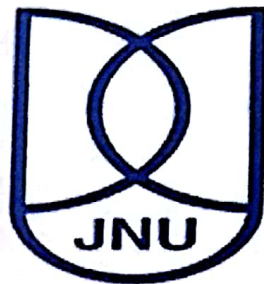


**Muslim and Their Public Sphere:
From Pre Partition to Contemporary West Bengal**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
In partial fulfilment of the requirements
For the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I, Manisha Majumdar hereby declare that the dissertation titled "Muslim and Their Public Sphere: From Pre Partition to Contemporary West Bengal" submitted by me in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy to Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted in part or in full for the award of any degree of this or any other university.

(MANISHA MAJUMDAR)

CERTIFICATE

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

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Place: New Delhi

**MUSLIMS AND THEIR PUBLIC SPHERE: FROM PRE
PARTITION TO CONTEMPORARY WEST BENGAL**

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I have sought to analyze the Muslim and their Public Sphere from pre-partition to contemporary West Bengal. Muslims have been particularly chosen for this topic because although they constitute a large chunk of Indian population, they have been deprived of benefits and developments. The interest on the Muslim subject particularly aroused because of the recent attacks on them by the Hindu right wing forces. Also, we see that interference by the government in Muslim's cultural issues has been criticized by the leaders of the Muslim community. The interest also aroused because of my vantage point of being a Woman. Woman has always been the target of violence and had been treated as a secondary citizen. Therefore, I wanted to delve into the issues of the Muslim community. It is another fact that women remain minorities in the minorities but that is altogether a separate issue. Therefore, I wanted to study the Muslims in general.

The Sacchar Committee Report showed that the Muslims of India lagged behind in Education, Government Jobs, Health, Sanitation etc. The SNAP report by Pratiche Institute particularly studied the condition of Muslims in West Bengal. According to the report titled "The Living Reality of Muslims in West Bengal", "only 1 percent households are fortunate to have salaried jobs in the private sector as their main source of income" (Pratiche institute, SNAP, 2012). All these show the pathetic condition of the Muslims of West Bengal. However, the socio-economic situation of the Muslims in West Bengal has been studied properly by many. Therefore, my main focus is on the Muslims and their public sphere, to see Muslims of West Bengal in totality to their surrounding environment. To understand it, one has to study Muslims from the pre-partition period to the contemporary time, so as to trace the changes in the Bengali public sphere. Also, not much has been studied solely related to Muslims in the post-partition period in West Bengal and their public sphere. And also, in order to approach the Muslim issues, one must know their problems in totality of their surroundings.

RATIONALE OF STUDY

My research concern here is to examine the Muslims and their public sphere. Public sphere influences the course of action that a given community takes to understand its place in a bigger polity. Even after so many years of Independence, Muslims have found it hard to get equal

opportunities and real rights and come at par with the other communities. From the pre-partition period we see the Bengali public sphere as a field of contestation. Muslims were backward educationally, economically and politically but many events told us that they continued to rise in the face of the domination of the Hindu Bhadrak. But we also see that, from Khilafat movement to the idea of Pakistan and finally the partition, Muslims were a force to reckon with. Muslims distrust towards the intention of the Hindu community led the Muslim leaders to formulate the concept of Pakistan. The country got divided into two halves but we see that the condition of the Muslims of those who stayed back in India got even worse as now they were left leaderless. Even after partition we see the continuity in their identity construction. But the process became all the more difficult as vacuum that was created by the lack of leadership was difficult to fill. The population that stayed back in India and in West Bengal, particularly, was the poor section of the Muslim population that was hard hit by the trauma and financial loss of the process of partition. Therefore, the idea is to study the Bengali public sphere from the pre-partition period to the contemporary West Bengal keeping Muslims as the main focus of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wide range of literature available related to Muslims in Bengal. The pre-partition period especially, has sufficient range of literature but not much has been focused on the post partition Muslim condition in relation to the left front CPI(M) rule in west Bengal. Much has been focused on the general performance of the Left front's rule in west Bengal but not much has been written about the Muslim population and its relation to the left front government in west Bengal. Why it is important to understand the relationship between Muslims and the Left front in west Bengal? It is important because after the partition Muslims depended immensely on the role of the state. The trauma of the partition, its memories, economic backwardness and the separation from their families and relatives caused a huge setback in the condition of the Muslims in west Bengal. Therefore, it is important to access the role of the governments in the post partition Bengal. In what way, the policies of the government affected the Muslims in west Bengal? In what way did the Muslim of west Bengal relate their aspiration with that of the agendas of the Left government and the Trinamool Congress that replaces CPI (M) after the long reign of 34 years? What are the other social factors apart from the electoral politics that affects

the Muslims? What shape did the Bengali public sphere take in relation with its Muslim community from pre-partition to the contemporary time? The new public sphere that places Muslims in relation to the Trinamool Congress, the current government, one could locate the crisis of identity that Muslim faces with irregular waves of identity politics in west Bengal.

There are ample lots of literatures that one could find related to the pre-partition Muslim and their public sphere in Bengal. There are significant authors that studied the emergence of Islam in Bengal. The writers like Rafiuddin Ahmed, Atis Dasgupta, talked about the way Islam became a part of the Bengal society. For Ahmed, the process of Islamization was the part of a larger agenda, which was initiated by the Muslim Ashrafs of Bengal. The agenda was to mobilize the people for the greater concept of a separate homeland. Ahmed's understanding of the Islamization of the rural people of Bengal had a political agenda. The role of the pirs, and religious heads of the Muslims, according to him, had a similar intention as those of Muslim ashrafs, that is the larger goal of a separate identity, a culture that is not seen as inferior to the Hindu culture and a dream of separate homeland that ultimately culminated into Pakistan. For the goal to get fulfilled, the Muslims needed the support of the rural masses. The role of the waj mehfil, a religious forum of debate and discussion for the Bengali Muslims, according to Ahmed, played an important role in making the Muslims aware of their distinct culture. The interesting thing to understand is that, according to Ahmed, the need to Islamize the Rural Muslim population emerged because the rural Muslim population was very much an assimilated part of the Hindu culture. The Bengali Muslims followed the same traditions that Hindus practiced in the rural areas. The main reason behind so much similarity in the cultural practices of the two communities is because, according to Ahmed, the rural Bengali Muslims were the Hindu converts of the lower section of the Hindu community. The lower section of the Hindu community converted itself because of the inequality that they faced from the Hindu upper caste. Therefore, to come out from the inequality and to live a life free of domination, the lower section converted itself to Islam religion. But this section of the population failed to give up their old tradition. Atis Dasgupta gives another perspective of the emergence of Islam among the rural population of Bengal. According to him, the process of Islamization was a natural process that was not imposed to the rural population. According to him, the Sufi tradition and their social work naturally brought the local population close to the Islamic religion. Muin-ud-din Ahmed Khan and Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, looked into the movements known as

Fairazi and the Wahabi in Bengal. The authors look into the origin and the impact of the movement which played an essential role in the mobilization of the rural Bengali population in Bengal. The movements brought in the fore front the socio-economic deprivation of the rural Muslim masses of Bengal. For the role of the Khilafat movement in Bengal, there are authors like M. Naeem Qureshi, Mushirul Hasan, Nurul Islam who looked into the khilafat movement in India in general and west Bengal in particular by Nurul Islam. These authors analyzed the Khilafat movement and placed the location of Muslims in the movement. Mushirul Hasan. The role of the Ulemas were brought forth by these authors whose political aspirations were important to analyse so as to understand the Muslims and their public sphere in the pre-partition India. Regarding the partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement, the authors like Anil Baran Ray, A. K. Biswas were referred. The authors brought out the complexities involved in the partition of Bengal and its impact on the Hindu-Muslim unity. How Muslims responded to the Hindu initiation of the Swadeshi and Boycott movement has been analyzed by these authors.

Scholars like Bidyut Chakrabarty, Poromesh Acharya, V.N. Datta, Balraj Puri delved into the history of Communal Award, the Language tussle between the Hindu and the Muslim community(difference related to language existed even among the Muslim community), the Idea of Pakistan respectively. These authors looked into the impacts of these social events into the political atmosphere of Bengal. Whereas authors like Hamza Alawi, Sana Aiyar, Haimanti Roy tried to de-link the concept of a separate Homeland with Communalism. According to these writers, the partition of Bengal and India was not entirely Communal in nature. Hamza Alawi tries to understand the Pakistan movement as a peasant ideology marked by economic consideration.

Joya Chatterji looked into the Bhadrlok hegemony in Bengal. She delved into the role of the Bhadrlok hegemony and its impact on the Muslims. Her observations could be found relevant even in the contemporary West Bengal. The Bhadrlok hegemony was the Cultural superiority of the Hindu middle class in the pre-partition Bengal which looked at the Muslim Culture with contempt. The hegemony of the Bhadrlok prevailed in all the spheres such as education, politics etc. This resulted in clash between the two communities which in the future turned into reason for the division of Bengal. Sheila Sen delved into the Muslim politics in Bengal. She talked about the Muslim politics in relation to the government of Bengal after the

election of 1937. She looked into the detailed study of the Muslim government in Bengal after the election of 1937, the role of the Muslim League in Bengal and its hold in Bengal. The political scenario of Bengal after the election of 1937 was very important in understanding the events leading to partition of Bengal and thus Sen's book helped in making the task easy.

Also, Joya Chatterji's another book on the aftermath of partition of Bengal and India provided deep insights into the condition of Muslims in Bengal and India after partition. The Ruralization of Muslims in West Bengal and their difficult situation has been studied in detail by Chatterji. Her work provided important insights related to those Muslims who stayed back in India. The crisis of identity that the Indian Muslims faced in the aftermath of partition has been carefully looked into by Chatterji.

Other round of scholars like Joya Chatterji, Suranjan Das, looked into the condition of West Bengal after the partition, in relation to the Congress government and its effort in handling the situation of West Bengal. The refugee problem in West Bengal created several problems such as, the riot of 1964 between the Hindus and the Muslims. Das especially studied the communal riots of 1946 and the 1992 in West Bengal. Das's work helped in understanding other factors apart from electoral factors that affected Muslims and their public sphere. The social exclusion of Muslims after the partition plays an important role in making the Muslims vulnerable. The work of these writers helped in this particular direction.

Writings by Mukul Roy, Twaha Siddiqui, Kannad Dasgupta, Animesh Chakrabarty, Mosharraf Hossain are the Bengali sources that delved with the working of the Left government in West Bengal. These works are the raw expressions of desperation and frustration of the constant backwardness of the Bengali Muslim community of West Bengal. The failure of the Left government in West Bengal to bring out the desired change into the lives of the backward Muslim community has led to resentment among the Muslims. The literatures are a kind of appeal made to the Muslim community of West Bengal to rise, participate and voice out their anger against the prejudiced behavior of the government against the Muslim community.

Similarly, Scholars like Bonita Aleaz, Arup Kumar Sen, Himanshu Roy, looked into the working of the Left government and its policies that affected the

Muslims in West Bengal. Aleaz looked into the Madrasa system of education and its condition during the Left regime. Sen looked into the Nandigram incident and the developmental violence that was unleashed on the poor section of the Muslims in West Bengal, which led to their alienation from the left government. Sumanta Banerjee delves into the factors that led to the replacement of the Left regime with that of the Trinamool government in West Bengal. She analyses the different aspects that played in favor of the Trinamool Congress to replace the Left regime in West Bengal.

In the third chapter, several scholars like Manisha Bandhopadhyay, Kumar Rana and Manabi Majumdar delves into the events that affected the Muslims and forms the new public sphere. The Khagrahad incident in West Bengal resulted in targeting the Muslim community. The police and the government started targeting the Madrasas alleging their involvement in the terrorist activities. The scholars criticize the government in failing to protect the Muslims and equalizing Madrasa education with that of Muslim fundamentalism.

In order to bring out the arguments related to the new public sphere, the help of the internet sources have been taken. The news articles, opinion pages etc have been taken into consideration to look into the contemporary discourses so as to understand the new public sphere in West Bengal.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a review of available literature which is relevant to the subject in hand as M.Phil thesis is expected to be, though an ethnographic study would provide a more concrete picture and would be the next step in this pursuit. The literature has been chosen according to the themes that are being worked on. The study has also referred to newspaper reports and articles etc.

CHAPTERIZATION

In the first chapter, I have examined the Muslims and their location in the Bengali public sphere in the pre-partition era. The chapter delves with the history of the Muslims in colonial Bengal. The chapter starts with the formative period of Islam in Bengal with its influence on the

population of Bengal and how its influence resulted in the formation of a distinct community of Bengali Muslims. The chapter brings out the heterogenous character of the Muslim community in Colonial Bengal. The difference between the Urdu speaking Muslims and the Bengali speaking rural Muslims shows the heterogenous character of the Muslims in Bengal. The chapter also delves in the events starting from Ferazee movements, Khilafat movements, language tussle between the Hindu and the Muslims to the final concept of a separate Homeland-Pakistan. The purpose is to look into the Bengali public sphere historically so as to understand the response of the Muslims in relation to these issues. Also, how the dominance of the Hindu upper caste in all the major positions in Bengal resulted in counter assertion of identity by the Muslim in Colonial Bengal is observed in this chapter. In the final section of the chapter, the partition of India and Bengal has been delved into. The Ghettoisation of the Muslims in the post-Partition West Bengal became a harsh truth that affected them politically, economically and demographically.

The second chapter starts with the post-partition scenario of west Bengal. The trauma, memories of violence and loss of property, dignity and life during partition affected both the communities. But in west Bengal, the condition of the Muslims had become worse as they were forced to live in a ghetto in the potential danger of a riot which resulted in their loss of traditional livelihood and had to put up with petty jobs. The chapter looks into the rule of Congress in west Bengal after partition and the response of the Muslim towards it. The successive waves of Hindu refugees coming to west Bengal from East Pakistan further deteriorated the condition of west Bengal. The Hindus being minority in East Pakistan faced violence by the majority Muslims and similar fate was met by Muslims in West Bengal being a minority in India. However, the failure of the Congress government to associate itself properly with the issues of the people of Bengal led to its replacement by the left front in Bengal. The chapter further delves into the relation of the left regime with that of the Muslims community in West Bengal. How Muslims engage themselves with the agenda of the left front in west Bengal is the question posed by this chapter. Do we see a continuation in identity formation by Muslims even after partition? The last section gives a brief outline of the replacement of the left regime by the Trinamool Congress in west Bengal after a 34 long year of continuous reign.

The third chapter delves into the reign of the Trinamool Congress. The new public sphere is the title of the third chapter. As the name suggests, the chapter tries to focus in to the contemporary

position of Muslims and their public sphere in West Bengal. It tries to understand the new complexities in the Bengali public sphere after the completion of the left era. The third chapter is the final chapter which helps to locate the Muslims in relation to its surrounding in the post-partition west Bengal.

CHAPTER-1

A SHORT HISTORY OF MUSLIMS IN BENGAL; PARTITION AND RURALIZATION

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MUSLIMS IN BENGAL; PARTITION AND RURALIZATION.

I start this essay with a brief pre-partition historical background of the Muslims in Bengal. The interesting thing to understand is that the Muslims in Bengal were socially, economically and most importantly, culturally different from the rest of the Muslims in other states in colonial India. Therefore, it becomes imperative for us to understand why this was the case and in what way the Muslims in Bengal were different from the Muslims in other provinces. The central argument of the thesis revolves around the Muslim and their public sphere in Bengal and in this chapter I would delve into the events that led to the formation of the Muslim spaces that formed the Muslim identity in the British India. What were the conditions that affected the Muslims and influenced their decisions, debates and protests in the colonial Bengal?

Coming to the Muslims in pre- partition Bengal, one must look into the advent of Islam in Bengal and how it was different from the Islam practiced in different provinces? Was the Muslim community in Bengal monolithic in nature? How much role did Religion play in the events leading to the formation of Muslim Identity? Or was it a misinterpretation of the Muslim events that gave huge importance to the role of religion whereby it was mostly economical and political in nature?

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN BENGAL

Atis Dasgupta, in his *Islam in Bengal: Formative Period* (2004)¹ gives a philosophical background to the formation of Islam in Bengal. However, there is another viewpoint which states that the exploitation of the lower caste Hindus by the Hindu high caste resulted in the conversion of lower caste Hindus into Muslims voluntarily to acquire equal status (Ahmed R. , 1996). Dasgupta argues that Islam in Bengal was formed by the influence of the Sahajjiya syncretistic tradition and Sufism of Islam between 13th to 17th Century. This was the formative phase for the Islam in Bengal between the Turk-Afgan and Mughal rule. The Sahajjiya syncretistic tradition was the formulation of Buddhist Sahajjiya under the Pala rulers in Bengal between 8th to 11th Century. Dasgupta further explains that the Charyapadas and the Dohas of the Sahajjiya tradition were the literary expression that behaved as a counterpoint to the Hindu

¹ Atis Dasgupta, *Islam in Bengal : Formative Period* (2004).

orthodoxy. The basic foundation of the Sahajiya tradition was the “Ultimate Reality”. The self was given importance. The soul was given the highest relevance as opposed to the performance of rituals etc. It is a ‘reverse’ journey which meant that the ultimate reality of human being is to return to one’s own self. The “Vaishnava” or the “Saguna Sahajiya” was the first systematic form of Sahajiya. The Bauls were the emergence of this Vaishnavas tradition. Their ‘nirguna’ characteristics in the later years combined with the Sufis in Bengal impacted the people of eastern Bengal especially, in a great way. The Palas were thrown over and replaced by the Sena dynasty from Karnatakas towards the end of the 11th century which asserted itself on the people of Bengal with its Hindu orthodoxy tenets. Brihadharma purana and Bhrahmavaivarta purana were the first Smriti text in Bengali, but, in opposition to this, Sahajiya tradition reasserted itself, but it was only during the Mughal rule that Islam had finally taken its course in Bengal.

Dasgupta (2004) observes that The Turk-Afghan rule did not lead to the advent of Islam in Bengal but it did set up certain symbols like Mosques and Madrasas which had provided a base for the future process of Islamization in Bengal. The Mughals had brought with themselves the class of Muslim aristocracy, the Urdu speaking elites known as Ashrafs who dominated the major positions in the administration. According to Muin-ud-din Ahmad Khan (June 1970)² Mughals displaced the Poets and Writers of Bengali literature who used to receive patronage from the Pathan and Turkish rulers but Mughals eliminated the local Muslim Aristocracy to ensure its domination. However, the new Muslim aristocratic class was mainly from U.P and Delhi who had no attachment to Bengali language and its culture. They regarded the Bengali culture as a part of Hindu culture. This condition polarized the society. The new upper class was unable to fill the gap which created a cleavage between the Muslim rural masses and the upper caste Muslims.

Dasgupta (2004) further explains that the diversion of Ganga River to the eastern Bengal changed created a huge difference. The Mughals settled in eastern Bengal due to its economic importance. The fertile soil of the eastern Bengal made it suitable to grow wet rice. The pioneers brought by Mughlas helped to cultivate the forest tracts with the support of local population. The pioneers were given the grant only on the condition that they would build a Mosque or a Temple in the forest from the wealth they accrue. As most of the

²Muin-Ud-Din Ahmed Khan, “Faraidi Movement” Islamic Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1970), pp. 123-147.

pioneers were Muslims, the local population found themselves immersed in the culture and religion of some other community but which came to them naturally without any imposition. Many pioneers were of the Sufi tradition. It was not only due to economic reasons that people of eastern Bengal embraced Islam but because of the Sufis who initiated social welfare programmes also. They fed the poor, the hungry. They helped during any calamity. All these measures naturally made the Sufis popular amongst the people of eastern Bengal. A tolerance capacity emerged in the people of Bengal. As Khan (June 1970)³ explains “Islam was propagated not as a court religion but as a religion of humanity. Islam in Bengal has rightly been described as a gift of Sufis, who were humanist per excellence” (Khan, June 1970). But then what happened that the revivalist reforms like Fairazi and Tariqah–I–Muhammadiyah took place in Bengal? For Khan, it was because of the English exploitation of the Muslim masses that removed them from all their political supreme position in the latter half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century that led the Muslims to stand upright

THE IMPACT OF THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF 1793

The permanent settlement introduced by Cornwallis created a new class of landholders to establish his political domination and a section of the landed gentry that would remain loyal to the British government (De, 1977). Amlendu De in his *Bengali Intelligentsia Attitude to the Permanent Settlement* (1977)⁴ explains that the Zamindars were given full proprietary rights over the estates. It gave a security of government revenue and also encouraged this new class with proper wealth to invest in the purchase of Zamindari⁵. According to De, the Bengali middle class was the creation of this permanent settlement. This class stood as an intermediary between the Zamindars and the cultivators, which formed the social and economic structure of Bengal. But what was the response of the Muslims in relation to this permanent settlement? As most of the ryots especially in eastern Bengal were Muslims, it affected them tremendously. The ryots were exploited in the hands of the Zamindars. The close link between moneylenders and Zamindars made the condition of the ryots pathetic. De argues that money lending interest had mixed up

³ Muin-Ud-Din-Ahmed Khan, Fairadi Movement, (June 1970)

⁴ Amlendu De, *Bengali Intelligentsia Attitude to the Permanent Settlement*, (social Scientists, 1977).

⁵ The purpose of the zamindari settlement was to keep India an agricultural country, which would aid in the supply of the raw materials to british industries. It would give incentive to the landholders to solve the agricultural crisis and thirdly, it would create a new class of landholdes who would have no motives for change.

with landed interest. But what was the role of the Muslim Aristocracy in relation to this, in relation to its community?

RESPONSE OF THE MUSLIMS

According to De (1977), the Muslim leaders tried to reform the Muslim community so that they could be brought into the mainstream and compete for the jobs and other facilities. Therefore modernizing the Muslim community took place alongside showing the loyalty to the British. Nawab Amir Ali Khan Bahadur, Abdool Luteef and Syed Ameer Ali leaders of the educated Bengali class directed their attention towards the strengthening of the Muslim community through education. De argues that these mainly represented the interest of the upper and the middle class Muslims. They complained regarding the Hindu clerks who gave hard time to the Muslim Zamindars which created a threatening situation for them. They were not concerned with the Muslim ryots. Some Muslim intelligentsia raised themselves against the Zamindari oppression. Mir Mosharaff Hossain in his drama “Jamidar Darpan” showcased the oppression meted out to the ryots, but, he himself could not go beyond his class particularities. Similarly, Syed Ameer Ali, was not mainly against the Zamindars, but gave his support to the ryots. But he did not talk about the Muslim Zamindari. He only talked about the exploitation of ryots by the Hindu Zamindars. These people did not talk about the abolition of permanent settlement as they were aware of the advantages related to it.

FERAZEE AND TARIQAH-I-MUHAMMADIYAH MOVEMENTS IN BENGAL

Muid-Ud-Din-Ahmad Khan in his *Faraidi Movement* (June 1970)⁶ traces the origin of the Faraidi movement. The Faraidi movement in Bengal was a revivalist movement which gained popularity in Bengal from 1818, in the 19th century. Faraizi means “obligatory duties enjoined by god” (Khan, June 1970). The movement was initiated by Haji Shariat Ali. The focus was given on the five fundamentals of Islam “1. Profession of Faith. 2. Saying the five daily prayers. 3. Fasting in the month of Ramadan. 4. Payment of Zakat. 5. Pilgrimage to Makka” (Khan, June 1970, p. 131). He maintained that all deviation from the original teachings of Islam should be done away with. He condemned idol worship, saint worship, prohibited the rituals related to

⁶Muin-Ud-Din-Ahmed Khan, *Faraidi Movement*, Islamic Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1970), pp. 123-147.

birth, marriage and death. He preached brotherhood of Muslims, social equality and universal justice. It was mainly confined to Eastern Bengal and parts of Assam and thus impacted the East Bengali masses. It was religious in nature when it originally started but then it got influenced by the local factor. The Eastern Bengal which was resided by mostly Muslim poor peasants were economically exploited by the Bania landlords which resulted in the fierce economic struggle between the Ferazees and the Hindu landlords. It was only during the latter half of the 18th century and first half of the 19th century that they realized that the main cause of their political decadence is their deviation from the actual teaching of Islam. The author argues that as there was lack of leadership from the landed gentry, a leader had to be sought from amongst the masses. The two important demands of the Faraidi movement was, 1st, Going back to the original teaching of Islam and 2nd, The protection of the masses from Economic exploitation from big landlords. It was suppressed by the British government when it launched a jihad movement from 1863 to 1870. This also coincided with Muslims modernism which was the production of scientific and rational thinking within the Muslim community with the emergence of middle classes. On his death Dudu Miyah⁷ became the head of the faraidi movement who used force to curb the oppression of the landlords and the British power. The permanent settlement gave much right to landlords provided to them by the British.

Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay in his *The Ferazee and Wahabi Movements of Bengal* (1977)⁸ also delves with the origin and the impact of the movement in Bengal. Ferazees gave their own interpretation of Koran. Non-payment of levies during Kali and Durga Puja and cow slaughter during the Muslim festival regardless of all prohibition was maintained by Fairazees. He argues that it was impossible to isolate the reform movement from the socio economic and communal problems. Still it retained its religious agendas. Based on the belief that earth was a common property it was felt wrong on the part of the Hindu Zamindar to demand rent which was contrary to divine law. But under Dudu Miyan it became a broad based movement of economic and socio religious programmes. Dudu Miyan constituted the Panchayats to ensure justice to the poor peasants. The orthodox Muslims dreaded the Ferazees. Forcible

⁷ Son of Haji Shariat Ali, the initiator of the Faraizi Movement.

⁸ Dilip Kumar Chattopadhyay, *The Ferazee and Wahabi Movements of Bengal*, Social Scientist, Vol 6, No. 2 (Sep., 1977), pp. 42-51.

conversion also took place so that the converted people could be used against the Hindu landlords.

Another revivalist movement which take place in Bengal was Tariqah-I-Muhammadiyah⁹ which emerged out of the political decaying Muslim society of Hindustan that of UP and Delhi and it extended to Bihar, Bengal, Deccan and North West Frontier. It was initiated under the leadership of Sayyed Ahmed Shahid from 1821 to 1823. And in the second phase it developed into a mass movement under Titu Miyah from 1827 to 1831. Like Faraidi Movement, it also took shape along the pull and pushes of the local factors and became a movement for economic upliftment. It assumed a socio-political character, in its later phase.

Rafiuddin Ahmed in his book, *The Bengali Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (1996)¹⁰, looks into the issue of identity of Bengali Muslims. For Ahmed, Bengali Muslims had a crisis of identity. In the late 19th century, for Ahmed, there was a disjunction between the two allegedly separate categories, Bengali and Muslims. In Bengal, the Muslims had to decide either between the two choices. A Muslim can either be a Bengali or a Musalman. According to Ahmed, after the revolt of 1857, muslims became more conscious of their separate identity of being a muslim. The consciousness was given shape through debates, known as Anjuman and waj Mehfil¹¹ organized by the religious people, reformers and the self-declared religious head of Islam like ullemas. The participation of the rural Bengali Muslims in these debates as audiences and supporters led to the Islamization of the rural muslim who were earlier assimilated within the Bengali Hindu folk culture. For Ahmed, it seemed that, conflict was bound to happen between these two separate realities for him. It can also be inferred from the work that two communities unity was short lived and it was not surprising that gradually the process started of making the Muslims aware, in this case the rural Muslims, of their religion and their own identity to which they, in reality belonged. The question remains, is it so convenient and easy to divide or cut into two halves the continuous, ever flowing, shaping of a culture? If

⁹ According to Muin-Ud-Din Ahmad Khan, there is a lot of common grounds between the Faraidi and Tariqah-I-Muhammadiyah Movement. Both were a form of religious Revivalism.

¹⁰ Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengali muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, (1996).

¹¹waj mehfil were the places of debates and discussions initiated by the religious leaders so as to create awareness and participation of the Muslim masses in the political and religious affairs of their community. it was sometimes organized by Faraizee and Tariqah-I-Muhammadiyah leaders.

we look at the mass awareness of the rural Bengali peasants, it seemed as if Islam was an imposition on the masses. It was external to the masses and to the Bengali culture. According to Ahmed, Bengali culture was the one which could be characterized by the practices and symbols of the upper caste Hindu. The upper caste Hindu dominated and occupied most of the governmental high posts under the British rule. The literary sphere was also an arena which has the dominance of the Hindu upper caste. For Ahmed, there was a genuine connection between the revivalist movement known as the Faraidi and Tariq-e-Mohammadi led by religious preachers like Dudu Miya at the end of the 19th century and the demand for the separation and formation of a new state based on religion¹². This assumes that that the revivalist movement took place so as to unify the rural Muslims with the bigger agenda of Muslim political elites of having a separate state thereby ignoring the demands of the people and making it an identity movement based on religion. There was another side to the movement, the socio-economic element of the movement which the author ignored or failed to study.

According to Ahmed (1996) the movements like Faraizi and Tariqah-I-Muhammadiyah were launched to reform the Islamic practices. The rural Bengali Muslims over the years had inculcated the cultural norms of the rural Bengali Hindu community. The rural Muslims performed many such rituals which were actually a part of Hindu culture. Ahmed argues that the rural Muslims were mostly the lower caste Hindu converts who changed their religion from Hinduism to Islam to get rid of the inequality prevailing in the Hindu religion. But, despite the conversion, the lower Caste Hindu converts had not changed their cultural norms of Hindu religion. Therefore, as Ahmed argues, reformist movements were launched so that the rural Muslims who were so influenced by the Bengali folk culture could also be brought within the ambit of the larger Islamic umbrella. The Faraidi movement had a strong anti- feudal, anti zamindari content to it. The socio-economic perspective of this movement was an important side which Ahmed failed to give importance to. According to Asim Roy (1999)¹³, literatures which researched and wrote on these movements were unable to look into the contribution made by the reformists in the socio-economic sphere. Ahmed makes a distinction between the social and religious concerns of the reformists. Roy is critical of it as it reduces the Reformists movement

¹² This argument is problematic in nature because Hamza Alawi in her social ideology and forces in the making of Pakistan argues that the movement for Pakistan was not communal in nature. It was an economic necessity.

¹³ Asim Roy, Impact of Islamic Revival and Reform in Colonial Bengal and Bengal Muslim Identity: A Revisit. Journal of south Asian Studies, pp- 39-77.

as the attempts by the reformers to exploit the poverty of the peasants and thus directing the movement towards attainment of the bigger goal of purifying Islam. According to Ahmed, the reformists movement was a failure as large number of rural Bengali Muslims did not get influenced by it and continues to follow their old practices. For Roy, this view of Ahmed, diminishes the impact that reformist movement actually had on the masses. According to Roy, a narrow distinction between the social and religious concerns of the reformists fails to bring forth the complex relationship between social and the religious.

Roy (1999) also brings to the forefront the formation of the community, the umma that can lead to bridging the gap between the Asrafs and the Atrafs. The Asrafs were the Urdu speaking elites of urban Bengal and the rural Bengali Muslims who inculcated Bengali folk culture in their life were called the Atrafs. According to Roy, the community that was formed as a result of the attempts made by the reformers could make the rural peasants identify themselves with the aspirations of Asrafs towards creating a unified Muslim community so as to attain a bigger political goal. There were attempts made by the reformers to focus on the socio-economic justice. The attempts could be identified in the teachings of Dudu Miyan and Titu Mir. The ideas like equality and justice could be found in the doctrines of Islam which had the potential of giving the reformist movements a new direction. These movements led to the change in the mindset of the rural Muslims. The movement implemented two things. Firstly, it provided religious awareness to the people and secondly, it made Bengali Muslims conscious of their oppressed condition. The revivalist preachers often resorted to militant activities. For instance, some preachers were alleged to be involved in the killings of Zamindars. The awareness that resulted through the revivalist movement amongst the rural Bengali Muslims, of their socio-economic condition, led to these activities.

For Roy (1999), these activities were the natural outcomes as people became conscious of their oppressed socio-economic condition. As Roy argues, revivalist movements played a significant role of uniting the people into a larger Muslim community through the process of Islamization¹⁴. It encouraged people to fill the gap and go beyond the differences. But this, according to Roy had a tendency to make things communal. It made the

¹⁴ Though it can be seen through several political events that the larger Muslim community is a Myth because the Asrafs were mostly bothered regarding their political patronages. The rural Muslim masses were forming their own line of Peasant struggles parallelly.

community exclusive. An important consequence of these movements was that, it started creating conflict within the mindset of the Bengali Muslims of their dual identity. The movements made an individual Bengali Muslim conscious of his/her dual identity. One of being a Muslim and another of sharing a same language with that of Bengali Hindu. This created clash in the relationship of these two identities, brought forth by the revivalist movements. According to Roy, Muslims, by venting out their feeling of uneasiness towards the Hindus, eased their conflict which they had been fighting with, internally. But, this argument may seem to put the blame of communal friction with the Muslim community significantly. However, it cannot be denied that revivalist movements played a very significant role in the lives of the Bengali Muslims. It provided them with a community which resulted in giving them a sense of stability. It made them realize about their socio economic conditions which was necessary for a better living.

KHILAFAT AND THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENTS

M. Naeem Qureshi in his *The Indian Khilafat Movement* (1978)¹⁵ analyses the Khilafat Movement from an all India basis. Turkey was the seat of “universal caliphate” and a country which effectively resisted the European domination. It was pride of the Muslims especially for those who were under foreign domination. It was the custodian of the holy places in the place named Jazirat -Al- Arab (Hasan, Religion and Politics: The Ulama and Khilafat Movement, 1981, p. 903)¹⁶. Therefore, as Qureshi argues, after the defeat of Turkey in World War I, the fear emerged regarding the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and with it, the fate of the Muslims in other parts of the world. This was the case with Indian Muslims as well. It was symbol of worldly power of Islam. To the Muslims in India it gave them a sense of security amongst the Hindu majority. Muslims held British chiefly responsible for the fate of the Ottoman Empire. And thus the Khilafat movement took an anti- British stance. The khilafat movement against the British that started from 1918 and went on for 6 years was the result of pan-Islamism. Here, the necessity is to look into the Khilafat movement from the Bengal point of view. How

¹⁵ The Indian Khilafat Movement (1918-1924), Journal of Asian History, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1978), pp. 152-168.

¹⁶ Religion and Politics: The Ulama and the Khilafat Movement by Mushirul Hasan, EPW, Vol. 16, No. 20 (May 1981), pp.903-905+907-912

Bengali Muslims perceived the Khilafat movement and what was the public opinion that formed around it.

Mustafa Nurul Islam in his *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as Reflected in the Bengali Press (1901-1930)* (1973)¹⁷ analyses the public opinion that reflected through the Bengali press. He shows the debate and discussions, the Bengali journals participated in to bring forth the Muslim public opinion regarding different issues in Bengal. The dilemma to choose between Britain and Turkey was evident in some journals. *Banga Nur*¹⁸ in 1920 through its writing, points to the dilemma and the confusion surrounding it. It petitioned the British government to not do anything that may harm the Caliph. *Islam Pracharak*, another Muslim journal wrote “I emphasize that... Muslims are a peace loving, god fearing nation. But when their religious beliefs are effected they go to extremes. In consideration of this, it is proper that the government should in accordance with its own agreement hand back to the Turks which have now been snatched from them and which previously were subject to the authority of the Turkish government, otherwise there is a danger of great unrest and peril in India...”¹⁹ The next paragraph appealed to the Muslims to keep peace and restrain from any bloodshed²⁰. But some also gave first preference to the Bengali Muslim identity. ‘*Moslem Bharat*’ for instance talked about the Muslim Bengali identity and how much it is important for them. And if Turkey were to invade India then it is their duty to protect India because foreign invasion of any kind is not preferable and it also showed feelings of brotherhood towards other communities of India as well.

THE ENTRY OF GANDHI AND THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Nurul Islam (1973) analyses the entry of M. K. Gandhi and the impact that it had on the movement. Gandhi’s entry into the Khilafat movement also brought along with him the support of the Hindu masses. “It was the desire to advance India’s political interest. It was the synchronization of political interests and political dependence on each other that ... tied the two communities together” (Qureshi, 1978). According to Qureshi (1978), the Non-cooperation

¹⁷ Mustafa Nurul Islam, (1973),*Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press, (1901-1930)*.

¹⁸ A Bengali Muslim press in Colonial Bengal.

¹⁹ Quoted in the book by Mustafa Nurul Islam;1973,pg 54.

²⁰ Quoted in page 54 of the *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press*.

movement was incorporated into the Khilafat campaign. The main objective of the non cooperation movement was the “triple boycott of law courts, schools and colleges, and councils”²¹.

Nurul Islam (1973) further observes that ‘Al-Islam’²² in an article wrote about the non cooperation movement, its objectives and whether or not it is successful in bringing the result. According to it, the objective of the non cooperation movement was two- fold, firstly, to preserve the prestige of the Caliph and restoration of the Muslim world and secondly, attainment of Swaraj for India. But the meaning of Swaraj was kept very vague. The people interpreted it according to their own ideas. For example Kazi Nazrul Islam, in his editorial in “Dhumketu” in 1922 wrote about the inadequacy of the definition of Swaraj. But he was of the opinion that British should leave the country once and for all. Similarly, ‘Choltan’ also talked about the vagueness of the term Swaraj and its failure to achieve any success. It stated that “congress should keep sharp lookout, lest people are deceived and misled by such specious explanation of Swaraj”

THE ROLE OF ULLEMAS IN THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

According to Qureshi (1978) Ullemas played a significant role in the khilafat movement. With the entry of ullemas, politics and religion was seen to be assimilated together. Ullemas are those who are specialized in the reading of the Quran and who possess knowledge (ilm). During the reign of sultans in Delhi, they rose to power as the sultans needed these learned men to influence the society and its people, through their knowledge of Shariat and thus stabilizing the empire. Thus they played a huge role in making safe environment for establishing the foreign regime of sultans, by influencing the Indian masses. However, during British regime, the most important thing that reduced the power of ullema was the separation of power and religion. The educational reforms and the spread of secular ideas were other factors. In 1917 they tried protesting against the administrative activities of the government and tried emphasizing the role of sharia but failed. So it was only during khilafat movement that they again saw the opportunity to raise their status. As a result, with the coalition of political leaders, ullemas formed the religio-Polical

²¹ The Indian Khilafat Movement (1918-1924) by M Naeem Qureshi, Vol. 12 (1978), pp. 152-168

²² A Muslim Bengali newspaper, as described by Mustafa Nurul Islam in his Bengali Muslim Public opinion as reflected in the Bengal press, 1901-1930.

association called the Jamiyyat al-Ulama-i-Hind and to come to common ground with the political elite. In 1920, during Hijrat campaign large no. of muhajirin sold their belongings and started taking shelter in Afghanistan. But it became a huge failure when Afghanistan stopped any further immigration. It created Havoc as families got separated in the process. The sudden closing of Afghanistan gates for further immigration resulted in the failure of the Hijrat movement. The khilafat movement ended because of the failure in keeping synthesis between pan-Islamism and the Indian Nationalism. But it created new political energy within the Muslim masses. It made them aware of their potentialities.

THE PARTITION OF 1905

Anil Baran Ray in his *Communal Attitudes to British Policy: The Case of the Partition of Bengal 1905* (1977)²³, analyses the case of partition of Bengal and the events that happened as a consequence to it. Ray argues that British government's motive for dividing Bengal was administrative convenience. It was of course not only administrative in nature. The other motive was to curb the Bengali nationalism and Calcutta being the hub of it. Bengal with a population of 78 million with 189,000 square miles was becoming hard to manage for the Britishers. Therefore Dacca and Mymensingh district was to be separated from Bengal and transferred to Assam. Therefore the two points of Bengal division was the relief for Bengal and invigoration of Assam (Ray, 1977).

Ray (1977) further explains that Curzon toured the Muslim majority districts of eastern Bengal in Feb 1904. To garner the Muslim trust, he stated that the new province would provide them the necessary opportunities to move ahead in all spheres of life and Dacca will be the new province. And this would provide a great unity amongst the Muslim masses. He took Nawab of Dacca under his ambit as a result of which the new province was made with Dacca as it's capital. Many alternatives were also given so as to avoid the division of Bengal by the Bengali leaders. The first alternative was the separation of the non- Bengali speaking areas like Orissa, Bihar and Chotanagpur and second was the governor with a council to make the administrative work easier. But these were rejected. However, this is also not true that it was only to win the support of the Muslims that division was being implemented. The fair

²³ Anil Baran Ray, *Communal Attitudes to British Policy: The case of the Partition of Bengal 1905*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Dec., 1977), pp. 34-46

motive was to improve the condition of the Muslims as A. K. Biswas (1995) ²⁴also states that high caste Hindu bhadralok were blind in their superiority and exploited the Muslims in all sphere of life in Bengal and therefore it was necessary and good move made by Curzon.

ANTI-PARTITION AND SWADESHI MOVEMENT OF BENGAL

According to Ray (1977), the Hindu response was the boycott of foreign goods and the use of Swadeshi goods which would eventually lead to the growth of Indian industries. They accused the government of following the divide and rule policy and also weakening the thread between Hindus and Muslims. The practical implication was that it affected the economic and commercial interest. The boycott of foreign goods resulted in the hampering of British economy because now nobody touched foreign goods.

As against the Hindu support for Swadeshi and boycott, Muslim response was weak in this matter. Ray (1977) observes that, the symbols used to invoke the energy within the Bengali community were associated with Hinduism. For example worshipping of goddess Kali became a significant ritual during Swadeshi movement. (Sen S. , 1976)²⁵. It was during the Swadeshi movement that the understanding related to the importance of having a distinct culture and identity emerged within the Muslim intellectuals. But, as Sheila Sen (1976) observes that initially Muslims and Hindus were unanimously protesting against the partition but it was Nawab Salimullah of eastern Bengal that emerged as the leader of the people of eastern Bengal and changed people's opinion in favor of partition. On 16th October 1905, Nawab Salimullah in the Mohammedan Provincial Conference in Dacca addressed the Muslims and said that the partition scheme has made the Muslims realize that they now need to do away with their inactivity and fight for their rights. Ray further explains that the Bengali Hindu terrorists²⁶ belonged to the middle class while the Muslims were mostly the poor peasants. The Hindus were not bothered to mobilize the Muslim masses politically. Muslims were economically and educationally backward and thus they gave the support to the partition of Bengal in 1905. The writings of Bankimchandra inspired the Hindu terrorists, the worshippers of shakti cult, but drew

²⁴ Paradox of Anti-Partition Agitation and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905), Vol. 23, No. 4/6 (April-June, 1995), pp. 38-57

²⁵ Sheila Sen, Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947, Impex India (1976).

²⁶ The terrorists emerged from the hindu community, participating in the swadeshi movement. But these, as the name suggest used some extreme measures to show their protest regarding anti- partition movement.

Muslims away from them. Thus the realization by the Muslims that the new province would guarantee them special privileges led to the agitation by the Muslims against the Swadeshi movement which eventually meant favoring the partition. Muslim Chronicle, also now favored the partition which was opposed to the idea of partition earlier (Sen S. , 1976)²⁷. The partition led to the emergence of tension between the Hindu and Muslim community. In an article “Rajniti Kshetre Hindu-Musalman”, Lehajuddin Ahmed put forth his view that the existence of Muslims in future is only possible when the Muslims understand the absurdity of joining congress and other Hindu organization in the Swadeshi movement (Sen S. , 1976). Few took part in the agitation, many were indifferent from the agitation.

A. K. Biswas in his *Paradox of Anti-Partition Agitation and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905)* (1995)²⁸ delves into the exclusive nature of the Swadeshi movement that alienated the muslims in Bengal. Sir Surendranath Banerjee, Rabindranath tagore, Ananda Mohan Bose, Bipinchandra pal, Anne Beasant, etc, were the front rank leaders of the anti partition movement or the Bango Bhango Andolan. October 16 1905 Bengal was partitioned. Rabindra Nath Tagore envisaged the objective of the Swadeshi as follows: “1. To undertake fulfilment of the country's needs by the efforts of the people themselves; 2. To take over the responsibility of the people on their own shoulders; 3. To execute all national activities with the agency of Indians alone and to refuse the help of aliens in these matters; 4. To abstain from the use of foreign cloth and other goods; 5. To refrain from writing letters to relations and friends in the English using English goods, English furniture, English music, English drinks, and having social intercourse with the English people; 6. To establish Indian schools; 7. To decide disputes without resort to the courts established by the British Government” (A.K.Biswas, 1995, p. 39)²⁹. It was maintained by Rabindranath Tagore and many other front leaders of Swadeshi that all the section of the Bengali population participated in the agitation, but according to the Biswas, the low caste people especially Namasudras, who constituted the highest majority of low caste in Bengal, were exploited by the high caste Hinduas and even during worship in temples they were not allowed to enter the premises of the temples and these were 97.3 percent of the

²⁷ Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947 by Shila Sen, 1976.

²⁸ A.K. Biswas, Paradox of Anti-Partition Agitation and Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905), Social Scientist, April-June-1995,pp-38-57.

²⁹ See page 39 of the article Paradox of anti-partition agitation and Swadeshi movement in Bengal (1905) by A.K.Biswas.

Hindus. So how could they remain involved in the swadeshi movement? They were the ones who converted themselves in Islam. The Muslim also suffered from the same misery. Hindu Zamindars oppressed the Muslims severely by imposing innumerable cesses. They were forced to join the agitation.

Biswas (1995) further observes that even after the annulment of partition in 1911, on the outbreak of World war I, the army recruitment was totally narrow in nature. For example Biswas quotes in his article, the appeal made by Surendranath Banerjee - "I went from town to town urging my countrymen of better classes to enlist as soldiers and fight for the Empire which was in danger. I addressed more than thirty meetings in different parts of the province ... We were able to raise something over six thousand recruits, mostly from amongst the respectable classes"³⁰. The mere – Muslims were deliberately excluded from the appeal for joining the army. It addressed to the respectable and better classes which shows that the agitation was not mass based (A.K.Biswas, 1995).

EVENTS THAT LED TO THE RADICALIZATION OF MUSLIM POLITICS IN BENGAL

Mushirul Hasan in his *Communalism in the Provinces: A Case Study of Bengal and the Punjab, 1922-26* (1980)³¹ By the end of the 1922, the cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims that was evident during the khilafat and the non cooperation ended. The communal strife could be seen already during 1920s. However, it could not be understood only through the narrative of religion. According to Mushirul Hasan, one has to understand the growth of communalism in the background of the structural changes in the polity and with the asymmetrical development of the communities living in colonial India. For Hasan, the political changes initiated by the act of 1919 brought about certain condition that became the breeding ground for communalism. The Morley-Minto reforms by creating communal electorates fostered Hindu Muslims division. The Muslims especially took it to their advantage as they demanded for special safeguards in accordance to their numerical strength. But it should be understood that the advantages were only for the Muslim aristocracy. It did not include the Muslim masses of Bengal. Their main aim was to

³⁰ See page 53 of the article by A.K. Biswas (1995).

³¹ Mushirul Hasan, *Communal in the Provinces: A Case Study of Bengal and the Punjab, 1922-26*, Economic and Political Weekly, Aug., 1980.

secure a strong position in the political power structure which revolved around the legislative councils. The Montague-Chelmsford reforms³² under the policy of diarchy created many changes. These gave real power in the hands of the Indians. The value of seat was increase manifold even in the local bodies but the process made the communities aware of the importance of the political power in the council bodies which resulted in the appearance of the existing cleavages between the two communities. It brought about a shift away from the politics of Muslim minority provinces to Muslim majority provinces. Political parties which earlier behaved only as a pressure groups, could now dispense patronage. But Montague-Chelmsford reforms did not affect the Hindu-Muslim Entente during the khilafat movement and the non cooperation movement although by the end of the 1922, the discord between the two community was apparent after the withdrawal of non cooperation movement in February 1922 related to Khilafat issue³³. The failure of the movement angered the Muslims all over India and Bengal also was effected by it (Sen S. , 1976). Hasan further states that the riots happened with issues related to cow killing and music before the Mosque. Communal strives could be particularly seen between the two communities.

The Bengali Muslims felt that they should have the full advantage of their numerical strength, therefore, they demanded for certain safeguards for their community. The Bengal pact, formed by C.R. Das, in alliance with the Muslim politicians attracted many oppositions. It acceded to the demands of the Muslim population for separate electorates, Secondly, the local bodies would have the 60 to 40 proportion for the majority and the minority respectively and Thirdly, government appointments will have 55 percent of reserved seats. This threatened the Hindu domination in Bengal. It was seen as a way of replacing Hindus from their superior position which they had been enjoying from so long keeping the Muslims backwards in all spheres of life. In December 1923, the congress at Kakinada, rejected the

³² On the legislative side, it increased the no. of voters. It also established large provincial and central legislatures with a majority of elected and non-official members. On the administrative side, it divided the functions of the government between reserved and transferred departments. These departments were administered by the governor-in-council, but the control of such important departments as education, agriculture and local self government in the transferred departments was handed to ministers responsible to the legislatures. Quoted from (Hasan; 1980).

³³ Muslim Politics In Bengal,1937-1947, Shila Sen, 1976.

Bengal pact³⁴ which they regarded as an attempt to solve the all India question on provincial lines. After the death of C. R Das the alliance was broken by Hindu politicians and the Muslims were once again alienated. This created a feeling of hatred against the Hindu community. On June 25, 1926, a manifesto was issued according to which the Bengal pact was never been ratified by the Indian National Congress or by the majority of Hindus. It was very well understood that if Swaraj party was to have a platform in Bengal politics, then it needs to do away with the pact entered with Muslims.

RESPONSE OF THE MUSLIMS

Hasan (1980) further explains that in the 1926 elections, only one out of all the Muslims elected was a Swarajist. Moslem Chronicle stated:

“We confess we were never enamoured by the artificial alliance which Das's instinct of self-preservation prompted him to conclude with the Muslim community. The Muslims as a community never cared for the Pact and always looked upon it as a ha'pworth of political cheese which could be thrown into the dust bin any moment they liked... We know that the Hindu politicians were playing a foul game, and when the pact was put to test within a few months of its birth, the astuteness of Hindu politics was quite apparent”³⁵. According to Hasan, the condition of the Muslim peasants who were the tenants under Hindu landlords in eastern Bengal was appropriated by the Muslim politicians. Full advantage was taken of the religious symbols, which cut across caste and class divide. The Calcutta riot of 1926 in the backdrop of the above points created insecurities in the minds of the two communities.

LANGUAGE TUSSLE BETWEEN THE MUSLIMS AND THE HINDUS

Poromesh Acharya in his *Education and Communal Politics in Bengal: A Case Study* (1898)³⁶ analyses the relationship between education and communalism. He delves into the

³⁴ It was a secret alliance formed between the Muslims leaders and C.R Das in Bengal, resulting in the formation of the Swaraj party in Bengal.

³⁵ See page 1399 of the article by Mushirul Hasan, Communalism in the provinces: A case study of Bengal and the Punjab, 1922-26.

³⁶ Poromesh Acharya, *Education and Communal Politics in Bengal: A case study*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 24, No. 30 (Jul.29, 1989), pp. PE81-PE90

politics around education and how it results in communalism. The nationalism in Bengal developed along the lines of Hindu cultural identity. Therefore, it was natural that Muslim intelligentsia did not find any difference between Hindu nationalism and Congress nationalism. In 1915 itself, Bengal government constituted a committee to look into the matter of Muslim education and thus several recommendation was given. Representation of Muslims in high schools was given importance, in the management committee and that 15 percent should be reserved for Muslim boys in government schools. But the committee could not solve the problem related to language. Bengali was made an essential language as the medium of instruction in all primary schools, for the children having Bengali as their vernacular. For the Muslim boys, in the secondary level, they were suggested to learn three languages: Bengali, English and Urdu. According to the committee, Urdu was a language of importance not just to Muslims but also to the whole of India and it gives a sense of identity to the Bengali Muslims. Calcutta university commission of 1917-1919 also received several Moslem deputations.

According to Acharya (1898), the grievances were related to the problem of sanskritized Bengali, the books contained statements that were offensive to Muslim sentiments and unfairness in the appointment of university examiners was brought up. For example, Out of 895 examiners that were appointed in subjects other than Urdu, Arabic, only 9 were Muslims. Muslims believed that the reason for their lacking behind in education was due to the Hindu dominance and therefore, it was necessary to take some control over the education system. Muslim public opinion could be understood from various journals which showed its resentment regarding the bias of the Hindu community. It was alleged that Muslim books were not published on the pretext that it contained too many Urdu and Arabic words. This generated into a communal cleavage. The depiction of war, destruction with the Muslim history can be found in the history textbooks. Fazlul Haq, the education minister of Bengal in 1940, introduced the bill. According to Acharya, one could also observe that Muslim characters were missing from the Bengali literature. Muslim intelligentsia resented this, and which only showed the lack of interest on the part of the Bengali Hindus to know the majority community. The All India Hindu Mahasabha in its 20th session that only Hindi should be the national language of India as it is composed of sanskritized vocabulary and it's their duty to remove all other alien words from any other language like Arabic and Persian. According to Mahasabha, Bengali Hindus had done a remarkable job by making Bengali literature free from any such impurities.

On this background, Acharya (1898) observes that ‘The Bengal Secondary Education Bill of 1940’ was introduced in the legislative assembly. The Bill proposed to establish a large board of secondary education which would enable the government to have control over the affairs of the education which till now had always been in the hands of the Hindu community. The proposed Bill was sent to Calcutta University for its recommendations and suggestions but the university committee that was set to look into the proposed bill opposed the proposal of the bill. The main problem was the government’s control over secondary education in Bengal. Muslims viewed Calcutta University with distrust and it was natural also because the board of the Calcutta University was dominated by Hindu members. The 1940 Bill also proposed to have a communal representation. The Muslims were given special importance to represent themselves in the board. This was not agreed upon by the Hindu leaders. They saw it as a threat to their dominance and also asserted that the communal representation of Muslims in the proposed Bill would tend to make the education also communal. The reason given by the Hindu leaders for their opposition to the Bill was that they wanted secular education to be imparted to the students. When finally the Bill was proposed there were so many amendments made by the opposition parties that it became almost impossible to come to a desired end.

Further Acharya (1898) explains that the debates outside the legislative assembly were yet another matter. The Hindu leaders addressed the public on various occasions and made it clear that they are not ready to bow down before the Muslims. Their speech made fairly evident that they were far better than Muslims culturally and the most important argument that Hindu leaders gave was that the Hindus were the ones who were behind the establishment of schools for imparting modern and rational learning to the people of Bengal, therefore, it is the Hindus who have more say in the matter relating to education. When one of the Hindu leader asserted that Hinduism considers every culture as one of its own and that gave the theory of composite culture, a cultural synthesis, Muslims felt all the more agitated as they perceived this theory as a way of making Muslims also Hinduised. Abdul Monsur Ahmed, one of the distinct political figures of the time stated that in India, the reason that there is no Hindu-Muslim unity is because Hindus never understood the distinct nature of Muslim community or for that matter any other community. Hindus always wanted to merge every other religious and

cultural community within its ambit in a hinduised form. Different public opinions by Bengali Muslims showed that there were certain instances that paved the way for communal distrust³⁷.

According to Nurul Islam (1973)³⁸, Bengali Muslims blamed several Bengali Hindu writers for defaming the Muslim community through their writings and thus creating communal distrust between the two community, for instance, Rabindranath Tagore, Bankimchandra. A newspaper called Naba Nur, alleged that Bankimchandra did injustice to a Muslim character, in his writings. The writer distorted the historical Muslim personages in Durgeshnandini(1865) making Katlu Khan cruel and lecherous whereas “ history is completely silent about this... History fames Osman as the son of Katlu Khan. Did Bankim babu do right in changing that relationship...?”³⁹ According to Naba Nur, this attempt was deliberate. Islam Pracharak, another newspaper outlined the anti-Muslim sentiment that could be traced in Bengali literature. For instance, in one of the newspaper, the editor wrote that the Hindu writers could not finish the novel without using the word ‘meleccha’, ‘yavana’ to showcase Muslims in a derogatory manner. The word ‘Yavana’ was a debatable term which according to the Bengali Muslims, was used by the Hindu community to refer Muslims as a bad and cruel being, who are inherently violent by nature. The equalizing of nationalism with glorious Hindu past was not accepted by the Muslims in positive light which ultimately resulted in the alienation of Muslims.

THE COMMUNAL AWARD OF 1932 AND ITS IMPACT IN BENGAL

The communal award of 1932 proposed a secure position for the Muslims in Bengal. As Bidyut Chakrabarty in his *The Communal Award of 1932 and its Implications in Bengal* (1989)⁴⁰explains, the communal award happened to secure the position of the Muslims in Bengal in the sphere of politics. The reservation of seats in the legislative assembly for the Muslims in Bengal was proposed by this scheme. Under this scheme, out of 250 seats in the Bengal legislature, Muslims were given 119 seats and Hindus were given 80 seats. The Hindus of Bengal opposed the scheme for the reason that the proposed scheme would leave the Bengali Hindus without any real power and the Muslims without any efficiency in politics, education

³⁷ Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press, (1901-1930).

³⁸ Mustafa Nurul Islam, Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as reflected in the Bengali Press, (1901-1930).

³⁹Mustafa Nurul Islam quotes the newspaper Naba Nur in his book.

⁴⁰ Bidyut Chakrabarty, *The Communal Award of 1932 and Its Implication in Bengal*, Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1989), pp. 493-523.

would rule Bengal. The Hindus in Bengal condemned the scheme for another important reason. The British government wanted to establish special constituencies for the depressed classes for a period of twenty years but the Poona- pact⁴¹ initiated by Gandhi further reduced the proportion of legislative seats for the Hindus. Gandhi opposed the idea of separating the depressed classes from the Hindu fold even for a limited time period and thus the depressed classes ended sharing the legislative seats from the Hindu constituencies. Thus, in actuality the caste Hindus obtained only 20% of the seats.

According to Chakrabarty (1989) there were discussions regarding the proposed scheme between the governor of Bengal and Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy. The Hindu-Muslim representation was a heated debate that found its space because of the proposed scheme. The discussion between the two British officials revolved around the proportion of legislative seats to be given to the two communities. They also did not want to dissatisfy the Hindus by giving statutory majority to the Muslims. According to Anderson, it should not look as if the proposed scheme is trying to diminish the importance of the Hindu group by giving too large of a proportion of the seats to the Muslims. And if the Muslims are not given their due representation then that would lead to large scale dissatisfaction amongst the Muslim population, regarding their political rights and also, if Muslims were deprived of their rights then they would too, like the Congress would not cooperate with the British and join the Congress fold. Anderson also feared that if Hindus were reduced to minority due to this scheme then it is possible that in the near future, the depressed classes and the Muslims may join hands against the Hindus, because most of the Hindus are Landlords and Zamindars whereas, the ryots or the peasants were mostly Muslims. This may lead to a devastating situation in the future, according to Anderson. Muslims responded positively to the scheme as this was the single scheme which gave them if not desired but adequate representation. Although the proposed scheme placed the Muslims in a better place, the representation was not given according to the demographic strength of the Muslims. A.k Ghuznavi, member of the Bengal government insisted on the statutory majority of 51%, though according to the demographic strength the Muslims

⁴¹ The Poona-Pact was an agreement between Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi signed on September 24, 1932. It happened in Yerwada Central Jail in Poona, India and was signed by Madan Mohan Malviya, Ambedkar and other leaders to end the fast undertaken by Gandhi as a sign of protest against the decision taken by British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald To give separate electorates to the depressed classes. Finally they agreed upon 147 seats.

were entitled to 54.85%. Fazlul Haq had concerns relating to the pattern of the distribution of seats because the running of the administration would be difficult for the Muslims even in the provinces where they would be in majority without the support of the other parties. Hindus reacted in disagreement with the scheme.

Chakrabarty (1989) further states that during the course of the debate, the All India Congress Committee got divided into separate factions due to disagreements on the issue of Communal Award. The All India Congress Committee denied its affirmation regarding the anti-communal award agitation in Bengal and all over India. It refused to take any particular sides in the matter of the scheme for the reason that, accepting the award may drive away pro-Hindu Congressmen whereas rejecting the award may lead to distrust among the Muslim community regarding the intention of the Congress. The Congress at that time could not take the risk of driving away one important community from its fold. The Congress was in the midst of freedom struggle against the British. Dissatisfying the Muslims would break the unity that was necessary to wage a fight against the powerful British regime. Its non-committal stand led to the splitting of the Congress forming another party known as Congress Nationalist party in Bengal to redress the suggested wrong of the Hindus of Bengal. The immediate recourse that the party took was to organize an anti-communal award conference at the end of October 1934. In Bengal, the successful Bhadrak, like B.C.Chatterjee, R.K.Mukherjee, represented the Hindus of Bengal. The rift was evident in Bengal between the two communities, which led the Muslims even more adamant about their political rights in the wake of the scheme.

FAZLUL HAQ, THE KRISHAK PRAJA PARTY, THE MUSLIM LEAGUE AND THE ELECTION OF 1937

In 1911, East Bengal Muslim League was set up. It was mainly in the hands of Urdu speaking Muslim Ashrafs, such as, the Dacca Nawab Family (Alawi, *Misreading Partition Road Signs*, 2002)⁴². But after the World War I, its leadership shifted to the rich peasants from the zamindars (Alawi, *Misreading Partition Road Signs*, 2002, p. 4521)⁴³. From there, Fazlul Haq emerged as a leader who would later try to mobilize the support of the rich peasants (De, 1977, p. 39). To

⁴² *Misreading Partition Road Signs* by Hamza Alawi, Vol. 37, No. 55/45(Nov., 2-15, 2002), pp. 4515-4523.

⁴³ See page 4521 of the article *Misreading partition road signs*.

understand the role of Fazlul haq, we have to go back to 1913, in the background of permanent settlement. As De (1977) argues, with congress's pro-Zamindari attitude, it was Fazlul Haq's political activism in favor of krishaks, that gave an altogether different shape to the Muslim politics in Bengal. Since, 1915, his main motive remained to organize praja movements against the zamindari- mahajani system. Gradually, it spread to different parts of Bengal. In 1921, two big rallies were organized in the village of Barisal and Dacca district. Nikhil Banga Krishak Proja Samiti was the brainchild of Fazlul haq. But it was in the hands of the educated Muslim middle class. According to Hamza Alawi (2002), the Bengal provincial Muslim league was also under its ambit. To oppose the movement, Muslim zamindars formed united Muslim party with top professionals, with Suhrawardy as its secretary. In 1936, he changed his party name to Krishak Praja Party. De (1977) further explains that Haq coined two terms: 'Krishak' and 'Proja'. As the word praja encompassed all section of the people without being exclusive to any particular community, it became inclusive for other sections of the community also apart from krishaks. Taking together both the terms, he started a different phase of Bengal politics. His thoughts were clear regarding the motive of his party. In the election manifesto of 1937 election, he listed several agendas. Thorough overhauling of the Bengal Tenancy Act in the of the agriculturists ensuring the vesting of proprietary rights tillers of the soil and including "(i) the abolition of the zamindar's right of nazar and salamy right of pre-emption; (ii) tenants' of mutation of name without additional payment; (iii) of rate of rent; (iv) To take adequate and effective measures against illegal cesses by the zamindars, moneylenders and their representatives" (De, 1977, p. 31)⁴⁴.

According to Alawi (2002), in the election of 1937, with its petty bourgeois leadership, KPP failed to garner effective support from the poor peasantry. Therefore, KPP, could not win the majority as a result of which, the coalition government was formed in Bengal. Muslim league with Krishak Praja Party, formed the government with Fazlul Haq as the premier of Bengal. But after taking over the office in 1937, he could not go forward with his programme of abolition of zamindari system as Muslim league was not in favor of it as it was under the control of the jotedars and merchants who were benefitted by the existing land system. But as Sen argues (1976), the league ministry in Bengal under Fazlul Haq took various

⁴⁴ See page 31 of the article by Amlendu De – Attitudes to permanent settlement.

welfare measures for example: Bengal tenancy (Amendment) Act 1938, for the poorer sections, the poorer sections who were mostly Muslim peasants could now relate themselves with the success and failures of the government in Bengal. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether the Bengal tenancy act in reality improved the conditions of the ryots. As De (1977, p. 31) argues that the ryots got some privileges, their financial difficulties still prevailed⁴⁵. Further De explains that because ministry was unable to abolish the permanent settlement, there were peasant uprisings in many districts of Bengal. As a result of which on 5th November 1938, the land revenue commission was appointed which looked into the matter of the existing land system of Bengal. It came to the conclusion that the permanent settlement was no longer suited to the condition of Bengal in present and that it has generated many defects.

DEBATES RELATING TO COMMUNALISM, PARTITION OF BENGAL AND DEMANDS FOR PAKISTAN

Iqbal and the Idea of Pakistan:

According to V.N.Datta in his *Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition: An Intimate Relationship* (2002)⁴⁶, the role of Iqbal and Jinnah has to be studied properly to understand the political philosophy behind the idea of Pakistan. The separatist trend in the idea of Iqbal could be understood through his poetry, speeches etc. For Dutta, the political relationship of Jinnah with Iqbal was an important factor behind the idea of Pakistan which ultimately led to the division of the nation in two halves. Iqbal is represented in Pakistan historiography as the founder of the idea of Pakistan and in Indian writings, he is projected as the pioneer of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, a "convinced Muslim nationalist"⁴⁷. According to Dutta, after 1905, there was a shift in the ideology of Iqbal. Before 1905, till he went to Cambridge in 1905, his writings, poetries etc were based on his love for India. But, after coming back from Cambridge, his writings were more inclined towards Islam. His writings were reflection of his shift in his attitude after 1905. His writings were based on European aggression against Muslim countries like Turkey and Persia. According to Dutta, Iqbal advocated "Pan-Islamism as the political goal of the Islamic world". (Dutta, 2002). Dutta further argues that Iqbal's poetries used to contain

⁴⁵ See page 31 of the article by Amlendu De titled attitudes to permanent settlement.

⁴⁶ V.N.Datta, *Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition: An Intimate Relationship*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 37, No.50 (Dec., 14-20, 2002), pp.5033- 5038.

⁴⁷ Datta; see page 5033.

high moral tone and behaved as a message to the entire Muslim community. The poetries were a way of making the Muslim community realize of its fallen status and therefore, the necessity of waking up and working towards the betterment of the community.

Dutta (2002), gives example of one of his poetry named “Shikva” where Iqbal could be found questing the God of it’s biased behavior towards non-Muslims. “Rehmat-en hain teri agyar key kashanon par, Burg girti hai to becharey Musulmanon par”, which means, Kindness is bestowed not on the Muslims but on non-Muslims While the Muslims continue to suffer⁴⁸. For Iqbal, the concept of Khudi (self-realization) given in Quran, is an important element for the spiritual uplift of the Muslims. For Dutta, Iqbal’s political aspirations revolved around Islamic Universalism, disregard of territorial nationalism etc. The Nehru report published in 1928, was rejected by the Muslim League. The recommendation of the Nehru report for the abolition of the separate electorates and also reservation of seats in the Muslim majority constituencies, met with a disagreement with the Muslim League. On the issue of Simon commission, the Muslim league got divided into two groups, one led by Muhammad Shafi and the other by M.A. Jinnah. Iqbal got involved with the Shafi group. During 1928-29, Iqbal’s lectures depicted the importance of Islam for the Muslim community, its rational basis and it’s consistency with modern philosophy and science. For Iqbal, Shariat held the most important place in Muslim society which could become the guiding light for the Muslim community in forging a better future. Also, the importance of ‘Ijtihad’⁴⁹ was revived by Iqbal to as to make the Muslim community at par with the modern challenges of the present society. He doubted the intention of the non-Muslim legislative assembly regarding the use of ‘Ijtihad’. On April 29, 1930, Iqbal, in his presidential address in Allahabad, propounded the theory of Muslim homeland. He felt, the Nehru report and the Simon commission recommendations denied the Muslims their rightful legitimate political rights.

According to Dutta (2002), Iqbal realized the threat posed by the Hindu community regarding the Muslim cultural identity. For Iqbal, the solution to communal problem was the creation of a separate state consisting of the North-west frontier, Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan, exclusive of those areas where non-Muslims predominated. But, his proposal was

⁴⁸ Poem by Iqbal, Quoted in V.N. Dutta.

⁴⁹ It is an Islamic legal term referring to independent reasoning. It can also be defined as the rationality to interpret the Quran according to the challenges of the particular period.

open to many interpretations. Dutta cites the example of Reginald Coupland, an imperial constitutional historian. According to Coupland, by the creation of a separate state in India, Iqbal meant a north-west autonomous Muslim region comprising the Muslim majority regions within a loose All India federation. The victory of the congress in the election of 1937, with majority in six provinces, worried Iqbal as it showed the poor performance of the Muslim league. Iqbal felt that Muslims would not flourish under Congress government. Therefore, he shared his worries and interests with Jinnah. In his letter to Jinnah dated 21st June 1937, he suggested the creation of a state consisting of the North-west province and Bengal where Muslims were in majority. For Iqbal, the creation of a separate state was important otherwise, there would emerge a civil war like condition. According to Dutta, the idea of Pakistan was propounded by Iqbal but was followed practically by Jinnah.

Balraj Puri in his *Iqbal and Idea of Pakistan* (2003)⁵⁰ rejects Dutta's argument regarding Iqbal's political shift after 1908. According to Puri, there was definitely a shift in the thought process of Iqbal but not to that extent which Dutta talks about. For Puri, Iqbal rejected the notion of Pan-Islamism. In fact, Iqbal suspected that the idea of pan-Islamism was a concept planted by British, a way of distracting the Muslim population of their political rights in India. For Iqbal, in Islam, there did not exist a word that corresponded to pan-Islamism. Puri further argues that Iqbal did not uphold Shariat as a guiding principle for the Muslim society. In fact, Iqbal, did not consider Quran as a legal code. According to Puri, Iqbal's ideologies were for the enrichment of the Muslim community. He wanted the evolution of Islam so that it can meet the challenges of the modern world. Puri argues that, for Iqbal, the main focus revolved around the Muslims and not Islam. Iqbal was flexible in relation to his belief in Islam. For Iqbal, Islam was more of a culture than being merely a religion. He talked greatly of the Aryan culture as well, besides passionate references to Muslim glory and conquests to unite the Muslim mind. For him, God in Islam is power and he believed that religion without power is only equal to philosophy. Iqbal wanted to create awareness among the Muslim community and for this to happen he was not bothered whether the unity comes through Islam or by the amalgamation of different religion. He was mainly concerned with the preservation of Muslim

⁵⁰ Balraj Puri, *Iqbal and Idea of Pakistan*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 5 (Feb., 1-7, 2003), pp. 490-492.

identity in an undivided India. And as Dutta (2002)⁵¹ argued regarding Iqbal's proposal of a separate state consisting of the Muslim majority provinces, Puri also argues the same. But difference comes when Puri argues that Iqbal wanted a separate state for the Muslims so that it would develop a sense of responsibility and patriotism among the Muslim community for India. This would also ensure the Muslims that they are free of Hindu domination after the British left the country. But this proposal did not meet its required fate and Iqbal found himself talking about the separate homeland, the idea of Pakistan, for Muslims with the division of the country. He believed that Jinnah would be the appropriate one to take forward his idea of Pakistan but he definitely wanted the separate state consisting only of Muslim majority provinces, leaving the minority states outside the proposal.

For Hamza Alawi the Pakistan movement was not religious in nature⁵². It was the result of the 19th century crisis of the Muslim ashrafs of the northern India especially. They were the descendents of the immigrants from central Asia, Arabia and Iran. The introduction of the English as a state language in place of Persian, the ashraf language, resulted in crisis for the Muslim ashraf. These people were the state officials who had to take English education to enter into government jobs, the salariat⁵³ and secondly, the professionals in law, medicine etc. Various section of the Muslims in Bengal were hard hit by the market fluctuations economically. The peasantry ranged from jotedars to small land holders, especially in north Bengal. In the aftermath of the World War I, the salariat, the urban poor, all were deeply affected by the economic conditions. The mass movement was held in east Bengal by the Muslim league in 1945 election but that was not religious in nature (Alawi, Social Forces and Ideology in the Making of Pakistan, 2002)⁵⁴. According to Alawi, it was always in check by the Fazlul Haq Ministry(KPP) who had great support of the peasant population of Bengal. The famine which grasped Bengal in 1943 helped the Muslim league to take advantage of the situation. During that time, Tebhaga movement was in full swing, which was the product of the famine and thus Muslim league with the help of Abul Hashim, the general secretary took into its ambit the poor masses of Bengal who were mostly peasants. Abul Hasim presented a mixture of socialism and Islam and focused on the needs of the small peasants during the election campaign of 1945. This

⁵¹ V.N.Dutta, Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition: An Intimate Relationship, (2002)

⁵² Misreading Partition Road signs, 2002.

⁵³ Those who depend on salaried employment, (alawi; 2002)

⁵⁴ Social Forces and ideology in the Making of Pakistan, (Alawi; 2002)

was not religious in nature. In the globalized cash economy, they were hard hit and thus it was purely economic issue, they promised that Pakistan would be a peasant raj. It was a peasant ideology (Alawi, *Social Forces and Ideology in the Making of Pakistan*, 2002)

Sana Aiyar in her *Fazlul Huq, Region and Religion in Bengal: The Forgotten Alternative of 1940-43* (2008)⁵⁵ challenges the narratives of nationalism in Bengal which makes the movement of Pakistan seem communal. Former Regional and cultural identity rather than religion played in the making of Bangladesh which was a continuation of the identity politics of the Bengali Muslims emerging in the wake of government of India act 1935. According to her, provincial politics emerged as a challenge to the central politics but formed an intermediary which did not let religion and region supersede each other but created a third alternative between 1940 and 1943 amongst the Muslim majority region. Fazlul Haq provided the third alternative as opposed to the communal and secular or Nationalistic discourse. According to Aiyar, Muslim separatism was challenged by this third alternative. The regional leaders challenged the communal tones of the Muslim league as well and also behaved as the leader of the Muslim community so as to put their community's interest forward. The communalism of Fazlul Haq was different from any other Muslim minority region because he took into consideration the different layers of the Muslim identity in Bengal. It allowed for a regional particularity without resorting to secularist claims and could oppose Jinnah.

According to Aiyar (2008), for provincial leaders the politics was totally based in local people and their aspirations and solidarity. And therefore, it questioned the political ideology of the parties in an all India basis. Fazlul haq had a mass support of the Muslim peasants. The leader of the krishak praja party, he fought for the rights of the peasants and relieving them from the oppression of the zamindars. As the zamindars were mostly Hindus, it became communal in nature but the main motive was only economic. Haq being a member of the Muslim league showed his allegiance to the Muslim community but did not forget his cultural identity. Aiyar argues that Jinnah's politics was entirely depended on the construction of the other. Haq emphasized on the difference of interest between the Muslims in minority provinces and Muslims in majority provinces thus it questioned the legitimacy of the

⁵⁵ Sana Aiyar, *Fazlul huq, Region and Religion in Bengal: The Forgotten Alternative of 1940-43*, 2008, Modern Asian Studies.

Muslim league as the sole spokesperson of the Muslim league and for demanding a united Pakistan. Haq's statement regarding Pakistan in 1940 pointed to several independent states whereas Jinnah talked of a singular independent state. Bhola Chatterjee (1969)⁵⁶ talks about the politics of Bengal and observes that the Muslim politics in Bengal was different from the Muslim politics in other provinces. According to him, there was something regional about the character of Muslim politics in Bengal. One of the most significant reason for this, according to Chatterjee is that Muslims who were the majority in Bengal did not have the advantages equaling their numerical strength and also the Muslim middle class was not in a position to come at par with the Hindu middle class. All these factors gave the Muslim politics in Bengal a regional characteristic.

With regard to division of Bengal, *Joya Chatterji in her Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*(1995)⁵⁷ tries to analyze the significant contributors towards the making of Bengali culture and nationalism through stories of characters having morals and virtues, making the character a perfect symbol of Bengali culture⁵⁸. These characteristics are the main criteria according to these authors⁵⁹ that Chatterjee analyses, which defines a Bengali Hindu and thus a culture is created. Chatterjee traces the source of communalism in the Bhadrak⁶⁰ culture. 'Culture' formed the very basis of difference between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. The reality of this "culture" was due to the attainment of education. "Bhadrata"⁶¹ came to be associated with a "class". There was a construction of homogenized Hindu community which involved characterizing the "other" or the Muslim community with certain attributes. The attributes associated with the Muslim community in this case was their education and cultural backwardness which results in their being 'inferior cultured'. The author looks into the works of Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay to uncover the layer of politics around culture that was used by Sharat Chandra to differentiate Muslims from that of

⁵⁶ Bhola Chatterjee, *Aspects of Bengali Politics in the early 1930s*, 1969, world press.

⁵⁷ Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*, University of Cambridge press, 1994.

⁵⁸ *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*, 1994.

⁵⁹ Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Nabin Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, were the writers whose works have been analysed by Joya Chatterji (1994).

⁶⁰ Prosperous, well educated people, typically Bengalis, regarded as the members of a social class, emerged during colonial rule in India

⁶¹ A particular mannerism associated with the superior culture, in this bhadrata was associated with bhadrak.

Hindu Bhadrlok culture. In one of his specific work, Bipradas⁶², an attempt was made to put together different contradictory aspects within the Hindu religion. The image which the protagonist in Bipradas holds is in contrast to the image of the 'babu' or the service class under the British rule. The protagonist is well-built and handsome who is a Zamindar. The image of the protagonist is such portrayed that it gets contrasted with submissiveness that had started to characterize the babu. This particular class was characterized with an attitude to serve the others which was considered as an obstruction to form a superior Bengali culture. Culture was the epicenter through which compromise was effected, a compromise "between manliness and passiveness, orthodoxy and tolerance, spiritualism and a love of freedom, other worldliness and worldly responsibility, formal western knowledge and actual self knowledge." (Chatterji, Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947, 1995). There was a change in the older socio economic order and also the dominance of the Hindu bhadrlok started declining. With all these changes it became imperative to instill a sense of pride in the Hindu community of Bengal. The importance of the old feudal order, the zamindari system associated with Hindu bhadrlok was emphasized and this was done through novels like Bipradas. The dominance of bhadrlok class was thus maintained through reviving the structural orders which was considered as creating inequality in the social order of Bengal. In this way the values defined by the bhadrlok zamindari section was promoted. The promotion of the values of old feudal order thus constructed a distinct section- Muslims, who were mostly peasants. Hence, the "other" was created, which was necessary to show that the two communities are exclusive to each other. There are other works by Sarat Chandra in which the exclusivity of the two communities is emphasized. One of his work is 'Bartaman Hindu-Mussalman Samsya'. Saratchandra stated that: "If learning is simply knowing how to read and write, there is little difference between Hindu[s] and Muslim[s]... But if the essence of learning is width of the mind and culture of the heart, then there is no comparison between the two communities ... Many may hope to establish a parity of learning [between them] but I do not. A thousand years has not been enough time [to achieve this]- nor will another millennium suffice".⁶³

⁶² A particular character in Sarat chandra Novel who was shown as an epitome of Hindu superior Culture.

⁶³ Quoted from Bengal divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947, 1994

Here, culture plays the important role. For Sarat Chandra, culture is one aspect which unifies the whole Hindu community and which is found lacking in the Muslims. To portray such unity, Sarat chandra deliberately tries to make the division of the Hindu society on the basis of caste irrelevant. According to him, the issue of caste could be solved within the Hindu religion itself. The process of making a homogenized hindu society also resulted in the making of a homogenized Muslim community having the same attributes and characteristics. It was constructed as opposites of what makes up a Bhadra Hindu. Sarat Chandra, in his writings also questioned the loyalties of the Muslims towards the nation.

“Hindustan is the homeland of Hindus. (Hindustan Hindur desh). Therefore, the duty of freeing this nation from the chains of servitude belongs to Hindu alone. Muslims look towards turkey and Arabia , their hearts are not in India ... Today it is vital that we understand this point- that this work is the work exclusively of Hindus and no one else. There is no need to get agitated counting the Muslim population. Numbers are not the ultimate truth in this world ... When Hindus come forward and vow to free their country, then it will matter little whether a few dozen Muslims lend their support or not.”⁶⁴

Muslims were considered as a section of the Bengal population who has their allegiance to the foreign land. According to Chatterji, the use of word “desh” had multiple layers. It was not meant only to define nation but also to signify the place of origin for the people and thus in result creating the other, the Muslims who are not the original natives of Bengal and had a pan Islamic sentiments which binds them to the Muslim population worldwide. In this way, as Chatterji argues, Sarat Chandra novels constructed an atmosphere where the two communities became significantly exclusively to each other. In the essay, it was maintained that the Muslim population who were composed mainly of the peasant community were not mentally fit enough to take decisions. Thus, even if the majority of the Muslim population voted as per their own though process, it was rendered incorrect as the Muslim population was not considered intelligent or articulate enough in decision making.

The partition of Bengal and India was not a communal affair and this is argued by Haimanti Roy. Roy in his *A Partition of Contingency? Public*

⁶⁴ Pp. 178, Quoted from Chatterji, 1994

Discourse in Bengal, 1946-1947 (2009)⁶⁵ Though print media was used to show public opinion, the process was not transparent enough to give clear idea of the picture. The questions were not appropriate to bring sufficient result. It was distorted. The question that were put in front of the people were put in such a way that there was not enough space for their own engagement properly. Therefore, the author showcases the actual public opinion in the form of letters etc so the concerned authorities. It brought together the unknown people from the divergent places to engage in a dialogue, the newspaper journals offered a discursive and representational space which constituted a common space. A public sphere where Bengalis hoped to discuss and disseminate on the ideas on the partition and hoped to build a larger consensus. The newspaper and journals provided a metatopical⁶⁶ space. But these were widely fragmented as these were in English and covered only a limited section of people. There were sections of people apart from the eminent people who put forth their views regarding the partition for better future of Bengal but failed to persuade these failures make way for modern public sphere, the attempt to make the partition of 1947 as a result of communal strife erase any other alternative possibility in the political sphere, the public sphere was not formed along the communal lines. The public was busy deliberating about the partition along territorial cultural and linguistic lines. The partition was needed not as a homeland for Hindus but for to remain united with the Indian union at large. Most of the readers wrote in the newspaper... it was not for saving ones religion but to keep distance from the communal administration of the Bengal's Muslim league. It was only to achieve nationalistic goals. For those who were in favor of partition, it was a necessary evil. Many others appealed towards the key sustenance of the new Indian nations, citizenship and economic stability.

IDEA OF PURBA PAKISTAN

Sen in her *Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947* (1976)⁶⁷ observes that in Bengal, the situation was altogether different. As Sen argues, “it was the ideal of Purba Pakistan in Bengal and Assam on the basis of the Lahore resolution that was the article of faith with Muslims in Bengal” (Sen

⁶⁵ Haimanti Roy, *partition of Contingency? Public discourse in Bengal, 1946-1947*, Modern Asian Studies, 2009.

⁶⁶ The space where people unknown to each other, expressed their opinion, shared common interests to influence public outcomes.

⁶⁷ Sheila Sen, *Muslim Politics In Bengal, 1937-1947*, Shila Sen, 1976.

S. , 1976). Many Muslim journals gave way to the idea of Purba Pakistan. Likewise Zahur Hossain in an article on Pakistan and Soviet union said:

“That the Musalman chasi of Bengal can make friendship with kabuli mahajan can only be imagined by those who do not have any connection with the soil of this country. Sometimes it is said that Urdu is the mother language of the Indian Musalmans. But the leaders of Pakistan movement have clearly said that the state language of Purba Pakistan will be Bengali and not Urdu. That Peshawar and the Chittagong cannot be brought under one state, Pakistan idea accepts this truth only”.⁶⁸

One such article was published by Fazlur Rehman in star of India under the title divide and develop. In this article the writer emphasized the ideal of Pakistan and the privileges that it would bring with its formation as a state for the Muslim masses in Bengal. The article also emphasized that Bengali Muslims were not only different from Bengali Hindus but also from Muslims in other provinces. Fazlur Rehman in the article also emphasized on the need for the Muslims to develop their own culture and literary work. It stressed that Muslim writers should develop their own “Sahitya”. It gave significant importance to the traditions and cultures of the villages in Bengal. Therefore though Jinnah wanted to instill the idea of Pakistan- Pakistan which will be constitutive of the other Muslim minority provinces as well, was not successful in Bengal. And also according to Sen, it was due to the fact that the All India Muslim league was an elite organization which failed to bring into its ambit the rural Muslims of Bengal. Sen argues that in the end Bengal eventually got partitioned and Pakistan- Pakistan which Jinnah imagined came into being with the help of other Bengal league leaders. The Lahore resolution in which a call for Pakistan was made by Fazlul Haq but which did not have any significant appeal to the Bengali Muslims because the ministry in Bengal already gave the Muslim masses their share of rights and facilities. The Muslim masses could relate themselves to the power of the ministry. Sen traces the period when the Pakistan movement gained momentum in Bengal. It was in 1943 that the movement for Pakistan gained pace on an all India level. In Bengal, the idea of Pakistan captured Muslims attention because the idea of Pakistan gave them a sense of security. It gave them an assurance of stability and relief from political and environment free from Hindu

⁶⁸ Quoted from Muslim Politics In Bengal,1937-1947, Shila Sen, 1976.

domination in education and government jobs. The thought of establishing a Muslim national state in eastern India gave them a hope for their stable future, according to Sen.

DIRECT ACTION DAY

According to Sen (1976), the event which ultimately changed the relation between the ministry and the congress in Bengal was the direct action day which was observed by the league in Bengal as a response to the failure of the cabinet proposal and to make the ideal of Pakistan more pronounced. The working committee of the All India Muslim league declared 16th august as the direct action day. The event was followed by the Calcutta riots as both the communities turned violent against each other which led to a huge destruction of lives and property from amongst both the communities. But as Sen argues, the hint of communalism was clearly not avoided in the resolution as it was made clear that the event is against the British slavery as well as the future domination of the Hindu community. Abul Hashim one of the important member of the Muslim league in Bengal who significantly contributed in making the league popular amongst the Muslim masses in Bengal said in the legislators conventions in new Delhi in April 1946 “where justice and equity failed, shining steel would decide the issue”. It was clear from the speeches that Hindu- Muslim unity was hard to maintain now and that there were apprehensions about the congress agenda once it forms the government after Britishers transfers the power to Indians. Suhrawardy who formed the Muslim league ministry in April 1946 in Bengal said that “let the congress beware that it is not going to fight just a handful of people fighting for power, but a nation which is struggling for its life and will secure its life”. The strain in relationship between the congress and the Muslim league was evident finally after the Noakhali incident which happened as a result of the direct action day. Hindus found themselves with their faith weakened in the present ministry after the Noakhali incident. There were looting and destruction of property and lives. Forced mass conversion also took place of Hindus by the Muslims in Noakhali. Also absence of the instruction “Peaceful observance” (Sen S. , 1976), in the speeches given by league leaders created a violent interpretation of the direct action day All this created a feeling of distrust amongst the Hindu community. According to the observation made by Sen, Hindu organizations were also prepared on the direct action day. The processions carried big sticks and other materials which made it evidently clear that only a spark was needed to start the riot. (Sen S. , 1976)

THE PARTITION OF INDIA 1947

Joya Chatterji in her *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67* (2007). Two nation states were formed with the partition of India 1947. Pakistan was the new state that was formed after the partition. Unlike India, Pakistan was divided into west Pakistan and east Pakistan. Chatterji explains the process of partition, its legal processes and with it the unimaginable consequences⁶⁹. Taking into account the difficulty of the task, of dividing the country into three different parts, Cyril Radcliff was called upon to draw the boundary. The difficulty of the job was on account of the fact that many different populations lived in Punjab and Bengal. They wanted to divide the regions on the basis of numbers. This meant that the population who had the highest majority may get to stay either of the two nations, India and Pakistan. But, there were no proper majorities but different minorities who were numerically significant stayed in some regions. Therefore, partition involved huge difficulty which ultimately resulted in the loss of numerous loss of life and property. Division of the region with added task of transferring the population became a frightening experience for both the people of India and Pakistan who migrated and also for those who stayed back. According to Chatterji, partition was the result of different self interest of the people. A shift in Bengali Hindu politics from 1905 to 1947 could be seen. Earlier, during 1905, when the first partition of Bengal was supposed to take place, there was widespread agitation and mass mobilization in Bengal by the Bengali Hindu leaders, against the partition of Bengal but in 1947, the leadership changed its course in Bengal from behaving against the partition to supporting the partition. The construction of boundary was to take place under Radcliff Award. The process was such that even minute details had to be touched upon. The decision to divide the country was taken not in the place where the partition was to take place but in Delhi and London. It did not take much time to consider the Radcliff line as the dividing line between the two nations, India and Pakistan in the west as well in the east. In just ten weeks, that is, from 3 June to 17 August, that the decision was taken regarding the boundary. An order was passed from London positing that the legislature in Bengal to be divided into two and the leadership to be taken charge by a shadow cabinet. The decision of dividing the country was put to vote with the result that the Hindu legislators voted in favor of the partition while the Muslims voted against it. "The provisional west Bengal legislative assembly resolved, by 58 to

⁶⁹ Chatterji, *The spoils of partition: Bengal and India*, 2007.

21 votes, that the province should join India's constituent assembly. At a separate meeting later on the same day, members of the east Bengal assembly voted against partition by 106 to 35". There were two thirds of the districts in western region of Bengal which had 55% Hindu majority. This was on the basis of 1941 census. The task of drawing up the boundary was left with the nominated members. These people were mostly the judges, in both the provinces of Bengal and Punjab. These members were given the task to look into the matter of boundary creation and specifically to argue for or against the lines that were drawn as boundaries, in Radcliff Commission. The central congress chose to play strategically. It decided in the whole process to stay from the process of partition and let the Radcliff commission to do its task. However, even though, congress chose to limit its interference to the minimum, in the process of partitioning the country by the Radcliff commission, there were various plans proposed by the congress to the commission. As Chatterji argues, the Radcliff line represented in the end, congress's point of view. It matched congress's blueprint of dividing the country. However, there were certain preconception regarding the decision to partition and plans advanced to the commission, "that all-India would come to West Bengal's aid and would help it to make good deficiencies and iron out disruptions and distortions in the economy of the new state. Second: that the disposition of India's revenues – and West Bengal's share of them – would remain largely unchanged. And third: that trade between the two parts of Bengal would continue much as before. Underlying these assumptions was a fourth of astonishing naivety: that the sub-continental economic and fiscal status quo ante, and West Bengal's role within it, would remain unchanged despite the partition of India". But, all these believes could not be turned into practicality as west Bengal government was left to look after itself on its own. Huge number of Hindus started migrating to west Bengal which burdened the economy. In the backdrop of these circumstances, Muslims turned out to be minorities in the western region within India. Similarly, Hindus in East Pakistan faced the same situation of being a minority. However, there were certain divisions which existed within the two communities and played its part when the time to move arrived from one place to another. Different sections of a particular community had to measure their choices according to the situation, for example, poorer section of the community who had low prospect of growth and settlement in the other country, had no choice but to stay. The section of the community who were better off chose to cross the territory for the fear of being a minority in the present country. This section could take the decision to move because

they had the assets through which they could influence their well being in their new place of stay.

RURALIZATION OF MUSLIMS IN WEST BENGAL AFTER 1947

Many scholars have worked on the conditions of the people who migrated from one place to another during the Partition. But not much has been studied about those people who stayed back in their own part of Bengal. This has been echoed by Chatterji (2007)⁷⁰. There are several reasons due to which it becomes difficult to generalise on the situations of the Muslims who stayed back. These Muslims became the minorities in west Bengal. Lack of government reports, documented evidence made it difficult to analyse the condition of the Muslims in a definite manner. According to the estimate, about 50 lakh people had stayed in west Bengal. Over the next two decades Muslim population migrated to east Pakistan for several reasons. As a result of which there was reduction in the size of the Muslim population around important areas in Bengal especially in Calcutta. In Calcutta, the effect was that, the Muslim population got reduced to less than half of what it was before. As Chatterji argues, those Muslims who stayed in west Bengal, started to form new allegiance. Muslims in west Bengal had to assimilate themselves with the conditions prevailing there. In other words, they had to prove their loyalty towards the Indian nation. This leads to subordination and suppression of the culture of a minority group, in this case the Muslims in west Bengal. There was an atmosphere of confusion, fear regarding the future course of action for the Muslims who stayed back. In this tense situation, the Muslim leaders who stayed back in India tried to ally themselves with the congress so that a sense of security could be created in the then atmosphere of chaos and hatred. Many Muslims who were part of the Muslim league before partition were now chosen to become the members of congress government in Bengal led by B.C. Roy. The situation remained chaotic and one of conflict as Hindu refugees started settling on the properties left by those Muslims who moved during partition, but again after some point came to claim their property. There were frequent instances of violence between the two communities in west Bengal. As a result of these violence, Muslims were forced to leave their villages and settled in areas already inhabited by Muslims. The state according to Chatterji, did not do much to discourage these events of violence, which were becoming a recurrent phenomenon in Bengal. Muslims had to show their loyalty towards the

⁷⁰ Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-67*.

nation through assimilating themselves but the assimilation process often involved intimidation and coercion.

According to Chatterji, there was also a demarcation of Hindu and Muslim localities. The Ruralization of the Muslim population resulted in the gradual erosion of their traditional occupation. To make ends meet, Muslims moved towards menial jobs or resorted to self employment. The loss of traditional occupations of Muslims resulted in deprivation. Many Muslims kept pace with the situation by changing their occupation but majority of the Muslim population lost track of their life. The Ruralization of the Muslims in west Bengal resulted in reducing them to a vote bank politics. There was the “Ghettoisation” of Muslim population in west Bengal. However, this resulted in the development of community consciousness amongst the Muslims on the basis of sharing a common experience of violence, trauma and systematic marginalisation. The Ruralized Muslims became an important part of vote bank politics especially after the annulment of separate electoral policy. But, despite being an important vote bank, Majoritarian violence kept coming their way. Gradually, there could be seen a shift in politics from the side of the Muslims in west Bengal. Earlier, it was based on socio-economic deprivation, a sense of unequal treatment meted out to them in the dominance of the Bengali Hindu upper caste unlike the period after partition where a community consciousness based on loss, chaos, marginalization, occupational loss due to forced Ghettoisation was turned into a political asset by the Muslims.

The losses made them connect together to form a community which gave them a sense of stability. These processes were on the basis of religion headed by imams. These were the religious heads who, organized the population under religious symbols and emphasized on the superiority of the Muslim way of life. There were various religious organizations like Rezae Mustafa, the Tabligh Jamaat, the Muslim Jamaat, the Jamaat Islami and Al Hadis who directed their politics towards the issues of Muslim population in Bengal. They addressed the issues of the Muslim population who were trying hard to sustain themselves after the loss of their traditional occupation, the loss of their culture. These organizations voiced the grievances of the Muslim population against the ‘institutional’ communalism⁷¹. The political parties were also unable to address the grievance of the people

⁷¹ This concept is formed by Chatterji , 2007.

living in these areas. This created a sense of suspicion in the minds of the people, making them think that these inequalities were deliberate. The situation became politically manipulative when instead of addressing the structural failures, the political parties started nominating a candidate from the Muslim community. Although it led to the proportionate representation in assembly of the Muslims in 1964 elections, it did not result in any major changes in the conditions of the Muslims.

ANALYSIS:

From the above articles presenting the debates relating to the different events that formed the Muslim identity, it could be understood that the Muslim community is not monolithic in its nature. The Muslim identity is based on an uneven platform where there is vast difference between the Urdu speaking Muslims and the Bengali Muslims. Right from the introduction of permanent settlement and other different events to the movement for Pakistan, there had been huge differences in the way Muslim and their public sphere was formed. The rural masses of Bengal especially of eastern Bengal were economically and socially very different from the Muslim landlords and Intelligentsia and the Muslim middle class. It is also true that the domination of Hindu bhadralok in case of Muslim intelligentsia and the domination of Hindu zamindars of the peasants of the eastern Bengal, did give a common ground of dissatisfaction to both the Ashrafs and the Atrops, but then the method of redressing the problem for both the section of the Muslim community was different. And this at some point did make the events communal but then as some writers correctly point out, it does not make the history of Muslim politics communal in nature altogether. Hamza Alawi categorises ashrafs into three groups⁷². Firstly, the Urdu speaking Muslim aristocrats who were affected by the replacement of Persian language by the English language. Secondly, the Ullamas, who possessed the knowledge relating to Quran and the third were the Muslim landlords who were not economically affected by the policies of the British government. The Muslim public sphere has been a fragmented space where there is appropriation of religion. We even see that there is an effort to create the public sphere in its entirety through the appropriation of religious symbols. Different section of the Muslim masses reacted to the events in a particular manner creating a significant gap in the formation of Muslim identity. Even during khilafat movement, not all section of the Muslim community was a part of

⁷² Misreading Partition Road signs, Alawi, 2002)

it. The dilemma to choose between Bengali and Muslim always remained. The people had been Islamized from above for a particular reason. And therefore there is an identity formation that is problematic in nature. But it definitely provided them a sense of unity amongst its people, for example Faraidi movement fostered a sense of community amongst Bengali Muslims. Even during revivalist movements, lower caste Hindus were forcefully converted so as to use them against Hindu landlords. Literary public sphere was also divided between the Urdu speaking muslims who tried to initiate Musalmani Bengali and Bengali Muslims who embraced the identity of a Bengali and a Muslim and rejected the dobhasi literature, which corrupted the Bengali literature. The identity of a particular community also forms with the assertion of domination of the majority community. In the case of Muslims of Bengal, the Hindu dominance resulted in the counter assertion of the identity of Muslims and so the religious and cultural assertion of being a Muslim. Though Alawi says that Pakistan was a peasant ideology and that the Bengal ministry under Muslim league campaigned for Pakistan amongst the rural masses of Bengal purely on economic lines, two possibilities could be inferred from here. One, it coincidentally became communal in nature as the Muslim peasants were oppressed by the Hindu zamindars mostly. Two, the picture was strategically painted as communal by talking only of economic backwardness but making it evident that the oppression is because of Hindu Zamindars. The trauma and memories of separation and violence left both the communities with various drawbacks but the Muslims were the worst sufferers. The Muslims who stayed back were backward economically and politically and thus, with loss of leadership, the Muslims found themselves in the same position as before.

CHAPTER 2

THE POST PARTITION PERIOD AND THE LEFT REGIME IN WEST BENGAL

THE POST-PARTITION AND THE ERA OF LEFT REGIME IN WEST BENGAL

The partition of India with its violent consequences resulted in dark memories which lingered on in the minds of both the minorities of the independent nations that is India and Pakistan. In India the minorities were the Muslims who hoped that they would get the basic rights and necessities in the post partition post independent India. In west Bengal, the Muslim minorities lived with a combination of fear for their survival and hope for a better future. The Noakhali incident before the partition of Bengal resulted in a huge conflict between Hindus and Muslims and therefore it could only be hoped that the future of Muslims in a post partition India would not get affected by the pre partition incidents. But it should also be stated that after the partition of Bengal, Hindus who remained in East Pakistan were also faced with a similar mix of hope and despair as their Muslim counterparts on the side of the border.

According to Joya Chatterji (2007)⁷³, thus, in 1950, Hindu refugees fled from East Bengal and came to West Bengal to live a better and normal life. This was followed by targeting of Muslims in West Bengal, especially in Howrah. It was known to the administrators that the partition of Bengal could lead to killings and riots. However, nobody could anticipate the scale of massacre. But gradually the crisis could be understood when Hindu refugees started coming to west Bengal fleeing from east Pakistan over a period of many years. By 1951, the refugee problem grew to such an extent that it was becoming difficult to accommodate and feed them. The density of population grew to an alarming 800 people per square miles in this side of the border.

CONGRESS REGIME IN WEST BENGAL

The tenure of Congress regime in west Bengal was replete with problems of Hindu refugees and its growing pressure on the economy of west Bengal. As Chatterji in her *'Dispersal' and the failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal* (2007)⁷⁴ notes, the first government of west Bengal was headed by Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, but it soon fell due to factionalism and was replaced by Bidhan Chandra Roy government. It became imperative

⁷³ Joya Chatterji, 'Dispersal' and the failure of rehabilitation: refugee camp dwellers and squatters in west Bengal. Cambridge university press, Vol. 41, No. 5 (Sep., 2007), pp. 995-1032.

⁷⁴ Joya Chatterji, 'Dispersal' and the Failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 41, No. 5 (Sep., 2007), pp. 995-1032.

for Roy to look into the refugee crisis. The first response of the Bengal government was to keep down the number of persons who came under the official definition of “refugees”. To implement this, government declared that only those persons would be entitled to government assistance who had migrated to West Bengal before the end of June 1948 and register him/herself as a bona fide refugee before January 1949. The assistance which government was providing was only limited to relief but not to rehabilitation. To stabilize the financial crisis, the government tried to cut the relief by putting several conditions. For example: the able bodied men who stayed in the camp for more than seven days were not entitled to relief. It tried to close the camp as soon as possible. The worst problem arrived when Hindu refugees went to Calcutta to settle.

The first wave of refugees that came to west Bengal was the educated middle class who had their kin and relatives in Calcutta. Calcutta provided them the opportunity to dream for a better future. Even the artisans fled to Calcutta who was skilled in traditional handicrafts. The artisans hoped to find wealthy Hindus under whom they could work. The west Bengal government firstly tried to close its eyes towards the refugee problem and secondly, even if they were compelled to look into the matter they did not pay heed to the detailing. The government was not sensitive to the practicality of the situation. The Hindu refugees were discontented by the west Bengal government as they felt that the government was not sensitive to their situation. The refugees brought with them political activism. “The bhadrak of eastern Bengal regarded themselves as the true heir of Bengali nationalist legacy”. (Chatterji, 2007, p. 1004) The relation between Congress and Muslims in west Bengal was shaped by the forces outside outside the region. However, According to Theodore P. Wright, Jr (1977)⁷⁵, the congress till 1964 garnered the vote of the Muslim community by entering into a coalition with traditionalists, secularists and Muslim league modernists. But with Nehru’s death, this coalition fell apart. The formation of Muslim Majlis-i-Mushwarat constituted by the members of Jamaat-i-Islami, the Muslim league of south India and some Congress Muslims was the background against which, the coalition fell apart. But this also did not go well and several events like communal riots again led most Muslims under the ambit of Congress during Indira Gandhi’s regime. However, the emergency of 1975-77 caused huge strain in the relationship

⁷⁵ Theodore P. Wright, Jr., Muslims and the 1977 Indian Elections: A Watershed? , University of California press, Vol. 17, No. 12 (Dec., 1977), pp. 1207-1220.

between Muslims and the Congress regime. The two campaigns launched by Indira Gandhi: slum clearance and sterilization for birth control was mainly used against the Muslims and other weaker sections of the population and thus resulted in creating resentment against the Congress government.

Also, according to Abhijit Dasgupta (2009)⁷⁶, the assembly election in 1967 was a turning point regarding Muslim's support to Congress. In this election, 30 Muslim candidates were given tickets to fight as a candidate, out of which 14 had won. The new united front government appeared as an alternative to the Congress rule in west Bengal. From the late 1970's, the victory of the left front in the state assembly with its minority welfare programmes made it a suitable alternative to Congress but Congress was not erased from the political arena of west Bengal till 1982, as the left front candidates won also from those constituencies where Muslims had the highest concentration.

According to Mayuri Sengupta⁷⁷, the left regime was considered as a party for poor people, and a party with which the Muslims of West Bengal recognized themselves and could think of a better future in West Bengal. Before the partition, Muslim league formed the ministry in Bengal but after its departure, Bengal saw the advent of congress rule as was the case with most of the other states in India. During its rule, the opposition was formed by the left parties in Bengal. But the opposition itself was plagued with internal conflicts and rifts within the party. However, left was successful in exposing the ineffectiveness of the congress. Congress regime failed to tackle many severe situations prevailing in West Bengal, for example: the drought period of 1964 and 1965 brought along with it, the shortage of food and rising prices for the people of West Bengal, which was further aggravated by the rampant corruption.

Also, Suranjan Das in his *The 1992 Calcutta riot in Historical Continuum: A Relapse Into 'Communal Fury'?*(2000)⁷⁸explains, the 1964 riot in Calcutta brought out Hindu-Muslim clashes in the forefront. It was the result of the external events that

⁷⁶ On The Margins: Muslims In West Bengal, Economic and political weekly, Vol. 44, No. 16 (Apr., 18-24, 2009), pp.91-96.

⁷⁷ Thesis; Decline of The Left Front In West Bengal And The Rise of The Trinamool Congress, July, 2010.

⁷⁸ Suranjan Das, *The 1992 Calcutta Riot in Historical Continuum: A Relapse Into 'Communal Fury'?*, Cambridge University Press, Vol.34, No. 2 (May, 2000), pp. 281-306.

impacted Calcutta in a great way. The disappearance of the holy relic from Kashmir's Hazratbal mosque in December 1963 created Hindu Muslim enmity. It was suspected that it was deliberate Hindu act. It started from Madhya Pradesh and spread to other regions of India. In January 1964, such communal vibes spread to East Pakistan's Khulna and Jessore districts, and mostly provoked by Pakistan government. In Calcutta Hindus felt bothered with the news of atrocities meted out to Hindus in East Pakistan. On 8th January, people witnessed and fell victims to the violent events happening in Calcutta. For Example, Muslim stalls were pulled down in Sealdah. People held meetings to protest against the situation in east Bengal, over the majority community's attitude towards the minority community. People protested in front of the office of Deputy High Commissioner of East Pakistan to demand for the punishment of those who were guilty regarding the disturbances in Khulna and Jessore districts. On 10th January Hindu students of Calcutta schools and colleges boycotted their classes and protested against the violent events in East Pakistan. This resulted in clash between the students and the police force. One such police intervention in an area called Garia (south Calcutta), to disperse the procession of students in the precincts of Dinbandhu Andrews College resulted in the death of a Student. A sizeable proportion of east Bengali refugees lived in this area, thus it created resentment amongst them against the government. They interpreted it as a sign of Bengal government's failure to have a sensitive outlook towards the events in East Pakistan. Muslims were the worst sufferers as their slums were destroyed. Although it The worsening situation resulted in the decline of majority seats for congress in the 1967 elections and the emergence of united front headed by Ajay Mukherjee with a coalition of several left parties. The deepening frustration amongst the masses of West Bengal led to a class conflict and as the left forces within the government did not allow the police to interfere, it led to a decline in the law and order in West Bengal. The chaotic situation made the centre to impose president rule in West Bengal in 1967. However, the president's rule was not seen in a good light by the people of West Bengal, although it was imposed to restore law and order.

However, during 1971 Indo- Pakistan war, with Indira Gandhi's popularity soaring high, Congress emerged victorious in the 1972 election in West

Bengal. According to Poromesh Acharya (1999),⁷⁹ the main reason for the decline of the congress was the deeds done during the regime of Siddhartha Shankar Ray. During his regime, massive killing of Naxal youths and CPI(M) cadres by police took place. Also, as Acharya argues, the new generation of leaders who joined the congress led to the demise in the very character of the party. This new generation of leaders did not pay heed to the importance of the traditional nature of the congress and used the party only for individual vested interests. These factors made congress vulnerable to the accusations of the opposition which provided a new alternative to the people of west Bengal. For Acharya, even after 1977, when left emerged victorious, it was not till 1999, that the complete decline of the congress took place. The most important reason for the decline, he cites, is the absence of any political ideology that would have acted as a reason for the political leaders to stay together in unity.

EMERGENCE OF THE LEFT FRONT IN WEST BENGAL

The emergence of the left in west Bengal after 1977 election brought a “new beginning” and an end to the deadlock created by the emergency and the situation of violence created by the then Congress government. The left now ruled west Bengal ending all its ties with pre-emergency India. As Ranabir Samaddar⁸⁰ argues: “with a broad range of, though limited in depth, economic and political reforms- such as some amount of land reforms, unemployment compensation scheme, stabilization of urban poor with reforms in urban renewal system, implementation of measures relating to payment of bonus, dearness and the other allowance to the salaried class, implementation of the Panchayati raj system, expansion of primary education...Left rule surges ahead” (Samaddar, 2013, p. 5).

The question which this chapter jostles with is the question of “public sphere”. In what aspect, the Muslims of west Bengal, after partition continued to assert their rights and identity? What shape did the Bengali public sphere take during the 34 years long reign of left government in west Bengal? Did Muslims have any role in bringing the left party to power in west Bengal? If yes, then, why that was so? In what way did

⁷⁹ Poromesh Acharya, End of the Congress: New turn in Bengal Politics, Economic and Political weekly, Vol. 34, No. 33, (Aug., 14-20, 1999), pp. 2298-2299.

⁸⁰ Passive Revolution In West Bengal, Sage Publication India Pvt. Ltd., 2013.

they feel in coherence with the agenda of the left in west Bengal? And after left's coming to power, how did the Muslims respond to the left regime in west Bengal?

MUSLIMS AND THEIR PUBLIC SPHERE DURING LEFT REGIME

How Muslims viewed the rule of the left regime? How did the Muslims influence the political action could be understood by analyzing several literatures? The literatures which after going through, one could understand that they contain the voice of discontentment, appraisal, discussions and debate around the then left regime and its policies in west Bengal. Several Muslim literatures revolve around the issue of Muslims as vote bank. According to these literatures, the political parties, have always used Muslims in a vote bank politics. The frustration of the Muslim community, emerging from the failure to get rid of their socio-economic backwardness was apparent after going through some of the literatures. The state has always played an important role in the lives of the minorities. In this case, after partition, the Muslims who were left behind in India, belonged to rural Background with little or no socio-economic advantage. This section of the Muslims depended largely on the welfare measures of the state. Besides, the role played by the state in west Bengal, there are certain other factors influence the Public sphere. For example the riot of 1992, which caused a huge strain in the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslim communities (Das, 2000).

According to Das (2000), the 1992 riot in Calcutta is to be situated in the backdrop of the social transformation taking shape in Calcutta. It was not a result of external forces unlike the riot of 1964, it was totally an internal affair. It was an organized violence especially affected the area in Tangra, Tiljala, Entally, Park Circus, Karaya and Taltala. Muslims were targeted systematically. It was suspected that the riot was planned by the promoters whose aims were to get hold of the land where the Muslims were residing. They wanted to clear the slum area for construction projects. Similarly, the economic prosperity in Metiabruz raised the estate prices in the area, therefore, a group of non- Bengali promoters had been trying to monopolize the land for their construction projects for multi-storeyed structures. In Metiabruz, many Hindu families sold their houses and left the place. In doing this, the promoters used the Bangladeshi Muslim day- labourers. These migrants were a huge asset for the brick smuggling trade centering around Calcutta port. As Das states: "But their presence had caused a boom in the land market of this locality. Well-built housing complexes are fast coming

up on both sides of the main road and the pressure on land continues to rise. Bustees like Lichubagan can alone provide new space for developmental projects. Incidentally, these were the prime targets of the violent crowd” (Das, 2000, p. 296). The post Ayodhya communal sentiments of the people were used in waging the 1992 riot. It did not touch the upper classes of both the communities but the lower classes were the main targets. According to Das, it was not based on a communal undertone because it did not spread to Calcutta outskirts occupied mostly by the Muslim refugees. But the riot certainly took advantage of the Babri Masjid conflict.

Mukul Roy in his *Aekai Brinthe Duti Kusum*(One Stem Two Flowers) (2015)⁸¹ brings forth the debate around the Sachar Committee Report⁸². For Roy, Bengal was never the place for such level of discrimination which was faced by other marginalized groups in other parts of India. Bonita Aleaz (2005)⁸³ also gives several examples where it can be understood that left tried keeping the communal harmony in west Bengal through several measures. During 2001-2002, the demand for the closure of Madrasa by the Hindu fundamentalist group was made to the west Bengal but left refused to accept the demand and did not force the Madrasa to fall in line with the secular education. This according to Aleaz, was done keeping in view the “Kidwai Commission Recommendation”, which emphasized on the importance of Arabic studies for employment opportunities in west Asia etc. There was also a general feeling of well being amongst the Muslim masses in west Bengal. According to the author, it happened because of the same government being in power for 27 years. Another significant example is the organization of “Milan Mela”, initiated by the west Bengal Minorities Development And Finance Corporation For The Development Of The Backward Classes. Awareness Programmes, self employment loans, vocational training, were the characteristics of this Mela. But, as Roy argues, the Sachar Committee Report during left regime made it evident

⁸¹ A Bengali article named “aiki brinte duti kusum” in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

⁸².The Rajinder Sachar Committee is a report on the contemporary status of Muslims in India which was commissioned in 2005 by the then prime minister of India, Manmohan Singh. It highlighted the issues that behaved as a hindrance to the full participation of the Muslims in economic, political and other sphere of Indian life. The report was first of its kind to reveal the backwardness of the Indian Muslims. Alongside many facts that it brought forth, one of them was that the conditions facing the Indian Muslims was below that of schedule caste and schedule tribes.

⁸³Bonita Aleaz, Madrasa Education, state and Community Consciousness: Muslims in west Bengal, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 40, No. 6, (Feb., 5-11, 2005), pp. 555-564.

that Muslims after the partition would only be used as a vote bank. Government jobs, higher education, health etc are the important spheres where Muslims face severe backwardness. He further argues that, the lack of responsiveness towards the backwardness of Muslims by the left front had led to the feeling of unrest mostly amongst the ‘poor section’ of the Bengali Muslims in west Bengal. This has reduced the Muslims only to a vote bank politics which has resulted in the deterioration of the Bengali education culture and also humanity has been deeply affected. Social unrest has gripped the society at large. According to Roy, it’s necessary that total Uplift of the masses is done on a large scale rather than resorting to peace-meal reforms.

Similarly, Twaha Siddiqui in his *Maryadar Sandhane (In Search Of Dignity)* (2015)⁸⁴ points to the issues that Muslim faces after the partition in west Bengal. The author goes back to the pre partition era and reminisces the heroic deeds of the Muslim rulers who were characterized by their secular policies towards their people. He further argues that Muslims played a great role in the Indian freedom struggle for example: Titu Mir- an Islamic preacher who led a peasant uprising against the Hindu zamindars during the 19th century. According to Siddiqui, British’s divide and rule policy did play its effective role for brewing up conflict between the two communities as a result of which Muslim, even after the partition when the congress formed the government in most of the states, it did not place its capable Muslim members in chief positions. After all this while, why Muslims have not been given their due share is the question raised by Siddiqui. For Siddiqui also, Muslims have been used for their numerical strength only. The issue of vote bank politics is discussed by several writers where they point towards the promises made by the political leaders concerning the Muslims during the election and its unfulfillment once election gets over. During the left rule as Siddiqui argues, the government jobs were reduced to 2 percent which was 12 percent during congress regime. This fact has been backed by another writer named Mossharref Hossain. Hossain (2015)⁸⁵ particularly talks about the relationship between the Muslims and the left rule and the role played by the Muslims in bringing the left front victorious in west Bengal.

⁸⁴ Twaha Siddiqui, *Maryadar Sandhane, (In Search of Dignity)*, Article in a book named *Promises and Development*, A collection of essays edited by Farooq Ahmed, 2015.

⁸⁵ A Bengali article named “Bondhu Sejhe Pithe Churi Bosiechilo Bamera” (Disguised as a Friend, left Betrayed the Muslims) a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named *Promises and Development*, a collection of essays.

According to Hossain, as the majority of the Muslim population resides in the villages in west Bengal, this segment of Muslim population became a big source of left victory in west Bengal. For Hossain also, apart from Sachar committee report that resulted in final blow to the left rule in west Bengal, it's the Nandigram incident which strained the relationship between Muslims and left.

Arup Kumar Sen in his *Nandigram: A Tale of Developmental Violence* (2008)⁸⁶ delves into the Nandigram incident and points to the connection between Development and Violence, and shows the ferocity of the state inflicted terror on the people of Nandigram to acquire fertile agricultural land for SEZ project. As Sen writes: “after a landslide victory in the assembly election in 2006, the left front government vigorously pursued the policy of inviting big capital to west Bengal” (2008, p. 31). Sen puts forward his argument on the basis of the report of the people's tribunal on Nandigram. This report placed significant importance to the socio-political profile of the region where most of the masses comprised of Muslims and lower caste Hindus. The report further pointed towards the role of armed party hooligans appointed by the state to “teach a lesson” to the poor villagers on march 14, 2007. Many cases of sexual violence unleashed by the armed party hooligans and the police on the women of the village were also reported. Bullets were fired from the back while the protesting crowd was running away, was also brought forward by this fact finding machinery.

Hossain (2015)⁸⁷ further points out towards the left front's role in the issue of Madrasa in west Bengal. His argument puts forth an interesting understanding, According to Hossain, the left government reduced Muslim education only with Madrasa, which resulted in creating an adverse environment for the Muslims. Left's attempt to open several Madrasa instead of secular modern schools made the Muslims remain aloof from the mainstream. Aleaz (2005)⁸⁸ delves into a report by the Madrasa education board. According to this board, more than 90 percent of 23.61 percent Muslims were engaged in petty occupations

⁸⁶ Arup Kumar Sen, *Nandigram : A Tale of Developmental Violence*, Vol. 43, No. 37, (Sep., 2008)

⁸⁷ A Bengali article named “Bondhu Sejhe Pithe Churi Bosiechilo Bamera” in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named *Promises and Development*, a collection of essays.

⁸⁸ Aleaz, (2005), pp. 562.

such as rickshaw pulling, tailors, hawkers, mechanics etc. most of these belong to the unorganized sector. And according to this report, this condition of Muslims is because of the madras education with no rational coursework. This argument is opposed to the one where opening of new Madrasa in the Muslim populated region was seen as a fulfillment of the promise made by the left to the marginalized. Hossain further argues that, most of the Muslim parents choose to send their children to a simple school as it becomes difficult to get a job in the mainstream after studying in Madrasas. For Hussain, the emphasis on Madrasa education makes it easy for keeping Muslims out of the competition from the mainstream jobs, for completion of education from Madrasa does not provide employment as opposed to the person completing her education from a simple school.

Roy in his *All This Phony Marxism*⁸⁹ analyses the policies of communist party of India. One of the policies that he analyzes is on the 'Minority Rights'. According to the author, the extra emphasis put by the communist party on the Madrasa education for the Muslims has only benefitted the rural clerics and mullahs in retaining their dominance. According to this argument, emphasis on Madrasa education ignores the significance of the simple modern education and how much importance modern school education holds for the development of the Muslims. Furthermore, when putting forth the argument that minority rights have benefitted the minorities by providing them educational institutions in those rural areas where they do not exist is the way to make the state free of its responsibilities to look after each and every section of the society and bringing the impoverished to the mainstream where one can compete for the goods with equal opportunities in hand.

In the context of Madrasa education Aleaz (2005)⁹⁰, looks into the working of the Madrasa system in west Bengal and then, in the later section talks about the government's role regarding it. The author looked into some significant cases from 1984-2001, regarding the state of affairs of the Madrassa system of west Bengal. For instance, the infrastructure facility of the Madrass remained poor. The course work which was followed there was impractical. During her survey in west Bengal, it was found that the weightage of general education in the Madrasa was only 50 percent. Requests were sent to the government to

⁸⁹ Himanshu Roy, *All This Phony Marxism*, Frontier Weekly

⁹⁰ Aleaz,(2005), pp.561

incorporate a 'rational' learning procedure without any significant result. The problem of funding made the working of madras difficult. The problem remained because the funds were not sanctioned by the government on a regular basis. There were instances when protests were held by the students to demand their inclusion within that network of schools and colleges which could give them livelihood in real terms. For example, a peaceful procession of students of about 10,000 was violently curbed by the state machinery. They lathicharged the students so badly that several students were hospitalized⁹¹.

Most of the literatures are written to spread awareness among the marginalized masses of west Bengal. Questions regarding the level of development of the Muslim community are forwarded in the society through these writings. These literatures are the voice of dissent, a way of uniting the underprivileged masses that remain aloof from the main stream politics. Farooq Ahmed (2015)⁹²through his writing addresses the marginalized masses of west Bengal. He stresses towards the impoverished condition of the Muslim masses of west Bengal. How the state government has been unsuccessful in curbing the economic impoverishment and also in some way was the source of economic backwardness is stressed by Ahmed in this writing. One such instance is given by Ahmed, when Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya equalized Madrasa education with getting trained in terrorism, during one of his speeches while addressing the public in west Bengal. These kinds of statements, makes the marginalized community more vulnerable and prone to attacks by the majority community.

Kannad Dasgupta in his *Sherf Vote Bank Hoe Thakai Ki Rajyer Muslimder Bhabitbya* (Are Muslims of this State only for Vote Bank) (2015)⁹³sheds light on the problems surrounding the Muslim community. The author argues that illiteracy is the problem which does not give the Muslims opportunity to get in the mainstream. Political leaders during elections involve themselves with the religious heads of the marginalized community so

⁹¹ Aleaz, (2005), pp. 562

⁹² A Bengali article named " Uttoroner Agnishapath" (in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

⁹³ The article talks about the complexities of relation between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. This is a Bengali article named "Shref Vote Bank Hoe Thakai Ki Rajyer Muslimder Bhavitba" in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays

as to effectively garner the votes of the people following these religious heads. This did not change during the left rule also and illiteracy of the masses makes it easy for the political leaders to put forth their false promises amongst the masses. Similarly, Animesh Chakraborty (2015)⁹⁴, points towards the faulty POCA(prevention of organized crime Act) policy initiated by the left in west Bengal. It was policy to deal with the Muslim terrorism as propounded by Buddhadev Bhattacharyya during his tenure in office of chief minister of west Bengal. It was proclaimed that the unregistered Madrassas are the den of anti- national activities.

Sumanta Banerjee in her *West Bengal's Next Quinquennium And The Future Of The Indian Left* (2011) talks about the decline of the left in west Bengal and the causes behind it. One of the causes, according to the author is the decline in vote share by the Muslim minority community. What caused such decline is the question posed by her? For her also, Sachar Committee Report dug a huge pit for the left in west Bengal. What made it worse is the left's denying of the situation. Left did not pay heed to the questions posed by Muslims on the basis of Sachar committee report. It only tried to pacify the situation by nullifying the importance of the report. The author points towards another important incident that may have been seen as a way of appeasing the Muslims and to soothe the unrest spread across the Muslim intelligentsia. The left banished Taslima Nasreen and banned her book in west Bengal after acceding to the demands made by the Muslim fundamentalist mullah. It did not go well with the section of progressive Muslim intelligentsia.

Banerjee (2011)⁹⁵ also argues that in 2007, the death of Rizwanur Rehman, a Muslim, created turmoil in the political atmosphere of west Bengal. It was alleged that rehman's involvement with the daughter of the industrialist Ashok Todi resulted in his death and also that police being a tool in the hands of the left, was involved in intimidating Rizwanur and making it look like a suicide. Also, left's refusal to punish the guilty policemen led to a huge protest by the Muslims which turned violent and riot like situation took place in Kolkata. According to the author, all this was done by the CPI(M) in lieu of corporate funds and also to ensure that west Bengal remains a favorable place for big capitalists. This incident

⁹⁴ A Bengali article named "Paschimbange Muslim Janota: Upokrit Hocche? Na Upekkhit Thakche?", in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

⁹⁵ Banerjee; pp. 18

resulted in the protest in Kolkata, park circus and Tiljala area, by the Muslim mob which turned violent. The area became a battlefield as some of the young Muslims were seen holding swords and shotguns. Huge loss of property and life was reported. As Muslims form a large fraction of voters in west Bengal, this incident affected the west Bengal government politically. According to Afsar Ali⁹⁶, in February 2010, the recommendation of the Ranganath Mishra Committee regarding the 10 percent reservation for the Muslims was accepted by the left front in west Bengal. But the then chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya limited the reservation only to the job sector. For the author, this kind of peace-meal reform does not account to any real development. The education is the real issue, the lack of which makes the minority remain backward in all spheres of their life in west Bengal. The education is the first path to get employment in the future. Thus, unless reservation in education is provided, one cannot think of getting employment and therefore the whole purpose of providing reservation in jobs becomes unsuccessful.

The role of the public sphere is the creation of checks and balances in the representative government. The rational critical debate is the core aspect of a public sphere. During the left regime in west Bengal Muslim public sphere can be recognized not as one of contentment. It had the voice of dissent which could be found forwarded through the literatures. The public sphere of the post partition period does not seem to be different from the pre partition era. Muslims have been desperately trying to find their voice since pre partition days. In the literatures authored by Bengali Muslims, the desperation and need for a better future was clearly visible. And the frustration, regarding the failure of the left in providing economic advancement to the Muslim minority was evident enough. Public sphere also means making the people aware of their condition and thus making it possible to influence the political outcome. The decline of the Muslim vote share in favor of CPI(M) and bringing the end to the rule which reigned for 34 years is an appropriate example for this. The faulty minority policy was not the only reason for the decline of the left but it is a sufficient reason for its end as the Muslims are the major constituent of west Bengal.

⁹⁶ A Bengali article named "Madrasa sikkha: Aamader Aubosthan" in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

A tone of activism was evident while going through the literatures. The need to have communal harmony is again and again highlighted in these literatures. Ahmed for instance shows his concern for all the section of people who are marginalized (Ahmed F. , Jege Uthar Ahwan, 2015)⁹⁷. The agenda of his writing revolves around the issue of communal conflict between Hindu and Muslims. Similarly Rai (2015)⁹⁸, stresses on the importance of having distinguished cultures growing alongside each other and that having difference in culture and opinion does not make the two cultures against each other. According to Ahmed (Ahmed F. , Jege Uthar Ahwan, 2015), not only economic advancement is necessary but the mentality of the people is also needed to be changed then only minorities could live with their rights intact. Ahmed puts forward his dilemma in the form of question to the society at large. He finds it problematic when for one person's misdeeds, the entire community is targeted by the majority community especially. The trust deficit in the system could be understood when he says, a nation could not move forward by keeping its minorities economically backward.

Siddiqullah Choudhury,⁹⁹ delves into the importance of gaining political power¹⁰⁰. According to him, the path to development in all spheres of life for the people is by attaining political advancement. He discusses the role of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind in the lives of the marginalized, especially Muslims. According to him, it provides a platform where poor and the marginalized could participate and feel responsible for the betterment of their future. Similarly for Farooq Ahmed¹⁰¹, there was mobilization of the Muslim masses by the religious heads and mullahs against the left government in west Bengal. This shows the context in which Muslim and their public sphere was working.

⁹⁷ Ahmed; pp, 182.

⁹⁸ Rai; pp, 9, Aikai Brinte Duti Kusum, (one stem two flowers), In a Book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development.

⁹⁹ Siddiqullah Chowdhury is an Indian Muslim Politician from the state of west Bengal. He is also the representative of the Mangalkot constituency in the west Bengal legislative assembly as a member of the ALL India Trinamool Congress. He is also the president of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind's west Bengal Branch.

¹⁰⁰ A Bengali article named "Jagran O Khamotayan", in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

¹⁰¹ The article is basically a call for change and an attempt to unite the marginalized section of the Muslim community, An article in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays. Ahmed; pp, 183.

The continuity in the search for a Muslim identity can be seen amongst the Muslims in west Bengal. There had been attempt by the Muslims to join the mainstream politics like the Congress and the Communist Party of India¹⁰². Because of mainstreaming, the Muslims were able to put forth their demands in the public, at the national level, which obviously is a necessary and important step to advance economically, politically and culturally. But the opposite of secularism is not always communalism. The rhetoric of secularism has been understood by some as a way of repressing the questions of a particular community. The portraying of community politics as communal makes it highly questionable in the eyes of the so called “Secularists”. The concept remains empty if only used as Rhetoric. According to Dasgupta (2015)¹⁰³, these sections of the Muslim population did not raise its voice for the question of total upliftment of the Muslims. Why this is so? There is a certain concern that if a particular influential person does put forth her views regarding the backwardness of the minority community then that particular person is alleged to have communal views. Therefore, it stops many influential people from the minority community to show concern particularly for her own community. The necessity to show herself as ‘neutral’ takes away the opportunity to make her particular community the first priority in her developmental agendas.

How a minority community takes recourse to religion in forming its identity is explained by Das (2000)¹⁰⁴. According to him, during Calcutta riots, the Bengali middle class superiority paved the way for the formation of identity on the religious lines. For instance: the Bihari Muslims from Bangladesh were discriminated against as intruders, these Muslims therefore took solace in the Guidance of Muslim religious preachers. Their discontentment was showed in the December riot. Also, it is quite noticeable that the public sphere which is being talked here is constitutive of that section of the Muslim population which is economically impoverished and needs to be empowered in all spheres of life. The reasons which were discussed in the literatures for the decline of the left in west Bengal are related to the problems surrounding the poor Muslim masses. There is a genuine attempt to bring in the majority of the Muslim masses within the “public sphere”. This can be further corroborated by

¹⁰² Dasgupta,(2009), pp. 94.

¹⁰³ Dasgupta;(2015) pp, 147.

¹⁰⁴ Reference given by Suranjan Das in his article, (2000). Reference was from submission by Diptosh Majumdar, 26 Dec., 1992.

Dasgupta (2015)¹⁰⁵, where he shows his concern regarding the inactiveness of the section of the Muslims who are capable enough in their capacity to contribute highly to the question of Muslim development. Hence, here, public sphere is not homogenous in nature.

DECLINE OF THE LEFT IN WEST BENGAL AND THE EMERGENCE OF TRINAMOOL CONGRESS

In 2011 legislative assembly, the 34 year long reign of CPI(M) ended and got replaced by the government of Trinamool-Congress led coalition headed by Mamata Banerjee in west Bengal. As Sumanta Banerjee (2011)¹⁰⁶ argues, the people of west Bengal were already resentful with the faulty policies of CPI(M), especially after the Nandigram, Singur incident. Secondly, “the desperate need of the urban middle class to get out from the CPI(M) stranglehold on civil society, which determined every stage of their professional careers from appointment to promotions and commandeered every step in their quotidian existence from buying a house to selling it” (Banerjee, 2011). According to the author, the choice to bring Trinamool congress in west Bengal was not political for the people rather taken due to the need for mere survival. Apart from Trinamool there was no choice. The want for better jobs, health facility, education, housing, sanitation made people vote for Trinamool Congress. The main opposition of the CPI(M) has always been the Trinamool congress in west Bengal. Since its inception, its major priority has been to dethrone the CPI(M) from west Bengal. To make this happen, it joined several alliances which have been in opposition to the communist party. How the post- left era affected the Muslims alongside other factors is outlined in the next chapter

¹⁰⁵ Kannad Dasgupta, Shref Vote Bank Hoe Thakai Ki Rajyer Muslimder Bhabitbya, in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed Named Promises and Development,2015.

¹⁰⁶ West Bengal’s Next Quinquennium, and the Future of the Indian Left; Sumanta Banerjee, economic and Political weekly, Vol.46, No. 23, pp.14-19.

CHAPTER 3

THE NEW PUBLIC SPHERE

THE NEW PUBLIC SPHERE

The post-Left Bengal brought with it the rule of Trinamool government in West Bengal. The replacement of 34 years long CPI(M) rule with that of Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal tells a lot. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Mamta Banerjee provided them with a hope of better governance. She promised the people of Bengal with ‘Poribortan’ or change¹⁰⁷. The main Questions of this chapter are- what is the new public sphere in west Bengal? What are the other factors that influences the Muslim and their Public sphere in its formation apart from electoral politics?

THE ELECTORAL FACTOR:THE MUSLIMS UNDER TRINAMOOOL CONGRESS IN WEST BENGAL:

The most important chance that Trinamool government grabbed for coming to power, besides other factors, is that of using the feeling of dissatisfaction and betrayal among the Muslim masses of Bengal, especially the Lower section of Muslims, against the Left government, in relation to the Sacchar Committee Report (Basu, 2015)¹⁰⁸. Muslim leaders and religious heads mobilized support for the Trinamool Congress from among the Muslim masses (Ahmed F. , 2015)¹⁰⁹. Therefore, the question comes: In what way the State influenced the Bengali public sphere? It can be said after analyzing various situations in West Bengal revolving around Muslims that Muslim and their public sphere was formed according to the State’s response towards the issues regarding Muslims. According to M. Reyaz (2017)¹¹⁰, Mamata Banerjee tried to benefit from those movements, which was kept sidelined deliberately during the left front rule in west Bengal. She also gave tickets to the poorest candidates of different religious groups. This was a social-engineering played by Trinamool government to cut into the votes of the left front.

¹⁰⁷ Banerjee; pp, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Anjan Basu, A Bengali article named “Muslim Toshon Ki Bostu, Ettu Bolben?”, in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

¹⁰⁹ Faruque Ahmed, A Bengali article named “Jege Uthar Ahwan”, in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

¹¹⁰ New Found Muslim Assertiveness In Bengal and the Rise of Hindutva by M Reyaz, Café Dissensus,

She also co-opted religious groups like Furfura Sharif¹¹¹ and gave tickets to the state president of the Jamiat-e-Ulama Hind¹¹², Siddiqullah Chowdhury.

The lower section of the Muslims in west Bengal depended on the State for its welfare policies. The economic considerations among the Muslim masses were the main reason behind the support for the Trinamool government. The issues of Muslims in West Bengal was aggravated by the combination of ghettoization and inadequate facilities in terms of education, health, government jobs etc. Therefore, during Trinamool rule also, Muslims, especially the poor masses who reside in villages, depended for their basic economic rights on the policies of the state. The politics of the state revolves around promising Muslims the betterment of the status of Madrasas in west Bengal, providing aid to the religious heads of the Muslims, Providing short term material benefits to the Muslim masses for example: According to Mosharaff Hossain (2015)¹¹³ distribution of bicycles to the Muslim girls so as to encourage them to go to school. But the leaders of the community fear that this may backfire and would prove to be counter- productive. It creates enmity amongst different communities as there are other minorities also who needs such encouragement.

Questions related to Madrasa education and its adequate development is a frequent issue revolving around Muslim development in West Bengal. The problem which makes the issue of Madrasa a recurring question is the fact that even after all these years, the schools under Madrasa board are not at par with the secular schools. Another issue which is of huge importance to the Muslim community is the future of the students who completes their education from these Madrasas. These students find it difficult to get job in the

¹¹¹ Furfura sharif is a village in jangipara community development block of srirampore subdivision in hoogly district in the Indian state of west Bengal. It is a holy place for Muslims. It was built in 1375 by Muqlish Khan. It is a site for Muslim pilgrimage, especially during pir mela. The history goes back that the founders of the furfura sharif were not only religious preaches were also social and religious reformers. The Furfura high Madrasa established way back in 1908 by Hazrat Abu bakr Siddiqui, oldest high Madrasa in the district. It provides political platform to give voice to the Muslims of the west Bengal.

¹¹² Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind is an Islamic organization in India. It was formed initially to carry on Non-Violent movement freedom struggle and currently its purpose is to look after the development of the Muslim community. It has an Urdu daily known as Al-Jamiat. Protection of Islamic belief, civil, educational and cultural rights of Muslims, identity , heritage and places of worship are the main focus of this institution. It also works for the revival of Arabic and islamic studies and framing syllabus according to the needs of the present.

¹¹³ Mosharaff Hossain, Bindhu Seje Pithe Churi Bosiechilo Bamera, A Bengali article in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development.

mainstream market. These students had to make their living by getting job in religious places like Mosques etc., despite having proper education. The Trinamool government under Mamata Banerjee, included almost 87% of the Muslims in the ambit of the OBC quota. Despite all this, Muslims under OBC quota, find it hard to benefit from this special representation because of the task involved in acquiring the relevant documents to come under the eligibility of the said reservation. Even though government has implemented the OBC reservation, Muslims are unable to avail the facility due to twisted government procedures.

KHAGRAGAD INCIDENT IN WEST BENGAL

The problem also lies in the perspective of the political parties and other communities regarding the character of the Madrasas. According to Manisha Bandopadhyay (2015)¹¹⁴, as most of the people appointed in these Madrasas remain Muslims, the perspective is formed that these places are the hub of terrorists. The Blast in khagragarh in Bardhaman district on 2nd October 2014 resulted in distrust among the Muslim community in relation to the State. The blast happened inside a rented house but the media houses and political parties linked it with activities of Islamic institutions like Madrasas. People with Arabic names were also targeted. It resulted in the growth of anti-Muslim propaganda in the state. The religious books that were found in these places were considered as jihadi although these were the basic books of Islam. They were similar to the books found in any other religion. But according to Kumar Rana and Manabi Majumdar, there is a different story (2014)¹¹⁵. For them, the existence of cottage industries of explosives in several areas of West Bengal with political leaders being the clients of this industry, is overlooked by the investigating team and media houses. Birbhum, Hooghly and Bardhaman are the areas for large scale violence and where fight for political supremacy is rampant. Media houses as well as print media were responsible for spreading misinformation. For example: media houses alleged that the Madrasas are teaching the way to good death. The allegation came in the backdrop of finding a Book in the Madrasa named “Bhalo Mrityur Upay” meaning The Way to a Good Death. A newspaper daily known as Anandabazar Patrika headlined it as Bhalo Mrityur kee je Upay Batlalo Madrasa (Madrasa prescribes ways to good death). Males from many villages fled from

¹¹⁴ Manisha Bandopadhyay, A Bengali article named “Pariborton Hok Mansiktar”, in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

¹¹⁵ Cultivating communal Hatred In Bengal, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. no. 46, Nov., 2014, pp. 68-72.

their houses and it was cited as evidence of their involvement in the blast. The fear of the police atrocities led these males to flee from their respective villages.

The government's special benefits to Muslims have been often cited as "Minority Appeasement" by the opposition parties. The government has been accused of making the atmosphere of West Bengal communal by such strategies. For example, according to Abu Syyed Ahmed, the provision of providing grants to the Mullahs by the State was not seen in a positive light by the other communities (2015)¹¹⁶. This has been alleged as a way of appeasing the Muslim community as people are unable to see the benefit accruing from this. How would this help in making the Muslim community progress in any way, is the question that is posed by the people in West Bengal. None of the other religious minorities are getting such benefit. According to Garga Chatterji (2015)¹¹⁷, another instance where the government has been accused of showing mere tokenism to the Muslims is regarding the case of Kazi Nazrul Islam, a legendary Bengali poet, song writer and artist. He is admired and respected by every Bengali irrespective of creed and other factors. Mamata Banerjee in a gathering organized by the 'West Bengal Minorities Development Corporation' had stressed on the government's plan to initiate a Nazrul research centre. According to him, this is a way of equalizing Muslim identity with that of Nazrul Islam whereas as mentioned above, Nazrul Islam's artistic works help him to transcend his Muslim identity. Another such tokenism according to Chatterji was making the Aliah Madrasa into a University and merely naming it as Aliah Madrasa University. The Equalizing of Muslim identity with that of Urdu language is another way of Minority Appeasement according to Chatterji. To explain his argument Chatterji situates the high profile felicitation of Urdu poet Mohammad Iqbal's grandson by the West Bengal government as a way of appeasing the Muslims and in the process confusing the Muslim identity with Urdu language. According to him, none of the Bengali Muslim writers have received such honor by the government funds. Chatterji's attempt is to bring forth the necessary difference in the identity of the Muslim community of West Bengal. He further explains that most of the Muslims of West Bengal have no connection with Urdu. Most of the Muslims are ethnic Bengalis with Bangla as their mother tongue. He also states that health problems, food insecurity, job opportunities continues to be the

¹¹⁶ A Bengali article named "Sankhyaloghuder khob", in a book edited by Faruque Ahmed named Promises and Development, a collection of essays.

¹¹⁷ Danger Games; Muslims and Mamata's Communal Play In Bengal, Dec., 3, 2015, (An article on Catch news).

problem of the Muslims of West Bengal but this remains the problem of other 70% population of West Bengal irrespective of their creed.

The concept of Muslim Appeasement used by Chatterji has been criticized by Murshad Alam and Mosarrap H Khan. According to Alam and Khan (2015)¹¹⁸ Appeasement means making peace with someone who is particularly hostile or waging a war. Then this would mean making peace with Indian Muslims. According to the authors, this would mean then two things. Firstly, Muslims are still trying to divide the Indian State, as the image is portrayed of the Muslims from the pre-partition period and Secondly, the Muslims in the post-Independence period is behaving militantly by trying to take away all the available resources away from the majority. The authors further explain that the term Muslim appeasement had been brought in the political sphere by the BJP and RSS during the Ram Janmbhoomi Movement. The movement was against the Muslim appeasement during Congress regime. The authors argue that the debate on Muslim appeasement was a way of depriving the Muslims of the resources. According to the Indian constitution, State remains in a position to take certain special steps that would benefit the historically disadvantaged communities to come out of their backwardness. But, any such step, when taken by the government is charged as Minority Appeasement by the opposition. The authors state that it is because of their faith that Muslims have been kept deprived of their share of resources. The concept of Muslim Appeasement when applied in West Bengal becomes all the more problematic because Muslims form more than a quarter of the population. According to the authors, “The subsequent indifference of the ‘secular democratic’ state to the bleak condition of the Muslims has further exacerbated the problem” (Alam & Khan, 2015). Further the authors maintain that the debate on the term Muslim appeasement also means that the Muslims of West Bengal do not deserve any special benefit as most other communities face the same problems like lack of health education etc. According to the authors, this kind of argument is not relevant for the Muslims in West Bengal for they are the weakest among all the Muslim communities in India. The author argues that the normalization of the marginalization of the Muslims in terms of economic condition flares up communal differences. The term Muslim appeasement also entails that Muslims vote in

¹¹⁸ Murshed Alam and Mosarrap H. Khan, Is Mamata Banerjee Included in ‘Muslim Appeasement’ in west Bengal? *Café Dissensus*, 2015.

terms of their religious identity, for they are appeased through certain benefits and cultural manipulations such as, political leaders meeting the religious heads of the community. But this argument, according to the authors, robs the Muslims of West Bengal of their agency. The community needs the Muslim elite and the middle class to come forward and provide a helping hand towards the betterment of the community. Only this would lead the community to negotiate with the political leaders for their due rights, as a citizen of the country.

MUSLIM POLITICAL ASSERTION

The identity assertion by the Muslim middle class is noted by Reyaz (2017)¹¹⁹. According to him, the Muslim middle class is now demanding their rights as an equitable citizen. The Muslim middle class had been seen making active participation in several recent movements concerning the Muslim society in general. For example, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e Hind in the past had participated in the movements for demanding higher remuneration for Madrasa teachers (Ali, 2015)¹²⁰, garnering support in favor of Triple Talaq (HT Correspondent, 2016)¹²¹. According to M. Reyaz, this assertion is creating gap between the majority community and the Muslims because this threatens the hegemony of the Hindu Upper caste domination. However, the power centers mainly in the hands of the traditional clerics from a particular area who provide support to the party. According to Reyaz, their main assertion remains in the religious arena. For example, the right to use loudspeakers during socio-religious gatherings, beyond the time limit prescribed by the Supreme court. For Reyaz, this creates resentment among the majority community.

The controversy around the celebration of Nabi –Dibas and Saraswati pujo in a school in Howrah district is the example that best explains the author’s argument that assertion by the Muslim community threatens the Hindu domination. According to

¹¹⁹ New Found Muslim Assertiveness In Bengal and the Rise of Hindutva by M Reyaz, Café Dissensus,

¹²⁰ The protest took place on June 18, 2014. Around 2000 Madrasa teachers from across the state marched in Kolkata to demand for higher remuneration. The protest was held under the banner of All India Minority Forum. The lack of infrastructure in the Madrasa were also the main focus of the protest held.

¹²¹ The jamiat-Ulema-i-Hind was against the abolition of triple talaq in west Bengal. The centre in its decision to abolish the practice of triple Talaq in the Muslim community asked the state’s governments opinion in the matter. The west Bengal government refused to give support to the centre’s proposition rather it provided its support to the Jamiat-Ulema-i-Hind’s leaders in condemning the centre’s proposal. According to the organization, the centre do not hold any right to interfere in the cultural and religious practices of the Muslims and also that the proposal to abolish triple talaq is only a ‘distraction agenda’ of the centre.

a news article (Roy E. , 2017)¹²², many students of Tehatta High School, with the residents of the area carrying a three-foot-idol of Goddess Saraswati, protested against the lockdown of the school since two months. The lock down became a hindrance to the celebration of the Saraswati Pujo. This all happened, when some Muslim students came to ask for permission to celebrate Nabi Diwas, Prophet Mohammad's birth anniversary. But the permission was denied as it had never been celebrated there within the campus. This resulted in a conflict between the students of the two communities of the school, as a result of which legal stands had to be taken. According to another media report (Daniyal, 2016), the resentment between the two communities was evident when in 2016, the State government restricted the timing of the immersion of the idol of Goddess Durga to 4 pm¹²³, so that it does not interrupt the procession of Muharram, celebrated around the same time as Durga pujo. But, when it was challenged in the court, the Calcutta High Court gave judgement in favor of the petitioner. The court accused the government of Appeasing the Minority. Further, when argued by the State that it was a law and order issue, the court struck it down by saying that Muharram was not the most important festival of the Islam religion whereas the immersion of the idol is an old Hindu ritual that is important to them and for those "who worship Maa Durga with a pure and clean mind. It accused the government of being bias to one particular community and attempting to "pamper and Appease the Minority section of the public at the cost of the majority section". The court further suggested, "indulge in performing puja to compete with one another for the purpose of winning prizes". Finally, it extended the immersion timing from 4 pm to 8.30 pm. These tensions are creating Anti-Muslim feeling among the section of the population of West Bengal giving opportunity to the right wing forces in west Bengal to create further communal tensions.

THE RISE OF THE BJP AND THE COMMUNAL TENSION IN WEST BENGAL

The rise of the BJP has changed the political scenario in West Bengal. Since, 2014, BJP has been emerging as an important force along the fault lines of the West Bengal politics. On May 25, 2017 (First Post Staff, 2017)¹²⁴, BJP protested against the Trinamool Congress government on

¹²² Nabi Diwas vs Saraswati Puja: Fault Lines in a Bengal School, The Indian Express, Feb 1, 2017, by Esha Roy.

¹²³ Why did the High Court accuse the Mamata Banerjee Government of appeasing minorities during Durga Pujo, Oct 10, 2016. by, Shoaib Daniyal, Scroll. in

¹²⁴ First post news, BJP protests against Mamata Banerjee government; Kolkata cops resort to lathicharge, detains demonstrators, May 25, 2017.

the pretext of Law and Order issue. The protest turned violent and it resulted in police resorting to lathi-charge and water-canon. The result of the by-election of 2017 (Kundu, 2017)¹²⁵, Kanthi Dakshin assembly constituency says a lot. Although Trinamool candidate won but the vote share of BJP rose to 31% from only 9%. BJP had been emerging as the principle opposition in West Bengal. The activities of RSS in the State could be understood to form a communal gap between the two communities. For example, the organization of training camps by RSS in different locations like Tantiberia in Howrah district, Siliguri, Farakka and Kasimbazar in Murshidabad, for the Hindus had attracted lots of Hindus of West Bengal (Bhattacharya, 2015)¹²⁶. According to the report (2015), these training camps train Hindus in protecting themselves against the Minority attack in West Bengal. According to the report RSS claims that, a no. of atrocities had happened against the ST/SC Hindus and therefore it is very necessary to train Hindus so that they could protect themselves from the “atrocities” of the Muslims. It is interesting to note that suddenly, the ST/SC community becomes a part of Hindu community which had always been attacked by the Hindu upper caste. The camp includes classes in Mental, Physical and spiritual training. According to the interview done by SabrangIndia of Suvojit Bagchi (SabrangIndia Staff, 2016), in 2016, communal riots broke out in different parts of West Bengal such as Chandannagore in Hoogly district, Kharagpur in West Medinipur etc. during Durga puja processions which coincided with Muharram. The Chief Minister called it “Communal terrorism”. The violence had got triggered when some people involved in the Durga idol immersion procession hurled stones at the Manik peer’s Mazar shrine. That very night, a Muharram procession was also scheduled. Bombs were hurled at houses, making people to flee from there. In Hazinagar, it was found out that many local Trinamool leaders or even municipal councillors of the TMC were involved in the riots. According to the report, these political party members would work as Trinamool candidate in the morning and at night helped in organizing programmes for the Viswa Hindu Parishad for example, organizing Hanuman Chalisa distribution programme for the VHP. Here, the report provides an interesting observation regarding state’s involvement with religion. The report puts forth the question that why is it necessary to engage in any religious activity of any community, mixing state with religion? The politicization of religion creates confusion in the atmosphere as religion becomes the new excuse

¹²⁵ Indrajit Kundu, India Today news, Assembly by-election results: Trinamool Congress wins Bengal seat, BJP takes Assam, April 23, 2017

¹²⁶ Hindustan Times, RSS registers jump in membership for training camps in West Bengal, July 01, 2018.

for people to do anything and getting away with it. The validity of the argument could be understood by another example. To tackle the growing popularization of the BJP in West Bengal, TMC in many circumstances had taken refuge of religion to win back different community. For instance, According to the report (Sengupta, 2017)¹²⁷, TMC supporters had been seen playing the religious card so as to win the Hindu community. The chanting of the name Ram and participating in Hanuman Jayanti rallies by the TMC indicates that they too are concerned about the Hindu community's interest shows a clear picture of how Religion is politicized. The unveiling of the statue of Hanuman in Kolkata by the State Consumer Affairs Minister Sadhan Pandey was a way to connect with the local population through such programmes. Similarly, according to another report (Sengupta S. , 2017)¹²⁸, in Malda, a Muslim majority district in West Bengal, during Ram Navami, people with saffron headbands, carrying Swords and Trishuls in their hands was seen rallied on the streets. The focus of the RSS remains in the two Muslim majority regions, which is, Malda and Uttar Dinajpur, because, according to them, these two districts have less no. of Hindus residing than Muslims which creates insecurity among the Hindus. Also these two districts face infiltration from Bangladesh. Therefore, it gives RSS the opportunity to pave their way in north Bengal. The whole BJP agenda in West Bengal is directed to curb the alleged Muslim radicalism against the Hindu community. The training camps in West Bengal had been opened on the pretext of Muslim fundamentalism by RSS.

According to the same report (2017), in the world of social media also, RSS's south Bengal chapter introduced "IT Milan", exclusively for those swayamsevaks who work in the IT sector. This includes sessions like Yoga, Surya Namaskar, discussions on current affairs. The IT Milan also helps them in broadening their social media activities. Hindu Samhati, Bajrang Dal and Hindu Jagran Manch have social media teams with 10- 15 people for generating content. The social media remains flooded with fake news, fake social media profiles, morphed videos, leading to tensions amongst the communities. For RSS, Corruption and bad governance remain secondary issues, the primary importance is the security of Hindus in West Bengal. According to the report, in 2011, RSS had only, 580 shakhas whereas by 2018, it has grown to have more than 1500 shakhas in West Bengal. Most of the shakhas are in the districts of Kolkata, West and East Midnapore, Howrah, Birbhum. The arms training camp

¹²⁷ Here's How The Trinamool Congress Is Taking On BJP's Hindutva Politics In West Bengal, 13-04-2017, Huffpost.

¹²⁸ India news, Playing with fire: RSS organizes arms-training camp for Hindus in Murshidabad, 3 June, 2017.

in West Bengal's Murshidabad district by RSS is another example of BJP's agenda in West Bengal. The camp had been organized to train Hindus in the use of weapons and Martial Arts. The use of the term "jihadi forces" against the Muslims by RSS members says a lot about the intention of these camps. Murshidabad consists of 66% of Muslim population and therefore, it is not coincidental that they chose Murshidabad as the place to set up their arms training camp.

According to Reyaz (2017), the identity assertion by Muslims is seen as a radicalization by the Bengali population. The Bashirhat riot of 2017 (Reyaz, *Bashirhat Riot: How Bengal is different and why it still gives hope*, 2017)¹²⁹, is another instance which talks about the changing communal equations in West Bengal. The riot happened over a post by a teenage boy in Facebook regarding Islam. People torched houses and Muslims clerics and leaders mobilized people to protest against the Facebook post. The mob was mobilized on the pretext of "Islam Khatre me Hai" (Reyaz, *Bashirhat Riot: How Bengal is different and why it still gives hope*, 2017). People were outraged against the boy and were demanding for his punishment. The crowd was seen chanting 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', with people burning an effigy and Mumtaz Begum written on it. This was referred to Mamata Banerjee as Hindutva forces claim that she has converted herself into a Muslim and thus the name has been given to her.

These are the experiences of the Muslims mostly in the rural areas of West Bengal. What difference do we find in the experiences of the Muslims in Urban areas of West Bengal?

GHETTOISATION IN THE URBAN AREA AND THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF MUSLIMS

The ghettoisation of the Muslims in Urban area leaves them out of the competition in terms of many facilities. Local Muslims in Urban areas remain mainly engaged in informal sectors. Anusua Chatterji in her *Margins of Citizenship: Muslim Experiences in Urban India* (2017)¹³⁰, describes the economic condition of Muslims in Kolkata Park circus, an Urban area. She describes, how in an Urban area like Park Circus, Muslims in their daily life deal with their

¹²⁹ Basirhat riot: How Bengal is different and why it still gives Hope, 08-07-2017.

¹³⁰ Margins of Citizenship: Muslim experiences in Urban India by Anusua Chatterjee, published by Routledge, 2017.

marginalization. Wealthy Muslims live outside the social world of these ordinary Muslims who struggle to make their living in the face of economic hardships. The author notes that the ghettoization of the Muslims in this area is due to frequent communal outbreaks between 1926 and 1951. It led to the inflow of low skilled, migrant laborers. These Muslims, in search of security moved in to places where their co-religionists lived. But the area did not provide economic security on its own. According to the author, the few Muslim families who had their traditional business in the neighbourhood, their children refuse to work in those traditional jobs and demand to work as wage laborer under some factory like shoes, wallets etc. Also, enterprises which are in the local area do not employ labor from the local neighbourhood even if having the capacity to generate employment. This is because, in case of disputes between laborer and the owner, the laborer, if hailing from the same locality remains in a position to mobilize his/ her people against the factory owner.

Chatterjee (2017) further explains that government jobs for Muslims remain a rare phenomenon. Many Muslims complain of biasness and prejudiced behavior during the process of their selection in the government jobs. Therefore, most of the Muslim families engage their children in some apprenticeships of different types. Being a Muslim further makes situation difficult for them, for instance, Muslims have to use fake names in order to get work in Hindu operated business in the city. Muslim women in the course of their work in the Hindu household, fake their address, names and also dresses as a Hindu woman with Sindoor and other such symbols of Hindu culture for the ease of getting a job and to avoid hostilities from other communities. Also, Religious symbols affect the Muslim men in general. The wearing of skullcap and the traditional kurta- pyjama to their places of work is often met with disapproval and distrust.

In the field of education also, the ordinary Muslims residing in the Urban area of Kolkata, find it hard to educate their children in the mainstream education. Chatterjee (2017) states that, the wealthy Muslims send their children to the English medium schools, whereas, the ordinary Muslims had to compromise by sending their children to Madrasa due to inaffordability of the education. She found that the lower middle class and the slum dwelling poor also, shows great understanding regarding the benefit of sending their children to English medium schools. It is in contradiction to the state policy of extending funding

towards Madrasa education and equalizing Muslims to Madrasa education. However, for most of the Muslims, Urdu education is a hindrance in getting proper employment in the mainstream. For many Muslims, the Urdu education remains irrelevant because all of the official work is done in English and therefore, Urdu education provides no help. And as regarding the religious education, one can receive it by learning it under a local Maulvi. Even few missionary schools where underprivileged Muslims could think of sending their children often have restrictive Criteria which denies the admission to the Muslim children.

DIVERSITY AMONG THE MUSLIM POPULATION OF WEST BENGAL

It is important to show the diversity amongst the Muslim population, when talking about the new public sphere because it helps in approaching the issues related to the Muslims in a better way. There is a vast difference among the Muslims of West Bengal. According to Chatterji (2017)¹³¹, the Linguistic divide between the Bengali speaking Muslims and Urdu speaking Muslims is a fact which we come across even after independence. According to the Non- Bengali Muslims, the Bengali speaking Muslims are the ones responsible for downgrading the authenticity of Islam. For the former, the latter are not the real Muslims as Bengali Muslims follow many cultural practices of a Bengali Hindu. Non- Bengali Muslims on the other hand follow the pan-Islamic tradition, which is grown in Middle-East and which is followed and practiced by the north Indian elite Muslims. The Non-Bengali Muslims carry Arabic or Persian names as well and wear traditional attires like kurta pyjama. Urdu is their language of conversation. But within the Non-Bengali Muslims also, there are two categories which are separated by their social status as well. First category is the traditional ‘Asrafs’ which are the descendents from Awadh, Mysore etc. The second is the slum dwellers, the migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh who came in successive waves to find work in the city. The second category is seen by the traditional elites as the ones who are degrading and bringing bad name to Islam and particularly to the neighbourhood. Most of the Bengali speaking Muslims, avoid speaking the Bengali language so as to show their difference from those Bengali speaking Muslims who had been converted to Islam from among the lower section of the Hindu community. Therefore in the urge to show that they are true Muslims, the Bengali Muslims refrain from using Bengali Language. Also,

¹³¹ Anasua Chaterjee, Margins of Citizenship: Muslim Experiences In Urban India, , Chapter 3, 2017.

according to the Bengali speaking Muslims it is because of the Non-Bengali Muslims that they had not been able to assimilate within the Muslim fold.

Alefea Tundawala in her *Multiple Representations of Muslimhood In West bengal:Identity Construction Through Literature* (Tundawala A. , 2012)¹³²

The linguistic divide could be seen even in the literatures also between Bengali Muslims and Urdu speaking Muslims. But it is also essential to note that they could not be categorized into water-tight compartments. According to Alefea Tundawala (2012), the Bengali Muslim literature is more assimilatory regarding the Hindu ideas and thoughts. It works to bridge the gap between the Hindu and the Muslims. It has belief in the Hindu system of rituals, practices and customs and also gives huge importance to the activities of pirs, who remain the integral part of Islam of the rural Bengal. This section of the literati, seem less acquainted with the greatness of Islam. Although, this section works around the Hindu system of beliefs and practices, they refrain from making their work Hinduised. Their work, do not contain religious themes and titles. For example, Bengali Muslim weekly named “Natun Gati” which has all Bengali Muslim editors, is a fine example for this. This also shows their admiration for Bengali. Because of their love for Bengali language and their less attachment to Muslim identity, they have gained the trust of the large section of Hindu Bengali. Most of the Bengali Muslim writers have also been awarded at par with the Bengali Hindu writers like Manas Majumdar, Saroj Bandopadhyay etc. The Bengali Muslim writers are of the view that Muslims need to develop their literature so that relations between the Hindus and Muslims become amicable, thus each becoming a part of other’s society.

Whereas, the Urdu speaking writers, according to Tundawala oppose any influences from the Hindu community and the local cultural environment. Their writings are the expressions of Muslim culture and identity and an effort to preserve the Muslim purity and distinctiveness of Muslim. Their writings may showcase the inclination towards pan-Islamism, to reach out to the Muslims all over the world. But they avoid using any such statements in their writing which could lead to communal tensions. Their avoidance of the Hindu local cultural environment do not put them stand against the Indian constitution rather they show

¹³² Alefea Tundawala, *Multiple Representations Of Muslimhood In West Bengal: Identity Construction Through Literature*, South Asia Research, Sage Publication, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 139-163.

full support to the Indian identity. In response to the Hindu aggression, which doubts Muslim's loyalty to India, the Urdu speaking writers compose poems and prose pieces emphasizing the sacrifices made by the Muslims during Independence, signifying their attachment to India as their homeland. As Tundawala states: "Such competition between Hindus and Muslims for the right to speak for the nation may be deemed to lead to a hardening of religious boundaries. Yet, the Urdu writers also suggest ways in which popular literary genres continue to define a common identification with the nation, even as they shape new conceptions of difference. They project another type of the shared generic convention, a devotionism now linked to the country. The Bengali Muslim writers on the other hand seem rather decided to enlist the support of their Hindu readers. The construction of identity for them is more a political than a religious project. So they find it hard to ground the explication of their national identity explicitly in religion. They see no need in being a Muslim first by being blind to the requirements of the time in one's own country. They also see no need in going to Arab lands to prove oneself as a Muslim, which could be done even while sleeping in the thatched cottages, the mango groves and the bamboo forests of Bengal" (Tundawala, 2012).

Caste is another factor which fails to make Muslims a monolithic community. According to Sheikh Rahim Mondal (2003)¹³³, Uttar Bango Anagrasar Muslim Sangram Samity is the government registered organization for OBC Muslims. In 2003, this group entered into the political scene to demand reservation for OBC Muslims especially for those living in Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur. The Samiti was very active in helping the OBC Muslims of North Bengal. One such community is Nashyas community, an important indigenous Muslim community residing in sub-Himalayan north Bengal. This Community constituted of the numerically largest group among Muslim OBC in west Bengal. They are considered as descendents of those Muslims who came under the ambit of Islam from different indigenous communities of north Bengal like Koch, Rajbansis etc. They are considered by the Hindus as the ones who converted to Islam therefore they are referred as nasto-jati by Hindus and as their conversion is not that old, they are also known as nao-Musalman (new Muslims). Nashyas claim themselves as sheikhs known as Nashya sheik, to raise their social status but the upper class Muslims keep them at a distance. They are sunnis and follow the

¹³³ Social Structure, OBC and Muslims, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No.46,(Nov.,15-21, 2003), pp 4892-4897.

Hanafi school of tradition. The Deobandi Madrasa is also gaining ground among the Nashya community. They are also known as Rajbhansi Musalman. Because of their ethnic originality and their integration within the local population, that is the rajbansis, their dialect is different from the popular Bengali. These two schools of thought had played their role in impacting the Nashya community. These schools helped in Islamization of the community which in turn helped the community to assimilate smoothly within the Muslim fold. They are backward in education and other spheres of life. Their political participation is minimal because of their socio-economic backwardness. Until and unless the diversity among the Muslim population of west Bengal is not recognized by the state and the people living in it, it would be difficult to understand the problems consuming Muslims.

BHADRALOK AND THEIR CULTURAL PREJUDICE TOWARDS MUSLIMS

According to Chatterji (2017)¹³⁴, the ghettoisation of the Muslims in the urban area is also because of the anti-Islam cultural prejudice of the Hindu middle classes. Hindu Bhadrlok constructs an “other” around Muslims which in itself leads to separation of the two communities. There is a stigma related to the Islam-predominant neighbourhood and negative connotation attached to the Muslim cultural practice. The Cultural prejudice of the Hindu Bhadrlok is experienced by the Muslims in their daily lives, in the urban neighbourhood, gradually excludes Muslims in the process from the mainstream. Chatterji notes that, for Hindu middle class, these neighbourhood are a reflection of mini-Pakistan, where people are aggressive and unpleasant and do not have the civic qualities that are the required criteria for an urban living. ‘The azaan “blares” from the mosques’, the place reeks of garlic’, there is beef everywhere’, ‘the men and women appear as though from a different world’- were the characteristics described by them regarding the Islam-predominant space. The Muslim’s sense of religious identity and their ways of living is stressed on by the local Hindus which make them incompatible with the urban lifestyle and also to the Hindu culture which is more liberal and progressive and remains more suited to the cosmopolitan life. The common fear of diversity could be sensed here as the culture that remains alien to us makes us apprehensive of its unpredictability. Here, the cultural practice and the lifestyle of the Muslims have been described as opposite to that of a Hindu and according

¹³⁴ Margins of Citizenship: Muslim experiences in Urban India by Anasua Chatterjee, published by Routledge, 2017.

to chatterji, the use of the word opposite is a powerful way of signifying that everything is wrong with the Muslims as it does not fit within the cultural practice of the Hindu middle class. For example, Hindu middle class criticizes the marriage practices among Muslims where they can marry four wives. Hindu's notion of uncleanness also comes from the food practice of the Muslims. The fact that Muslims consume beef makes the neighbourhood ritually polluted but some also cite the reason of genuine health problems related to consumption of beefs and living in close proximity to the leather treatment factories. These generalizations overlook the fact that the Muslims are compelled to live in such spaces in ghettos due to lack of social and financial security even after so many years of independence. The Park circus where the author had taken up, is a place where Muslims live in their own world far removed from the world of the Hindu middle class. The Muslim neighbourhood is thought of as an unsafe place is evident by the fact that a Hindu would never move into a Muslim place after a certain time limit. This explains the fact that a Muslim however educated would not find a place in an affluent Hindu neighbourhood. This shows that apart from the insecurity generated through communal violence, the factor which leads Muslims to live in ghettos is the cultural prejudice practiced by the Hindus against the Muslims. The memories of the partition period among the Muslim middle class do not let them leave their constructed boundaries and stay in a mixed neighbourhood. Many Muslims share the view that, lower Muslim class who are mainly the slum dwellers act as a buffer zone during the riot. It acts as a safety valve during any riot. There remains a social status gap between the affluent middle class Muslims and the Muslims of the slum. They try hard to remain at a distance from the lower class Muslims as they are not of the same social status but the middle class Muslims fail to leave the place because of Hindu prejudice which does not let them stay in a Hindu dominated locality. Also, the potential threat of a communal flare-up among the Muslim youth is another reason which prohibits them to go beyond their closed social circle. According to the author, because the Muslims live in close proximity with each other, Hindus find them as one with a heightened sense of religious identity. They overlook the fact that due to cultural prejudice they are forced to live in such a way. This view also gives primary importance to the idea that religious and cultural identity is the primary identity of any individual. This also entails that this prejudice gives way to counter assertion of identity by the Muslims in aggressive ways.

The new public sphere is a sphere of contestation. Most of the wealthy Muslims went to East Pakistan after Independence and those who were left behind are the lower class Muslims who had been trying to assert their identity by holding onto different political tools like Culture and Religion. It must be understood that religion as an identity is sometimes imposed on the Muslims by the other community which emanates from the construction of the 'other'. The political parties take recourse to religion as well. This is for the variety of reasons. As Singh states: "1. Religion many times helps in mobilizing support from any religion and sect. 2. Political parties find it easier to mobilize support directly from the member of religion community by appealing to them. 3. Religion on many occasions provides an extensive basis for organizing of democratic politics. 4. The communication of ideas is strong within a religious group or sect and generally members of group share the common view point in relation to political parties as well as individually" (Singh, 2010). The failure to move from that constructed other leads one to embrace the imposed identity to gain other benefits and to make a place in the society even in the name of the given identity. The rise of the BJP makes the Muslims even more aware of its difference with the Hindu community. It is a fact that the Muslim community is not similar in its membership, social status, etc, but is one in terms of fear, and trying to carve out a space where they share equal status with other communities in terms of social status, political and economic advantages. The identity assertion by the Muslim middle class shows the aspiration and the demand for a better life.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In the pre-partition Bengal, there were different events that located Muslims in relation to the Bengali public sphere. The Ferazee and Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah movement in Bengal brought about the socio-economic reforms in Bengal. Muslim rural leaders played the most important role in making the rural Bengali Muslim community aware of their socio-economic deprivation. The movement became the clashing point between the Hindu and the Muslim community. The movement naturally took a communal shape as the large percentage of peasants, were Muslims and landlords were the Hindus. These movements brought out leadership that was rural and subaltern in character. The leaders were from amongst the people themselves who could mobilize the rural population. The movement brought out the rural population in the fore front and helped in giving a voice to the rural Muslim population. The Muslims in the pre-partition Bengal took recourse to different events to showcase their cultural, economical and political outlook. But we also see the heterogeneous nature of the Muslim community. The rural Muslim population was an assimilated part of the Bengali Hindu culture. They followed the rituals practiced by their Bengali Hindu neighbours. Whereas, the elites, also known as Ashrafs, were mostly the Urdu speaking Muslims, who wanted to have equal share in the government jobs and other political rights, as their Hindu counterparts. The Bhadrakol of Bengal dominated most of the ranks in government jobs. Muslims lacked behind in education which resulted in their backwardness politically. Culturally also, Muslims were regarded inferior by the Hindu upper caste. Muslims were active in breaking this domination in the pre-partition Bengal. From the Khilafat movement to the concept of Pakistan, Muslims were active in making their presence important in the Bengali public sphere. There was constant effort to mobilize the rural Muslim population to the agendas of the Muslim elite leaders. For this, they tried to use religious symbols to unify the Muslim population. But it was not easy to separate the Bengali identity with that of a Muslim identity. During Khilafat movement, Ulema tried to come in the fore front, to regain their lost leadership during the Mughal rule. But after the advent of the British and after the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, Ulema lost their leadership. The Khilafat movement was seen by the Ulema, as an opportunity to showcase their leadership. This also led to their alliance with the Muslim political leaders. But the Ulema failed to regain their leadership with the end of the Khilafat movement. Khilafat movement in itself was a cultural movement that was

used by the Muslims as way to showcase their cultural distinctiveness and superiority through pan-Islamism as against the Hindu cultural domination in Bengal. The Khilafat movement saw the Hindu-Muslim unity. However, not all section of the Hindu community came in support of the Muslim community. The partition of Bengal was another important event that brought out the complexities of the Bengali public sphere. The partition of Bengal initially was opposed by both the Hindu and the Muslim community but after several incidents, Muslims saw the partition of Bengal beneficial for their well being. Here, British played an important role by conveying to the Muslims, the advantage of the partition. The British made the Muslims realize that the partition would give them their due share which they always deserved but never got because of the Hindu domination in every sphere. The new province that would be carved out from the bigger Bengal would be a Muslim majority region which would benefit them politically, culturally and economically. This made the Muslims in favor of the partition. Thus, the rigorous opposition created by the Hindus made the Muslims to join the anti-agitation camp. During Swadeshi and Boycott movement in Bengal, the use of Hindu symbols further alienated the Muslims. This created a rift between the Muslim and the Hindu community. Also, the language played a huge role in the Hindu-Muslim divide. The two categories, that is, Bengali and Muslim, led to the crisis of identity at some point. A Muslim cannot be a Bengali as well as a Muslim together. This was the cry that was made by the Muslim leadership. In the backdrop of this, the use of the Bengali language in all the schools as a medium of instruction was opposed by the Muslim leadership. Muslim tried to put forth this issue through several delegations, but the issue got further aggravated rather than being solved. The Calcutta University which was the main institutional body had most of the Hindu members in its board, did not pay heed to the Muslim issue. This further aggravated the situation between the two communities. The Muslims demanded that the schools should use text written in Urdu and Arabic. They also accused the Hindu text of showing Muslims under bad light. The glory of the Muslim heroes are badly depicted in this texts and also shows them as vulgar, destructive and aggressive as opposed to Hindu Kings and heroes who were righteous and brave. According to Muslims, this puts the Muslims community under scrutiny and makes their culture inferior. The communal award proposed by the British also, brought out the complexities of the Bengali public sphere. The Muslim's demand for separate electorates in the Legislative assembly was a demand that threatened the domination of the Hindu Bhadrakal in Bengal. But Muslims knew that the only

possibility of getting a fair share in the political power after British leave the country is by separate electorate. Because according to the Muslims, Hindus could not be trusted with sharing equal power with the Muslims. The concept of Pakistan also, should be seen in the lack of trust between the two communities. The demand for a separate Homeland by the Muslim leaders divided the country into two halves with the creation of a new state called Pakistan. But even though, the onus of the tragedy is made to fall on the Muslim leadership, it is analyzed by several authors like Hamza Alawi, that the ideology of Pakistan was not communal in nature. It was a peasant ideology. The Muslim leaders mobilized the Muslim population by giving them a dream of a new land where the peasants would have an equal place and live without any oppression. Therefore, Alawi's observation makes it possible to see the demand for a separate nation in a different light than the popular notion of the demand being a communal one. However, with the partition of India, Bengal also saw its division in two halves. The portion which remained in India became west Bengal and the former East Bengal became East Pakistan. The quest for identity could be seen in the Muslim population during the pre-partition era, which everyone thought especially the Muslim leadership that it would end with the creation of a separate Homeland, which would give them every opportunity that they always deserved but never got in former Bengal. But we see the identity crisis and continuation in the identity formation even after the partition of Bengal. The partition was a trauma for the poor people of both the communities who stayed back in West Bengal. The memories of loss and violence during the partition, was a huge setback to the people of both the communities. Muslims became the minority in the west Bengal. Most of the elite Muslim leaders left India and migrated to Pakistan which created a vacuum in the leadership of the Muslim population. The Muslims, who were left behind, were the ones with poor socio-economic condition. This section of the Muslim population again tried to restart their lives with a hope of better future. But the condition of the country had become difficult. The riot between the two communities had started to unleash even before the partition. The Direct Action Day was the brain child of the Muslim leaders who wanted to have the division of the country in any condition. The condition became such that both the communities became convinced that the necessity of the time is the division of the country. The Muslims who stayed back in Bengal were insecure and only hoped that they would get a better future. But what actually happened in the post partition Bengal is the ghettoisation of the Muslim community. The fear of a potential violence led them to remain in close proximity to one another. This created

ghettos of the Muslim community with little or no adequate facilities. The ruralization of the Muslims in west Bengal led them away from the mainstream and forced them to live a life of deprivation with lack of education and other facilities.

In the post-partition west Bengal, the Muslim leaders who were left behind, tried to maintain their leadership but it was not easy as the situation had become worse with the trauma and the loss of partition. History has always accused the Muslims in the creation of such situation that led to the partition. This was the perspective of the Hindus in west Bengal also. Many Muslim leaders adjusted themselves to the new situation by showing their loyalty to the Congress government. The Congress government ruled west Bengal under the premiership of Nehru, like in most of the other states in India. The state assumed an important role after the partition. The welfare of the communities was depended on the policies of the government. Muslims particularly, had to depend on the state for the advancement of the community. Muslims lost their traditional occupation and had to engage themselves in the petty jobs. This caused a huge loss to the Muslim community. Another thing which made the situation worse for the governance of Bengal was the waves of Hindu refugees coming from East Pakistan. The violence meted out to the Hindus in East Pakistan compelled large number of people to migrate to India. The Hindus who came back in successive waves from East Pakistan were agitated because of the treatment meted out to them in East Pakistan. Even the Hindus in West Bengal protested against the violence unleashed on the Hindus in East Pakistan. The protest sometimes changed itself into a riot for example, in 1964. In 1964, west Bengal witnessed riot, in the backdrop of the enmity between the two communities. The Congress government failed to solve the problem of the Hindu refugees, who believed it to be their right to have a better future in west Bengal. The waves of Hindu refugees also brought with itself the legacy of the Bengali Political leadership. These were the people who were a part of Bengali nationalism and thus refugees acted as a pressure group in west Bengal. The emergency period during Indira Gandhi regime with its programmes that target the marginalized community further led to the decline of the popularity of the Congress government. The sterilization programme followed by Sanjay Gandhi during the emergency period particularly targeted the Minority population to practice forceful sterilization and Muslims became one of the target. The Left front gradually emerged among the people of Bengal as a pro-people party. Its agenda related to land reforms made it the party for poor people. Muslims who were the economically deprived community in

the post partition West Bengal was depended on a government for its policies. Apart from electoral politics, other factors also played its role in Bengal that influenced Muslims and their public sphere. The 1992 riot in west Bengal happened in the backdrop of the Babri Masjid demolition. However, the cause of the riot was not altogether religious in nature but was a product of the burden that the overgrowing population was putting on the resources of the state. The riot was used as an excuse by the building contractors to uproot the Muslim slum dwellers from the land that the contractors wanted to have for further business.

The left government however, could not fulfill the promises that it made to the people of west Bengal. The Muslims in particular felt betrayed by the treatment that the left government meted out to the Muslim population. Bengali Muslims talked about their socio-economic deprivation and the reduction of Madrasa education to that of terrorism agitated the Bengali Muslims. Also, they felt that the Muslim community, especially the rural population of west Bengal has been used as a vote bank by the left front government. The Madrasas, upon which most of the rural Muslim population is depended for education was not at par with the education of the secular schools. Even at times, left government was accused by the Bengali Muslims of keeping them away from the mainstream education and giving exclusive importance only to the Madrasa education. The problem with the Madrasa education is that after completion of the studies, the Muslims fail to get any proper job in the mainstream. Therefore, as a result they are stuck with menial jobs and sometimes putting up with the jobs in Mosques. Other event which made the left government unpopular amongst the Muslims was the Nandigram incident. The socio-economic deprivation of the rural Muslim community and the failure to provide better future to the Muslims after the post-partition West Bengal resulted in trust deficit among the Muslim population of West Bengal against the Left Government.

After 34 long years of left front rule in west Bengal, the left government was replaced by the Trinamool Congress. The Muslims played an important role in replacing the government. The new Public sphere of west Bengal is a place of contestation and place of continuous assertion of identity. From this I mean, the Muslims in the contemporary west Bengal through its alliance with the present government tries to move beyond their stagnation. However, the present government has been criticized by the opposition, of appeasing the minorities and politicizing the religion. The new public sphere in Bengal also saw the

assertion of identities by the middle class. The middle class among the Muslim community of west Bengal could be seen aspiring for the better future. However, the Bengali Public sphere could be seen tilting towards the right wing ideology in West Bengal. The Hindu population of west Bengal agitated by the appeasement policy of the Trinamool Congress towards the Muslim community could be seen moving towards the right wing ideology. The assertion of identity by the Muslims in west Bengal is seen as radicalism by the Hindu community. The rise of the Bhartiya Janta Party in the political atmosphere of west Bengal could be understood to have a whole new dimension to it. The Hindutwa politics of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh(RSS), had been responsible for changing the communal equation in west Bengal. The same members of the TMC who would work for their party in the day could be seen working at night cooperating with the RSS workers. This had been responsible for many instances of violence between the two communities. In the Urban area like park circus, the attitude towards the Muslims by the Hindu upper caste creates much problem. The Muslim neighbourhood is described by the Hindus as 'Mini Pakistan' and is seen with contempt by the Hindu upper caste. The diversity existed among the Muslim population even in the pre-partition colonial Bengal, but the Muslim leadership managed to mobilize the rural Muslim population in the fulfillment of their dream of a separate Homeland. I assume, the mobilization was possible because of the rural Muslim's engagement with the Ferazee and the Tariqah-i-Muahammadiyah movement. The movements prepared them with the reality of their deprived socio-economic condition. Also, the movements showed them their real enemy. Most of the zamindars were Hindus and the peasants were Muslims. It might be possible that once the Muslims realized that Hindu zamindars were responsible for their exploitation, the Muslims naturally supported the Muslim leadership to carve out a space known as Pakistan, away from the exploitation of the Hindus. However, the Muslims in the post-partition west Bengal had lost its leadership, where most of their leaders migrated to Pakistan. But, even after the partition and getting a separate Homeland, the Indian Muslims continued their identity formation. It did not end with the partition of Bengal.

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