male in the total population of the city was 63.7, and this went on increasing and, by the close of our period of inquiry, (i.e. 1921) this percentage increased to 67.3. Similarly, the female percentage at the beginning of 1876 was 36.3 which increased to about 32.7 by 1921.

Table 8

TOTAL MIGRATION INTO CALCUTTA IN PERCENTAGE							
Year	Bengal <sup>43</sup>	Bihar <sup>44</sup>	UP	NWP & Punjab <sup>45</sup>	Orissa <sup>46</sup>	Total migration from different provinces	Difference of migration between Bengal & other provinces
1881 <sup>47</sup>		13.7			3.0	16.7	-16.7
1891	35.4	17.9			3.7	21.7	13.7
1901	30.4	16.4	10.7	2.5	3.1	32.7	-2.3
1911	31.1	16.8	10.0	3.3	0.0	30.0	1.1
1921	30.3	13.8	7.4	3.9	4.8	30.0	0.3

Coming to the volume of birth and death reported in Calcutta (Table 8), the Censuses of 1911 and 1931 provide us with the figures of actual births and deaths reported, starting from 1891 to 1930.<sup>48</sup> Thus Calcutta witnessed more deaths than births. Going by the above mentioned statistics it will be extremely difficult to explain the increase in the population of Calcutta during the period if we do not consider the amount of migration into the city. Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya provides us the detail of migration into Calcutta from the different districts of Bengal as well as the different provinces of

<sup>43</sup> Main Divisions within the different districts of Bengal as taken in the overall counting of the Migration figures are Burdawan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapur, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Jessore, Khulna, Pabna, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Backarganj, Noakhali, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna and Malda.

<sup>44</sup> Area considered in the calculation are Champaran, Darbhanga, Gaya, Hazaribagh, Lohardagga, Manbhum, Monghyr, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Purnea, Saran, Sahabad, Singhbhum and Santhal Parganas.

<sup>45</sup> For the NWP and Punjab figures the migrants are mainly from Punjab who are basically Sikhs and for the NWP Rajputana is the main area of in-migration from where Marwaris basically migrated.

<sup>46</sup> Cuttuck and Balasore are the main area from where people migrated; apart from these two Puri, Angul and Khondmals are areas from where migration occurred.

<sup>47</sup> Chattopadhyaya does not provide with the figure for the year 1881. Though the Census of 1881 does give figures of persons born out of Calcutta such figures do not correspond with the calculation provided by Chattopadhyaya for Bihar. This is the reason why figures for Bengal for the same year is not given here as it will differ for that of Bihar and Orissa the only two areas for which Chattopadhyaya provides us with the figure.

<sup>48</sup> Census of India, Volume IV, City of Calcutta, Part I Report and Subsidiary Table, p. 34; Census of India, Volume IV, Calcutta, Part I, Subsidiary Table, pp. 83.

the subcontinent. Without going into the detail of the figures provided by him, it is important to take his calculations into account as he takes into consideration the migration from Bengal and other provinces of Indian; not going into figures provided in the Census of Calcutta, which actually provides figures of the population enumerated as having taken birth at places apart from Calcutta. Such figures as are provided in the Censuses of Calcutta are in a sense incomplete as they do not give the details of people migrating at the specific period of census enumeration but gives overlapping figures of the different migrations that took place at different epochs. It is absolutely impossible to segregate these different overlapping figures to give a coherent picture. Chattopadhyaya's figures provide a relief from these gross calculations and are important here in accounting for the amount of migration into Calcutta during the period of this study.

The above are summarized from the details of the figures provided by Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya. However, a slight modification has been done, the details of which are provided in the relevant footnotes. It comes out from the figures that "the strength of Calcutta's migrant population from the districts of Bengal and other provinces", "indicates that the growth of the population of Calcutta was then decidedly due to migration from outside the city."<sup>49</sup> If we total the figures of all the different places from where migration occurred it will appear that more than half the population of Calcutta was migrant during the concerned period. Apart from this, migration from within Bengal nearly equaled that from the entire subcontinent. However, not much is known about the pattern in which migration occurred or the area which attracted migration from different places. Chattopadhyaya is of the opinion that from Bihar and Orissa, the migrants mainly got employed as manual labour. Though the migrants from Bihar were mainly unskilled manual labourers, a majority of those from Orissa also got employment as skilled labourers. The same is the case with migrants from UP who filled the demand for manual labour of the city, both skilled and unskilled. On the other hand, migrants from Rajputana, enlisted here under the category NWP and Punjab, were basically traders, and settled in areas such as Burra Bazar and Lower Chitpur Road. The only

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<sup>49</sup> Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, "Calcutta – Her Place in the story of Internal Migration", in *Internal Migration in India, A case study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Delhi, 1987, p. 422

description of the type of employment performed by these migrants is from the Census of 1921 where we get data of the different occupation of the migrants of Calcutta.

### III

#### THE RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF CALCUTTA

Whether through migration or through a natural process of growth or a combination of both, the growth in the population of Calcutta is a given fact. The important question is how far this growth got reflected among the different communities<sup>50</sup> that inhabited the urban sprawl. At the beginning of 1876, (Table 9) the population of Calcutta was 429535 souls with the Hindus comprising 64.8 percent of the population, while the Muslims composed less than half that of the Hindus i.e. 28.8 percent of the total population while all other religious groups including Christians and Bahmos composed 6.5 percent of the city's population. At the end of the period of the present research, the religious composition of the population of Calcutta was no different (Table 10). The Hindus composed more than two-thirds of the population, rising from 64.8 percent in 1876 to 69.9 percent in 1921. The Muslims declined in ratio to that of the Hindus from 28.8 percent in 1876 to 24.9 in 1921. People of all other religions also declined from their earlier position of 6.5 percent to 5.2 percent. After observing the results, one could easily come to the conclusion that the Hindus increased at a more rapid pace than the other communities. While for the Muslims, the period from 1876 to 1921 did enable them to increase numerically from 123556 in 1876 to 282,053 in 1921. But their relative strength in the city declined, particularly when compared to the Hindus. The important question that could be asked here is whether this trend could also be observed in the average annual rate of growth for the different communities and whether the breakup of figures from the decadal censuses gives different results.

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<sup>50</sup> Communities here should be read as religious communities as could be found in the Censuses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The colonial records register the segregation of communities on the basis of religion and thus it becomes absolutely impossible to procure information, from the censuses, of communities in different frame and definition.

Table 9

RELIGIOUS POPULATION IN 1876				
Religion	male	female	total	Percentage to total population
Hindu	177582	100642	278224	64.8
Muslim	88539	35017	123556	28.8
Others	16385	11370	27755	6.5

Table 10

RELIGIOUS POPULATION IN 1921				
Religion	male	female	total	Percentage to total population
Hindu	523493	267742	791235	69.9
Muslim	198023	84030	282053	24.9
Others	35141	23817	58958	5.2

The compound average annual rate of growth among the different communities for the period 1881 to 1921 gives the following results (Table 11). I have not taken the figures of 1876 here for the reasons mentioned earlier. The figures here follow the above mentioned pattern. While the Hindu population increased at a rate of 1.54 percent, the Muslims increased by just 0.61 percent a rate of growth approximately one-third than that of the Hindus. Thus for the overall growth of Calcutta the proportion of the Muslims to the population could be regarded as minimal when compared to Hindus in terms of population growth. Again, if we look at the male-female ratio, the percentages reveal a typical migrant growth, with the male exceeding the female.

Table 11

RELIGION	1881	1921	PERCENTAGE OF GROWTH
Hindu	428692	791235	1.54
Muslim	221013	282053	0.61
Others	34953	58958	1.32
Total	684658	1132246	1.27

Table 12

Percentage of Male-Female Growth in the city of Calcutta						
Religion	Male			Female		
	1881	1921	%	1881	1921	%
Hindu	267499	523493	1.69	161193	267742	1.28
Muslim	147788	198023	0.73	73225	84030	0.34
Others	20735	35141	1.33	14218	23817	1.30
Total	436022	756657	1.39	248636	375589	1.04

In the case of the Hindu rate of growth, this could not be typically true as the female rate of growth followed closely upon the male rate of growth, but in the case of the Muslim rate of growth the figures clearly give the impression that more male migrated into Calcutta for jobs than the females. The occupational structure of the Muslims community

will be dealt with separately. For the present discussion let us view how this migration happened, i.e. during which point the Muslims migrated more, and at which period their migration was limited.

The figures for the decadal growth among the different communities in Calcutta, during 1881 and 1921, reveal that the growth was very uneven, increasing at specific periods and declining at other periods. However, one should note that the increase and decrease at different epochs were not similar among all the communities. Different communities fared well at different periods while other did not do so well. But the common feature of the rate of growth was that the Muslim community never, during the period of discussion, did well in term of growth rate. The highest growth registered among the Muslims was during 1881-1901. However, during 1881-91 and 1911-21, they registered a negative growth rate. While during 1881 and 1891, the negative growth rate could be explained in term of the unavailability in the census of 1891 of the suburban (which has been pointed out in details earlier) figures, such a deficiency was also there between the censuses of 1891 and 1901. However, the growth rate was highest during those years. The reason for this cannot be explained from the normal procedure and the limited variation of the available data in the censuses. Coming to the decline during 1911-21 among the Muslims, the decline in the urban population of Indian cities during the period severely affected the Muslims. But the Hindus fared better in terms of survival from the harsh economic condition that prevailed after the end of the First World War. The decline among the Muslims could only be explained through the much harsher economic conditions that prevailed, and under which they lived.

Table 13

Decadal Growth between 1881-1921								
Religion	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21				
Hindu	0.35	3.32	1.20	1.33				
Muslim	-0.84	3.50	0.42	-0.58				
Others	-0.20	3.23	0.77	1.49				
Total	-0.05	3.37	0.95	0.82				
Decadal Growth among Male and Female between 1881-1921								
Religion	Male				Female			
	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21	1881-91	1891-1901	1901-11	1911-21
Hindu	0.73	3.38	1.39	1.29	-0.29	3.20	0.83	1.40
Muslim	-0.58	3.46	0.56	-0.46	-1.39	3.58	0.13	-0.87
Others	-0.54	3.51	0.82	1.56	0.28	2.85	0.69	1.40
Total	0.24	3.41	1.11	0.81	-0.57	3.28	0.63	0.84



Decadal growth among the males and females of the different communities is an important aspect here. They show a similar picture as the above figures reveal. Muslim Female decline was sharpest in 1881-91 while during the years 1891-1901 they exceeded the Muslim males in terms of population growth. Though figures for Howrah are not available in any of the censuses, the Census of 1921 give detail of the different communities inhabiting the ten<sup>51</sup> Wards. This, also, is no different from that of Calcutta proper and of the Suburbs. The Muslim percentage in the total Howrah figures is much lower than that of the Hindus, being just 23.03 percent as against 76.60, and the male female percentage for both the communities discloses a migrant population.

Table 14

Religious Population of Howrah 1921						
	Male	Female	Total	% in the population	% male	% female
Hindu	98119	51487	149606	76.60	65.58	34.41
Muslim	28806	14234	43040	22.03	66.92	33.07
Others	1547	1108	2655	1.35	58.26	41.73
Total	128472	66829	195301		65.78	34.21

In conclusion, it could be said that the highest growth rate was registered among the Hindus and that the Muslims scored far less. Both the communities give evidences of a migrant population and the decadal growth among the different communities was subjected to intense changes in different period. As for the pattern of settlement in the city, it will be important to look into the places which registered a Muslim growth over and above that of other communities.

The Census of 1876 gives details of eighteen Wards within the municipality of Calcutta.<sup>52</sup> It will be observed from the table of 1876 that there were six wards, the Muslim population of which came about 65 percent of the Muslim population of the city.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> The Census of 1921 divided the Howrah municipality into 10 Wards.

<sup>52</sup> These wards are Shampukur, Komartolly, Bartalla, Sukhea Street, Jorabagan, Jorasanko, Barabazar, Kalutola, Muchipara, Bow Bazar, Paddoopukur, Waterloo Street, Fenwick Bazar, Taltola, Collinga, Park Street, Baman Basti and Hastings.

<sup>53</sup> I should be note that the population of the Suburb here is not taken into account.

Table 15

Muslim population in 1876.				
	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of Muslims to the total Muslim pop
Shampookuer	2031	914	2945	2.38
Koolartolly	1058	189	1247	1.01
Burtolla	2684	1151	3835	3.10
Sookeas Street	2458	1096	3554	2.88
Jorabagan	1855	170	2025	1.64
Jorasanko	4100	1732	5832	4.72
Burra Bazar	4657	1166	5823	4.71
Colootola	15903	7770	23673	19.16
Moocheepara	8812	4871	13683	11.07
Bow Bazar	6549	2692	9241	7.48
Pudoopooker	1302	835	2137	1.73
Waterloo Street	1335	40	1375	1.11
Fenwick Bazar	8470	2593	11063	8.95
Taltolla	9614	6034	15648	12.66
Colinga	4190	2501	6691	5.42
Park Street	1076	254	1330	1.08
Bammun Bustee	1334	319	1653	1.34
Hastings	989	654	1643	1.33
<b>Town Proper</b>	<b>78417</b>	<b>34981</b>	<b>113398</b>	<b>91.78</b>
<b>Fort William</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>0.24</b>
<b>Port</b>	<b>9859</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9863</b>	<b>7.98</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>88539</b>	<b>35017</b>	<b>123556</b>	<b>100.00</b>

These wards were Colootola, Moocheepara, Bow Bazar, Fenwick Bazar, Taltolla and Colinga which contained 64.74 percent of the total Muslim population of the city. In addition to this, if we add the Muslim population of the Port which was sizable (constituting 7.98 percent of the Muslims of the city), the percentage of Muslim concentration will swell to 72.72 percent of the city's Muslim population.<sup>54</sup> Was this a tendency peculiar to 1876, or is it a common feature of the succeeding censuses?

<sup>54</sup> However this should not be taken as constituting the entire Muslim population as those classes of people who worked in Calcutta and lived at the fringes of the capital city was left uncalculated. This aspect will be clear when we analyze the later census which contain figures for those areas which were out in 1876.

Table 16

Percentage of Muslim to the Total Muslim Population 1881-1921					
	1881 <sup>55</sup>	1891	1901	1911	1921
Shampukur	1.78	2.89	2.82	2.54	2.10
Kumartoli	0.57	0.55	0.48	0.50	0.45
Bartala	1.97	4.23	4.16	3.67	3.87
Sukea Street	1.77	3.81	3.73	4.24	5.12
Jorabagan	0.98	1.04	0.88	0.80	0.72
Jorasanko	3.13	3.59	3.54	3.78	2.53
Barabazar	3.16	2.60	2.63	2.26	2.12
Kalutola	12.54	12.16	12.69	11.32	7.88
Muchipara	7.40	8.11	8.94	7.66	8.56
Bowbazar	4.88	4.37	-4.04	3.65	4.32
Paddapukur	1.09	0.58	0.81	0.53	0.63
Waterloo Street	0.80	0.72	0.56	0.40	0.39
Fenwick Bazar	5.91	5.36	4.60	4.32	4.56
Taltola	8.32	7.73	6.66	6.41	6.74
Collinga	3.29	3.22	3.17	1.88	2.12
Park Street	0.89	0.75	0.88	0.45	0.25
Victoria Terrace	0.83	0.60	0.59	0.26	0.28
Hastings	0.99	0.69	0.49	0.63	0.55
Entally	4.36	5.16	4.70	5.81	7.62
Beniapukur	5.63	6.22	6.53	8.82	9.03
Ballygunge -Tollygunge	7.03	5.07	4.54	6.96	8.47
Bhawanipore	3.79	3.36	3.03	2.39	1.89
Alipore	2.10	1.84	1.52	1.70	2.10
Ekbalpore	2.50	4.40	4.52	5.11	5.84
Watganj	5.17	4.09	4.83	5.25	4.72
Calcutta Proper	90.89	93.14	91.32	91.33	92.86
Fort	0.32	0.29	0.48	0.43	0.25
Port & Canal	8.79	6.57	8.20	8.24	6.89

With the addition of some of the Suburbs in 1886, there appeared a change in the percentage of the distribution of Muslim population in Calcutta. The six Wards which earlier totaled 65 percent of the Muslim population, now amounted to about 43.24 percent of the total Muslim settlement in the Census of 1881.<sup>56</sup> Among the added areas, the Wards of Entally, Beniapukur, Wadgunge and Ballygunge-Tollygunge had a large

<sup>55</sup> The Census of 1881 enlists only eighteen Wards under the Calcutta proper category the rest are given under the Suburbs. I have added them in the in the main body of the Calcutta population with the help of the details provided in the Census of 1901. Though it is impossible to calculate the actual transfer of areas particularly the areas of Ooltadanga, Balliagatha and part of Maniktolla (details of which are provided earlier), I have complete omitted them form my calculation.

<sup>56</sup> Though the Census of 1881 do not enlist twenty-five wards in the population of the city, as these wards were added in 1886, I have here calculate them according to the details provided in the Census of 1901. Details of the calculation is provided in the footnotes connected with the column of 1881.

amount of Muslim population which change the overall percentage of Muslim distribution in the city. The Wards of Bartala and Sukea Street, which had a very limited percentage of Muslim during 1881, increased in Muslim settlements in 1891. This was because after 1881 some parts of Maniktolla and Balliaghatha were added to the Wards of Bartala and Sukea Street with a total transfer of 13472 and 11676 souls respectively.<sup>57</sup> The total number of Muslim thus transferred is 6754 from Maniktolla and 5289 from Balliaghatha.<sup>58</sup> If we add the Muslim population of these wards together, then they amount to 64.8 percent of the total Muslim settlement in the city. From 1881 to 1921, there appeared a specific peculiarity in Muslim settlement pattern in the city. They tend to shift to other areas of Muslim concentration. From the data of 1881, as compared to the data of 1876, it is difficult to predict the future course of Muslim settlement pattern. Those areas which had earlier concentrations of Muslim settlements did not loose in absolute terms in comparison to the added areas after 1886; though in relative terms, it appears that the Muslims shifted their concentration to the new areas. Looking through the figures of Muslim settlements from 1881 to 1921, the six wards which earlier (in 1876) had a concentration of Muslim settlement approximately retained their percentage from 1881 to 1921, even though Muslim settlements in areas such as Entally, Beniapukur, Ekbalpore, Watgunge and Ballygunge-Tollyginge increased. If the actual absolute figures are taken into account in these Wards, the number of Muslims will increase up to 1901 and will start to decrease after that, decreasing sharply in 1921. Areas such as Colootola started with a Muslim population of 22756 souls in 1881, increased up to 31721 in 1901, and declined to 16471 in 1921. Similar is the case with all the six wards; the only difference is the intensity of the decline after 1901 (Table 16). The Muslim population of the Wards of Taltolla and Colinga did not show a very sharp increase or a very sharp decrease during the period. Wards such as Taltolla started with a population of 15101 in 1881 and by 1921 had decreased to 14095, showing a high of 16637 in 1901.

<sup>57</sup> The details of this transfer is given in the footnotes above.

<sup>58</sup> See Census of 1901, Table on Religion. (Details of the area transferred is provided above.)

Area	Male	Female	Total
Maniktolla	3614	3140	6754
Balliaghatha	3203	2086	5289

Table 17

Total Muslims 1881-1921					
	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
<b>Colootola</b>	22756	24696	31721	27358	16471
<b>Moocheepara</b>	13435	16479	22336	18504	17900
<b>Bow Bazar</b>	8863	8872	10104	8809	9038
<b>Fenwick Bazar</b>	10733	10896	11491	10447	9531
<b>Taltolla</b>	15101	15709	16637	15478	14095
<b>Colinga</b>	5976	6536	7918	4545	4436

Comparing this trend with the overall trend Muslim population in Calcutta from 1881 to 1921 (figures given earlier) should be concluded that the decline in the overall Muslim population of the city during 1911-1921 was due to a sharp decline in the areas of Muslim concentration particularly that of Colootola? Such a conclusion could only be made when the other area of Muslim concentration would be taken into account particularly the five wards mentioned above. The absolute figures for Muslim settlement in these five wards are:

Table 18

Total Muslims 1881-1921					
Wards	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
<b>Entally</b>	7908	10488	11746	14026	15922
<b>Baniapukur</b>	10218	12643	16313	21305	18881
<b>Bally &amp; Tolly</b>	12750	10303	11348	16821	17711
<b>Watgunge</b>	4530	8931	11303	12348	12202
<b>Ekbalpore</b>	9386	8317	12077	12676	9859

The figures for the five wards mentioned above (Table 17) show an increase in the Wards such as Entally and Ballygunge-Tollygunge. Watgunge registered a slight decrease during 1911 and 1921, with the increase being highest in 1911. The other two wards, Beniapukur and Ekbalpore, registered a sharp decrease during 1911-1921, from 21305 to 18881 and 12676 to 9859 respectively. The important features that appear from these figures are that during 1921 the population followed the pattern of the all India decline in population particularly in urban areas, being sharper in some areas, and not so sharp in others. The increase was just in two Wards, with a slight percentage of growth as compared to the previous decadal year. However, the separation of these six and five Wards of Muslim concentration, into two compartments is important when the highest increase in this overall Muslim population is considered. The six wards registered the highest increase in their respective population only in the year 1901; while that of the

later five wards coalesced together, registered the highest increase in the year 1911. The two years are important in the sense that the partition of Bengal took place in the years 1905. The effects of the Partition of Bengal were welcomed by the upper classes among the Muslims. McPherson writes about the Partition that for “the majority of upper class Muslims in Bengal the partition of the province into Hindu and Muslim majority areas in 1905 had been a God-send. The Ashraf families of east Bengal had regarded it as the ideal opportunity to make up lost ground and moved rapidly into positions of power in the new province with its seat at Dacca.”<sup>59</sup> If such is the case, there was a large number of Ashraf families residing in Calcutta and was holding positions of power among the Muslim of Calcutta as well as in the British administration.<sup>60</sup> Areas such as Taltolla, Collinga, Fenwick Bazar and particular Colootola were the seat of these Ashraf families in Calcutta.<sup>61</sup> Was there any migration of these ashraf families after 1905 from the seat in these wards to the new capital? As the figures of population do mention a decrease in these wards from 1901 there might be an element of reality to this assumption. Factual evidence for this can not be deduced directly from the Censuses. So the only way is to analyze the decrease in the male and female percentages in the Wards and to see whether these figures could provide any explanation.

The table for male-female ratio in the population of the six wards five offer a picture where the female decline is was more in percentage terms to the male, in the respective wards during the period 1901 and 1921. The partition did have a great effect on the ashraf families as from these areas the female decline was the sharpest in the period 1901-1911.

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<sup>59</sup> Kenneth M. McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918-1935*, (Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1974) p 26.

<sup>60</sup> The following chapters on the Calcutta Madrasah and the Socio-political organization of the Muslims in Calcutta will focus on these groups.

<sup>61</sup> The development Park Circus as a colony of Muslims educated class start after 1918 thus prior to that the concentration of these Ashraf families was in the six wards mentioned above.

Table 19

Muslim Population 1881-1921 (Male & Female)									
Male									
Area	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	% increase 1891	% increase 1901	% increase 1911	% increase 1921
Colootola	15551	17636	22647	20451	13320	13.4	28.4	-9.7	-34.9
Moocheepara	8608	10900	14697	12983	13177	26.6	34.8	-11.7	1.5
Bow Bazar	6227	6556	7624	7213	7622	5.3	16.3	-5.4	5.7
Fenwick Bazar	8159	8408	8923	8748	8290	3.1	6.1	-2.0	-5.2
Taltolla	9019	10015	10697	10780	10524	11.0	6.8	0.8	-2.4
Colinga	3667	4349	5176	3455	3449	18.6	19.0	-33.2	-0.2
Female									
Area	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	% increase 1891	% increase 1901	% increase 1911	% increase 1921
Colootola	7205	7060	9074	6907	3151	-2.0	28.5	-23.9	-54.4
Moocheepara	4827	5579	7639	5521	4723	15.6	36.9	-27.7	-14.5
Bow Bazar	2636	2316	2480	1596	1416	-12.1	7.1	-35.6	-11.3
Fenwick Bazar	2574	2488	2568	1699	1241	-3.3	3.2	-33.8	-27.0
Taltolla	6082	5694	5940	4698	3571	-6.4	4.3	-20.9	-24.0
Colinga	2309	2187	2742	1090	987	-5.3	25.4	-60.2	-9.4

The figures show that in the year 1911, there is a fall in the female percentage while female decline exceeds that of male decline. In wards such as Colootola<sup>62</sup>, 9.7 percent of the male as against 23.9 percent of the female declined. However, the numerical decrease in males and females in Colootola for the period 1901 and 1911 is not much different. A total of 2196 male decreased in 1911 figures from that of 1901; on the other hand a total of 2167 Muslim female of Colootola declined for the same period. Though the percentages for the two sexes differed because of the numerical disparity between them, the actual figures are very close to each other. These figures reveal the pattern of migration that took place after 1905. Ashraf migration after 1905 differs from the usual migration to any urban settlement by labourers, skilled or unskilled workers, etc in the way that in the latter form of migration the migration takes place in several compartments. Usually, it is the male who migrate first and is sometimes

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Percentage of Muslim Male						
	1876	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Colootola	67.2	68.3	71.4	71.4	74.8	80.9

followed by the females. In the migration among the Ashrafs of Calcutta after 1905, this pattern of migration would not have taken place, because of the well established position of the ashrafs not only among the Muslims but in general. Such migration is usually supported by the simultaneous migration of their female folk. This was the reason why a huge number of females declined from Colootola during that period. However, it should not be concluded arbitrarily that all those persons that disappeared had migrated out, as these figures do not give the actual number of persons who migrated in and out of the Ward. As the figures for Muslim males in the Ward of Colootola reveals a steady increase from 67.2 in 1876 to 80.9 in 1921, there must have been a steady influx of unskilled labourers in the ward, which might have reduced the actual number of Muslim males who migrated out of the ward. Inter ward migration cannot be deduced from these figures and the censuses does not provide any such data. As the above figure indicates a decline in the female percentage it is important to note whether the same conditions prevail of all the other five wards.

**Table 20**

Decrease in Muslim Population 1901-1911			
	1901	1911	Numerical Decrease
Male			
Moocheepara	14697	12983	-1714
Bow Bazar	7624	7213	-411
Fenwick Bazar	8923	8748	-175
Taltolla	10697	10780	83
Colinga	5176	3455	-1721
Female			
Moocheepara	7639	5521	-2118
Bow Bazar	2480	1596	-884
Fenwick Bazar	2568	1699	-869
Taltolla	5940	4698	-1242
Colinga	2742	1090	-1652

It will be observed (Table 18) that the numerical female decrease during 1901 and 1911 was much higher than the male, particularly in areas such as Moocheepara and Bow Bazar. It should be noted that this tendency was peculiar to the year 1911 where the ratio of females declined in numerical numbers to male. In no other years was there such a decline among females among the Muslims of Calcutta. The overall decrease of



0.87 percentage among the Muslims of Calcutta during 1911-21<sup>63</sup> is numerically reflected in these six ward in the following manner. While the percentage of female decrease to male decrease (figures given above) was much higher, the numerical decrease of female to male was did not follow the trend.

Table 21

Decrease in Muslim Population 1911-1921			
Male			
Area	1911	1921	Numerical Decrease
Colootola	20451	13320	-7131
Moocheepara	12983	13177	194
Bow Bazar	7213	7622	409
Fenwick Bazar	8748	8290	-458
Taltolla	10780	10524	-256
Colinga	3455	3449	-6

Female			
Area	1911	1921	Numerical Decrease
Colootola	6907	3151	-3756
Moocheepara	5521	4723	-798
Bow Bazar	1596	1416	-180
Fenwick Bazar	1699	1241	-458
Taltolla	4698	3571	-1127
Colinga	1090	987	-103

The highest decrease is registered in the ward of Colootola where 7131 males as against 3756 females decreased. Females declined in all the six wards while males increased marginally in Bow Bazar and still more marginally in Moocheepara. Again, in the Ward of Taltolla 1127 of the females decline as against 256 males. What can we conclude from these tables? Were these were the result of out migration, as in the case of Colootola during 1911, or was the female stock of the Muslims of Calcutta vulnerable to the economic hardships and the epidemic that prevailed after the Great War, or can we say that it was the result of both? Such a conclusion can only be deduced by surveying the conditions that prevailed in the other five Wards which were added in 1886 and which had a good proportion of Muslim population.

The above trend of Muslim settlement and decline is not seen in the other five Wards mentioned below. While in Wards such as Entally there is an overall increase

<sup>63</sup> Figures cited above

from 1881 to 1921, both the male and female population having the highest increase in 1891, in the two problematic periods (i.e. 1901-1911 and 1911-1921) it registered an increase of 19.41 and 13.52 percent respectively for both sexes. Baniapukur increased, in the period 1901-1911, at a rate of 34.2 and 26.1 for male and female respectively. While the period of 1901-1911 registered the maximum growth in the Ballygunge-Tollygunge ward, with the male and female increasing by 54.4 and 40.6 percent respectively, and not registering a decline in 1921, all the other wards except Entally registered a decline for that period. While Watgunge registered an enormous increase in 1891, it registered a decline only among the female in 1921, while the males always registered an increase in absolute terms. The Ward of Ekbalpore reveals the characteristics of a typical Muslim migrant population settling within its periphery. While it started with Muslim male constituting 49.3 percent of the population in 1881, it went on to become a settlement where the Muslim males constituted 74.3 percent of the population in 1921. As the figures below show that while the Muslim female population declined in 1891, 1911 and 1921 by 37.8%, 16.9% and 26.9% respectively, the Muslim male declined only in 1921 by 20.6 %.

Table 22

Muslim Population 1881-1921 (Male Female)									
Male									
Area	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	% increase 1891	% increase 1901	% increase 1911	% increase 1921
Entally	4981	6494	7591	9059	10767	30.4	16.9	19.3	18.9
Baniapoopur	5527	6984	9053	12147	11091	26.4	29.6	34.2	-8.7
Bally & Tolly	6738	5547	6295	9719	10539	-17.7	13.5	54.4	8.4
Watgunge	2680	4514	6049	6715	7574	68.4	34.0	11.0	12.8
Ekbalpore	4630	5361	7934	9235	7330	15.8	48.0	16.4	-20.6
Female									
Area	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	% increase 1891	% increase 1901	% increase 1911	% increase 1921
Entally	2927	3994	4155	4967	5155	36.5	4.0	19.5	3.8
Baniapoopur	4691	5659	7260	9158	7790	20.6	28.3	26.1	-14.9
Bally & Tolly	6012	4756	5053	7102	7172	-20.9	6.2	40.6	1.0
Watgunge	1850	4417	5254	5633	4628	138.8	18.9	7.2	-17.8
Ekbalpore	4756	2956	4143	3441	2529	-37.8	40.2	-16.9	-26.5

Such an enormous increase in the new wards, and a relative decline in population of the earlier concentrations of Muslims indicate that there is a case of internal Muslim migration among the wards, the reasons of which are not easy to get at present. Another category which could throw light on this problem is the caste division of different Muslim groups in Calcutta and their increase or decrease in particular caste during the concerned period.

All the Censuses differ in their assessment of Muslim castes in the city and "to construct a proper correlation" of the figures for the entire period is almost impossible. As for example the Census of 1881 distinguishes the Muslim on the basis of Shias, Sunnis and Wahabees<sup>64</sup>.

The Census of 1891 enumerated the following castes enlisted among the Muslim of Calcutta.

Table 23

Muslim Castes in 1891									
Castes	Town			Fort			Port & Canal		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Dhunia	30	6	36	7	0	7	0	0	0
Mogul	437	260	697	4	0	4	32	0	32
Momin	224	33	257	2	0	2	29	0	29
Pathan	8176	2925	11101	181	12	193	1159	0	1159
Syed	2607	1196	3803	13	0	13	206	0	206
Sheikh	114117	59215	173332	348	30	378	11916	8	11924
<b>Total</b>	<b>125591</b>	<b>63635</b>	<b>189226</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>13342</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13350</b>

It will be observed that the maximum number of persons were enumerated under the Sheikh category, constituting to about 91.6 percent of the Muslim population in the town, while the other two prominent castes the Pathans and the Syeds constituted in the town 5.9 and 2.0 percent of the population. The figures for the Fort and Port and Canal are no less different.

These three castes remained the same in the Census enumeration of 1901 which added categories such as Lalbegi, Jolaha and Hajam and eliminated the Momin category. It also provided detailed figures of married, unmarried and widowed for these

<sup>64</sup> See Census of Calcutta, 1881, Subsidiary Table, Table XII.

various castes along with the age of the persons enumerated. The census of 1911 gives a broader variety of details about the different Muslim castes present in Calcutta.<sup>65</sup> The Census of 1921 cut those into eight categories and added the category of "Other Sections of Muhammadans", in which a total of 11312 Muslims were enumerated constituting about 4.8 percent of the total Muslim population.<sup>66</sup>

Table 24

Percentage of Different Muslim Castes 1891-1901				
	1891	1901	1911	1921
Sheikh	91.6	91.5	85.8	86.4
Pathan	5.9	5.0	7.1	5.2
Syed	2.0	2.7	2.6	1.9
Jolaha		0.1	3.0	1.6
Other				4.8

Syeds were usually the Ashraf class of the Muslim gentry, but their proportion to the overall Muslim population of Calcutta was minimal. Though they could not be regarded as the only Ashraf class (some of the Sheikhs were also regarded as Ashraf) yet the majority of them were socially regarded as such, no matter what their economic position might be. Pathans were persons who migrated from the North Western Provinces and to some extent from the Central Provinces. Though migration figures are available for the actual amount of migration for these areas they provide no information as to the religion of the migrant let alone the caste of the Muslim migrants of Calcutta. Sheikhs are a category which was very commonly used for a majority of the Muslim castes in the city. The Census of 1921 gives evidence of the fragile manner in which the Sheikh category was used. The Bengali Muslim migrant held the lowest status among their co-religionists and usually sought a higher status by the change of name or, if possible, of occupation.<sup>67</sup> It says that there was a 'Bengali Muslim' group among whom the tendency in Calcutta was to abandon caste names in favour of the more respectable title of Sheikh.<sup>68</sup> But this category of people included a variety of persons. The area from where these Sheikhs came was very large. It included not only the entire Province of Bengal but also of Bihar. Though a considerable number of persons migrated from

<sup>65</sup> See Census of Calcutta, 1911, Subsidiary Tables, Table XIII, p. 67.

<sup>66</sup> See Census of Calcutta, 1921, Subsidiary Tables, Table XIII, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> Census of India, 1921, Vol. VI, part I, p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth M. Mcpherson, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta 1918-1935*, (Franz Steiner Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1974) p. 19

Calcutta, it was extremely difficult to analyze the extent of Muslim migration from that area. However, it could be very easily assumed that the majority of those enumerated under the Sheikh category were persons from the districts of Bengal and Bihar. Thus it could easily be concluded that the major amount of Muslim migration into Calcutta was from the neighbouring districts. But if the majority was constituted by these people, why were they regarded as low among their co-religionists, as the census of 1921 states? A satisfactory answer could be found in the language people spoke in the city as their mother tongue. Taking Urdu as the language spoken mostly by the Muslims, it will be interesting to see how this figure compare with to the other figures.

The Census of 1881 does not provide any category as Urdu speakers. It mentions Hindustani, which includes both Hindi and Urdu. Thus the figures provided here are in all respects, unusable in the mode of calculation mentioned above. Again, the Census of 1921 clubs Hindi and Urdu together into one category, and thus this figure also becomes unusable for the present tabulation. If it is supposed that the majority of Urdu speakers were Muslims then an estimate of Muslims speaking Urdu could be easily found out. This takes into account the total number of persons speaking Urdu divided by the total number of Muslims in the areas mentioned. The figures mentioned below, taken along with the figures cited above indicate a peculiar kind of settlement of the Muslims in Calcutta.

Table 25

Percentage of Muslim speaking Urdu					
Area	1891	Area	1901	1911	1921
Town	13.5	Calcutta Proper	9.8	26.1	
Fort	6.7	Suburb	8.7	12.9	
Port & Canal	16.1	Total	9.6	23.6	

During the year 1891 there were just 13.5 percent of the Muslims in Calcutta proper who spoke Urdu while the percentage in the Fort is 6.7 and that in the Port and Canal was 16.1 percent. This indicates that more than 85 percent of the Muslim population in the Town proper spoke languages other than Urdu. Even if Muslim migrants from Bihar are taken to speak Hindi, this will not effect the conclusion that a majority of the Muslims of Calcutta spoke Bengali and thus were migrants from the districts of Bengal. The year 1901 shows a still powerful ground to conclude that the majority of the migration was

from Bengal proper. The year 1911 registered a maximum percentage of Urdu speaking Muslims in Calcutta. There was, indeed, an increase in the absolute number of Urdu speaking Muslims from, 27627 in 1901 to 70558 in 1911. However, the reason or reasons for this increase cannot be assessed from the present data available. Whatever the case is, the increase was not such as will enable to conclude that the largest section in the Muslim population of Calcutta was the Urdu speaking population of provinces other than Bengal. The 1921 Census does not provide any specific data on Urdu speaking people of the city, thus it becomes difficult to perceive the direction of the increase in 1911. Whether, the increase in 1911 was a phenomenon that continued and increased later or was specific to 1911 are questions which the present Census figures are unable to answer. The one thing that stands clear from the above picture is that the Muslim population of Calcutta during 1876 and 1921 contained a population that migrated mostly from the districts of Bengal proper.<sup>69</sup> This trend might have a different story to tell after 1921 but up till that particular period the majority Muslim community in Calcutta was from the districts of Bengal. It will be useful to look in the economic composition of this Muslim community residing in Calcutta during the period of discussion.

Prof. Sumit Sarkar, writing on the city, says that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the city was inhabited by a “large number of Muslim service groups (preferred by Europeans as servants and cooks as presumably having less stringent pollution taboos).” He further says that there were more prosperous Muslims in “pockets like Cossipur.....Tollyganj.....and Garden Reach.....(having) considerable urban property”. Among these, the “more ‘respectable’ Muslim residents were immigrants from outside Bengal, speaking not Bengali but Urdu.” He pointed here particularly to the exiled families of Tipu Sultan and Nawab Wajid Ali Shah.<sup>70</sup> It will be useful here to see how the different service groups were represented in the census. As in the matter of occupation, the censuses do not follow a specific pattern. Thus it is extremely difficult to represent each group of occupation across the time span. Again, all the censuses do not give details of occupation in terms of religion. We get the details in

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<sup>69</sup> Bengal proper includes the Division of Burdawan, Presidency, Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong.

<sup>70</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “The City Imagined: Calcutta of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries”, in *Writing Social History*, OUP, (Delhi, 1997), p. 166

the census of 1881. On the other hand, the very detailed census of 1901, in term of occupation, does not contain any religious figures for occupation. Thus, the figures taken here are only from those censuses which contain the details regarding religion in terms of occupation. Starting from the Census of 1881, we get the following figures regarding Muslim occupation. Only those categories are taken here under which the Muslims are employed in good numbers, or those figures through which reveal the characteristics of the Muslim population of Calcutta. Again, the percentage of Muslims employed is taken by separating the figures from the total Muslim population of the concerned year. The Census of 1881 contains the following figures for the Muslim occupational structure in the city.

Table 26

Muslim Employed in Calcutta 1881									
Category	Male				Female				
	Town	Suburb	Total	% total	Category	Town	Suburb	Total	% Total
Police	677	620	1297	0.9	Mid wives, sick nurse	104	31	135	0.2
Army	237	449	686	0.5	Teacher	4	22	26	0.0
Physicians, Surgeon	98	128	226	0.2	Nurse, Ayah	1080	144	1224	1.7
Kabiraj, Hakim	13	13	26	0.0	Maid Servants	1193	561	1754	2.4
Musicians	103	14	117	0.1	Cook	253	236	489	0.7
Singer	78	38	116	0.1	Merchant	5	4	9	0.0
School masters, Teachers, Professors	322	189	511	0.3	Money-lender	2	3	5	0.0
Cook	1510	439	1949	1.3	Appraiser	0	8	8	0.0
Khidmutgar (table servant)	2761	1319	4080	2.8	Shop-keepers	147	254	401	0.5
Coachman	3486	1654	5140	3.5	Hawker	71	77	148	0.2
Merchant	395	203	598	0.4	Cart owner, dealer	14	10	24	0.0
Broker	282	313	595	0.4	Land owners	122	27	149	0.2
Shop-keepers	2104	927	3031	2.1	Cultivator	1	14	15	0.0
Cartman	941	2727	3668	2.5	House-owner	88	42	130	0.2
Boatman	11286	2080	13366	9.0	Mason	14	92	106	0.1
Ship-ower	3	0	3	0.0	Sempstress	109	215	324	0.4
Steam Navigation service	361	0	361	0.2	Barber	24	75	99	0.1
Ship steward, cook, &c	128	1	129	0.1	Washer woman	35	72	107	0.1

Seaman	1176	211	1387	0.9	Lac-dealer	17	85	102	0.1
Pilot	0	0	0	0.0	General Labourers	1423	1577	3000	4.1
Harbour, dock service	0	40	40	0.0	Mill-owner	0	0	0	0.0
Ship Sircar	3	0	3	0.0	Mill-worker	1	55	56	0.1
Chaprassee	1131	665	1796	1.2	Pensioner	34	23	57	0.1
Zemindars, land owners	212	120	332	0.2	Beggars	554	747	1301	1.8
Cultivator	75	233	308	0.2	Prostitute	792	377	1169	1.6
House-keepers, groom, jockey	3197	836	4033	2.7	Unspecified	27051	33551	60602	82.8
Booksellers	36	5	41	0.0					
Bookbinders	1348	149	1497	1.0					
Printers	769	270	1039	0.7					
Librarian	0	0	0	0.0					
Carpenter	605	387	992	0.7					
Bricklayer	2808	1042	3850	2.6					
Plumber	5	2	7	0.0					
Painter	281	2	283	0.2					
Cloth dealers	408	127	535	0.4					
Hair-dresser, barber	205	83	288	0.2					
Tailor	2316	2641	4957	3.4					
Shoemaker	499	70	569	0.4					
Washerman	149	189	338	0.2					
Butcher	332	384	716	0.5					
Rice, grain, dealer, cleaner	329	315	644	0.4					
Miller	5	39	44	0.0					
Baker	455	106	561	0.4					
Confectioners	287	231	518	0.4					
Greengrocer, fruitener	162	164	326	0.2					
Hide-dealer	186	200	386	0.3					
Thatcher	618	676	1294	0.9					
Water carrier	1225	800	2025	1.4					
Cooly, motiya, khalasee	14477	8848	23325	15.8					
Servant	5453	2392	7845	5.3					
Sircar	718	219	937	0.6					
Pensioner	45	73	118	0.1					
Beggars	680	759	1439	1.0					
Prisoners	416	1044	1460	1.0					
Unspecified	14725	14571	29296	19.8					
Grand Total	90667	57121	147788		Total	33763	39462	73225	

Among the Muslims males employed in the city, the highest percentage was employed as Cooleys representing 15.8 percentage of the total Muslim population.



Next in importance comes 'Boatmen', representing 9 percentage of the Muslim population of the city. The other areas where Muslims were in large numbers employed are in menial work as Cooks, Khidmutgar (table servant), Coachman, Shop-keepers, Cart men, Chaprassesees, House-keepers, Brick layer, Tailors, Tailors, Water Carriers and Servants, representing 1.3, 2.8, 3.5, 2.1, 2.5, 1.2, 2.7, 2.6, 3.4, 1.4, and 3.5 percent respectively. In addition to these about 19.8 percent cannot be specified in the census. Either they were unemployed or they were pursuing such an employment as the census categories do not categorize. The high posts in the city were monopolized by other groups of people. In the department of 'Law and Justice', there was just 37 Muslims who were employed. In the Jails, Custom and Excise, Telegraph, Post Office and Other Government Offices, there was a total of 48, 10, 9, 4 and 98 Muslims employed in the city. Again, there was one Kazi, three Barristers, seventeen pleaders and 89 Muslim Mookhtar in the city.<sup>71</sup> The categories from Boatman to Pilot are important in the present context as they convey the general impoverishment of the community and also the pattern of migration to the city. While a huge number of them worked as Boatman, there are just 3 Muslim ship owners in the city. Again, the persons working as Boatmen were not expected to migrate from outside Bengal. Thus it also points to the large amount of migration from the different districts of Bengal as the other figures above pointed out. Among the Muslim females employed in the city, the largest number was employed as General Labourers (i.e. 4.1 percent), followed by Maid Servants (i.e. 2.4 percent) with mid-wives and nurses constituting 1.7 percent of the total Muslim female population. Female beggars and prostitutes constituted 1.8 and 1.6 percent of the total Muslim female population respectively. A large number of Muslim females were unspecified, constituting about 82.8 percent. A large number among them could be regarded as dependents, while some either did not enlist themselves as employed or did some job that was outside the categories enlisted by the census. Some women were enlisted as land owners (about 149) where the maximum number was found to hold property in the city. About 489 Muslim females worked as cooks. What these figures convey in the matter of assessing the Muslims of the city? These figures represent a scenario in which the Muslims of the city could be said to be employed in the lower orders of the service

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<sup>71</sup> See Census of Calcutta 1881, Subsidiary Tables, Table XIX.

sector, while in the higher, not so respectable, services in the city their representation was minimal, almost negligible. This also highlights the general impoverishment of the Muslim community of the city. However, this is just the case of one particular census year. It will be useful here to survey other census figures that provide such data.

Table 27

Occupation of the Muslim population of Calcutta 1911-21				
Occupations	1911	% to Muslim Pop	1921	% to Muslim Pop
Income from rent of agricultural land	2301	0.77	5536	1.96
Ordinary Cultivators	1121	0.37	3670	1.30
Jute spinning and weaving	1788	0.60	19801	7.02
Jute pressing	15011	5.02	9042	3.21
Rope, wine and string	718	0.24	1339	0.47
Carpenter	4098	1.37	8009	2.84
Workers in Metal	1411	0.47		
manufacturer in vegetable oil etc	1310	0.44		
Baker and Biscuit maker	1527	0.51	1329	0.47
Butchers	4118	1.38	4608	1.63
manufacturer of tobacco, opium, ganja	726	0.24	1827	0.65
Tailors, etc	23705	7.93	23574	8.36
Shoe, sandal maker	1074	0.36		
Washing, cleaning, dying	1405	0.47	1568	0.56
Stone and marble worker, etc	20585	6.88		
Painters, lock smiths etc	3231	1.08		
Painters, lithographers, engravers	4971	1.66	3394	1.20
Book binders, stitches, etc	4660	1.56	6366	2.26
Harbour workers, etc	2687	0.90	1140	0.40
Boat owners and their employees, etc	16848	5.64	10413	3.69
Boat owner, boat men and tow men	12678	4.24		
Cart owners, drivers, coachmen	22429	7.50		
Railway employees other than coolies	3856	1.29	4935	1.75
Post office, Telegraph service	1051	0.35	1185	0.42
Banker, money lenders, etc	987	0.33	1330	0.47
Brokerage	1353	0.45	2020	0.72
Traders in Cotton, Wool, etc	4281	1.43	2549	0.90
Traders in skin, leather, etc	4115	1.38	2623	0.93
Traders in Wood	752	0.25		
Vender of wine	1234	0.41		
Owners and managers of hotels, cook shops, sarias, etc	1035	0.35	3418	1.21
Grocers	2838	0.95	1638	0.58
Sellers of Cardamom, beatel leaf, etc	3069	1.03	3106	1.10
Sellers of Tobacco, Opium, Ganja, etc	3063	1.02	4489	1.59

Traders in readymade cloths	4536	1.52	2894	1.03
Dealers in Fire Wood, Charcoal	1299	0.43	1446	0.51
Dealers in Bangles, etc	1173	0.39		
Publishers, book sellers, etc	2047	0.68	2854	1.01
Shop keepers	3056	1.02	11231	3.98
Peddlers, hawkers, etc	1182	0.40	1766	0.63
Police	1605	0.54	1418	0.50
Service of the State	2676	0.90	2701	0.96
Municipal and other local service	1192	0.40	3243	1.15
Medical Practitioner of all kind	1124	0.38		
Midwives, vaccinators, etc	426	0.14		
Architects, surveyors, engineers, etc	870	0.29		
Music composers etc	862	0.29		
Cooks, water carriers, watchman, etc	32506	10.87	26471	9.39
Private coachman, etc	4516	1.51	2311	0.82
Manufactures, businessmen, etc	928	0.31	1297	0.46
Cashiers, accountants, book keepers, etc	6759	2.26	21370	7.58
Person in mechanics	2107	0.70	2132	0.76
Labourers and workmen unspecified	20593	6.89	17753	6.29
Beggars, Procurer and Prostitute, etc	4785	1.60		
Field Labourers			1689	0.60
Carpenters turners and joiners, etc			8009	2.84
Forging and rolling of metals			1517	0.54
Other works in Iron			906	0.32
Brick and Tile makers			1032	0.37
Chemical Products			1250	0.44
Cabinet maker, carriage painters			1124	0.40
Brick layers and masons			15485	5.49
Builders, painters, house decorators plumbers			2352	0.83
Ship builders and workers in dock			1212	0.43
Gas work, electric light and power			1148	0.41
Owner of see going vessels and their employees			12533	4.44
Labourer employed in road and bridge			175	0.06
Person connected with mechanically driven vehicles			4074	1.44
Person connected with vehicles			13775	4.88
Labourers in Railway, coolies, etc			1626	0.58
Professors, teachers, etc			1064	0.38
Clerk, etc			39	0.01
Authors, editors, journalists, etc			1768	0.63
Proprietor, fund scholarship holders, etc			1973	0.70
Beggars			3503	1.24
Procurer and Prostitute			817	0.29

This also reveals a pattern where patterns where the economic condition of the Muslims were not better off. The highest concentration of workers is in under the category of Cooks, water carriers and Watchman representing 10.87 percent of the total

population of Calcutta. Tailors were the next to follow with 7.93 percent and the labouring Muslims were 6.89 percent of the total Muslim population in 1911. Other areas of employment for the Muslims of Calcutta in 1911 are as boat man, tow man coachman, etc. The most significant change in 1921 is an increase in the category of cashiers, accountants and book keepers which grew from 2.26 to 7.58 percent. Again, there are two categories which are not represented in the Census of 1911, that of the 'Owners of see going vassals' and 'Persons connected with vassals', which indicates a good percentage of Muslim population employed in these professions.

In conclusion, we can easily say that during the period of investigation, the Muslim population of Calcutta could not keep pace with that of the Hindu Community. The Muslim constituted 28.8 percent of the total population of the city but they decreased to 24.9 percent to the total population of the city. The economic condition of the Muslims of the city was miserable, the majority of them were employed in menial jobs rather than in the better position in the society. Moreover the educational institutions was predominantly ashraf where the Bengali speakers unable to send there children to these schools.

## *Chapter 2*

# *The Calcutta Madrassa and the Muslims of Calcutta*

## I

The Censuses of Calcutta indicate the presence of a sizable section of Muslims. A large number of those were migrants and was not expected to lay a permanent stake in the city. Coupled with the fact that the migration figures could not be segregated on the basis of religion it is very difficult to find out exactly how many Muslim migrated to Calcutta and from which part of the sub-continent they came. In the matter of education, however, the Muslims were not expected to behave differently even though they came from different cultural backgrounds, having different linguistic origin. Tradition Muslim education was same in all the regions of the country. This was the basic assumption when W.W. Hunter<sup>1</sup>, writing in 1871, conjoins the fact of 1857 with the presence of a huge number of Muslim religious fighters at the borders, supplied with men and money from the interiors of India. Whether the deliberation to rebel against the British Crown was an 'obligation' on the part of the Muslim or not, Hunter's book makes one think very clear that, the traditional system of education of the Muslims followed a particular pattern through out the subcontinent. The present chapter will focus on the educational establishments of the Muslims in Calcutta, particularly the Calcutta Madrassa, and will try to reflect whether any assessment of their society and mentality can be drawn from it.

## II

After 1857 the Afghan campaign of the British government was in full swing. Hunter writing against the political background of the Afghan wars was much concerned with the presence of a Muslim rebel colony in the frontier. This colony was supplied with both men and money from with the Indian territory. Hunter terms this colony as a 'Traitor's Camp' and was much concerned with finding the source of this

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<sup>1</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1872

“chronic danger to the British power in India.”<sup>2</sup> Hunter writing in the third quarter of the nineteenth century put emphasis on the Muslim’s sense of “racial pride, a memory of bygone superiority and lost power”<sup>3</sup> which was the major factor behind Muslim indifference to British rule. Though such a statement came in 1882 and emphasized on the education of the community his opinion was not much different from his earlier work when he wrote *The Indian Musalmans* at the request of Lord Mayo. Separating the entire Muslim community on the basis of the intensity of their religious belief, he separated the less staunch believers from the others and termed them as worldly Muslims. He advised the British government to procure the services of these worldly minded on their side. Focusing on the ways to tackle the party of Muslim religious fighters on the frontiers, he advised the government to “segregate the party of sedition in a nobler way by detaching from it the sympathies of the general Muhammedan community.”<sup>4</sup> Considering education as the main plank and the most powerful weapon to implement this British strategy he commented that “our system of public instruction.....is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements, and hateful to the religion of the Muhammedans” and proposed that the government should develop a rising generation of Muhammedans who would have a sufficient acquaintance with their religious code, to command the respect of their own community and an English training which would secure them an entry into the lucrative profession.<sup>5</sup>

This was no new policy and during the time of Mayo’s Governor Generalship it attained a more official cover than it earlier had. Lord Mayo’s note of 26<sup>th</sup> June 1871 had similar arguments on the question of Muslim education. He wrote that “[t]here is no doubt, as regards the Mahomedan population, our present system of education is, to a great extent, a failure. We have not only failed to attract or attach the sympathies and confidence of a large and important section of the community, but we may even fear that we have caused positive disaffection.” He then proposed to attract the

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<sup>2</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1872 (first published 1871; reprinted Indological Book House, Delhi, 1969), p. 3

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Indian Education Commission*, (Appointed by the Resolution of the Government of India, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1882), Calcutta, 1883, p. 403.

<sup>4</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p. 169.

Muslim gentlemen's son into the government schools through a formal declaration of regret in a Government of India Resolution, hoping that it would have an "excellent effect on the feeling of the Mahomedan population".<sup>6</sup> The fact that Mayo's remarks came before the publication of Hunter's book makes a point that Hunter was simply uttering the opinion of the person who commissioned him to write the book. What ever the fact is, the reality that the British Government was bent on putting a lot of weight on the education of the Muslims, during the beginning of the forth quarter of the nineteenth century, is important for our study on the Muslims of Calcutta. However Calcutta provides a very different case as the people of the city accepted British institutions from the very beginning of British rule. The Calcutta Madrassa established in 1781 was not only the first educational establishment of Calcutta but was the first modern government establishment of the country. Till the end of the period of this research, the Calcutta Madrassa remained a premier institution for the Muslims of Calcutta, even though its establishment was shaken by the introduction of English in government circles in 1839 and many other administrative changes introduced by the British Government. However, before going into any detailed discussion on the education of the Muslim of the city the general pattern of Muslim education and the history of the Madrassa should not be ignored.

### III

#### Education and the Muslims of Bengal

The Muslims of Bengal, the vast majority of whom were local converts, and separated from the rest of the Muslim world, could not keep pace with their brothers of faith outside Bengal in material as well as in intellectual advance. The injunctions of the Quran and the directives contained in the Prophet's Hadith did become an incentive to the vast majority of the Muslims of Bengal, but the culture through which those

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<sup>6</sup> Note by Lord Mayo dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 1871, *Mayo Papers*, Quoted in Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, (Cambridge, 1972), p. 90-91.



injunctions were passed on always remained alien to them. Though these Muslims belonged to the universal Islamic brotherhood, they were obliged, by the conditions of life and the environment of Bengal (a majority of the Muslims lived in rural areas) to live a life divorced from the culture of the vast number of Muslims of the subcontinent.

Modern research has focused on the role of a different class of persons, for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, within the context of rural Bengal. This group of persons created their own style and made a new niche for imparting Islamic religious belief to the vast majority of their Muslim brethren in Bengal. Though their purpose was the same as those of traditional Islamic institutions the method they employed was unique within the history of Islamic education. Recent studies by Asim Roy, Rafiuddin Ahmed and Richard Eaton casts a questioning eye on the role of these traditional *Maktabas* and *Madrassas* in context of Bengal in general. Roy's discussion of the role of *pirs* as mediator, in rendering the basic tenets of Islam to their less comfortable co-religionist (rural population of Bengal) is important here.<sup>7</sup> These *pirs* did not only adopted the Bengali language as the medium of conversation in their attempt to filter Islam among the rural mass but they also adopted non-Islamic idioms and symbols in order to make the rural masses more acquainted with what they were teaching. For Roy, this constitute a syncretic pattern of beliefs<sup>8</sup>, but for the discussion here it should be noted that the traditional Islamic institutions like the *Madrassas* and *Maktabas* were of less relevance, within the context of rural Bengal, as instruction in these institutions was given in Arabic and Persian which appear to be alien languages for the majority of the Muslims rural folks.

The Muslim conquerors and their followers, who came from Central Asia with a culture in many ways diverse, had gradually evolved and introduced a system of education in Bengal for the Muslims. Many of the Muslim sultans and later on the Mughal rulers in Bengal patronized learning following the traditions prevalent in many Islamic lands. The state in those days cannot be termed as a welfare state in the modern

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<sup>7</sup> Asim Roy, *Islam in South Asia: A Regional Perspective*. (New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1996), especially chapter I "The Interface of Islamization, Regionalisation and Syncretisation, The Bengal Paradigm" pp 11-44

<sup>8</sup> Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretic Tradition in Bengal*, Princeton University Press, 1983.

sense and so it did not take upon the task of imparting education to the people which was left to the religious scholars who, however, were patronized by the Government.

It was a common practice with the Mughal rulers and also with the Bengal Nawabs to grant *La-Kharaj* or rent free land to personage of cultural attainment, scholastic distinction and religious merit in lieu of stipends, bursaries and grant-in-aid called *Al-Tamgha*, *Aima*, *Madad-i-Ma'ash*, etc, which were wholly or partially meant for maintaining religious and charitable establishments particularly for educational foundations. These were grants in perpetuity to the above categories of persons. Although these grants were not confined to Muslims, they were the main beneficiaries of these grants.<sup>9</sup> The Muslim nobles, officers and the wealthier classes also emulated the rulers by patronizing and maintaining scholars who were engaged in imparting education through *Maktabas* and *Madrassas*<sup>10</sup>. The *Maktabas* were usually attached to the mosques and were institutions of lesser learning where the elements of Arabic, Persian and Islamic religious beliefs were taught. Most of the Bengali Muslims stayed in the rural areas, whereas the Muslim rulers and their clients generally settled in the Muslim urban settlements and it was in the cities of importance that *Madrassas* were established from which the rural masses remained untouched. Coupled with this all higher education was imparted through Persian and Arabic, alien languages to the larger mass of Bengali Muslims. The *Madrassas* in Bengal did not attract the Muslim rural masses but was constricted in its recruitment to the small upper class of Muslim who attended them. But in all matter of reference these were religious institutions catering to the religious requirement of the Muslims.

The establishment of the British rule in Bengal meant much more than the creation of a new political power. Apart from creating a new power structure it destroyed the economic base of the Muslim gentry. As the majority of the Muslim gentry were engaged in administration, the taking over of administration by the English gave a severe

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<sup>9</sup> A.R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims of Bengal, 757-1856*, (Dacca, 1969), pp. 39-40.

<sup>10</sup> Both are of Arabic origin. The term *Maktab* is derived from the word 'Kutub' means a place where writing is taught. In India *Maktab* are the school of elementary learning meant for Muslims' religious foundation. *Madrassah* which is derived from the Arabic word 'dars' means a lecture or a lesson was the seminaries of Muslims for more elaborate Islamic studies. See S.G.H. Hilali, *Perso-Arabic element in Bengali*, pp. 210-223.

blow to the basis of their economic power. As land was from the very beginning of Muslim rule left in the hand of the Hindu zamindars, the loss of political power left them with no retreat. The British recognition of the zamindars as a landed class further confirmed the position of these Hindu zamindars as an important economic class. For the Muslim aristocracy, the loss of political power did not allow them to fall on other vocations of life. The maintenance of Muslim institutions further gave them the illusion that they were still the holders of power, though in an inferior manner. As money was the primary concern of the Company, European supervision was not long to come. In 1769 European supervisors of revenue were appointed in the districts and a Controlling Council of Revenue was established at Murshidabad. W.W. Hunter says that the series of changes introduced by Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore ending in the Permanent Settlement of 1793, "usurped the functions of those higher Mussalmans officers who had formally subsisted between actual Collector and the Government."<sup>11</sup> In 1777 there were only five Muslims to forty-two Hindu employees in the revenue office at Chattagong.<sup>12</sup> K.N. Sinha opines that the upper class Hindus started controlling the bulk of the estates from the time of Murshid Quli Khan and that during the time of the Permanent Settlement 9/10 of the zamindaries in Bengal were held by Hindus.<sup>13</sup>

Further, the resumption provisions of the colonial government completely demolished the authority of another category of Muslim aristocracy who, though did not directly participated in the government but were the major beneficiaries of Muslim rule. These were those people who received rent free lands for educational and religious distinctions. In the beginning the Company's Government took little notice of the *La-Kharaj* lands. But from 1793 onwards it became suspicious of the genuineness of the deeds of grants. Finally a series of regulations regarding confiscation of "those holdings which do not possess unimpeachable title deeds with the collector" were issued serving a severe blow on the holders of such land. Though the Mughal's and later the Bengal Nawab's practice of granting *La-Kharaj* land was not bases on religious lines, as both

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<sup>11</sup> W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Mussalman*, p. 153-54.

<sup>12</sup> A.M. Sirajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of the East India Company at Chittagong 1761-1785*, p. 154

<sup>13</sup> N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1962, p. 229.

Hindus and Muslims were receivers of such grants, yet the Muslims were the major beneficiaries of those grants.<sup>14</sup> Thus the seizure of such lands severely affected the source of income of the influential section of the Muslims society causing a crushing blow to the source of intellectual leadership for the Muslim community.

In the realm of knowledge and education the establishment of the British rule brought in its train new ideas from the west which produced deep stirring in Bengali society. The coming of the British brought out a sea change in this pattern of education imparted in the country. Institutionalized education was imparted as against the traditional informal one. The Colonial rule not only changed the earlier system of education from the Maktabs Madrassas, Tols, and Patshalas to the modern European schools, but also changed the content of knowledge imparted in the country. Education during the pre-British days was largely traditional and out of touch with some of the chronic needs of the people which it ought to serve. It consisted in the memorizing of vast masses of ancient writings and commentaries handed down from generation to generation. Both among the literate Hindu castes and among the Muslims the traditional system of learning was exhaustively literary and religious in character. "The system had much in common. They taught in a language or languages foreign to the people at large. They drew their strength from their association with religion and being based on unchanging authority; they discouraged the spirit of free enquiry and resisted change."<sup>15</sup> The introduction of a modern western education in India was an event of great historical significance. In spite of the limitations and distortions of the education imparted, the fact remained that the British Government by spreading modern liberal education in India, even when due to its own needs, objectively played a progressive role. It produced a critical modern intelligentsia.

After the introduction of European knowledge by the missionaries, European sciences and European literature slowly became popular, at least among the

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<sup>14</sup> Dr. A.R. Mallick following Hunter contended that the Muslim grantees were worse affected by the resumption proceedings of the British government, partly because they form a majority of the grantees and partly because as the elite they were careless in preserving their deeds even if they had any. See A.R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims of Bengal*

<sup>15</sup> O Malley ed., *Modern India and the West*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1941, p. 139.

more literate section of the Indian society, and this new dispensation generally acted as a catalyst for modernization and intellectual awakening, not only in Bengal (where the cultural assimilation of the East and the West was first felt) but for the entire subcontinent. However the Muslims as a community did not participate in this new development. In Bengal, the 'renaissance' remained totally untouched by the thoughts and perceptions of the Muslim, and in the entire subcontinent the Muslim remained totally untouched by the new educational system introduced by the British, until quite late in the nineteenth century. The question of the non-participation of the Muslims in the renaissance is an important one which should be seen against the background of the Muslim community as a whole, coupled with the regional variations they carried. The formation of the Deoband Seminary, and much later of the seminary at Nadwa, is a living proof of the Muslim's non-acceptance of these 'new dispensations'. This did not change even much later as the all the reform movements among the Muslims were in the nature of rectifying the religion of illusory customs rather than question the content of the religion as a whole, which was reflected in some of the reform movements among the Hindus. As the discussion here is constricted within the ambit of Calcutta, I will start with the formation of the Calcutta Madrassa, along with the demand and perception of the Muslims of Calcutta about education in general and Calcutta Madrassa in particular. The discussion below will contain occasional references to other Muslim institutions other than the Calcutta Madrassa as it will be noticed during the discussion that the history of the Calcutta Madrassa was intrinsically connected with the Muslims of Bengal rather than with just those residing in Calcutta. It will be seen later that those who came to study in the Calcutta Madrassa were Muslim from the different districts of Bengal rather than only those of Calcutta. However, before beginning the discussion on the Calcutta Madrassa, we should briefly analyze the character of education imparted in Bengal.

The usual mode of reference to the pre-British educational institutions of the Muslims in general, not to say of Bengal exclusively, is through a reference of the system prevalent in Madrassas and Maktab. A discussion of the Madrassa and Maktab will not be of relevance here as it is very well understood what these terms implied.

Adam's<sup>16</sup> Report of 1835-38, revealed that the Muslim traditional educational system, the roots of which went back to the distant past, was on decay. The Muslim indigenous institutions like the Maktabas and Madrassas were inconsiderable. Few of the Muslim boys attended the Pathshalas, the indigenous elementary schools. The domestic elementary education was limited to the well-to-do families which were again not numerous. There were but few Madrassas and only an insignificant number of students belonged to the upper classes attended it. The medium of instruction in the Madrassas was Persian or Arabic, which were alien languages to the large Muslim masses of Bengal, and therefore these seminaries did not attract the Bengali Muslim masses. Adam's discussion of the village schools gives explicit reference to the syncretic character in regard to the general education of the different communities.<sup>17</sup> Hindus and Muslims attended the same schools and were imparted the same level of instruction. As for the Hindu institution, Sanskrit was one of the curriculums and for the Muslims Arabic formed another language for the instruction. But the basic level of instruction imparted in these village level schools was of very elementary and practical nature that had to do with the day to day affairs of individual life. Apart from these village level schools, the boys of affluent houses were given domestic instructions. Adam recognises that the Muslims of the districts he visited were under-represented both in schools and in domestic instruction. His second report on the Nattore Thana of the Rajshahi district refers to very few Arabic schools.<sup>18</sup> This he attributed to the social make-up of the area where the Hindus occupy the more influential positions in society while the Muslims worked in more menial occupations mostly as rural agriculturists. However an important reason apart from this will be the need of such schools as felt by the Muslims themselves. In quite a late development the Resolution of the Government of Bengal, dated the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1881, clearly stated that "(t)he ordinary schools of the country are believed to be in general as fully suited to the

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<sup>16</sup> W. Adam came to India as a missionary and later on served as the editor of the *India Gazette*. At his personal interest and personal request Lord Bentinck in 1835 appointed him to undertake the survey of the state of education which in the words of William Adam "was an indispensable preliminary to any measure for educational reforms". The investigations which carried out were spread over three years, 1835-38, during which period he submitted three separate reports dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 1835, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1835 and 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1838.

<sup>17</sup> Adam, W. *Report on the State of Education in Bengal, 1835-38* (Second Report on the District of Rajshahi), Ed. Joseph DiBona's edition of Adam's Reports entitled, *One Teacher, One School; the Adam Reports on Indigenous Education in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India*, (New Delhi, 1983) p 2

<sup>18</sup> Adam, W. *Report on the State of Education in Bengal*, pp 134-151 (Table 2)

requirements of Mohammedans as of Hindu pupils, the vernacular of the former being in all cases that of the people among whom they live".<sup>19</sup> This clearly indicates the mental and social orientation of the rural masses of the Muslim population of Bengal. Adam observes that "to the peasants of Bengal the Persian language was foreign and unknown and consequently unfit for being employed as the medium of instruction for the people".<sup>20</sup> Again most of the Bengali Muslims stayed in the rural areas, whereas the Muslim rulers and their benefactors generally settled in the Muslim urban settlements and it was in the cities of importance that Madrassas were established which did not touch the rural masses.

If such is the case then for whom the Maktab and Madrassas were established? In all the higher Muslim educational seminaries, the instruction were imparted through Persian and Arabic, alien languages to the larger mass of Bengali Muslims. The Madrassas in Bengal did not attract the Muslim masses but was constricted in its recruitment to the small upper class of Muslim who attended it. It was solely for those classes of Muslims who were rulers before the advent of the British on the political scene of Bengal and who even after their loss of political power maintained their separate cultural identity by the continuation of their sense of pride in their culture and education. In their thought and their language the Ashraf posed as alien to their coreligionists in Bengal. "In their thought, ideas and even in their language the Asharaf remained or at least posed to remain, alien to their co-religionist in Bengal and look down upon the Muslim masses."<sup>21</sup> A Bengali journal, *Islam Pracharak* in 1892<sup>22</sup> considered the 'sharifs' of the Muslims as another manifestation of *Kaulinya*<sup>23</sup>. "This class of Muslims treated the language of the subject race with contempt and they were as ignorant of native vernacular as any English administrator of the day."<sup>24</sup> Another Bengali journal *Al-Eslam*, as late as 1919, inveighed against the sense of Brahminhood among high born Muslims" who

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<sup>19</sup> Report of the Bengal Director of Public Instruction for 1880-81, p 4, NAI.

<sup>20</sup> Adam, W. *Report on the State of Education in Bengal*, p. 77

<sup>21</sup> Islam, Mustafa Nurul, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press (1901-1930)*, (Dacca, 1973), pp. 249

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Islam, Mustafa Nurul, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press (1901-1930)*, (Dacca, 1973), pp. 249

<sup>23</sup> Kaulinya literary means nobility in birth. In the nineteenth century Hindus campaigned against the evil effects of Kaulinya.

<sup>24</sup> A.R. Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims of Bengal*, pp. 48

regarded themselves as differing in every respects from commoners, as if they were a completely different species.<sup>25</sup> The Calcutta Madrassa was the product of this alien Muslim class in Calcutta, who in their attempt to preserve their sense of culture requested the British government to establish a Muslim seminary where the intricacies of Islam could be studied in a foreign language. We now turn our attention to the formation of the Calcutta Madrassa and the responses of the Calcutta Muslims towards it.

#### IV

#### The Calcutta Madrassa and the Muslims of Calcutta

The Calcutta Madrassa was founded in 1781 by Warren Hastings on the recommendation<sup>26</sup> of a group of Muslim intellectuals for the purpose of imparting Mohammedan sciences to the Muslims community during that period.<sup>27</sup> In his Minute of 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1781<sup>28</sup> Warren Hastings writes “in the month of September 1780 a petition was presented to me by a considerable number of Musssalmans of credit and learning, who attending in a body for that purpose praying that I would use my influence with a stranger of the name of Mudgid-O Din, who was then lately arrived in the Presidency, to persuade him to remain there of the instruction of the young students.....They represented that this was a favourable occasion to establish a Madrassa of College, and Mudgid-O Din the fittest person to form and preside in it .... I dismissed them with promise of complying with their wishes .....I sent for the man on whom they had bestowed such encomiums and prevail upon him to accept the office designed for him. He opened his school about the beginning of October and has success and reputation

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<sup>25</sup> *Al-Eslam*, Bhadra, 1326, B.S. Quoted in Islam, Mustafa Nurul, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion*

<sup>26</sup> *British Parliamentary Papers*, Minutes of Evidence Before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company with Appendix and Index. [I. Public] 1831-32.

<sup>27</sup> Warren Hastings Minute dated 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1780, reprinted in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, 1781-1839*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1920) pp 7-9.

<sup>28</sup> Warren Hastings Minute dated 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1780, reprinted in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, 1781-1839*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1920), (reprinted New Delhi, 1965), pp 7-9.



which have justified the expectation which have been formed of it.”<sup>29</sup> It should be remembered that during the eighteenth century the Madrassa education came under the influence of the *Dars-i-Nizamiyah*, or Nizamiyah curriculum of the Farangi Mahal of Lucknow.<sup>30</sup> It is said that the Madrassas in Bengal were also remodeled accordingly in the later half of the nineteenth century. It reduced the course of regular teaching to eight years and initiated a change in the medium of instruction from classical Perso-Arabic to Urdu.<sup>31</sup> However the case of the Calcutta Madrassa was very different. A scheme of study was laid down which in addition to Poetry, History and Geography and General Literature, professed to teach theology and law according to the Koran, the Commentaries and the traditions of it, and sciences according to Greeco-Arabic system of Baghdad and Bokhara.<sup>32</sup>

However Hastings’ reason behind the foundation of the Calcutta Madrassa was more practical than philanthropic. Although the character of the institution was religious it served the British Government in many of its policies. It was founded “in order to give the Mahommedan students a considerable degree of erudition in the Persian and Arabic languages, and in the complicated system of law founded on the tenets of their religion” so as to enable them “to discharge with credit the functions and duties of the Criminal Courts of the Judicature and many of the most important branches of police which it had been deemed expedient to continue in the hands of the Mahommedan officers.”<sup>33</sup> It was necessary for the Company to rely on the natives and also to follow the indigenous institutions. In the judiciary, the highest post went to the English officers, but the lower posts like the Qazi, Mir Adl, Mufti, etc., were still held by the Muslim officers. Muslim law continued to be administered in the Sadar Nizamat Adalat and also in the District Criminal Courts, Warren Hastings’ reorganization of 1772 placed the new district

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<sup>29</sup> Warren Hastings Minute dated 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1780, reprinted in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, 1781-1839*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1920), (reprinted New Delhi, 1965), pp 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Robinson, “*Al-Nizamiyya: A Group of Lucknow Intellectuals in the Early Twentieth Century*”, in Christopher Shackles, ed. *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell*, OUP, New Delhi, 1989; reprinted in Francis Robinson, *The ‘Ulama of Farangi Mahal and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2001, p. 130-31.

<sup>31</sup> O Malley ed., *Modern India and the West*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1941, p. 140

<sup>32</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, Vol. I* op. cit. p 20

<sup>33</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

courts, for both civil and criminal jurisdiction, under European superintendence. But the service of the Qazis and Muftis were still sought though as subordinates. However, in 1793 it was decided that no Indian was in future to be appointed to any post carrying an annual salary of £ 500 or more. The career prospects of Muslims and Hindus were thus limited to appointments as Amins and Munsifs in minor civil suits, as advisory Qazis to the criminal courts and the Sadar Nizamat Adalat Calcutta or (under Cornwallis's reorganization the Sadar Nizamat Adalat was moved to Calcutta from Murshidabad and reconstituted with Europeans<sup>34</sup>) as Darogas of police in the local thanas. Under these limitations also the Muslim legal experts maintained themselves in the judicial services. However when in 1830s, the Company affirmed the principle that 'all natives' of India were eligible for judicial service and placed increasing importance on a knowledge of English<sup>35</sup>, the predominance of Muslim officers in the judicial service in Bengal was seriously challenged. By the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, their disadvantage was overwhelming.

It must be remembered that up to the late 1930s Persian was the language of judicial administration and business. In the administration of justice Hindu and Muslim legal systems were generally followed. The Company needed trained Hindu and Muslim men to fill the subordinate positions in the administration. The two institutions i.e. the Calcutta Madrassa and the Benaras Hindu College in fact suited this purpose. However it was no part of the policy of the East India Company even up to the second decade of the nineteenth century to impose a Western or an English system of education upon its Indian subjects.

The Institution was maintained by Hastings at his own cost for a short time. He subsequently recommended that the Company should pay back all his earlier expenditures and that the institution should be endowed by a grant of certain villages and that the lands appropriated for the maintenance of the Madrassa be delivered over to the charge of the preceptors of the Madrassa and the *jamma* (revenue deposits) of them be

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, p. 37

<sup>35</sup> In 1837 by the Act XXIX, Persian was discarded as the official language and English was placed instead to be followed in all official

separated from the public revenue.<sup>36</sup> This recommendation was confirmed by the Company's Directors in England. Certain lands and villages with an estimated income of Rs. 29,000 per annum were assigned in the 24 Parganas for the support of the institution, and a *sanad* made out of them in the name of the preceptor or principal.<sup>37</sup>

The Government in fact till the end of the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was more concerned with improving the existing institutions than with creating new ones. Its attention was naturally turned to the Calcutta Madrassa whose condition was not very satisfactory. In 1788 complaints were made of "misconduct and mismanagement" on the part of the superiors, who had been appointed by Warren Hastings at the time of the foundation of the Madrassa. He was now removed and a new superior was appointed.<sup>38</sup> In 1791 the institution was again found to be in a state of disorder. It was discovered that some students were enjoying stipends without even attending classes and some others were "persons of depraved character".<sup>39</sup> The condition of the Madrassa continued to deteriorate.

The first reference to the Calcutta Madrassa in the historiography could be found in a work on Benevolent Institution of Calcutta, by Charles Lushington in 1824.<sup>40</sup> The views uttered by Lushington are worth considering here. "The object" behind the foundation of the Calcutta Madrassa "has never been attained to the extent of his

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<sup>36</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, Vol. I* op. cit. p 20

<sup>37</sup> These lands were termed as '*Madrassa Mahal*'. A claim, however, was afterwards set up for these villages by the Rajah of Nadia, the authenticity of the claim was considered to be genuine and the lands were restored to the Rajah with the provision that the revenue "there from were to be deposited as per previous arrangement for the maintenance of the Maadrassa". The revenue from the lands however fell off considerably and in 1819 a question arose as to the liability of the "Government Committee of the Madrassa claiming on behalf of the institution full amount of the rental of the lands" when granted i.e. Rs 29000 per annum. The then Governor General recognized the liability of the Government's sanction of Rs 30000 for the maintenance of the institution. This arrangement was confirmed later by the Court of Directors and continued for a long time. For reference see *Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71*, (Delhi, 1960) pp. 233-234.

<sup>38</sup> Extract Thomas Fisher's Memoir, quoted in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, 1781-1839*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1920) p 182.

<sup>39</sup> Fisher's Memoir in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p 182.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Lushington, *The History Design and Present State of Religious, Benevolent and Charitable Institutions founded by the British in Calcutta and its vicinity*, (Calcutta, 1824, Printed at the Hindustan Press).

[Warren Hastings'] expectations"<sup>41</sup> to the extent that "its resources were dissipated among the superior and subordinate drones belonging to the Establishment."<sup>42</sup> The government was informed about the state of affairs in 1812 and a remedy was instituted to the extent that a sum of Rs. 7000 was allotted to the formation of the Library.<sup>43</sup> Therefore for nearly four decades of its formation the Madrassa did not fulfill the expectations of its founder. However, to the Muslim community it was working with satisfactory results.

This state of affairs was attributed to the neglect of duties on the part of the superiors. The Government then placed the management in the hands of a Committee of Superintendents consisting of the Acting President of the Board of Revenue, the Persian translator to the Government of India, and the preparer of reports and regulations.<sup>44</sup> But the Madrassa did not show any sign of improvement. In 1818 the Committee recommended the appointment of one European Secretary to supervise its internal administration.<sup>45</sup> Captain E. Irvine was appointed to this post. Soon he found out that the library of the Madrassa, "laboured under a remarkable poverty of books; its stocks consisted of only twelve volumes of which number not four were of any standard or of general utility".<sup>46</sup> The Committee of Superintendents recommended that the surplus funds of some six thousand rupees should be used for the purpose of purchasing books in the attempts towards building "a respectable library of Arabic and Persian works".<sup>47</sup> This proposal was accepted by the Government. The Committee also decided not to admit any students to the Madrassa whose age was more than twenty-eight years. For the first time in the history of the Madrassa, the Committee in spite of vigorous opposition from the teachers and the students introduced the system of annual examination; and in the year 1821 the first examination was conducted.<sup>48</sup> Previous to this there was no system of examination.

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Lushington, *The History Design and Present State of Religious*, p. 135

<sup>42</sup> Charles Lushington, *The History Design and Present State of Religious*, p. 135

<sup>43</sup> Charles Lushington, *The History Design and Present State of Religious*, p. 135-6

<sup>44</sup> Fisher's Memoir H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p. 182.

<sup>45</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p. 30.

<sup>46</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p. 182

<sup>47</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p. 183

<sup>48</sup> H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p. 183

By the 1820s, however, the classes at the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrassa were arranged in five hierarchical grades. The number of teachers increased, the rate of stipend was enhanced and other expenses were also increased four times. But the strength of students showed little increase beyond what it was when Hastings established it. The curriculum fixed for the five classes is as follows: First year- Law and General literature including Grammar; Second Year- Law and Arithmetic and Algebra; Third Year – Law and Geometry; Fourth Year – Law and at the opinion of the student either Logic, Rhetoric, Metaphysics, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy or Theology; Fifth Year – Law including the regulation of the Government and any one of the foregoing subjects which the student might select. All were in Persian or Arabic.<sup>49</sup> A statement of the Madrassa for the month of September 1823 reveals that (i) of the students receiving stipends fifteen rupees per month, 17 were present regularly, one was present for twenty days and another one was present for seven days only; (ii) of the students receiving stipend of ten rupees each, thirty-two were present regularly and one attended only five days; (iii) of the students receiving eight rupees each, twenty-three were present regularly.<sup>50</sup> Thus it appears that the Madrassa never had a large number of students. In 1826 their total was 85, all were stipend holders; in 1827 it decreased to 73; and then during the subsequent years their number slightly increased.<sup>51</sup> By December 1835 the Madrassa had on its rolls 132 students in comparison with 407 and 135 students studying in the Hindu College and the Sanskrit College respectively.<sup>52</sup> While the students at the Madrassa were receiving stipends from the Government the great majority of the Hindu students in the above institutions paid their own tuition fees – a fact which reflected the attitude of the Hindu and Muslim elite towards education.

At an early stage it was ordered by Warren Hastings that if there was any vacancy in the Criminal Courts that should be filled by the students of the Madrassa only. The Preceptor (principal) of the Madrassa was to give Sannads (certificates) to the effect that the individuals nominated by him were duly qualified for the respective

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<sup>49</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Calcutta Madrassa, quote in Calcutta University Committee Report, Part I, Vol. I. (Calcutta 1916), p 110.

<sup>50</sup> All these were monthly stipends, see H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records*, p 37

<sup>51</sup> A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal (1818-1835)*, Leiden, 1965, p 164.

<sup>52</sup> A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal*, p 164

appointments.<sup>53</sup> The Committee also endeavoured to include European Sciences in the old Madrassa curriculum, through translations in Arabic and Persian of various English works. One Abdul Rahim, a Muslim scholar with a fairly good knowledge of English, was appointed for this purpose. He undertook to translate the articles on Geometry from the Encyclopaedia Britannica into Persian, Hulton's course of mathematics into Arabic and Bridge's Algebra into Persian. The Committee also took measures to print well known Persian works on Muslim law, namely Fatwa-i-Hamidi and Fatawa-i-Alamgiri for the use of students. But it was reported that "the prospect of benefits from the attempts in this respect is not, on the whole, satisfactory."<sup>54</sup> Thus as early as 1825 the Rev. Thomas Thomason who conducted the examination of the students in one of the subjects, reported to the Secretary of the Madrassa, expressing doubts as to the efficacy of the mode of teaching Western Sciences through the medium of an oriental language.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the interest which the East India Company had begun to take in the matter of education, nothing positive was done until 1823. In 1823 a General Committee of Public Instruction was established "for the purpose of ascertaining the state of public education and of the public institutions designed for its promotion and of considering and from time to time, submitting to Government the suggestions of such measures as it may appear expedient to adopt with a view to the better instruction of the people, and the introduction of useful knowledge and of the sciences and arts of Europe."<sup>56</sup>

This state of affairs continued till the mid of the nineteenth century without much progress in the level instruction imparted there. The curriculum was obsolete and no internal efforts were forthcoming from among the Muslim students or professors of the Madrasah to improve it. In fact, any attempt at changing the curriculum

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<sup>53</sup> See B. B. Majumdar, *First Fruits of English Education*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1963) p 30

<sup>54</sup> Notes by J. R. Colvin referred to in Lord Auckland's Minute of 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1839, Home Department Proceedings, Education Branch. Also quoted in H. Sharp, *Selection from the Educational Records, 1781-1839*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1920) p 171.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal*, p 165.

<sup>56</sup> Banerjee, Promothanath, *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, (Calcutta, 1957) pp. 8-9.

was met with vehement protest from inside. In 1827, a medical class<sup>57</sup> was also established in the Madrasa where the students could read anatomy by English authors translated into Arabic.<sup>58</sup> Under the orders of the Governor General, an English class was introduced in 1826 where only the rudiments of the English language were taught.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the progress of the English class was not at all satisfactory, it was even less than that of the medical class. The Committee of Public Instruction had tried to promote the learning of English by enforcing a rule that every student receiving a stipend from the Arabic Department must learn English for an hour or two a day, and those who did not receive stipends were allowed to join the English classes by paying two rupees a month.<sup>60</sup> But this experiment did not bring any positive result. It was found that as a result of this arrangement the English class was filled with unwilling scholars who were too old to acquire a correct pronunciation of the new language and consequently devoted too short a time to the study of English to make any substantial.<sup>61</sup> This was due to the very criteria, which was set up for admission to the Madrasa. Since admission was restricted to those students who had already acquired a good proficiency in Persian and had some prior knowledge of Arabic, the average age of the students was over twenty years.<sup>62</sup> It was reported in 1835 that “of all the students then at the Madrasa there are but two who have made any progress beyond the spelling book.”<sup>63</sup>

The Government in 1829 had constituted a Junior English Department, which later on after 1854 came to be known as the Anglo-Persian Department. From a letter from the Council of Education to the Government of Bengal we get to know about this arrangement in the Calcutta Madrasa. “The Arabic Department”, the letter says, “constituted at the foundation of the College in 1782, instruct gratuitously one set of

<sup>57</sup> Simultaneously with the beginning of medical classes at the Madrasa a similar class was opened at the Banaras Sanskrit College for the similar purpose.

<sup>58</sup> In 1927 the Madrasa building was also shifted at a new place which incurred the cost of Rs 1,40,537. See H. Sharp, op cit. p 182.

<sup>59</sup> A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal*, p 165.

<sup>60</sup> The important thing is that how many Muslim boys (students) not getting any stipends from the Madrasa actually got themselves registered in this English class. But the details regard this is very meager and almost non-existent. However such details will be compensated if we are to consult the admission of the Muslims to various other college imparting technical education.

<sup>61</sup> Calcutta University Committee Report, Vol. I, Part I (Calcutta, 1916) p 110

<sup>62</sup> Ahmed, A. F. Salahuddin, op. cit. p 165.

<sup>63</sup> Notes by H. T. Prinsep on the question of the education of the natives, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1835, Home Department, Education Branch, (KW papers) also see Sharp p 124.

pupil, belonging to the learned and higher classes of Mohammedans".<sup>64</sup> "The English Department, constituted in 1829, instructs on payment of a small fee, another set of pupil, mostly belonging to the lower orders of Mohammedans, in the elements of English language and in very little else."<sup>65</sup> The most important thing to note here and which will later get emphasized in the paper, is the pattern in which the instruction is afforded in the Junior Section. "There are, however, Bengalee classes in this department for such pupil as desire to study Bengalee as well as English."<sup>66</sup> However the exact number of students studying in this Bengali department is not given in the letter. It is astonishing to know that in all the latter reference of the Government of Bengal no exact reference to this Bengali department is found up till the much late in the nineteenth century.

However, with only an elementary knowledge of English, learnt half-heartedly, the Madrassa students were not to be expected to show any progress in the acquisition of Western knowledge. To what extent the Muslim Bhradralok had been neglecting the study of English could be illustrated by the fact that when the Calcutta Medical College was opened in 1835, not a single Muslim student came forward who had even a moderate knowledge of English and consequently no Muslim was admitted. This happened particularly because of the criteria that were set for entering the Calcutta Medical College. By the orders of the Government of India 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1835<sup>67</sup> the Medical classes in the Calcutta Madrassa and the Sanskrit College were abolished with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of February and thus this facility was opened in the Calcutta Medical College where instruction on the various branches of medical sciences on the approved branches of learning was imparted. This benefit was opened to "all classes of native youths between the age of 14 and 20 without exception of creed and caste." Efficiency in reading and writing English and Bengali or English and Hindustani was considered essential. Forty-nine students were selected in 1835 as foundation pupils. Most of them had their education at the Hindu College, Hare's School and General Assembly's

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from the Council of Education dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1853, to the Government of Bengal, Home Department, Education Branch, NAI.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from the Council of Education dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1853, to the Government of Bengal, Home Department, Education Branch, NAI.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from the Council of Education dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1853, to the Government of Bengal, Home Department, Education Branch, NAI.

<sup>67</sup> Order of the Government of Bengal, Home Department, Public Branch, February 1835



Institution.<sup>68</sup> By 1835, the Committee of Public Instruction came to the conclusion that the experiment of teaching Arabic and English simultaneously in the Madrassa had ended in total failure. Nevertheless, it resolved to maintain the English Department there as “it long affords an opportunity to the Muhammedan community as the ‘Capital’ labours under great disadvantage from the little encouragement which had been held out to them to cultivate English literature.<sup>69</sup> The Committee, however, noted that notwithstanding these disadvantages, ‘two or three’ Muslims have been able to acquire ‘a good English education.’ It, therefore, resolved to give every encouragement to the Muslims to become acquainted with English literature and sciences, and decided to appoint an English professor for the Calcutta Madrassa as soon as some students knew enough English to profit from his teaching.<sup>70</sup>

Macaulay’s minute of 1835 was the first official declaration of the colonial government that put its weight in favour of English education. One of the major clauses of Macaulay’s Minute of 1835 was the proposal for the abolition of the Calcutta Madrassah and the Sanskrit College. This clause some how was leaked out prior to the publication of the Minute and there took place a great commotion among the Hindus and the Muslims of Calcutta. The Government was provided with two petitions of the respective communities. The Muslim petition was signed by 8000 persons<sup>71</sup> and the petition from the Hindu community was signed by 18000 persons, in protest against the abolition of the Calcutta Madrassa and the Sanskrit College respectively.<sup>72</sup> Both the communities protested against the diversion of the funds from the institutions of traditional learning to that of the new one introduced by the British, and prayed for the maintenance of the older institutions.

In consequence of the Resolution of 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1835, stipends were abolished as against a limited number of scholarships. Petitions were signed by the

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<sup>68</sup> Banerjee, Promothanath, *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, (Calcutta, 1857) pp 35-36.

<sup>69</sup> Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1835, Home Department, Education Branch, National Archive of India. Also cited in the Calcutta University Committee Report, Part I, Vol. I. (Calcutta 1916), p 110.

<sup>70</sup> Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1835, Home Department, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

<sup>71</sup> Princeps’ figure.

<sup>72</sup> Ahmed, A. F. Salahuddin, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal*, pp. 184-87.

students of Calcutta Madrassa for the reinstatement of the stipends. Lord Auckland replied in a Minute of August, 1838, to those requests, that the "stipendiary system was unsuccessful in all countries." "On the other hand I hope that scholarships, limited in number, given for a limited time to the best students, upon fair and severe competition, may be considered as amongst the best stimulants for emulation and learning".<sup>73</sup> Lord Auckland drew up a minute on 24 November, 1839, which made an authoritative pronouncement of a new educational policy. The grants enjoyed till 1835 by the oriental colleges were restored. At the same time he made provisions for additional funds.<sup>74</sup>

Although the Orientalists on the General Committee of Public Instruction and the upper class Muslims of Calcutta could congratulate themselves on their achievement in amending the government resolution partly in favour of oriental education and getting a status quo on the existence of the Calcutta Madrassa with all its funds restored, the situation in Bengal during this time was following a new direction. The change, in fact, was totally blurred for the vision of the upper class Muslims. The position and influence which these classes of Muslims continued to exercise in the urban areas was a relic of the past which was linked with British political power. Till the 1840s, under the British rule, the old structure was artificially sustained. The old Mughal judicial and revenue systems were allowed to continue with certain modifications. Persian continued to maintain its privileged position in the administration. All these tended to generate a false sense of security and also a false sense of pride among the Ashraf Muslims. The continuance of the traditional system of administration and education under a western government was an anachronism which the Ashraf Muslims in general failed to realise.

Act XXIX of 1837 made it lawful for the Governor General in Council to dispense with the provision which enjoined the use of the Persian language in Courts and to prescribe the language to be used in its stead. In 1838 the Government "ordered that in the districts comprising the Bengal division of the Presidency of Fort William, the

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<sup>73</sup> Chakravarty, D., *Beginning of Western Education*,

<sup>74</sup> "Extract from Government Letter No. 986, dated 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1840, addressed to the General Committee of Public Instruction. Reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 77.

vernacular language of those districts shall be substituted for the Persian in the judicial proceedings and in the proceedings relating to land revenue.”<sup>75</sup> The progress made in English education during the decade following 1835 made Lord Hardinge in 1844 to declare that preference would be given to men who had received a western education.<sup>76</sup>

Though the Resolution of 1835 though decided in favour of English education, the Government did not relax its efforts to maintain and improve the existing oriental institutions although education in these seminaries had lost its relevance in the changed situation. The General Committee of Public Instruction by 1840 “fully adopted the proposition that ancient seminaries of oriental learning should be amply maintained so long as the community may desire to take advantage of them, and that the funds assigned to each seminary should, under the present circumstances, be exclusively employed in instructions in or in connection with the seminary, and for giving in these institutions a prominent encouragement to oriental learning.”<sup>77</sup>

The Court of Directors also by the Dispatch of 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1841, “laid it down as a permanent principle, in approval of the recommendations submitted to it by the Government of India that the funds assigned to these two great institutions of oriental learning (i.e. the Calcutta Madrassa and the Sanskrit College) should be employed exclusively in instruction in or in connection with those institutions giving a decided preference to the promotion in the first instance of perfect efficiency in oriental instruction”.<sup>78</sup>

The Committee also proposed for the assignment of Junior and Senior Scholarships, of the same aggregate pecuniary amount, to the oriental institutions. In its proposal the number of scholarships to be assigned to the oriental institutions was more

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<sup>75</sup> Banerjee, Promothanath, *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, (Calcutta, 1857) pp. 31-32.

<sup>76</sup> Resolution of India, dated 10<sup>th</sup> October 1844, reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 90-91.

<sup>77</sup> “Extract from the Government letter, dated 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1840, addressed to the General Committee of Public Instruction”, Reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 77.

<sup>78</sup> See extract reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 112.

than in the English institutions under its control.<sup>79</sup> The Committee further said that, - "At our oriental institutions the number of scholarships will be 98 Junior and 72 Senior; and the number of scholarships at our English institutions, inclusive of preparatory schools, will be 71 Junior and 52 Senior".<sup>80</sup> The Committee also decided to devote 1200 rupees a year towards the publication of oriental works which were translated from European works.<sup>81</sup>

Persian was rapidly "melting like snow" English steadily replaced it. Western education became the passport to the public services. The influence of the Act of 1837 and the Resolution of 1844 upon the Hindu Bhadrakol was bound to be decisive. Brahmins, Baidayas and Kayasthas had been the administrators, priests, lawyers, doctors, etc for a long time to come. Every successive government had drawn its corps of major and minor officials from among these classes of Bengali Hindus.<sup>82</sup> Before the British they had not hesitated to cultivate Persian and even Arabic which had opened up gainful employment. From the writings of the nineteenth century Bengal we find that there took place the birth and growth of a new Calcutta based aristocracy during the early part of the Company's rule.<sup>83</sup> Modern writers have found that this aristocracy consisted mainly of the three higher caste Hindus and were born within a radius of 50-60 miles from Calcutta.<sup>84</sup> The effect of the Act of 1837<sup>85</sup> and the Resolution of 1844<sup>86</sup> proved detrimental to the Ashraf Muslims. In their retreat from the modern world they found comfort in alienating themselves from the new order. The Calcutta and the Hooghly Madrassa with its archaic curriculum remained the main centres of Muslim higher education. But these were no match in front of the Hindu College of Calcutta whose

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<sup>79</sup> "Extract from the Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1840", Reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 75.

<sup>80</sup> "Extract from the Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1840", Reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 77.

<sup>81</sup> "Extract from the Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1840", Reprinted in A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 77.

<sup>82</sup> J.H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal*, Berkley & Los Angeles, 1968, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> By far majority of 186 persons whose biographies have been published in the first eleven volumes of the *Sahitya Sadak Charitmala* were born in and around Calcutta and belonged to the three higher castes. See *Sahitya Sadak Charitmala*, Volume I-XI, (Calcutta, 1940-70).

<sup>84</sup> J.H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> The act discarded Persian as the language of administration.

<sup>86</sup> The Resolution gave privilege to English educated persons.

doors were closed for them<sup>87</sup>, coupled with the detrimental attitude of the community towards this kind of education.

This repeated intervention indicates deep concern to introduce English learning into the Muslim community and to promote the Calcutta Madrassa among the Muslim community as well. It also afforded a sticking illustration of the general apathy of the Muslim community towards education especially towards the modern European system introduced by the foreigners. This apathy is aptly illustrated from the report of the Committee Superintendence of Madrassa who said in 1822 that the prejudice of the preceptor posed considerable obstacle in the way of reform.<sup>88</sup>

The Minute of 1835 put all its weight on imparting English education in the country, but the Government did not completely relieve itself from its commitment to support Oriental Seminaries. The Government, in its recommendation to the General Committee of Public Instruction, wrote thus:

“The Committee seems to have fully adopted the proposition that the ancient Seminaries of Oriental learning should be amply maintained so long as the community may desire to take advantage of them, and that the funds assigned to each Seminaries should, under present circumstances, be exclusively employed in instruction in, or in connection with the Seminary, and for giving in these institutions a prominent encouragement to Oriental learning.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Macaulay also commented on the disability of the Muslim student to enter institutions of higher and modern learning. In the Minute he said, “The Hindu College admits no Muhammedan students. None of the Directors are Mahammedans. The high compliments paid to this institution is therefore a compliment paid to the Hindoos at the expense of the Mussalmans. And I see no way of remedying this inconvenience. For there is no Mahommedan institution which bears the smallest resemblance to the Hindoo College.” See Extract from Macaulay’s note cited in Ahmed, A. F. Salahuddin, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal (1818-1835)*, (Leiden, 1965), pp. 191.

<sup>88</sup> Fisher’s Memoirs, printed in H. Sharp, op cit. p 182

<sup>89</sup> Extract from Government Letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1840, addressed to the General Committee of Public Instruction, printed in A. Richley, Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859, (Delhi, 1922) p 77

But after the Minute was published the question of Oriental Seminaries was no longer dependent on the decision of the community itself. Efforts were constantly made by the state to remodel the institution on modern lines along with keeping the Oriental structure of these seminaries intact. In the year 1842, all "The general and financial business connected with all the provincial institutions was brought directly under the control of the Government and the superintendence of the Council of Education was confined to the institutions in Calcutta".<sup>90</sup> Consequently the Calcutta Madrassa came under the control of the Council of Education. At the instance of the Council, in 1849 an Anglo-Arabic class was added to the Arabic Department at a charge of rupees hundred a month to instruct in English language such Arabic students who would avail themselves of such instructions, and it was felt that this will remedy the past failure of the English instruction in the Arabic Department.<sup>91</sup> This attempt though partly successful was not fully satisfactory for the Council to keep it going.

In the year 1851 Mr. Sprenger was made the first Principal of the Calcutta Madrassa, with duties and responsibilities similar to those in other colleges, with the exception that he would not teach in any class of the Madrassa. Dr. Sprenger, on his own, tried to introduce certain changes into the curriculum and discipline of the institution. This created a commotion among the students<sup>92</sup> to the extent that the police was called to control the revolting students.<sup>93</sup> The Council then appointed a Committee of Enquiry to suggest changes in the Madrassa.<sup>94</sup> The Committee reported its finding to the Council in 1853 where it was recommended that the Government should remodel the Calcutta Madrassa.<sup>95</sup> The committee also came to the conclusion that the changes brought Dr. Sprenger was opposed by the students as it contained the incorporation of Western studies in it.<sup>96</sup> It was also known that, though the teachers were not involved with the

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<sup>90</sup> A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 66

<sup>91</sup> A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) p 106

<sup>92</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India

<sup>93</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrassa Alia, 1781-1959*, (Young Press, 1959), Part I, p. 108

<sup>94</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, 'Tarikh-e-Madrassa Alia', p.108

<sup>95</sup> A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) p 105

<sup>96</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, 'Tarikh-e-Madrassa Alia', p. 109

student, but they did not even help the principal in controlling the students and putting down the affair.<sup>97</sup>

The Council thus recommended that the “present English and Anglo-Arabic classes should be closed, and in their stead an Anglo-Persian Department should be organised, upon such a scale, and with such an establishment, as to affords the means of acquiring through an elementary English education as far as the junior English scholarship standard. Persian should be taught simultaneously with English in this department.” The Council further said that “[i]n addition to English and Persian, it should contain the means of instruction in Hindustanee and Bengalee, the one being the domestic language of the Mohammedans all over India, and the other being the Vernacular language of this Province.”<sup>98</sup> The council further recommended that those who do not pass through the Anglo-Persian Department should have to go through a higher test in the Oriental studies than what was earlier deemed necessary. The Anglo-Persian Department of the Madrassa intended to the extent that the benefit of an “English education to the children of the Mohammedans of higher order or of the many scattered literary families residing throughout the interior.” The Council was of the opinion that “[t]here are probably many persons of the same persuasion in Calcutta to whom a classical education of their own language and literature is not an object, and who will be content with a good English education, as more suitable to their condition and prospects. There are also different Mahomedan families in Calcutta, of easy means, who would prefer to give a home education to their children in Persian literature, and who would therefore wish that there should be a school conveniently suited, at which English studies alone needs to be prosecuted. Such efforts on the part of the Muslims of Bengal are clearly indicated in the Council’s remarks on the failure of the English classes in the Madrassa. The failure, the Council opined, owed rather to bad quality of the instruction then given, and to other defects of system, “than to the general indisposition of the Mohammedan rank and rank and respectability”. “(T)hey have send their sons to Saint Paul’s School and the Parental Academy because these are the only seminaries, not to a strictly missionary character

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<sup>97</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, ‘Tarikh-e-Madrassa Alia’, p. 109

<sup>98</sup> Letter from the Council of Education dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1853, to the Government of Bengal, Home Department, Education Branch, NAI.

open to them, in which they can become proficient English scholars.”<sup>99</sup> The council in the same year announced the opening of the ‘Hindoo College’ for all sections of the population, irrespective of religion.<sup>100</sup>

Why did such a state of affairs continue in the Calcutta Madrasah, which was regarded as a premier institution of the Muslims of Bengal not to say just of Calcutta? The importance of the Calcutta Madrasah could be assessed by the fact that in 1873 the *Calcutta Gazette* published a report on “Mahomedan Education and Mohsin Endowment”<sup>101</sup> in which the Muslims are quoted as expressing the opinion that the importance of the Calcutta Madrasah will not diminish with the opening of the Madrassas at Dacca, Chittagong and Noakhally. Was it that the community itself desired to acquire an education steeped in their tradition which would neglect English and other European sciences? This could be so if we just look at the demands that the Muslims made to the British Government. In 1871 a person of Dacca named Khajah Abdool Gunny submitted to the Government of India a memorial requesting the establishment of a Mahomedan College at Dacca.<sup>102</sup> In this memorandum Bengali is emphasized instead of the classical languages as the medium of instruction and English was emphasized but was kept an option without much force. So may we regard this as a change in the attitude of the community, coming not from within Calcutta but from the districts? It should be remembered that though the medium of instruction was changed the pattern and context of instruction could not be regarded as something akin to the modern system of education that were prevalent in most of the schools and colleges of Bengal.

The memorial presented at Dacca was not the only institution inspired by the organization of the Calcutta Madrassa. Let us now turn our attention to yet another Madrassa founded much later but modelled totally on the background of the Calcutta Madrassa.

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<sup>99</sup> A. Richley, Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859, (Delhi, 1922) p 106

<sup>100</sup> A. Richley, Selection from the Education Records, pp. 109-111.

<sup>101</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1873, Supplement to the Calcutta Gazette, July to December, 1873, pp 1032-1036

<sup>102</sup> Government of Bengal, Education Deptt, Lt No. 242B dated 28<sup>th</sup> November 1871 from the Commissioner of Dacca, enclosing a memorial signed by Khajah Abdool Gunny, C.S.I. and other Mahomedans of Dacca, praying for the establishment of a Mahomedan Collage at Dacca, and specifying the advantages and concessions they specifically desired.



The Hooghly Madrasa, which was founded out of the funds of the late Haji Mohammed Mohsin, is yet another example of the attitude of the Muslims elites towards the education system prevalent in the nineteenth century. The Hooghly Madrasa was originally a department of the Hooghly College which was founded and was mainly supported from the funds bequeathed by Haji Mohammad Mohsin, a rich Muslim of Hooghly, who died without an heir in the year 1806, and left his large property, yielding an annual income of Rs. 45000 to Trustees for religious and educational purposes. Owing to the misappropriation of the funds, the Government assumed the Trusteeship in the year 1817. The Government's right of assumption was opposed by the original Trustees, but was upheld both by the court of India and by the Privy Council in England. The period of litigation extended for many years, during which the annual income accumulated, forming a surplus fund of Rs 861,000. It was further increased by a portion of the original zamindari and by the lapse of various pensions with which the estate had been burdened. This fund was devoted to the founding and endowing the Hooghly College which included an Oriental department known as a Madrasa, an English department, and a branch school. The history of the Hooghly Madrasa up to 1850 had been of much the same character. The system of instruction was in fact precisely the same and it produced the same result.<sup>103</sup> The course of instruction was exclusively Arabic and the students were required to possess some knowledge of the elements of Arabic before admission. The period of education was extended over a stretch of five years and comprised Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, and Law. Muslim law, and, as a necessary consequence, Muslim theology, constituted in reality the staple of the classes.

The Hooghly College was opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1836 with two departments, one English, known as the College for the teaching of English Literature and Sciences, and the other oriental known as the Madrasa. Within three days of the opening of the institution, it was inundated with pupils. While twelve hundred students sought admission to the English Department, 300 students sought admission in the Oriental (Madrasa) Department of the College. The report of the next annual

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<sup>103</sup> Zachkaria, K., *History of the Hooghly College, 1836-1936*, (Alipore, 1936); See also *Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71*, (Delhi, 1960) p. 236.

examination of the College provided the proportion of students belonging to different religions. Of the 1031 students who appeared from the English Department, 948 were Hindus, 34 were Christians and 31 were Muslims. Again, of all the 219 students who appeared from the Oriental Department, 138 were Muslims and 81 were Hindus.<sup>104</sup> A branch school was also opened out of the Mohsin fund in the year 1836 and was attached to the College to meet the demand of the English education. The branch school was filled up with pupils ready to pay for their education. However, here again the number of Muslim students was insignificant compared to others.<sup>105</sup>

In Murshidabad, a Madrassa had been established with two separate departments English and Oriental. Although this institution was meant primarily for the benefits of the Murshidabad Nawab's family, it was opened to others as well irrespective of religion or sect. In 1835 the Committee of Public Instruction bought this institution under its control and decided to raise the general standard of the instructions by raising its status to that of a college.<sup>106</sup> Here the picture showed a difference. In 1836, in the English department, there were 80 students of whom 58 were Muslims, 21 Hindus and 1 Christian. Similarly, in the Oriental department there were 88 students out of which 82 were Muslims and the rest Hindus.<sup>107</sup>

This indicates to the nature of the population and the intensity of one particular community residing there. As Murshidabad was an important Muslim urban settlement both before and after the rise of Calcutta into prominence, its population was in a position to invest in the education of their piers. On the other hand, Calcutta or for that matter Hooghly, was never a prosperous settlement of the Muslims. The majority of the urban dwellers in Calcutta were labourers and those of Hooghly were poor farmers for whom education (not to speak of higher education) was a goal not only unachievable but practically useless for earnings.

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<sup>104</sup> Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1836. Also referred in A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and British in Bengal, 1757-1856*, (Decca, 1969) p 295

<sup>105</sup> A. R. Mallick, *British Policy and British in Bengal, 1757-1856*, (Decca, 1969) p 297-98.

<sup>106</sup> Ahmed, A. F. Salahuddin, op. cit. p 192

<sup>107</sup> Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction, 1836.

The revolt of 1857 brought about a marked change in the attitude of the Muslims as a whole. The Muslim community was the main target of attack, and this was clearly reflected in the Government's attitude toward Muslim education and especially the education imparted in the Madrassas. In the year 1858 the then Lieutenant Governor General of Bengal, Sir Frederich Halliday, submitted a Minute to the Secretary of State of India, proposing the abolition of the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrassa.<sup>108</sup> The reasons for such a recommendation, apart from the uselessness of any such Oriental instruction, were grounded on the inherent potential of such instruction in creating dissidents for the British Government. The Lieutenant Governor thus continues:

“It is said that the Madrassa, by which is meant its Arabic Department, has produced and is producing extensive political evils, and that it is a nursery of disaffection. This is an assertion made on high authority, but entirely devoid of proof.”<sup>109</sup>

The Lieutenant Governor, however, admitted that:

“among all the Mahommedans who have been educated at the Madrassa, not one has been directly or indirectly concerned in the late rebellion many of them have [showed].....their loyalty; and the Maulavies of the College were foremost among them to allay the panic among the Mahommedans in the terrible months of 1857”.<sup>110</sup>

The proposal was rejected by the Government of India on the ground that no such proof could be gathered.<sup>111</sup> But the general attitude of the Government as

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<sup>108</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

<sup>109</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

<sup>110</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

<sup>111</sup> Minute of Hon'ble H Ricketts dated 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1860;  
Minute of Hon'ble J. P. Grant dated 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1859;  
Minute of Hon'ble James Outram, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1859;  
Minute of the Governor General Canning, dated 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1860;  
Minute of Hon'ble B. Peacock dated 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1859  
Home Department Proceedings, Education Branch

reflected in the Proceedings did show their concern about the Arabic instruction in the Madrassa. Captain Lees, the then Principal of the Madrassa clearly indicates this particular attitude.<sup>112</sup> He says that the Madrassa should be reduced to just an institution for imparting the Arabic language or else a separate chair should be created in the Presidency College for Arabic learning and all other curriculum should be abolished from the Madrassa.

Wood's Despatch on Education regarding the education of the Muslims had been promising. In the wake of the Despatch a great impetus to education was given, especially in Bengal. The Calcutta University was founded in 1857 under the provision of Act I of 1857.<sup>113</sup> Government expenditure on education has increased from one lakh in 1813 to twenty lakhs in 1856-57. However the lion's share was enjoyed by Bengal, which received over ninety-four thousand pounds or nearly half of the total expenditure on education.<sup>114</sup> The Educational Reports of 1859-71<sup>115</sup> gave the following statistics of students attending institutions in Bengal acquiring modern education. In the year 1850-60, 942 students were attending colleges<sup>116</sup>, which rose to 2,530 in 1870-71.<sup>117</sup> There were 15,982 pupils were attending Government schools,<sup>118</sup> and 28,109 pupils were attending private institutions under Government inspection in 1859-60.<sup>119</sup> Their number increased to 24,607 and 1,31,077 respectively in 1870-71.<sup>120</sup> A glance at the statistics of the Calcutta University will show how rapid and consistent was the increase in the number on the candidates offering themselves for the different university examinations. During the period from 1857-1861, 3,985 appeared at the entrance examination of the

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<sup>112</sup> Letter from Captain Lees, Principal of the Calcutta Madrassa, to Director of Public Instruction, dated 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1858. Home Department Proceedings, Education Branch, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1860.

<sup>113</sup> A. Richley, *Selection from the Education Records, 1840-1859*, (Delhi, 1922) pp. 70.

<sup>114</sup> A report got published in the *Friends of India*, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1861, where the Government's expenditure in different provinces was given for the year 1856-57. The breakup of which are Bengal - £ 94,322; Bombay - £35,243; Madras - £ 34,222; Northwestern Provinces - £ 33,060 and Punjab - £ 14,487.

<sup>115</sup> Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71, (Delhi, 1960)

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*, p 15

<sup>117</sup> *ibid*, pp 453-55

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*, p 40

<sup>119</sup> *ibid*, p 69

<sup>120</sup> *ibid*, pp 362-63, 401,412-13, 429.

Calcutta University<sup>121</sup>, which figure increase to 17,588 by 1870.<sup>122</sup> During the period 1861-70, 3,719 candidates appeared at the First Arts Examination of the University, while 1,425 candidates appeared at the B.A. Examinations during the period 1858-71 and 213 appeared at the M.A. Examinations during the period 1861-70.<sup>123</sup> Beside these general candidates up to 1871, 1,612 candidates appeared at the different professional examinations of the University like Licence in Law, Bachelor in Law, Licence in Medicine and Surgery, Bachelor in Medicine, Licence in Civil Engineering and Bachelor in Civil Engineering.<sup>124</sup> Thus the new education made remarkable progress in Bengal. However, the scene for Muslim education in Calcutta, or for that matter in Bengal as a whole, did not do quite so well.

In 1867, the Anglo-Persian Department of the Madrassa was affiliated to the Calcutta University, but only as giving education up to the First Arts. Provisions were made for the simultaneous perusal of Arabic and Persian studies, with a view to enabling the students to reach the standards of the First Arts Examination. The arrangement was bound to fail as sufficient time could not be given to English studies. Consequently, when the classes were opened during the session of 1867-68, only six students joined it. The following year, the number fell to four, and in 1860-70, the number was further reduced to three, all of whom again left during the session.<sup>125</sup> The results of the various examinations held under the University of Calcutta also indicate the same picture. The Friend of India reported the result of the Entrance Examination (1860) of the Calcutta University which shows that among 749 candidates from Bengal 683 were Hindus, 24 Muslims and the rest were Christians and Parsees.<sup>126</sup> In the B.A. examination of the same

<sup>121</sup> *ibid*, p 10

<sup>122</sup> *ibid*, p 40

<sup>123</sup> *ibid*, p 490

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p. 490-91.

<sup>125</sup> Calcutta University Committee Report (1917-19), Vol. I, Part I, p. 113

<sup>126</sup> Friends Of India, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1861, p. 119. The following table is from the same source:

Provinces	No. of Candidates	Christians	Muslims	Hindus	Parsees
Lower Provinces	749	41	24	683	1
Bihar	22	1	1	20	0
N.W.P.	23	3	1	19	0
Punjab	2	2	-	-	-
Ceylon	13	12	0	0	1
Total	869	59	26	722	2

year of the Calcutta University, thirty-nine candidates appeared out of whom thirteen passed successfully, eleven were Hindus, one was a Christian and one was a Muslim.<sup>127</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dt. 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1869. – quoting the General Report on Public Instruction for year 1865 reports that in the same year 9 Hindus and no Muslims passed the M.A. Examination of the Calcutta University; 41 Hindus and 1 Muslims passed the B.A. Examination and all the 17 students who passed the Bachelor of Law Examination all were Hindus. In addition to this all the Medical Graduates belonged to the Hindu community.

In the year 1871 of the total 1566 candidates who appeared at the entrance examination, 1323 were Hindus, 73 were Muslims and the rest were Christians and Brahmos. Of the 866 successful candidates 728 were Hindus, only 39 were Muslims and the rest were Christians and Brahmos.<sup>128</sup> In the same year, at the First Arts Examination (Intermediate) 459 candidates appeared from different colleges of Bengal among whom 373 were Hindus, 9 Muslims and the rest being Christians and of the other communities. Of the 185 successful candidates, 152 were Hindus and the number of Muslims was only 9.<sup>129</sup> The result of the B.A. examination of the year 1871 was as follows:<sup>130</sup>

Table 1

Religion	No. of Candidates Appeared	No. of Candidates Passed
Hindus	151	56
Muslims	2	Nil
Christians	6	2
Brahmos and Deists	42	20
Total	201	78

It is interesting to note that not all Hindus benefited from the new education. The modern educated class consisted largely of the three higher caste of Hindus of Bengal, i.e. Brahmin, Kayasthas and Baidyas. Coming from the Eastern and Western districts of Bengal proper, and bunching inside the metropolis of Calcutta, they had taken the largest share of higher education. Again, the occupation of the parents of

<sup>127</sup> *Friends of India*, 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1861, p. 119.

<sup>128</sup> Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71, (Delhi, 1960), p. 497.

<sup>129</sup> Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71, (Delhi, 1960), p. 499

<sup>130</sup> Selection from the Educational Records of the Government of India, Vol. I, Educational Reports, 1859-71, (Delhi, 1960), p. 500.

the students in Bengal shows that in 1870 the vast preponderance of college students were sons of professional men, Government servants and rent receivers, in that order. As the Calcutta University Commission noted, "it is not from the agricultural classes any more than from the commercial or industrial that the eager demand for educational opportunities has come ..... The classes whose sons have filled the colleges.....are the middle and professional classes, commonly known as Bhadrakalok, and it is their needs, and other cause that dictated the character of University education in Bengal."<sup>131</sup> The Government Policy of providing educational facilities for a privileged few also helped these groups. So far as the stress upon the education of the upper classes is concerned "it was part of the whole socio-economic structure of British administration in India."<sup>132</sup> Till the revolt of 1857 the central aim of the British policy had been to rally the upper classes. It was in tune with this attitude that almost exclusive importance was attached to English and to the education of the privileged few. The great bulk of the population was left to grope in ignorance, and to languish in the outmoded traditions of a bygone era.

However when one section of the people was advancing ahead with modern education, another section, the Muslims, lagged behind in demanding and acquiring western education. The Muslim lag was attributed to some factors among which the most important was, according to Friend of India was "the Muslim bigotry which prevented them from getting English education."<sup>133</sup> Dr. James Wise wrote about the Muslim attitude thus: "The Arabic and Persian containing as he thinks all that is worth knowing are his daily studies. But he neither reads modern literature nor sends his son to the Public schools, as are considered to favour infidelity and scepticism. Science is a sealed book which he has no desire to open while English and Bengali are foreign languages to him.....Instead of adapting themselves to the changes of modern civilization they.....lament that the days of Alamgir, and of Musulamn supremacy have passed away."<sup>134</sup> The truth of the statement could be gathered from the quality of

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<sup>131</sup> Calcutta University Committee Report (1917-19), Vol. I, Part I, p. 27-28

<sup>132</sup> Tarachand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. II (Publication Department, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1967), p. 208.

<sup>133</sup> Friends of India, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1869.

<sup>134</sup> James Wise's Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal, cited in Amalendu Be, *Roots of Separatism in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 1974, pp 82-83.

education imparted in one the premier institution of the Muslims, i.e. the Calcutta Madrassa. The following are the question that came in the scholarship examination of the Junior and Senior sections of the Arabic Department of the Madrassa.<sup>135</sup>

**Senior 1845-46**

- I. A person said to another – “Divorce my wife irrevocably according to law.” He also said to another – “Divorce her not irrevocable according to law.” Both of them divorced her in one tuhr (the period of purity between two periods of impurity). What is the opinion in this case?
- II. A person is murdered wilfully. He had two walis (those entitled to demand blood or its price); one of whom was absent. The Wali who was present told the murderer that the absent Wali relinquished the claim, and that he claimed his share in property. The murderer refused to believe it when the Wali who was present produced proof of his statement, what are the several kinds of contracts in which security is provided? Which of them is void and which is lawful?

**Junior – 1845-46**

- I. State whether a Mooruhik (a lad who, though under the age of puberty, is capable of having sexual intercourse with woman) is obliged to bath when he has had carnal intercourse with a girl of full age?
- II. A person entered Mecca as a pilgrim on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Azha (the last month of the Hijra Year), and intended to stay there for a year, - whether it is lawful for him to lessen the length of his prayers or not?

The pattern of the questions given above did not change till the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>136</sup> The archaic and uselessness of the studies undertaken in the Madrassa could be gathered by glancing at some other question over a period of time.

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<sup>135</sup> *Correspondence on the subject of the education of the Muhammadan community in British India and their employment in the public service generally: Selections from the Records of the Government of India* No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2.

<sup>136</sup> See Letter from Lieu. Col. W. Nassan Lees, to the Government of Bengal, dt.17<sup>th</sup> March 1870, pp. 1-12; Extract from the General Report of Public Instruction showing the questions given for the Senior and Junior Scholarships for the year 1842-3 to 1849-50, pp 16-18. Both reference printed in *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2



“State whether the evidence of an emancipated slave for and against the emancipation is always admissible or not? Whether in addition to proof, is it lawful to administer an oath?” (Senior 1943-44)<sup>137</sup>

“A person purchase fruit on a tree, then he hired the tree for a period, stipulating that the fruits may remain on that tree, - what is the opinion and the proof of its accuracy?” (Senior 1846-47)<sup>138</sup>

“A person told his wife “You are divorced from me as soon as you become impure from monthly causes”. She returned, “I am now in that condition”, and then brought forth a child. What is your opinion?” (Senior 1846-47)<sup>139</sup>

“What is the difference between the difference kinds of intention, kiyat, azm and kasd in the opinion of Mohammedan lawyers?” (Senior 1848-49)<sup>140</sup>

“What is the literal and what the legal meaning of “Ghusub” (taking a thing by force)? If a man takes some “Dinars” (coins) by force, and gets them made into ornaments, what is the law in such a case?” (Senior 1867)<sup>141</sup>

It refers to a very redundant syllabus where only the intricacies of rituals are taught or those aspect are dealt with which are applicable in the law courts. It is interesting to note that long after Persian had been discarded from the Courts and the administration of Bengal, the Professors in the Madrassa continued their traditional educational pattern and courses.

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<sup>137</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 17

<sup>138</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 17.

<sup>139</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 17.

<sup>140</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 18.

<sup>141</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 20.

More revealing are the books prescribed in the five grades of the Madrasa.<sup>142</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> Class	Literature	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter of Dewan-e-Hamasa <sup>143</sup> , pp. 55-109		1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter of Dewan-e-Hamasa. Pp. 1-54
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter of Dewan-i-Motunubi <sup>144</sup> , pp. 79-195		1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of Dewan-i-Motunubi, pp.1-96
2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter and a portion of 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter of Tarihk-ul-Khulafa <sup>145</sup> , pp. 157-310		1 <sup>st</sup> quarter Tarihk-ul-Khulafa, and a portion of 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, pp. 1-156
2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter of Tarihk-ul-Timoori <sup>146</sup> , pp. 127-254		1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of Tarihk-ul-Timoori, pp. 1-126
4 <sup>th</sup> Volume of Jami-ur-Rumooz <sup>147</sup> 1-171pages Principles of Law 119 pages of Touzeeh, i.e. from pp.220-339	<b>Law</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of Jami-ur-Rumooz, pp. 171-188  If possible the first 220 pages of Touzeeh
The Shamsiah <sup>148</sup> containing 83 pages Law of Inheritance Serajiah 26 pages (Explained by the commentary of 152 pages)	<b>Logic</b>	Ditto  Ditto
Mukhtiar-i-Maanee, pp. 361 to pp. 566 (old edition)	<b>Rhetoric</b>	Ditto Mukhtiar-i-Maanee, pp. 1-360
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Class</b>	<b>Literature</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Class</b>
Ajub-ul-Ojab <sup>149</sup> , pp. 212-424 Kulyubee, pp. 119-234		Ajub-ul-Ojab, pp. 1-212 Kulyubee, pp. 1-118
Shureh Vikayah <sup>150</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Volume, pp. 1-138 Grammar	<b>Law</b>	Shureh Vikayah 1 <sup>st</sup> Volume, pp. 1-114
Hidayut-un-Naho <sup>151</sup> (the whole syntax) Fusool Akbaree, pp. 81-182		Ditto Ditto pp. 16-80
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Class</b>		
		Hidayut-un-Naho (the whole syntax) pp. 1-64 Fusool Akbaree <sup>152</sup> , pp. 1-100 Nufhut-un-Yaman, pp. 1-100 Kulyubee, pp. 1-100

<sup>142</sup> C.H. Campbell, J. Sutcliffe, Esq. & Maulvie Abdul Luteef, Khan Bahadur, to the Officiating Secretary of the Government of Bengal, dt. 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1869. Home Education, 1870. Government of Bengal.

<sup>143</sup> The Poetic Collection of Hamasa

<sup>144</sup> The Poetic Collection of Motunubi

<sup>145</sup> History of the Islamic Caliphs

<sup>146</sup> History of the dynasty of Mongolian and Turkish dynasties

<sup>147</sup> The collection of Myteries / Secrets

<sup>148</sup> Arabic books on Logic

<sup>149</sup> The Book of the Wonder of Wonders

<sup>150</sup> Book on Islamic Jurisprudence.

<sup>151</sup> The Grammatical collection on Arabic

<sup>152</sup> The part of Akbar (the book is actually a collection on God)

The pattern of the syllabus reveals that the knowledge remains limited to a few books which are repeated in all the classes. Thus in the entire course of studies the students learnt nothing more than the knowledge contain in these books. Again all of these are old books intricately connected with the Islamic theology and Law. The routine of the department reveal that a lot of emphasis was given to law and the principles of Law. This pattern of syllabus did not change even up till second decade of the twentieth century. Maulvie Abdul Sattar, himself a student and later a teacher at the Arabic Department of the Madrassa, writing in the third quarter of the twentieth century after the independence of Indian give practically the same syllabus for a much later period.<sup>153</sup>

The students who came to the Madrassa were not exclusively from Calcutta. The following are the figures of students for the year 1856-57 who came to study in the Arabic Department of the Madrassa from different places.<sup>154</sup> It will be observed from the table that the maximum number of students came from the district of Chattagong, followed by Noakholly. Calcutta's representation in the Madrassa was very minimum. Only ten students got instruction in the Arabic Department. The following table will make the picture very clear.<sup>155</sup>

Table 2

DISTRICTS	NO OF STUDENTS
Chittagong	52
Noakholly	19
Sylhet	9
Tipperah	3
Backergunge	3
Dacca	4
Mymensing	3
Kooshtea	1
Serajgunge	1
Hooghly	3
Burdawan	5
Midnapur	1
Arracan	1
Calcutta & 24 Purgunnahs	10

<sup>153</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrassa Alia, 1781-1959*, (Young Press, 1959)

<sup>154</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 41.

<sup>155</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 22.

The economic background of these students is as follows:

**Table 3**

33	SONS OF ZEMINDARS
37	Sons of Talookdars
13	Sons of Moonshees
6	Sons of Merchants
6	Sons of Kazees
3	Sons of Moonsiffs

It is clear that most of those who frequented the Madrassa were from the upper strata of the Muslim society and were mostly from outside the city. This may be is because of the economic condition of the Muslim of Calcutta most of whom were from the lower order and were continuing menial jobs.

The situation in the Anglo-Persian Department of the Calcutta Madrassa was a bit different. Between 1865 and 1869 there was an increase in the number of boys taking instruction in the department.<sup>156</sup>

PERIOD	NO. OF BOYS
March 1865	155
August 1865	183
1866	239
1867	255
1868	282
1869	300

In terms of students coming from the different districts of Bengal, as well as different other places, the figure (table 4) shows an increase in the number of student from Calcutta than from other places. Chittagong however did not send a big number of students to the Anglo-Arabic department, as in the case of the Arabic department. 24 Pergunnahs exceeds in the total number of students coming to study in the Anglo-Persian Department. Next in line comes Hooghly from where forty-eight. Taking Calcutta into consideration it could easily be said that by the coming of the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Anglo-Persian department was more popular than the Arabic department. A shift thus is noticeable from the purely Islamic to a modern system of education among the Muslims of Calcutta. This will be very clearly noticeable when the political leadership of the Muslims of Calcutta will be considered. It will be seen that

<sup>156</sup> *Selections from the Records*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 31.

most of them emphasized a through knowledge of English, coupled with the traditional Islamic education.

Table 4

DISTRICTS	NO. OF STD	DISTRICTS	NO. OF STD
Calcutta	30	Banda	1
24 Pergunnahs	67	Delhi	1
Hooghly	48	Furruckabad	2
Jessore	15	Ghazeepore	2
Burdwan	16	Cashmere	1
Dacca	12	Krishenanagar	1
Chittagong	11	Tipperah	1
Furreedpore	11	Moorshedabad	3
Lucknow	7	Mymensing	1
Tirhoot	8	Pubna	2
Behar	9	Purneah	1
Barasat	7	Midnapore	1
Sylhet	5	Other Places	15
Bombay	2		

The social background of the student was elitist as was the case in the Arabic department. The sons of the zamindars and other persons connected with land exceeding to an alarming proportion than students whose parents pursue other occupations.

Table 5<sup>157</sup>

SONS OF	NO. OF STD.
Zamindars & persons connected with land	102
Teachers & Moonshees	29
Police Officers	5
Govt. Court Officers	13
Draftmen	20
Translators	8
Bakers	1
Mookteers	22
Pleaders	4
Doctors	9
Merchants	44
Govt. Pensioners	8
Clerks	8
Men in other occupations	5

A branch school at of the Madrassa was opened in Elliot Road, which was known as the Collinga Branch Schools. This was founded in 1854.<sup>158</sup> Most of the students enrolled in this school were from the lower orders of the Muslim society. It is

<sup>157</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, p. 31

<sup>158</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, p. 41

interesting to note that the syllabus in this school was based on the Syllabus of the Educational Department of Bengal. However most of the students were unable to pass the examination for the higher studies and dropped out in the middle of the course.<sup>159</sup> The average daily attendance in school was between 100 and 110. Students mostly come from with Calcutta. The British authorities considered this school as truly representative of Calcutta and its neighbourhood.<sup>160</sup>

Table 6<sup>161</sup>

DISTRICT	NO OF STD.
Calcutta	61
24 Purgunnahs	43
Hooghly	18
Dacca	10
Burdwas	8
Other Places	11

The social composition of the Collinga schools is better than that of the Arabic and Anglo-Persian department, as boys from different section of the society came to study.

Table 7<sup>162</sup>

SONS OF	NO. OF STD.
Petty land holders Aymadars, etc	30
Shop keepers	29
Tradesmen	15
Native Doctors	11
Moonshees	10
Khansamahs & other domestic servants	22
Tailors	10
Price Officers	2
Mooktears	10
Sircars, Duffrees, etc	12

The Collinga schools use to prepare students for the entrance examination of the Anglo-Persian Department. However few Muslim students of the Collinga schools were actually successful in these examinations. The report on the Collinga branch schools

<sup>159</sup> C.H. Campbell, J. Sutcliffe, Esq. & Maulvie Abdul Luteef, Khan Bahadur, to the Officiating Secretary of the Government of Bengal, dt. 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1869. Home Education, 1870. Goevrmmnt of Bengal.

<sup>160</sup> C.H. Campbell, J. Sutcliffe, Esq. & Maulvie Abdul Luteef, Khan Bahadur, to the Officiating Secretary of the Government of Bengal, dt. 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1869. Home Education, 1870. Goevrmmnt of Bengal.

<sup>161</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, p. 41.

<sup>162</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, p. 41

says that most of the students in this school came from the lower section of the Muslim society in Calcutta and are thus unable to complete the course of instruction.<sup>163</sup>

Table 8

YEAR	NO OF BOYS	TOTAL NO PASSES	HINDUS
1855	16	3	3
1856	6	1	1
1857	3	0	0
1858	13	3	3
1859	10	1	1
1860	10	2	0
1861	13	1	0
1862	10	1	0
1863	12	1	0
1864	8	1	0
1865	6	2	0
1866	10	2	0
1867	14	0	0
1868	9	3	1

On the basis of the recommendation of the Hunter Commission Report 1882 the Government of Bengal in January 1889 created two post of Muslim Assistant Inspectors of Bihar and Bengal.<sup>164</sup> The first assistant inspector was Maulavi Ahmed Kabir. We get to know from the Report on Public Instruction for the year 1888-89 this post of assistant inspector was specifically instructed to look into the problems of Muslims education focusing on the implementation of non theological studies among the members of the community, particularly the Indian regional languages, etc.<sup>165</sup>

Maulana Abdus Sattar writing in 1959 is critical of the acts of the Colonial Government. He writes that in the year 1888-89 the Government budget was Rs 25 lakhs while only a miser sum was spent on Muslims education and with that the Government claimed that it provided special facilities to the Muslims of the province and in the Muslims in general.<sup>166</sup> Being himself a teacher in the Madrassa Alia, it should not just be said that he was bound to write in this specific way. The explanation indicates that

<sup>163</sup> C.H. Campbell, J. Sutcliffe, Esq. & Maulvie Abdul Luteef, Khan Bahadur, to the Officiating Secretary of the Government of Bengal, dt. 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1869. Home Education, 1870. Government of Bengal

<sup>164</sup> The Government of Bengal followed the Resolution of the Government of India, No. 7 / 215-25, dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 1885 for the supervision of Muslims education in specific. See General Report on Public Instruction for the year 1888-89, Government of Bengal, pp. 66-67.

<sup>165</sup> General Report on Public Instruction for the year 1888-89, p. 67.

<sup>166</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia, 1781-1959*, (Young Press, 1959), Part I, Chapter 13 p.

attitude of the Muslim intelligentsia during the period. It cannot be regarded as a personal view of the Maulana as the argument intricately connects itself with the feelings of the Muslim community then and their expectations from the British government. This also indicates the lack of resistance among the Muslims of the city as their expectations from the British Government did not allow them to go against the feeling of the colonial masters. The following are the details of expenditure during 1888 and 1889 on the Madrassas.<sup>167</sup>

Table 9

NAME OF THE MADRASSA	NO OF STUDENTS		GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE		MOHSIN FUND EXPENDITURE		TOTAL EXPENDITURE	
	1888	1889	1888	1889	1888	1889	1888	1889
Madrassa Alia (Calcutta) Deptt of Arabic	362	408	10036	11251	1622	1733	11657	12984
Hooghly Madrassa	37	60	-	-	2117	2380	2117	2380
Dacca Madrassa	336	424	-	-	13710	14176	13710	14176
Chatgram Madrassa	356	401	-	-	8855	10191	8855	10191
Kakasbazar Madrassa	34	28	482	401	118	118	600	519
Murshidabad Nawab Madrassa	58	59	15899	14680	-	-	15899	14680
Rajshahi Madrassa	46	76	-	-	3020	3935	3020	3935
Other Madrassas	1229	1456	26417	26332	29442	32533	55859	58865

Among the other recommendations that came to the commission through the report of the inspector was the addition of sixth and seventh year in the five yearly course of the Calcutta Madrassa's Arabic department and the institution of weekly exams and an exam after the end of the seventh year leading to the provision of degrees to the students qualifying those examinations.<sup>168</sup> In the year 1888-89 a central examination (Table 10) was conducted in all the Madrassa of Bengal.

After the 1890 that the Government started to pay a lot of attention of the Madrassa and on their organization and functioning. In 1896 the Elite Hostel was formed to give the students the proper stay in the Madrassa. At first this was a two stored

<sup>167</sup> General Report on Public Instruction for the year 1888-89; See also Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia, 1781-1959*, (Young Press, 1959), Part I, Chapter 13 p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia, 1781-1959*, (Young Press, 1959), Part I, Chapter 13 p.



building. A total of 134 students could stay in this hostel. All the Muslim student of the two department of the Madrassa and the Muslim student of the Presidency College was allowed to stay. This Hostel was further increased by a floor later, but this did not solved the problems of the hostellers and thus the Muslim community in Calcutta organized a conference in the year 1908 to petition the government to establish a new hostel as the elite hostel has become insufficient for the students of the Madrassa itself, let alone that of the Presidency College.<sup>169</sup> As a result of this petition the government of Bengal established a hostel at Bow Bazar Street on a rented premise, but this did not satisfy the Muslims of the city as the hostel was located in a predominantly Hindu area and thus was considered as a hisdrance to the morals of the students. Thus petition for the construction of a proper hostel in a predominantly Muslim locality was urged by the Muslims of Calcutta and thus for the same purpose a conference at the Town Hall was conducted in 1909 in which it was decided that the community themselves will establish a hostel taking no money form the government. Thus the Baker Hostel was established in which the entity community contributed. In the collection of money for the Hostel the Nawab Salim-ullah Bahadur, the Nawab of Dacca contributed rupees 30000. But the government paid fifty percent of the cost of the construction of the hostel. In 1917 it was further increased where 200 students could stay at a time.<sup>170</sup>

Table 10

NAMES OF THE MADRASAS	NO OF STUDENTS	CLASS 1	CLASS 2	CLASS 3	TOTAL	NO OF STUDENTS	CLASS 1	CLASS 2	CLASS 3	TOTAL
Madrassa Alia Calcutta	72	29	18	12	69	74	47	19	13	80
Dacca Madrassa	57	10	12	16	37	56	21	10	15	46
Chatgram Madrassa	51	11	7	13	31	44	17	10	12	39
Hooghly Madrassa	19	7	-	5	12	19	7	4	3	14
Sahasram Madrassa	7	-	-	-	-	7	3	1	2	6
Total	207	57	37	56	150	210	94	44	45	185

The religious orientation of the Muslim community could be gathered from the fact that the two Madrassas lacked a mosque which was constructed on the request of some Mr. A.K.A.S. Jamal who came for the inspection of the Madrassa and

<sup>169</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 6

<sup>170</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 6-7

thus was astonished to observe that there was no mosque. For this particular purpose he paid from his own pocket Rs. 10000.<sup>171</sup>

In 1903 the Muslim of Calcutta petitioned the government to reform the education system of the Muslims. It was suggested to the government that the type of education imparted in the Calcutta Madrassa should be divided into two parts. English and Western studies should be constricted to the Anglo-Persian Department and in the Madrassa Alia only Arabic studies should be made to study. But this suggestion was rejected by the government.<sup>172</sup> It was a practice during those days that student of the Arabic department of the Madrassa, after finishing there study went to other Madrassa in the country for the study of Hadith and Tafsir.<sup>173</sup> Thus it was suggested that the study in the Arabic department should be upgraded as to provided the student with all their areas of interests and that the administration of the Madrassa should provide the students with such degrees as they acquire elsewhere.<sup>174</sup> As this was suggested by a section of the student's community of the Madrassa the government in the year 1904 added the studies of Hadith, Tafsir and Islamic history and geography.<sup>175</sup>

The Muslim Instituted just adjacent to the Calcutta Madrassa was established as a union of the Arabic Department of the Calcutta Madrassa but later developed to be an Institute of the common Muslims of Calcutta.<sup>176</sup> Initially there was two student's union in the Calcutta Madrassa; one was called "Muslim Debating Society" and the other was called the "Society for Mutual Improvement of Young Men". These two groups were converged to form the Muslims Institute.<sup>177</sup>

The same syllabus of the Madrassa continued up till 1921 when it was again reformed.<sup>178</sup> The pattern of education in the city indicates a shift in the perception of the Muslims. While a lot of emphasis was earlier given to oriental education, after

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<sup>171</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 7.

<sup>172</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 13

<sup>173</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 14.

<sup>174</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 14.

<sup>175</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 14.

<sup>176</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 19

<sup>177</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 19

<sup>178</sup> Maulana Abdus Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrass-e Alia*, p. 218-19

1857, it changed to a European pattern of education desired by the Muslims. Though figures of Muslims boys going to convent schools in the city are not available, but if these figures would have been there it would have definitely indicated towards a shift in the Muslim mode of perception towards education. This was quite natural to come in the context of Calcutta, where the others communities had made laudable progress. The opinion of the Council of Education in 1853 cannot be ignored because of the lack of substantial evidence of Muslims participation in other educational institution apart from the Calcutta Madrassa. While forming the Anglo-Persian Department, the Council said that it will be beneficial to those sections of the Muslims of Calcutta, who sends there sons to other convent schools such as Saint Paul. The political awakening after 1857, not only in Calcutta and Bengal but in other part of the subcontinent, acted as a boost towards the shift in the perception of the Muslims of the city.

## *Chapter 3*

# *Leadership of the Muslim Community in Calcutta: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*

The nineteenth century was a period of religious revivalism in Indian Islam. This was also a period of religious crisis. As Hardy puts it, "The anarchy and despotism of the eighteenth century and the evident loss of Muslim dynastic power to non-Muslim Marathas and Sikhs began to gain a hearing for more purist Islam."<sup>1</sup> Many important theorists emerged in the political scene, making a plea for the purification of Islam in India. The crisis in the Muslim society was further accentuated by the emergence of the British on the political scene, and the gradual subversion of a conservative oriental structure by ideas and values imposed from the modern west. Personalities such as Shah Abd al-Aziz, Syed Ahmed Bareilly and others upheld the banner of Islam in danger and declared the entire territory under British occupation as *dar al-harb*. In Bengal, a similar banner was waved first under Haji Shari-at-Allah, who was a contemporary of Syed Ahmed. However, the movement of purification initiated by Shari-at-Allah, was intertwined with the local politics of the province, where most of the rural Muslims were cultivators, severely oppressed by the zamindars who happened to be Hindus. This movement was continued in a more vigorous form under Titu Mir and Dudu Mian. These were, however, short lived movements, but they did create the impression in the minds of Muslims that the faith they practiced was opposed to that of the Hindus and that there could not be any attempt to synthesize the two trends of thoughts into one. They provided the rural Muslims of Bengal "a rallying point from where to express their grievances against the social and economic injustices they had suffered" at the hands of the Hindu zamindars.<sup>2</sup> The movement, again, contributed, directly or indirectly, to the growth of a distinct and exclusive identity among the non-elite Muslim population of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The uprising of 1857 gave a great relief to these champions of Islamic revivalists in India, as they hoped to convert the *dar al-harb* into *dar al-Islam* again. The nineteenth century revivalist movement in Indian Islam represents an atavistic throwback in the face of contemporary forces of modernism and progress.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Hardy, 'The Muslims of British India', p. 28

<sup>2</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906', p. 70

<sup>3</sup> Jayanti Maitra, 'Muslim Politics in Bengal', p. 31

<sup>4</sup> Jayanti Maitra, 'Muslim Politics in Bengal', p. 30

Muslim history after 1857 could easily be called the history of a different trajectory of self making within the political theatre of India. Muslims not only came to terms with the British government, but also accepted that fact that the days of the Mughal power were over beyond recovery and that the progress of the community could only be achieved through an active collaboration with the colonial administration. This was not true only of some particular region, but was the scene through out the sub-continent. Prior to 1857, the Mughal emperor was seen by the Muslim gentry as the actual political sovereign, the British ruling in the name of the Mughal emperor. 1857 destroyed these myths and compelled the community to come to terms with the British government. As Hardy writes about Muslim reaction after 1857:

“No doubt Muslims had suffered military defeat and political humiliation before in their history, both in India and elsewhere, but they had not been asked then to submit to a new syllabus of study for success in life”.<sup>5</sup>

This need, after 1857, saw the emergence of intermediaries between the British government and the Muslim community. The most important work of these intermediaries was the development of a political philosophy which could achieve the impossible i.e. the mingling of Western Liberal education and Islamic religious theology. The importance of the new education was not denied by these men. What they did was the reinterpretation of Islam to include the western thinking, though selectively. The most important development after 1857 was in the sense of cohesion among the Muslims of India. The happenings in Bengal were no longer the local affair of the province but became a matter of discussion among Muslims in all other parts of India. Thus in the socio-political world of the Muslims, the thought of different leaders very much affected the politics of different regions. It will be useless to discuss Calcutta and Bengal alone without taking into account the politics of the Muslim population of India.

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Hardy, 'The Muslims of British India', p. 92

Immediately after the revolt, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan published two monographs *Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind (Causes of the Indian Revolt, 1859)* and *An Account of the Loyal Mohammedans of India (1860)*. The intention of these books was very clear. He wanted to sieve out the burden of the revolt from the Muslim community and tried to show to the British government that the Muslims do not bear the sole responsibility for the uprising. He tried to write treatise on the Quran and the Life of Muhammad in order to impress upon the community that India was *Dar al-Islam*. He was eclectic in his choice of his arguments, taking points from those schools of Islamic jurisprudence through which he could support his views. Sir Syed particularly confronted the challenges posed by the nineteenth century sciences to Muslim belief. How can a Muslim be both worldly under the British rule and be a true Muslim obeying the entire rule imposed upon them? He tried to reinstate the laws of Islam in a way that the law of nature becomes consonant with the unity of god; and thus, by complying with the law of nature, one complies with God. Thus both western sciences and western education become an object of study for the Muslims as they in complying with the systems presented in those studies will actually be obeying the laws of Islam. He called upon his co-religionists to take an active part in the new cultural and social activity devised by the British government. For the same purpose, in January 1863, he founded a Translating Society, which was later named as the Scientific Society. In 1866 the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* appeared, which was printed in both Urdu and English. Later, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which later came to be known as the Aligarh Muslim University, started life as a primary school on 24 May, 1875. The Aligarh College was the one institution where a member of the Muslim community acquired both "Western and Islamic culture"<sup>6</sup> and students were given an education which would make them successful in the public life of India. However, the Aligarh College was limited to the upper sections of the Muslim society, and there was no plan in the mind of Sir Syed Ahmed to expand the educational opportunities to all the sections of the Muslim society.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Hardy, 'The Muslims of British India', p. 103

The political theatre in Bengal was different. Calcutta did not participate at all in the revolt. Judith Brown's assessment in this regard might be true. She says that "[t]hose areas of India where education had penetrated deeply remained conspicuously unmoved by the rebellion, whereas those areas where British authority was most threatened were markedly backward in educational standards and opportunities."<sup>7</sup> This was true of Calcutta. The modern Bengali intelligentsia at once expressed their loyalty towards the British rule as soon as the revolt began. The Maulavies of the Calcutta Madrassa were also on the forefront in allying themselves with the British government, and came forward with "demonstrations" of loyalty toward the British government.<sup>8</sup> Apart from any deep ideological commitment to the ideas of the new education, the teachers of the Madrassa had a "material interest in the new order"<sup>9</sup>, imposed by the British. The condition of Bengal during the period was in any case different. The revivalist movement of the early nineteenth century had left in the minds of the cultivators a sense of an exclusivist religion, though, in practice they maintained their un-Islamic syncretic customs vigorously condemned by the revivalist leaders.<sup>10</sup> The third quarter of the nineteenth century revealed an interesting fact about the demographic settlement of the Muslims in Bengal which influenced the nature of their political thought.

The Bengal census of 1872 for the first time officially noted the existence of a preponderant number of Muslims in northern, eastern and southern parts of the province and also of their preponderant rural character. Gradually, recognition has been gained in favour of the view that the overwhelming majority of Bengal Muslims are local converts and their descendants, and also they belong to the

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<sup>7</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Modern India, The origins of an Asian Democracy*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 89

<sup>8</sup> Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1858, Home Department Proceeding, Education Branch, National Archive of India.

<sup>9</sup> Judith M. Brown, 'Modern India', p. 90

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed is of the opinion that religious reform is an unending process. Despite all the efforts of the reformers over the years, the basic pattern of rural culture remained basically the same. See Rafiuddin Ahmed, 'The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906', p. 72



lower rungs of the social ladder.<sup>11</sup> Later the Imperial Gazetteer for the year 1909 defines the Mohammedans of Bengal thus:

“The Muhammedans of Bengal are mostly, in name at least, Sunnis. But the great majority are of Hindu origin and the knowledge of the faith they now possess seldom extends beyond the three cardinal doctrines of the Unity of God, the mission of Muhammad, and the Truth of the Koran.”<sup>12</sup>

For Asim Roy, the Census of 1872 was a “starting revelation” for both the British Government and the people of the Bengal Province.<sup>13</sup> But how far this was a new discovery is a question that should also be asked.

The recognition vary that Bengal was inhabited by a very large body of Muslims was a common one among the educated literati of the Bengali society. By the second half of the nineteenth century, questions were raised and discussed in public as to the origin and growth of the Muslims in Bengal. Francis Buchanan was one of the pioneers in the beginning of the nineteenth century to point out the presence of a large number of Muslims in those districts.<sup>14</sup> Adam’s survey of education in the Nattore thana of the district of Rajshahi gives proof of the existence of a large number of Muslims in an area which was earlier considered to be inhabited by a predominantly Hindu population. Adam not only found that the population of Rajshahi was over estimate by half a million, but also that Nattore thana had in reality twice as many Muslim families as Hindu families.<sup>15</sup> It was said that such statistics was framed keeping in view the people in authority and power and totally neglecting

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<sup>11</sup> H. Beverley, *Report on the Census of Bengal, 1872*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretarial Press, 1872), pp 131-33; see also quoted in Asim Roy, *Islam in South Asia: A Regional Perspective*. (New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1996) pp 12-16

<sup>12</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, *Bengal* (Calcutta, 1909) Vol. 1 p 48

<sup>13</sup> Asim Roy, ‘Islam in South Asia: A Regional Perspective’, p. 15

<sup>14</sup> Charles Stewart, *The History of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1903, (first published in 1819), p. 201

<sup>15</sup> Adam used the records of the population kept at the local collector and the magistrate of the District. The officials as was common at that time simply demanded returns from their underlings such as *daroghas*. They ask the zamindars that employed *gomashtras* or factors for this purpose The *gomashtras* in turn depended on the *mondals* or village headman or *chowkidars* for the information and the result was totally inadequate.

those in the lower rungs of the society.<sup>16</sup> By 1881 Bengal proper<sup>17</sup> was estimated to be an area of 70,430 sq. miles with a population of 35,607,628.<sup>18</sup> Bengal was inhabited by a population having the same language and for the most part the same ethnic origin. But by religion the whole population was divided into two equal parts – Hindus and Muslims. The first reliable census shows the Hindu and Muslim population in Bengal as 17,254,120 and 17,863,411 respectively. The percentage of Muslim calculated as 50.16 and that of the Hindus as 48.45 of the total population.<sup>19</sup> This brings us to the question that how such a large body of Muslim came to inhabit Bengal. As early as 12 August, 1869, an article was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the Muslims of Bengal. It appears from the statement that the author considered the population of Bengal as divided into two neatly watertight compartments, i.e. the Hindus and the Muslims. He then attempts to trace the origin of the Muslims to the conversion of the lower castes of the Hindus.<sup>20</sup> In 1890, the *Calcutta Review* also published a report in which it was stated that, of the 19 million Muslims in Bengal, not more than 25,000 belong to what is known in Bengal as the ‘bhadralok’ class. The remainder were agriculturists, day-labourers, petty artisans, tailors and domestic servants, who were originally from low class Hindus.<sup>21</sup> Beverley emphatically highlighted that “the existence of Muslims in Bengal is due not so much to the induction of Mughal blood into the country, as to the conversion of the former

<sup>16</sup> Adam, W. *Report on the State of Education in Bengal, 1835-38* (Second Report on the District of Rajshahi), Ed. Joseph DiBona's edition of Adam's Reports entitled, *One Teacher, One School; the Adam Reports on Indigenous Education in 19<sup>th</sup> Century India*, (New Delhi, 1983) p 13

<sup>17</sup> This includes the five Bengali-speaking districts division of the Presidency, Burdwan, Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong. See Hunter, *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1885)

<sup>18</sup> W. W. Hunter, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Trubner Hunter and Company, 1885) Vol. II pp 285-86.

<sup>19</sup> *Census of India*, 1881, (Bengal) Part I, Appendix –A.

Analysing the percentage of Hindu and Muslim population of Bengal proper in 1891 C. J. O. Donnell observed: “..... it appears that nineteen years ago in Bengal proper Hindu number about half a million more than Muslims did, and that in the space of less than two decades the Muslim have not only overtaken the Hindus, but half surpassed them by a million and a half. (See C. J. O. Donnell, *Report on the Census of India, 1891*, Vol. III p 147)

<sup>20</sup> The reference is cited in R. C. Majumdar, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta, 1970) p 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Calcutta Review*, 1890, pp. 231-32.

inhabitants for whom a rigid system of caste discipline rendered Hinduism intolerable.”<sup>22</sup>

Richard Eaton’s essay, and, still more, his monograph of the emergence of Islam on the Bengal frontier<sup>23</sup> explicitly states, what in British official circle and much more in the societal context of nineteenth century, Bengal was debated and discussed.<sup>24</sup> It is quite clear from Eaton’s discussion that the mass of the Muslim population of Bengal were converts from the lower order of the Hindu society. This clearly takes us to the topic initiated into historical discussion and discussed by Ahmed, Roy, Eaton and others that there is a great cleavage within the Bengal Muslims socially, economically and culturally (leaving aside the political factor).

Socially and economically the Muslims of Bengal were divided into Sharif and Ajlaf. The Sharif (the so-called *ashraf* and the orthodox *ulema*, who did not even recognise the latter as ‘Muslims’) were comparable with the Hindu *brakralok* who, they claimed, were an aristocracy by birth. The Ajlaf were the masses, comparable with the low-caste Hindus.<sup>25</sup> The Sharif consisted of a very small segment of the entire Muslim population of Bengal. From the manners and customs of this section of the Bengali-Muslim population it appears that they are not the original inhabitants of the Bengali soil but were migrants who came as a result of the Mughal rule and acquired vast land and status in the province. However, they retained their old ways of behaviour. In fact, many indigenous people of wealth and position

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<sup>22</sup> See *Report on the Census of India, 1901*, Vol. VII, Part I.

<sup>23</sup> Richard M Eaton, “Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal” in Rafiuddin Ahmed, ed. *Understanding the Bengal Muslims, Interpretive Essays*, OUP, 2001, pp 26-51; see also his *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, OUP, 1994, esp. chapter 5 (pp113-136)

<sup>24</sup> Fuzle Rubbi Khondokar in 1895 published from Murshidabad a Persian track which he translated into English later under the title ‘*The Origin of the Mussulmans of Bengal*’ in which he claims that Islam spread in Bengal not through the sword or through the conversions of the low order of the Hindu society but through the migration and settlement of people from outside India as they made Bengal their homeland. But this theory could not be accepted as it does not explain the causes why these people settled as agriculturists and low paid labourers; and above all it does not explain the causes and condition of the such a great migration

<sup>25</sup> See M. N. Islam, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press 1901-30*, (Decca, 1973) pp. 248-51.

among the Muslims also tried to behave like these Sharifs and tried to absorb their cultural identity. As early as 1896, one Yaqinuddin Ahmed wrote in a Muslims chronicle in Calcutta about these indigenous Muslims who try “their uttermost to cling to the North-west. They talk Hindustani, imitate Delhi or Lucknow manners, but in spite of that they were Bengalis”.<sup>26</sup> However, till about the third quarter of the nineteenth century, a feeling of community, cutting across various lines of distinction, did not seem to have clearly emerged. It is true that the clergy, such as the *mullah*, the *maulvi* and the *pir*, propagated the ideals of an Islamic society, and perhaps succeeded in establishing some kind of institutional as well as emotional contact with the Islamic world beyond the borders of Bengal, which became particularly evident during the so-called Wahabi trials in 1869-71. It should, however, be noted that this trend was only marginal and touched only the relatively articulate segment of the population, especially, the *madrassa*-educated literati, the affluent farmers in the countryside, who has links to the urban society, and the members of the non-Bengali Muslim population. The larger masses of peasants, artisans, and functional groups remained isolated from these trends.<sup>27</sup>

**Nawab Abdul Lutef, Khan Bahadur** (1828-1893), is generally regarded as the father of Muslim modernism in Bengal. He was a government servant with an excellent knowledge of English. In 1863, he founded the Mahommadan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta, in order ‘to impart useful education to the higher and educated class of the Mahommedan Community’.<sup>28</sup> Initially it was a small society which met once a month at the residence of Abdul Latif, but later expanded to incorporate about five hundred members

The career of Abdul Latif symbolized the growth of a new trend in the Muslim politics of Bengal. He was born in March 1828<sup>29</sup>, and represented an age when the strength of religious revivalism and a sense of economic discontent

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Edward C. Dimock Jr., “Hinduism and Islam”, in R. V. M. Baumer, ed., *Aspects of Bengali History and Society*, p 9.

<sup>27</sup> Rafiuddin Ahmed, 2001 op. cit p 5.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 104

<sup>29</sup> M. Mohar Ali, *Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur, Autobiography and Other Writings*, Chittagong, 1968, p iii.

among the Muslims of Bengal were at an enormous height. His assessment of the condition of the Muslim community in Bengal, after the Faraizi struggle and the unsuccessful revolt of 1857, led him, like Sir Syed, to the conclusion that it is only through a co-operation with the British that the Muslims would ever find their way out of the depressed economic condition they found themselves in at present. Thus, to implement this conclusion, one of his primary concerns was to bring about a reconciliation and understanding between the Muslims and the British administration. Residing in Calcutta, his views got more solidified, by his observance of the careers of his Hindu neighbours and the contrast with the utterly impoverished condition of the Muslims of the city. Though the Muslim population of Calcutta during those days represents a scene of urban poverty where the majority of them were engaged in menial jobs, Abdul Latif, like Sir Syed, decided to concentrate on the upper and middle classes of the then Muslim society in Calcutta, rather than work for the betterment of the entire Muslim community residing in Calcutta. Again, his concern was not the Muslims of Calcutta alone. He wrote and worked for the Muslims of Bengal in general. This was natural, as the better off sections of the Hindu community which made him reflect and construct his views, were from the upper and middle sections of the Bengali society and thus he did not pay heed to the lower class Muslims. He urged the Muslims to acquire English education and as he was convinced that it is only through English education and Western knowledge that a bridge would be created between the British government and the Muslims. The elite society of Calcutta was strictly limited, and the vast multitude of the Muslims in the eastern districts of Bengal represented the peasantry.<sup>30</sup>

In order to give a direction to the social, educational and political needs and activities of the Muslims of Calcutta, he established the Mahommadan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta in 1863. The Society became a prototype for further such organization in other parts of India, not to say of Bengal. Latif's interest in Muslim education began to take a concrete shape when he was appointed the Anglo-Arabic Professor in the Calcutta Madrassa in 1848, from

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<sup>30</sup> Jayanti Maitra, 'Muslim Politics in Bengal', p. 103

where he made consistent efforts for the cause of his religious brethren.<sup>31</sup> However, within a year (in 1849) he gave up his post of Professorship and joined the judicial service of the British administration, but he continued to make efforts in persuading the Muslim community to join the educational facilities opened by the British government. Though pleading for an Anglicist education for the Muslim community, he never differed from the basic parameters of Islam or never tried to reinterpret, as Sir Syed did, the fundamentals of the religion to fit western ideas and English education into it. Nor did he think that Muslims should work along with the British government in order to achieve worldly salvation. Islamic ideas, he felt, should form the central theme of Muslim education, towards which end the teaching of English should be combined with the traditional disciplines in Arabic and Persian.<sup>32</sup>

Long before Hunter had expressed his views, Latif had located the causes of the Muslim backwardness in the administrative provisions of the British government which displaced the Muslim gentry from their position of command. He criticized the government's declaration that the cause of Muslim backwardness is to be found in racial pride and a memory of bygone superiority<sup>33</sup> and put the blame on the removal from government positions of those sections of Muslims who were the community leaders, making their economic position miserable and deplorable.<sup>34</sup> The introduction of English made Persian studies useless, and those Muslims who were earlier required by the British administration, now became redundant. The removal of Muslim backwardness therefore requires a change in the policy of the British Government. Thus, when in 1853 he was asked to review the syllabi of the Calcutta Madrasa, he recommended the establishment of an Anglo-Persian Department, placing greater emphasis on English in the Junior grades. This was accomplished in 1854 when the Anglo-Persian Department was opened, containing a syllabus very much akin to the then prevalent educational criterion of the government schools.<sup>35</sup>In

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<sup>31</sup> Enamul Haque, *Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif, His Writings and Related Documents*, Dacca, 1968, pp. 6-10

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, *Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia, 1876-92*, Islamabad, 1981, p. 94

<sup>33</sup> Report on the Indian Education Commission, 1882

<sup>34</sup> Enamul Haque, 'Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif', p. 11

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 96

the same year he sponsored a price essay competition in Persian on the subject of 'Advantages of an English education to the Mahommedan youth in India and the most objectionable means of imparting such instruction'.<sup>36</sup> This competition instigated a section of the Muslim youths in Calcutta to take to the idea of English education.<sup>37</sup>

In 1861, Latif wrote a paper on the Hooghly Madrassa, where most of his ideas about Muslim education are expressly stated.<sup>38</sup> This paper was published as a pamphlet in 1863.<sup>39</sup> Here he divided the educated Muslim community into two parts (following very much the same divisions which are found in most of the traditional Islamic tracts), viz. the learned Muslims and the worldly Muslims. By learned Muslims, he does not mean only those Muslims who are educated, but he also segregated the type of education they undertook. Those who catered to purely Islamic education were clubbed in the category of learned Muslims and those who opted for worldly knowledge were categorized as worldly Muslims. The first category cared for religious education and has no inclination for English education, nor were they interested in any material gains from such education. Some of them belong to the poorest of the educated Muslims, though they are the most respected Muslims. Latif suggested that the funds of the Mohsin Endowment should be sufficiently used for this section of the Muslim society. The worldly section was content with the study of Persian, to the extent that their business could be transacted satisfactorily.<sup>40</sup> This section consisted of the nobility, the gentry and the merchants. In the scheme of Latif they, were the potential leaders among the Muslims in Calcutta and other urban settlements, to take on English education, if sufficient provisions are provided by the British government, along with their religious education. But, for Latif, Arabic and Persian are not to be sacrificed for the sake of English education, and all three should

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<sup>36</sup> Enamul Haque, 'Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif', p. 30; see also Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 96

<sup>37</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 96

<sup>38</sup> Enamul Haque, 'Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif', p. 24

<sup>39</sup> Reprinted in Enamul Haque, 'Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif', pp. 194-95

<sup>40</sup> Reprinted in Enamul Haque, 'Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif', p. 194

be simultaneously taught to the Muslim students. The impossibility of learning three languages at one time was something that did not strike Latif.

Later in 1884, Latif giving evidence before the Bengal Provincial Committee gave further evidence of his educational views.<sup>41</sup> Responding to the objections to the Report of the Government of Bengal on Education, he points out that the present system of education in the primary schools of the villages in Bengal is totally unsuited to the educational requirement of the Muslim students. The Government Report had stated that,

“The ordinary primary schools of the country are believed to be in general as fully suited to the requirements of Muhammadan as of Hindu pupils, the vernacular of the former being in nearly all cases that of the people among whom they live; but the Lieutenant-Governor is glad to observe that the practice of subsidizing Muhammadan *Maktabas*, on condition of their teaching the vernacular and a little arithmetic in addition to the *Koran*, has been extended with successful results.”<sup>42</sup>

Against this particular view, Latif expressed his dislike for the “ordinary Bengali *pathsala*” as, according to him, they are not “suited to the requirement of the Muhammadan peasantry”.<sup>43</sup> The reason he gives is that “[t]here is too much Hindu influence.....The *guru*, in almost all cases, is a Hindu, so are many of the pupils, and there is not much sympathy between them on the one hand and the Muhammadans pupils on the other.”<sup>44</sup> He further qualifies Dr. Hunter’s words that the English educational system lacks the “instincts of the Mussalman heart”<sup>45</sup>. For the lack of education among the middle class of the Muslims, he was of the opinion that the “inability to pay the fees of tuition, and the distance of schools, prevent many

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<sup>41</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, with evidence taken before the committee and the Memorials Addressed to the Education Commission, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 213-217

<sup>42</sup> Report of the Bengal Director of Public Instruction for the year 1880-81, para. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, with evidence taken before the committee and the Memorials Addressed to the Education Commission, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 213

<sup>44</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 213

<sup>45</sup> W.W. Hunter, ‘The Indian Mussalman’, p. 178.



middle-class Muhammadans from taking advantage of existing educational institutions.”<sup>46</sup> He was further of the opinion that “wherever there is a Muhammadan population, the lower vernacular schools should be furnished with Urdu teachers, the middle school with Persian teachers, and the high schools with Persian teachers, who should also be able to teach Arabic to those pupils who might be desirous of learning it.”<sup>47</sup> This was particularly relevant to the middle-class of the Muslim population in Calcutta as well as elsewhere in Bengal. However, he considered the peasantry as a class apart. Instructions for the “lower classes of the people, who for the most part are ethnically allied to the Hindus, should be in the Bengali language, purified, however, from the superstructure of Sanskritism of learned Hindus and supplemented by the numerous words of Arabic and Persian origin.”<sup>48</sup>

Unlike Sir Syed Ahmed, Latif took relied on the orthodox section of the Muslim in India. In 1870 he approached Lord Mayo to give permission for a lecture by Maulavi Karamat Ali, under the auspices of the Government of India.<sup>49</sup> Though the permission was not given, he conducted the lecture in his own house under the banner of the Muhammadan Literary Society of Calcutta on 23 November, 1870.<sup>50</sup> In this lecture, Karamat Ali declared India to be *dar al-Islam*, as most of the injunctions of Islam in the sphere of marriage, divorce, dower and inheritance were in force under British rule, and because Muslims enjoyed full religious liberty.<sup>51</sup>

After 1876, the society progressively assumed a political role and made valuable contributions to shaping Muslim public opinion in Bengal. On behalf of the society, Nawab Abdul Latif read an address in the Imperial Darbar to convey his congratulations to the Queen on her assumption of the title of the Empress of India. This heightened the role of the Society as a representative body of the

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<sup>46</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 215

<sup>47</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 215

<sup>48</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 216

<sup>49</sup> Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 110

<sup>50</sup> Enamul Haque, ‘Nawab Bahadur Abdul Latif’, p. 30-35

<sup>51</sup> *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1870, Lecture by Maulvia Karamat Ali, Calcutta, 1871, pp. 2-5, quoted in Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 111*

Muslims. It is interesting to note that Khan Bahadur Barkat Ali Khan of Lahore also associated himself with this address.<sup>52</sup> However, it was the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war that brought the Society into political limelight. The Muslims of the subcontinent identified themselves with the Turkish cause and were not happy with British neutrality in the Russo-Turkish war. Latif took steps to promote the best interests of the Government while seeking to turn the verbal expressions of Muslim sympathy into a positive support for the Turks. He asked the permission of the government of India for holding a meeting of the Muslims of Calcutta. This request was granted and a meeting was convened on the 7 October, 1876, in the Town Hall, where 600 Muslims gentlemen of Calcutta participated. He argued that any declaration of *jihad* by the Sultan of Turkey was inapplicable to the Muslims of India, as they were not his subjects, but were living in peace under British protection.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, by the second half of the nineteenth century the Muslims of Calcutta were a more self reflective and active community, both to their demands and to the cause of general Muslim backwardness in the country. The seeds of a separate Muslim identity could be easily discernable in the opinion of Latif. However, both Latif and his contemporary Muslim leadership represented the elites or the Ashraf section of the Muslim society and remained linked to Muslim opinion coming from different parts of Indian from their own class.

Though the Central National Mahomedan Association developed into a country wide organization, it was essentially the product of the politics of Calcutta. Its rationale could be found in the context of Bengal. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) the founder of the association, was a member of a Cuttack Orrisa family, formerly in the service of the Nawab of Awadh.<sup>54</sup> He secured an M.A. degree from the Hooghly Mohsin College, and later shifted to Calcutta to pursue law at the Calcutta University.

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<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 113

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 115

<sup>54</sup> Peter Hardy, 'The Muslims of British India', p. 105

He won a scholarship to England in 1869 and stayed there till 1873. On his return he was made a Judge of the Calcutta High Court. He published books to express, his views to the public. The first, *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed* (1873), was published during his stay in London. The more famous *The Spirit of Islam* (1891) was published much later. Staying in Calcutta, he made no efforts to contact his religious brethren in the mofussil and in the more rural areas. This does indicate, according to Hardy, the social distance between the Muslims of Calcutta and the Bengali-speaking Muslims of the province.<sup>55</sup> Though Amir Ali “eschewed theological dilemmas”<sup>56</sup> he was distinctly Islamic in orientation. Though he never refuted the basics of Islam, he looked forward to a time when “Islam will join hands with the Christianity of ‘the devoted Prophet of Nazareth’ and ‘will march together in the world of civilization’”.<sup>57</sup>

Calcutta of the 1870s was a seat of dissatisfaction among the Muslim youth about the educational policies of Nawab Abdul Latif. Amir Ali, then a young barrister, tried to give a direction to these youthful energies of the Muslim youths of Calcutta. Representing the reformist group as against the conservatism of Latif, Amir Ali took a pragmatic view of the Muslim political situation and initially shared his anxiety with Sir Syed Ahmed. As to the future prospect of the “Muslims in the political economy of British India” he argued for training of the Muslim youths “on parallel lines with that of their (the Muslim’s) Hindu compatriots”.<sup>58</sup>

In 1878 his views got a more emphatic expression when he established the Central National Mahommedan Association. The Association was expressly political in nature. Citing the reasons for the formation of the Association, Amir Ali says that

“.....the absence of any means to represent to Government faithfully and honestly, the views of the Mussulmans of India, have placed them in a more

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 105

<sup>56</sup> Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 105

<sup>57</sup> Peter Hardy, ‘The Muslims of British India’, p. 107

<sup>58</sup> Syed Amir Ali, ‘Memoirs’; reprinted from the *Islamic Culture*, October 1931, January, 1932, April, 1932 and October, 1932, in K.K. Aziz (ed), *Ameer Ali: His Life and Work*, Lahore, 1986, pp. 559-60

disadvantageous position as regards political influence and power relatively to the other Indian Communities.....The few Mahomedan societies which had been formed here and there, were, in the main, literary and scientific, having for their ostensible object the promotion of a desire of European knowledge among the Mahomedans.”<sup>59</sup>

The other most important reason was the formation of a unity among the Muslims of different provinces. Though in the initial stages of its formation, the Association commanded the influence of a large section of the Muslim gentry, it disintegrated very shortly. Amir Ali very sadly refers to this process in his memoir.<sup>60</sup> However, the Association was consonant with the policies of the British Government and was just the demands of the Muslim community that were put forward without any attempt to criticize the governmental policies. As was common among all the moderate and elite organizations of the times, the tradition of loyalty towards the colonial government was maintained by the Association. The Association defined its political methods as loyal but independent.

As was clear from his thoughts, Amir Ali wanted to make the organization an instrument of political training and progress for the Muslims. Though formed in Calcutta, the Association sought to be the sole political body of the Muslims of India. But the overt outlook of the Association was not communal in nature. The Association was open to the members of the Hindu community and there appear some names of some Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians among the Muslims who performed an active and important role in the functioning of the Association.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned above, the Association aspired to be an all India organization and it soon spread to many other parts of India. In 1883, the Association had 1518 members on its rolls and, by 1888, the number of members grew to 3232.<sup>62</sup> Branches of the Association spread into different Provinces and by 1888 there were 69 branches in

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<sup>59</sup> *Quinquennial Report of the Central National Mahomedan Association for 1878-1883*, Calcutta, 1884, cited in Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 128

<sup>60</sup> Syed Amir Ali, 'Memoirs', p. 560.

<sup>61</sup> See Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 132

<sup>62</sup> *Triennial Report of the Mahomedan Association, 1885-1888*, Calcutta, 1888, pp. 98-125

Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and the Northwestern Provinces.<sup>63</sup> The Association approached the Muslim public through a network of newspapers. By 1888, *Urdu Guide* and the *Muhammadan Observer* represented to the Muslim in Calcutta and Bengal the views of the Association.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, other newspapers were published in different provinces to give a clear picture to the Muslim public about the ideas and functions of the Association.

In the same document where Latif's views about education are registered, we also find Amir Ali's views. For Amir Ali, the causes which prevent Muslims of Bengal to avail themselves of the facilities of English education could be found in the 'political decadence'<sup>65</sup> of the community. He did not feel that the community was averse towards English education. He says that the 'causes ... (that) prevented the Muhammadans from availing themselves of the facilities afforded by the Government do not lie in their unwillingness to study the language of an alien race. At any rate, what ever may have been the feeling in former times, it is not so now.' He highlighted the economic backwardness of the Muslim community which for him was a major reason for the backwardness of the Muslim community.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, the Muslim nobility, who had the economic means of affording an English education, had "not awakened to the necessity of acquiring a through knowledge of English".<sup>67</sup>

The Association took stock of the situation, and authorized Amir Ali to draft a Memorial embodying the various grievances of the Muslim community.<sup>68</sup> The change in the outlook of the educated Muslims of Calcutta could be gleaned from the language of the memorial.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Triennial Report of the Mahomedan Association, 1885-1888*, Calcutta, 1888, pp. 128

<sup>64</sup> Both the newspapers were edited by Shams-ul-Ulama Kabir-ud-Din Ahmed. See Muhammad Yusuf Abbasi, 'Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia', p. 133

<sup>65</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 217

<sup>66</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 218

<sup>67</sup> Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee, (Calcutta, 1884) pp. 218

<sup>68</sup> Home Educational Proceedings, February, 1890, No. 34-61, Memorandum No. II of the Central National Mahomedan Association.

<sup>69</sup> Lt. to his Excellency the Most Honourable the Marquis of Ripon, in *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 238.

“ Your memorialists do not wish to be understood that this disaffection amounts to discontent or disaffection, for, as a matter of fact, the Indian Muhammadans have, since the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown, cherished a sincere attachment to her Britannic Majesty, upon whom they look not only as the lawful Sovereign on India, but as the Protector of all that is most valued in Islam”

It is astonishing to know that the British Government, by the end of the nineteenth century, was converted to the some very valued in Islam itself. Thus the English educated class in Calcutta was something akin to the movement, among the modern educated classes in the Muslim society, taking place in the entire subcontinent. The memorialists referred to the present impoverished condition of the Muslims of India, and pointed out that the cause which have led to the decadence and ruin of the Muslims under the British rule ‘were still at work’<sup>70</sup> in the Muslim society and after decades of deprivation and poverty have become the cause of further retardation. The memorialist further argued that this deprivation was a product of the political, economic and educational policies of the Government of India, and should not be attributed to the Muslim apathy towards English education.<sup>71</sup> Highlighting the ever growing disparity in the number of Hindus and Muslim officials in the various departments, the Memorialists further affirmed that,

“In 1871, the proportion of Mahommedans to Hinhu in the gazetted appointments was less than one-seventh, in 1880, the proportion fell below one-tenth. But in other and less conspicuous departments where the distribution of state patronage is less closely watched, that the fate of the Mussalmans may be more accurately observed.”<sup>72</sup>

The Memorialists also took that question of Muslim endowments, which had been a cause of concern to their community for almost two decades.

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<sup>70</sup> *Selections from the Records of the Government of India*, No. CCV. Home Department, Serial No. 2, p. 239.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*, p. 240.

<sup>72</sup> Home Educational Proceedings, February, 1890, No. 34-61, Memorandum No. II of the Central National Mahommedan Asiciation, para 13.

Referring to the expenditure of the Mohsin Endowment it accused the Government of diverting the income from Muslim Trust properties to its general revenues and spending it on those institutions from which Hindu benefited the most. Assuring the Government of Muslim loyalty to the British Crown, the Memorialist asked the Government to appreciate the cause of the "widespread feeling among all classes of Mohammedans in India with the present state of things."<sup>73</sup> Thus the Muslim in Calcutta during the end of the nineteenth century was looking forward for the redressal of their grievances. Thus among the Muslims of Calcutta there was an awareness of the far-reaching changes in the Indian society and the ways to tackle with this issue. The effect of the formation of the Indian National Congress was clearly seen in the Muslim politics during those days. As to the Muslim of Calcutta the reflection of the impoverished of their brethren was a major problem, which they wanted to tackle through partitioning the British Government.

Lord Curzon assumed the Viceroyalty of India on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1898<sup>74</sup> and within month outlined a policy of formidable reform. However, none arouse the excitement and opposition as that of the Partition of Bengal. The Partition of Bengal came into force on the 16 October, 1905. There was a lot of protest among the educated Bengalis Hindus., There was also evidence of Muslim opposition to the proposal of the Partition. The Central Muhammedan Association of Calcutta in February 1904 held a in which the proposal was condemned.<sup>75</sup> However, after much administrative problems when the Partition question had been settled the Muslims accepted the matter with good grace. In the Partition the Muslim community found a great opportunity to develop as a separate force. During the course of the anti-Partition movement, mostly led by the Hindus, the relation between the two communities, in general, became strained. As Sumit Sarkar writes that, the "Hindu-Muslim relation posed the greatest challenge before the

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<sup>73</sup> Home Educational Proceedings, February, 1890, No. 34-61, Memorandum No. II of the Central National Mahommedan Asiciation, para 24.

<sup>74</sup> Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, p. 228

<sup>75</sup> *The Moslem Chronicle*, 6 February, 1904.

swadeshi movement, and ultimately proved its greatest failure.”<sup>76</sup> The annulment of the Partition in 1911 not only disillusioned the Muslims, but also shook their faith in the British rulers. As Asim Pada Chakrabarti has shown that a new leadership arose from within the Muslim community in Bengal, who, wanted to work closely with the Indian National Congress, dominated mainly by the Hindu, in the freedom struggle with more active and large participation. These leaders were aware of the backwardness of the community but were at the same time did not want to stick to the communal stand of the old leadership. The Muslim leadership at this moment demanded more vigorously the modern and scientific education, but at the same time, wanted to preserve all that they possessed as individual traits of their identity. This was typical of the Calcutta Muslim as their participation in the Council and the Calcutta Municipality was enthusiastic, demanding the modern contours of development from the government, they at the same time laid stress on the preservation of traditional in the Calcutta Madrassa, as is clear from the second chapter. This state of affair continued till the 1920. After 1920s there appeared an interesting change in the attitude of the Muslim community towards politics.

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<sup>76</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “Hindu-Muslim Relations”, Chapter Eight of *The Swadeshi Movement. 1905-1908*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, p. 405.



*Conclusion*

## CONCLUSION

The Muslims community of Calcutta up to 1921 was not an impressive one. They made up a quarter of the city's population and the majority of those settled in Calcutta belonged to the lower sections of the community. This was natural as the city was not established as an abode for Muslims to settle in. It was a city formed by the British as a trading centre at a time when the Muslim power in Bengal was reigning high. Calcutta coming into political prominence was an accident. After Plassey and Buxar, it was natural that the politics of the region would be controlled through Calcutta. However, the expressed intention behind the formation of the city was never a political one. Situated in South-western corner of Bengali, Calcutta was surrounded by a sea of Bengali Hindu settlements. Muslims were concentrated in the urban centers of old Muslim power, such as Murshidabad, Pabna, Dacca, etc. It was quite natural that the population of the city will have a Bengali Hindu majority. Elite Muslim migration into the city was a process that took place much later. This reality can be easily deduced from the fact that in 1781 when some Muslims of Calcutta requested Warren Hasting to form a Madrassa, the community was not in a position to financially support such an educational establishment. Again later when changes were recommended in the institution it was through government finances that such change was instituted. The first instance of community participation comes from the year 1909, when the need for a hostel led the Muslims to unite and make arrangements for funds with governmental help. Even in this case fifty percent of the expenses were borne by the Government. Thus Calcutta during its early days was never a city of the Muslims, even of the Muslim elite. It was a city where the majority of the Muslims had settled in search of a meager livelihood.

Muslim concentration in the city never attained a striking pace. It lagged behind the Hindu population during the period of research here. The Muslim growth rate was much lower than that of the Hindus. And such rate of growth differed from period to period. During the periods of economic hardship it was the Muslim community that was the main suffered, registering a decrease in the overall growth in the city; while their Hindu counterparts registered an increase in the overall population of the city.

Muslim migration pattern into Calcutta has a particular sequence. While more than fifty percent of the population of Calcutta was migrant, with migration from the other provinces constituting the core of population increase in the city, Muslim migration followed a pattern which was intimately linked with the political turn of the period. From the beginning of the investigation there was a good amount of Muslim migration from the neighbourhood of Calcutta and the different districts of Bengal. The pattern of migration continued up till the beginning of the twentieth century. From the first census of the city in 1876 till about 1901 there was a large number of Muslims coming from the districts of Bengal. The data clearly shows this pattern of migration into Calcutta. From 1905, Bengali Muslim migration into Calcutta shifted towards Dacca. Simultaneously, from the first decade of the twentieth century Muslim migration from other provinces especially the North Western Provinces, Central Provinces, etc. starts to increase. However, such increase was not a remarkable one, as overall shifts in Muslim migration did not affect the concentration of Bengali speaking Muslims but, it was double than what the previous figures suggest. Up to 1921 this increase in Muslim migration from other provinces of India continued. The cause for this increase could not be found from the data given in the Censuses of Calcutta. However, this would have been a major cause for the particular pattern of politics that evolved in the city after the end of the First World War, discussed very thoroughly by McPherson, where the non-Bengali migration developed a major stake in the city.

The economic position of the Muslims of the city was grim as the discussion in the first chapter indicates. Combining this with the pattern of Muslim migration into the city it will be easy to compose a story where the relative rural prosperity in Bengal during the late nineteenth century did not compel those to migrate to Calcutta or any other urban areas, who had even a small amount of property in their native villages. Thus those who migrated into Calcutta were the property less section of the Muslim community. This was one of the reasons why the economic condition of the Muslims from 1870s to 1920s was miserable. Migration from other provinces however was not of the same pattern. There was a substantial number of the well-to-do in the later

Muslim migration from other provinces of India. This might be one of the reasons for the improvement in the economic condition of the Muslim community after 1910.

The educational requirement of the city's Muslims was initially restricted to the Calcutta Madrassa, which provided them with jobs in the lower echelons of the British administration. Things changed after 1837 and particularly after 1857. After the revolt, there appeared to be a self-realization among the Muslims of the city, following a similar pattern in the entire subcontinent. There appears a shift from purely Islamic studies to modern European studies introduced by the British. This shift was very much visible in the city as the Anglo-Persian Department had more of the city's Muslim students than that of the Arabic Department, which contained a very minor percentage of the Muslim students of the city.

In terms of politics, there was a similar realization of their deprivation, both educationally and economically. After 1857 the interest of the Muslim community in the new education, was felt strongly in the city. A large number of Muslims came forward with concerns of the betterment of the community. But the pattern followed here was not a regional one. It was an imitation of the politics of Muslims in Northern India. The linguistic reality of the Muslim of Bengal never appeared to these reformers as an important aspect of Muslims of this region. They concentrated on Urdu as the language of the Muslims. Though a spate of writings in Bengali, particularly that of Mir Mosharraf Hussain, do indicate the realization among the Bengali Muslims of the importance of Bengali, but in the city of Calcutta the concentration was more in line with the politics of North India than with the region. This might be taken as following the pattern of Muslim settlement in the city after the partition of Bengal. The Partition of Bengal was a major in terms of the political leaning of the Muslim. Initially, there was a spate of protest against the partition, among the Muslims of Calcutta, but such protest dissolved into an appreciation for the plan of the Partition. The annulment of the Partition brought forward the disillusionment of the community for the supports they gave to the British government and thus there developed a major shift in the politics of Calcutta as well as that of Bengal. After the end of the Second World War, the politics of Calcutta and specifically the Muslim politics of the city were overwhelmed by the political

development in the entire subcontinent. Later Muslim migration into the city would have been a major cause for this change. Though this dissertation takes into account the period up to 1921 however, later Muslim migration, the pattern of which was clearly visible from the Census of 1911 would have brought considerable changes in the political and demand of the Calcutta Muslims.

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