UNDERSTANDING 'MINI – PAKISTAN' IN KOLKATA: AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF MUSLIM IDENTITY
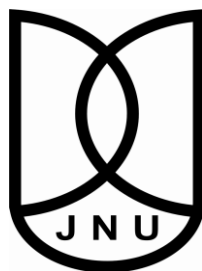
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled *Understanding 'Mini – Pakistan' In Kolkata: An Enquiry Into The Changing Dynamics of Muslim Identity* submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

During a course on research methods and techniques we were told by our teacher that there are certain things we should keep in mind when we decide a topic for our research. One of the most important among them was – to choose a topic that personally meant something to us. The reason or purpose behind such a decision according our professor was twofold, first it would ensure that we work harder, go the extra mile and not get bored with our area of study; and second that it would mean something to us personally once the findings became clear. It is with these guidelines that I choose the area of my study – to look at the changing nature of Muslim identity in the city of Kolkata. C.W. Mills (1959) in his work 'The Sociological Imagination' brings out a very important relation between a human being's biography and the larger historical setting, defining it as,

> "The sociological Imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social position... it is the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within this period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those all individuals in his circumstances... by the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of his society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and its historical push and shove. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and promise." (Mills 1959: 5-6)

Mills definition would help one understand why this topic was chosen for study. At the personal level this definition enables one to understand the reason behind why I, the researcher chose such a topic. Being born in Kolkata and belonging to the Muslim community did not seem to be two extremely polar aspects, as growing up in an environment where being a Bengali didn't contradict with being a Muslim; religion was seen as a private affair and one's identity was mainly according to one's culture. Similarly at the historical level, Bengal had always been assumed to move beyond the

scope of religion. The Bengal Renaissance and the Reformation Movement in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as well as the presence of a Communist Party at the state for thirty years ensured that religion had moved away from the public sphere and functioned only in the private domain. However few incidents that occurred in my life during the past few years made me realise that maybe communalism still has its roots in the city; one was a simple taxi ride home. The taxi driver who said I looked like his sister back home. was talking to me in general about what I do and how is Delhi different from Kolkata but on entering the Park Circus area, he started grumbling. I thought it was because of the traffic but then he said something that will probably stay with me forever.

> *"Ei jayegata bhalo na janen toh ei je era puro taake nijer Pakistan baniye niyeche, ekhan theke beshi raat hole jaayaat korben na. Ei Musulman gulo shaala shob haraami; nijer meyeder ke toh gharer bayre ber kore na aar amader meyeder dike ja bhabe takae..."* ("This place is not at all safe, these people they have made it their Pakistan, don't travel through this area if it gets too late. These Muslim scoundrels are all bastards; they don't let their daughters out of the house but the way they stare at our daughters...").

I was too shocked and taken aback to say anything or to say that even I am a Muslim and my family had not really tied me to the door, that I was free to make my own choices and men staring at or eve teasing women didn't really have anything to do with their religion. Even though this incident had a very disturbing effect on my psyche, I let it go thinking that it was just an anomaly; that people didn't really think like that. However few months later while waiting at the bank a similar incident occurred. Standing in the queue waiting for my turn to come I was standing behind a couple who were talking to each other. As their conversation grew more and more intense it also grew louder and louder. While their discussion revolved around how India is not developing fast enough and there are many social evils, their conversation suddenly acquired a different colour on seeing a man with *hena* dyed beard. One of them suddenly went on this long monologue about how it is because of the Muslims in the country and in this state that there isn't any progress, that they should have left 'their country' India at peace and had just gone to Pakistan. Also he went on blaming Muslims for the population problem India was having, pointing out how they only

produce babies and have no sense of family planning and the only thing they do is say, *"Allah, Allah"*.

While it would have probably been easier to forget these incidents or brand them as episodes stemming from the ignorance of the people, one has to realise that the things that were being said also have an impact on the people residing in this area and a similar effect was seen among the residents of Park Circus. It was during the month of *Ramadan,* while walking from the Park Circus Seven point Crossing, one could see that people were out on the streets buying *haleem* or fruits for *iftar.* Although this was not a new phenomenon, growing up in the city, every year during the month of *Ramzan*, I would see this scene, what was different was the atmosphere the energy that surrounded the place the activities and the people. It was crackling with a different energy – something had changed in the undercurrents; the inclusive element of this festival somehow had vanished from the city and it could be seen through very subtle changes. One such change was in the attire of the people; it had become a very recent phenomenon that during the Friday prayers or in this case during the month of *Ramadan* people would be seen wearing only *kurta pajama* and only wearing the skull cap, while among the women the number of those taking the *hijab* had increased steadily over the years. The simple act of buying *haleem* had also acquired a religious connotation. This became evident while listening to a conversation between two young boys who were crossing the street with me. One was saying to the other, *"Yeh apna khana nahin kha sakte jab dekho humara khana khane aa jate hain, khao apna 'maach bhaath' yeh humara khana hain..."*("Can't they eat their own food, you will always see them coming to eat our food, eat your 'fish and rice' this is our food...").

As the current historical processes are changing today, the larger picture in Bengal and the city of Kolkata is seeing a resurgence of religion, where larger historical and political processes are seeing an assertion of religious identity. It is at this juncture of time standing at the precipice that I, as a researcher am trying to locate my biography, trying to understand how my reality would fit in in this larger debate around religious identity.

Understanding my own biography and placing it in a larger debate, would require an answer to a more fundamental question regarding the assertion of Muslim identity in

Kolkata at this point in time, can one assume that the ideals that the city and state were suppose to have was just a farce, a lie that was fed to the people so that the actual situation would never be revealed and the hidden elements of communalism would just get stronger?

Before moving on to the specific research questions it is important to provide a brief overview of the larger theoretical debate surrounding this issue.

LOCATING THE DOMAIN OF ENQUIRY

The question of minority relation to the nation has been a long and a contentious one; the reason behind it of course varies from one country to another. For example in some countries like Rwanda in Africa, the minorities that is, the Tutsis were in power during the Belgian colonial rule. Even though small in number they were the ones who ran the government, were in high posts and ensured that the resources and opportunities remained within them. But when the colonial powers left the country they made the Hutus, who were the majority in number, the authority. This led to a situation of tension and internal schism and finally culminated in the genocidal attack on the Tutsis by the Hutus in 1994. The reason given by the Hutu militia and the Rwandan army was that the Tutsis were nothing more than 'cockroaches', pests who were feeding off the Hutus and had done it even during the colonial rule. The minorities in the country of Rwanda had to pay a very heavy price – instead of being assimilated or absorbed they were almost exterminated.

There are other countries whose approach to their minorities is not as violent as the one mentioned above. Nevertheless, there is a tendency among them to assimilate the minority communities in the name of nation building, as be seen now in France where the government is banning the use of head scarves in schools on the ground that it goes against the ethos of French secularism. This has created a wave of protest among the Muslims all over the Europe on the ground that it not only goes against their religious beliefs but also that it leads to a form of uniformity with and assimilation of the minority group into the majority population.

However, the minority relation vis-a-vis the state is mostly associated with power. Therefore in most of the countries the question that arises is what position one takes

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towards the minorities should they be assimilated or should their distinct identity be maintained. The whole problem of minority position or the question of minority rights within a nation-state comes from a very primitive and deep-rooted understanding of seeing oneself as the true people or citizens of a nation and seeing the minority group as the 'other' as an alien entity who does not belong to be a part of 'us'. This sense of seeing oneself as the legitimate torch bearer of one's national identity stems from the construction of the nation itself, where a particular group's cultural values and ethos become the values and ethos of the whole country, thereby, making those following these dictums as the true citizens. More often than not it is the majority group's cultural norms and settings that become the culture of the state, thereby making the majority community the true members of the nation-state.

A similar argument also has been taking place in the Indian state where the debate is mostly between the Muslim population and the Hindu population. The problem between the two communities is too complex and layered and to provide a simple explanation to this situation would only add fuel to the fire. The Muslims came to India mainly from Central Asia and ruled over this country for centuries but they never really integrated with the majority population and maintained their distinct identity. Even though they were small in number they ruled over India and in the process introduced their culture and rules. Although these rules were alien to the indigenous population, due to fear and lack of any other alternative, the Hindu population accepted and followed them. Later when the British took over India, the condition of the Hindus improved relatively whereas those of the Muslims became worse; from being at the helm of power, to a position where all their sense of glory and supremacy was lost. As a result they moved more and more towards their religion and formed a cocoon which they believed would protect them, but instead it only had a more divisive effect between the two religious groups which finally led to the partition of the country and one of the most violent and forced rehabilitations of the people in the world.

Those Muslims who stayed back in this country today have to face the question regarding assimilation and absorption or complete extermination, from certain divisive elements in the current political arena. Since the makers of this country realised the importance of having a Constitution which safeguarded everyone's rights,

the situation in the country is not as dire as it could have been. Nevertheless, the Muslim population is asked time and again to show their solidarity with the country and one such path that they are expected to follow is the acceptance of having only one identity as an Indian and letting go of all the markers of their religious identity. This becomes an extremely hard thing for Muslims to do because Islam as a religion does not only have rules for the private domain or those associated with one's personal belief about God or praying. Rather it is all pervasive and dictates all aspects of one's life including the ones that fall under the purview of the modern state – marriage laws, property laws and divorce laws. And so the problem arises, because for the Muslims of this country choosing one identity does mean forgoing another. Also, since religion has acted more often than not as a healing touch for this community there is an affinity to move towards their religious identity. An example of this was the Shah Bano Case of 1992, where some members of the Muslim community protested against the Supreme Court giving a judgment in favour of a destitute woman Shah Bano, regarding the provisions of alimony using the Indian Civil Code which was against the *Shariah*[1] laws upheld by the clergy. This led to major protest demonstrations all over the country because the minority community saw it as an infringement of their religious identity and it was their fear that led to such a mass agitation. Sadly though, the only person who lost something in this tug of war between the state and the minority community was an old woman fighting for her right, as the court changed its decision and upheld the *Shariah* laws of the community.

If one places this situation at the larger global scale then the situation tends to become even more complicated. After the September 11th 2001 attack on the U.S.A. by the *Al – Qaeda*, anyone who is seen carrying markers associated with Islam is seen as a terrorist and to show their position against the acts of terrorists, one would have to be a 'good' Muslim; this definition of a 'good' Muslim basically ensures that one is completely removed from their religious beliefs. A similar argument is used in this country as well, where all those seen as carrying the markers of Islam are seen with suspicion and are almost always branded as terrorists. A brilliant depiction of how the

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[1] Islamic laws are called Shariat.

Muslims are viewed is shown in a feature film of 2008 titled *Aamir*[2] directed by Raj Kumar Gupta. This film deals with the kind of prejudice and stereotypes Muslims have to face and even when they try to save people they are still branded as terrorists. The film revolves around the events of a day surrounding Aamir's (played by Rajeev Khandelwal) character. Coming out of the Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai, he realises that his family has not come to receive him and after waiting for some time a worried Aamir calls home. When no one receives his call he gets even more anxious; while he is thinking about his next step, he gets startled by two masked bikers who throw a cell phone at him and ride away. The phone rings and an unknown caller starts dictating certain random messages at him telling him where to go and what to do. The movie then takes the audience through Aamir's journey to various parts of Mumbai, mostly through Muslim ghettos and it is in this journey one realises the condition of Muslims in this country, most of them living in abject poverty and in conditions that would in most countries would be considered inhuman. But as the journey concludes, a very ugly truth comes out; the intention behind such a journey was not just to teach and show Aamir the condition of 'his brothers', rather it is something more sinister. He is supposed to leave a red briefcase in a crowded bus which contains a bomb. Realising what they had made him do, Aamir runs back to the bus and is able to remove the briefcase and save many lives. He runs with the bomb to a construction site used by the Mumbai Municipal Corporation and tells them that it is a bomb and to ensure that no one gets hurt holds on to the bomb and gives up his life to save others.

To elucidate the point, two scenes needs to be elaborated – the first scene is the one at the airport where Aamir, an Indian studying medicine in London, has come home and is withheld at the customs. His crime is not that he has done something unlawful or has certain questionable items in his suitcase. His only crime is that he is a Muslim which is very sarcastically explained by the custom officer who says, *"dekhna parta hain kyu ke aaj kal toh doctor or engineer hi desh ka naam roshan karte hain... kahi kuch ho gaya toh?..."* ("We have to check these days it is the doctors and the

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[2] It is a Persian word which means the leader.

engineers who make the nation proud... What if something happens?...")[3]. After being harassed for a long time – his name and his address asked multiple times and his luggage ransacked multiple times as well, he is finally allowed to go. As Aamir leaves, he asks a question to the custom officer, *"Agar mera naam Amar hota aur Aamir nahin kya aap mere saath yeh karte?"* ("If my name was Amar and not Aamir would you have done the same things to me?"). The beauty of the scene though lies after the protagonist leaves the frame; the next passenger comes to the custom officer's desk and his name as luck would have had it, is 'Amar'.

It is the last frame that needs to be mentioned because it talks about how people understand and portray the community in question. In the last shot all one sees is a pile of rubble, there is fire burning and the only thing left of Aamir is his cufflink. One can hear news reports in different languages reporting the same news about how a suicide bomber wanted to bomb the bus who at the last minute, changed his mind and in the process ended up taking his own life. This sentence is along the same lines as the actions of the custom officer, where one judges the entire community by acts of few and without looking deeper, judges a person by his community. At the beginning of the movie the protagonist is treated with suspicion because he is a Muslim and at the last scene despite saving so many lives he is still called a terrorist.

What this movie also does is bring out in the open how,

> " The 'two – identity theory' still exists in full force and if it is rare that a Muslim
> forgets that he is a Muslim, it is equally rare that a Muslim is allowed to forget
> that he is a Muslim." (Baig 1974: 105).

FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

As mentioned in the previous section there is a larger debate that deals with minority issues and the nation-state, regarding the position a minority group has in the public as well as the private sphere of a nation. Drawing from this larger debate this section will focus on one aspect of minorities – their identity – and formulate a problem in hand.

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[3] This movie was filmed around the time the London Bombings had occurred.

The minority in question here is the largest religious minority of India – the Muslims – and   the question that is posed is regarding how they understand and or formulate their religious identity vis – a – vis their national identity. Muslims in this country are always seen with suspicion or a degree of mistrust when it comes to their loyalty towards India, and any act that is seen as either a celebration or propagation of their religious identity is assumed to lead to another partition of the country and more often than not leads to violent clashes between the two religious groups – the Hindus and the Muslims.

It is for these reasons that scholars like Gyanendra Pandey (2003) also believe that an act of assertion by a minority group is basically an act of aggression, where the religious minority challenges the dominant group's power in all the spheres of life. It can also be seen as an obstacle in the path of the community itself, as is seen in the writings of M.R.A. Baig (1974) in his book 'Muslim Dilemma in India', where he points out that if the Muslims don't move away from their religious dogmas and let go of their religious identity then they can't move towards the path of development, and that it is their identity itself that is acting as a barrier to their better conditions.

> "But no practicing Muslim will ask for any meaningful change within Islam, and government will make no change outside Islam. Neither party seems to have heard of the political maxim: 'legislation precedes reform'. With both Islam and democracy against change, Muslims will remain rooted in the past and impervious to the future." (Baig 1974: 111)

The solution to the problem according to Baig (1974) is simple, the Muslims in India, needed to cease being Muslims. "They need not cease being Muslims in the religious sense" (Baig 1974: 107) but culturally they would have to cease being Muslims.

However, one would realise as this dissertation unfolds that reality is far more complex to be reduced to a simple cause and effect understanding of any phenomenon. If Muslims hold on to their religious identity it is not just to maintain their difference, but sometimes it is the only thing they have which gives them a sense of security, or it is their fear of being assimilated in the Hindu fold as propagated by the fundamentalists that leads to their assertion of Muslim identity, which acts as a self defence mechanism for them.

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There is a very important reason for making Kolkata the place of study because at an apparent and obvious level one would not see such threats to the Muslims and so one would assume that there won't be any acts of assertion. However the current situation in the city begs a different outlook one which understands the 'why?' behind this assertion of Muslim identity. It is with this idea in mind that this dissertation attempts to study the assertion of Muslim identity in Kolkata (Bengal) by focusing particularly on a place called the Park Circus Area by the locals and 'Mini – Pakistan' in a derogatory fashion by the majority population in their colloquial usage.

The site of the study or the field, one realises, is not some far off esoteric place.As Akhil Gupta argues, distance is not really a criterion for choosing one's field and the whole idea of a far away land for study is redundant in today's time and age. Questioning the whole distinction between the field and the home, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997) wrote,

> "What we object to is not the leaving of 'home', but the uncritical mapping of difference onto exotic sites (as if 'home' however defined, were also not a site of difference) as well as the implicit presumption that 'otherness' means difference from an unmarked, white western 'self' (which has the effect of constructing the anthropologist as a very particular sort of subject...) . The issue, then, is not whether anthropologists should work 'abroad' or at 'home', but precisely the radical separation between the two that is taken for granted as much by those who would insist that anthropology remain 'at home' as by those who would restrict its mission to fieldwork 'abroad'." (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 14 - 15).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are four inter – related questions that need to be answered in order to provide to a better understanding of Muslim identity. These questions are as follows:

- **Is there religious polarisation in a city like Kolkata?**

- **Is there an assertion of Muslim identity in the city?**

- **What are the reasons for the rise of religious identity among the Muslims in the city?**

- **Do Muslims realise that by asserting their religious identity they perpetuate the cycle of stereotyping?**

SYNOPTIC OUTLINES

This dissertation will be divided into five sections, the first four will be divided along four chapters and the fifth section will be the conclusion.

Chapter two consists of the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, the historical background as well as the methodology. The theoretical framework provides answers to four questions regarding identity – the first question is, 'How are identities formed? and what are the problems associated with it?'; the second question is, 'How does this notion of identity continue to exist and reproduce itself through generations as well as across generations?'; the third question that is asked, 'Is there only one identity or are their multiple identities?'; the fourth and the final question looks at, 'How are these notions of identity operating in the Indian context particularly when one looks at the Hindu and Muslim identities?'

The conceptual framework also provides an explanation of the concepts that would act as the bedrock for this research; the concepts that are dealt with in this section are – Communalism, Nation and Nationalism,' Mini-Pakistan' and Muslim identity. The section dealing with historical background provides or gives an account of the various events that occurred in India prior to 1947 which finally led to the partition of the country and the division of the people along the lines of religion. It looks at how Islam came to India and how for centuries it ruled over it. Then this section gives an account of colonial rule with particular emphasis on the British[4]. Then it also gives an account of how it was under the British crown rule that the categories of Muslims and Hindu were created[5]. This finally in turn led to the rise of communalism which was a by-product of the 'Divide and Rule' policy promoted by the British and finally culminated into the partition of the country. There are two narratives which run parallel in this section: one at the level of the nation and the second at the level of the state of Bengal. The reason for providing a historical background is that it sheds some

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[4] As the British had control over most of the area in the country.

[5] This was done through the 1872 Census.

light on the current situation of the country in general and the condition of Muslims in particular.

The section dealing with methodology explains why it becomes imperative to use Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter hegemony of culture as well as Wilhelm Humboldt's understanding of language from hermeneutics school of thought to understand the current phenomenon; to operationalise this phenomenon the methods of cross-sectional ethnography as well as an in depth face to face interview are used. These methods do not produce enough data for a full fledged field work but do provide enough understanding to make this research field sensitive and do enable the theoretical information to be supplemented with the happenings at the field.

The third chapter deals with the socio-political milieu of India and Bengal from 1947 onwards and the impact it has had on the Muslim population residing in the country as well as in Bengal. This chapter begins with the questions that haunted the Muslims in India at the time of partition and in some degree still continues to do so by analysing the 1974 Hindi film *'Garam Hawa'*. This movie dealt with two poignant questions for the Muslim community living in India – one, whether they should leave or stay and two, were they willing to live in a situation of mistrust and suspicion – and also provides one with images of what those choices would lead to. Sadly though, one realises that the Muslims in this country still find themselves in a situation where the second question still is a part of their everyday reality.

Realising the effect of this question, the second chapter looks at how the Muslim community is pushed to the margins and is a victim of violence at three levels – direct which in turn leads to structural violence; both these forms of violence find legitimacy through cultural violence and promote it as well. To understand how these acts of violence operate, this chapter looks at two mechanisms used by Hindu fundamentalists – communal riots and propaganda. It also looks at the impact it has on the Muslim community both at the national level as well as at the state level of Bengal.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation will focus on the site of the study – a 'Mini Pakistan' in Kolkata called the Park Circus area by the locals. This area of study consists of wards numbered 64 and 65 under Borough – VII of the Kolkata Municipal

Corporation. This chapter is divided into three sections – the introduction, the description of the 'Mini – Pakistan' which is divided into eight sub - sections – 'The Changing Nature Of Space: From Mullick Bazaar Crossing To Seven Point Crossing'; 'Where Little Tradition Takes Centre Stage: Park Circus Maidan'; 'The Harmony Of Opposites: From The Seven Point Crossing To Beckbagan Crossing'; 'The Vibrancy That Comes From Pluralism: Shamsadullah Street'; 'Impermanence Of Settings: The Park Circus Railway Station'; 'Where Human Relations Triumph Over Commodity Fetishism: Park Circus Market'; 'Love Thy Neighbour: Circus Avenue, Theatre Road and Meher Ali Road'; and The Hidden Reality – which provide an understanding of the reality of those living in this area. It also helps one to understand how communalism operates in Bengal and how it therefore reinforces the idea of it being free from communal politics.The third section of the chapter is the conclusion. This chapter explains the undercurrents which flow through the city and the people who reside in it. The third chapter basically seeks to find answers to the questions – is there religious polarisation in Kolkata? and; is there an assertion of Muslim identity in the city?

The ethnographic account of these areas is supplemented with photographs and the area that is being demarcated as the 'Mini-Pakistan' for this study is also presented in a map in the chapter.

The fifth chapter tries to look for the answers related to the larger query of Muslim identity by seeking answers to the following questions – what are the reasons for the rise of religious identity among the Muslims in the city? and; do they realise that by asserting their religious identity they perpetuate the cycle of stereotyping? This chapter looks at the various dimensions of Muslim identity that are operating in Park Circus by focusing on seven major themes. The themes in this chapter are as follows: 'Assertion Of Religious Identity: Counter Hegemony To The Prevalent Culture'; 'The Metamorphosis Of Islam: From A Religion To The Way Of Life'; 'Previous Generation's Habitus; Present Generation's Field'; 'Language as an Assertion of Identity'; 'Religious Identity: A symbol Of Liberation'; 'Negotiating With Stigma'; and 'Fear Of The World Out There And Fear Of The World Within'. The data for this chapter mainly comprises of narratives from thirteen in depth face to face interviews of respondents from different age groups and socio-economic backgrounds and across

gender. The choice of such a varied group where there are people from all walks of life is taken to ensure that a more real picture of Muslim identity emerges from the narrative of their lived experience.

The last section of this dissertation will provide a concluding statement for the research at hand and most importantly it will probably provide some answers for the changing history of Kolkata and its people.

An appendix is provided at the end of the dissertation. It contains certain key arguments or explanations of concepts which are not directly associated with the questions at hand, but do have an important impact on them.

CHAPTER –II

ON RELIGION, NATION AND IDENTITIES: EXISTING DEBATES

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation this particular chapter will focus on the theoretical, conceptual and historical frameworks of the research along with the methodology that will be used in this dissertation. The aim behind such a chapter is simple but very important; this chapter acts as the starting point for the research at hand and at the same time provide a glimpse into what has already been done. Other than providing a brief review of literature this chapter will also give a certain degree of clarity into what arguments have been used and why.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As seen in the introduction of this dissertation, the main focus of my work is around the question of identity, of course the work does look at it in a particular geographical space as well as time, but one can't deny that the impetus of this work is given to identity. By identity this dissertation implies group identity, so all the theories that are dealt with here talk in terms of collective identity. Therefore it seems only appropriate that this section will be focusing on mainly four questions associated with identity. The first question is 'How are identities formed? and what are the problems associated with it?' The second question is, 'How does this notion of identity continue to exist and reproduce itself through generations as well as across generations?' The third question that is asked, 'Is there only one identity or are their multiple identities?' The fourth and the final question is, 'How are these notions of identity operating in the Indian context particularly when one looks at the Hindu and Muslim identities?'

The theoretical discourse will be supplemented with interviews or instances that were observed and collected during this research, as it would provide clarity and a better understanding of why and how these theories become the foundation for the dissertation at hand.

How Are Identities Formed? And What Are The Problems Associated With It?

Group identities are complex things they arise out of a feeling of togetherness or shared memories. Durkheim (1912) in his book 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' plants the seed of the idea of identity. While it may not have been his intended purpose but one can't deny that the idea does seem to come into play in his work. The basic theory that this work talks about is of the relation between religion and society. Writing at a time when the prevalent idea about the modern society was that it was immoral or going through a moral crisis because of the fall of the church, Durkheim in order to silence the critique of modernity and the French Revolution, said that the modern society was as moral as the traditional society and the new codes of morality were science and rationality, but to say that because of the ascendancy of science morality had vanished from the society was a misinterpretation of reality. He tried to prove that this morality was a constant thing and nothing more than the collective conscience by studying the Aboriginal Australians and their religion based on totemic principles. While studying their religion and their practice of eating their totem or being associated with a totem, Durkheim proved how religion or more precisely God, and society were one and the same thing which was nothing more than the collective conscience of the group.

While talking about the relation between the totem and the clan Durkheim highlights a very important element about the totem and its relation to the clan, where he writes,

> "[The Totem] expresses and symbolises two different kinds of things. From one point of view, it is the outward and visible form of what I have called the totemic principle or god; and from another, it is also the symbol of a particular society that is called the clan. It is the flag of the clan, the sign by which each clan is distinguished from the others, the visible mark of its distinctiveness, and a mark that is borne by everything that in any way belongs to the clan: men, animals and things." (Durkheim 1912: 208).

He therefore, points out that the totem represents the clan, is the symbol of the clan, and is even represented as a symbol on the members of the clan itself, but what is even more significant is how each clan has a different totem and what is sacred for one clan may not be for the other. Since these totems could be anything from the kangaroo to the crow or even a plant, the members of those clans would also be

associated with the symbols of their totems and therefore would have an identity of their own which in turn would be different from another clan with another totem. Hence the idea of group identity can be seen operating in Durkheim's work even if it is at an implicit level.

The construction of group identity though depends on two things – in-group relations and out-group categorisations. While each group require internal cohesion and a sense of camaraderie to ensure its continuance it also requires distinguishing itself from the other groups. Hence simply put, each group needs to promote the 'we' feeling but at the same time also maintain its distinction and thereby construct the category of the 'other'. As Simmel (1955) rightly points out that the unity of the group starts to become weak or disintegrates if there is no other opponent fighting against them, "Hence, opposition is often generated by rulers to guarantee the existing set up or conditions." (Simmel 1955: 97). This idea of seeing oneself as different from the other group came up time and again in the field, where both the religious communities in this case – Hindus and Muslims kept talking about how they were different from each other and this differentiation had even seeped into the idea of food. An example of this was a tea stall in the area of study; while at one look this stall was like any other in the city, what is worth mentioning is that after the name of the stall was a line that is probably not seen very often, it advertised that it served only pure 'Hindu' food . A similar example was a restaurant mentioning that it served only '*halal*' food. While both these eateries didn't exactly tell people from other religions not to come, these subtle phrases mentioned in their hoardings did ensure that a distinction was being maintained.

Mirroring the same thought as George Simmel, Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May (2001) talk about how one distinguishes between oneself and the other, which according to them derives from the fact that human beings make a distinction and divide the world. Since one's existence is based on this understanding of divisions, one also divides between one's own group and the other group. But this division of the world becomes problematic since,

> "Our vision of this is vague, fragmentary and due to poor comprehension, even
> frightening. Further we may be assured in our beliefs by suspecting that 'they'

feel the same reservations and anxieties about us." (Bauman & May 2001: 30).

The 'they' used by the thinkers imply the out-group which is basically the imaginary group towards which the in-group stands in opposition to and needs it for its own identification, as well as for its inner solidarity, cohesiveness and emotional security. Therefore, it becomes evident that the in-group needs to have not only the feeling of family towards other members of the group, to ensure its continuance even though the group may be extremely large, geographically and therefore may be imaginary, but it also needs a feeling of hostility towards the out- group, and so one finds,

> " ...the image of an enemy who is lurid and frightening and possess the characteristics of cunning and scheming. Vigilance becomes a constant necessity where images are informed by prejudice." (Bauman & May 2001: 32).

This construction of group identity becomes problematic when certain characteristics start getting attached to the traits of different groups, and the difference acquires a hierarchical character, such that certain traits of one's own group become qualities that must be admired whereas traits of the other group become something that should be demeaned.

Erving Goffman (1963) points out that this association of negative traits with a particular group can lead to stigmatisation of those individuals' identities that belong to that particular faction. Goffman (1963) begins his book by talking about how the idea of stigma originated. First used by the Greeks, the term actually referred to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. These signs were cut or burnt into the body and advertised that the bearer was either a slave or a criminal or a traitor – blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided especially in public places. But today the notion of stigma has undergone major changes. It is now associated with the idea of disgrace itself rather than to the bodily evidence of it.

Goffman then explains about how there are three types of stigma that exists. He writes,

> "Three grossly different types of stigma may be mentioned. First, there are abominations of the body of the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts and radical political behaviour. Finally, there are the tribal stigma of race, nation and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family." (Goffman 1963: 4).

Of the three it is the stigma that is associated with the group that is the most dangerous kind as it places an entire group of people into certain categories and once placed, there is no escape from that category.

Goffman explains how stigma which is associated with a particular group or individual traits is actually caused by a discrepancy between what he calls virtual social identity and actual social identity. Virtual social identity, Goffman points out arises out of expectations that other's have about that group or individual, whereas actual social identity actually consists of attributes that are actually possessed by one. So the term stigma actually refers to those attributes that are deeply discrediting in nature and is, "really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype."(Goffman 1963: 4).

Therefore, the stigma theory becomes an ideology that is used to explain the inferiority of the other group and account for the danger that is imagined by one regarding this group, which in turn may go to the extent of rationalising an animosity that is based on completely other differences, such as those of social class.

This process of stigmatisation leads to a number of problems: first it leads to stereotyping the other, than it leads to prejudice and as Goffman (1963) himself mentions,

> "... the stigmatization of those in certain racial, religious and ethnic groups has apparently functioned as a means of removing these minorities from various avenues of competition." (Goffman 1963: 139).

One very important effect or impact of this process of stigmatisation is that it leads to the feeling of prejudice towards the other group which Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May (2001) define as the following,

> "Prejudice – As the refusal to admit any virtues that the enemy may possess and an inclination to magnify their real and imaginary vices – prevents one from accepting the possibility that their intentions may be honest. Prejudices also manifests in double moral standards. What the members of an in -group argue that they deserve as entitlement will be an act of grace and benevolence if granted to those of the out group. Most importantly, one's own atrocity against the out-group members does not seem to clash with moral conscience, while out-group severe condemnation is demanded in cases where much milder acts have been perpetrated by the enemy. Prejudice thereby prompt people to approve of the means used in the promotion of their own cause, means that would never be justified if employed by the out-group in pursuit of their own purposes. Identical actions are thus called different names: for example, one group's freedom fighter is another group's terrorist. (Bauman & May 2001: 32).

It is this feeling of prejudice which leads to stereotyping the other community as well as discriminating against it.

This feeling of prejudice towards the other community was seen in the field. While it may seem like a really small matter for most, the pain and hurt it brought about for the person in question was in no way minuscule: the instance was a simple joke cracked by a shopkeeper with a child. The shopkeeper, was probably in his fifties and was selling his wares until he saw a child, the boy would not have been more than ten or eleven wearing his *kurta pajama* – an outfit worn by most Muslim men on Fridays who join for the weekly prayers – who was crossing his store. The shop keeper said loudly, *"Oh aajke shukroobar, na tai aajke chaan ta kora hoechhe"* ("Oh, its Friday right, that's why someone has taken a bath") and started laughing hysterically. Most of the men there also giggled and the only person who looked ashamed and absolutely mortified was the boy who simply ran from the scene. These sterotypes are common when one describes the Muslim community – the fact that they don't take bath everyday, they have higher sexual libido and that is why they marry four times and kidnap Hindu women. While some of the stereotypes are outright aggressive and only operate during a situation of tension between the two groups, most have seeped into

everyday discourse and are seen in people's behaviour or jokes like the one mentioned above, making those at the receiving end a stigmatised group.

Therefore, one can conclude that while it is at some level acceptable to have identities that ensure one's distinction from others and at the same time give birth to a 'we' feeling, the hierarchisation of such identities is not, and is therefore one of the biggest problems of group identity and probably also the source of major conflict related to groups.

How Does This Notion Of Identity Continue To Exist And Reproduce Itself Through Generations As Well As Across The Same Generation?

For a group to continue to sustain itself it needs to ensure that the markers with which it is associated with, and characteristics that it has, continue to exist. This process of production of characteristics as well as maintaining them, which in turn leads to the group being treated as a separate entity, leads to what Bourdieu calls practice and explains it by using the concept of habitus and field. According to Bourdieu, practices are actually the result of "an obscure and double relation" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 126) or "an unconscious relationship" (Bourdieu 1986: 101). He also summarised the relation between the habitus and the field by using the following equation:

[(habitus) (capital)] +field = practice

If one explains this equation then it states that practices basically results from the relation between one's habitus and one's position in a field.

Before taking this argument any further it becomes imperative that one defines habitus and the idea of field. Bourdieu used habitus as a tool to explain the link not only between the past, present and future but also as something that can act as a link between the social and the individual, between the objective and the subjective, and between structure and agency. Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a "structured and structuring structure" (Bourdieu1994: 170).

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The reason why Bourdieu defines habitus in such a manner is because habitus performs two functions simultaneously which makes it fluid and rigid at the same time. It acts as the agency as well as the structure; it changes the individual as well as is changed by it. It is structured because it is shaped by one's past as well as one's present circumstances such as the influence of one's family upbringing as well as educational qualifications. It acts as a structure because it is not random but rather is systematic and has an order. This "structure comprises a system of dispositions[6] which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices." (Bourdieu 1990: 53)

When Bourdieu talks about the field, he mentions that there are three kinds of fields that one has to understand to get a complete understanding of how practice results. He talks about the field being like that of the football field[7], or like the science fiction force fields and finally a force field[8]. Since the motive for using this notion of the field is to understand how the group identity operates as field to create itself as well as reproduce itself through as well as across generations, discussion will only be limited to the field which best explains social space by comparing their operation to the science fiction force field.

The science fiction force fields are actually constructed through the erection of a barrier which ensures that all that goes inside is separated from all that happens outside. This field is done with the intention that it would protect all those within the barrier and also lead to the formation of little self contained worlds. The activities inside are not random or chaotic; they maintain an order and do follow a pattern. This

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[6]Bourdieu uses the concept of disposition to bring together the ideas of structure and tendency.

[7]Bourdieu uses the football field as one of his illustrations because he assumes that the social field also operates on the same principle where indviduals can be equated with players and the external factors like the condition of the field and the weather are seen as hurdles that people face in the social field.

[8]Using the same principles that is used in physics to explain force fields where a set of vectors illustrate the forces that are exerted on an object, Bourdieu explained how individuals can be placed in a field made up of opposing forces, that is as a chiasmatic. He used economic and cultural capita as the two hierarchised poles in a social field. The field works like a magnetic one where the position of an individual would be explained in terms of his/her relationship to the two poles. Where on one end there would be economically dominant but culturally dominated position while on the other end there would be culturally dominant but economically dominated position.

Bourdieu mentions, leads to a predictability and ensures that the field does not become anarchic and cease to function. It does follow a hierarchical structure where some people have the right to govern where as others have lesser roles but they all function together and follow the rules of the field as if, "a separate universe governed by its own laws." (Bourdieu 2005: 5).

Like the force field the social space also operates along the principle of semi-autonomy, where human beings construct their own sets of beliefs which in turn rationalises the rules of behaviour operating in the field. As Patricia Thomson (2012) writes while talking about the science fiction force field,

> "... each field has its own distinctive 'logic of practice'. Social agents who occupy particular positions understand how to behave in the field, and this understanding not only feels 'natural' but can be explained using the truths or doxa, that are common parlance within the field." (Thomson 2012:70)

Therefore, we can understand the mechanisms that work to ensure the maintenance of the group identity, the identity that is produced through generations with the help of the mechanism of the habitus and is reinforced by the field, which in turn ensures that only the members of one group stay together and follow the same ideals but at the same time also ensures that the distinct identity of the group is maintained by creating a barrier. An example of how this relation between the habitus and the field operates can be seen in how culture functions in a group. It acts as a very important tool not just for the formation of a group but also to maintain the group identity, it is something that can be used distinguish the 'us' from 'them'. Two excerpts from the same respondent show not only how one's habitus and field is structured but also how it is maintained by her actions, which in turn distinguishes her from members of another group.

> "Most people have very fond memories of their childhood and Alhumdo – lil- lah I have also been blessed that way I have had a very nice childhood and all my memories are happy ones. We are in a family where people say we are a little conservative and orthodox but we are basically practising Muslims a family which tries to... I mean I am not saying that we are good practising Muslims we just try to practise Islam. From a very young age only we are given basic Islamic teachings and we are told to adhere to it only. So basically that's it."

"Ok so I try... but first and formost what I am trying to establish is salah, five times of salah I try to do that... because it is said that if you don't do your namaz then you are actually going out of the folds of Islam. Then what else oh this hijab thing in one such thing which I follow I mean it is command of Allah - O - Subhanotalah, a lot of people want reason for that so I feel when I wanted to take up the hijab. No sorry I did not want to take up the hijab I was told to take up the hijab, Iwasn''t explained why I had to take up the hijab it was more like everyone in my family takes so I have to since everybody does so also have to. But I feel that if you explain to them because I feel today everyone wants to be rationalised they want reason they need to be explained why they have to do this. So since we have become like that so we should also bring rationality in the context of religion, and also we have to look at the foremost belief that if Allah, Allah - O - Subhanotalah, has told you then it is for your own good you have belief in that. That is one thing, then Alhumdo - lil - lah I have been associated with this centre[9] for the past five years now, I have been a student here on and now a teacher here. So of course there a number of things and in my own little way I am doing whatever lttle that I can do.

There is dawah so I try to do a little of that but of course the most important thing is that you practice before you preach. So I try to do these little things I try to do some charity and small gestures, because a very important thing that are deen teaches us is that you don't have to do big things to make a difference Islam is all about small kindnesses. You don't know which good deed is liked by Allah – O – Subhanotalah. So the motive is to please Allah, curb your ego is one thing that I have learned and I am also trying to curb my anger. So this is for me what Islam is all about curbing my anger trying to discipline my desires... So that is all."

Ethnomethodology also helps one to understand how group identities operate at a micro level. The basic premise operating behind ethnomethodology is to see how all individuals come to construct and believe in the same sense of reality; this sense of reality also includes the rules they follow in their day to day affairs and operate under the sense that they all share the same notion of society. If this argument by ethnomethodologists is taken into consideration then it also can be said that all the aspects of reality are also produced by the social actors in their lives and therefore their identity is also produced and reinforced through their actions. As a result the principles that people follow are also the same principles that continue to reinforce

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[9] The respondent is a teacher at a weekend Islamic school.

identity. For example, certain religious groups practice fast for a particular period or wear certain markers of their religious identity, to ensure that the group does not disintegrate or that the sense of reality that they share does not break down all the members of the group follow the same rules.

This principle of following the same rules and having a similar notion of reality is reflected in all the respondents. Their belief in 'Allah' and the teachings of 'Quran' is evident in all their narratives, but it becomes most evident when they talk about all the tenets of Islam that they follow, and it is almost the same for all the respondents irrespective of their age, gender or socio - economic status. To elucidate the point further two excerpts from two respondents one a twenty – two year old Mass Communication student and the other a thirty – five year old housewife will be presented below respectively to show how there is an almost identical sense of reality operating among all the respondents when thet follow their religion,

> "Ok so I pray five times a day, then there is roza, so you fast for thirty days during the month of Ramadan and you can also do nafil roza. Its basically the five pillars of Islam so salah, sabra – being patient is very important and there is your tawheed."

Reflecting a similar understanding the female respondent says,

"There are five pillers of Islam which you follow and we do all of them..."

"Could you elaborate a little..."

"Yeah there is kalma, namaz, zakat and haj and Masha – Allah I follow everything I am only left with haj and other than all is good."

Alfred Schutz drew from Edmund Husserl, Max Weber as well as George H. Mead and W.I. James and developed a more comprehensive Phenomenology according to which all humans can carry out their activities in the social world because they carry in their minds rules, social recipes, conceptions of appropriate conduct and other information which enable them to do so, which he termed as the 'stock knowledge at hand'. It is this stock knowledge that acts as the reference point which allows them to interact with each other. The underlying assumption of this behaviour is that all individuals believe that they share the same stock knowledge at hand. If one is to stretch this argument a little further then one sees how this idea also enables group

identity to be produced as those with a sense of similar stock knowledge deriving from similar experiences or beliefs do tend to come together.

David Harvey's analysis of residential segregation and certain communities being pushed out from certain parts of the urban space can also be seen as an important process for the production as well as continuance of group identity. David Harvey (1989) points out how urban spaces are demarcated and certain urban space are associated with certain groups. Those who are generally differentiated from the majority are treated as the other and are pushed to the margins do develop a sense of togetherness. This feeling of togetherness Harvey points out is not based along the lines of class but something stronger – the feeling of community. This feeling of community consciousness actually leads to the continuation of group identity as it also produces a 'we' feeling. As Harvey writes,

> "The homogenization of life experience which this restriction produces reinforces the tendency for relatively permanent social groupings to emerge within a relatively permanent social structure of residential differentiation. Once this is translated into a social awareness that has the neighbourhood or community as the focus, and once this form of social awareness becomes the basis for political action, then community consciousness replaces class consciousness (of the Marxian sort) as the springboard for action and the locus of social conflict." (Harvey 1989: 120).

Is There Only One Identity Or Are There Multiple Identities?

The debate regarding whether every individual has only one identity or gives primacy to only one identity – their group identity – or does an individual have multiple identities making the categories more fluid has been a major source of contention towards the end of twentieth century. While there are those who argue that primacy is given to group identity which is drawn along the lines of culture and therefore is also the reason for conflict and violence among different groups, there are other scholars who think that this is too simplistic an understanding of the world and reduces an individual's capacity to associate with others; it questions the whole notion of individuality as it subsumes the individual in the group and does not provide any agency to the individual. This section of the theoretical framework will try to explain both sides of the argument.

This argument that individuals only associate with one of their identities, their group identity based on their cultural belief, became prevalent in the post Cold War period because according to Samuel P. Huntington (1997) that is the first time the world moves away from a bipolar world to a multi polar and a multi cultural world which in turn made it a multi civilisational world. He mentions that in the post Cold War era the distinctions that are made among the people are not along the lines of ideology, economics or politics but rather along the lines of culture. He writes,

> "People are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry religion, language, history, values customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also define their identity. We know who we are only when we know we are not and often only when we know whom we are against." (Huntington 1997: 21).

Therefore the world according to Huntington, would be divided along the lines of civilisation and the world would have mainly eight civilisations and the conflict that would result among these groups would actually be clash between civilisations as it would lead to tensions that would be more primordial therefore, less easy to solve.

Culture then plays a very important role as it acts both as a unifying as well as a divisive force, because it can bring people together who may be divided by ideology but have the same culture. Similarly it can act as a wedge between those who share the same ideology but have very different cultures. As Huntington (1997) writes,

> "The philosophical assumptions, underlying values, social relations, customs, and overall outlooks on life differ significantly under among civilizations. The revitalization of religion throughout the world is reinforcing these cultural differences. Cultures can change, and the nature of their impact on politics and economics can vary from one period to another. Yet the major differences in political and economic development among civilisations are clearly rooted in their different culture." (Huntington 1997: 29).

It is this civilisational identity that acts as a source of conflict in the world today. It is a contentious source of conflict as it redraws the world along the lines where one sees someone as opposed to them simply on the basis of culture, where the question that takes prevalence is "Who are you?" It is this fundamental question that is turning people against each other where friends become foes and cultural identity defines the state's place in world politics. Therefore, it is not surprising that the world is seeing "the eruption of a global identity crisis." (Huntington 1997: 125).

This reconstruction of the world along cultural identities or civilisational lines has two effects: it increases cooperation and cohesion among those who are from the same cultural group but at the same time leads to conflict and increases cleavages among those who are different from them. Cultural commonality has both these effects because of the following reasons according to Huntington (1997). First, in the world today it is cultural identification that is dramatically becoming very important as compared to other forms of identities. Even though there are multiple identities and they all compete with each other or reinforce each other like kinship, occupational, cultural, institutional, territorial, educational, partisan, ideological and others, it is only the civilisational aspect of the identity which seems to have dominated the discourse of the world, wherein,

> "The increased extent to which people throughout the world differentiate themselves along cultural lines means that conflicts between cultural groups are increasingly important; civilizations are broadest cultural entities; hence conflict between groups from different civilisations become central to global politics." (Huntington 1997: 128).

The second reason why there is an increase in the prominence of identity along cultural lines is the result of modernisation of the socio-economic sphere at the individual level. This leads to a feeling of alienation as well as disruption and therefore need for more meaningful identities at a larger societal level.

The third reason is that identity is relational; it can only be explained or defined in relation to the 'other'. This other can be at a personal level, tribal level, racial level or civilisational level. It can be seen that this principle of the other has been operating throughout history, where kingdoms having similar cultural identity are treated

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differently from the kingdoms who have a different civilisation as there were separate codes of conduct that would govern the behaviour towards those who were considered to be 'like us' and separate code of conduct for those who were the "barbarians". Samuel P. Huntington(1997) points out the beliefs from which the differences of intra-civilisational as well as extra-civilisational behaviour stem; they are as follows: i) Feelings of superiority (and occasionally inferiority toward people who are perceived as being very different; ii) Fear of and lack of trust in such people; iii) Difficulty of communication with them as a result of differences in language and what is considered civil behaviour; iv) Lack of familiarity with the assumptions, motivations, social relationships and social practices of other people.

The fourth reason is that,

> "... the sources of conflict between states and groups from different civilisations are, in large measure, those which have always generated conflict between groups: control of people, territory, wealth and resources, and relative power, that is the ability to impose one's own values, culture, and institutions on another groups as compared to that groups ability to do that to you." (Huntington 1997: 129).

The conflicts that arise from this cultural differences though, can never be resolved because there can never be a situation for negotiation as both the parties would want a decision that would have a clear cut answer. No middle path can be achieved on these conflicts as no rational ideals control them.

The fifth reason according to Huntington stems from the human nature to hate all those who are different from them; it is a tendency among humans to distrust those people who are different from them and believe that they might harm them. Since in the world today the governing principle to differentiate is that of culture, the feelings of hatred and distrust are now divided along civilisational lines where the 'us' are treated with a degree of cooperation while the 'them' are dealt with in a more aggressive way.

Therefore one can see how these ideas of civilisation and culture can have both a cooperative as well as a conflicting effect depending on the position of the groups and their alignment.

Amartya Sen (2007) talks about the fallacy of believing the civilisational argument put forward b Samuel P. Huntington. He talks about the pitfalls that are associated with putting people in certain categories and the violence that is seen emerging from these sectarian politics; he pointed out how, "the divisive power of classificatory priority is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a unique set of rigid boxes." (Sen 2007: 11)

Before examining the arguments that Sen (2007) develops as a response to Huntington (1997), it is important that we first look at the criticisms of Huntington's idea. The first criticism against the idea is that it provides a singular vision of the world. While talking about the world as civilisations, Huntington provides a singular analysis of the world where the entire globe is reduced to nothing more than a bunch of groups all bounded by the same herd mentality. At the same time, it gives a very reductionist view of the individual. Sen (2007) argues, "Civilizational partitioning is a pervasively intrusive phenomenon in social analysis, stifling other – richer – ways of seeing people." (Sen 2007: 42). The problem with such a classification is that even at a local level that is between tribes or religious groups, it splits them into two groups with divergent cultures and disparate histories and almost 'naturalises' the animosity that is there between them.

The second criticism that is put forward is the crudeness with which the world civilisations are characterised where they are all treated as homogeneous and insular categories. The fact that all these countries had completely different histories and took very different paths and trajectories in world history is not taken into account and all the countries are clubbed under the same banner of civilisations. This theory has an extremely (albeit unique, in some sense) divisive view of the world population as it stands again two universal principles on which mankind stands: one that people around the world are more or less the same as they value the same principles, and two, that there is a certain difference in all of us which makes us unique in our own way. By following the civilisational classification, both these beliefs are destroyed.

The third criticism is that this notion of allegiance to the civilisation presupposes the idea that a person does not have any individuality with no more than one affiliation, or

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as someone who is a member of many groups, but only as someone who is a part of the collectivity and it is this membership that gives that person, her identity.

Reality is far more complex than the simple division given above. In one's daily life one is confronted by people who have multiple identities and these identities may not necessarily be in conflict with each other or one identity may not always subsume the other identity. All persons irrespective of their position in the world have multiple identities and they all operate at the same time. Sen argues,

> "Any person is a member of many different groups (without this being in any way a contradiction), and each of these collectivities, to all of which this person belongs, gives him or her a potential identity which – depending on the context – can be quite important."(Sen 2007: 46).

Sen (2007) instead talks about how there are multiple identities and not all of them are associated with one's religion or culture. The impetus of the argument is the individual and her identity and even within a group or civilisation there is scope or choice for people to maintain their individuality.

What is the need of the hour is to talk not just about the importance of multiple identities that every individual has but also to talk about the uniqueness that is there in every identity. The reason for doing so is that it ensures one's identity as separate from that of the group.

An example of this uniqueness is visible in an excerpt from an interview with a twenty-five year old female respondent. While talking about stereotypes and her identity, she says,

> "It would probably be easier for someone to judge me on my appearance and most people probsbly do it as well but if you judge me without talking to me without seeing what kind of person I am than that isyour fault. Yes I am a Muslim and yes I wear the abaya (veil) but that doesn't mean, that it is my only identity I am person in my own right, so even though I am from a particular religion does not mean that I think in exactly the same way, you know what I mean..."

Therefore one can see that the argument of having a singular identity does not hold true in today's world where everyone has multiple identities.

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How Are These Notions Of Identity Operating In The Indian Context Particularly When One Looks At The Hindu And Muslim Identities?

The group identities in India are nuanced and extremely complex mainly due to the tangled nature of the various agents of social stratification. Understanding the operation of the various group identities is beyond the scope of this work, therefore one would focus on the relation between the Hindus and Muslims as two groups and how these identities operate today. To understand how these notions are operating in the Indian context, this section is divided in two parts: the first half talks about why is it that group identity of Hindus and Muslims is still operating in India today. The second half will focus how these two groups see the 'other'.

These two groups have of course undergone a metamorphosis over time and the meaning that they hold today is very different from a century or even half a century ago. These group identity today operate as cultural identities. Sudhir Kakar (1996) defines cultural identity as,

> "... a group's basic way of organizing experience through its myths, memories, symbols, rituals and ideals. Socially produced and thus subject to historical change, cultural identity is not a static affair even while it makes a decisive contribution to the enhancement of an individual's sense of self – sameness and continuity in time and space." (Kakar 1996: 184).

This definition brings out a very important aspect of group identity or cultural identity that it has a changing nature and Kakar (1996) points out to the changes that resulted in the birth of Hindu and Muslim identity that is seen today. The changes are mostly due to modernisation and globalisation. Kakar (1996) mentions that it also the reason why allegiance to the group would increase, because,

> "As modernization picks up pace, individuals will increasingly seek membership in group with absolute value system and with little tolerance for deviation from their norms." (Kakar 1996: 183).

The reasons why modernisation leads to such effects is because of the following changes it brings in the lives of the people – population movements are a common phenomenon of modernisation which involves the loss of familial as well as familiar

ties along with the loss of one's ecological niches; this in turn leads to a state of bereavement as well as stages of withdrawal among those who mourn the loss of their old bonds and attachments and at the same time are suspicious of creating new ones. Globalisation also adds to this feeling of pain where due to this process the movement is no longer restricted within the boundaries of the state and while it does lead to some groups dramatically increasing their income generation capacity, it also leads some groups to migrate out of their geographical areas because of impoverishment. The internal migration from rural to urban areas have two effects: one, that it leads to a feeling of bereavement, but because it also leads to a situation where there is relative lack of cultural norms in dealing with strangers and less discrimination on rigid caste based identities. Hence, the person is compelled to be in a state of "permanent psychic mobilization and heightened nervous arousal."(Kakar1996: 186) Modernisation also leads to the complete shattering of whatever self respect or self – esteem one has. It is even more true for those who lose not only their earning power but also their social status and identity that is associated with the particular kind of work that a person does. But,

> "For the affected and their families, especially children, there is a collapse of
> confidence in the stability of the established order of the world." (Kakar1996:
> 186).

Two, modernisation also leads to feelings of low self worth and a feeling of humiliation. According to Kakar one of the major sources of humiliation lies in the homogenising as well as hegemonising impact of not just modernisation but also globalisation as they both show complete disregard to cultural plurality and cultural diversity.

These processes act as a source of humiliation for those who are not embraced or identified by the modernisation process in its totality; this is because the imperative of economic development see many cultural values and attitudes as outmoded or even as irrelevant. For the masses it acts as a blow to their self esteem because it further dehumanises the already mechanical bureaucratic structures and also makes it extremely complex.

The elites of the non-western world suffer an additional humiliation because they remember the loss of their civilisation at the hands of their colonial rulers, and

> "This defeat is not merely an abstraction or a historical memory but one which is confirmed by the peripheral role of their countries in the international economic and political order of the post colonial world."(Kakar 1996: 188).

This feeling of humiliation that comes with being second class citizens of the global order is something that is reinforced time and again by the encounters with their western counterparts who are more self confident in various international forums.

In this situation of humiliation and loss of self identity and familial bonds it is group identity or as Kakar writes cultural identity, that becomes the answer; it acts as a healing hand which is in it self a very vital function in the formation of one's identity.

In the light of the above theoretical discourse it makes complete sense as to why a country like India which is in transition from a traditional to a more modern society, is in a situation where religious identity is gaining momentum.

Now that the reason behind the formation of identity along religious lines in India has become clear the next step is to see how these group identities stand in relation to each other.

The Hindus see the Muslims as people who are completely opposite to them and are generally associated with animality and brutal force; the Muslim is mostly seen as the bad child who led to the division of the country. Kakar and Kakar (2007) bring out a very important angle to the discourse associated with the Hindus and the Muslims, arguing that a Hindu's self identification only happens or begins when he talks of Muslims, otherwise it is the caste affiliations that take primacy. The Muslims are also described as dirty as those who take bath only on Fridays; the dirtiness that is associated with the Muslims is not just about hygienic behaviour but is something which is far more fundamental because the Muslims consume beef which is a polluting act for the Hindus. The Muslims are also seen as someone with high sex drives and it is their high libido also that makes them dirty, as the only thoughts that are there in their minds are impure in nature. Therefore,

"The psychological processes involved in the development of 'We are' not only take recourse to the group's cultural traditions – its myths, history, rituals, and symbols – to make the community a firm part of personal identity but also employ bodily fantasies as well as family metaphors to anchor this aspect of identity in the deepest layers of individual imagination. The 'pure' us versus the 'dirty' them, the association of a rival group with denigrated, often anal, bodily parts functions, representations of one's group in metaphors of a body under attack or as a 'good' son of the mother(land) while the rival group is a bad son..." (Kakar 2011: 249).

This idea of the Muslims being impure was seen to operate in the field in very subtle ways and could easily be missed if one did not pay much attention; one such instance was at a sweet store. The store owner sitting at the counter was handling the money from the different sales and the way he would give back the money to the customers was rather odd. To the Hindu customers he would give the money or take it from their hand but if he thought his customer was a Muslim, he pretended to be busy with someone and would tell the customer to keep the money at the desk and would in a similar manner give back the money by keeping it on the table and not touch the customer. For a lot of people it would just seem to be a coincidence but after observing the man for nearly a week, it was easy to understand the rationale operating behind his actions; the fact that he believed that the Muslims were impure and therefore should not be touched was very evident even if it was expressed in a very restrained manner.

The Muslims on the other hand view the Hindus as being cruel and cowardly, the same principle of the 'other' being dirty is also associated with the Hindus this dirtiness stretches from their immoral beliefs as *Kafirs*; the Hindus are described as being cruel because the prevalent idea is that they would attack any Muslim and not look at either the sex or the age of the person. They are described as being cowardly by the Muslims because they always attacks in groups and are supposedly scared of Muslims when they are alone.

While none of the respondents whose narratives are used in this research said anything derogatory about the Hindus living there, it would be very wrong assume that stereotypes for the Hindu community do not exist within the Muslim community.

While walking around the Park Circus Maidan, I observed a fight among a group of young boys playing cricket, which reiterates the argument stated above. It seemed like any ordinary match but a simple loss of wicket changed the colour of the game completely. While one group said that their batsman was not out, the bowler's team refused to agree; one thing led to another and a brawl broke out. As one boy who got rather serious bruises got up and said that he would complain to his mother, another boy retorted, "What else can we expect from you, you are all cowards, eat beef you will get stronger..."

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the chapter deals with the four major concepts that work as the cornerstones for the dissertation at hand – communalism, nation and nationalism, Mini–Pakistan and Muslim identity. These four concepts form the backdrop for the question this dissertation asks regarding the assertion of religious identity among the Muslims of Kolkata. To further confirm how these concepts come into play in the research at hand, this section will supplement all the arguments with certain observations made in the field.

Communalism

The word communalism has a special meaning for South Asian countries; while in the rest of the world it actually means a feeling of community, for the multi religious, multi racial and multi lingual countries located in this section of the world, it actually means something negative; it is a feeling of hatred or violence or anger that stems for a particular community because of a process of 'other'-ing; it is something that is believed to stand against everything that secularism[10] stands for. Bipan Chandra (1984) provides a definition of communalism, stating,

> "Simply put, communalism is the belief that because of a group of people follow a
> particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic
> interests. It is the belief that in India Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs form
> different and distinct communities which are independently and separately

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[10]Secularism as an idea has its roots in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. For further analysis look at Appendix -I at the end of the dissertation

structured or consolidated; that all the followers of a religion share not only a community of religious interests but also common secular interests that is common economic, political social and cultural interests;" (Chandra 1984: 1).

While common parlance and popular belief would lead one to believe that communalism and particularly communal violence is an anomaly, a pathological condition that disrupts the social structure and the social system at large and occurs when there is a disjuncture between the norms and values of the society, and as something that "…periodically erupts as if by the forces of nature…"(Gupta2011: 2), a closer look at these so called anomalies and sporadic outburst shows a very different picture. It shows that communalism and communal violence has been an inherent part of our everyday life, it is meshed into our everyday life. Violence is not just the physical act; as Gyanendra Pandey (2006) also writes in his book 'Routine Violence: Nation and its Fragments', it is engrained in our every day existence, it is in the prejudice we carry towards the other community, it is in the language, the use of terms, the body language and in the way our locality is comprised. A similar idea is evoked by one of the respondent's narratives where he talks about his experience about watching an India Pakistan cricket match when he was younger, during his college days,

> "After the match got over one of my classmate came up to me and said *dekh tera Pakistan haar gaya.* So I said mera Pakistan kyu? He very casually replied arre tum logo ka hi to hai and left…"("After the match got over one of my classmate came up to me and said see your Pakistan has lost. So I said why my Pakistan? He very casually replied *arre* it's your people's only and left").

A similar argument is also provided by Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta while talking about communal violence.

> "Communal violence is woven into the fabric of everyday life; it is both particular and general, visible and hidden, sometimes spoken of in ritual and dramatic terms, occasionally caricatured. Yet, the riots exist side by side with a world that is being continuously crafted, a world that often demands the skill to learn the rules of survival as it does the ability to build it anew. In this way, violence and the mechanisms of coping highlight the problematic and redemptory nature of personal agency and political will." (Chatterji & Mehta 2007: 1).

I realize that it would be impossible to look at all the theories which look at conflict or violence and also beyond the scope of this section so the focus here would primarily be on the theories put forward by Erich Fromm, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Lewis A. Coser.

Erich Fromm brings forward a very unique idea while talking about violence and human behaviour. He asks a basic question which becomes the premise of his theory, the question being "What is it that makes man 'a killer… the only primate that kills and tortures members of its own species?'" (Fromm1974: 4), he then goes on to talk about a kind of aggression that is unique to mankind and calls it malignant aggression. While talking about this perverse form of aggression Fromm mentions group narcissism as a form of aggression which can be seen as the root cause of communal violence. He defines group narcissism as a state where

> "…the object (of affection) is not the individual but the group to which he belongs, the individual can be fully aware of it, and express it without any restrictions. The assertion that my "my country" (or my nation or my religion) is the most wonderful, the most cultured, the most powerful, the most peace loving, etc., does not sound crazy at all; on the contrary, it sounds like the expression of patriotism, faith and loyalty. It also appears to be a realistic and rational value judgment because it is shared by the members of the same group. This consensus succeeds in transforming the phantasy into reality, since for most people reality is constituted by general consensus and not based on reason or critical examination."
> (Fromm 1974: 204).

Fromm (1974) then goes on to talk about how this form of narcissism leads to aggression. He writes that any form of violation of the symbol of the group can lead to violent behaviour and this violence is generally on a large scale. He gives the example of the communal riots of 1947 to explain this form of aggression which he says is the driving force for most communal violence.

> "In considering the causes and the function of bloody and cruel mass massacres as they occurred between Hindus and Moslems at the time of partition of India or recently between Bengali Moslems and their Pakistani rulers, group narcissism certainly plays a considerable role…" (Fromm 1974: 205).

Lewis Coser drawing from his Marxist roots points out that a major source of violence is actually class conflict and how it is actually related to the position one occupies in relation to the factors of production. He also mentions that the intensity and duration of the conflict influences the degree of violent behavior. He further states that the conflict over issues which are emotional in nature and has its roots in the sentiments of the group is the most ferocious as it implies that no rational outcome from it is possible. He emphasizes the need for conflict as it is the path through which social systems change.

He also talks about the idea of 'vested interest' which he takes from Thorstein Veblen, and using it as a reference point writes,

> "Conflict ensues in the effort of various frustrated groups and individuals to increase their share of gratification. Their demands will encounter the resistance of those who previously had established a 'vested interest' in a given form of distribution of honour, wealth and power."(Coser 1968: 30).

Ralf Dahrendorf also looks at conflict as a source of social change. He explains it by using the idea of Integrated Coordinated Association (I.C.A.'s), and explains the principle underlying this idea by writing the following lines,

> "Life chances are never distributed equally. We do not know of a society in which all men, women and children have the same entitlements and enjoy the same provisions. We do not know of even one in which all men have the same status. Probably there cannot be such a condition." (Dahrendorf 1988: 25).

Dahrendorf points out that these integrated coordinated associations are in constant conflict with each other over limited resources; if certain I.C.A.'s are in a better position, this is due to their exposure to better life chances. He explains a very important idea related to life chances, arguing that,

> "The unequal distribution of life chances is a result of structures of power. While some are in a position to lay down the law by which the standing of others is measured." (Dahrendorf 1988: 28).

Communalism is a product of the present contrary to what a number of extremist groups may say communalism has its roots in modernity. According to Bipan Chandra (1984) it was only after 1857 that communalism started to grow; it was not

an antiquated idea which was reinforced but as Jawaharlal Nehru said, in his 1936 speech,"One must not forget that communalism in India is a latter day phenomenon which has grown up before our eyes."

Nation and Nationalism

The two concepts of nation and nationalism are dealt with together because one term cannot be explained without the other. These two terms are almost used synonymously and interchangeably and because of the fluidity of these two concepts they are dealt with together.

Nation as a concept has its roots in eighteenth century Western Europe which was transforming under the ideals of Enlightenment and rationalist secularism. As Benedict Anderson writes,

> "... in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought. The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary. What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning... few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation." (Anderson 1994: 11).

The idea of the nation acted as a bridge for the shift from traditional to modern societies because even though the idea of a nation was a modern construct, it came from a political expression which emphasised an immemorial past and also provided a security blanket into a limitless future. Anderson (1994) points out that the nation played the same role that religious communities and the dynastic realm did in traditional Europe. The nation was therefore nothing more than an imagined political community – and imagined inherently limited as well as sovereign. It is imagined because no member of any nation no matter how small would ever meet all of its members but in her mind there lives "the image of a communion" (Anderson 1994: 6). The nation is imagined as being limited because all nations no matter how big or small and no matter with how large a population would have finite boundaries even if

those boundaries were elastic to some degree and beyond these boundaries would lie other nations as well. As Anderson rightly puts, "No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind."(Anderson1994: 7). The nation is imagined as being a sovereign entity because as a concept it was born when the Enlightenment ideas and the French Revolution were destroying the belief of divinely-ordained rule and the hierarchical dynastic realm. It is also imagined as a community,

> "...because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible. Over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill as willingly to die for such limited imaginings." (Anderson 1994: 7).

Ernst Renan (1990) in his famous work 'What is a Nation?' brings out a very important element about this concept. Through his article he showed how it is not a common religion or language or race that acts as a binding force and makes up a nation. The making of a nation depends on two things: one, large scale amnesia where all the people are gifted with the same boon of forgetting their past and two, what he called soul force – the desire to stay together irrespective of one's differences which one could call nationalism. Anderson (1994) very rightly points out that one should not see nationalism as an ideology but rather look at it from the same lens that one would look at kinship or religion, as it is something that binds an imagined community together.

Not everyone though has a similar view about nation or nationalism; many thinkers particularly those from the erstwhile colonies did not agree with the idea of nation and nationalism and saw it as something that was imposed on them by the colonial powers as something that was alien and did not fit their way of life. In India Rabindranath Tagore and M.K. Gandhi were two such leaders. While their views were not as strong as Tom Narin, who wrote,

> " 'Nationalism' is that pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as 'neurosis' in the individual, with much of the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built- in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent for infantilism for societies) and largely incurable." (Narin 1977: 359).

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Nonetheless Tagore as well as Gandhi both had their reservations towards this idea of nationalism and never really supported the idea because they realised that for a country like India with its multi-religious, multi-racial and multi-lingual population the concept of nation would only lead to trouble. Tagore was so averse to the idea that even when he used the word nation in his work he used to write it in English; he never translated it to Bengali because he realised the implications of such a concept.

Their anxiety was not ill founded or wrong. As the nationalist struggle progressed and nation and nationalism came into the discourse, problems arose. Since the idea of nationalism had its roots in culture and most often than not the cultural symbols that were used were mostly from the Hindu tradition, it brought a divide between the two religious communities – the Hindus and the Muslims – who now started seeing themselves and each other as two different nations whose differences were so great that the idea of them living together seemed far-fetched; it was this idea that finally led to the partition of the country and the formation of Pakistan.

Even today when extremist groups talk about their view of India and Indianness they evoke the same argument of nation and nationalism that was used during the partition. For them India is and should be equated with the Hindu nation and everyone who lives in the country should live according to the ideals of Hinduism as for most of these groups Hinduism is the only form of nationalism for India. The anxiety that it evokes among the Muslims among the country is no secret; so strong is this fear and anxiety that it manifests in different forms like in one of the respondent's understanding that without an *Aadhar* card, she would be thrown out of the country and that if she did not have one as it would mean that she was not a citizen of the country. Giving a similar argument regarding voting she said,

> *"hum yeh isliye karte hain kyu ki hum sochte hain ki hum Hindustan mein hain aur yeh sab Hindustan ki nishaniyan hain isiliye hume yeh sab karna chahiye. Aur nahin denge toh nahin rakhega nikal dega."*("I do this because I think that these are symbols of India and if I don't do this then they will throw me out.").

> ***"Matlab?"*("Meaning?").**

> *"Matlab vote nahin denge toh koi chine ga nei... ration card nahin rakhenge toh koi pehchanega nahin, ye mulook hi ka nahin samjhenge."*("Meaning if I don't vote then no one will know who I am...if I don't have a ration card then everyone wil refuse to acknowledge me they won't see me as a member of this nation.").

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"Toh apko dar lagta hian ki woh apko nikal denge?" ("So do you feel scared that they will throw you out of the country?")

"Dar toh lagta hain woh admi log sab bolta hain ki yeh sab zaroori hain. Dar hai, baaki Allah ka hukum hai, wohi insaan log bola yeh zaroori hain isliye hum kiye hain." ("Yes, I do feel scared and these people say that it is necessary. There is fear, the rest is of course Allah's wishes, it's just people say it's necessary that's why I do this.").

' Mini – Pakistan'

Since the partition of India in 1947, the word Pakistan has come to mean many things for many people. For most of the people of the world it means only a country, for those in Pakistan it means their homeland, something for which they had to struggle a place where the Muslim population and its needs finally gained centre stage. For those residing in India though the words have multiple meanings, for the majoritarian the word is associated with everything demeaning that can be associated with the Muslim community. Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta(2007) while talking to riot victims and listening to their accounts of the violence realise how a single word comes to be associated with a particular community, where even the act of rape is equated to destroying and looting Pakistan. This usage of the term 'Pakistan' and the multiple meanings that are attached to it can be seen in Rowena Robinson's 'Tremors of Violence', where she explains that,

> "In the north Indian plains, it is common to hear a man going to the toilet – that impure sandas often outside or behind the home – refer to his visit as 'going to Pakistan'. In the brutal communal discourses that we have been made to countenance, more so over the last decades, the Indian Muslim is a Pakistani, a scorned being who should 'go to Pakistan'. Indeed as the social geography of Indian cities manifests, the Muslim in fact lives in Pakistans, mini Pakistans."
> (Robinson 2005: 13).

The reason behind doing this according to Taha Abdul Rauf (2011) is that by calling a place Pakistan or 'Mini-Pakistan' it instills in the mind of the majority population that the area is outside their country and therefore the residents of that country are also faceless and nameless beings who have no place in the "imagined rosy reality of India" (Rauf 2011: 72).

Since independence almost every city in India has seen major religious conflicts and the violence between the Hindu and the Muslim religious communities have in colloquial terms often been referred to as wars and therefore the two concerned areas where the riots have taken place are referred to as the two countries of India and Pakistan. The Hindu areas are referred to as India and the Muslim localities as Pakistan. Then there are those areas which are in the periphery where tension runs high and are more often than not called the borders. These are generally the areas where the two communities clash during the time of violence, which a respondent in Robinson's 'Tremor of Violence' articulates as, *"Takkar pe aate hain"* ("Clash together") (Robinson 2005: 50).

Muslims residing in the urban areas is not a new phenomenon. According to Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jafferlot (2012), Muslims have been an integral part of the urban life from the time the Mughals ruled. But the transformation of urban spaces and the division of the cities along religious lines has been a recent phenomenon something that has its roots in post independent India particularly with an increase in the frequency of communal riots. The restructuring of certain pockets of the cities with a particular religion has been seen by many scholars, as a way of living that may provide a sense of security for the members of that community. Contrary though to the popular belief, these processes which lead to the separation of social spaces along communal lines actually increase the chances of riots rather than averting it. Robinson (2005) also points out that every time there is a riot there can be re-organisation of the boundary lines and they may have deeply problematic implications for both the religious communities. But it is also worth mentioning that in certain parts of the country[11] where even if people want to leave a particular area and reside somewhere else, they can't because division on religious lines are given primacy over everything else. This has a major impact on those living or residing in these areas. The situation is worse for the Muslims because these 'Mini-Pakistans' acts as barriers for the growth or the development of the Muslims as most of these 'Mini-Pakistans' lack sufficient infrastructure or facilities to ensure the social and economic betterment of the community. An excerpt from a young Muslim activist in Jeremy Seabrook and

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[11] An example of such a city would be Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Imran Ahmed Siddiqui's book 'People Without History: India's Muslim Ghettos' gives voice to a thought that is probably there in a lot of Muslims' minds, when they look at their state and see the absence of mobility, when they look at their 'Mini-Pakistans'.

> "These...are India's Gaza. There is no visible prison, but that does not mean these places are free. Mobility is not prevented by check points, military posts and armed guards; but the exit from misery ignorance and want is policed by discrimination and prejudice, and these are not tender custodians of borders. It is not by accident that the Indian government is collaborating so much with the state of Israel. We are convinced there deliberations go far beyond defence or trade contracts. Who knows what stories they share with each other on the mysterious arts of institutionalised oppression?" (Seabrook & Siddiqui 2011: 24).

Muslim Identity

Muslim identity is and has been one of the most talked about as well as controversial ideas of both the twentieth and the twenty-first century, but it still seems to be an enigma for most. Simply stated someone following the religion of Islam would be a Muslim and since, she or he would be a practicing Muslim she or he would have markers that could be associated with their religion which in turn would give them their Muslim identity. But reality is never that simple as aspects of life are never really compartmentalised. A person having a Muslim identity has to answer a lot of questions most of which are not even associated with her or his religion. The obsession (if one may use the term) with Muslim identity seems to have gained momentum in the last one and a half decades. This part of the chapter will look at the debates surrounding Muslim identity both at a global as well as at a national level.

The debate surrounding Muslim identity in the world is generally based on questions from the West; their lack of understanding and knowledge and history of the countries in Asia as well as other countries leads them to come to a very simplistic, superficial and deterministic understanding of the rest of the world. Edward Said calls it Orientalism which is basically a troubled and exploitative relationship between Western nations and the Middle East and South and Central Asia, and defines it as the following,

"Anyone who reads, teaches and writes about or researches the oriental; a style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the orient' and 'the occident'; a corporate institution of dealing with the orient a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient." (Said 1979: 2-3).

This feeling of orientalism is reflected in most of the arguments put forward by the West in an attempt to understand the Muslim world and the Muslim Identity and is best reflected in Samuel P. Huntington's (1997) work, 'The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order'. Huntington seeks to explain the world along the lines of culture and divides it into eight civilisations where he puts the Islamic Civilisation or the Muslim Civilisation as something which stands in opposition to the West and whose sole purpose is the destruction of the West. What this argument basically does is that it represents Muslims in a single category who stands opposed to the West and because of their religious belief are all fundamentals. This argument did seem to get an impetus after the September 11 attack in 2001, in the aftermath of which world reduced all the Muslims in this monolithic category of people who were governed by their religious belief, but mostly because of their belief in Islam were unable to live in harmony with others. Overnight the Muslim identity came to be equated with terrorists and this racial profiling and blatant disregard for people's feelings became the justified mode of action and attitude for those in the West.

The situation of course became worse with the debate that revolved around a speech given by the then President of the United States of America who distinguished the Muslims into categories of good Muslim or bad Muslim. By doing this he attached certain qualitative adjectives to Muslim identity and narrowed it down even further. Mahmood Mamdani elaborates on this idea pointing out how this speech affected the Muslim identity.

"From this point of view, 'bad' Muslims were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time the President seemed to assure Americans that 'good' Muslims were anxious to clear their names and undoubtedly support 'us' in a war against 'them'. But this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proved to be 'good' every Muslim was presumed to be 'bad'. All Muslims were now under obligation to prove their credentials by joining a war against 'bad Muslims'." (Mamdani 2014: 15).

Mamdani's argument brings out another element in the discourse regarding Muslim identity one which has now taken central stage while discussing Muslim identity. It is the commonality being drawn between terrorism and Islam and therefore terrorists and Muslims. These categories have now almost become synonymous in the West and any form of assertion of Muslim identity is seen as an act of terrorism or act against the ideals of the West. Matters like this become worse as most of the Muslims who live in these countries are practising Muslims and do carry the markers of their religious identity. This leads to friction in the public sphere at times among those who don't understand or are ignorant of the practices of Islam and therefore lack sensitivity; sometimes the friction can also be with the government as one can see in the debate regarding the head scarves in France. This problem arises because anyone who is seen carrying these markers is also seen as a 'bad Muslim'.

The Indian context of this this idea of Muslim identity is even more complex and layered or nuanced. Given that India is a multi lingual as well as a multi racial country, even Muslims across India have different identities; this is further complicated by the caste system which has penetrated the Muslim community as well. But most of the debates that surround Muslim identity see it as a monolithic category. This sub-part dealing with Muslim identity in India looks at how it comes into construction and how it operates today.

The Muslims in India are seen as alien entities who came to India and did not assimilate in its culture or religious belief; they maintained their religious identity and even though they were a minority they still conquered and controlled the country for centuries. This idea of Muslims as invaders or those who destroy and plunder came to be resurrected during the partition of the country as it was assumed and portrayed that the invaders had again destroyed the country by dividing it.

A problem with Muslim identity in India is its roots in pan Islamism, an argument that is used against them by Hindu fundamentalists as well. The basic question that is asked time and again to the Muslims and is very closely associated with their identity is whether they give primacy to their Muslim lineage and therefore relate more to "their brothers around the globe" or are they Indians first?

Since there is no simple answer to this question, the Muslims are always put under the microscope; what becomes evident though is that their religious identity gains primacy only when they feel threatened of being assimilated into the Hindu fold or when they realise that if they play their religious card they can gain certain political leverage. As Asghar Ali Engineer rightly states,

> "The assertion of religious identity in the process of democratisation, or even modernisation for that matter should not be seen only as religious fanaticism or fundamentalism; it should also be seen as the best available way for the deprived communities in backward society for realising greater share in power, in government jobs and economic resources." (Engineer 1991: 1038).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As mentioned in the introduction, this dissertation's main aim or objective is to find out why is there an assertion of Muslim identity in a place like Kolkata, but before this research starts is journey, it is crucial to talk about the history of this nation whose by-product is the relationship that has emerged between the Hindus and the Muslims of this country. It is this relationship between the two communities that forms the larger discourse of which, this work would deal with one of the elements – identity.

This section will look into the impact that history has had on these two communities and how it has continued to affect the two religions even after independence. The section will be broadly divided into two narratives: one at the level of the nation as a whole and the other will look at the history of Bengal and Kolkata till independence. But before going any further and recounting the history of both the country and Bengal it is important to give a brief account of how Islam came to India.

Contrary to popular knowledge or understanding, the advent of Islam in India did not come with the sword; it wasn't with raids, loots or wars in the North of India; it came in from the South, from Kerala through the Arab traders not with violence but with peace. It has been found that the link between the Middle East and India dates even before the birth of Islam. Traders from Arabia would pass through Kerala to go to the South East Asian countries. The proof in this argument is found in the fact that the coast which is called the Malabar coast of Kerala comes from the Arabic word

Mac'bre, which means passage and is used by the Arab traders when they mentioned Kerala. With the advent of Islam most of these traders started preaching about Islam, married into the local population had children and settled there and thus began the spread of Islam in the sub continent.[12]

 The north of India had a different trajectory though it did see invasions from central Asia and the birth of the Delhi Sultanate, the first Muslim empire. Mohammad Bin Ghori and Mahmud of Ghazni have been credited with one of the first and most brutal invasions on the northern region of India; it has been said by historians that they would come and loot and plunder and then leave, that they never really made India their home. The first settlement or the desire to reside in India started with the Slave Dynasty or Mamluk Dynasty (1206 to 1290) whose founder was Qutub – ud –din Aibak. They were followed by the Khilji Dynasty (1290 to 1320), which founded by Jalal – ud - Din Feroz Shah Khilji. The third dynasty to follow them were the Tughlaq Dynasty (1320 to 1414) and this dynasty's founder was Ghiyas – ud -Din Tughlaq. The fourth dynasty was the Sayyed Dynasty[13] (1414 to 1450) and the fifth dynasty was the Lodhi Dynasty (1451 to 1526) and it was founded by Bahlul Lodhi. All these five dynasties formed the Delhi Sultanate. They were the first empire in India which had Islamic rule and they started making changes in the social, cultural, legal and religious aspects of life. Bringing in rules and mandates which had their origin in the *Hadis*[14] the influence of Persian and Arabic culture and tradition started making its presence felt in the Indian traditions which were largely dominated by Hindu beliefs.

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[12]This is also a reason given by many scholars to show why there is relatively less tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities in the South of the country as compared to the North. How valid is this statement is a different matter or question and is beyond the scope of this research.

[13]During the reign of the Sayyed Dynasty there were many attacks from Central Asia as a result of which most of the historical accounts and records are lost.

[14]Hadis is the name of a compilation of Prophet Mohammad's teachings, deeds and sayings. It is seen as a guideline by most Muslims who follow these teachings in their everyday life.

After the Lodi Dynasty was defeated by Babur in 1526 in the first battle of Panipat, the Delhi Sultanate was replaced by the Mughal Empire which ruled till 1857[15] when their last emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was arrested and sent to exile to Yangon (Rangoon) by the British.

  It is the Mughal Empire which was the more important of the two Muslim empires and continues to be so even today especially when it comes to discussing the relationship between the Hindu community and the Muslim community. The allegations, some real, others myths, against the rulers still continue to play a major role of contention between the two communities. Therefore, it is important to talk a bit more in detail about the Mughals, particularly the Great Mughals (1326 to 1701) whose rule begins with the rule of Babur followed by Humayun, who is ascended by Akbar, then Jahangir, then Shahjahan and finally Aurangzeb. Some of the laws that were passed by the rulers have been seen as unjust and are used today by certain pockets of political parties to show that the Hindu communities were discriminated by the Mughals. One such argument given by them is with regard to the tax the Hindus had to pay to travel to their pilgrimage site. Even though this tax was discontinued by Akbar[16], his great grandson Aurangzeb started it all over again.

Many attempts are made to show that the dispute among the kings were mostly religious; this is both historically incorrect and politically motivated, as it does nothing more than reduce the rulers to their religion and ignores the fact that most of the battles and wars fought in history were due to conflicts between two kings and not religious beliefs. An example that is used time and again is the war between Rana Pratap Singh and Akbar, which is used by most Hindu nationalist groups to show that it was a war based on religion. But if that truly was the case than neither Akbar would have had Raja Man Singh who was a Rajput Prince fighting by his side nor would

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[15]By 1857 the Mughal Empire was just a shadow of the original empire under the Great Mughals. After losing almost all their territory to the East India Company the rule of the Empire was reduced to just the area inside the fort.

[16]Most historians believe that it was a strategic and political decision made by Akbar to ensure that the Mughal Empire would become stronger and to do so it required legitimacy from his subjects most of whom believed in the ideals of Hinduism.

Rana Pratap Singh have a Muslim general named Hakim Khan Sur fighting in the same battle.

Of all the Mughal rulers, Aurangzeb is considered to be the most cruel and intolerant towards his Hindu subjects. This is mostly due to wrong interpretation of history by certain Hindu nationalist groups. Most historians for example point out that the tax that was levied on the Hindus were done with the intention of bringing some parity among the population, as the Muslim subjects were supposed to pay *zakaat*[17] and there was no equivalence of that in the Hindu belief system and so the rulers had to introduce it among the subjects who practised Hinduism as a belief system. Another argument put forward by them in defence of Aurangzeb's intention to restart the taxation is that he came into the throne right after the Mughal treasury was almost empty and so it was an economical rather than a religious decision.

While the rest of the section will talk about the history of both India and Bengal, it will focus mostly from 1600 onwards, from the advent of the East India Company. The objective behind this focus is simple, as it is only with the advent of the British rule that the categories of Muslims and Hindus became concrete and binary realities and continue to do so even today.

Pre – Independent India

The Europeans reached Indian shores on 1498 at the port of Calicut, with Vasco De Gama leading a crew of Portuguese sailors. Thus started the race in Europe to head to East and the colonial rule in India along with most of the nations who are today called the Third World Nations began; the last to enter the race were the British who came to India in the 1600s[18] and set up their first trading post in Surat, Gujarat and the East India Company was born. They continued to be a trading organisation and competed with other European countries to establish themselves as the supreme trading organisation in the East and by 1757, they had become successful in doing so, because

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[17]One of the five pillars of Islam, it is enforced on rich Muslims to ensure that they spend a portion of their money on charity. During most of the Islamic rule it was also seen as a form of taxation.

[18]Once in 1608 when they failed to get permission from the Mughal court and the next time in 1612 when they were finally granted permission to trade in India.

in 1757 in the Battle of Plassey[19], the Company defeated Siraj –ud –Daulah and got control of the Diwan of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa[20]. Robert Clive who was working for the company even annihilated the revolt that happened in 1763 led by Mir Qasim in the Battle of Buxar and ensured the rule of the company. By the end of the eighteenth century, the East India Company had control over most of the sub-continent and after defeating the French in the three Carnatic Wars in the South had established itself as the key player of trading in the East. By wars and annexation as well as by formulating laws like the Doctrine of Lapse[21] and the abolition of adoption the British ensured that they would not be challenged and became invincible.

The arbitrary rules and laws that the company was passing and their manner of interference in the functions of the court of all the Princely States was leading to a feeling of discontent and anger among some of the kings and princes. But it was actually a simple rumour that was became a major reason for bringing the company to its knees. The East India Company had its own regiment of soldiers and a rumour was spread among the soldiers that the cartridge that was used by the company had pork and beef fat. Since these cartridges were supposed to be torn by using one's mouth it offended the religious sentiments of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh soldiers and it was this rumour that led to the Sepoy Mutiny[22] of 1857 and the East India Company faced many problems. Even some of the princely states, tired of the company's interference, revolted against them under the leadership of Rani Lakshmibai, the queen of Jhansi. This along with the bankruptcy[23] led to the downfall

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[19] It is a place in the district of Murshidabad in the state of West Bengal.

[20] It is now called the state of Odisha.

[21] It was rule passed by the East India Company in all the princely states which were under the influence of the Company, but not under its direct control. It stated that if the king passed away without having any heirs then the control of the princely state would go to the Company.

[22] A number of scholars also believe that this was the First War of Independence by the Indians, but it is a very contentious idea as it is also shown that the idea of the nation, the idea of India as one knows it today came into existence much later as did the fight for it.

[23] The reason for the bankruptcy was the company's own mistake to ensure that they would get people from England came to India to work for them; they had a clause in their agreement which stated that all the employees of the company would be allowed to practise trade on their own and whatever profit they would earn would belong only to them and the company would have no share in them. As a result of this clause the employees of the company started working only for themselves;

of the East India Company and the British Crown took over in 1860, and India became a colony under the British rule.

By the late nineteenth century, India had become a colony of the British Empire and along with it began its struggle for freedom, the birth of the idea of a nation came but with a price of distancing and alienation between two communities – Hindus and Muslims – and the partition of the subcontinent. All of this will be dealt with in greater detai in the following pages.

It was with the British Crown taking over the sub-continent that the categories of Hindus and Muslims came into existence. It should be mentioned that the homogenisation of these two religions as two monolithic categories having the same set of needs and wants, is something that only happened with the first census that was carried out by the Crown in 1872. Prior to this time, the Hindus and the Muslims were more fluid categories and people's association was more along caste and class lines than along religion. The situation is best explained by the following quote,

> "It is important to note that neither Muslim nor Hindu community was a homogeneous one. Both the communities were highly stratified horizontally as well as vertically. Medieval societies were hierarchical along caste and class lines and the lower rungs of the community did not harmonise with the upper rungs."
> (Engineer 2004: 72).

The British Crown after gaining control over India started bringing in changes both in the legal as well as the administrative spheres; the medium of instruction shifted from Persian or Urdu to English. Most of the Muslims who only knew how to read and write in either Persian or Urdu were at a loss; a community which was at the helm of power and controlled almost all aspects of the society under the Mughal rule, were now at the bottom of the food chain. They were losing their grip and their reality was completely changing. From being in most of the administrative and legal offices, they were now being moved to other spheres which were not economically viable. As a result, they started moving more and more towards their religion as they found a sense

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they would return to England rich and prosperous as they would have their own business as well as the salary they would get from the company, whereas the company was sinking in loan and heading towards bankruptcy.

of comfort in something that they were familiar with, and moved away from public life which in turn further aggravated their situation. On the other hand, the Hindus who were far more flexible in their attitude as they were more adept to changes as compared to their Muslim counterparts, started learning English and giving their children Western education.

By 1885 the Indian National Congress[24] came into existence and started asking the British to make certain changes and amendments in the laws as well as to look into the problems of the people. The Indian National Congress comprised of mainly the elites from both the religious communities and even though they believed in justice and were pursuing the British for better conditions of the people, they also followed the same categorisation of the people as the British did wherein they started categorising the people of the two religious communities as monolithic homogenous groups (which, as one moves along the chapter would realise, was a big mistake and is continued as a practice even today).

Realising that the British Crown was as ruthless and despotic as the East India Company, certain sections of the Indian population started organising themselves and started asking the British government to make certain changes in its rules and laws when it came to govern India. One such rule was the Indian Council Act of 1861 which expanded the Governor General's Executive Council which was entrusted with law making powers. This Council was extremely biased and hardly had any representation from the Indian side. In 1892 when the Act was reformed to include Indians, most of the members who were nominated were Princes or Zamindars[25], mostly people who had their loyalty to the British and wouldn't question any of their legislations. An example of one such member was Raja Dig Vijay Singh of Balarampur who was nominated in the council twice but couldn't speak or understand a word of English; it is believed that one of his relatives had once asked him how was

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[24] It was started by A. O. Hume, a British civil servant with the belief that the Indian National Congress will act as a valve against any future revolts or frictions. But many historians like Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherhee and Aditya Mukherjee believe that it instead was like a lightning conductor which sparked the Indian national movement.

[25] The landlords in British India were given the title of Zamindars along with Rai Bahadur and Khan Bahadur.

it that he could work in the council to which he replied, that he would look only at the Viceroy and follow his movements that is, he would raise or lower his arm when the Viceroy did.

It was only from 1904 onwards, that political leaders like Dada Bhai Naoroji, G.K. Gokhale and Lokmanya Tilak were part of the nationalist struggle started being nominated as members in the council through which they brought forward all their demands including the idea of self government with the same model that was fashioned for Canada and Australia.

But as the nationalist struggle was gaining momentum so was the divisive politics that was a central tenet of the British rule. The imperialist government in India in a very subtle way started creating an atmosphere of divisive politics which it fuelled, by ensuring a degree of insecurity and mistrust among the communities particularly within the Muslims and the Hindus. This divisive politics is called the Divide and Rule policy by most of the Indian historians and they bring into the light how this was done. Sometimes it was subtle, like by favouring a particular religious group over the other, or by manipulating the leaders of a particular group. But the most crucial act in this divisive politics was in 1905 because this single action of the British ensured that religious differentiation could never be reconciled and a united front against them could never emerge. This single event can be seen as the event which would finally snowball into the ugly thing that communalism would come to be. The event was the Partition of Bengal in 1905 under Viceroy Lord Curzon, who was adamant for the partition of Bengal sighting an official reason; that since the size and population of Bengal was so great that administration was affected and it was difficult to carry it out properly or effectively, but the partition was actually done in a way that it divided the Bengali community; the partition was not only done on religious lines; it also ensured that the Bengali community become a minority in Bengal itself. The sinister idea behind this partition becomes clear in the letter written by Lord Curzon to the then Secretary of the State, where he wrote,

> "If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to
> dismember or reduce Bengal again: and you will be cementing and solidifying a
> force already formidable and certain to be source of increasing trouble in the
> future." (Chandra 1988: 125)

The same year the Swadesi[26] Movement had begun as an offshoot of the protest carried out against the partition and continued till 1908 but because of the partition, Bengal had lost its momentum. It is important to mention here that while the nationalist struggle was gaining some ground, so was religious politics; falling prey to the categories that were set up by the British, the leaders made some grave mistake. In their effort to bring the people together, they started certain festivals or traditions[27] which had the effect of alienating the Muslim population, who then started to feel and realise that they were a separate category from the rest of the country and that they themselves needed to voice their demands to the British.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was one of the most prominent leaders of the nineteenth century and was also the founder of the Aligarh Muslim University. Realising that the Muslim youth were being discriminated and not being represented well enough in other colleges providing Western education, he started this institution. While it has been argued that it was Syed Khan who started talking along communal lines it must be pointed out that it was only in 1888 that he started talking only about Muslim interests. Prior to that he also believed in the idea of a single nation; so much was his belief that the people irrespective of their religion were one and the same that in 1884, he said,

> "Do you not inhabit this land? Are you not buried in it or cremated on it? Surely you live and die on the same land. Remember Hindus and Muslims are religious terms. Otherwise Hindus Muslims and Christians who live in this country are by virtue of this fact one *quam*[28]". (quoted in Chandra 1988: 414).

The change in his attitude seems to occur at around the same time when the nationalist struggle started using symbols of culture and religion – which were mostly associated with the Hindu community – to unite the people. The elements of divisive politics were getting stronger and stronger and there was a feeling of estrangement among the two religious communities. Even though attempts were made to unite the

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[26] Swadesi was a concept that was introduced by the nationalist leaders to promote and ensure self reliance.

[27] Like the Shivaji Festival or Ganesh Chaturthi.

[28] It means nation or community.

communities it generally did not last long. One such attempt was made by M.K. Gandhi wherein, he tried to bring the Hindus and the Muslims together by ensuring a common struggle which he did by showing his support to the Khilafat Movement and gaining support from the Muslim clergy for his Non - Cooperation Movement which was from 1920 to 1922. But after the end of this Movement one could see the situation worsening.

The Muslim League, The Hindu Mahasabha and of course the British Crown did not make matters any easy; they in their own ways and through their deeds added another nail to the coffin of the idea of a unified India. In less than a century, categories introduced by the British to enumerate the people of the country became the central point of contention for the two groups. The word 'Hindu' acquired a new meaning – it started getting associated with a particular religion, which was not the case as late as the nineteenth century. The term was loosely used for the inhabitants of the land which we today know as the Indian subcontinent comprising mainly of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. An example of this belief can be seen in a famous speech given by Bharatendu Harishchandra at Ballia (Uttar Pradesh) around 1884, where he declared that, "Whoever lives in Hindustan, whatever his colour or caste is a Hindu."(Quoted in Pandey1993: 245) He then went on to elaborate what the statement meant. He pointed out that all those who were involved in a common historical project that is "Bengalis, Marathas, Panjabis Madrasis [sic], Vaidikis, Jains Brahmos, Musulman"(Ibid.) were all Hindus. A similar understanding was even given by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in a lecture given by him in 1884 at Lahore, where he stated that the term Hindu actually meant "the inhabitants of Hindustan"(Chandra 1988: 415). So fluid were the categories, that Bhai Paramanand while talking about his experiences in America in the early 1900s, mentioned that he was asked by an American acquaintance of his "Are all Hindus Musulman?" (Quoted in Pandey1993: 245).

It is only by the 1920s that these categories underwent drastic change and led to the emergence of nationalism that was based on religion and not territory any more. The rise of Hindu nationalism happened around the 1920s, with Golwalkar and Savarkar categorising Hindus along religious and traditional lines; this categorisation became problematic when the category of the Hindu started being equated with the nation and the citizens or people of that nation and Muslims as opposite or binary to this vision.

These ideas gained prominence in the work of Savarkar (1942) especially in his book 'Hindutva', where he used the idea of territory and the people that were used by previous leaders and gave it a perverse and manipulative interpretation. He stated that the word 'Hindu' had been used for the name of the land and later when the Aryans came they started pronouncing it Sindhu, but the truth remained that the land that was here and the civilisation that existed here was Hindu so the actual citizens of this nation would be those who would consider themselves as Hindus. He then went on to explain who would fall under this category. He wrote,

> "A Hindu means a person who regards this land of Bharatvarsha[29], from the Indus to the Seas as his Fatherland as well as his Holyland, that is the cradle land of his religion... Hinduism means the 'ism' of the Hindu; and as the word Hindu has been derived from the word Sindhu... meaning primarily all the people who reside in the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu [the Indus to the seas], Hinduism must necessarily mean the religion or the religions that are peculiar and native to this land and these people" (Savarkar 1942: 104)

These sentences by Savarkar showed that the Muslims and Hindus could not reside together that they were not the same; there was a difference of not just political interests but it was a difference of two civilisations and two cultures which are completely different from each other and can never come to a situation where their differences can be reconciled.

It would be inaccurate to say that Savarkar and other Hindu nationalists alone were demanding or thinking along the same lines – the idea of one nation based on one religion – the Muslim League also had the same idea, when it came to the construction of the nation. A handful of upper class Muslims decided that a separate nation was also needed for Muslims. Hiding their own self - interest under the garb of religious differences they started promoting a separate nation for the Muslims. Mohammad Ali Jinnah on March 22nd 1940 in his speech talked about the Two Nation Theory, where he pointed out that Hindus and Muslims could not reside together anymore as there were major differences in their cultural and religious beliefs and that they were two different civilisations.

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[29] It is a synonym in Sanskrit for India.

The British Government added fuel to the fire and did everything possible to ensure that the two communities would not unify and provide a strong opposition against them. This it did by passing a number of Acts[30] like the Separate Electorates Act which granted every religious community to have separate electorates who would do their bidding. Even though Gandhi tried to do his best to stop it, he failed.

It would be wrong however to say that all the leaders from both the religions were thinking along religious lines. There were some leaders who were nationalists till the end; they still believed in the ideals of secularism and it was their struggle that finally after a number of movements like The Civil Disobedience Movement from 1934 to 1938 and the Quit India Movement in 1942 that India as an independent state became a possibility.

Their struggle and zest finally had the impact it was designed for. The British Crown agreed to grant independence to India by passing the Transfer of Power to the Indians in 1946, but this struggle by the nationalist leaders also came at a cost: the Partition of the country into two nations India, and Pakistan – East (In 1971, which became a separate country of Bangladesh) and West.While Independence was a victory for those who believed in the ideals of freedom and unity, it also in a way became a victory for those who believed in communal politics as well and it was the victory of the latter which would cost the people of the nation a lot – their lives, family, livelihood but most importantly their homes and would create a major impact on their identity and would continue to do so for a very long time.

On 15th August 1947, India got its independence, but this freedom was marred with the blood of those who lost their lives in the riots of Partition. The instant India was declared as an independent state and the birth of Pakistan became inevitable, riots broke out all over India. The devastation was the worst in Bengal in the East and Punjab in the West, so bad was the situation that Gandhi had to go to Bengal and walk through the streets of Noakhali to diffuse the communal tension and bring a degree of normalcy in the lives of the people. Punjab was also deeply affected by the partition and the violence was getting worseby the day. There was large scale migration within

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[30] It is a synonym for Laws.

the two countries and even the trains carrying the refugees were not spared and stories of empty compartments carrying only bags containing breasts of women and penises were abound. Horror and fear became an integral part of the memories of those who survived the partition and it reined their imagination for a long time. The best way to probably explain the partition is by looking at the words of Ismat Chughtai (1915 – 1991) who wrote,

> "The flood of communal violence came and went with all its evil, but it left a pile of living, dead, and gasping corpses in its wake .It wasn't only that the country was split in two bodies and minds were also divided. Moral beliefs were tossed aside and humanity was in shreds. Government officers and clerks along with their chairs, pens and inkpots were distributed like the spoils of the war. Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart. One brother was allotted to Hindustan, the other to Pakistan; the mother was in Hindustan, her offspring were in Pakistan, the husband was in Hindustan, his wife was in Pakistan. The bonds of relationship were in tatters, and in the end many souls remained behind in Hindustan while their bodies started off for Pakistan." (Chughtai 2001:).

The partition finally succeeded in 'other'-ing both the communities from each other and the Muslims who stayed back in India were seen as the enemy.

Bengal in Pre – Independence Era

Bengal has always played a very important role both in the Mughal as well as the British rule in India. Because of its strategic location(its port allowed one access to the South East Asian countries by sea; also it was connected to places as far as Kandahar in Afghanistan through the Grand Trunk Road)[31] and fertile soil, Bengal was always the province that needed to be controlled. Even though it wasn't under direct Mughal rule, the rulers of Bengal did owe their allegiance to the Mughal rule and would even pay a certain amount of grains to the Mughal granary as tax to the Empire.

The British also set their post here to trade with the permission of the Subedar of Bengal. But the East India Company under Robert Clive had other plans; to gain

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[31] The road was built by Sher Shah Suri; it is also called the Sher Shah Suri Marg.

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political control all over India, it was very necessary for the British to have Bengal under their thumb.

To ensure their victory in Bengal Robert Clive joined forces with those who wanted to overthrow Siraj-Ud-Daulah and wanted one of them at the throne. Most of these men were noblemen from the court of Bengal and their leader was Mir Jafar, who had dreams of becoming the ruler of Bengal himself. They all came together and tried to overthrow the king. This finally led to the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The East India Company won the war and gained control of the province of Bengal[32].

Robert Clive did not keep his promise to Mir Jafar[33] and even he was killed. His son-in-law Mir Qasim tried to fight against the company and take back Bengal from their control in the Battle of Buxar in 1763 but his rebellion was crushed and he was also killed. Thus by 1764, Bengal was under the direct rule of the British[34] and continued to do so till independence.

Under the Company's rule Bengal did undergo a lot of change. It was one of the first places in India where Western education was introduced and there was impact from the missionaries as well. Western education brought about some changes in the people of Bengal. They had begun to experience both intellectual and cultural turmoil, something that would characterise social life in nineteenth century Bengal and would be termed as the Bengal Renaissance. The seed of this turmoil began with a question that seem to haunt the people, the question was an inevitable introspection that came from being defeated by the British as well as the consequent discrimination from colonial culture and ideology that they had to face. The response to this situation may have varied but the underlying principle of introspection cannot be questioned by

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[32] Today the states of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa parts of the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Bangladesh, would make up the province of Bengal.

[33] According to local folklore Mir Jafar was thrown into the river with rocks tied around his leg while he was still alive and Robert Clive had told him that was it his punishment for betraying his ruler.

[34] The British Crown introduced certain laws regarding the control of land, where over time in some of its colonies they moved from direct control to indirect influence like the Ryotwari System, no such change was ever introduced for the province of Bengal which continued to be a Permanent Settlement.

anyone. Raja Rammohan Roy's speech in 1828, best articulates this question, where he says,

> "I regret to say, that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinctions of castes introducing innumerable divisions and sub – divisions among them has entirely deprived them of political interest. The distinctions of castes introducing innumerable divisions and sub –divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rite and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. It is, I think, that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort." (Quoted in Collet 1913: 124)

These questions regarding their identity and the perception of them being seen as the defeated race brought about a new zeal among the people of Bengal, which in turn led to reformation movements in Bengal which later spread to the rest of India. The question all these men who were the first generation products of English education, were asking were mainly in the sphere of religion and the dominance of social evils and superstition that had started being associated with religion. The reformers pointed out that these evil practices had gained such status that most people had started thinking of religion only in these terms and had forgotten about the actual principles of their faith. It wasn't only Raja Rammohan Roy who questioned religion but also other organisations like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, who brought forward their own sets of anxieties and tried to find solutions to them.

Bengal saw a number of social reformers from Swami Vivekananda, to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who were the torchbearers when it came to social reform in Bengal; they ensured that the Abolition of Sati[35] Act as well as the Widow Remarriage Act be passed.

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[35]Sati was a practice among the upper class Hindus, where the wife would be burnt alive along with her dead husband on his funeral pyre.

In 1857 the Sepoy Mutiny also started in Barackpore[36] which was then under the Bengal province. Mangal Pandey, a soldier in the Barackpore regiment refused to use the cartridge and led the mutiny but was later caught and hanged. In 1860 when the British Crown took over India, Calcutta[37] became its administrative hub and thus became the capital of British India.

In 1883 in Bengal, Surendranath Banerjea organised a national conference which was the first of its kind in that time period in India and it was this conference which has been heralded as one of the causes for the birth of the Indian National Congress.

From the above passages then, one could see the influence Bengal had not only in the realm of politics, but also in the social sphere. Bengal with its epicentre at Calcutta was becoming a very important stronghold for nationalist politics. Being introduced to the language and the ideas promoted by the British, the leaders here could counteract and use the tools of the British government against them. At the same time the influence of the Indian National Congress in Bengal was also increasing. The British Crown had realised that the backbone of the nationalist struggle was Bengal and the people residing there, so to weaken the Nationalist Movement the British Crown decided to divide Bengal. So under Viceroy Lord Curzon a legislation was passed that would lead to the Partition of Bengal in 1905.

The reason given by Lord Curzon and the British rule for the Partition of Bengal was given as administrative, wherein Lord Curzon wrote to the Secretary of State on the 30th of April 1902,

> "I am not sure that this will not be a proper occasion on which to examine into the larger questions of the boundaries of local governments or some of them in general. Bengal is unquestionably too large a charge for any single man. Ought Chittagong to continue to belong to it, or ought we to give Assam an outlet to the sea? Is Orissa best governed from Calcutta? Ought Ganjam to be given to Madras?..."(Quoted in Ronaldshay 1918: 220).

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[36]It is an area in the suburbs of Kolkata.

[37]It was renamed to Kolkata in 2001.

In 1905 when it was finally declared that Bengal would be split into two, the leaders in Bengal realised that it was an act that was based on the British government's new principle of governance, of 'Divide and Rule'. This became evident in the way Lord Curzon went about fulfilling his plans to divide Bengal. First, he went to Dacca and began to talk about it becoming the capital of East Bengal after the partition and as a result it would ensure greater development in the region the idea appealed to the Muslim population who were mainly living in really bad conditions, while garnering resistance from the Bengali Hindus.

Another reason why this was seen more as a political move to destroy the nationalist struggle among the Bengalis was that, the Partition of Bengal was planned in a way that the Bengali speaking people would become a minority in both the provinces.

The final act by Curzon which proved that he had more than administration on his mind when partitioning Bengal was when he rejected the plan of division given by Bengali nationalist leaders under the leadership of Surendranath Banerjea. Surendranth Banerjea and other members realised that there was some truth in what Lord Curzon was saying about East Bengal, where he pointed out,

> "Crime was rife, the peasant were crushed beneath the exactions of absentee landlords, the police system was feeble, education a mere shadow, and internal communications disagreeably inadequate." (Quoted in Fraser 1911: 19).

According to Curzon all of this was happening because "the old government was engrossed" (Ray 1977: 36) only with Calcutta and its surrounding areas where practically all of the revenues from Bengal was being spent. So agreeing with him they formulated a new division of Bengal wherein the Bengali speaking community would not be divided but the other regions would be. This suggestion was of course not accepted and Bengal was divided according to the original plan where Assam and East Bengal became a single province and West Bengal, Bihar Orissa and Chota Nagpur became another.

On 19th July 1905, the Government resolution was passed which led to an atmosphere of anger, anguish, indignation and protest. To voice these feelings Surendranath Banerjea wrote,

"The announcement fell like a bombshell upon an astonished public... We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self – consciousness of the Bengali speaking population. Originally intended to meet administrative requirements, we felt that it had drawn to itself a political flavour and complexion, and it allowed to be passed, it would be fatal to our political progress and that close union between the Hindus and Mohammedans upon which the prospect of Indian advancement so largely depended." (Quoted in Baig 1969: 116).

There was protest everywhere; people started boycotting English goods and started using swadesi items. Stores selling English goods were picketed and even though the swadesi goods were more expensive people still bought them in order to show their protest against the resolution and also to show their solidarity.

October 16th 1905 was declared as the day for national mourning and several things were particularly assigned for this day which showed the solidarity between the Hindu and the Muslim community as well as their disappointment and anger with the British government. It was mentioned that the people had

"(1) to move in procession... towards the Ganges to take a dip in the sacred waters, and to tie the rakhi round the wrists of passer - by... (2) to come back after bath and assemble at celebrated Central College... and to observe the Rakhi – Bandan ceremony there; (3) to observe the day as a day of fasting and uncooking; (4) to assemble in the afternoon to lay the foundation of the proposed Federation Hall;... and (5) finally to march in procession in the evening... and start there the first collections from the people for the creation of the National Fund" (Baig 1969: 117).

The partition of Bengal had many effects not just for the people living there but the echo of this partition could be heard in almost the whole of the country. While some effects were good, like it gave rise to the Swaraj Movement (1905 – 1908), the other changes that it brought about were not so good; it led to the division between the two religious groups of Bengal turning them into two antagonistic parties standing at opposite ends; and so communal and divisive politics entered Bengal which in turn would lead to large scale violence later.

In the freedom struggle also the partition of Bengal played a major role; it made people question the efficacy of the methods used by the moderates in the Congress which in turn led to its split and gave rise to a section of people who were within the nationalist movement and wanted freedom but now preferred violence as a means to achieve it.

Even though the people from the Bengali community joined the nationalist movement and supported the cause for freedom regardless of their religious background, it was never the same; a line now had been drawn along religious identites and the British had finally succeeded in achieving what they wanted: to weaken if not destroy the Bengali nationalists' unity.

The redrawing of the boundaries of Bengal along religious lines is seen as a watershed in Bengal's history which led to the rise of communal elements in this part of the country. As Patricia A. Gossman (1999) duly notes,

> "The redrawing of the boundary provided a catalyst for political organizers to mobilize the majority communities on both sides of the new border around religious and economic symbols. Religious reformers and peasant leaders who, for different reasons, were hoping to instil in the Bengali Muslims a more developed consciousness of his or her Muslim identity were foremost among those leaders who saw 1905 as a watershed. The partitions repeal in 1911 provided equally fruitful opportunities for these middle level leaders to exploit the betrayal of the Muslims by the colonial administration. The years between 1905 and 1911 were marked by violent agitations, as religious reformers joined ranks with peasant organizers to challenge both 'anti - Islamic practices' and Hindu dominance in landholding and money lending." (Gossman 1999: 19).

It was actually the period of 1905 to 1911 which is crucial to understand the rise of Islamic identity in Bengal because prior to that, the Muslims in Bengal were not really aware of their identity as part of a larger group who were fighting for their own demands. It was only in 1905 that it was realised that the Muslims in Bengal were in miserable conditions living in abject poverty and under the weight of huge loans. The partition brought about two elements of their identity – economic and religious – which would then be used by religious leaders to bring the Muslims together. The communal violence therefore, had two elements.

The peasantry was used as a symbol to mobilise the Muslim population in Bengal because of their "backward and impoverished conditions" (Gossman 1999: 20) by two groups who then used it to forward their own agenda. They were the,

> "... the urban, educated elites who saw it as an instrument that would help persuade the colonial authorities to promote Muslim interests, and popular religious leaders who believed that this underclass was the key to spreading their own reform message." (Gossman 1999: 20).

As the years moved on, the growth of Muslim leadership continued even after the decision to reverse the partition was announced on 12th December 1911 and Western and Eastern Bengal provinces were to be reconstituted and joined as one. The Muslim League, however, did not enter the political scene till about 1935, when it came into power in coalition with the Krishak Praja Party (KPP) and until 1937, they virtually had no presence in Bengal and their idea for a separate nation was almost absent.

However according to the administrative records this was the period that was decisive in the way symbols and issues were going to be used in order to gather momentum among the Muslims residing in Bengal for the creation of Pakistan.

The communal violence that then came to dominate Bengal during the 1930s and 1940s was a reflection of how successfully the leaders polarized the Hindu and Muslim communities, and also the,

> "triumph of the leaders who used the incidents of violence to stake their claim as the sole body capable of protecting not just Muslim or Hindu interests, but Muslim and Hindu lives." (Gossman 1999: 137).

The communal politics finally culminated to a situation where Bengal was rife with brutal stories of violence, death and killing in 1946. It began on 16th August 1946 in Howrah which was to be observed as The Direct Action Day by the Muslim League and its supporters; the day was declared as a bandh a day when people would show their support for the call for Pakistan. A procession was going through Salkia, Shibpur, Panchanantola, Kali Babu Bazar and other places. While this procession was taking place some Hindu store owners who had opened their shop were asked to close them. There were also reports which said that,

"... from the morning, groups of Muslims armed with lathis went around the town enforcing a hartal. Before 2 p.m. no incidents were reported. Some people collected in the Howrah maidan began closing shops on the G.T. road. The Hindu residents of Rameswar Malia lane resisted. Another procession coming from Shibpur looted two shops and then the rioting began." (Batubyal 2005: 239)

Map 2.1: Area Affected In The 1946 Great Calcutta (Kolkata) Riots
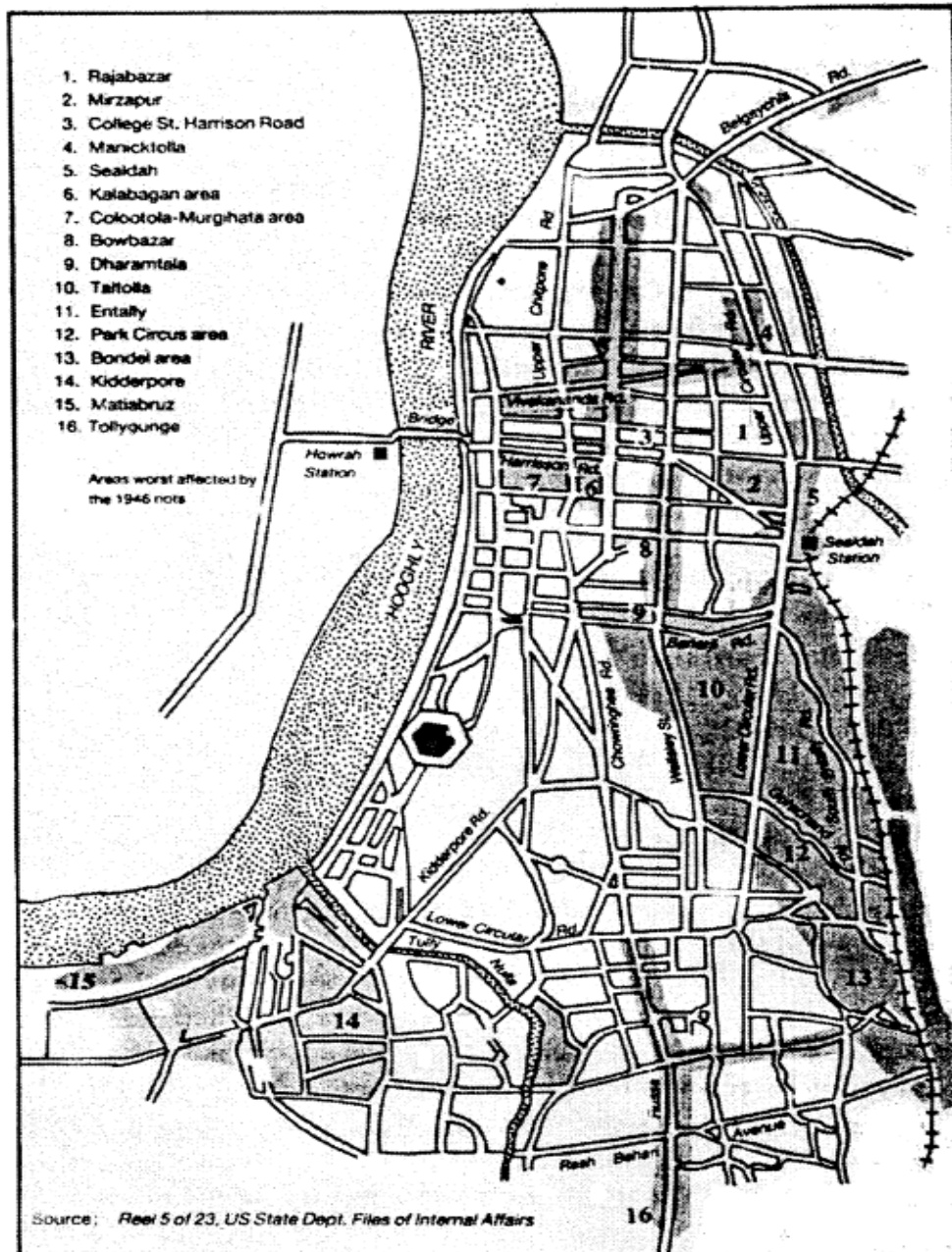
1. Rajabazar
2. Mirzapur
3. College St. Harrison Road
4. Manicktolla
5. Sealdah
6. Kalabagan area
7. Colootola-Murgihata area
8. Bowbazar
9. Dharamtala
10. Taltolla
11. Entally
12. Park Circus area
13. Bondel area
14. Kidderpore
15. Matiabruz
16. Tollygunge

Areas worst affected by the 1946 riots

Source: Reel 5 of 23, US State Dept. Files of Internal Affairs

Source: Das, Suranjan(2000) The 1992 Calcutta Riot in Historical Continuum: A Relapse into 'Communal Fury'? pg – 284.

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Incidents of violence breaking out in different parts of Bengal were heard on 17th August 1946 as well as news about sporadic looting of shops, burning of boats containing straws or hay on the banks of the river were reported in Howrah, Chittagong and Chandpur in the Tippera district. Violence was escalating as reports of Muslim men taking to the street and disrupting peace in Hindu areas were coming in. There were some reports that some Muslim youths were walking around Hindu areas with sticks, catapualts and iron rods and were closing and looting all the shops that were open; news of molestation, mugging and beating up of random Hindu passersby were becoming more and more frequent.

None of the violence, however that occurred in the rest of Bengal prepared people for what happened in Calcutta, which even today is referred to as the Great Calcutta Killings. The communal tension and the violence resulting from it were so high and gruesome that for a long time it was etched in the minds of the people. Calcutta was in a state of communal frenzy and the situation did not get any better till the 19th of August 1946. It was considered to be one of the worst communal riots in the history of pre- partitioned India. Even though the actual death toll could never be known as it was reported that a number of people killed were thrown into the river, the death toll is generally estimated to be around five thousand or more. The official number by the British government was around three thousand. As Batubyal (2005) mentions a hundred and thirty bodies were later discovered in the sewage system of the city. But it is the testimonies of the survivors and eyewitnesses which bring out the deep malignant violence[38] that became apparent in these riots. Shaista Ikramullah was one of those who witnessed the riots of 1946 and wrote about it four decades later,

> "As we entered the town further ghastly sights of violence met our eyes, dead bodies lay strewn everywhere. I clearly saw the body of a person lying in the marble steps of the porch of a house, his head neatly severed from his body and lying a few feet away. I saw a Sikh clad only in shirt and shorts, without his turban, being chased by a man with an unsheathed sword, panting after him like an animal after its quarry." (Quoted in Batubyal 2005: 248) .

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[38]As used by Erich Fromm in Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (1974).

Another eye witness while talking about the riot recalled,

> "We had gone about wearing iodine masks for three days and nights preceding this visit and picked up from the street 5,869 dead bodies, whole and mutilated, and disposed of them through mass burial and cremations." (Batubyal 2005: 237) .

The Calcutta Riots brought out in the open the hatred and communal politics that had been spreading like weed throughout Bengal. It showed that the Partition of Bengal was actually successful in dividing the people. Also it brought out another element that instead of fighting against the British the people were now fighting among themselves, seeing themselves as members of a religion and not as people who were fighting for freedom; the divide and rule policy of the British had finally taken root in the psyche of the people. The British government's desire to cause damage to the people was evident; even during the riots it saw the riots as an opportune moment to destroy the nationalist leadership without actually getting directly involved; this it did by not deploying police or the military fast enough which ensured that most of the nationalist leaders would be in serious danger and those who survived would focus more on bringing the people of the two community together than they would to the struggle for independence.

It came as no surprise to anyone therefore, when in 1947 riots broke out in Bengal the worst affected area was Noakhali; 'Bengal was burning', so bad were the conditions and so horrid the stories of gruesome murders, rape and looting that Gandhi himself had to come to Bengal to put a stop to the violence and to bring peace to the city and the rest of the state.

__METHODOLOGY__

Methodology and method are almost used synonymously in daily discourse, but the truth of the matter is that the two are very different; method is a subset of methodology, a part of it, while methodology is the larger theoretical or philosophical position a research takes which in turn decides the method or methods that the researcher will use. The methodology that will be the lens, from which this research will look at the field and thereby use methods to interpret it, is drawn from two

strands of thought: one from Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter hegemony and the other from Wilhelm von Humboldt's from the hermeneutical understanding of language.

Realising that the conceptual and theoretical aspect of this dissertation would not provide a complete view of the reality, this dissertation has tried to draw a complete picture by relating the theoretical understandings with the ground reality; therefore this section will also talk about methods that can provide a degree of field sensitivity. Since the work done is for a short duration of time that is, from September 2014 to December 2014, this cross -sectional[39] ethnographic study cannot be considered a full fledged field work. Similarly, to understand how the people residing in a particular field think, understand or perceive their reality, in- depth face to face interviews were conducted but since the size of the interview consists of thirteen respondents – while was a very conducive exercise to understand ground reality – it can hardly be considered enough to be work in its own right; it can only be seen as a supplement required to understand the field.

But before moving any further about the methods used, it becomes pertinent to talk about the methodology by focusing on Gramsci's hegemony and counter hegemony as well as Wilhelm Humboldt's idea of hermeneutics. It is necessary to understand these two ideas because they act as the lens through which the methods used in field sensitisation make sense.

Gramsci's (1971) idea of cultural hegemony talks about the relation between power and culture and how this relation operates in capitalism. He talks about cultural hegemony as a form of control that operates in capitalism where the masses give consent to a way of life that is imposed by the ruling class. According to Gramsci(1971), culture becomes a tool through which the dominant groups control the masses; power is controlled by the dominant group through the construction of dominant ideas which in turn becomes the hegemonic culture and imposes a direction on the social life.

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[39] The study was conducted for a short period of time; if the duration would have been longer then it would have been a longitudinal study.

Gramsci (1971) mentions a very important aspect about how the ruling class maintains its control over the subordinate group; it is not only by painting their domination with the colours of moral authority, but they also ensure this domination through the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols, by doing this they ensure the consent[40] of the subordinate groups. Gramsci (1971) then goes on to explain how the continuance of hegemonic culture actually depends on the discursive practices; for him language is the most important tool in the hands of the dominant group to ensure the continuance of their rule.

Gramsci (1971) however mentions that there can also be a creation of a counter hegemonic culture something that would arise out of the subordinate groups. In the key passages of his 'Prison Notebooks' he writes about how the subordinate class actually have two theoretical consciousness: one that is imposed on them by the dominant group and the other that stems from their own lived experiences, which mostly is in the embryonic stage and may appear in flashes among the group. Gramsci (1971) believed that if the subordinate group could overcome the discursive practices of domination that was engrained in language, then there was a possibility for the growth of a counter hegemonic culture which would then enable them to construct a reality which they felt familiar with and therefore could use it to assert themselves.

Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1986) gave a lot of emphasis on language as a tool to understand reality. His idea of hermeneutics draws from speech and how the spoken words form a very important relationship between the subjective inner world of the speaker and the outer objective world that he describes and also becomes a recipient of this inner world. According to Humboldt (1986), "However, language is never a mere tool of communication but an imprint of the mind and the world view of its speakers." (Quoted in Mueller 1986: 12).

For Humboldt (1986) language was a process as well as a product and as mentioned above this was influenced by the reality of the speaker as well as influenced it.

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[40]For Gramsci consent was an extremely complex mental state, a state of "contradictory consciousness" where apathy along with approbation as well as resistance with resignation all co – exist. Gramsci broadened the superstructure to show how complex the relation was between power and culture and included the political society as well as the civil society and the state. All these institutions according to Gramsci play a major role to form what he believes is consent.

The above two theoretical arguments come closest to what this dissertation stands for. While realising that the impetus is on the working class for Gramsci, while this work is looking at a religious community the similarity between the process that Gramsci talks about is almost identical to the one that unfolds in the field. Similarly Humboldt's use of language plays a major role in understanding the reality of this 'Mini - Pakistan' because it is more than just a geographical space; it is a nuclei of relations for the people living there and their reality only makes sense or comes alive when one looks at language the way Humboldt did.

Methods

As mentioned earlier to get a complete understanding of the ground reality, the theoretical and conceptual arguments were supplemented with field work which was divided into two parts: emphasis was given to observation in the first section, whereas conversation gained primacy in the second portion. The first was done with the intention of not just describing the field but also seeing the undercurrents that governed it. The idea behind this was to describe a 'Mini - Pakistan', and therefore to link the concept with a particular region. The field of course does not just consist of a particular space but also has people living in it. In the second section the focus was on conversation and so in-depth face to face interviews were conducted.

The site of the field were parts of the 64th and 65th Wards of Borough VII of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation; the locals call it the Park Circus Area and it is also called a 'Mini – Pakistan' in a derogatory manner by members of the other religious community.

The method used to study this particular 'Mini - Pakistan' was ethnography[41] where observations were made about the area of study. Using participant observation,[42] the area concerned was observed, the findings of which are mentioned in the third chapter of the dissertation. To get a holistic view of the field photographs were also used as a

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[41]The term 'ethno' means folk and 'graphy' means study, therefore, ethnography means the study of the folks, it is a method that is mostly used by anthropologists. The aim behind it is to study or describe a culture in its totality, which is mostly done by using observation as the method.

[42]Participant observation is a technique used in the field, whereby a researcher plays both the role of a participant as well as that of an observer studying the field in question.

tool in the field. As the saying goes, 'a picture is worth a thousand words' it seemed apt to use of visuals here to enable one to understand how the field and the people in it operate.

To understand how Muslim identity was changing in the area of study, in-depth face to face interview[43] was carried out with thirteen respondents. The number of respondents that were drawn all were the residents of the Park Circcus area, the 'Mini-Pakistan' which was the site of this research, and while all the residents of the area concerned could have been interviewed for the study, the aim behind the exercise was not to construct grand theories but to look at the unique nature of the site. Hence qualitative techniques were given primacy over the use of quantitative techniques. The people who were interviewed were all from different walks of life so that a better understanding of Muslim identity could be achieved. The intention behind it was to get as varied answers and perspectives as possible and not a similar response from all those who had participated in the study. All the respondents in this sample size do carry the markers of their religious identity and belong to the *Sunni[44]* sect of Islam. The markers of religious identity that formed one of the principle parameters[45] for the sample size wass the *burqa* or *abaya* or *hijab* for the women whereas for the men it was the beard and the skull cap. [46]

The whole set of respondents consists of six female and seven male respondents. The respondents came from different socio-economic backgrounds as well as with different educational qualifications and occupations; while one of the respondents is the secretary of the Inter-Faith Committee another respondent is someone who

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[43]It is a technique used to collect data whereby the interviewer asks a set of questions to the respondent, but instead of giving a simple yes or no answer as is with most structured form of interviews, the answers are more detailed and often take the form of a dialogue.

[44] Islam is divided mainly into two sects one who believe in Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) called Sunnis. The other sect believes in Hazrat Ali and are called Shias.

[45]Characteristic on which the group being studied is defined.

[46]The reason for using the burqa or abaya or the hijab for the women and the beard and the skull cap for the men is because they are the most obvious markers of Muslim identity and therefore also the most controversial ones.

teaches the Quran[47] . The oldest respondent is seventy – five years old the youngest respondent is twenty – two years of age. They all reside in the different localities or streets in this area. The purpose behind choosing such a varied spectrum of respondents was to ensure that the answers found, represent to some degree the community that is being studied here.

The interviews were conducted over the month of December 2014. Most of the interviews were collected over two sessions, while there were some interviews where three sessions were done to ensure a more clear understanding of the respondents' reality as well as the social milieu of the area they had been residing in. The interviews were not conducted with a questionnaire; rather it was in the form of a conversation, to ensure that every respondent could to some degree manoeuvre with the topics. Instead of a set of questions, themes were kept in mind while talking to these respondents. Again the principle behind this form of an interview is done to ensure that the unique events in the biographies of all these respondents are captured.

Realising that language itself is an important tool to understand the social reality of those being studied, another method is used where language itself becomes the object of study. The method was that of discourse analysis[48]. The reason for doing this is that discourse analysis explains how reality is constructed through language, where,

> "Language is not merely a channel through which information about underlying mental states and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated. On the contrary, language is a 'machine that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world. This also extends to the constitution of social identities and social relations. It means that changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed. Struggles at the discursive level take part in changing as well as in reproducing the social reality." (Jargensen & Philips 2002: 9).

Realising that discourse analysis itself is an umbrella term and has many schools under it, this dissertation will focus on only one of the schools within discourse analysis – discursive psychology[49]- as it seems most suitable for the research at hand

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[47]It is the holy text of the Muslims.

[48]It is a particular way of talking as well as understanding the world or a particular aspect of the world.

[49]It is a branch of social psychology that developed in order to explore the ways in which people's thoughts and emotions are formed and transformed through social interaction.

and the larger methodological position that this dissertation wants to take. The reason for choosing this branch of discourse analysis is simple as it stresses on the individual and does not see them as only products of discourse but also producers of discourse in specific contexts of interaction.

Social constructionism is the basic premise on which discursive psychology is based, which basically boils down to the following arguments regarding culture and society – i) There should be a critical approach to taken for granted form of knowledge, the knowledge that is there in the world should not be seen as objective truth as there is a difference between reality and truth; reality can only be accessed through categories, knowledge and representations of the world therefore are not the truth as they are not merely reflections of the reality out there the actors construct their reality and therefore their knowledge. ii) Historical and cultural specificity are important aspects in social constructionism; since every individual is located in a particular historical and cultural context, everything that is said or done by the actor can only make complete sense in that context. If one expands this argument then one can see that it is – a) contingent: one's world views and identities could be different and they can change overtime; b) anti – foundationalist: it stands in opposition to the foundationalist argument which states that "knowledge can be grounded on a solid meta theoretical base that transcends contingent human action." (Jargensen & Philips 2002: 7); c) anti – essentialist: this means that they question the idea of the social world as something that is given; according to this view, social world is constructed discursively, that is, its characters are not pre – given or determined by external conditions. iii) the link between knowledge and social processes: the way one understands the world is actually created as well as maintained by social processes. "Knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false." (Jargensen & Philips 2002: 7) iv) The link between knowledge and social action: there is a direct relation between knowledge and action where one influences the other, Gernsen mention,

> "Within a particular world view, some forms of action become natural and others unthinkable. Different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and therefore the social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences." (Gergen1985: 268 – 269).

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It is these basic premises that allow one to look at discourse and language as something more than just a given reality.

Research Design

This dissertation has elements of three types of research design. The descriptive research design becomes evident when a historical background is provided for both the Hindu as well as the Muslim population in India. The explanatory research design becomes visible when the dissertation looks at the construction of the 'Mini – Pakistan' and how religious currents operate in Kolkata and it harps on the exploratory research design when it explores the reasons for the assertion of Muslim identity in Kolkata by studying the Park Circus Area.

Ethics of Research

One of the most important aspects of research is associated with ethics, especially when dealing with respondents. A similar measure is taken in this research as well, to ensure that all the respondents' anonymity is maintained, this research no where gives any specific information regarding the respondents and in cases where names have been mentioned they have been changed to make sure that no one is adversely affected by this research. All the names used here are fictitious. Another aspect regarding this section needs to be mentioned, especially with regard to photographs – some of the people interviewed for the third chapter refused to give their photographs and therefore most of the photos in that section are not portraits but rather are landscapes.

Limitations of the Research

As mentioned earlier this research uses ethnographic and face-to-interview to provide a holistic view of the ground reality, however there were limitations in the research. One was with regard to the duration of the study of the Park Circus area; it was carried out for only a few months, thereby a complete and more nuanced understanding could not be achieved. The other was the number of respondents for the face-to-face interview which was also very less.

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

To conclude, therefore one can say that this chapter acts as the theoretical bedrock for the following chapters to come as it not only gives an account of all the debates that are associated with the topic at hand but also provides an overview of the philosophy that influences the methods that are used here. Most importantly though, it gives a historical account of the community in question thereby enabling one to contextualise and place the research questions in the current scenario.

CHAPTER – III

HISTORICISING THE DEBATE: THE FEAR OF ASSIMILATION AND ITS IMPACT

INTRODUCTION

In the section on the historical background we saw how the Hindu and Muslim community came into contact with each other and lived with each other in harmony for centuries and while there were wars and battles between the rulers of the two religious communities the motive was always political and not religious. The idea that the Hindu and Muslims were two very different religious communities with no similarities was a by-product of the first Census carried out by the British in 1872. The impact of this categorisation would then lead to the division among the two religious communities who would now posit each other as two very different civilisations and which in turn would finally lead to the division of the nation into two countries of Pakistan and India.

This chapter will look focus at the socio-political milieu in India and Bengal from 1947 onwards and the impact it had on the Muslim community living here.

Indian Muslims faced many problems after India became independent especially when it came to the question of national security vis-a-vis their identity. As Asghar Ali Engineer mentions,

> "First partition riots made them terribly insecure. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed during the partition riots in India as Hindus were killed in Pakistan. Thus independence brought a great calamity for both the Hindus and Muslims in India. Moreover Indian Muslims were totally confused and did not know what to do. They lost even their sense of confidence. It was leaders of stature of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who instilled a sense of confidence and made them proud of their Islamic heritage in India. Maulana Azad's speech from the steps of Jama Masjid Delhi acted as a balm and had a healing touch. However, Muslims had hard days to face after partition in India."   (Engineer 2004: 74).

This dilemma that the Muslim community faced is portrayed brilliantly in the 1974 Hindi film 'Garam Hawa'. Directed by M.S. Sathyu, the film is based on an unpublished short story written by Ismat Chughtai. The film set in Uttar Pradesh, is the story about a Muslim man Salim Mirza played by Balraj Sahni and the film portrays the ground reality of India right around partition after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. The story mainly deals with the question that had haunted many Muslims after independence, the question of whether leaving their home – *watan* – for their – *Kaum* – nation or vice versa. The same question was haunting Salim Mirza, a small time leather shoe manufacturer in Uttar Pradesh. The first scene of the film shows Salim Mirza at the station waving good bye to his sister and her children who are leaving for Pakistan. This scene depicts a reality that was a common phenomenon in almost all the Muslim households in the country: some members of the family deciding to leave for Pakistan believing that it was their true home and leaving some members of their household behind. Many families were separated like this, where one brother or sister and his or her family would leave for Pakistan while the other sibling would stay back with his or her family. The pain and despair that the character feels becomes easily evident when the driver of the horse driven carriage asks him "Who did you come to drop off today?" to which he replies "My sister and her children" and the dejection and the pain that he feels is very subtly expressed through the tremor of his voice and his posture which reflectes the inner turmoil of a man who seems to be losing his dear ones and is unable to do anything to change their mind. Seeing Mirza's response, the carriage driver played by Rajendra Raghuvanshi replied in Urdu, *"Yeh waqt hi aisa hain yeh garam hawa hain..."* ("The time's are only like this, the air is only so volatile...").

On reaching his *karkhaana*[50] he finds the same grim reality haunting him; most of his workers have left for Pakistan with the belief that it would provide them with the opportunities that they would no longer get in India under the current government[51]. As a result his business starts to get affected and he can't even get enough loans to

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[50] It is a term used in Urdu which means a workshop.

[51] It was believed by a number of Muslims during partition and in the initial years that Pakistan would actually be the Promised Land for all the Muslims of the country, an idea which changed rapidly once the ground reality became evident to them.

keep his business running. The bank rejects his application for loan as it assumes that even he like most of the Muslims would leave and be a defaulter to the loan that the bank has given him. The situation in his house is a little different; there seems to be a lot of preparation for his only daughter Amina's (the character is played by Gita Siddharth) wedding with his elder brother's son Kazim (who is played by Jalal Hashmi). The same question of leaving or staying in the country seems to play in the mind of his elder brother. A member of the Indian Muslim League, he can't seem to figure out whether he should move to Pakistan or stay here in India. Realising that his political career would have better chances if he lived in Pakistan, he decides to leave India but afraid that the police might arrest him for instigating communal tension he leaves the country on the pretence that it is a temporary agreement that would just be for a few days. But as the days turned into weeks and weeks turned to months Salim Mirza realised that his brother Halim Mirza (whose character is portrayed by Dinanth Zutshi) is not going to come back nor is his son and so the possibility of his daughter's marriage slowly dwindles day by day. In the mean time another problem arises. Since the house is legally owned by the elder brother and after he leaves for Pakistan the Indian state gets guardianship. As a result the entire family is evicted from their own ancestral house: a very moving scene is when Badar Banu who plays Salim Mirza's mother, refuses to leave the house and the pain and anguish that she feels when she cries and says she would never be able to answer her dead husband when on Judgement Day he would ask her why did she leave their house or allowed her sons to do what they did.

The whole process of losing possession over one's house because of some legalities was expressed in the single dialogue by Balraj Sahni where he tells his mother that the house isn't their's any more and belongs to someone else, and while she may control all that is happening inside the four walls of this house, outside the world has changed where a new faceless government is making laws and doesn't care for individual plights.
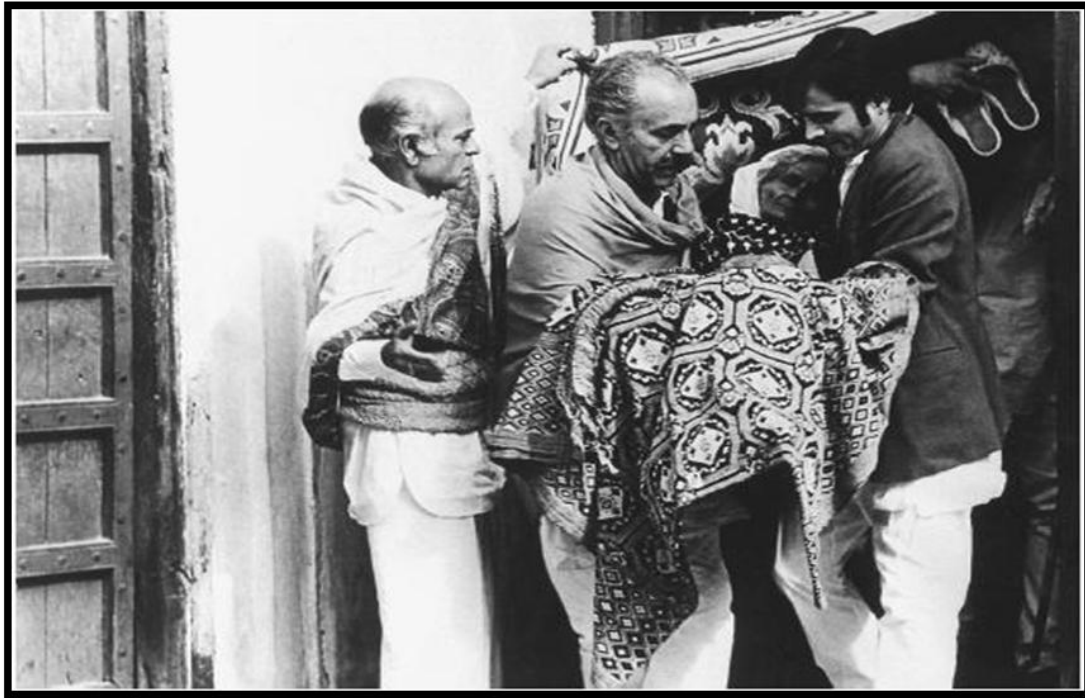
Picture: 3.1 A Scene From the Film *Garam Hawa* (1974); Reflecting The Family's Pain.

The dilemma of Salim Mirza increases ten-fold as he realises that while on the one hand he is losing his own house on the other hand, he is incapable of finding a new home for his family. The reason was something over which he had no control and something very fundamental: it was his religion. This instance in the film brings out another aspect of Muslim identity – which may have had its birth at the time of independence but is as common a sight today as it was then – that overnight Muslims became this category of people who could not be trusted or as someone who should not be allowed in one's house; the Muslim became a very unwanted stranger who one should be afraid of and when seen lurking outside be treated with a degree of ferociousness and severity, one that is probably used to get rid of rodents or vermin.

Finally after a lot of searching and refusals from house owners a disheartened and dejected Salim Mirza goes to another landlord and the thing that he says first represents not just anger but also hurt and anguish that someone would feel if overnight their identity became a source of stigma. He says, "Before you say anything about the rent or about the house let me tell you that I am a Muslim..." and is pleasantly surprised when the landlord agrees to keep them as tenants, but because the time is such that he asks for a year's rent in advance, which after some negotiations is

reduced to rent an advance of three months. This scene is so poignant because even today the same idea holds true where Muslims find it very difficult to find places to stay simply because of their religion and when they do find a place to stay they are harassed by various conditions in the agreement. But more often than not they are advised to live with 'their kind of people'.

In the new house, things get worse because they dodn't get enough financial backings to get a loan and as a result the business slowly gets smaller and smaller, the number of workers also decrease. In the midst of all this one day his nephew comes back; Kazim has left his family and comes secretly to marry Amina but because he is now a citizen of Pakistan and doesn't have any legal papers or a passport he is deported and the marriage does not take place. Amina goes into a depression and decides not to marry anyone. Finally convinced by her sister – in – law and realising herself she decides to marry Shamsahd (who is played by Jalal Agha) who is her sister-in-laws brother and another cousin. Another source of happiness came when Salim's youngest son Sikander (played by Farooq Sheikh), finally becomes a graduate, but this happiness quickly turns to a source of anxiety, for Sikander realises that even the degrees he can't get a job. Meanwhile Salim's elder son, Baqar (Abu Siwani) disagrees with his father's beliefs and ideals and decides to leave India and head for Pakistan and the family gets divided yet again. When returning back from the railway station he is asked by the same horse driven carriage's driver, "Who was it this time?" to which he replies, "My elder son and his family..." The stunned expression on the driver's face and finally his exclamation about how strong Mirza is, speaks volume, because even though the driver is talking about the strength of the character that Salim Mirza represents, one can actually see the pain, dismay and inner turmoil that Salim himself is going through. The turmoil that arises within Salim is because of a contention between his inner belief that everything would finally be all right – that the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi would finally uphold and the communal tension and the fear and anxiety that the religious community face would finally subside, that things would go back to normal and the India that Gandhi and Nehru had imagined would finally become a reality – and the ground reality which was deteriorating by the minute.

It was his belief that had kept Salim Mirza going even after the death of his mother, the loss of his factory and the suicide of his only daughter Amina whom he loved the most among all his children. Amina who had finally come out of her shock of not getting married to Kazim had agreed to marry Shamshad and even after he and his family moved to Pakistan she was still hopeful that he would come back and that they would get married. Her dream was shattered when Shamshad's mother comes to visit them and informs them that he is getting married to someone else. Not being able to live with the same fate, Amina dresses herself as the bride and slits her own wrist. The death of Amina is a very moving scene as it is Salim himself who finds Amina lying on the bed dressed as a bride and her lifeless body and eyes staring blankly at the ceiling.

The death of Amina and her condition mirrors so many women's plight who suffered the same fate in India after the partition of being separated from their loved ones just because an imaginary line had been drawn across the land. The fear and insecurity that becomes a part of Amina's existence is something tangible and real and can also be seen or heard in the narratives of all these women who suffered a similar fate at the time of independence.

As the movie progresses one can get a sense of how tense the situation was right after independence. A scene from the movie depicts how a horse driven carriage accidently pushes a cart of vegetables and it falls leading to a full blown riot as both the parties involved in the incident were from two different communities. In the altercation Salim Mirza is gravely injured and his wife begs him to leave and he still refuses. After losing his workshop due to lack of resources, he decides to run his workshop from his house and just as his business gets a little better he is arrested and is accused of being a Pakistani spy. Even though he is acquitted, the tag of him being a spy, a traitor has spread throughout the city. As a result of which, his associates refuse to do business with him and his friends refuse to acknowledge him. It was at this moment that he realised that there was no longer any future for him in India and with a heavy heart he makes the decision to go to Pakistan. He, his wife (the role was played by Shaukat Kaifi Azmi) and their youngest son Sikander decided to start their lives in Pakistan. The scene is very powerful with Salim locking the house and the neighbours peering from their own houses and it is the same carriage driver, the one who takes him to the

station every single time he has to drop someone off, who says, "Forgive me but I knew all along that you would be leaving for Pakistan...". On their way to the station, they see that the people have come out from the street and they belong to all the religions and they are demanding the same things, equal opportunities and a better life. It is in the midst of all this that Salim realises that the answer is not to leave, to separate oneself from others, to create a barrier, but to be a part of the storm and fight the forces of communalism and so even though he loses a lot of things in his life, in the end he realises his principles are something he is not willing to sacrifice and therefore decides to stay back in India.

This movie deals with a subject that was a reality for a lot of Muslims in this country, the dilemma and the anxiety portrayed in this movie was a part of many biographies at that time. For those who decided to stay though, another set of questions haunted their existence; these questions came up time and again in the movie and are in some of the very crucial scenes of the movie – the scene in the bank at the beginning of the film is one such scene where the protagonist is not given the loan because it is assumed that he would leave the country and live in Pakistan and therefore would default on the bank's payment. This scene talks about the lack of trust that the Muslims had to face because of actions of some of the people. Another such scene is when Sikander is not given a job and told that he should try for a job in Pakistan. Both these scenes are very powerful because of two reasons. One is because of the question it deals with 'of why is it that the Muslims had not moved to Pakistan', a question that is asked to Muslims even today and the other reason is the way the scenes have been shot. In both these scenes the people asking these questions were never shown; I think it was a beautiful choice on the part of the director to shoot the scene like that because just the voice showed the anonymity of the speaker and therefore symbolically showed how the question was probably a very common issue and in almost everyone's mind whenever they saw a Muslim after independence on this side of the border.

The movie and its narration of Salim Mirza's life in his most difficult hour, acts as the starting point of this section of the dissertation for two reasons – one, it gives one an idea of the problems the Muslim community faced at the time of independence and two, the questions that these characters were asked are questions that Muslims are

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asked even today. So even though the film talks about certain events that happened almost seven decades ago, the impact it has on the Muslim community even today is as overwhelming as it was almost sixty - seven years ago.

INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Even though the film finishes on a somewhat positive note with Salim Mirza staying back and not going to Pakistan, the ending also leaves a very important questioned unanswered – "What would happen to Salim Mirza and his family in India?; Would they ever be considered a part of the country?; Would Sikandar get a job and not asked about his allegiance to the country?; Would Salim ever be able to open his shoe factory again? Or would he never get the loan that he needs for a start up because he is a Muslim?" This segment of the chapter will focus on two aspects on what it is like to be a Muslim in this country: i) the continuous assault that they face on the basis of their religion which in turn leads to questions regarding their loyalty. This would be shown by looking at two elements that are associated with the political atmosphere of this country especially when one talks about the Muslim community – communal riots and propaganda. ii) the second aspect would look at how the violence that is inflicted on the Muslims through the above mentioned acts, affects the Muslim's socio - economic status.

It is imperative that a brief account of the events that occurred in India after independence should be mentioned, because these events directly or indirectly led to the current situation where the overall condition of the Muslims is abysmal. In 1950 when the Constitution came into effect, it brought some respite for the Muslims in the country as it ensured certain fundamental rights to everyone. This particularly was like a boon for the religious minorities of the country as it ensured them complete freedom to practice their religion. With Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of the country, there were no major communal riots or tension among various religious groups. Nehru with his belief in modernisation, rationality and secularism ensured an environment where the minorities did not feel threatened and it seemed that India would finally move away from the memories of partition and move along a path that would ensure a certain degree of respect to everyone residing in the country. But it all seemed like a farce as in 1962 there was a major communal riot in Jabbalpur, one

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which shook the country and destroyed everyone's belief including the Prime Minister, that communalism was a thing of the past and was resolved by the partition of the country. The relatively violent-free era of the 1950s was mainly due to the fact that the focus was more on linguistic division of the states within the country.

In 1964 Jawaharlal Nehru passed away and was succeeded by his daughter Indira Gandhi, who in order to strengthen her position politically favoured the minorities and according to many, appeased them. The communal tension never really vanished from the Indian scenario; it would subside and then again a communal riot would occur in a part of the country and the situation would go back to square one. It would be more subtle and disguise itself in the garb of normalcy, but the slightest provocation would reveal the ground reality as it truly was, that no one had been able to forget the Partition of the country and the violence and hatred that was unleashed because of it.

The 1970's was a relatively less violent decade. After winning the war against Pakistan and helping in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the Congress government in power under the leadership of Indira Gandhi achieved a status of supremacy that was not questioned by anyone. But by the late 70's, people and other members of the Parliament started to go weary of Indira Gandhi and her rule, mostly because she had become tyrannical in her rule, and started questioning as well as overruling her Cabinet Ministers, seeing her opposition as major threat she compelled the President to declare Emergency in India in 1975. The Emergency lasted till 1977 and during this period Indira Gandhi made sure that all those who she thought were threats to her position were arrested and put behind bars.

In 1977 when the emergency came to an end and the Lok Sabha[52] elections were finally held, the Congress lost and for the first time were in the opposition. The government in power was a coalition government called the Janata Party comprising of Congress(O), the Jan Sangh, the Bharitya Lok Dal and the Socialist party. But they could govern only till 1980 and broke up due to internal differences and in 1980 elections were held again and the Congress came back to power again but the situation had changed somehow, the dominance and popularity of the Congress had

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[52] The Lok Sabha is the Lower House of the Parliament whose members are elected through elections based on Adult Sufferage.

diminished and it now realised that appeasing the minorities alone would not help the Party and so it also started appealing to the Hindu nationalists. Hence, by 1980s communal politics began to grow again and all the ideals of secularism and equality which were promoted by the Congress earlier now became a farce and metamorphisised into pseudo secularism.

It is in these conditions that communal riots and political propaganda under the garb of religion and cultural purity re-emerged, undergoing very subtle transformations over the years but remaining as venomous and ugly as ever. Both these aspects that were characteristics of the late 1980's and early 1990's cannot be separated from each other and one very often than not, depends on the other to thrive. Before going any further into showing how these two evils affect and have affected the Muslim community in the post independent era, it is important to give a brief account of what they are.

The 1990's saw the resurgence of using political propaganda under the disguise of religion and culture. Tshree arguments were put forward by the right wing fundamentalists that ensured that divisive politics would reach new levels of lows in our country. These were as follows: i) the "Alien" Muslims; ii) the "Other" Muslims; and iii) the "Dying" Hindu race – "All of which demonise Muslims, by manipulating historical truth, arousing mass hysteria an propagating the notion the Muslims were a 'past and future threat'." (Rauf 2011: 70).

The idea of the "Alien" Muslim is promoted to ensure that the cultural interrelatedness that exists between the Hindus and the Muslims is undermined if not completely destroyed and dissipated. The Muslims and the Hindus are represented as being poles apart, wherein Islam is represented as an intolerant religion and Hinduism as an all embracing creed; the discourse therefore, that emerges with regard to tolerance is extremely bipolar. The Hindus are shown as those who are extremely tolerant and this tolerance comes from what Hashmi (2008) says is the veneration of the Bharat Mata, who is an icon for Hindu identity for Bharat. To show that theirs is a culture immersed in tolerance there is a reinvention and reinterpretation of history particularly pre – Islamic history.

> "It is this omission and commission, not the homeland as it was and as it is, that is used to build the image of Bharat Mata as goddess." (Rauf 2011:71)

Since, veneration of a goddess is not allowed in Islam, it automatically puts them out of the Indian cultural fold making them nothing more than alien entities who are shown as invading Goddess Bharat Mata.

The propaganda of the "Other" Muslim has its roots in the attack of September 11 in 2001 in the United Staes of America and the events that followed. A very fast growing phenomenon which was an off-shoot of these events was that all Muslims started getting equated with terrorists and Islam with terrorism. Mamdani (2005) rightly describes how Muslims are being represented as those who stand against modernity and are all for religious hysteria. In the process what happened in India was that Muslims in the country were also put in the same category, and were being seen in the same light as the Muslims from around the world. The explanation that governed such an understanding lay in most people's belief that Muslims gave primacy to their religion and everything else was secondary, so they would first help their Muslim "brother" and therefore walk on the same lines of bloodshed and destruction. The consequence of such an act is that the Muslims "are 'othered' into invisible and untouchable foreign figures of whom nobody has an experience through human relationships." (Rauf 2011: 71).

The propaganda based on the lie that the Hindus are the dying race is the most important catalyst for violence against Muslims in this country. This anxiety and fear which sort of re-emerged in the political debates around 1989 had its roots in the colonial rule and can be seen as a reaction to the first Census that was carried out in 1872, as it was for the first time that members of a religious community became aware of their strength and "instilled a geographical and demographic consciousness among people belonging to different religious communities" (Rauf 2011: 70). The Census reports had the desired effects the colonial rulers were hoping for; it led to a debate regarding the growth and size of certain religious groups in comparison to others. The debate led to the birth of the idea that the Hindus were decreasing in number rapidly; the situation did not get any better with U.N. Mukherjee (1909)[53] and

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[53]Hindus : A Dying Race (1909).

Swami Shradhanand (1924)[54] writing books which talked about the extinction of the Hindu race. Mukherjee in his book wrote about how the Hindus should unite and forget about class, caste or sect otherwise he predicted that in four hundred and twenty years Hindus as a race would cease to exist. This fear of the dying race later morphed into something else – where the argument that emerged was that the Aryan race was under threat from the Muslims.

This decline in the demographic structure was seen or interpreted as a decline in the political power of the Hindus as well and therefore led to the belief of a perceived Muslim threat. This argument is now used by Hindu militant groups like the R.S.S. and V.H.P. where they instil the fear of a Muslim rule by giving a distorted account of history, particularly of the Muslim rule, which according to them happen again now due to the declining Hindu population.

Their answer to this problem is the total destruction of the Muslim community, as

> "Muslim men were a threat to Hindu women and had to be eliminated. The danger their future generations may embody is taken care of by destroying Muslim females, the carriers of culture, ideology and future generations." (Rauf 2011: 70)

Another element of this propaganda used in the 1990s was with regard to culture where the argument was given that the need of the hour was a 'Hindu Rashtra' which Ashutosh Varshney (2002) explains is seen by Hindu nationalists as,

> "The Hindu Rashtra [nation] is essentially cultural in content, whereas the so - called secular concept pertains to the state and is limited to the territorial and political aspects of the Nation. [T]he mere territorial - cum - political - concept divorced from its cultural essence can never be expected to impart any sanctity to the country's unity. The emotional binding of the people can be furnished only by culture and once that is snapped then there remains no logical argument against the demand by any part to separate itself from the country" (Varshney 2002: 65).

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[54]Hindu Sanghatan: Saviour of a Dying Race (1924).

The argument given by the Hindu nationalists though is a little different from Hindu fundamentalists. While the latter want a total annihilation or removal Muslims from the Indian state, their idea of Hindutva as Gyanendra Pandey (1993) explains, is marked by,

> "...shades of McCarthyism, by its arrogant declaration of who are 'natural' inhabitants of India and therefore the 'natural wielders of power' and by the startling ease with which it moves to a language of violence as the answer to all existing ills." (Pandey 1993: 2).

The former are a bit more 'soft' in their views; they believe that if Muslims in this country want to stay then they should assimilate into the culture of this country and see themselves as Hindus as well. Reflecting a similar thought L.K. Advani as the Home Minister in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government in 1998 had argued in favour of the usage of the term Hindu and explained what the term meant. He said that the term "Hindu" actually was the description of the nation and therefore the Muslims in India should be called Muslim Hindu, the Sikhs as Sikh Hindu and the Christian as Christian Hindu.

The conditions given by the Hindu nationalists for the assimilation of the Muslims in the 'Hindu Rashtra' are that the,

> "Muslims must accept centrality of Hinduism to Indian civilization; acknowledge key Hindu figures such as Ram as civilizational heroes, not disown them as mere religious figures of Hinduism; remorsefully accept that Muslim rulers of India between A.D. 1000 and 1757 destroyed pillars of Hindu civilization, especially temples; not claim special privileges such as maintenance of religious personal laws and not demand special state grants for their educational institutions. *Via Ekya* (assimilation), they will prove their loyalty to the nation. Maintaining distinctiveness would simply mean that 'their love' as Savarkar put it, 'is divided'." (Varshney 2002: 66)

Given below are four speeches or write ups by the various right wing Hindu organisations. The reason for mentioning them here is that even though they were written or said in different decades and for different reasons, the various elements of propaganda seem to operate in all of them.

The speech given by Sadhvi Rithambara right after the 1992 riots is one of the most crucial and also probably one of the most inflammatory speeches ever given. This speech is crucial in the political trajectory of India because this particular speech was given by the Sadhvi in different parts of the country with the belief that it would unite a certain section of the Hindu community and the principle that they used to ensure that unity of Hindu identity is achieved by pitting their identity against Muslim identity. The Muslims are shown as the evil outsiders against whom the Hindus have to unite if they have to survive. An excerpt from the speech which reflects this sentiment perfectly is as follows,

> "I mean to say that the long – suffering Hindu is being called a religious zealot today only because he wants to build the temple. The Muslims got their Pakistan. Even in a mutilated India, they have special rights. They have no use for family planning. They have their own religious schools. What do we have? An India with its arms cut off. An India where restrictions are placed on our festivals, where our processions are always in danger of attack, where the expression of our opinion is prohibited, where our religious beliefs are cruelly derided. We cannot speak of our pain, express our hurt I say to the politician, 'Do not go trampling upon our deepest feelings as you have been doing for so long.'." (quoted in Kakar 1996: 207).

A similar narrow and stereotypical view of the Muslim was given by Sadhvi Sarasvati in one of her speeches where she begins by decrying polygyny which is suggested by Muslim laws which according to her turns Muslim women into sexual objects and breeders and result in large Muslim families, that is why she said that for every five children the Hindus had the Muslims had fifty. She then continued her speech by saying,

> "And who feeds these fifty children? Hindus do! Then after the Muslims divorce then the waqf[55] boards support the children with taxes that we pay... Within twenty-five years you will be living a poor minority in the country... Muslims have forty-six countries but Hindus have only one, Nepal! If you become a minority in this country who will provide refugee status for you? None of the neighbouring countries provide the kind of orphanage that India does."

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[55] It is the religious charity board for the Muslim community in India.

In a letter written by Raj Kumar Bhardwaj to a leading newspaper on 12th August 2008, titled *'Why I Hate Islam',* where he wrote,

> "Hindus were under the oppression from Muslims for ten centuries. In their own country they were treated as second class citizens. The British gave the Hindus their self - respect back. Under the British, Hindus thrived they felt that finally they were living in their own country again. So why shouldn't they have co - operated with the British???"

In the Organiser of 17th May 2015 one sees the way their divisive politics is given legitimacy. An article titled "Criticising Hindutva is 'No Solution'" written by Dr. Sunil Gupta, very conveniently portrays the R.S.S. and V.H.P. as the torch bearers of Hindu religion and as the rightful speakers for Hindus everywhere. The article also mentions that the brand of religious belief that they practice is actually universal and secular in nature and to show how 'secular' these parties, are the writer mentions that,

> "India's R.S.S., V.H.P., B.J.P. or any other pro –Hindu group is as 'Secular' as were Sir Winston Churchill and George Washington. The purpose is not to suppress any religion or its followers, however fortification of our faith is an obligation and we ought to take notice of the same." (Gupta 2015: 20).

All the four write up or speeches ensured two things. One, it instilled fear in the minds of those who have heard it or read it regarding the Muslim community and two, it evoked a hatred among the people that is so strong that it seems to have no bounds or limits. The scariest thing in all these speeches is that it actually has the potential of bringing people under the banner of Hindutva and ensures that a certain degree of legitimacy is given to their violence against the Muslims.

The above mentioned propaganda used by various Hindu outfits cuts across the various caste, creed and other forms of division among the Hindus turning them into a monolithic category with a common enemy. It is for this reason, according to Richard H. Davis (1996) that it was the iconography of Rama in his chariot that was more crucial in the narrative of this country's politics than the actual act of the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 because this iconography would continue to play in people's images and influence their sentiments and to be honest it does so even today. The Babri Masjid was one of the first sites that were chosen by the Hindu nationalists.

According to them that particular mosque was built by Babur after he had destroyed the temple which marked the holy grounds on which Lord Rama[56] was born. Davis (1996) points out that the choice for this temple was simple as it,

> "...juxtaposes two figures well known to most people in the North India, Rama and Babar. God and human, they are made to stand for two religions – Hinduism and Islam – in a highly imbalanced manner." (Davis 1996: 34)

The reason for taking up the iconography of Rama also played another very important role for these people. Since Rama is seen as the protector and the preserver of the world someone who fights against injustice, therefore, his followers or those who are fighting his fight even today would be seen in the same light. Similarly, those who oppose his followers, in this case the Muslims, are equated with those who fought against Rama, meaning the *asuras* (demons). Therefore by doing this the Hindu nationalists ensured that all the Muslims of this country are seen in the same light as Ravana[57] with whom Babur[58] was equated, and therefore as a result of which all Muslims are seen as *asuras* (demons).

Communal riots have been described as an evil of the modern period by many scholars, pointing out time and again that this had its roots in the colonial rule and is an ugly offspring of their divide and rule policy. Simply put, communal riots are forms of direct physical violence that occur between two groups who differ along ethnic, religious, lingual or caste lines. Here the communal riots referred to, are those that took place between the Hindus and Muslims in the country. There have been numerous communal riots in the country between the two religious communities. However, it is the communal riots of 1992 -93 and 2002 that have left an everlasting impression of fear in the minds of all those who had either witnessed these riots first hand or had heard about it from their loved ones. The scale of violence, killing, looting and destruction of property in these two riots had shook the nation like never before but most importantly it brought out the heinous face of human nature.

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[56] Lord Rama is an avatar of Vishnu, the God in Hindu mythology who is seen as the protector of the religion.

[57] According to Hindu mythology, he is the demon King of Lanka who had abducted Rama'a wife Sita.

[58] The founder of the Mughal Empire in India.

Therefore it is these two communal riots that would be the focus of our attention to understand the violence that is inflicted on the Muslims of this country.

Zeenath Kausar (2006) talks about how the seeds of the Bari Masjid demolition were sown on the 29th of November 1992 when top B.J.P. leaders like L.K. Advani, M.N. Joshi, Uma Bharti and some others began their yatra from different parts of the country, to mobilise public support for the demolition of the Babri mosque on 6th of December 1992. On that fateful day about 70,000 Hindus assembled in Ram Katha Kunj with 500 sadhus and sants (Hindu monks and leaders) for a public meeting. When the BJP and the VHP leaders were addressing the crowd around which time,

> "... One hundred and fifty Hindu fanatics regrouped themselves, stood on the terrace and started pelting stones at the police personnel. Around the same time, about thousand Hindu fanatics entered into the structure and started damaging the domes. By 2:40p.m. in the afternoon, the crowd increased to 75000 people. The local authorities and police stood as mute spectators as the violence was being perpetrated. There were strict instruction from the Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh to the local authorities and the police not to use force against the Kar Sevaks. Demolishing of the mosque continued the whole day and by the evening 3 Domes were badly damaged. Some Kar Sevaks returned and new Kar Sevaks arrived and continued the work of demolition. The Inspector General of Police, the Deputy Inspector of General of Police and the Commissioner were on the scene. Eventually the entire mosque was totally demolished and the idol of Ram was installed on the debris of the demolished mosque. Along with the process of demolition, some Kar Sevaks were engaged in setting fire to houses of the Muslims and killing them. After all this violence was perpetrated, curfew was imposed in Ayodhya and Faizabad. Kalyan Singh's ministry was dismissed and President's rule was imposed in Uttar Pradesh". (Kausar 2006: 356)

The events that followed because of this action led the entire nation's Muslims to wonder if they were safe in their own homes, with the right wing parties using the mantra of "Hindutva" to gain political mileage and enraging the people to lead to various mob attacks which led to the killing, raping and torturing Muslims across the nation. An accurate picture of the violence and its aftermath is drawn by Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta (2007) as they give an account of 1992 – 1993 riots and the intensity of the violence that rocked the city of Bombay (now Mumbai) by providing a detailed description of what happened in a shanty town called Dharavi, in

their book titled, 'Living with Violence An Anthropology of Events in Everyday Life',

> "...it began on the day of the demolition of the Babri Mosque (6th December 1992) in Ayodhya in a town in eastern U.P, some 2500 km north east of Bombay. The violence continued till the 3rd week of January 1993. Some commentators argue (Padgaonkar 1993, Patel and Thorner 1997) that the riots were in two distinct phases. The first starting on 7th December 1992 lasted for about a week, and was outcome of Muslim anger over the demolition of the mosque. The second beginning early January and continuing for about 3 weeks, was the outcome of the Hindu backlash aided by the police force. It seems that while the violence of December 1992 was spontaneous that of January 1993 was orchestrated and planned the result of political machination". (Chatterji&Mehta 2007: 3)

Zeenath Kausar in her article also gives an account of the 2002 Godhra riots as well. She writes,

> "On 27th February 2002, the Ahmedabad – bound Sabarmati express train reached Godhra station. It stopped for 25 minutes instead of the scheduled 5 minutes and then moved out of the platform. Before it gathered its normal speed, the alarm chain was pulled to stop the train at signal Falia, a Muslim inhabited locality, which was less than one kilometre from the station. After about twenty minutes, compartment S6 was on fire in which 58 passengers including 36 women and 12 children were burnt to death among those passengers were the Kar Sevaks coming from Ayodhya after Mahayagna. At least four theories have been put forward by some Hindutva leaders on this barbaric act. First it was claimed that the ISI of Pakistan, along with some Indian fundamentalists were involved in the burning; Second, that Muslim fundamentalists who are jihad – oriented have done it in conspiracy with some other Muslims; Third, that the opposition party, Congress, performed the atrocities. However, there is also a fourth theory that points out that Muslims were compelled to commit such a callous and brutal violence because the kar sevaks provoked them and were hostile towards them for last few days in that area. According to the eye witnesses, there were about twelve hundred Ram Sevaks travelling in the train. They harrased Muslims all along the way and used abusive language and instigated them to commit this heinous crime. According to some other accounts the misbehavior of the Kar sevaks had preceded the trains arrival at the platform… these events instigated the Muslims from signal Falia to attack the train with stone and fire bombs…

As a result on 28th February and from 1st to 2nd March sixteen of the Gujarat's twenty- four districts were entangled by the organised armed mob attacks in which 200 lives were lost, 270 mosques and religious and cultural monuments were destroyed and the Muslim community of Gujarat suffered on enormous economic loss worth rupees 35 billion". (Kausar 2006: 359).

It is these acts of violence and propaganda that have become the mantra of divisive politics in India. The Bharatiya Janata Party which most scholars have point out, is a political party with connections with the Rashrtiya Sevak Sangh (R.S.S.) a Hindu militant organisation, use the same arguments given by Savarkar and Golvalkar to gain political mileage. They also use the idea of India as the 'Bharat Mata' and how the Muslims had drawn a sword through her and divided her. The separation between the Muslims and other communities is drawn time and again by using what V.D. Savarkar had said,

"Sikhs are Hindus in the sense of our definition of Hindutva and not in any religious sense whatever. Religiously they are Sikhs as Jains are Jains, Lingayats are Lingayats. Vaishnavas are Vaishnavas; but all of us racially and nationally and culturally are a polity and a people... Bharatiya indicates an Indian and expresses a larger generalisation but cannot express [the] racial unity of us Hindus. We are Sikhs, and Hindus and Bharatiyas. We are all three put together and none exclusively." (Savarkar 1942: 125)

As Gyanendra Pandey rightly points out that,

"All identities are built upon a series of identifications and exclusions in other words by differentiation between 'Us' and 'Them', the Self and the Other." (Pandey 1993: 249)

 The same principle is used by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Drawing inspiration from Savarkar's idea they have created the 'us' and at the same time through a process of exclusion have created the 'them', the foreigners who were not racially Bharatiyas. Sadly though, the only people who seem to have to pay a price in all of this are the Muslims and their only fault is that they are "Muslims".

As mentioned earlier, that the next section will focus on the impact these communal riots and forms of propaganda have on the Muslim community.

Johan Galtung (1990) brings forward a theory of violence which in understanding is the closest of violence to the brutality the Muslim community faces in this country. According to Galtung (1990), violence can be of three types – where each reinforces the other and is closely linked to the other – direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence. These forms of violence generally operate with a degree of consensus as it leads to the formation of an understanding of the 'self' that is forged in the opposition to a common 'other'.

Direct violence is associated with acts of physical violence where members of a particular community are subjected to murder, rape, looting and all other forms of torture. The communal riots are examples of direct violence. Direct violence in turn reinforces structural violence. Structural violence is practiced in every day affairs where people can be thrown out of their jobs and homes on the slightest pretext. Simply put structural violence is pushing a particular group to the margins whereby a group who is already in a situation where it has lost everything is further pushed into an abyss by ensuring that whatever socio-economic security it had, be taken away as well. Structural violence does not just stop with one's occupation or source of livelihood; it is a form of violence that operates in every dimension of human reality where one's movement can be restricted. A person may not get proper health facilities or get proper education or housing facilities simply because of the community that person belongs to. Structural violence has an even more devastating effect than direct form of violence because it does not operate only under situations of communal tension; it is a part and parcel of a group's everyday life and therefore can have far-reaching repercussions for a community's existence. An example of structural violence is given by Rauf (2011) where he writes,

> "Many villages and cities in Gujarat have spatially excluded Muslims, drawing borders between what are now known as 'their' ghettos and 'our' shining cities. The atmosphere in Gujarat is vitiated with fear of, and hostility towards Muslims who renegotiate their socio -economic existence only to live as second- class citizens."(Rauf 2011: 74).

The third form of violence that Galtung (1990) mentions is cultural violence which reinforces as well as legitimises both structural as well as direct violence. Cultural violence operates with the idea that the members of the group who is suffering from

three forms of violence need to blame only themselves. But more importantly cultural violence ensures that certain attributes of the group in question are treated as derogatory; the use of stereotypes and prejudices to ensures that the group in question is marginalised to a point of no return. For the Muslims these stereotypes run along the lines of them being barbaric and the Hindus as those who are civilised and pure, the forms of cultural violence always show the two communities as not just being opposites but as the Hindus being superior in nature and is mostly along the following lines,

> "... outpourings from the Hindu Right - wing work on the basis of a brazen division of India into the civilised (Hindus) and the barbarian (Muslims). The former are said to be educated, rational and modern – potentially educable, rational, and 'modern'. The latter are declared congenitally incapable of attaining these conditions, and unwilling even to try. The civilized are concerned about the problem of rapid population growth, and attentive to needs of hygiene, science and medicine. The barbarians choose to live in ghettos, dirty, over-crowded, and unventilated; they multiply like rabbits, and spread filth and disease. For all these reasons, the pronouncement goes, as well as on account of their innate religious bigotry and aggressiveness, the Muslims are a source of grave danger to society, 'modernity', 'civilization'." (Pandey 1993: 2).

If one looks at the analysis given by Galtung and relates it with the Muslim condition, it would seem that this theory was tailor- made for the Muslim condition today. According to the Sachar Committee Report, the Muslims are at the lowest rungs of all the socio economic indicators. Rowena Robinson (2008) explains that this is because that every single time there is a communal riot (direct violence) it is the Muslim community which faces the wrath given that it is the most vulnerable because most of the members of the Muslim community are from the unorganised sector. They work as daily wage labourers and therefore lack proper amenities (structural violence) and even once the riots are over, they find it difficult to get or maintain a job because more often than not their religious identity is seen as a source of stigma. Analysing the Sachar Committee Report and data from Census reports, Robinson (2008) explains how the Muslims in India were victims of social exclusion and how this exclusion was along three dimensions of backwardness, marginalisation and

discrimination, all of which it have their roots in the communal riots or ethnic violence that is mainly associated with the community.

The Muslim community mainly owes its backwardness to low literacy level; the literacy level is actually below the national level and this difference is higher in urban areas and among the women of the Muslim community.

Marginalisation occurs mainly in the employment sector, which according to Robinson (2008) leads to economic marginalisation. Another factor which shows their marginality is their under representation in public offices or political prestigious positions which in turn would enable them to make decisions, which shows their political marginality. The ratio for worker population is lower among the Muslims as compared to any other socio-religious community and this is higher in the rural areas. The data also points,

> "... towards the very high share of Muslim workers engaged in the self employment activities, particularly in the urban areas. This concentration in self employment – street vending, small trades and enterprises – ensures that the community is far more exposed to the disruptions and damages caused by urban conflict and violence. The fragility of Muslim participation in the economy and the low level of asset accumulation in general further intensify their vulnerability to the displacements, physical and economic, caused by situations of communal strife. Long hours of curfew, for instance impact enormously on the economic sustainability of households crucially dependent on daily earnings" (Robinson 2008: 196).

These acts of ethnic conflict also ensure that the Muslims suffer marginalisation of space as well, where Muslim are pushed to certain parts of the city and they themselves migrate there at times because it instils in them a sense of security. Another sphere where Muslims are marginalised is in the sphere of workforce or labour, where most Muslims are found to work in the unorganised sector which doesn't help at all towards the betterment of their conditions.

Also when one looks at the dimension of discrimination then one can understand by looking,

"... at village by village data provided by the 2001 Census that some of the most disturbing information relating to the exclusion of Muslims from the resources crucial for development emerges. What we can perceive is that with respect to social and physical infrastructure Muslims are particularly poorly served." (Robinson 2008: 198).

BENGAL AFTER INDEPENDENCE

This section of the chapter will also try to find the answers to the same set of questions asked above, with regard to the Muslim community, but the focus will shift to the state of Bengal. It will look at the same phenomena of communalism and propaganda and their effects on the Muslim community in the state.

Most of the leaders in India and Bengal believed that the communal problem had been solved with the partition of the country and the making of Pakistan, but they were wrong. What the partition had done instead, was leave a big scar in the minds of the people, who had in turn started seeing and labelling each other along religious lines. In this background, Bengal as a state in India came into existence; a province which predominantly had a Muslim majority overnight became a state in India, whereby the Muslims now comprised 19.85% of the population and thereby, became a minority in the state[59]. The large scale migration of Hindus from East Pakistan and the fear of a repetition of 1946 Calcutta Killings were present in everyone's mind. Despite Gandhi's appeal for a violence free transition of power in 1947, Bengal experienced communal riots and the ferocity of this violence left nothing to the imagination. The oldest respondent among the thirteen interviewed for this dissertation was a witness to the riots. The impact of all the things that happened to her on that fateful night can still be heard in the tremor of her voice or in the fear that she expressed when she described all that she had face during the partition. The excerpt is as follows,

> *"Riot mein yeh dekha ki sab taraf aag lag raha hai, jab riot shuroo hui thi toh hum apne ammi ke saath nahin the apne ghar mein nahin the aur hum soche ab kaha bhage ja... ghar mein humari amma khana bana rahi thi socho yahan se Circus Row ka tarah door the humlog apni ammi se. Hum chup ke the waha pe. Is soch mein dube the ki kahan jae ab. Jaise bahar nikla toh kya dekhte hain ki log*

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[59]According to the Census Report of 1941.

sab bhage chale aa rahe hain, sab jagah se Munnibagan Sethbagan yeh sab us para sab ka nam tha. Hum aur meri behen aur baki admi log ek guala ghar hota hain na wah jake choop gaye. Aur kya nazara dekhte hain Aafreen jo jaise halat mein tha waise hi halat mein apna ghar chod ke aagaya hain, unme se ek toh Dulhan bhi thi. Apne shadi ka jora mein, usi halat mein kitti aurate ma bhi banne wali thi hum sab chup se oi gual mein the sab bas roh rahe the apni halat dekh kar aur soch rahe the ki kabhi apni ammi ko dekh paenge bhi kya? Yah phir zinda bhi bach paenge bhi kya? Itte mein meri ammi toh dusre jagah thi woh apne moholle mein thi aur bahut tanao ka mahol tha bahar log bhag rahe the aur ammi sochne lagi ki agar yeh waha pe rukh gayi toh akeli par jayengi, usi wakt humare moholle mein ek chacha the jo truck chala teh the woh chillakar bole Gafur miyan bahar niklo tab humari ammi bhi unke saath nikal ke truck mein bhag gayi. Hum ko ek chees abhi bhi yaad hain ki humlog sab para ka admi ek taraf se bhag rahe the aur dusre taraf aag jal raha tha... hum sab usi pool ke upar se jaan bajate bajate bhaag rahe the." ("What I saw during the riots, I saw that there was fire everywhere, everything was burning. We were not with our mother at that time we were some place and we thought what do we do now, where do we run. Our mother was cooking at our home. The distance was I guess the same as from here to Circus Row and we still couldn't reach to our mother, we were hiding. We were thinking where do we go now what do we do. When we got out the site that we saw, we saw people running from everywhere Munnibagan, Sethbagan these were the names of those localities. Me and my sister along with others went and took shelter in a cow shed and hid there. The site that we see Aafreen, everyone ran from their homes in whatever state they were in, among the people who were hiding there one of them was a bride as well still dressed in her wedding attire, there were even some women who were pregnant as well. We all just sat their quietly and kept hiding there the only thing that we did was to cry silently and wonder about our current state. The questions about whether we will ever be able to see our mother ever again? or whether we will survive this situation or not. The same time my mother was somewhere else, she was still in our locality and the environment was extremely volatile, people were running out side, and my mother kept thinking that if she stayed back than she would be all alone, at the same time there was this uncle in our locality who used to drive a truck, he came with his truck and screamed Gafur Miyan come out, then our mother also came out and escaped with them in that truck. I still remember one thing that all of us belonging to the same locality were running on one side and there was a fire burning on the other side and we were all running across this bridge trying to save our lives.")

"Toh aap aur apki ammi kaise mile?" ("So, how did you meet your mother again?")

"Hum log toh camp mein the, humari ammi phir dhund dhund ke humlog se mili. Toh ek doctor hua kartah tha unlog Free School Street mein rehta tha, woh log bahut bara admi the unke ghar mein toh ek kankal bhi tha. Humlog pehle unke ghar mein the phir waha se camp chale gaye the." ("We were living in the camp, our mother was searching for us and then finally found us. There was a doctor, who used to live in Free School Street, they were very rich, they even had a skeleton in their house. We were initially living in their house then we moved to the camp").

But the desire to join the mainstream population and to break away from the shell of religion and fear was evident among the Muslim population of Bengal. One of the most visible ways in which this can be seen is in the political sphere. The Muslims started to move away from all the elements that were using religion to gain momentum. As a result of this, the communal elements within Bengal started to decline.

> "This is why a party like the Muslim League found it hard to carry on its activity
> in the state of West Bengal and not a single Muslim League candidate won a seat
> in the assembly elections, they were eclipsed even from the arena of the three –
> tier panchayati politics in the state." (Dasgupta 2009: 94).

The mainstreaming into politics had a positive impact on the Muslim population as well because it ensured that their political and economic interests were being taken into account. This was necessary and vital if the Muslim community had to survive, as most of those who were living in West Bengal after the Partition were socially and economically very weak.

By the early 1960s it seemed that communal politics had left Bengal and that religious harmony had finally been restored, but the riots that shook Calcutta in the winter of 1964, brought back all the memories of violence and fear as well as pain and anguish that was there in the consciousness of the people from the 1946 riots.

> "The immediate context of the 1964 riot was the sudden disappearance of a holy
> relic from Kashmir's sacred Hazratbal mosque in the last week of December

1963.[60] A rumour gained ground amongst the Muslims of the subcontinent that the desecration was a deliberate Hindu act. The communal undercurrent that resulted, first burst forth through Hindu – Muslim clashes in Jabbalpur (Madhya Pradesh). Almost simultaneously in early January 1964 serious communal violence affected the districts of Khulna and Jessore in East Pakistan, provoked largely by the Pakistan governments anti-India tirade over the Hazratbal incident. The Calcutta disturbance between 10 and 13 January needs to be situated in this context." (Das 2000: 287).

The incidents of violence began in the late hours of 8th January 1964 when some Muslim stalld were brought down in an area in Central Calcutta (Sealdah) which was basically a reaction to the spread of reports about how the Muslims in East Pakistan were inflicting atrocities on the Hindus. On the 9th January 1964 there was a large protest demonstration by the people of Bengal who had marched to the office of the Deputy Bengal High Commissioner of East Pakistan demanding that the Hindu minorities in their country be protected and the people responsible for the violent acts be held accountable for their actions. But the situation became extremely volatile and there was instant heightened communal animosity, when in the evening of the same day a procession comprising mostly of Hindu students were attacked with soda water bottles, brickbats and lathis[61] in an area in Central Calcutta and the suspicion of the people landed on the Muslims who resided in the area. By nightfall the riot had claimed its first victim, as a Hindu man was stabbed.

But it was the incident of 10th January 1964 that can be seen as the catalyst for the sporadic violence that occurred in the city for the next two days. On that day most of the Hindu students in school and colleges boycotted their classes and marched towards the Deputy High Commissioner's office. The police tried to stop these rallies but the situation became worse, with an unfortunate incident where, Bhudeb Sen a first year B.A. student of Dinabandhu Andrews College in Garia (South Calcutta) was shot by the police. Since in this part of the city most of the families were refugees from East Bengal the act was seen as lack of sympathy for the Hindus of East Pakistan by the Bengal Government and it was this strain which resulted in sporadic

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[60] The relic was a lock of hair which was believed to have belonged to Prophet Mohammad.

[61] It is a Hindi synonym for stick.

Hindu Muslim clashes all over the city as well as the neighbouring districts[62] for the next two days.

Map 3.1: Areas Affected By The 1964 Communal Riots In Calcutta (Kolkata)
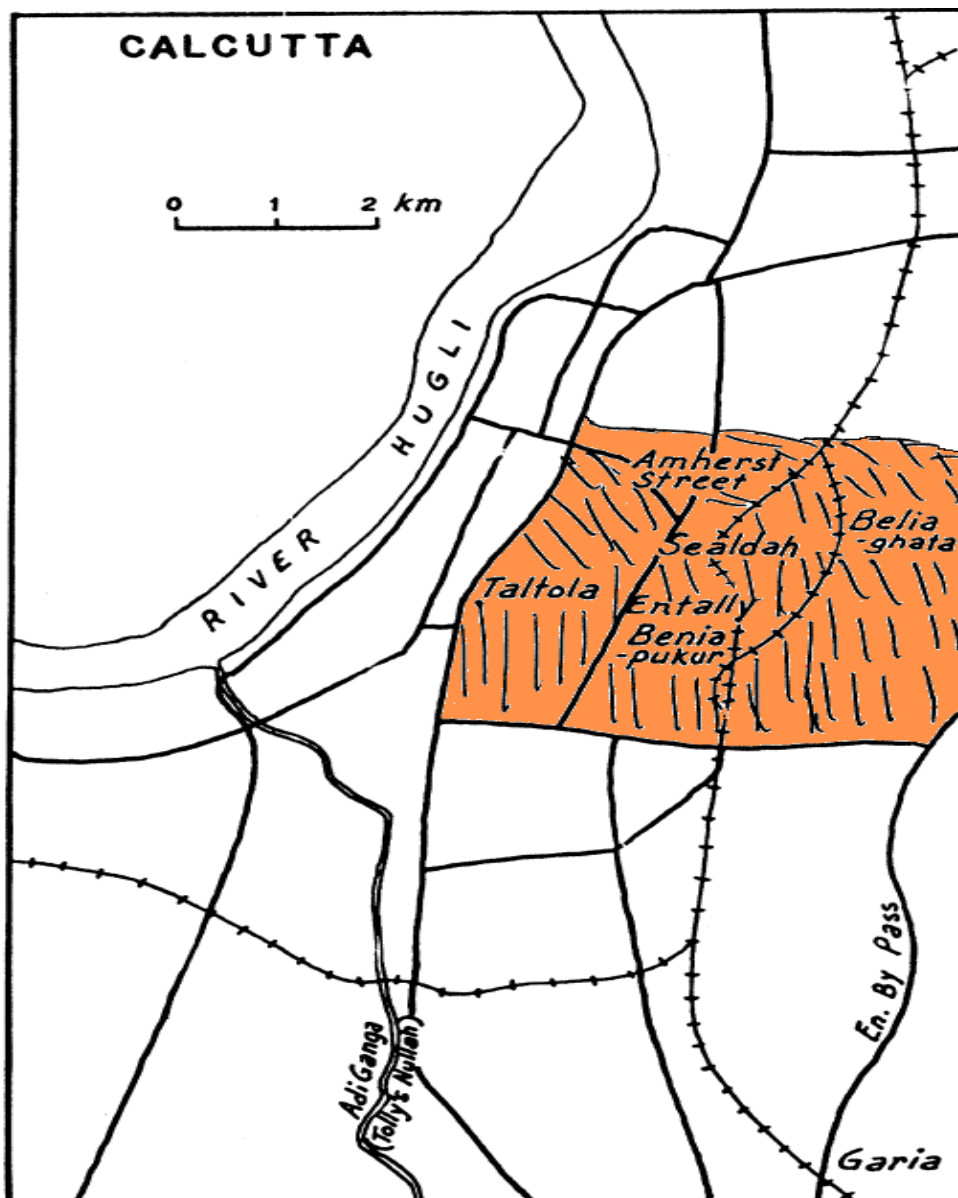
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[62] The districts were Hooghly, 24 Paraganas, Nadia and Howrah.

On the 11th and 12th January, incidents of violence was reported in Amherst Street, Sealdah, Taltola, Entally, Beniapukur, Beliaghata and Garia; coincidently these were also the areas that were worst affected during the 1946 riots. The riots of 1964 claimed the lives of eighty - two people of which forty - four had succumbed to police and army bullets. In East Calcutta some Hindu slums were ransacked, but it was mostly the Muslims who were affected, the worst among them were those who lived in the slums along the Sealdah Ballygunge railway lines. During the riots, two hundred and sixty-two Muslims and a hundred and seventeen Hindus were injured. Normalcy in Calcutta was only restored on the 13th January 1964 by which time the military was deployed to help the police and six thousand eight hundred and seventy people were arrested in the city on rioting charges.

By 1977 there was a drastic change in the political sphere of Bengal and there was shift in power. The Congress government which had been governing over West Bengal from independence was finally defeated and for the first time in India a Communist Party had come to power. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) came into power with the other left parties and formed a coalition called the Left Front. The trajectory of Muslim and Hindu relations changed in the state, the government united members of both the communities against the fight for a better social position; there was a shift in the focus of the people: it was no longer religious community but class structure that was seen as the enemy. Communal harmony had come to the state and communal politics had declined in Bengal. Another major change that had occurred in the attitude of the people was after the Bangladesh liberation war had been won when identity based on linguistic categories gained supremacy. The Bengali identity became important. At the same time during the 1980s there was large scale migration from the rest of India to Bengal; the fact that there was religious tolerance and a drastic decline in the frequency of communal riots made it a haven for all.[63]

The idea that Bengal had moved away from religious categorisation and realised the actual enemy – class – was somewhat challenged in 1992. The 1992 communal riots in Kolkata was the last major outbreak in Calcutta but,

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[63] Even in 1984 during the anti – Sikh riots Bengal and Calcutta were relatively peaceful.

"The 'brutalization of human consciousness' which had dominated the 1946 carnage and manifested itself in the recent post – Ayodhya outbreaks in Bombay (Maharashtra) and Surat (Gujarat) was not characteristic of the last Calcutta outbreak." (Das 2000: 292)

Even the number of those who lost their lives in the violence of the riot was less than those who lost their live in police firing: thirty-three according to the official report and unofficially fifty. There was another difference that was observed in these riots was that the 'traditional' zones for riots in Calcutta – Rajabazar, Kidderpore, Kalabagan, Zacharia Street, Keshan Sen Street, Chitpur and Moulali were not affected by the riots. The violence instead was found in the South-West and Eastern sectors of the city in the Metiabruz, Garden Reach, Park Circus, Tangra, Topsia, Tiljala and the Beniapukur slums.

Map 3.2: Areas Affected By The 1992 Communal Riots Of Calcutta (Kolkata)
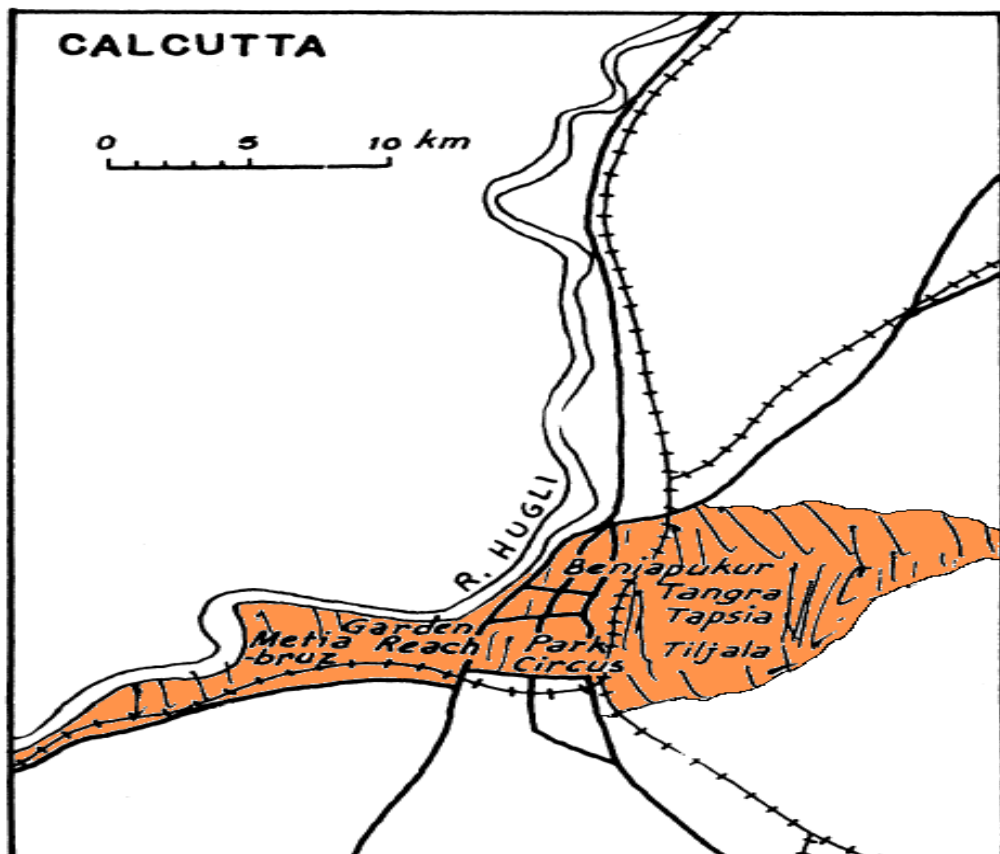
Source: Das, Suranjan(2000) The 1992 Calcutta Riot in Historical Continuum: A
Relapse into 'Communal Fury'? pg – 293.

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There were some very drastic changes in the pattern of violence in the riots of 1992; even the Kolkata police believed that the riots did not follow the frenzy that was and is associated with communal violence. The attacks according to them were mostly associated those with looting and destroying rather than of religious frenzy as no religious sites were desecrated. The violent acts occurred at nights and were almost always accompanied with looting; there were no reports of molestation and the violence was restricted to only Kolkata. Even sensitive districts of Nadia and Murshidabad were not affected. As a result of this, the 1992 "outbreak thus needs to be located within the trajectories of social transformation in contemporary Calcutta." (Das 2000: 292) The riot seemed to reflect more of economic greed than religious fanaticism. It was seen in the increase in the number of lootings that occurred in the city but it was most blatantly visible in the areas which were looted; most of these slums were being persuaded by land developing companies and their refusal to sell seemed to have been solved by the riots destroying their homes.

The CPI (M) was in power in Bengal for three decades and it was believed that with its egalitarian politics (a reflection of which was considered to be the absence of communal riots) it had actually improved the conditions of the Muslims in the state. But the Sachar Committee Report brought to light data which said otherwise; it showed that the Muslims were socially, economically and educationally very backward in West Bengal, and therefore begged the question, how was it that the party which says that it is against communal politics not be aware of such chronic forms of structural violence against the Muslims? Is the act of physical violence or the absence of it alone the marker to see if a government is communal? Does religious polarisation have to be blatant and obvious for it to exist or is the more subtle and deep rooted polarisation more dangerous? The fact that there is a feeling of religious polarisation and that Muslims in Bengal do face certain degree of discrimination and prejudice becomes evident when one of the respondents talks about his experience of travelling in a local train. On remembering the incident he said,

> *"Toh ei ami train theke aashchhilam bari theke Kolkata aar ki, aami beshi bhaag*
> *train –e A.C. teh jaatajaat kori jaate bhadrolokeder shaathe jaatajaat kora jaye*
> *keno ekta level er lok toh A.C. teh jaatajaat kore shobai toh aar korte paare na.*
> *Toh aashte aashte dekha gelo je takhon Murshidabad e Aligarh Muslim Univerity*

r ekta campus hocchhilo aar ki toh shekhan theke ekta Congress neta uthlo aar ki toh take kichhu lok cheeke dhore jigesh korchhe aar bolchhe je Jodi ekhane Aligarh Muslim University ta ekhane hoe jaye tahole amader kono astitva aar thakbe na. Toh amar maane ki eder bojha ucheet aar ki je aar khoj korle jante o parbe aar ki je Aligarh Muslim University teh more than forty percent teacher ra Hindu aar ki aar chhatro ra oh around forty percent Hindu. Aar o jana uchheeth je Benaras Hindu Universiy teh twenty percent chhatro ra Muslim aar around fifteen percent teacher o Muslim. Toh ekhon je situation ta hoe utheche aar ki je real education jeta ke bole mane aamra toh bhalo chakri korchhi aar ei je iktu aage bollam I.A.S. ba I.P.S. hochhe aar ki kintu ei chinta bhabnar oder obhaab. Kichhura toh abar jeneo ichha kore mistake kore etathe amader kharab laage botei kintu oder aar o lojja korar kotha oder jonne lojjar kotha aar ki."("I was travelling in the train while I was coming back to Kolkata from my home. I mostly travel in the A.C. coach when I am travelling in the train because you assume that you are travelling with *bhadroloks*[64]because only a certain strata can travel in A.C. not everyone can travel in it. So while I was coming, there were talks about a campus of the Aligarh Muslim University being constructed in Murshidabad as well, from the same station a Congress leader boarded the train and suddenly a crowd gathered around him and started asking him questions as well as telling him that if Aligarh Muslim University is constructed there then their identity would cease to exist. I think that they don't know and if they ask around maybe they will realise that in Aligarh Muslim University more than forty percent of the teachers are Hindu and even the number of Hindu students is around forty percent and they should also know that in Benaras Hindu University twenty percent students are Muslims and fifteen percent teachers are also Muslims. So the situation that has arisen today is that what we consider real education, I mean that today we have good jobs and as I have mentioned earlier people are becoming I.A.S. and I.P.S. officers but they need to change the way they think. There is a scarcity in thinking patterns. Some of them think like this even after they know the truth it does make us feel bad, but they should feel ashamed, it is a shameful act on their part.") .

This excerpt brings into focus an observation made by Gyanendra Pandey (2006) regarding violence and communalism.That communalism or violence is not just that which can be measured or observed like physical violence rather it is something more. It is something that is much more deep rooted; communalism can be seen in everyday

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[64] There is no synonym for it in English. The closest word that defines this category of people would probably be Gentlemen.

activities in the way one talks about the other community, in the way they behave in front of another community. The same idea is seen operating when the men in the train make the statement that they do. Communalism does exist in Bengal but the nature of it is different. Instead of taking a more aggressive stance, it comes up in subtle ways maybe in the form of a joke made between two colleagues or as a statement or appeal among the members of a particular community regarding another. What makes Bengal unique in comparison to to other states is that it does not operate under the same purview as a state with a right wing party and despite any obvious forms of divisive politics being played it does exhibit elements of communalism. If the Sachar Committee Report's findings are accurate then communalism even though hidden, has been a chronic situation in Bengal, which didn't vanish in 1977 as people believed it did because of the change in the government.

While direct violence did stop making appearances in the socio – political milieu of Bengal, structural and cultural violence didn't and it is precisely this reason that it remained hidden beneath the surface; it was latent therefore, even more dangerous.

CONCLUSION

The categories of Hindu and Muslim may have started in 1872 but they continue to exist and influence everyone's life in this country even today. We see that there is a separatist tendency which emerged during the British rule. While major credit is given to the colonial rulers along with the separatist elements in both the countries, one can't deny that the problem remains even today – it is the refusal among the section of the population to let it (The Partition) go; even today the idea of Partition is used time and again by certain political factions to gain mileage and the brunt of this is faced by the Muslims of this country. Communalism and propaganda as mentioned above has been a constant source of problem for the Muslims and ergo a constant tool used by those promoting divisive politics. While the mechanisms of divisive politics may have changed the idea operating behind them remains the same. Since the Godhra riots of 2002, there hasn't been any major communal clash in India. According to some in the government, the incidents that do occur are publicized with a different angle. But certain incidents that have occurred in the last few years alone will prove that the

explanation given is completely misleading and wrong. Some of these well known events that occurred in the country as well as Bengal are -

Love Jihad[65]: The idea of Love Jihad had surfaced in 2009 in Kerala and Mangalore as well as in parts of Karnataka, but it gradually spread to different parts of the country. The recent resurgence of it has been in 2014, when a B.J.P. Member of the Parliament, Yogi Adityanath made a comment that Love Jihad was actually an international conspiracy that was done to target only India; he actually went on to announce on the television that since the "Muslims can't do what they want by force in India, so they are using Love Jihad method here". The Hindu activists then went on to caution all the women in Uttar Pradesh to avoid all Muslim men and not to befriend anybody from that particular community. So strong was the feeling of anxiety among the Hindu activists that the Akhil Bharatiya Vishya Ekta Parishad announced that their intention was to restrict the use of cell phones among young women in order to prevent them from being vulnerable to activities that in turn would lead to their conversion to Islam.

Muzaffarnagar Riots: Communal clashes were reported on 21st August 2013, in Muzaffarnagar and the police to control the situation by registering cases or complaints against 150 people out of which 14 were taken into custody. The communal riots took place between the Muslims and Jats in Shamli and Muzaffarnagar[66] and grew in intensity by the 27th of August 2013. The original cause of how the riots began is not clear as there are two contesting stories as to how the violence actually began. According to one version there was a traffic accident and according to the other version it was a case of eve – teasing. Whatever was the actual incident, it led to the death of a Muslim youth Shanawaz Qureshi and two Hindu Jat[67] boys, Sachin Singh and Gaurav Singh.

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[65] It is also known as Romeo Jihad, where it is believed that most Muslim men marry women who are non – Muslims by feigning love and converting them to their religion.

[66] Names of Places in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

[67] A sub – caste in the Hindu caste system, they are the dominant caste in Uttar Pradesh.

As the news of the killings spread, members of both the religious communities started attacking each other. The police managed to bring the situation under control by taking possession of the three bodies, but it was a temporary lull. In September 2013, fresh riots sparked off again which led to the death of 11 poeple including a T.V. journalist and left more than 34 people injured after which there was an indefinite curfew and the army was deployed. In the aftermath of the violence nearly 5000 people were displaced and by 12th September 2013 forty-three people were killed and by the 15th of November 2013 the police had registered 13 rape and sexual harassment cases.

The Minister's Comment on *"Raamzyade* or *Haraamzyade"*[68]: At a rally on the 2nd of December 2014, the Union minister Niranjan Jyoti made an extremely controversial statement while addressing a crowd, where she said that either, 'you are the sons of Ram or you are illegitimate sons'. The statement was made in a rally in the city of New Delhi where she asked the crowd if they wanted a government that was made by the sons of Ram, the rightful sons of the land or a government made by the illegitimate sons. The statement had created uproar in the Parliament where the Rajya Sabha[69] and the Lok Sabha[70] stopped functioning and the opposition wanted action to be taken against the Sadhvi[71] and an apology from the Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well. Both the Houses had been disrupted more than three times even before the lunch recess and the opposition comprising the National Congress, the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party and other parties rushed to the Well which in turn led to four adjournments in the pre lunch period. While the members of the ruling Party along with the minister in question did apologise, no apology was offered by the Prime Minister himself.

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[68] Sons of the Vishnu avatar Lord Rama or Illegitimate Sons.

[69] The Upper House of the Parliament.

[70] The Lower House of the Parliament.

[71] A female Hindu ascetic.

The Ghar Wapsi[72] in Agra: On 8th December 2014, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh provided a report that it had converted two hundred and fifty Muslims in Agra to Hinduism and called it Ghar Wapsi. The result was major debates in the Parliament. It was found out that the Muslims who were residing in the Vednagar slums were told by a local Hindu activist that if they wanted basic amenities and ration card as well as other welfare schemes under the current government then they would have to attend a *Havan*[73] and after the ritual was over they were all told that they had now been converted to Hinduism and they were all Hindus.

The police then filed a First Information Report (F.I.R.) against the organisation as well as its convenor and launched an investigation; they were registered under section 415 and 153 (A) of the Indian Penal Code as a complaint was made against them by one of the people who were converted. The Uttar Pradesh Moniriries Commission which had gone to investigate in Agra and file a report, found in their fact finding that the conversion programme was actually an act of fraud. The ruling party which is generally associated with the R.S.S. tried to distance itself from the issue and even went on record to say that what had happened was not right and that the focus of the government continues to be in the area of development. The Committee submitted its full report on February 2015 whereby its concluding remarks were that all the people who were converted using these fake techniques continued to practice their original religion and refuse to accept their conversion as they all point out that they were cheated into believing that the ritual was something that was done to start the process of their uplift; they were never told or informed about the conversion that was suppose to take place.

Amit Shah's Rally in Kolkata: On 30th November 2014, Bharatiya Janata party (B.J.P.) head Amit Shah held a rally in Kolkata, where he not only criticised the

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[72] It is the Hindi synonym for homecoming. It is a programme that is run by the Jagaran Samiti (Religious Awakening Committee), which is a Hindu Activist group affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.). The objective of this programme is to reconvert all the Muslims nd Christians in India, as it is believed that all these Muslims and Christians were originally Hindus whose ancestors had converted to other religions, as a result of which their conversions are regarded as reconversion or homecoming.

[73] It is a Hindu sacrificial ceremony.

current ruling party at the state the Trinamool Congress, but also pointed fingers at the current Chief minister Mamta Bannerjee's close association with the Sharada Scam[74] as well as the attack that had happened in Burdwan. Using the same style and rhetoric that was used by Mamta Bannerjee herself in the 2011 Legislative Assembly elections, Amit Shah talked about how by only being victorious in Bengal will he consider himself to be successful and he asked the people to vote for a B.J.P. Mayor for the city so that the rest of Bengal can follow its footsteps.

Mohan Bhagwat's Rally in Kolkata: On 20th of December 2014, R.S.S. head Mohan Bhagwat held a rally in the city and defended the reconversions that were done by the various branches of the Sangh Parivar and echoing what the B.J.P. leaders were saying, he said that if anyone was against reconversions they should then support the anti-conversion bill. He said *"Agar pasand nahin hai toh kanoon banao. Humko kisi ko badalna nahin hain. Agar kisi ka parivartan nahin karna toh Hindu ka parivartan bhi nahin hoga"* ("if you don't like it, change the law. If this has to stop, then the conversion of Hindus also has to stop")[75]. This statement was made by Mohan Bhagwat at the Shahid Minar grounds to mark the golden jubilee of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

The pattern of continuous direct or structural violence is having two major impacts on the Muslim community. One, they are being excluded from, and marginalised in all the spheres; the evidence is available in Sachar Committee Report of 2006 which showed that the Muslims were least represented in most of the indices associated with a decent standard of living. The other impact that can be seen is with regard to the Muslim themselves, with them moving towards the elements that are associated with their religious identity as it acts as a solace for them; for most of the people who are down trodden, poor and marginalised it is only their religious identity and their belief in their religion that acts as a healing touch and let's them imagine a better tomorrow, one similar to their past. As Sudhir Kakar and Katherina Kakar (2007) mention,

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[74] Sharada Scam was a chit fund scam that led to the collapse of a ponzi scheme which was run by Sharada company.

[75] Quoted as mentioned in the Telegraph Kolkata news paper circulated on the twenty – first of December 2014.

"... he withdraws further into the shelter provided by his religious community, holding on tightly to all markers of his religious identity – the Quran, the Sharia, the Urdu language, the madarsa or religious school – which his religious leaders tell him will lead him out of his current predicament. It is only thus that he can recapture the glory that came the way of his ancestors who strictly adhered to the tenets of Islam."(Kakar&Kakar 2007: 160).

It is the second element that will be given primacy to in this dissertation where one would look at how in Kolkata there is a sudden increase in the assertion of Muslim identity and thereby also look at what are the causes as well as the effects of this assertion.

Map 4.1: Demarcating the Areas that is the Field of the Study – Sections of Wards 64 -65 under Borough – VII Of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.
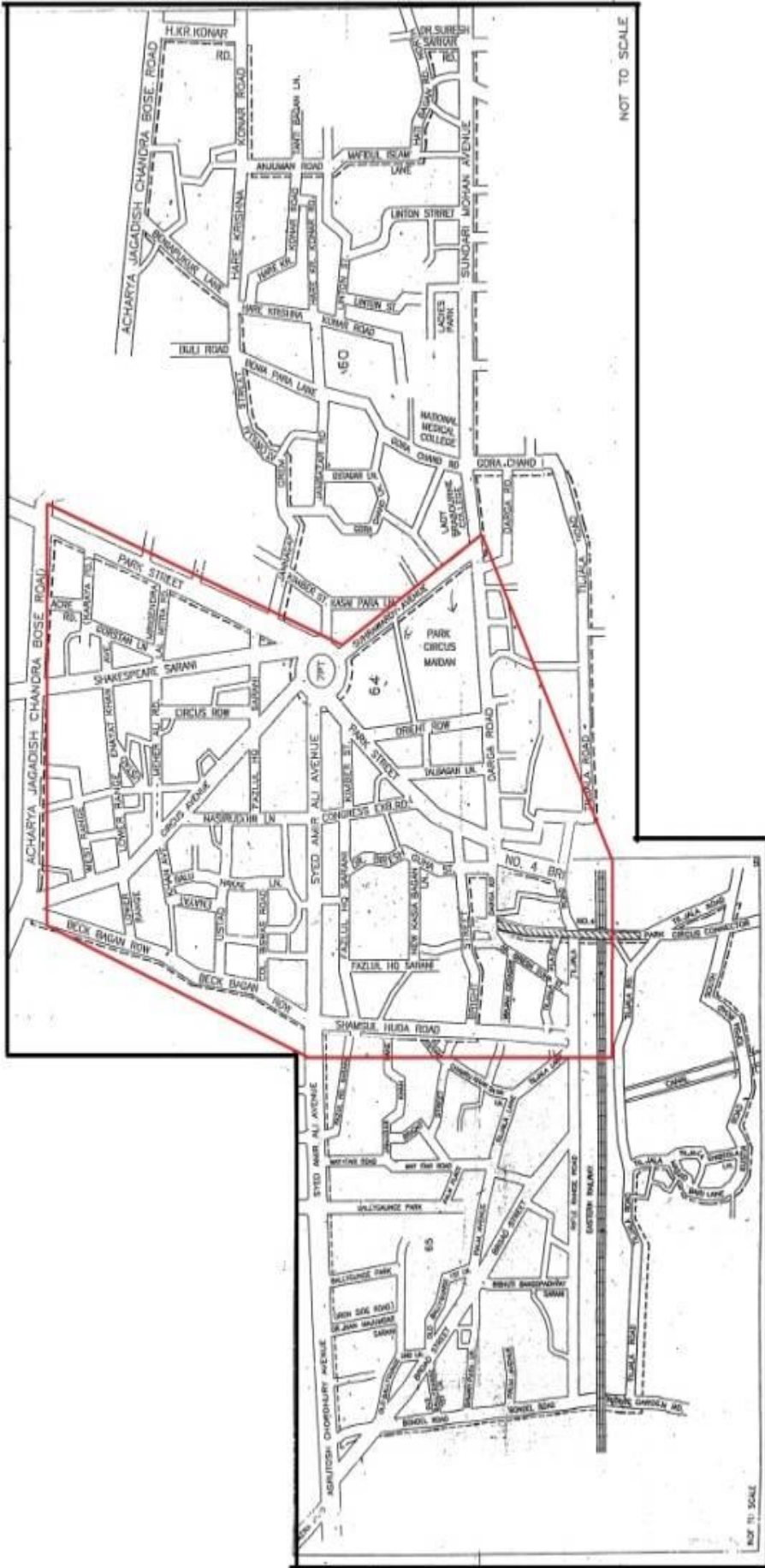
Source: Borough VII, Kolkata Municipal Corporation

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CHAPTER – IV

LOCATING THE 'MINI – PAKISTAN'

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the dissertation will focus on the site of the study a 'Mini Pakistan' in Kolkata called the Park Circus area by the locals. As mentioned earlier wards number 64 and 65 under Borough – VII of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation has been observed. As section of these wards constitute the Park Circus area and are under the jurisdiction of three police stations – the Karaya Police Station, the Benia Pukur Police Station and the Topsia Police Station.

As the census report which is available to the public does not provide any data to prove that the area studied has a Muslim majority, the following indicators were looked at – a) The places of worship : During the ethnographic studied that was carried out it was found out that this area has thirty-seven mosques, as well as an *Eidgah*[76] five temples and three churches along with a building dedicated to only the pilgrims of *Haj*[77]. It was not just the number of mosques that indicated the religion of the majority population but also the way these mosques were constructed. Most of them are two to three storeys high with ornate architecture and located at important junctions of this area whereas the temples were mostly constructed by the pavements on the street and were small with just a small idol of certain Gods. b) The names of stores and residences: Most of the stores, shops and residential buildings had a name which had its roots in Urdu, Persian or Arabic languages and even when some of them had names which did not give away any religious affiliation, the name of the proprietor or the owner would be mentioned and would be words from the above mentioned languages. The names prove that most of them residing here are Muslims as it is this community which has its roots in these languages and are therefore mostly

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[76] Eidgah is a place which is only used special prayers on both the Eids, it is not a part of the mosque.

[77] It is the holy pilgrimage to Mecca.

associated with it as well. c) The places where last rites are performed: Though there are two burial grounds in the area being studied, one belonging to the Christians and the other to the Muslims, it is the one that is used by the Muslim community that still operates and is one of the largest Muslim burial grounds in the city and is called *Gobhra Kabrastan*[78]. All the above mentioned indicators therefore proved beyond a shadow of doubt, the dominance of Muslim community in the area and hence a perfect site for a study on the changing dynamics of Muslim identity in Kolkata.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned before one progresses with the chapter is the element of time. The time period during which this ethnographic study was carried out was from the 20th of September 2014 to 10th of November 2014. The purpose behind this choice was to study this area during the festive seasons of both the Hindus and Muslims. The reason for it is to study the pulse that operates within these two communities not during communal riots or during times of stress and tension but during what is called 'normal' or their routine and everyday life. An added reason was also to see if the spirit of cosmopolitanism that this city is said to have is still operating or not.

DESCRIPTION OF THE 'MINI – PAKISTAN'

To get a complete and detailed view of the area the ethnographic study is also supplemented by photographs that were taken of the area in question. This chapter is divided into eight sections, each dealing with a particular part of the area being observed and studied. These are as follows:

The Changing Nature Of Space: From Mullick Bazaar Crossing To Seven Point Crossing

The road from the Mullick Bazaar Crossing to the Seven Point Crossing is the lower section of one of the most important and famous streets in the city called Park Street[79]. This crossing from Mullick Bazaar onwards fall in what most people

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[78] The Muslim burial grounds are called Kabrastan.

[79] Even though it has been renamed as Mother Teresa Sarani, the locals still call it Park Street

everyday spoken language call the Park Circus area, that is, the area being studied in this dissertation.

On any given day of the week one would see that this street is filled with all sorts of vehicles, from all the brands of cars that are seen in the showroom, to various kinds of two wheelers, auto rickshaws, mini buses and even the hand pulled rickshaws which are unique to the city are visible along with trams and they all seem to occupy the continuously moving traffic on this road. But the reason for mentioning this street under this section is not the traffic or the road on which it runs; it is the footpath and the people who reside on it and the buildings that give it character.

On the right side of the footpath is the grand building which is one of the oldest and most popular Mughlai food joint in the city 'The Shiraz Tulip Inn'[80] Hotel. Just next to the building is a small pan shop where people come and buy all sorts of edible things; while standing next to a building whose grand structure is in complete contrast to it, this small shop does not seem out of place probably because of the people, who come out of this three star fancy hotel after eating their meal and very naturally go to this shop and buy cigarettes or 'pan'[81] or any other item that is sold in this store. Also, in the same row of shops lies one of the oldest wedding decorators of the city, G. Hossain, now run by the proprietor's great - great grandson, this shop has been in business from the early 1900s and has decorated a few thousand weddings. The owner of the store was kind enough to answer some questions about the city about the area as well as his store. He said,

> *"Mein yahan pe kareeb thees saal se beth raha hu, mere pehle, mere walid*
> *yahape beth the the aur unke pehle unke walid yani ke mere dada... yeh dukaan*
> *hum char pushtoh se chala rahe hai, shaadi ke gharo mein sajawat ka kaam dekh*
> *te hai... sab tareekein ke intezam karte hai gareeb aur bare ghar ki shadiyan dono*
> *dekhte hai.. Aap dekh sakti hai yahan pe sherwani aur shaadi ki topiyan bhi*
> *rakhhi hui hain yeh hum bhare mein dete hai taki joh khreed nahi sakte woh bhi*
> *pehen paye... ha sheher toh badal gaya hai balki badal raha hai... logo ki soch*
> *badal rahi hai aur woh imandari nahi rahi, woh daur hi chala gaya zubaan ki koi*
> *value hi nahi hai phir bhi yeh soch ke khush hu ki baki shehar jaisi gandagi yahan*

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[80] It is a three star hotel.

[81] It is mostly eaten after dinner and is made up of betel leaves and betel nut.

nahin hai... Ha yeh ilaka bhi badal gaya hai bahut changes toh aye hai.. jaise ki yeh building ko hi le lijiye pehle tha kya aur puri sheher mein jo ho raha hain uska impact toh aap yahan pe bhi dek sakti hain.. mein dekhraha hu aur roz dekhta hu." (" I have been running this store for the past thirty years, before me this shop was run by my father and prior to him it was his father my grandfather who ran this store. This shop has been in my family for four generations, we decorate wedding halls and the residence of the groom or the bride. We cater to all socio-economic groups, you will notice that we even have sherwanis and turbans we give them out to rent so those who can't afford to buy them can still wear them... Yes of course the city has changed actually it is still changing... The way people think has obviously changed that honesty which was there has gone words or commitments don't mean anything anymore but I still get some solace by thinking that at least our city isn't as bad as other cities in the country... Yes even this neighbourhood has changed there have been so many changes... For instance take this building this wasn't there initially and whatever changes are happening in the city are also mirrored here... I see it now and have been observing it for quite some time.").

This side of the footpath has buildings both old and new all standing next to each other in complete harmony along with *khola badi*[82]. A little ahead in one of the lanes one sees what can be best described as a sea of cars all being looked at, all being fixed, which provides as one of the major income generating activities in this area. Also, one can see the entrance to a section of the Park Street Christian Cemetery which is now closed for burial services.

A little further along the road one can see a road side *dhaba*[83] where a man and his wife provide lunch and breakfast and can be seen providing the famous and unique bread and butter toast with sugar and pepper as toppings. For lunch one can see a variety of vegetables, dal[84], rice and fish is being prepared. Most of the customers who come to eat at this road side stall are daily wage labourers, rickshaw pullers and auto rickshaw drivers. The store next to the dhaba sells furniture, where the carpenters

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[82] These are small one storey houses where even though the walls are made out of brick and cement the roof is not it is just covered with tiles or tin sheet. Most of these houses don't even have proper sanitation facilities or running water or legal electric supply.

[83] It is a small eatery.

[84] Pulses or legumes are called dal in most Indian languages.

are seen engrossed in their craftsmanship, polishing and hammering the nail into a piece of wood that would later go on to be a table or a chair. The other stores on the street range from an Islamic book store and an Islamic boutique selling religious texts and *burkhas* or *niquaab* or *abayaa* and the *hijab*[85]. A number of typists are found sitting in front of the Park Street post office typing legal documents for all those who come to them and seek their services.

There are a number of other shops there: a boutique, a *chat* house, a laundry and dry cleaning store, a shop which sells all kinds of electrical items ranging from a ceiling fan to a sewing machine and has been runningfor the past forty years or so. Most of these shops have been here for thirty or more years. They might have changed their names like the sweet shop which was called 'Shree Lakshmi Sweets' and was later renamed as 'Park Sweets' following the 1992 - 93 riots when another shop owned by a Hindu business man was destroyed and burned to the ground. The old shops are also accompanied with a number of new enterprises which seem to have mushroomed in all the empty space that was there on this section of the street – whether it is the Honda bike showroom or a new beauty parlour. This section of the street mirrors a perfect harmony between the old and the new, as well as that between the grand structures and a number of small and humble abodes. This stretch till the Seven point Crossing all has one of the largest mosques in the area and right next to it lies the Missionaries of Charities[86] building.

On the other stretch of the footpath similar kind of activities can be seen. The Shiraz hotel still has its original shop a simple restaurant called 'Shiraz The Golden Restaurant' which has influenced the Mughlai[87]culinary trends in the city and has been the dominating taste on everyone's palate in the city for a long time. In front of the restaurant one can see a number of booths which are closed during the day.

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[85] All are the terms used for the veil.

[86] Missionaries of Charities is an organisation that was started by Mother Teresa and other nuns. It provides charity, medical help, hospice care to all those who need it, it also has an orphanage.

[87] It is a very popular form of cuisine which has its roots in the Mughal rule.

Right next to the restaurant is a meat shop and a shoe shop which belongs to the same man. On the same stretch of the footpath there are shrines of two Sufi saints being cleaned and maintained by the local people who live there. Right opposite to these *dargahs*[88] is an old delipidated building which was once a movie theatre called the 'Park Show Cinema'; this theatre in its time was one of a kind. Since most of the residents in this area were and are Muslims and practised the *purdah*[89] system the movie timings were different for men and women. So strong was the belief in the *purdah* system that even the people who checked the tickets were male and female depending on the audience of the show. Later some shows did cater to audience from both the sexes as most families would want to come to the movies together but to ensure that the *purdah* system was continued and the sentiments of the patrons were not hurt, a segregation in the seating arrangement between the men and women watching the same show was practised.

This stretch of the footpath is also occupied with a number of shops ranging from an old store which sells paints to stores where one can get their photos clicked. A common site on this side of the footpath, are a number of booths all locked and also, one sees that there are these wooden beds on the side of the road all empty with just a few things on them, some clothes and some bedding. Moving along this stretch of the road one sees a number of establishments, a bank and another hotel.

There is a school on this side of the road where children from the nearby slums come to study. Right next to the school was a small stationary store and an Ayurvedic[90] store providing all kind of herbal medicines and ointments. A small fast food joint called 'Tandoori Delights' provide a number of food cuisines from Mughlai to Chinese. Also on this stretch are a number of fabric stores where, one can see women making their purchase.

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[88] Sufi saint shrines are called by that name.

[89] The purdah system also draws from the idea of the veil; it basically means segregation between the sexes.

[90] Ayurvedic medicines are produced by an ancient branch of Indian medicine called Ayurveda.

Pictue 4.1: The Tram Depicting The Nature Of The Space During Day Giving The Mirage Of Anonymity

Picture 4.2: By Evening The True Nature Of The Space Reveals Itself Questioning The Idea Of Uniformity In Urban Spaces

Place: The Mullick Bazar Crossing

During the day this part of Park Street probably resembles any other part of the city; establishments old and new grand and humble can be seen in all parts of the city and they coexist rather peacefully in any section of this metro. What makes this section so unique is the transformation of the space that occurs the minute the sun goes down, the minute all the office buildings, the bank and other office spaces close for the day. Then the footpath which seems rather deserted and empty acquires a completely different meaning. The empty wooden beds become people's home where the women with their children attend to their chores cooking in their small pots on the mud stoves and at the same time talking to each other and discussing their day's happenings. The booths which remain closed during the day seems to come alive at this time of the day; some of these booth sells pirated DVDs and CDs of the latest movies and their audio albums, whereas others become repair shops for mobile phones and/or television sets. The *dargahs* also transform from a quiet shrine to a place where the community comes together and the *qawali*[91] that is played from the speakers can be the best example for one to explain the influence of Bollywood[92] in our daily lives as even the *qawalis* that are sung in the name of Allah or his saints are sung on some Hindi movies tunes'.

Makeshift shops appear on the footpaths in front of the shutters or closed doors of the different offices; these shops sell everything that one could ask for from pillows to different assortment of spices to utensils of different sizes and shapes. *Ittar*[93] or perfume is also sold by a number of men but the oldest in this trade in that area is an eighty year old man who everyone lovingly calls *chacha*[94]. He has been selling this perfume since he was nineteen and says that it is his family business. Everything that one could think of is available in this local makeshift market. But what makes this market fascinating and also gives it its name is a unique item that is sold here – monkeys, naming the market '*Bandar patti*' or a place where monkeys are sold. Most

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[91] It's a form of music, mostly associated with Sufism, where songs are sung to praise the Sufi saints and Allah.

[92] The Hindi film industry in Bombay is called Bollywood.

[93] It is the only kind of perfume that is allowed in Islam as the base of this type of perfume is not alcohol or spirit but oil from plants.

[94] It is a term used to refer to one's paternal uncle, more precisely one's father's younger brother.

of these monkeys are bred by men in the nearby area called the *dom para*; the men who sell these monkeys belong to the scheduled castes and during the day are actually employed in other odd jobs around the city but earn extra money on the side by breeding and selling monkeys. When asked who buys these monkeys one of the men selling the monkeys said,

> *"Oh bahut koi le jate hain... jo bandar ka khel dekha te hai woh khareed ke le jate hai, kabhi kabhi chiriyakhana se log leke jate hai ha abhi toh naya fashion hua hai na photo khich ne ka toh kuch bhikari bandar khareed ke le jate hai aur woh signal mein bandar ke sath phone mein photo kheech ne ka paise lete hain.. oi khareed teh hai aur hum bechte hai.. Arre ek baar toh police bhi ayi thi yahan koi bandar se chori karwa raha tha... ab batao is mein humara kya dosh?"* ("A lot of people come and buy these monkeys... All those who earn their living by showing tricks using monkeys, sometime people from the zoo also come and purchase these monkeys, there seems to be new trend of people clicking their photos all the time so some beggars also come and buy monkeys from us and then charge money to those who want to click a picture of themselves with the monkey they do that at the previous traffic signal... Once the police had also come here, someone was using a monkey to mug people... now tell me how is it my fault?").

Alongside the various stalls where goods of all kinds are sold, there were stalls selling various types of road side food from *phuchkas*[95] to *till ka laddoos*[96] and *badam chakkis*[97] different kind of *chutneys*[98] and sweets and candies that one could think of. The children and adolescent girls and boys are seen surrounding these stalls and enjoying the various assortments of goodies. These stalls also becomes a place for courtship where young boys and girls can meet each other without their parents' knowledge and not get into trouble or get caught as they are in a large group.

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[95] It is a very popular street food in India which is called gol guppa in Delhi, pani – puri in Mumbai and Gupchup in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It is basically a covering made out of flour and made as a ball which is then stuffed with spicy mashed potatoes and finally served after being dipped in extremely spicy and tasty tamarind water.

[96] These are a kind of a sweet dish made out of sesame, where the shape of the sweet is round.

[97] These are a type of candy which is made by using jaggery and nuts.

[98] Sweet and mostly cooked pickles are called chutney.

Pictue 4.4: Reflecting The Colourful Mood Of The Foot Path

Place: The Footpaths After The Mullick Bazar Crossing.

Another common site is the crowd in front of these *thelas*[99] which sell beef *nihari*[100] a delicacy which is very popular among the Muslim population in the city along with hawkers selling *sewai*[101] and *lachha*[102]. One more crowded place is the bangles store where women and young girls are seen adorning their hands with colourful bangles and buying them in dozens. Right next to this store sits a fortune teller with his parrot, who comes out of its cage to pick a card and reveals the customer's fortune.

The best way to explain this part of the city is probably in the words of one of the woman who lives here. She describes it by saying, *"Yahaan toh saara saal Eid ka bazaar laga rehta hai..."* ("It's like Eid's market throughout the year"). The way this street transforms from one part to another part of the day makes one realise that the ideas associated with the urban life of its anonymity, uniformity and loneliness needs to be questioned.

Where Little Tradition Takes Centre Stage: Park Circus Maidan

Park Circus Maidan[103] is situated on one of the most important roads of Kolkata; the Seven Point Crossing is a major artery that connects almost all the important streets of South Kolkata. This park has been an important part of the city's past. As the name suggests this park was where circuses were held even during the time of colonial rule. This park is now open to public throughout the year and one can see people jogging or walking in the morning, a laughing club enjoying their exercises, cracking jokes and getting amused by them, one can also see a group of elderly women strolling down the field and talking to each other, most of them telling each other about their previous day's happenings. Outside the perimeter of the park some vendors are seen coming from the direction of the Park Circus Railway Station to sell some of their

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[99]It means a cart in Hindi.

[100] It is a curry made with meat and bone marrow and lots of spices; it is prepared by cooking it on low heat over night and is eaten with bread. It is a Mughlai dish.

[101] It is a sweet dish that is prepared by cooking it in oil or milk and sugar.

[102] It is also a sweet dish; it is eaten by soaking it in milk and simply adding sugar to it.

[103] It means a field.

commodities at the maidan before setting up shop at the Park Circus Market. School children in their uniform are seen running through the park to reach their school.

Evening brings out another aspect of the maidan; one can see young boys playing football or cricket and enjoying themselves. Most of the boys are from the nearby localities. If one looks at them it becomes obvious that these children head for the park straight from their schools as majority of them are still in their school uniforms. The children continue playing till dusk and all retreat for the day to their houses once the Imam from the mosque which is situated inside the park, calls for people to say their evening prayers by saying the *azaan*[104] for *Maghrib.*[105] This is more or less what happens in this park for nearly eight months, but with September the maidan transforms, the festive mood that is associated with 'Durga Puja'[106] also has an impact on this part of the city. One of the largest *Pandals*[107] in the area is constructed in the middle of the park and along with it there is also a fair where people from the nearby localities come to enjoy their evenings with their families.

The fair is called the *Milan Mela*[108] and even though it starts with the *puja*, it stays till Christmas. The name of the fair and the duration of it are fixed actually done to ensure that most of the religious festivals from all the religions are also seen as a part of the fair. As one enters the fair one can see the majestic *pandal* adorned with lights is the main attraction, which after the *puja* turns into a makeshift theatre where *jatra*[109] is performed around the *pandal.* There are a number of shops selling woollen garments, crockery, pickles, *chutnies*, *papaddum*, an assortment of home – made

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[104] It is a term used as a synonym for the call for prayer in Arabic.

[105] It is one of the five times that a Muslim has to pray, this one is used to classify the time of dusk.

[106] It is one of the most important festivals for the Bengali Hindus; it is celebrated for ten days to mark the return of Goddess Durga and her children to her natal home from the Himalayas.

[107] It is a grand makeshift structure that is constructed where the Gods and Goddesses' idols are kept so that people can come and take their blessings.

[108] The word Milan means unity or togetherness while mela means a fair, the word play is done to make this fair a symbol of unity for all the religious communities.

[109] It is a term used in Bengali which means drama, the themes of these dramas or plays are mainly depiction of some religious or Hindu mythological story. It is the theme that makes these kinds of plays unique in character.

sweets, clothes, costume jewellery, decoration pieces made out of clay and terracotta and bags. On speaking to one of the owners of the stall that was set up here an amazing piece of information came to light. He said,

Pictue 4.5: The Mosque Stands As the Symbol Of Harmony Next To The Pandal

Pictue 4.6: The Festival That Defines The City.

Place: The Park Circus Maidan.

Pictue 4.7: A Mother With Her Child Looking Around The Carnival

Pictue 4.8: Milan Mela: A Carnival That Goes Beyond Religion.

Place: The Park Circus Maidan.

"Mein yahaan kuch chaaliss saal se aa raha hu humari dukan toh Punjab mein hai par hum her saal yahaan ake apna stall lagate hain... Apko shayad vishwas na ho per yahaan pe jitti dukaane hai woh her saal wahi jagay pe aati hai jahan pehle saal ayi thi, mein khud isi kone mein pichle chaaliss saal se dukan laga rah hu... Apko sun ke yeh lag raha hoga ki toh phir yahan log kyu aate hain, agar her saal ek jaisa mahol hain toh mein khud bhi yeh soch tah hu uttar toh nahin mila per acchha lag ta hai dekh karke abhi bhi wohi log her saal humara intezar karte hai aur yahan aate hai..."(I have been coming here for the past forty years our store is in Punjab but we come here every year and set up our stall... You may not believe me but all the stores that you see here have been setting up their stall in the exact same position every time, even I have been setting up my stall in this corner for the past forty years... You may be wondering then why is it people come here every time even I ask myself the same question, I still don't have an answer but I feel good when I see that the people wait for us and come here at this carnival..").

Along with these stores there is a section of the fair dedicated to only different assortments of eatables there are a number of popcorn making machine and cotton – candy stores as well. A number of famous restaurants also open their food counters here one of them is 'Bijoli Grill' a restaurant famous in the city for its authentic Bengali cuisine and popular for its fish fries and fish *kebabs*[110]. A crowd around this stall proves the popularity of this restaurant. Another favourite haunt in this food court is and has always been 'Calcutta Chat House' selling food of cuisines from different parts of the world; it is popular among both the older generation as well as among the youth. From an array of chats – bhel muri[111], *papdi chat*[112], *aloo chat*[113], *masala muri*[114], *raj kachori*[115], *dahi bhalla,*[116] etc.; all kinds of street food that the city is

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[110] It is a preparation where boneless fish is marinated in a spicy sauce and cooked over a barbeque which is called the tandoor.

[111] It is a street food, where puffed rice is mixed with onion, cucumber, coconut, coriander leaves, sprouts and boiled potatoes and is then mixed with a number spices and chutneys both sweet as well as a spicy kind.

[112] It is also another kind of street food where the bottom layer comprising papdis which is basically flat round biscuits made out of gram flour on top of which a mixture of potato, onion, peanuts, coconuts, some bhujiyas (also made from gram flour) along with green chillies and spices and sweet chutney is poured over and served.

[113] It is basically a mixture made up of potatoes, onion, sprouts and spices with a lot of tamarind water and red chilli powder.

[114] It is one of the most popular and cheap street food found in the city, which is a mixture of puffed rice with cucumber, onion, tomato, coconut and an assortment of spices with some mustard oil.

famous for is sold here. Along with the above mentioned items the stall also sells *chole bhature*[117], all types of *dosas*[118], *vada*[119], *idli*[120], *chowmein*[121] *momos*[122] and *kathi kebab rolls*[123]. On talking to one of the people who was buying the food, the person said, *"bhalo aar shostha khabar bole shobai ekhane aashe."* ("Since the food is both tasty and reasonably priced that is why it draws such a large crowd.").

Other than the stalls another reason why this fair draws such a large crowd is because of the number of rides that are available, it has a section which operates as an amusement park having a giant wheel, a roller coaster ride, flying saucers, a toy train and also a merry go round for children. Most of these rides are reasonably priced as compared to other amusement parks as a result of which it becomes accessible to everyone and does not burn a hole in anyone's pocket. When talking to a group of

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[115] This street food had its origin in Rajasthan but today is considered as one of the local delicacies, it is basically a huge kachori stuffed with potato, sprouts, onion, spices chutney and curd.

[116] It is also called dahi vada, it is a dish that is made up of balls out of gram flourand a number of spices which is then soaked in ice water to make it cool and finally served in a bowl of curd, sweet tamarind chutney and spices.

[117] It is a dish that migrated to Bengal from Punjab and today is one of the most favourite dishes of the people, if someone has a bigger appetite then it is the perfect dish; it consists of chhole which is a kind of legume and bhature which is a kind of a bread that is extremely big and because the dough has curd in it, it brings out a different flavour in the bhature.

[118] It is from South Indian cuisine; the wrap is made out of rice flour and inside the stuffing is made up of potato, tomato, sesame seed, etc. It is served with coconut chutney and a kind of a curry called sambar.

[119] It is a dish that is made up of a ball which is made out of a batter of dal and rice, which is then deep fried and served with coconut chutney and sambar. It is a dish from South Indian cuisine.

[120] It is prepared by steaming rice batter and is served with coconut chutney and sambar. It is a south Indian dish.

[121] It is a dish from Chinese cuisine, where noodles are prepared with vegetables, soya sauce and with vinegar. It can even be prepared with a variety of meats.

[122] This food has its root in Sino –Tibetan cuisine, it is a casing made out of flour stuffed with either vegetables or any kind of meat. It is then prepared by either steaming or deep frying it and is served with a really hot chilli, garlic and ginger sauce.

[123] Roll is one of the most popular foods of the city and this type of roll is everyone's favourite, the reason for it is the way the meat is prepared where it is cooked in a barbeque style but instead of using metal skewers wooden sticks or kathis are use which gives it another flavour.

kids all excited to go on the roller - coaster ride, one can get a sense of happiness and a mood of festivity that is associated with 'Durga Puja', one of them said, "We don't have to do homework, we can stay out and play as much as we want, wear new clothes and eat good food. This is the best holiday among all the ones' that we have"

The name of this fair seems appropriate when one looks at the crowd that comes here. People from different religions, regions, linguistic group and socio-economic groups are visible here. All come to look at the beauty of the *pandal* and the craftsmanship of the idols; while for some these idols are sight of reverence for others it is a work of art and a major component of the Bengali culture of which they are also a part of. A woman in *niquab*[124] rightly explains the pulse of the festival, by saying

> "The Durga Puja is more than a religious festival for us. It means a time when the entire city celebrates, a week's holiday where everyone can enjoy with their families, meet their loved ones and enjoy the beautiful transformation of this city."

This syncretic belief reverberates in every individual who comes in this place and is reflected in the respect that each one of them has and show for not just their own but others' religion as well. This can best be explained by the fact that when the mosque which is right next to the *pandal* gave a call for *azaan*, the music from the *pandal* stopped and similarly on speaking to the *imam*[125] it was found out that during the time of the actual *puja* the mosque would not use the microphone to say the *azaan*.

The 'Park Circus Maidan' especially during the 'Puja' with its carnival and fair becomes a synergy for both the 'Great as well as the Little Traditions'[126] with the

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[124] It is a synonym for the veil.

[125] An Imam is a term used to denote the chief priest of a mosque.

[126] This model of studying culture was first developed by Robert Redfield to study Mexican communities and was later used and modified by Milton Singer and McKim Marriott to study Indian society. The model has an evolutionary view which states that civilisations as well as structures of tradition which are made up of cultural and social structures actually evolve in two stages, first, through indigenous or orthogenetic changes and second through encounters with other cultures or contact with other civilisations. The social structures of these civilisations also operate on two levels – one, at the level of little tradition, which mainly comprises of folk culture of what is described as, the

worshipping of the Goddess and her children combined with the folk culture of having fairs and carnivals. But in the end what becomes understood is that it is the little tradition, the folk culture that gains primacy in the eyes of the people.

The Harmony Of Opposites: From The Seven Point Crossing To Beckbagan Crossing

This section of the Park Circus area is commercially the most important part of the city, mostly because of the transportation system that is available to the daily commuters who come from the suburbs. On the one side while there are the fast moving mini buses and auto rickshaws, on the other side the trams with a more relaxed pace are seen travelling on the same road carrying people to their destinations; while some are in a rush and therefore require a fast moving mode of transportation others prefer a more relaxed pace of mobility. Standing on any one of the corners of this road, one can see a number of buildings; what makes these structures worth mentioning is the architecture style of all of these buildings. While on one hand there are the office buildings with their efficient use of space and modern styling, on the other hand one sees building which reminds one of the times gone by, as the influence of colonial, of Victorian architecture can be seen.

This area seems to never sleep; one can see cars and even trucks pacing through the road at odd times of the day. The first wave of the daily commuters who enter the city at wee hours of the day comprise mostly of hawkers and vendors as well as part-time maids; they all seem to be in a hurry to get to their destinations, most of these maids come to the city from the cantonment area and work during the day and head back home in the afternoon train.

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culture of the "unlettered peasants" (Singh 1974:13). The other is at the level of Great Traditions which was the culture of the "reflective few" (Singh1974: 13). These two levels of tradition are not separate entities but are always interacting with each other. According to Singer and Marriott every civilisation would first move from little tradition than to great tradition.

Pictue 4.9: The Eateries Mirriring The Festive Season's Glee.

Pictue 4.10: A Humble Fruit Seller's Stall At The Same Corner As Arsalan Mirroring The Ideals Of The Strret

Place: Seven Point Crossing

Pictue 4.11: A Day As Usual With Comuters Hurrying To Reach Their Dstination.

Pictue 4.12: The Luxury Mall Reflecting The Oppulance That Co-exists With Other Establishments Representing Simplicity of The Area

Place: Bechbagan Crossing.

As the day progresses, more and more people come to the city. While some travel through the local trains others use the intrastate buses. The shops start to open and it is business as usual. On one of the footpaths one can see fruit sellers opening their shops, which are mostly makeshift shops at the corner of the footpaths. These fruit sellers cater to a major portion of the population residing here and evidence of it can be seen during the month of 'Ramadan'[127] or even during 'Diwali'[128] and 'Saraswati Puja'[129]. The fruit sellers are residents of a locality nearby called *Falpatti* and as the name suggests, this lane is inhabited by families who are in the business of importing and or exporting fruits as well as selling them. As one of the fruit sellers mentions, most of these stalls have been here for generations, his stall has been here for three generations and he plans to give it to his son after him. He goes on to say how the city is changing and with the number of malls coming up their income has actually gone down. When asked if there are any communal elements[130]present and how do they solve any problems along the above mentioned lines, he said,

> *" Ha thode bahut masle toh hote rehte hai... per hum apas mein hi sulah kar lete*
> *hai kisi party wale ko nahi bula teh isse kya hota hai chhoti baat chhoti hi reh;*
> *jati hain jaise aap kisi party wale ko bula teh toh baat ka batangar ban jata hai*
> *aur dange hone mein kitti der lagti hain..."*(Yes there are few skirmishes here
> and there but we try to solve this amongst ourselves, we don't involve any party
> workers. As a result what happens is that we ensure that the matter remains a
> small thing and does not transform into something huge; the minute you involve
> someone from a political party they make a mountain out of a molehill and then
> how much does it take for a riot to start...").

As one moves along the road the frequency of the number of shops increases, a gift shop, a stationary shop, juice shop, all seem to be busy doing business. A number of

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[127] It is the month of fasting that is observed by Muslims

[128] It is a festival that is celebrated to commemorate the victory of Rama over Ravana, symbolising the triumph of good over evil by the Hindus.

[129] It is the second most widely celebrated festival among Hindus in the state of Bengal; it is celebrated to show one's reverence to Goddess Saraswati, who is the Goddess of knowledge.

[130] The intention for this line of inquiry was an event that occurred in 2008, where some Muslims were protesting against Taslima Nasreen's petition for Indian citizenship and it took a communal turn, the situation had deteriorated to a point where a curfew was declared and this crossing was the epicentre of that situation.

beggars sit on the street asking for alms. On talking to one of them and asking him about the area and the people that reside in it, the man made an interesting comment,

> *"Shobai shob shomoe byastho thake, shob shomoe cholte thake, ei shob cholachol er modhe amra i ja achhi jara ek jaygae dariye. Dekhle mone hobe je shob kichu bodliye gechhe kintu ashole jano toh shudhoo manoosher poshak, tader jama kapod bodliyeche bhetore aaj o tara theek tader aager juger lokder motho... Oder chinta bhabna roj diner shamoshya shob ek."* ("It seems that everyone is very busy these days, they always seem to be on the move and within this chaos or continuous movement we are the only people who are constant not moving. If one looks at this situation and compares it previous times then it would seem that everything has changed but in reality that is not true the only thing that has changed is the clothes that people wear, their way of dressing has changed that is it but deep down inside they are just like the generation before them... They have the same worries, same tension and the same problems.").

Since it was a Friday one could see a queue in front of the 'Christ the King Church' which gave food to the poor and the destitute; around the corner a similar situation occurs as the building next to the church is the 'Islamia Hospital' which provides free healthcare to the under privileged every Friday. On the other side of the road in the Muslim Orphanage; one can see people donating food and clothes here as well. A little ahead one can see some restaurants selling breakfast mostly *nihari*, *paya*[131] and *naan roti*[132] or *dalpuri*[133]. On the other side of the road one can see mechanics repairing cars and changing tyres. The little 'Bethel Church' with its doors closed and hidden beneath the trees seems like something out of a painting. A little ahead on the road is the largest luxury mall of the city called the 'Quest Mall' and is filled with people; most of them are young boys and girls who are out with their friends and after a day of 'pandal hopping' have decided to have lunch at this mall's food court. On the opposite side of the mall is 'Mithai' one of the oldest and famous sweetshop in the

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[131] It is a stew that is prepared with the lower part of the legs of either cows or goats and is prepared with special spices and is eaten with bread.

[132] It is a type of bread which is prepared by cooking it inside a mud oven.

[133] It is a type of bread, which is filled with a stuffing of fried dal and spices and is prepared by deep frying it.

city and the number of people lining at the store can make one assume that the store is still pretty popular among the people.

At noon the area, however, goes through a complete transformation. In all the mosques from this area one can hear different kinds of *khudba*[134] and one can see men mostly in *kurta pajamas*[135] heading towards the mosques as the *Jummah ki Jamaat*[136] starts in all the mosques. There seems to be a silence that envelops the place – the traffic slows down, most of the shops have their shutters down as their owners and workers are all Muslims. The lull and quiet continues throughout the afternoon and it is only after dark that the vitality and the fast paced nature of the area returns, as the crowd that had distributed itself among the various buildings seems to come together to form a sea of people all standing in the same cues for buses and auto rickshaws to take them back home.

But as it is also the festive season one sees another trend of people coming back to the city particularly to this area; the reason for it is mainly because of the two very popular Mughlai food joints – 'Arsalan' and 'Zeeshan'. Both these places are filled with people, with the restaurants seated to their full capacity. A common sight in front of these restaurants is a long line of people; while some after waiting for a long time decide to pack their food, others are still determined to eat at the restaurant. On talking to one of the workers at 'Arsalan' it was found out that the restaurant was open till six in the morning the previous day as it was serving their patrons.

Another place with a huge turnout was the mall with a stream of peoples all entering the building for a good time. This mall with its grand stores is worth mentioning because it is built right next to one of the biggest slums in the city and so most of its residents belong to the low income group, but they are also treated with the same

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[134] It is an Arabic word used to denote the Sermons given by Imams from the mosque usually on Fridays.

[135] It is a traditional dress worn by men on Fridays it is symbolic as it indirectly tells others of their religious identity.

[136] It is used to refer to the weekly Friday prayers of the Muslims which makes it mandatory that every Muslim man must attend.

respect as any other customer who enters the mall; there isn't any element of sniggering or high handed behaviour from either the shop personnels or customers.

The trends with their contradictory nature seems to confront one whereever they look but these opposing elements don't seem to be in an antagonising relation; they seem to be in a harmonizing state – this opposition that can be seen from something as obvious as the architectural style of the buildings to the pace and choice of mobility that one uses. There seems to be no judgment for the opposite pattern, just a degree of mutual respect which comes from a deeper level understanding about life.

The Vibrancy That Comes From Pluralism: Shamsadullah Street

The road from Beckbagan crossing to Lohapool is called Shamsadullah Street. This long stretch of road probably best explains the pulse of the area – the cosmopolitan nature of Park Circus. At the Beckbagan crossing, one sees a *pandal* for 'Durga Puja', with the idols of the Goddess with her children. Since it is *Shaptami*[137] morning one can see the *puja* going on with the *purohit*[138] chanting mantras. A little ahead along the road one sees that for the other community residing in the same locality there is also a sense of respect for the *puja* that is taking place. The shop keepers are enjoying a raise in their sales which is due to the fact that everyone is on a holiday and there is a common mood for celebration and merriment which in turn has led most people to go on a buying spree. The reason why the *puja* and this particular *pandal* requires a mention is because this road mainly has a Muslim population residing here; this becomes evident from the fact that this street alone has seven mosques. But despite having two religious communities living in such close proximity there was no tension in the air, which one would have assumed under any other conditions. The reason for the assumption was very apparent. A few buildings away from the *pandal* a temporary shed is built which has four to five cows tied in it. On making an inquiry it is found

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[137] It is the seventh and the most important day of the puja, it is the day all believers come and show their reverence to the Goddess and her offspring.

[138] The word means priest in Bengali.

out that the cows are being sold so that they can be sacrificed for Eid – Uz –Zoha[139] which is an important festival for the Muslims.

Pictue 4.13: The Puja On The Shaptami Morning

Pictue 4.14: Believers Waiting To Get Blessings From The Goddess

Place: Shamsadullah Street.

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[139] It is one of the most important festivals of the Muslims which happen on the eleventh month of the Islamic year, it happens on the last day of hajj. The idea behind this festival is to understand the importance of God and sacrifice all worldly desires, which is symbolically done by sacrificing an animal and then giving its meat to charity.

Pictue 4.15: The Illegal Market Bustling With Buyers All In The Mood For Merry Making

Pictue 4.16: A Makeshift Cowshed For Eid – Uz- Zoha Along The Road Speaks Volume Of The Pluralstic Ideals Of This Street

Place: Sahmsadullah Street

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On the right side of the road one can see a number of sellers selling their wares which ranges from fresh fishes, to vegetables, to chicken, to eggs etc. These sellers come every morning from nearby areas of the city and get down at the Park Circus Station and sit on the roadside and sell their wares. The market is illegal but by eleven o' clock the sellers and their wares are all gone. If one looks at the stores on the roadside then one sees that a number of eateries are open they are selling breakfast which ranges from *Puri and Aloo Dum*[140] to *Dalpuri* and *Nehari* or *Halwa Puri*[141] these places are called 'Chulloo Hotels' by the locals as they are not actually licensed hotels. Other than the hotels there are general stores ration stores and meat shops where beef is sold. Walking through this road one sees a different atmosphere a more relaxed pace of life unlike the purposeful strides that are seen on Park Street. A feeling of community can also be experienced where everyone knows one another and shares a sense of respect for the elders.

This part of the city looks like it never sleeps it is never tired and always on a holiday. With evening one sees the number of food stalls multiply four folds and people from all the houses come out to eat and enjoy. The food stall ranges from noodles and momos and soup to beef *kathi kabab rolls*, *kulfi*[142], *samosa*[143], *panteras*[144], different kinds of sweets and as the evening grows even dinner is sold in these restaurants the item can vary from chicken and beef *biryani*,[145] to beef *chaap*[146] or simple *dal* and

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[140] It is dish which comprises of breads that are deep fried and an extremely spicy curry made out of potatoes.

[141] It is a dish, where the breads are deep fried and are rolled up with halwa, which, is kind of a sweet dish mainly made with suji and then served.

[142] It is similar to an Indian version of ice – cream where milk, sugar, saffron and cardamom are used to make the liquid which after being frozen is served as kulfi.

[143] It is a snack where mashed potatoes with all kind of spices are stuffed inside a cover made out of flour and is then deep fried.

[144] It is similar to a spring roll, but the filling is mostly meat of any kind.

[145] Biryani is a Mughlai dish that comprises of rice and meat and is cooked by using special spices, saffron and milk and oil. In Bengal one finds a different kind of Biryani, where big pieces of potatoes are also added to the dish.

[146] It is a spicy beef preparation.

steamed rice. As one moves along the street one sees a lane that is called *Kafan Gali*[147] by the residents of this area as this lane has a number of stores that sells fabric for *Kafan*[148]. One of the owners of the oldest *Kafan* store in this area mentioned that,

> *"Dekhle mone hobe je ei area ta anek bodliye gechhe jodiyo ek deek theke sheta theek kintoo Jodi ashol bheet ta dekhben tahole bujhte parben je kichui bodlai ni, ei toh barobaro buiding er shathe ei chhoto chhoto khola bari o acche kintoo eder modhe kono bibaad nei bhai chara ekhono ache shobar proti ekta respect ache jat aar dharmo ki sheta keo beshi jor dae na ashole janen toh loke ra ager theke bhalo hoe geche lokeder modhe dharmer proti shrodhha aar Allah – r proti bhoe jegeche er karone aager moto maarpeeth aar gerkanooni kaj aar hoe na lokera aaro dharmic hoe utheche."*("It may seem that the area has changed even if it is true at one level it is still more or less the same at the core, that while there are buildings along with the slums the community feeling and respect for everyone despite their religion is still there and in fact the people have actually become better, they have become more religious and God fearing as a result of which of vandalism and illegal behaviour has actually gone down in this area.").

'Pluralism' as used by Gurpreet Mahajan[149] seems as an apt concept through which this area can only be explained. Despite being a locality where religion is strongly upheld and almost seems as something that is tangible and can be touched, both the communities are not at loggerheads with each other even if some of the tenets held by one religion oppose the belief of another; there seems to be no communal tension which actually stems from a syncretic way of life.

Impermanence Of Settings: The Park Circus Railway Station

At seven in the morning with one of the first trains pulling in the station the deserted platform of the Park Circus station comes alive bustling with commuters travelling from the suburbs to the city. Most of these commuters are vendors who sell their produce in the local market; the other passengers are mostly part time maids, students and office goers. As one stands at the platform one cannot help but feel the urgency

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[147] It means a lane where kafans are sold.

[148] It refers to cloth in which the body is draped before being buried in Muslims.

[149] Mahajan points out that pluralism is not a recent phenomenon, but has existed in India for a long time, it marks the co – presence of of different communities in a polity

and a sense of purpose in the stride of the people; an energy seems to be emanating from them and enveloping the entire station.

Pictue 4.17: The Front Stage Of The Setting – The Park Circus Railway Station

Pictue 4.18: As The First Set Of Commuters Get Of The Station All Hurrying To Get To Thier Destinations

Place: Park Circus Railway Station

The station is a small one comprising of two platforms adjacent to two railway tracks. On the two platforms one can find a number of stalls where people are found selling a number of commodities like lock and keys; a number of stalls are seen selling biscuits and chips and a closer look at these items would make one realise that while the packaging may resemble some of the leading brands of the world with the same font and colour the name of the products are not the same a change in the arrangement of the alphabets; makes it a different brand altogether, a number of stall also are seen selling breakfast – ranging from eggs and bread as well as *puri sabzi* – and are surrounded by commuters all having their breakfast before heading out to work.

As one stands on the overhead bridge and watches the wave of commuters leave the station one can finally becomes aware of the other aspects of the station. The first thing one observes about the station is the geographical space itself – the two stretches of railway tracks with their platforms are surrounded by a number of buildings. Most of these buildings seem to be incomplete, made out of only brick and mortar even though they all are at least eight to nine storeys high and have people residing in them. On asking one of the vendors who sells lock and keys at the station, it is found out that all these buildings are illegal and the only reason they look so desolate and incomplete on the outside is so that it fools the officials and ensures that the Kolkata Municipal Corporation does not tear it down. On one end of the platform there seems to be an array of colours, it seems to emanate the same vibrancy as a carnival children are found playing and enjoying themselves; on closer look though the picture completely changes – those vibrant colours takes the shape of thousands and thousands of plastic bags and the children who seem to be playing and enjoying there are found actually to be collecting those plastic bags which they go and sell at the nearest plant where these plastics are recycled to other products.

As the morning progresses and the frequency of the trains coming to the station decreases, and the people living in and around the station get up and start their daily lives, the station seems to acquire a completely different character and the meaning that is associated with the station itself completely changes. The platform as well as the railway tracks transforms into a local market, where people come and sell all kinds of products ranging from perishable items like vegetables, fruits, milk, fish and meat on one hand and on the other cheap plastic imitation jewellery as well as stolen

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items like clothes, shoes, bags, etc. Another thing worth mentioning is how even the microphones which are used to announce the schedule of the trains develops a new function. Instead of the train schedule heyt now play recorded *qawalis* and/or religious *Khutbas.* The transformation of the railway station itself reminds one of Erving Goffman's theory on Dramaturgy (1956) particularly to his reference to front stage and backstage and how none of the spaces are fixed; they are all temporary and the meaning that is attached to these spaces and the settings keep on changing.

Pictue 419: The Changing Meaning Of A Setting: Railway Station To Makeshift Market

Place: Park Circus Railway Station

As I walk out of the station with the other passengers and enquire about the station and the area surrounding it, a conversation starts with a lady. Her name is Durga[150] she is a part –time maid and has been working in this area for the past thirty years. On giving permission to walk with her and agreeing to provide information about the area she started walking but before leaving the platform she bowed her head to pray in front of a Sufi saint's shrine and said *"Ami ghutiyari shareef baba aar ei babar upor khub bishwash kori enara kono dine amae khali haathe ferod pathaan ni..." (*"I have utmost believe in the Ghutiyari Shareef's sufi saint and this baba they have never sent me back empty handed..."*).* We started walking out the station through a narrow path

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[150] The name of the respondent is changed to ensure her anonymity.

which was lined with buildings on either side; some of them stores and shops, others are entrances to buildings including that of a mosque.

Pictue 4.20: As The Day Progresses The Sleepy Street Transforms: Shutters Open And Small Eateries Selling Breakfast Become A Recurrent

Pictue 4.21: The Illegal Buildings Around The Railway Station A Recent Development In The Area

Place: Park Circus Railway Station

The streets which were so quiet in the early hours of the morning were now crowded and noisy most of the stores which had their shutters down were open for business and selling all kinds of food from *nehari*, *paya* and *dal puri*, *halwa puri,* noodles, bread and egg, and of course tea. In the midst of all this Durga started talking about her life. She said,

> *"Ami praye thireesh batchor dhore Kolkata shahore ashchi kaj korte, ami ei cantonment e thaki amar bor ekjon goreeb chashi chhilo, denadarer kache onek taka nae kintoo shodh korte na pere athyohothya kore... takhon nijer charte bachhar much dekhe kaj korte barir bayre berote hoe... parar baki mohilara ei parae kaj korte ashto toh oder shathe ami o chole ashi ekhon ami paanch ta ghore kaaj kori tar modhe duto ghore toh thireesh batchorer motoi achhi... jibon cholei jaye."* ("I have been working for the past thirty years in this city I live in the cantonment area and commute every day. My late husband was a very poor farmer, he had borrowed money from the moneylenders and when he couldn't repay his loan he committed suicide. I looked at my four children and realised that I had no other option but to look for work. Other women in my neighbourhood used to come to the city to work, they gave me the suggestion to do so. Today I work in five houses and out of these five, I have been working in two of these household for nearly thirty years.").

As she talked about her past, she crossed the busy street surrounding the station and took a by lane surrounded by buildings which are mostly in a dilapidated state and a weird smells seemed to hang in the air. Durga pointed out that the smell actually comes from the nearby leather tanneries where the leather is treated. As she continued to walk toward her destination she answered questions about the Park Circus Railway station,

> *"Station taake abar notun kore toiri kora hoechhe aage khoob nongra chhilo daralei mone hoto bomi kore di ekhon toh onek porishkar, ekta baro ghar dekhle na she ta aage chhilo na... kintu she khane amra keoo jaee na... okane oi ki bole neshar jineesh bikri hoe shob ganja khor ra boshe thake jodi okhane gele tahole bujhei nao je chhintai hobe... stationer ei ashe pashe jato baro baro bari dekhle shob ei kichu bachor aage hoe che aage puro phaka chhilo shudhoo oi kabrostaan er dewal ta chhilo ei dokaan pati shob kichhu notun hoechhe ei shaath aathh bachhorer modhe."* ("The station has been rebuilt, earlier it was very dirty you couldn't stand there without vomiting now it is much better, much cleaner. Did you see that big shed that is also recently constructed it wasn't there

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initially... but we generally don't go there... drugs are sold there and you will find addicts sitting there all the time if you do go here then be assured that you will get mugged... the buildings that you saw around the station are all new, earlier all that space was empty the only boundary was the one with the Kabrostan even the stores that you see are all new they have come up in the last seven to eight years".).

As Durga continued to walk towards the *Char Nombor Pool* she went on to talk about her employers and it was found out that all the households that she worked in were Muslim households. When asked if she was aware of the fact that all her employers were Muslim or was it a coincidence she said,

> *"Haa ami jani ami ichha kore Musulman barite kaj kori oder parob aar amader parob onno onno na tai tahole amra chhuti korle oder kono kasto hoe na aar oder parober dine amrao ashte pari... Ei padae jato meyera kaj korte ashe tara beshi bhag –ee – Hindu aar shob Muslim meyera Tollygunjer Hindu bari te kaj korte jae."* ("Yes I am aware, I have intentionally decided to work in these households. It is because we celebrate different festivals, so when it is our festival and we need to take a few days off our employers don't have a problem and when it is their festival we can come and work as well... Most of the girls who work here are all Hindus and all the Muslim girls go and work in all the Hindu households in Tollygunge[151].").

On being asked if she doesn't have a problem on working in these houses during Eid - Uz - Zoha she replied, *"Na era bojhe je amra kichhu kaj korte parbo na to amader bolei na."* ("No they realise that there are certain work which we can't do so they don't even ask us to do it."). As she turned right one saw that we had reached Durga's destination, the small lane opening at the crossing of the *char nombor pool,* was lined with three nursing homes and a crowd of visitors were gathered in front of all these nursing home Durga manoeuvred around them and said that now she had to go as she was getting late.

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[151] A street in the city of Kolkata.

Where Human Relations Triumph Over Commodity Fetishism: Park Circus Market

The Park Circus Market is the only sanctioned market by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation in this area. The market is as busy at seven in the morning as it is at six in the evening with people coming in their cars or riding on hand pulled rickshaws and are seen doing their weekly shopping. What becomes apparent in this market is that class divide which one generally assumes to be associated with places like these does not really operate. All the customers whether rich or poor, are treated with the same attention and respect.

If one has to describe this market, the easiest way to do it would probably be by looking at the market as a number of concentric circles. The outer circle consists of mostly hawkers selling their wares in little makeshift shops. The produce sold by these vendors is as varied as one can think of, ranging from all kinds of vegetables – seasonal, local and sometime imported. Along with vegetables fruits of all kind are also sold. A number of chemist stores advertising discounted prices are also some of the shops that are there on the outer circle facing the road. On the other side of the road breakfast is sold; the breakfast is mainly consumed by office goers are *Puri Aloo – r – torkari* and *Panthua*[152] for sweets along with tea. The stationary store is also crowded by children buying pens, chart papers or refills on questioning it was found out that most of them were having their puja vacations and were actually working on their project works. Most people were also seen buying *khoi,*[153] jaggery[154] and *nokul dana*[155] so that they could give it as offering to the Gods.

The market area itself is surrounded by four *puja pandals* one can listen to music being played in all these *pandals,* music ranging from the latest Bollywood and

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[152] It is a sweet made from deep frying a ball made out of milk and flour and then soaking it in sugar syrup.

[153] It is made when flattened rice is heated.

[154] Juice from date trees when cooked and cooled become are called jaggery.

[155] It is a sweet made from powdered sugar and is given as offerings to and from Gods.

Tollywood[156] motion pictures to the various classical traditions as well. The glee of the festive season can be seen on everyone's faces; it can even be heard in the form of bargaining tactics used by both the sellers and the buyers, where the sellers point out that it is the *pujas* and so they need extra money for their family whereas the buyers mention that because it is the *pujas* they should get a discount.

As one moves into the market, the stores again appear to be forming a circle. This circle consists of mostly non - perishable goods or goods with long shelf lives as well as processed goods. Along with these general stores one can also find oil being sold straight from the refinery as well as local bakeries selling their bread, biscuits and cakes. Small shops selling local cosmetics and costume jewellery are also a part of this ring of stores. Women are seen crowding around these stores doing their last minute shopping for the *pujas* as well as Eid – Uz – Zoha. Women were buying *hena* cones, glass bangles, vermillion and *alta*[157] for their feet; some stores also sell toys, most of them are cheap imitations of branded toys. Shops selling fabric are also over crowded as women and men are buying either last minute gifts for their relatives or buying something for themselves. A woman complained that she has to buy her *dupatta*[158] now as her tailor lost her piece of garment and now she can't seem to find the same coloured fabric. There seems to be a complete chaos in all these stores where both the customers and store keepers are screaming to be heard above the overall noise.

The other shops in this circle are a shoe store which sells local factory-made rubber slippers and plastic shoes for kids. Also, a number of flower shops displaying their array of flowers can be seen and people buying them either as bouquets or as garlands so that they can be given as offerings to their Gods or to a Sufi Saint whose shrine is right opposite to the market and is maintained by the shopkeepers themselves. A major proportion of the flowers are used by the temple situated inside the market place itself. On the other side of the circle are a number of vegetable sellers but unlike the vegetable sellers selling outside they are not hawkers but have permission from

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[156] The film industry in Bengal is called that.

[157] It is a red coloured dye used to paint on the palms of one's hand and feet.

[158] It is along piece of garment used as a scarf mostly by women.

the municipality to run their stores in these sections and even pay rent. The vegetables sold here are as varied as one could imagine catering to all the sections of the area; one can see different kinds of green leafy vegetables to baby corn or mushrooms and even sea weeds. There is even a small store which sells earthen pots, statues of Hindu deities and piggy banks made out of clay.

Pictue 4.22: The Market Buzzing From The Energy Of The Last Minute Shoppers

Pictue 4.23: The Outer Circle With It's Non – Perishable Goods

Place: Park Circus Market

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Pictue 4.24: The Vegetable Section With It's Varied Produce And Loyal Customers

Pictue 4.25: A Section Of The Last Concentric Circle: The Fish Market With It's Varied Range Of Seafood, Resting All Debates Regarding A Bengali's Love For Fish

Place: ParkCircus Market

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The last concentric circle consists of shops which sells animal products. Divided into four sections, one section sells all the varieties of fish that one could imagine from different kinds of catfishes, to all kinds of carps and of course all the variety of sea fishes. In the assortment of these various kinds of fishes, shrimps, prawns, lobsters and crabs are also sold along with squids and a variety of mollusc. On observing this section, and the buzz that one sees that is generated here from the crowd buying all kinds of fishes, seems to justify the notion that is associated with Bengalis and their love for fish. The next section of the market sells poultry and other fowls; here again one observes a large crowd the reason being, it is the holidays and everyone wants to buy good food and enjoy it with their family. Some people pointed out that the reason why they were buying so much meat was because they were going to cook it for Eid – Uz – Zoha, while others mentioned that they would have guests over. The last two sections sold red meat – one section sold beef and mutton and the other section sold pork.   To respect the religious beliefs of the customers this is the only part in the market where there is an actual wall separating the two sections. Most of the shops selling beef are closed. When asked, one of the shop keepers replied that since Eid – Uz – Zoha is around the corner most of the shopkeepers who are also butchers by profession go back to their native places, so that they can earn more money by helping in sacrificing the animal. He also mentioned that most of his customers here, also sacrifice animals and therefore do get some amount of meat as a result of which, they don't buy red meat and so the shops remain closed for a while. When asked why is it that his shop is still open he said it is to cater the needs of some of his non - Muslim patrons.

If one has to observe this market only through a particular lens: as an institution with a particular structure and a place where commodities are sold and bought, then one would miss a very important element about this place which at some level probably makes it special. Here one can see that Marx's assumption on commodity fetishism,[159]

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[159]Karl Marx describes commodity fetishism as a feature of the capitalist society, where actors themselves forget that it is their labour that has created the object and that it is their labour which gives it its value they start seeing it as something that is outside of them and instead they start to think that the value of the commodity rises from its inherent natural properties or out of the impersonal market operations. Hence the market takes on a function in the eyes of the actors that should actually be

about relations between individuals being reduced to the act of buying and selling a commodity does not really hold true. Here the obsession with owning a commodity has not taken over the human aspect of one's life, the feeling of a community and the personal touch in this act of buying and selling can be observed. It can be seen in the conversation between a shop keeper and his customer, where the shopkeeper asks, *"Toh apnar shoreer kemon achhe aager bar jakhon apni eshechhilen takhon khub roga lagchhilen, chintai chhilen bujhi?..."* ("How are you feeling now the last time you came here you looked thin and unwell, were you under a lot of stress?..".) To which the customer replied,

> *" Arre aar bolben na Girin babu aaj kal kar baccha ra ki aar kotha shone ja ichhe tai kore amar chhele tao omni ekta apodartho ki mone holo chakri chhere ekhon byapsha korbe bolche... tai chintai or ma aar amar abostha kharaap."* ("Don't even talk about it Girin babu God knows what is wrong with this generation they don't seem to listen to anyone they do only what they think is right my son also falls in this category, the imbecile quit his job and now wants to start his own business that's why his mother and I are both under a lot of stress.").

There was another aspect in the act of buying and selling which would again make one wonder over the validity of the argument about money gaining primacy and the driving factor in every aspect of one's life including relationships. This question arose on observing a conversation between a shopkeeper and a customer, where the customer after collecting his buys told the shopkeeper, *"Shankor da Ja taka baki roilo porer bar eshe diye jabo."* ("Shankor da, whatever money that I owe you I will come

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performed by the actors themselves that is the production of value, in Marx's words, "A definite social relation between men... assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things". (Marx 1867/1967: 72).

This in turn leads granting a sense of reality to commodities and the market and a simultaneous loss of control over commodity and the market by the actor.

"The commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in its social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour, because the relations of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour". (Marx 1867/1967:72).

and give it to you the next time") to which the shopkeeper replied *"Apnar kach theke kono din taka chechhi jan porer bar diye deben"* ("Have I ever bothered you about the bill it's all right you can clear the rest of the bill later"). What was unusual about this transaction was not the fact that the shopkeeper gave credit to his customers but the fact that he did not write it down in any piece of paper. When he was asked how does he remember the exact amount, he very casually replied that he doesn't. The next question that was asked to him was how does he know that he won't be cheated. He replied

" bhorsha, ta chhara aar ki, ami ei dokan ta prae cholleesh batchhor dhore chalachhi aar uni amar dokane prae kuri pochheesh batchor theke aashchen onno kono dokan janna amar dokane jodi onar proyojoner jineesh na o thake tobe o uni aar kothao theke kenen na opekha koren amar dokane jokhon ota chole ashe takhon ekhan thekei niye jan.. Toh hote pare je uni majhe majhe bhule dosh beesh taka kom dilen sheta kono boro byapar na. Boro byapar ta holo shamporkho ta, ei bhorsha aar kritogota ta." ("Trust what else is there, other than that I have been running this store for almost forty years and he has been coming to my store twenty, twenty - five years he doesn't go to any other shop always comes to my store even if sometime I don't have an item that he needs he doesn't buy it from somewhere else he waits for my stock to arrive and then comes and buys it from here, so what if once or twice he forgets and gives me ten or twenty rupees less that is not important. What is important is this relationship that we have one that is based on trust and loyalty".)

Pictue 4.26: The Only Meat Store Open Prior To Eid – Uz – Zoha

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Pictue 4.27: A Conversation Which Proves The Absence Of Commodity Fetishism

Place: Park Cicus Market

One can also observe a personal element in the way the buyers and sellers addressed each other where older men irrespective of their role in the market were addressed as *kaku*[160] or *dada*[161] the younger boys were called *baba*[162] and *dadu*[163] with affection. Similarly the older women were called *kakima*[164] and *mashima*[165] where as the younger women were called *didi*[166] and *boudi*[167] as well as *bhabi* [168]and *apa*[169]. Another observation worth mentioning is the fact that there is an absence of class

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[160] It means uncle and it is a kinship term used to call one's father's brother.

[161] It means older brother.

[162] A term of endearment used to call children.

[163] It is a term of endearment used to call out children.

[164] A term used to call father's brother's wife.

[165] A kinship term used to call mother's sister.

[166] A kinship term used to call one's elder sister.

[167] A kinship term used to call one's brother's wife.

[168] A kinship term used to call one's brother's wife.

[169]A kinship term used to call one's elder sister

markers and therefore hierarchies that one would associate with it, here all the customers and patrons are treated in a similar fashion and it is not due to the fact that this market caters to only a particular socio - economic group which becomes evident if one just looks at the chauffer driven luxury cars that are parked on the road in front of the market.

Love Thy Neighbour: Circus Avenue, Theatre Road and Meher Ali Road

These three streets best represent the feeling of a community, which is seen to operate through the various societies that function in these areas. If one was supposed to observe this area during the weekdays it would appear as if these streets are no different than the ones that can be seen around the globe – the people here with their own sets of problems all busy in their own routines – going to work, going to school, going to market to buy groceries. It would appear that these streets have nothing unique or worth mentioning about them. But here is where it could be misleading. While these streets may seem ordinary to others, for the people who are living here, it portrays a feeling of solidarity, of togetherness because of the various non - governmental and charitable organisations that are run by the residents of the street themselves.

Pictue 4.28: One Of The Unique Charitable Organisations Working In The Area
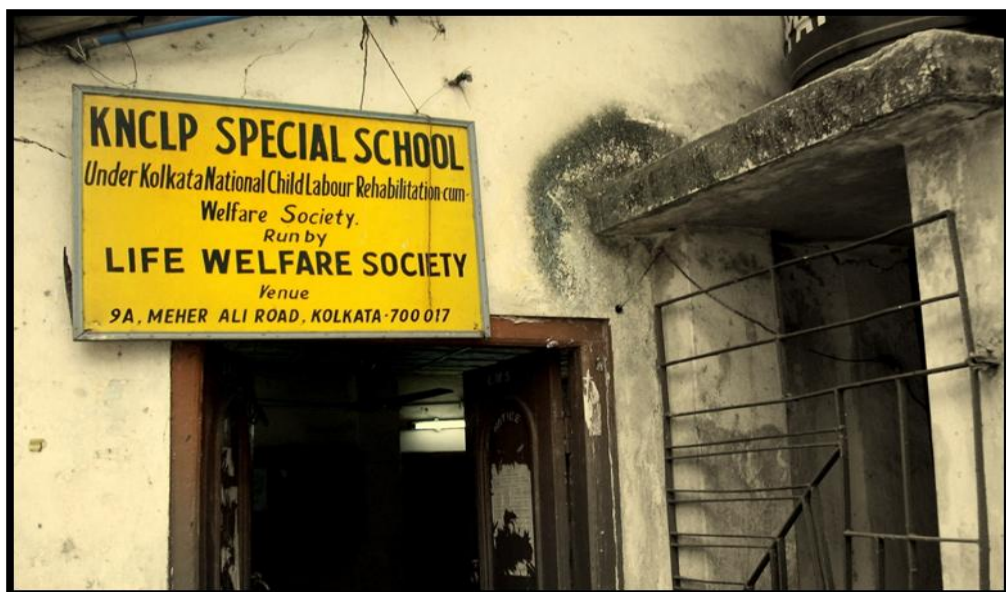
Place: Meher Ali Road

These Welfare Societies are an integral part of these localities as they ensure that everyone in these localities are connected to each other and stand next to each other in their times of need. To ensure that the principle of brotherhood exists among the people, these societies organise a number of events so that the members of these streets can all come together and participate in them. The events can range from drawing competition or elocution competition for the children, to programmes during Independence Day and Republic Day or celebrations during the 'Durga Puja', 'Saraswati Puja' and 'Kali Puja'[170] as well as 'Eid Milan',[171] an '*Iftar*[172]Party' and a 'Christmas Party' as well. But the thing that actually brings the residents together is the charitable work that they do over the weekends, which includes giving food to the needy, or warm clothes during winters and most importantly it is the medical camp that is set up every weekend and where people get free medical diagnosis and treatment from some of the best doctors of the city. The Secretary of the Life Welfare Society which mainly works in the Meher Ali Road mentioned about the various activities that they perform,

> "We provide care to the needy, every weekend we have doctors who come here to give free medical advice we have general physicians, E.N.T. specialists, an oncologist a cardiologist and even a child specialist who come here and check on our patients and even they do it pro bono; since some of the patients are uncomfortable with allopathic medicine we even have a homeopathic doctor who comes in and treats patients. We give free medicines to those who can't afford it, we also give out free spectacles to those who need it, but I think our most important contribution so far has been the fact that we could introduce a drive where we provide free vaccines for infants and young children... As you can see most of the people living in this area are not so well to do and don't even have proper sanitation facilities so they are more prone to diseases so recently we have started this programme where we are teaching the people the importance of hygiene. We even run a school for the children in this area, it is an evening school as most of the children work during the day along with it we have a night school

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[170] It is a puja done in order to show reverence to Goddess Kali. Pictue 4.4:

[171] On the day of Eid – Ul – Fitr when people celebrate it is called Eid Milan.

[172] During the month of Ramadan, when people break their fast the food that is given to them is called iftar.

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to provide basic literacy to the adult residents. All this work is actually done by the residents of the area themselves from making posters to telling people about the various programmes; it is all done by our neighbours. The idea behind this kind of work is twofold, one it helps us keep in touch with each other and second it allows us to give back to the society by doing a bit more than just writing a cheque... I guess we can say that it promotes the teaching of 'love thy neighbour'."

Pictue 4.29: Acting On The Teachings Of' 'Love Thy Neighbour' A Resident Of The Area Provides Frre Eye Consultation

Place: Meher Ali Road

Through the various organisations of these three streets one sees how the loneliness that is usually associated with cities that generally comes from anonymity is counter attacked and the notion of fraternity which is associated with a rural commune life is thriving in an urban space. It is remarkable even more because as late as the Sixties these areas were known to be very communally sensitive and incidents of people from both the religions leaving this area and migrating to the other part of the city was a common phenomenon. Such an instance which occurred in the 1964 riots is mentioned even today of how a Muslim man who was very respected in the locality lived in this area, on that fateful day of October, was coming from his duty as a captain in a government oil vessel and was attacked by the mob who were standing in front of his house and somehow managed to escape. The next day he and his family packed their bags and left the area and migrated to another part of the city which was inhabited only by members of his own community. Therefore it won't seem wrong for

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one to say that the way these streets have turned around in their attitude and behaviour is nothing but remarkable.

The Hidden Reality

The picture that one draws from the above observations would lead one to conclude that Kolkata and Park Circus may have actually moved beyond the religious divide, that the term 'Mini – Pakistan' that was used for this particular space is a thing of the past, something that was by gone, that people had actually achieved a degree of universalism with regard to their religion. But, as one knows and learns, reality is never what it seems and a closer look at the same space proves just that. To show how communalism operates in this area, this section will be divided into two parts each focusing on a particular question the answer to which will become evident by observing the same streets and the same people. The questions are – is there religious polarisation in this area? and; has it led to an assertion of Muslim identity?

The answer to the first question of religious polarisation becomes evident when one looks at the cliques who were out celebrating the puja, at the Park Circus Maidan as well as at the Seven Point Crossing. One saw huge crowds but what was common in almost all of the groups in the crowd was that they were all single religious cliques, where people, even friends, who were out there were mainly from one religion. They were all either Hindus or Muslims, and when asked to a group of friends who might have been in their twenties about why is it that they were all from the same religion, one of them replied, "It was because it was their festival..." When asked if they had any Muslim friends, they all said yes however they also mentioned that they didn't think that their friends from other religion would come so they didn't even feel the need to ask them.

A similar scene was seen at the eateries, where people were again divided into single religious units; it was easy to distinguish these groups on the basis of their religion and surprisingly again the same principle was seen as operating as all the responses from both the Hindus and the Muslims were along the same line of religion, where one group mentioned that they didn't think that their Muslim friends would come as it was not their religion and so they didn't ask them, and the other groups pointed out that it was Hindus' festival so they weren't participating in it.

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However, an ugly manifestation of this feeling of religious difference was seen operating in an incident at 'Zeeshan'. Since there was a shortage of space the management had asked two groups to share a big table, to which one of the groups refused. After moving a little away from the other group, one of the members a man in his forties, commented to his party, *"Oi nongra Saala Musulmander shaathe ke khaabe, Ei aajke pujo kore ma er darshon kore oder shaathe chhi chhi..."* ("Who is going to eat with those dirty Muslims and of all days today right after we have offered our prayers and after getting our blessings from Ma chhi chhi...").

A very peculiar principle operates behind this religious polarisation. Though it has its core in two phenomenon functioning in the psyche of the majoritarian population and while most of the time it is very well hidden as is seen in the above sections of the chapter, there are moments when slippages do occur, like the statement made by that *'bhadrolok'* about sharing the same dining space with a Muslim family. These two phenomena are – hatred associated with the Muslim community and fear and anxiety regarding the community which transpires into fear and anxiety regarding this particular area.

This fear of the other becomes apparent during a conversation with a group of girls who very casually inform me, while talking about coming to this place, "Generally we don't come here at night. Our parents get really scared if we are in this area after dark, it is not safe here you know..." When asked why, they said,

> "Arre these Muslim boys are so cheap all of them are these loafers this place is
> only like this, you just feel scared even if you are walking in a group... Now the
> situation is different you know there are so many police around so we feel safe,
> we know that these Muslims can't do anything to us..."

This sense of fear of the other has an additional consequence; it leads to perpetuation of certain stereotypes, in this case of the animality of the Muslim men with their high sex drive and lack of respect for women, but most importantly of the stereotype of these men kidnapping and harassing Hindu women. It is these stereotypes themselves that act as catalyst to the hatred towards the community which in turn is reflected in prejudicial behaviour like refusal to share the same table with the "impure Muslim"

on a holy day. This finally leads to polarisation between two religions, as is the case in this area.

Two other indicators of this phenomenon of religious polarisation is seen in the spaces that are occupied by people. While the above sections do mention about localities in this area with a mixed population, a closer look brings out a very important aspect about the occupation of the space all those areas which have a mixed population are actually at the borders or periphery of the area being called 'Mini – Pakistan'. A view of the map alone is sufficient to explain the phenomenon; this idea of brotherhood then seems like a hoax as the area which is at the hub of this place has mostly if not only a Muslim population.

The second indicator regarding space can be understood with reference to admission to a particular space, in this case it was the entry into Quest Mall. On the days of 'Eid – Uz – Zoha' and 'Muharram' this luxury mall was closed and the reason given was to celebrate the festivals; it seemed rather odd that sinceon the days of 'Durga Puja' the mall was open and the reason given was also to celebrate the festival. This kind of behaviour makes one question about the secular fabric of the place because the only thing that can be seen is religious polarisation.

The answer to the second question regarding the assertion of Muslim identity also is affirmed when one observes the same space. Since this assertion hasn't transformed into a full-fledged phenomenon like the Hindutva movement in other parts of the country, it would be very easy to overlook it. However a closer and a more critical look will prove beyond a shadow of doubt that there is an assertion among the Muslims in the community. This act of assertion was seen in a number of ways ranging from certain incidents that were observed during the study or certain minute changes in the social institutions operating in this area. An elaboration of these examples would prove the case at hand and is as follows –

An instance like this was on a Friday during the *Jummah ki Jamaat*, when a major road in this area was blocked; there was no legal reasons for it in fact it wasn't even sanctioned by the traffic police and was done simply because it was a Friday and supposedly there wasn't enough space in the mosque so the congregation had moved on to the road to say their prayers. This was a relatively new phenomenon; while

speaking to a traffic sergeant it was found out that this process of blocking a road and saying the *namaaz* on the road was a weekly affair but had started only in the last two or three years. When asked why the police didn't do anything about it, the sergeant said that they are given orders from their senior officers to not do anything as it wass assumed that it may lead to a tense situation.

Another such act which can be seen as an act of assertion was observed on two separate occasions, once on a Friday and the other was on 'Eid –Uz –Zoha' on the 6th of October 2014. On both these occasions it was found that most Muslim men who were driving a motorbike weren't paying in attention to traffic safety rules and hence were not wearing a helmet; in fact almost all of them were wearing their skull caps. When asked why was it that they weren't following safety rules and wearing their skull caps, a twenty - five year old lawyer, replied

> "No one ever asks a Sikh to wear a helmet they can wear their turban every day, why is it that when once in a while we wear our religious clothes on special occasions we are asked to wear a helmet, even we would like people to know that we are Muslims once in a while and let them know it is our festival we are celebrating.".

Pictue 4.30: The Mosque On A Friday

Pictue 4.31: After The Friday Prayers

Place: Seven Point Crossing

Also a recent phenomenon was seeing school children particularly girls wearing the head scarves with their uniforms. Some of these girls would even wear a pant or a payjama under their school uniforms While talking to a class three student from a convent school in the area it was found out that there were many girls in her school who came dressed like that and once they entered the school premises they would open the head scarf and or the trousers and wear them again before leaving the school. On further talking to the child and asking her if she knew why she wore it she immediately answered,

> "Oh it is because I am a Muslim and in our religion we are suppose to dress like
> this, when I get older I will wear the burkha...".

When asked if she likes wearing it or if she feels different from her friends, she said that at times she feels different and especially feels bad because when she goes out no one can see her pretty rubber bands or hair bands but she knows that she is suppose to wear the scarf otherwise she would be punished and made to go to hell.

Other indicators of the assertion of Muslim identity were more subtle but equally vital in understanding the reality. One such indicator has been the mushrooming stores in

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the area, selling religious texts and other books on how to lead a life like a good Muslim. There has also been an increase in the number of boutiques selling burqas. In the past three years there have been eight boutiques which have come up all catering to a certain section's need for burkha and the number of stores selling religious books has also increased four times in the last two years. On speaking to one of the book store owners it was found out that these stores not only kept the Quran but that they also had a collection of books on the prophet's life, on how to say the *namaaz*, how to live one's daily life. There were even books for children where Islam's teachings were imparted through various pop-up books. There were even small cut outs made which mentioned what *surah*[173] or *aayat*[174] to read while doing certain functions like leaving the home or entering it, driving, before going to bed, etc;

The store owner was also asked about the number of people who come to their store and he mentioned that his store is rather busy throughout the year and how more often than not he has to order some book because its stok gets over very fast. When asked why he thinks that suddenly there is this unexpected growth in the number of people wanting to know about Islam he said,

> *"Yeh toh acchi baat hain, lekin malum asal baat kya hain abhi humare kaum ke logo ko pata lag raha hain ki agar aap Allah ka haath nahin pakrenge toh aap ka kuch nahin ho sakta... Aur phir yeh bhi toh dekhiye log aaj kal apne deen ke baare mein janna chahte hain, pehle nahin jaante thhe toh log jo kehte the wahi maanle te thhe. Isiliye na jab America ne bola ki saare Musulman terrorist hain humme se koi kuchh bol paya kyu ki hume khud nahin mallum tha ki Islam hain kya. Lekin aaj waqt badal raha hain, yehi Park Circus ko hi le lijiye abhi yahan ke Musulman finally jag rahe hain."* ("This is a good thing, but let me tell you the truth people from our community are finally realising that if they don't take Allah's hand then there is no salvation for them... And also see this that people want to know about their religion, when initially they didn't know they would believe whatever everyone else would say. That is why when America said that all Muslims are terrorists no one from our community could say anything because we ourselves didn't know about our religion. However times are changing now,

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[173] Surah is a hymn of the Holy Quran.

[174] A verse of the Quran is called an aayat.

look at the Park Circus area itself the Muslims in this area are finally awakening.").

Pictue 4.32: One Of The Many Relgious Book Stores That Has Mushroomed In The Area In The Last Few years

Place: Park Street Crossing

Another unique and recent phenomenon which symbolised the assertion of Muslim identity is this growth of schools with a religious bend; these schools are not Madarsas, but rather these schools have a unique blend of curriculum where they are taught all the subjects that are prescribed under the education board of the country and they also have compulsory special courses where not just the Quran but other Islamic teachings are also taught to the students. These schools also have a uniform which emphasises the Muslim aspect of one's identity where boys are supposed to wear skullcaps and girls have to take up the *hijab*, even their breaks are according to the timings of the *namaaz*. One such school is the 'Gibreel[175] International School'; while talking to one of the teachers of this school it was found that most of these children have to give two sets of exams and their holidays are also according to the Islamic calendar, that is why the school is closed on Fridays and Saturdays instead of Saturdays and Sundays, so that the students don't miss the Friday prayers and the holidays are around the month of 'Ramadan' and around 'Eid –Uz – Zoha'.

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[175] Angel Gabriel in Arabic is called Gibreel.

A similar kind of development has been with the growth of weekend Islamic schools in this area. These schools cater to those children who don't go to schools like the one mentioned above to ensure that they get a holistic understanding of their religion. These schools that are being run, they also do more than just teach a child how to read a Quran; there are special classes allotted different times of the day where a particular aspect of Islam is explained to the children. One of the members of the foundation that run such a school explained the purpose behind opening such a school. She said,

> "When we were growing up we were just taught the basic just how to read the Quran. We weren't even told the meaning of what it is we were learning, it was a rote system of learning and the worst part was that we were doing it in a language we didn't understand, today we have schools like this across some of the major cities in this country and one of the main reasons why we have started such schools is so that the children know about their *deen*.[176] Know about Islam and when they read the Quran they should read it with their meaning, so that these children when they grow up know about Islam and what it is to be a Muslim and be comfortable if not proud of this aspect of their character."

A similar organisation working for the older generation can be seen in the numerous *jamaats* that operate in the area; these weekly jamaats are increasing not just in number but also in size where Muslim men and women go to learn more about their religion and about their religious identity. While most of the women's *jamaats* take place on the weekdays and during the day while the men's *jamaats* mainly take place on the weekends or at nights. A member of one such *jamaat* mentioned,

> *"Pehle toh itte log nahin aate the, per ab aisa ho gaya hain ki bethne ki bhi jagah nahin hoti. Jo thore buzoork hain woh beth the hain aur hum aur baki chhoti chhoti larkiyan jo hain khari rehti hain, dekh ke achha bhi lagta hain ki itt chhoti umar se yeh Allah aur Islam ke baare mein jaan rahi hain."* (Initially not many people use to come, but now the situation is such that you don't get a place to sit. Those who are elderly they sit and us and other really young girls stand, it feels good to see girls at such young age are getting to know about Allah and about Islam.").

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[176] It is a word used to denote the religious life or religion.

Through the above mentioned instances as well as recent developments in the psyche of the Muslim population it becomes clear that there is sense of growing Muslim identity, as well as a desire to assert it.

CONCLUSION

As the relations and the workings of this area unfolds it becomes clearer and clearer that universalism, pluralism and cosmopolitan attitude that is seen here is all a farce; what people actually believe in is religious polarisation; what they actually see is a Mini - Pakistan and this is creating a sense of assertion among the Muslims residing here, who have also started to see themselves only as Muslims and have started to understand their religion and show their religious identity. While no one really uses the term Pakistan or Mini – Pakistan to describe this place but the adjectives and stereotypes that are used to describe a Muslim area, a Pakistan are all used here. This also brings out another facet of communalism in Bengal, that instead of being all out in the open it is more hidden and nuanced and only makes a peek through the cracks when the facade of universalism slips.

A more detailed understanding of what is this Muslim identity is shaping up to be will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

ASSERTION OF MUSLIM IDENTITY: AN ACT OF AGGRESSION OR INNER REFLECTION?

INTRODUCTION

By the end of the previous chapter we see that contrary to the popular image about Kolkata and Bengal – regarding it being free of communal tensions – there is actually a religious polarisation in the city which is also reflected in the area that is the focus of this research. While this tension does not appear or manifest itself in a more obvious and overt manner, it does show or reveal itself in certain hidden or latent undercurrents of the social fabric that operate in this area. The best way to explain the previous chapter is probably by quoting Dipankar Gupta, who uses Jackie Assayag's (2004) concept, and observes that,

> "the much talked of coexistence between Hindus and Muslims is really an outcome of 'antagonistic tolerance' rather than warm feelings of brotherhood. Violence is under the surface and the socialisation is all about how to live in the presence of violence. Obviously, there is violence of the perpetrators and that which the victim suffers, and the two are not the same and they are both negotiating with violence from different vantage points. In a clinical sense, they are both implicated in violence though it is only one side that suffers the most. At the end of the day, a new normal emerges, and with it a new negotiated boundary between communities that may differ in significant ways from the earlier one that has been disrupted." (Gupta 2011: 4-5).

If we then use this argument that Dipannkar Gupta (2011) puts forward then we can say that the social relations in Park Circus also operate under the purview of antagonistic tolerance and the 'new normal' which has been constructed is based on the hidden violence, and forms a new negotiated boundary, which in popular discourse is being represented as secularism.

In the previous chapter we do show how these tensions appear and the way they are infused in the reality of all those who reside here and by doing so, we answer question

of, if there is religious polarisation in the city and also if there is an assertion of Muslim identity in the city. These two findings will operate as the backdrop or the foundation on which this chapter stands and tries to shed some light on the other research questions which were mentioned in the beginning of the dissertation. To find the answers to the earlier mentioned questions, this chapter will focus on thirteen narratives that were collected for this particular research by taking face to face in-depth interviews of the respondents. The aim is to find certain patterns from these narratives which in turn will provide a better understanding to the changing dynamics of Muslim identity in the area concerned.

As mentioned earlier, the term Muslim identity is used here to denote two aspects of a community – one, it explains the community along the religious lines, where those who believe in Islam and practice it in their daily lives and second, drawing from the fist one, as a political category. The five main tenets or pillars of Islam act as a major connecting thread in the formation of Muslim identity and remain constant, irrespective of either geographical, ethnic, racial or gender differences these are – *shahada,* that is the belief that there is only one God, *Allah* and no other God and his Prophet is Mohammad (p.b.u.h.); the second pillar of Islam is *salat* which means to pray or offer *namaz*; the third pillar is *sawm* which basically refers to fasting during the month of ramadan; the fourth pillar is *zakat* which is to give charity to poor and is *wajib* which means applicable for those who are financially and economically well off and fifth, is *hajj* which is the holy pilgrimage to Mecca also is only *wajib* on those who can afford it.

Since Islam as a religion has certain rules that affects the every day working of its believers it leads to the visibility of practising Muslims in the public sphere as well; these rules are mainly associated with their appearance – where a man is supposed to wear a skull cap and it is also considered 'sunnat' to sport a beard, the women are suppose to take up the *hijab* or the veil; or with the kind of food they eat – they are only allowed to eat or drink those items which are deemed *halal* in the Quran; even certain kinds of businesses or jobs are not done by the Muslims because it goes against the ethos of Islam. It is these reasons that make a religious community a political category, which is the second aspect of Muslim identity as observed in this dissertation.

Muslim identity was a major of political debate in the twentieth century and continues to be so even today and this debate has taken centre stage both at a global as well as at the national level. Both these debates reduce Muslim identity or Muslims to nothing more than a group of people with no other identity other than their religion's and also emphasise that as a group they only give primacy to their religion. This flawed understanding is then further used against them to show that because of this they can't coexist with other communities, that is, at a global level they are seen as an extremely violent civilisation that is against all other civilisations but particularly against the West, and at the national level as a group who give primacy to pan Islamism over their country, and therefore, are Pakistani spies and hence are never to be trusted.

The national discourse regarding Muslims and Muslm identity is a bit more complex than the one at the global level because of the duration of ineraction and proximity between the communities, but along with the above mentioned image about Muslims there are others as well, the Muslim identity here is viewed as a villainous being out to destroy the motherland along with its rightful children the Hindus.

This chapter will be divided into two parts – the first will be sub divided into seven major themes that will help us analyse the findings from the narratives of the respondents their sense of reality as well as their understanding of what it means to be a Muslim, which is actually the key source of data in this chapter. The next section of the chapter will be the conclusion where one would see if all the questions that the research had put up have finally been answered.

EMPIRICAL AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL

This section of the chapter will try to find the patterns that have emerged through the narratives which is the focal point of this section of the study, and divide these patterns into major themes to see if they all come together to form a picture and provide a clear understanding of Muslim identity that is emerging in the city of Kolkata.

Assertion Of Religious Identity: Counter Hegemony To The Prevalent Culture

When walking down the street or looking at the way people talk or dress in the city one notices that there are certain aspects of a person that is considered to be 'normal.'[177] This idea of normal may be associated with the way people dress in a certain way, where the men are generally in western attires or in *dhoti and kurta*[178] while the women are dressed in either what their Western counterparts wear or the traditional *sari*[179] or *salwar kameez;*[180]the married women also do carry the religious markers that are symbols of being a *suhagan*[181] – the *sindoor*[182], *mangal sutra*[183] and the *shakha* and *pola.*[184] Even the language that is spoken in the daily affairs of the people have the usage of certain words which has its roots in the Sanskrit or the Devanagri script and the usage of these words in the common parlance is considered as something given and not questioned. No one seems to think that it is odd that most of these activities of the people and something as run of the mill as one's apparel and language has elements of a particular religion, in a city which has supposedly freed itself from the shackles of religion and has no bias towards any community. The reason why all of this is considered 'normal' and not questioned is because it is a part of the hegemonic culture that is operating in the city.

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[177] As something that is not to be questioned or taken for granted.

[178] The dhoti and kurta is traditional garment worn by mostly Hindu men.

[179] The sari is a traditional piece of garment worn by Hindu women, it is a long piece of garment measuring around five and a half meters that is draped around the body.

[180] Salwar Kameez is attire worn by women.

[181] Suhagan is a term used to describe those women who are married.

[182] It is a marker of a married Hindu women, it is vermillion.

[183] This is also worn by Hindu married women, it is a neck piece worn which is made up of black and golden beads.

[184] Shakha and Pola are bangles that are mostly worn by Bengali women after their marriage.

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Antonio Gramsci drawing from Karl Marx's[185] work and carrying it forward talks about cultural hegemony and uses it to address the relation that is there between culture and power and how it operates in capitalism, if one observes the dynamics of the city, one would find the same principles of hegemony operating. But before explaining this argument any further it is important to explain what Gramsci meant by cultural hegemony. Even though he did not provide any definition as such, what can be used as the closest substitute is his most often quoted characterization of hegemony as –

> "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its positions and function in the world of production."(Gramsci 1971:12).

If one looks at the definition provided by Gramsci then it becomes extremely clear why is it that the behaviour of the dominant religious group is considered normal because they not only control most of the modes of production but that they have also prestige attached to their symbols; by using the majoritarian narrative of the freedom struggle and the nationalist movement they have deemed themselves as the rightful torch bearers of culture. So they not only define what is considered as the acceptable culture but also ensure that in the process project themselves as the protectors of this culture.

In this atmosphere of cultural hegemony, if one then places or looks at the Muslim community and their engagement with their religion and its impact on their life as well as their interaction with the social world, assertion of their own culture and identity can be seen as a response to the dominant culture; it can be seen as counter hegemony by the oppressed group. Counter hegemony basically means that the oppressed class translates the stance that is embedded in their experiences into a conception of the world which in turn directly challenges the hegemonic culture.

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[185] Karl Marx uses the concept of base and superstructure to explain the relation between the mode of production and the prevalent culture which in turn is influenced by and influences the base.

But before one delves into this notion of counter hegemony any further and see how it is seen to operate in the findings of this research, one explanation must be given which in turn would clarify the environment that was prevalent in the city as well as the area being studied for so long – why was there an absence of a counter hegemony among the oppressed who in this case are the Muslims in the city. Gramsci (1971) points out that the oppressed group have their own sense of reality, and their own sense of the world as well, and even though it may be in an embryonic stage of conception, it does exist, but this group also has to adhere or adopt conceptions which are not its own but are borrowed from another group and is sort of imposed on them, as a result what happens is that the 'man - in - the - mass' actually ends up having two theoretical consciousness or 'one contradictory consciousness' one, which is implicit in his reality and actually unites him with other members of his community and the other one is something that is imposed on him, described by Gramsci (1971) as the –

> "superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the discretion of will, without varying efficacity but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of the consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity."(Gramsci 1971: 326-327).

By giving our attention to the quote above, we realise why is it that the Muslim community did not assert its identity prior to the present moment as they themselves were trying to break free from the hegemonic culture but since it was inherent in them, ingrained in their consciousness, they found it difficult to completely negate it or didn't even question it because they assumed that the hegemonic culture was their culture as well. This can be explained by pointing out how the idea was that the dominant culture in Kolkata was the Bengali Culture and not the Hindu Culture another reason for this assumption was that because there was a Communist Party in power so religious elements would not enter the public domain.

Another reason why counter hegemony becomes difficult to create, is because as Gramsci (1971) points out that the ruling groups do not just maintain their cultural

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hegemony by showing that their domination has an aura of moral authority which they ensure by creating symbols and by perpetuation of legitimising symbols, they also seek to win the consent and approval of those groups which they dominate over in that existing social order[186].

We now see in all the thirteen respondents a desire or a drive to also provide a place for their cultural beliefs and their identity; now that they have realised that their culture does not form a part of the hegemonic culture and their experiences are different, they have now begun to assert themselves and their reality as a response, as the counter hegemonic culture. This realization that their culture is different from others becomes very apparent in one of the respondents' argument.When talking about how as a religious community they are different from other communities and that they should not forget that because the other communities don't, she talks about this while referring to what she feels about Muslim identity

> "Someone would want to flaunt his or her thing you know... like someone is a pilot or someone is a Miss World she would love to show off her tag. That is because you are proud of that but you are not proud of your own identity. There is identity crisis among the Muslims at the moment specially the youth, because at one place their home they are being taught about Islam, they are being taught to live their life a certain way I will talk for example only about the girls, I mean they are talked about the importance of hijab, you have to do this and you don't have to go partying, I am just giving you an example and then when they go out then they have this problem where people are telling them to celebrate and do all that, for example celebrating Christmas when it is not even your festival I mean I don't even understand the concept why go crazy over Christmas I mean you won't find any Christian celebrating Eid."

Another pattern which emerges and can probably be explained again by using Gramsci's idea of the intelligentsia. Gramsci points out that there will be a certain section within the suppressed group who will act as the vanguard and protect as well as ensure the continuance of the struggle to ensure that the counter hegemonic culture fulfils its desired purpose and unite the oppressed group. We see a similar pattern emerging in our narratives where we find that all those who have a higher level of

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[186] Gramsci implied in his work that there was actually an active commitment to the established order which was actually based on deeply - rooted belief that the rulers are actually legitimate

educational qualification also show a higher level of awareness about Islam, their religious identity as well as the problem the community is facing. To prove this point excerpts from two respondents' interview would be used. One is of a fifty year old female respondent who has no formal education and earns her living by teaching the Quran to children from her neighbouring slums on the other hand the other excepts is from a twenty-two year old male respondent who is currenty pursuing his post graduate degree in mass communication from an institute in Pune. The excerpts are divided into two categories, one dealing with awareness regarding the religion and second regarding the problems as a community they have to face.

> "Islam is very simple... so following it alo becomes very simple... Number one, tawheed, the belief in one God, simple, Now the most Important thing abut Islam is ok all religion actually is the concept of God, so why one God, we know why one God. So I think evey human being in the world be it a Muslim or a Hindu or belong to any religion by culture or by caste first has to understand who is your lord your creater who has created you, so that question is very important and it should pinch you, you should want to know who your creater is once you know who your creater is then it is very easy to worship him then you know who you are worshipping and so you are worshipping the true God. So the tenet of Islam is of course monotheism, but you should also know who your God is and who you are worshipping and what he stands for.... Ok so I pray five times a day, then there is *roza*, so you fast for thirty days duringthe month of *Ramadan* and you can also do *nafil roza*. Its basically the five pillers of Islam so *salah*, *sabra* – being patient is very important and there is your *tawheed*."

> "Yes one is aware of certain events that are happening around the world where Islam is looked down upon it is seen as backward and mostly as something bad."

> *"Oi hum namaz padrteh hain. Koran pardteh hain aur pardhateh hain. Iss se zyada hum ko pata nahin kyu ki hum padhe likhe nahin hain na isliye. Koran mein kitna mane hain agar hum pardteh toh hum ko pata hota, Urdu medium school mein toh pardhata hain na... woh sub toh humko kuchh nahin malum. Bas apna namaaz padrhteh hain... Ha bas yeh pata hain ke Musulman ko sachhi baat bolna chahiye apna iman theek rakhna chahiye, yeh sab kayam rakhna chahiye. Jhooth nahin bolna chahiye, namaz ka paband hona chhiye, namaz chhodna nahin chahiye yeh sab humlog ke mazhab mein hain yehi par hum khade hain."*

> *"Iske bare mein hum ko kucch pata nahin hain Aafreen ghar mein admi nahin hain toh humlog ko kaun ya bata ta. Sirf yeh malum hain Aafreen ki yeh shor*

araha tha ki Babri Masjid ko tod diya jayega aur Hindu log uska upar kabza karna chahta tha... Hum ko sirf yehi malum tha jo jiska masjid hain woh samajh lega.. matlab Allah pak... Matlab yeh Allah ki masjid hain toh Allah sambhal kar rakhenge aur kis ka takath nahin hain jo usko koi todhe... aaj bhi dekho woh aisa hain." ("I say the namaz. I have read the Koran and teach it. But I don't know more than that because I don't know how to read or write.There are so many meanings in the verses of the Koran that I don't know if I had studied in an Urdu medium school I would have known the meanings of the verses. I just say my namaz... Yes but I do know that a Muslim is suppose to speak the truth, must keep his faith it is important that all this is maintained. Should not lie, must say the namaz, should never stop saying it, these are the tenets of my religion and that's what I practice."

"I don't know any thing about it Aafreen, actually there are no men in the house so who will tell us anything. The only thing that we did know Aafreen that there was a lot of noise that the Babri Masjid will be destroyed and the Hindus will take over the land... the only thing that I knew is that it is Allah's mosque so he will protect it and no power will be able to go against his bidding... Look even today the mosque is standing.").

So if we look at the above mentioned excerpts, then we see that with education there is also awareness and that there is a section within the Muslim community mostly from the younger generation, who are more aware about reality; they are operating as the intelligentsia for their religious community.

Another group which is also doing the same work as the intelligentsia are a number of organisations like the weekend Islamic school, the Madarsas[187] and the *Jamaats*[188] which are increasing in number on a daily basis and are creating awareness among the Muslims about what is their religion and what do they stand for.

An additional pattern which was seen in all the respondents was that they were now aware and had realised that their culture and lived reality was different from the other community and they no longer wanted to compromise on it. When asked how would they balance between the principles that were operating in the public domain and their religious belief they all said that Islam and their religious identity would gain

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[187] They are religious schools where the teachings of Islam are preached and taught.

[188] Religious meetings where the teachings of the prophet and the Quran are discussed.

supremacy. The answer from a sixty - one year old lawyer highlights this aspect of their belief rather clearly,

"Eta beliefer byapar na eta ekta ayiin aar ei ayiin er bayre toh keo jete paare na ar ki. Toh 1988 aar ki aami biye korechhilam aar ki aar amar biyer card e lekha chhilo aar ki je 'no presents are allowed but your blessings will be highly appreciated' aar jakhon aami amar biyer nemontonno korte gelam toh shobai ke biyer card er shaathe shaathe bole o elam je amar biye teh apnake kichu aante hobe na... Aar bollam je Jodi apnader karor ei jineesh ta pachondo na hoe tahole theek ache apnake aashte hobe na kintu presents aami accept korbo na. Dekha gelo aar ki, maane raat barotar shamoe shob shesh hobar por... ami dekhlam maane, dekha gelo aar ki, je teen teh box rakha geche aar ki tar modhe theke ekta chhilo ekta gold er earring, aar ekta dekhe monehochhilo je ekta piece hobe aar ekta dekhe mone hochhilo je ota ekta flask. Toh je oi kaaner shona ta jeta chhilo sheta amar bou er colleague –era diyechhilo aar ki toh aami taderke ekta chithi likhe bollam je apnar gift ta accept korlam aar ei jonne na je ota expensive bole aar ki karon ota amar bouke apnara bhalo beshe diyecchen, kintu aami jakhon apna kichhu mana korlam to bhabben je ota ekta adorshogoto byapar aami ekhane kono hotel khuli ni aar ki, aami apnader dekechhilam amar khushi teh ek hote aar nijer bhalo kamona dite aar ki. Ei jonne na je apnara ekhane khaben bole apnake kichu dite hobe aar ki, ebong er pichhone Islamic jukti o aache aar ki karon Rasool- Allah (S.A.W) bibi Fatema – r biye teh karor kach theke kichui nai ni shobai ke shudhoo khejur khaiyechhilen uporuktoh tar jamai ke ekta tarbari debar jonno Hazrat Osman Alir kaach theke dhaar niyechhilen jeta poroborti kale Allahr – nobi ke uni muaf korechhilen. Toh amar toh shikha maane amar shob kichu aar ki Allah, tar Quran aar taar Rasool theke, toh ekta jineesh aar ki aami amar life theke realise korechhi aar ki that to be a Good Muslim you have to be unsocial or anti – social to some extent." ("It is not a belief it is a rule and no one can disobey these rules. In 1988 when I got married I had written in all the wedding cards, 'no presents are allowed but your blessings will be highly apprectiated' and even when I had gone to invite the people I had specifically told them not to get any presents and that I would not accept them. By midnight after the reception party was over, there were three boxes that were kept, out of which one was a pair of gold earrings the other two gifts were a piece of fabric and a flask. The pair of gold earrings was from my wife's colleaugues. So I wrote them a letter, where I said that I do accept your gift but not because it is expensive but because you gave it to my wife with love, but do realise that when I have told you not to get it, it was because I believe in something it is my principle. I invited you all because I wanted you to be a part of my happiness and joy I didn't open a

hotel. It wasn't a place where you would come and eat and then give something back in return. In fact there is an Islamic argument behind it also.When Rasool – Allah (S.A.W.) was getting his daughter bibi Fatema married he didn't take anything from anyone and just gave dates to eat at his daughter's wedding, he actually had to take loan from Hazrat Osman Ali so that he could gift a sword to his son - in - law if the prophet did that and I follow all the principle and rules of Islam in all the aspects of my life. Actually you know you have to be unsocial or anti – social to some degree if you have to be a good Muslim.")

"You have to be unsocial keno?" (Why do you have to be unsocial?)

"Jemon akikah[189], akikah kono onushthaan- i chole na aar ki. Toh ora oi anushthaan raakhbe aar ki aar apna ke khaiye daiye pathiye debe aar ki, aar jerokhom aaj kaler culture tumi kichhu na niye abar jeteo parbe na. Emni amar shaathe hoechhilo aar aami shei loktake boleo chhilam aar ki je apni akikah korte paaren aar niyom ashole hochhe je apni mangsho kete loker bari diye dewa, na ki ranna kore khawa aar ranna kore o khawale kichhu na niye jawa. Toh uni amae invite – i korlen na, aami o bhablam je bhalo holo ekta paap kaaj theke aami bachlam keno kono paap kaaje shoreekh hole o apni paapi hon.

Jemni amar ekta attiyo chhilo je challisma korchhilo aar challisma[190] Islam e haaram achhe aar ki maane aar jakhon aami take mana korlam takhon she amar kotha aar shunlo naa aar ki eteh amar ki holo kichui na... emni anek cases aache aar ki."("For example take akikah, this festival isn't there in Islam. But they will invite you to the occasion and feed you, and you can't even go empty handed to these occasions. Something like this happened to me also, I had told that person that you can do akikah but the rules are that you are just suppose to distribute the meat and not cook and feed it to people and even if you do the idea of getting gifts is not there. So he didn't invite me only and even I thought that I was saved from a wrongful deed.

In another instance I had a relative who was doing a challisma, now challisma is Haram in Islam and when I told him so he didn't believe me, but it didn't affect me at all... there are many cases like this.").

Even though Gramsci's construction of cultural hegemony and counter hegemony is a vital theoretical ground to understand how reality operates in a city like Kolkata and

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[189] It means name keeping ceremony.

[190] After someone's death on the fortieth day there is an occasion, it is similar to a wake.

that there is a struggle from below by the Muslim community to create its own niche, one can't deny that Gramsci had class in his mind while creating such a structure and the group in question is a religious one. So even though these respondents do share certain elements of their lived reality, it isn't identical for all of them; even though they have a common religion they are divided by their class, gender and even caste and therefore would have different needs and wants and so demand different things. However, what is fascinating is that in the current situation they are all operating as a single unit where their collective religious identity supercedes all their other identities. So the question now that needs to be asked is whether this change in the attitude of the people to view themselves as a single group, who are fighting for a collective goal continue, or would the differences of class, gender and caste overpower this feeling of Islamic brotherhood.

The Metamorphosis Of Islam: From A Religion To The Way Of Life

Before moving ahead and talking about the different patterns that emerged from the narratives it is important to make an observation regarding religion, actually regarding the role religion plays among the Muslims of Park Circus. Religion for them has acquired new meaning it as entered in all the domains of their life. For all of them in fact it has become a way of life, the only way of life. An excerpt by a dentist who is also a *Jamaati*[191] will probably illuminate how important religion has become for them. When asked what tenets of his religion he follows, he replied by saying –

> *"Jathota paari thatho ta follow korbar cheshta kori shab toh aar jani na to oi Namaz aar ja ja achhe in fact namaz porai kintu shudhoo Islam ke follow kora na. Islam is not only restricted to that amar khawa o kintu amar dharmo, amar showa tao kintu amar dharmo, ebong amar pechhab payekhana tao kintu aami dharmo, aar byabsha banijyo keo aami dharmor i bhethorei kori, karon ei shobi will take me to jannat ebong aar aamake aamar dactari teh jodi honestyr shaathe kouke exploit na kore take ei na bole je tomr ei hoe gechhe tomar oi hoe gechhe tumi omukh koro tamukh koro faltu kotha bole exploit kora eta toh Islam-e nei I mean this is not religion. Toh aami jathota pari Islam theke niye maane jaateh aami honest thakteh pari aar theek thakteh pari. Aar shob niye cholbar cheshta kori though it is not possible for me to follow everything I am not that type of a pious*

[191] A Jamaati is someone who attends Islamic religious meets regularly, which are called jamaats.

man, kintu jathokhani pari aami cheshta kori follow korbar I am a not a hundred
person follower I mean nobody is." ("I try to follow as much as I can, I say the namaz, but only saying the namaz is not enough, Islam is not just restricted to namaz, the way I eat is my religion, the way I sleep is also my religion even the way I defecate also depends on my religion, even th eway I do my business will also be within my religion because all of these things will take me to *jannat*. And, even the way I practice my medicine the way I treat my patients with honesty and not exploit anyone, without telling him that this is wrong with you or that is without saying rubbish and exploiting the man this is not there in Islam I mean this is not religion. So I try to follow whatever I can and how much I can from Islam. I try to follow all it's principles but it is not possible for me to follow everything I am not a pious man, but I still try I am not a hundred percent follower I mean nobody is.").

If we look at the excerpt then we realise that religion instead of being a part of their life has come to represent their whole life. The three dimensions that can be observed in the narratives of all the respondents and when put together best explains the characteristics of the religion that has developed in this part of the city, the three dimensions can be best explained by using Durkheim (1912/1995) Weber (2009) and ethnomethodology[192].

Islam for all the respondents is working like the collective conscience as it binds all the people together it brings all those who follow the religion on a same platform and make them realise that they are all together. Durkheim defined the collective conscience as -

> "The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience... It is thus, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can be realized only through them."
> (Durkheim 1912/1995: 79 – 80).

He also pointed out that this collective conscience has certain specific features which in turn give it a moral character; they are – it being external, constraining and having

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[192] It is the study of the body of common sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations [the methods] by means of which the ordinary members of the society make sense or find their way about, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

a general character. This element of how Islam is operating as a collective conscience is represented in two aspects of the respondents' narrative. One when they talked about what Islam meant for them, the moral character that it had acquired which in turn led to the refusal of the respondents to let go of any aspect of their religion as it has achieved a status where it cannot be questioned or compromised with. The second aspect emerged when they talked about what they expect from the future generation most of them only focused on the future generation of Muslims thereby demarcating themselves as a group having a solidarity of their own.

Max Weber's construction of social actions as being mutually exclusive seem to collapse when one looks at the way these respondents manoeuvre through their life where they bring in religion in not just the traditional activities but also in their legal and rational actions.

Before explaining how this collapse of social action occurs and the boundary between rationality and irrationality vanishes, it becomes crucial to explain what Weber meant by all the four types of social action. The reason for doing so is because the contradictory principles which Weber uses for the categories of rational and traditional social action don't hold true when one looks at the conduct of these respondents.

Instrumentally rational (relation to a goal) action is determined by the expectations as to the behaviour of the objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are then used as conditions or means for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends. Actions are instrumentally rational, when the ends, the means and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to end and of the relative importance of different possible ends.

Traditional action is carried out under the influence of customs and habits. It includes the great bulk of work that is mostly carried out by people in their everyday action to which they become habitually accustomed. In this type of action, meanings are derived from ideas and symbols which do not have the coherent defined forms of those which are actually pursued in value rationality.

The respondents seem to have developed a rationale for their religion which manifests itself through all their actions even something as instrumental like casting one's vote is done by using the principles of their religious belief and this does not mean that they vote along the lines of religion but that they actually look for those parties who according to them adhere or represent the ideals of their religion. A male respondent said,

"Jehetu aami Islam ke shob kichhu teh maanar cheshta kori, aar ki, aar Islam in its pure form aar ki maane utmost aar ki follow korbar cheshta kori toh aami Islam er sheta abar amar political chinta dharae o follow kori aar ki, aar oitaar link hocche aar ki aar communist aar ki toh aami communism e bishhaash kori. Aami mone praane communist kintu aami oi C.P.I.(M) aar C.P.I. – e jaai naa aar ki karon aami jemni aageyi bolechhi je aami ekta puritan aar ki, toh ei kotha ta beshi bhaag Marxist are Communist ra jaane aar ki je Karl Marx er je guru chhilo aar ki maane Hegels. Hegels chhilo oi shamoyer ekta peer waliallah type – er lok maane ki ekta religious type of lok chhilo aar ki, toh ei kotha ta hoe toh anekei jaane na kintu Allah –r ei Kuran aar ki prathom onubadh hoechhilo ar ki maane prathom translated hoechhilo aar ki kintu German language e. Toh prathom baar German language e Quran onubadh hoe aar ki, aar takhon kar shamoe Berlin University teh kintu comparative study teh Quran poraano hotoh aar ki. Toh ei je Hegels ei Comparative study teh Quran pore ebong Islamer ei je shammobaadh naye aar ei shammobaader ekta modified version hochhe Marxbadhi aar ki ekhane difference hochhe je era rituals maane na aar ki natoh tah chhara sixty percent jineesh oder mile jaye aar ki. Anekera bhabe je Communist re dharmo maane na bhagobaan maane na kintu Jodi apni Marxbaad aashole pore dekhben takhon apni dekhte parben je okhane lekha aache je jekhane jekhane bhagobaaner naame ishworer naame full mawtobaadh aache aar ki maane bhabun kono raja kono anyae korlo aar bole dilo je aami na bhagobaan korechhe ba aami hochhi bhagobaaner protineedhi tai kintu sheta toh actually noe.

Karl Marx jakhon koshto pelo aar ki takhoni she bole uthlo aar ki je 'what is the presence of God in the human beings?' aar ki toh ei je bishwash je manusher bhetore bhagobaan aache aar tahole she ei prashno kore uthlo je Jodi tai hoe aar ki tahole she amar upor otyachaar keno korchhe aar ki. Toh tai jonno era hoetoh bhagobaan Ke maane na aar Allah ke maane na aar etai oder parthokko Islam theke. Era kintoo ashole manob premi aar etai hochhe oder dharmo je ora

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manushder o tader bhalo kea age gurutto dae aar Jodi sheta apni dekhen tahole dekhte parben aar ki je Islam o tai kotha bole Islam o bole je manush ke bhalo bashteh. Maane ekta lok bhukha thakbe aar tomar kache taka thakle tumi take debe na shudhho nijer laabher kotha bhaabe sheta toh Islam kono deen bole na aar Marxism o tai bole. Maane dekhle mone hobe je dutoe anek parthokko aache aar ki kintu aashole dujoner theme ekki aar ki." ("Since I try to follow Islam and I try to follow it in its purest form, so my political belief is also influenced by the tenets of Islam. I try to find the link and I see it, I am a Communist I mean I believe in Communism. In my heart and soul I believe in Communism but I don't believe in that C.P.I.(M) and C.P.I. division. As I have said before I am a puritan. So most Communists or Marxists don't know this but Karl Marx's teacher Hegel was like a saint, he was a religious person. I mean a lot of people may not know this but Allah's Quran was first translated to German and it was taught at the Berlin University under comparative study. Hegel in this comparative studies read the Quran and took this idea of equality, and this modified version of equality is Marxism, one difference that is there is that they don't follow rituals otherwise sixty percent of the things are the same. A lot of people say that Communists don't believe in religion or don't believe in God, but if you read the texts on Marxism then you will actually see, that it is written that wherever in the name of God there is tyranny, I mean imagine any king does something wrong and says that it's not me but God who had done it as I am his representative then it is wrong and that is not true also.

It was only when Karl Marx was suffering that he said, 'What is the presence of God in the human beings?'He basically questioned the belief of the presence of God in human beings, because he asked if God resides in man then 'why is it that I am being tortured by man.'So may be that is why he doesn't believe in God or Allah. That is the only difference, other than that there is no other difference from Islam. They actually love mankind and that is their true religion, they give importance to the good in man, which if you see clearly is said in Islam as well. I mean there will be someone who will be hungry and even if you have money you won't help that person, you will think only about your own gain, this is not what Islam stands for and Marxism also believes in the same. It may seem that there are many differences between the two but really they actually have the same theme".)

The third way we see religion operating is at the micro level between a relation and belief of a believer and God. All the respondents show reflexive action[193]when talking

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[193] Much of the human interaction is reflexive in nature, as human beings interpret information, gestures as well as words in a way that sustains a particular vision of reality.

about their religion whether they see it in their current situation or in their belief for their future generation or whether they see it as their salvation. What has been used as an example to explain reflexive action about the believers and their faith in religion is that if they pray and perform rituals to ask for something from God and when their wishes do come true, they thank God but when their wishes don't come true they still don't let go of their belief in God; instead they pray even harder and perform more rituals and blame themselves and believe that something was done wrong on their part, but never question the existence or their faith in God; they always believe in a higher super power and continue to perform prayers and rituals without upsetting the normal pattern of things.To explain this aspect of their belief about Islam a respondent's answer to what she thought of the current political situation or if she had any anxiety will be the most appropriate example,

> "I don't react... I really don't because it comes from the strict belief that I have
> about my religion and my maker that even if we are under pressure and even if
> people are trying to throw us out no one will be able to throw us out if Allah does
> not permit and Allah is the only ne who protects us and gives us food and no one
> else does. So I really don't care who is in power or what they will do to us..."

Previous Generation's Habitus Present Generation's Field

Another major pattern that emerges from analysing all the narratives is that the respondents from the age group of twenty-two to thirty-five are more aware of their religious beliefs and   teaching as compared to the respondents who are above the age of fifty. A major reason found was the way they grew up in their home when those who are much older talked about their family or what it was like growing up. Most of them mentioned how the environment in their house was very cosmopolitan and they never really had any problems where religious belief was concerned and that their family was not really 'conservative or orthodox' in nature. An excerpt which probably best explains this is from a narrative of a doctor who resides and practices in Park Circus.

> "I was born and brought up in this city and earlier I lived in Chandni Chowk[194]
> and we were living in a building which had a very cosmopolitan atmosphere. On

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[194] It is a name of a locality in Kolkata.

both sides of our flats there were these two aunties who lived there one is from... both are Christian but one is an Anglo – Indian but the other one was a South Indian. During our education time we lived together there was also a Muslim family there, a Keralait[195] Muslim family and we all lived together like one big family and the atmosphere was very cosmopolitan there. We didn't really have that many Hindu families living there just one but they also were there with us we all lived like a family and we enjoyed this situation it was very very good."

But when the same question was asked to all those who are from the younger age group they all mentioned how when they were growing up Islam teachings was given a lot of importance, wherein they were all growing up in an environment where the rest of the family was strongly rooted in their religious practices and Islam was more than just a religion for them; it was a way of life, something that they were growing up with and so had inculcated most of the practices of their religion from a very young age. So what was a choice for the previous generation of Muslims became a rule and the only sense of reality for the current generation of Muslims. This trend becomes evident in most of the narratives of the respondents but the excerpt by a twenty- two year old engineering student probably sums it up most eloquently, who says –

"I have changed my location a lot my father converted at the age of twenty - seven, he was an atheist even though he was from a Muslim family. He didn't believe in God initially but when he found God he left everything he even left his family who were in life insurance and Islam is against interest and he couldn't you know... I mean he felt he couldn't take or consume his father's money so he left everything he had, he is an aeronautical engineer so he had his job and he had his own house and when he left his house he sold all his goods because he thought that maybe he bought some of those things from the interest money. He lived on only his income. Whatever little he had and took a flat on rent in Dum Dum and that is how he started growing and that's the place where I was born. I was too young to have any memories of that place. Then I came to a locality near *Topsia* because that was the only place we could afford since my father had to start from scratch, that locality was mostly of Muslims, it had many Muslims living there, so near my house there was a mosque so we used to go there... So my parents because of the drastic change they had after their marriage, they always taught me why religion? Why Islam? And why God?... The importance of God, the

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[195] People from Kerala, actual term is Malayali.

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importance of life and the meaning of life, so for me since childhood Islam was what they were... Islam was never about what they said but what they were doing how they were behaving.

My father used to pray five times a day he would get up early in the morning and go to the Mosque and so I would pray five times a day I would follow whatever it is that he would do. If we are talking about growing up in a Muslim society then I would say that for me he was the Muslim society and so was my mother, there was no one else around me because Topsia is a factory area, so mostly people around there are businessmen who have their own factories and their big bungalows there one generally next to the factory or someplace so none of them prayed in the morning most of them hardly prayed only very few, only some of the people would come from the slums to do their prayers. At the age of seven my mother started sending me to the mosque also saying that you should at least go there and start praying there... I mean she told me to just to go there and start praying to God. It was not forced but more of a conditional thing where my parents made me do from childhood to connect with God. Ok so this was my experience till class five and then I moved into a completely different scenario I was no longer in a Muslim society, now the situation was very different. My mother also had a gradual change she didn't change as drastically as my father so she was not wearing any veil initially and she would dress whatever way she would and slowly slowly now even she had changed. We now lived in an apartment building in Ballygunge with ninety - nine flats and there were no Muslims we were the only Muslim family there. Now what happened there was, there again it was my family and not me but my family that was representing Islam there. Allah was very kind and we were given a lot of respect and were treated with a lot of honour, there was a mosque there also and I would go and pray there myself and all the security guards knew me and I would go there... but whatever I did it was very rigid, very mechanical whatever I was doing was not because I knew about Allah or I had found my religion I did it because my parents told me to and they were my world and my society so I did whatever they told me and doing it as a part of my culture and even though I had friends there none of them would ask me anything because they would also pray to their Gods and so would I and we never really had any issues as such except for when it was Holi.

What happened in Holi was first year I played, no problem because that was my first year and I in't know what was happening my parents were also seeing it for the first time I mean they also encountered something like that so they let me play but a few days later they told me ' Ali try to avoid it, don't support such things because what happens is you are a representative of Islam tomorrow later,

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somedays later when someone can come up to you and ask you Ali if you knew Islam is correct...' Ok at this point I was learning about Islam at that time, 'If you knew Islam was correct then why did you support I mean why did you let me do this? So just to make your point clear, just to stand out, just make them think... make them think about you why didn't he play with us, why didn't he play with us... So that they question you don't be a part of them, give them an opportunity to ask you and question you...' That is why my parents said that you should not play Holi.

So now I started getting bombarded with question with my friend asking *'kya hua?' 'Arre yeh toh kuch nahin bas masti hain...'* Now it so also happened that some of the boys fro other locality would also come to play and they were also Muslims and they would also tell me, *'Arre hum bhi toh khelte hain kuchh nahin hota chalo bas...'* and they would also tell me arre we are so liberal why are you so conservative it is stereotyped... So I told them that I don't play because of this reason... I mean initially holi was played for reasons because at that time harvest use to come out but now what they have done is that they have made it a religious festival and it has to do with idol worship I mean the whole Holika and other Gods that they worship... So I feel if it ws only to do with the harvest I would be a part of it too but because it has something to do with your religion and that if I play than I am worshipping this Goddess that is why I abstain from it and I want to make my point clear that for me Allah is my God and that is why I am abstaining from your Holi. Diwali also I used to be a part of but now I don't.

We then moved to another Complex here and the whole complex has no Muslims, there is a mosque next to my house but initially it was a very small one and only labourers come and pray there during the day, but with Allah's grace now that mosque has turned into a four stroreys building. So this is my life so far... my Muslim thing..."

This finding seemed like an enigma. Initially one may wonder how is it that a generation before there was an inclination to focus on the cosmopolitan elements of society. Whereas the generation today which according to most thinkers have actually moved beyond religion there is actually an assertion of religion and religious identity. But after a closer look it is clear that this pattern can be explained if one uses the concept of habitus and field as used by Bourdieu and the answer becomes very simple. Simply put, the previous generation's habitus actually has become the field for the current generation of Muslim youth, as a result of which they are actually more religious and assertive of their identity than their parents' generation. So the current

generation did not really choose their identity they were born into it whereas the older respondents took a conscious decision to portray the markers of their religious identity. A detailed explanation of this argument is as follows.

Bourdieu (1994) defines habitus as a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a "structured and structuring structure" (Bourdieu 1994: 170). It is structured by one's past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is "structuring"in that one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a "structure" in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned. This "structure" comprises a system of dispositions[196] which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu 1990: 53).

If we then look at this aspect then we see that the older generation were actually the catalyst who brought a change in the social structure of the area; it was they who changed the structures of the society. They were the one who actually ensured that an assertion along the religious lines would be possible. Their children in turn were already born into a field where religion had gained supremacy and because there is a relation between the field and the habitus whereby one influences and is influenced by the other, the religious element of their life became the most pivotal aspect of their identity.

 But this would have only been possible if a particular idea of the field operates. In this case, the most appropriate is the notion of the field used by Pierre Bourdieu when talking about a science fiction force field. These fields are constructed by erecting barriers and making a distinction of what happens on the outside and what goes on inside. The barriers that are constructed is designed to protect all those who are inside, who in turn constitute little self contained worlds of their own, their own spaceships. The activities that take place within these ships follow their own regular and ordered patterns which in turn provide a sense of predictability in the ship without which there

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[196] Disposition is a crucial idea for Pierre Bourdieu because it brings together the idea of structure and tendency. His definition of it is that it expresses the first result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination.

is a possibility of anarchy spreading within the ship. The fictional ship that Bourdieu talks about has a hierarchical structure, where not everyone is equal, and there are some people who are dominant and who have decision - making powers about how the ship (the social world) will function.

We see a similar model operating in all the families of the younger respondents where the family and the house acts as the fictional ship where the teachings of Islam are practised and it is the same teaching which acts as a force field and ensures safety for them; just as there is a hierarchical structure in the ship so also, the same element operates in the family as is evident in some of the cases where these young respondents were initially forced to take up markers of their identity but later they realised that it was for their own good. This realisation would probably happen as a result of the interaction of the habitus and the field.

Language as an Assertion of Identity

This theme provides a unique change in the lifestyle of the people of Kolkata – one it talks about the usage of language as a source of asserting one's religious identity, and second, it marks another change a decline in one's usage of Bengali language.

Of the thirteen respondents, only three spoke in Bengali, which seems like a paradox that in a state like Bengal, where Bengali language and culture was given more importance than religion the role seems to have reversed. Bengalis as a community have always been proud of their language which acted as a bridge for the different religious communities residing there, it was Bengali language that made Kazi Nazrul Islam, Micheal Modhushudon Dutta and Rabindranath Tagore the heroes of Bengali literature and was loved and liked by all those who were from Bengal. Even after the partition of 1947 one could hear Nazrul's poetry and songs in this side of Bengal and one should mention that Tagore's work and his birthday was also celebrated with a lot of reverence in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The idea was that Bengalis as a community would remain united as long as the language would remain the same and this would also ensure its unique identity at the global level. The importance of Bengali language for the community became evident during the language movement in India when the argument surrounding a common national language was the bone of contention in political discourse and Bengal with other

eastern and southern states of the country had shown their opposition and taken an aggressive stand.

So strong was the sense of identity among the Bengalis that during the Bangladesh Liberation War, people from the state of West Bengal were helping out – some illegally by hiding refugees from the other side and some young men even had crossed the border to help – with the freedom struggle and most of the aid was actually provided by Hindus; no one cared about the fact that most of those fighting for Bangladesh were Muslims, because the fight was for Bengali culture and Bengali language. In fact according to many scholars it was only after the independence of Bangladesh that communal tension among the Muslims and Hindus declined in the state as they realised that they were all at the end Bengalis.

This feeling of being Bengalis has somehow now taken the backseat and identities along the lines of religion have taken primacy.

A trend that was seen among the respondents was with regard to language and the way they spoke but more importantly what they spoke. There was a marked distinction in the language used by the older age group of respondents as compared to those respondents who were from the age group of twenty-two to thirty-five. While the older respondents did talk about Islam their language as such could not be considered as a representation of their identity whereas, the younger respondents' language also reflected their religious identity, this was evident from the terms that they used. Words like *Alhumdo –lil- lah, Masha – Allah, Insha – Allah* were used more frequently than it was seen among the older generation. To elucidate the point further two excerpts are presented below. One belongs to the secretary of the Inter – Faith Forum who while even talking about *Allah* used a more universal term God, while the other excerpt belongs to a twenty-five year old girl who is pursuing her post graduate's degree in Psychology and is also a teacher. Both the excerpts explain the observation made above very clearly.

> "Yes, yes, of course the principles are very important and anybody, I mean if you
> actually see it, it is the message of God which is there in the Quran and very
> clearly laid out is actually between the believer and the non believer and you may
> call them infidels or hypocrites but it is between the two. So what has been made

out is either you are a believer or a non - believer and if you are a believer than you have to follow some rules and it is that rules that will keep you on the right path and it will protect you from all the bad things and evil things that surround us. So that is the reason why I have realised that I need to follow these rules. Actually you know these five pillars are actually the boundary in which you need to keep yourself so that you can achieve success in this world as well as in the aftermath that is after death because God, God has promised us certain things which if we abide by it so we are titled to be rewarded. So I believe in this and follow it with the intent so that I get the reward from God by adhering ourselves to these rules, these commandments, the ordainments. So this is the purpose and the reason why I follow."

"Ok so I try... but first and formost what I am trying to establish is salah, five times of salah I try to do that... because it is said that if you don't do your *namaz* then you are actually going out of the folds of Islam. Then what else oh this *hijab* thing is one such thing which I follow I mean it is command of *Allah – O – Subhanotalah*, a lot of people want reason for that so I feel when I wanted to take up the hijab. No sorry I did not want to take up the *hijab* I was told to take up the *hijab*, I wasn't explained why I had to take up the *hijab* it was more like everyone in my family takes so I have to since everybody does so also have to. But I feel that if you explain to them because I feel today everyone wants to be rationalised they want reason they need to be explained why they have to do this. So since we have become like that so we should aso bring rationality in the context of religion, and also we have to look at the foremost belief that if *Allah, Allah – O – Subhanotalah,* has told you then it is for your own good you have believe in that. That is one thing, then *Alhumdo –lil –lah* I have been associated with this centre for the past five years now, I have been a student here on and now a teacher here. So of course there a number of things and in my own little way I am doing whatever little that I can do.

There is *dawah* so I try to do a little of that but of course the most important thing is that you practice before you preach. So I try to do these little things I try to do some charity and small gestures, because a very important thing that ourdeen teaches us is that you don't have to do big things to make a difference Islam is all about small kindnesses. You don't know which good deed is liked by *Allah – O – Subhanotalah*. So the motive is to please Allah, curb your ego is one thing that I have learned and I am also trying to curb my anger. So this is for me what Islam is all about curbing my anger trying to discipline my desires... So that is all."

We can therefore see that language can act more than just a channel through which information about the underlying mental state and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated. If we look at the argument put forward by discourse analysis then we realise how important language becomes as a tool to understand reality and that it is more than just a medium of communication but rather is a tool which helps us understand and change social reality and the answers from my respondents do exactly that. They show how by using terms which are related to their religious identity, they are changing the structure of society; they themselves are changing the social reality of which they are a part of.

A similar argument is also put forward by Wilhelm Von Humboldt, who says that,

> "However language is a never mere tool of communication, but an imprint of the mind and the world – view of its speakers. Sociability is the necessary means for its development, but by no means the only purpose behind its labours, because this purpose is found after all in the individual as its end – point." (As quoted in Mueller 1986: 12)

We can also understand this change if we focus on what Gramsci had to say about language and which seems to be tailor made for the current situation. Gramsci points out that the problem in the construction of a counter hegemony is partly one of language and Gramsci realised that every language contains the element of an origin of the world. The available vocabulary helps mark the boundaries of acceptable discourse, demoralize the clarification of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it. So it would seem that the younger respondents are trying to break that hegemony that exists and is perpetuated by language by using words in their every day discourse which are closely related to their lived experiences.

Religious Identity: A Symbol Of Liberation

It is worth mentioning that the desire to assert their religious identity was more strongly held by the female respondents as compared to the male respondents. This facet becomes clear when one takes a look at the responses that were given by both the men and women when a statement was made regarding them carrying the markers

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of their religion. While the men did say that they carried the beard because it was *sunnat*[197] and they did want to please Allah, they also mentioned that in the time that they are living in, not everyone who sports a beard is a Muslim or that they don't have such a long beard that it would be seen as a marker for religious identity. The following two excepts reflect both the dimensions of the justification given by the male respondent. The first one is by a sixty - two year old dentist who says

> *" Daari je shudhoo Msulim keno koto Sikh aachhe jader eto baro baro daari aache, daari toh aami shudhoo nobir Sunnat ta follow korbar jonne maane Prophet Nobi Salle Allaho Sallam er life amader follow kora ucheeth aar onar jato sunnat amra adaa kori totoh amara Allah ke khushi kori"* ("Beard is not something that only Muslims keep there are so many Sikhs who keept it, I sport a beard to fulfil the prophet's sunnat, to follow sunnat I mean we should follow Prophet Nabi Salle Allaho Sallam's life's teaching it is a must and the more we follow sunnat the more we please Allah.").

The other excerpt is from a fifty-six year old doctor who says

> *"Eta Haj theke ashar por theke mane amar beard ta jodiyo oto lomba na kintu ami haj theke ashar por theke aar beard taake kamayi ni..."* ("After coming back from the Haj I started to keep the beard but you'll notice that my beard is not that long, but I did not shave off my beard after coming back from *Haj*.")

Whereas the responses from all the female respondents did reflect a conviction that was far more rooted and therefore stronger than the male counterparts who were interviewed, they had no qualms in saying that they carried on the markers of their religion particularly carrying the *abaya*[198] because their religion expected that from them. A twenty-five year old female respondent's answer reflects her strong passion and belief regarding the veil, where she gives reasons as to why she has taken it up -

> "Primarily it is because of the call of Allah... If Allah has told me to do it then I will. Quran makes it obligatory so I will follow it no matter what whether I like it or not... As a matter of fact I like it I understand the good reasons behind it and so I accept it willingly rather than crudely."

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[197] It is when Muslims follow certain rules which may not be ascribed in the Quran, but is still done as a form of reverence to Prophet Mohammad because he used to follow it.

[198] It is a synonym for the veil.

One of the most controversial debates regarding Islam in the Western discourse has been the veil, about how it oppresses and subjugates the women in the world. Anjum Alvi (2013) explains most appropriately the discourse on veil by saying that,[199]

> "The popular discourse generally sees this as a violation of women's right and individual freedom and its wearers as either suppressed by the male gender in the name of religion or engaged in fundamentalism and radical thinking subverting Western values. The media associate the concomitants of economical poverty and corrupted institutions such as lack of education, dependence on men, control on female sexuality and violence..." (Alvi 2013: 177)

If one were to analyse these respondents narratives through the lens of the above mentioned discourse, then the analysis would along with being too simple, would also be completely wrong. Most of these women are educated, they even work and support themselves and feel completely comfortable in their own skin. Even if one tried to place these responses in the prevalent discourse that operates within the nation, the justification would not seem apt. The reason why these respondents carry the markers of religious identity has nothing to do with them being treated as the embodiment of honour for the community. They all emphasise the point very strongly that the only reason why they wear the veil is because it is what is expected from them by Allah[200].

So strong is their conviction that most of these women refuse to let go of it even when they are asked by their family or friends. An excerpt from a thirty - five year old respondent best captures this fervour perfectly when she talks about her experience of taking up the *burkha*[201] and the response that she gets from her relatives and then her reply to them,

> " See the attitude of the people towards the Muslim has always been the same and when they see you in an *abaya* then toh they just don't accept you and it is not just people from the other community even Muslims themselves don't treat you properly or accept you if you are in an *abaya*... no not just the community but

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[199] The veil is a topic of debate even within the Muslim community while some support it others find it oppressive. A more detailed analysis of this debate is presented in Appendix –I of this dissertation.

[200] The name through which the Muslims call their God.

[201] It is a synonym for the veil.

even my family member bolo ya certain relatives it is like that. So it's ok even I avoid situations like that and I am like theek hain it's not that I am doing it for you or for myself I am actually doing it for Allah and I will keep on doing it no matter what you think about me."

This analysis would remain incomplete if one did not focus on how wearing the *hijab*[202] affected the respondents' lives personally. All the respondents were told to wear the *hijab* by their family and while initially being reluctant, they all started taking it because they realised its religious significance, but there is another dimension to why is it that they continue wearing it and it is more personal; they don't find the veil oppressive, rather for them it is liberating and it acts as a boost to their confidence. They don't feel that they can't achieve something just because they are behind the veil. They also find that it frees them from the scrutiny of the male gaze. The following excerpts mirror these thoughts perfectly.

"Okay so the reason for me to begin with, the reason for me was because everyone in my family took the *hijab* so even I did, and I started taking up the *hijab* from when I was in school from the twelfth standard onwards. So I was in class twelve and I wasn't very happy about it because I was the only one in my group who had started taking up the *abaya* and I was a little apprehensive I was like none of my friends take why should I take the only thing though for me I mean the only reason I was given was that everyone in my family takes it and so I did to abide by the rules of my family but *Alhumdo –lil- lah* once I started wearing it I felt a sense of security you know and that was the time I also joined Alfalah the centre where I teach now. Once I joined that centre and we got to know why is it that we do *hijab...* I mean I told you earlier that today's generation wants to be rationalised they want to know why they are doing this? I mean it can also be because today we are not so much in touch with our *deen* I mean we follow them just as a set of rules but that is not true it is a set of guidelines actually, I mean what we consider as rules are actually guidelines it is a way of life. Islam is not just a religion with a set of rules Quran is not just a book it is a guideline, it is says the right thing about what it is that we should be doing and shouldn't be doing and now my belief is that if the creator has said if he has commanded for you to do something then in his wisdom he knows best what is good for you, because he is the creator he is our master then of course he knows what it is that is best for us and so we should follow these principles. Maybe we in

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[202] It is a synonym for the veil.

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our very little wisdom don't understand why we are told to do something but we should still do it because we should trust him and have faith in him. It is with this trust that I have taken up the *hijab* and I wear this *hijab* and now that I teach my children about the importance of hijab I mean in the centre where I teach I have talked to the girls in my class about the importance of *hijab* where it has come from my personal experiences of wearing the *hijab* and Alhumdo –lil- lah they understand.

Now that I have taken up the *hijab* I am so comfortable with it I mean I think I would feel uncomfortable if I didn't wear it now. I mean I don't leave my house without wearing the *hijab*. I am so used to it now that I feel it is a part of me I think I would feel uncomfortable and conscious if I didn't have one on... I will be very honest with you I have already told you that I did my schooling from a convent school and I did my graduation in education but the kind of self confidence and self respect that I have gotten from learning about Islam about knowing about my identitiy about taking the *hijab*, I haven't gotten it from anything else and *Alhumdo –lil – lah* for that."

"No no aisa kuch nahin hain ek burkha lene se hum toh dab nahin ja rahe hain na... humara personality pura ka pura waisa hi hain aur hum apni personality pura dikha sakte hain zaroori toh nahin hain na ki hum apne personality ke saath apni body ko ya face ko expose karna hain... Body ko expose toh sirf modelling karne ke waqt hota hain na sab cheese mein toh woh zaroori nahin hain education mein body ko dikha ke kya fayeda. Hume thodi figure dikhaa ne yah face dikha na hain humme education hasil karna hain aur hum proper education burkha pehenke aur hijab leke bhi kar sakte hain. Toh yeh baat koi kyu nahin samajh pata yeh mujhe samajh nahi aati... Tum hi batao ki mujhe agar doctor banna hain ya lawyer ya engineer banna hain toh is sab cheese karne se thodi mujhe mera hijab rokh raha hain nahi na ha agar mujhe modelling karna hain toh mujhe problem hogi lekin yeh sab cheese se toh mujhe nahin lagta hijab se koi problem honi chahiye...

Ha hume karna kya hain hume logo ki soch badalni hogi aur agar woh apna soch na badle tobhi theek hain kyu ki humtoh nahin badalne wale." ("No, no there is nothing like it, it is not that if I take up the burkha that I become oppressed... my personality remains the same, and I can show my personality to anyone it is not necessary that I have to show my body or my face along with personality... The only time you expose your body is when you have to model, it is not needed anywhere else, we don't need to show our body to get an education. I don't need to show my face or my body I just need to gain education and proper education can

be achieved by wearing the *burkha* and the *hijab*. So what I don't get is, why is it that no one understands it?... You tell me if I want to be a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer how is it that my *hijab* is stopping me, it is not right the only time there can be a problem is if a decided to model other than that there shouldn't be any problem.

Yes but we have to do something we have to change the way people think and if they don't change the way they think then that is also fine because I am not going to change no matter what.").

Nevertheless there are other elements which have to be taken into account and while a detailed discussion of it would be beyond the scope of this research, it does require a mention, because these are important aspects to understanding women and Islam. To explain the trends which are also creeping into the field of the respondents the following excerpt is used. It is from a twenty - five year old female respondent who while talking about how the veil is important for women, says certain things that need to be questioned. The excerpt is follows –

"I would tell her why is it that I do take up the *hijab* what are its advantages I mean why do I wear what I wear and honestly you know, you must be reading in the newspapaer and hearing things about all the stuff that is happening around about all the things that happening to women, I mean all these lewd remarks, molestation cases and rape cases... I mean I know a lot of people will tell why should women be blamed for that but when you are crossing the road aren't you going to be careful I mean if a car comes and hits you I mean if the driver of that car is driving rashly or something and he is being careless and he comes and hits you I mean you can blame the driver but you yourself will also be careful right. I mean I know a lot of people say that it does not depend on the way women dress and all that but obviously it does it is on us to take precautions. I mean you know there are people like that out there so why would you want to instigate them why would you wear such clothes. Okay I mean I am not in favour about all that is being said about women but then I can't deny that there are some women who come across in a wrong way a very wrong way I would say. Forget Islamically but I feel socially it is not acceptable.

I mean a lot of protests are coming up where women are saying that no they will go out at twelve o clock they will dress a particular way but that is not the solution if that happens then these things will definitely continue. You have to understand this I mean many people don't... okay so there was this lady I don't remember her

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name but she had won the Nobel Prize I don't remember in what but then she had gone to meet the Queen and she was asked about what is the point of the *hijab* and she answered very beautifully I must say that when man did not have much knowledge he used to cover himself up with two pieces of cloth I mean he would just cover himself up with leaves and all that as his knowledge started to grow he started to cover himself up even more... So I guess this can explain your question quite correctly."

This female respondent's statement also reflects how patriarchy functions and how religious belief if not probably checked, can lead to a situation where women would actually face problems and the assumption of the West would stand correct. But there is also hope as there is another pattern which we can see among the women respondents where they do make a distinction between religion and the family, and a twenty - six year old female respondent's answer mirrors that distinction aptly.

> *"Humare Muslims mein toh yeh hain ki aurate kuch bhi kar sakte hain hijab mein hai toh kya hua hum sab kuch kar sakte hain hum toh Muslim men ke saath kaadha se kaadha mila ke chal sakte hain... Matlab aisa nahin hai ki hum hijab mein hai toh kuch nahin kar sakte hain... Humara Muslims mein yeh nahin hain ki hume koi cheese ka allow nahin hain, lekin humara joh Muslim family hain woh ek concern hain woh hi nahi allow karta hain.* They are responsible for our current state, condition..."(In our religion women can do everything, it doesn't matter if they are in *hijabs*, we can do anything, we are at par with Muslim men... I mean it is not that just because we are in *hijab* we can't do anything... Among Muslims there isn't anything which women are not allowed to do but the Muslim families are a source of concern they don't allow. They are responsible for our current state or condition.").

Negotiating With Stigma

The Muslim identity carries with it its own baggage and has been subjugated to many stereotypes as well as prejudices in this country. Treated as the 'other', the members of this religion are seen as carrying what Erving Goffman would call a stigma[203] for the society.

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[203] It was the Greeks who had originated the term, which referred to bodily signs which were actually designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier. These signs were actually cut or burnt into the body of the bearer who was then advertised either as a slave, a

Goffman points out that the usage of the term stigma has changed a lot "today it is associated more with disgrace itself rather to the bodily evidence of it." (Goffman 1963: 4) and that now the term is used for certain religious groups, race or nation, since in this form stigma is associated with identity it is the group and not the individual who is held responsible and therefore it is also transmitted by lineage and "equally contaminate all the members of a family". (Goffman 1963: 4).

Goffman mentions that this stigma arises when there is a discrepancy between what he calls virtual social identity, which arises from our expectations and actual social identity that the traits the person actually possesses, what s/he really is. The stigma which is associated with identity arises when the virtual social identity has a negative connotation and obliterates all the positive qualities the individual possesses. The virtual social identities[204] that ensure the continuation of stigma are the stereotypes the individuals face.

Then if we focus on Goffman's definition of stigma then we see that

> "In all these various instances of stigma, however, including those the Greeks had in mind, the same sociological features are found: an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us." (Goffman 1963: 5).

In the Indian context this idea of stigma is associated with different religions as well as castes. While the focus here is with religion alone, here the stigma carrying group are the Muslims who reside in the country, whose identity based on their membership into a religion alone acts as a hindrance to their everyday affairs.

Of the thirteen respondents whose narratives are being used here, eight had said that they had faced acts of prejudice and had been victims of stereotypes. An interesting

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criminal or a traitor basically a blemished person who is ritually impure and has to be avoided in public places.

[204] It is a theory or an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger the person represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social classes.

thing that is observed about the five who said that they had not faced any acts of discrimination at all is the way they lead their life; four of the five respondents live in a world where even the outer or public sphere of their life is compatible with their religious identity they don't really leave the 'science fiction force fields'[205]. They operate within what Bourdieu calls the doxa.[206]

Of the respondents who had faced certain cases of stereotypes. Some excerpts are given below, these stereotypes are of two types one that the respondents had to face because they were Muslims and the other kind is if they didn't fit into the Muslim image that people from the other community had in their mind. The next excerpt deals with that aspect of prejudice that a respondent faced, because he did not match with the virtual social identity constructed by the other community.

> *"I don't react violently with them but I try to explain to them amar shaathe jeta hoe je amake shob shamoe bola hoe je apni bhalo Bangla bolchhen toh ba apni khub bhalo Bangla bolen... sheta amake bar bar school, office, college –e shunte hoeche apni khub bhalo Bangla bolen toh... Apni je Muslim sheta bojhai jae na. Ei kothata amake chhoto bela theke shunte hoeche tader ke takhon bojhate hoe aar mone korateh hoe je Najrul Islam kintu Banglae likhe chhilo aar Jodi British re bhaag na korto tahole kintu apni dekhte parten je beshi bhaag Bangali ra kintu Muslim hoto... Karon beshi bhaag Bangali ra kintu Muslim achhen mane majority kintu Muslim. Aar apni kintu desher bayre jaan aar Bangla kotha bolen tahole kintu oi desher lokera apnake Bangladeshei bhabbe keu bhabbe na je apni Muslim non. Eta amake ekbar baro writer keo bojhate hoe chhilo..."*

> ***"Ei je Bangali aar apni Muslim?"***

> *Ha mane amake toh ekhono jigesh kore je apnar barite ki bhashae kotha bola hoe, apnar ma ki Muslim uni o ki bolte paren Bangla... Ei shob mojar mojar ghatona ghote ei gulo dekhe hashi o pae abar dukho o hoe abar raag o hoe."* ("I don't react violently with them but I try to explain, a common occurrence with me is that I am often asked how is it that I can speak Bengali, or the surprise people show in saying that I can speak such good Bengali... I had to hear this in my school, office, college, that I can speak very good Bengali and that it is impossible to figure out that I am a Muslim. I have been listening to this ever since I was a

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[205] As used by Bourdieu, to explain a type of social field.

[206] It refers to the apparently natural beliefs or opinions that are intimately linked to field and habitus.

child and had to explain to them and remind them that Nazrul Islam used to write his poetry in Bengali and if the British had not divivided Bengal then most of the people speaking Bengali would have been Muslims, because most of the Bengalis are Muslims. And if you go outside the country and speak in Bengali people will think you are a Bangladeshi no one will think you are not a Muslim. Once a writer had also asked me...”

“What the fact that you could speak Bengali and you are a Muslim..?”

Yes, I mean I am still asked what language is spoken in my house?... Is my mother a Muslim can she also speak Bengali... I have to listen to all these funny funny incidents, which at times make me laugh and at time I am also saddened and feel angry as well.”)

This excerpt shows how people who don't fit 'the image' are also questioned and have to explain their identity and as the male respondent mentioned, it also to some degree leads to a feeling of hurt or anger because they realise how ignorant are the people who ask this question.

A female respondent talks about how she had experienced acts of prejudice[207] against her but also mentions how it was at a more subtle level, but what is probably most astonishing in her experience is that she had experienced such behaviour in a set - up which is believed to be free from such bias – the school and from agents who are generally not associated with such acts – teachers.

"Ha school mein I had faced it with some of my teachers... school mein teachers log thodi waise thi... matlab not just me lekin woh saare Muslim ladkiyon ko treat differently karti thi then other students hume achhe se samjhati nahin thi agar hum kuchh puchte the toh koi response nahin aata tha... dekha jae toh bahut chhoti baat hain aur koi specific incidence toh nahi hain lekin yehi hota hai humare saath."("Yes, in school I had faced it with my teachers... in my schools the teachers were a little like that... I mean it was not just me they would treat all the Muslim girls differently as compared to the other students, they wouldn't explain to us properly if we had any doubts and if we asked any questions then they would not respond... one way to look at it is that it wasn't such big an issue I mean there are no specific incidences as such but this would happen pretty regularly".)

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[207] It is defined as an unreasonab;e dislike for an individual or group.

Another similar experience of prejudice was experienced by a doctor who is also the chief medical examiner of a borough, and talks about how a certain recent experience has made him question about the idea of secularism and merit in a government office, and how prejudice also operates in the so called environment where technically there are no biases or partiality. He mentions how

"Mayby maybe... recently I have been very much hurt by this thing... Right now I am also working in Calcutta Corporation as an Executive Health Officer and this whole Calcutta is dvided into fifteen boroughs one to fifteen you know and every health officer is incharge of one borough any type of disease any type of health issue then he is responsible and I am incharge of one such borough ok as an executive health officer and just above me there is a Deputy Chief Medical Officer and above that there is a Chief Medical Officer. I have experienced a very bitter experience you see I want a leave from the twenty-second of this month to the thirty-first of this month as I am suppose to go out f the city as I approached my boss, then he asked me who am I going to leave incharge for that time I said to the next borough medical officer, then I had to approach my deputy and he signed my leave then now I had to get it signed by the chief, so I approached my chief, today is the fifteenth..."

"No it's the sixteenth..."

"Oh the sixteenth so I had approached him on the second or third of December and he said it was too early and I can't allow you now..."

"Maane uni apnake bollen je uni apnake ekhon leave deben na keno ekhono anek time aacche?..."**("You mean that your boss said that he would not give you the leave because there is still time?")**

"Ha aajke ki baar?" "(Yes, what day is it today?")

"Mangolbaar." **("Tuesday.")**

"Mangolbaar ha toh ei last Friday ami jakhon onar kache pher gelam takhon aar o dujon Executive Medical Health Officer okhane chhilen. Tara dujone okane nijer leave sanction kora len tar modhe theke ekjoner leave o baeesh theke...Kintu ami jakhon onake abar bollam takhon uni abar bollen je tomar toh ekhono deri ache. Kintu oi ladyta jinni nijer leave tah sanction koralen onar o twenty – second – i chhilo. So I have no reason in my mind. Aar ki reason hote pare other than my identity?... I see no other reason only my identity, amra teen jon i approach korlam ami toh aaro age korchhilam tobuo oder kore dilo kintu amar korlona..
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toh ki aar hote pare bolo other than my identity. Ami aajke o gelam ora aaj o amar kore ni ekhono ame boleche pore ashteh."(Tuesday, yes so last Friday I went to him there were two other Executive Medical Health Officers present there. Even they had come to get their leave sanctioned; he signed both their forms including one person whose leave was also from the 22nd... then when I told him again to sanction my leave he said that there is still time. But the lady who got her leave sanctioned her leave was also from the 22nd. So I have no reason in my mind. What other reason can there be other than my identity...I see no other reason only my identity, three of us approached him I had approached him even earlier but he didn't sanction my holiday what other reason can their be other than my identity. I even went today he still didn't sanction it he has told to me come even later".)

"Toh apnar mone hoe je its only because of your religion?" ("You think it is only because of your religion?")

"Ha aar ki hote pare amra teen jonei same category- r officer teen jonei same kaj kori aar jodi apni amar leave application ta dekhen toh apni dekhben je amar ta beshi promising... mane ami oder oh leave application dekhlam kintu ora kichu specify kore ni... Amar leave ami shob kichu specify korechhi amai koto diner jonno leave niyechi aar keno nichhi.. Oder application e shob kichui lekha chhilo na... ami full chart baniye niye gechhilm je amar koto diner chhuti ache shob ami kore niye gechhilam ei office theke tader o ami shoi korye niye gechhilam... Aar er ager o emni kono kotha hoeni je ami kono gandogol korechhi ba kichhu emni first time amar jibone hoechhe and it has hurt me so much that I am thinking about leaving my job..."("Yes, what other reason can there be, we are all from the same category of officers, three of us do the same job and if you look at my leave application then you will see that is quite promising... I mean I have seen their leave application and they had not specified anything... I had made a full chart showing the duration of my leave and the number of holidays that I have left I had even taken signatures from these officers... And it has never happened before that I didn't do my duties properly or had done something wrong it is the first time something like this has happened in my life and it has hurt me so much that I am thinking about leaving my job.")

Two more respondents talk about their experience. The reason why their experiences need to be mentioned here is because unlike most of the people who spoke about their experiences pointed out that the discrimination was more subtle and not so aggressive, but in these two respondents experience there has actually been an overt and

aggressive display of hatred and which in turn has actually resulted in a lot of pain and anguish for the respondents.

"Is hi building ke samne ek admi rehta tha uska naam tha Dileep toh kabhi kadaar humari gari yahin pe parked hoti thi, toh woh roz raat ko pike aata tha toh ek deen unhone humari gari thok di toh humne bola ki aap theek si chaliye unko bola, 'Dileep da theek kore cholun batha pe jaben' toh ulta woh humse lardne laga aur bola 'Ei beta tui beshi kichhu boleesh na toke Pakistan pathiye debo.' Toh hum bhi bole 'Achha Dileep da sheta time ashle dekha jabe ke Pakistan jabe apni na ami...' Toh hum toh Pakistan nahin gaye abhi tak India mein hi hain abhi hum marne ke kareeb aagaye lekin oo yeh Maholla chhod ke chala gaya... Aur aise kuchh nahin hain baki sabke saath dosti yaari ke saath hi hum ji rahi hain." (In front of this building a man called Dileep used to stay, sometimes my car used to be kept here he used to drink and come back every night, so one day he banged into my car and I told him to drive carefully, I told him 'Dileep da go carefully or you will get hurt' instead he started fighting with me and said, 'You fellow don't speak much or I will send you to Pakistan' so even I said, 'we will see Dileep da who goes to Pakistan you or me...' So I am still here I haven't gone to Pakistan, I am still in India now even though I have reached the last stage of my life, almost come close to my death but he left this locality... other than that nothing like this has ever happened to me.")

"Ha... mane schoole omni du ekta chhele chhilo after Bangladesh war maane tar por people changed emni kono comments aar shunte hoe ni taar aage chhilo class e chhele taara oi majhe shaje kichu boltoh... Ha ashole 1964 er riot er por maane chhilo ektu communal feeling lokder bhetore kintu after Bangladeh's independence sheta chole jaye maane jakhon okhankar lokra ekhane aar ekhankar lokera okhane jete laglo aar mela mesha hote laglo takhon ota kete gelo.. Amake bolei chhilo jata oi maane anek kichu bole chhilo ei je gorur mangsho khae tai toder much theke gandho aashe oi aajbaaje jineesh shob aar ki. Oi bole chhilo ei toh e Musulman e gorur mangsho khaye tai er mukh theke ei gandho beraye aar oi shob aar ki." ("Yes there were a few boys in school who were like that but after the Bangladesh war situation changed I didn't have to hear to any such comments prior to that there were a few boys who would say some things... Actually after the 1964 riots there was a communal feeling among the people but after Bangladesh's independence that went away after people started interacting with each other... Yes they had told me actually something rubbish, they had said that because I am a Musim and I eat beef that is why my mouth stinks".)

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While most people did say that they had experienced acts of discrimination and they felt hurt there are three other kinds of responses that also emerged especially among the younger respondents. One type of reaction was that they encouraged stereotypes because it provided them with a space and an opportunity to talk and explain the truth about Islam which they believed would finally lead to a dialogue, which is very well explained by the next excerpt which is from a twenty-two year old male respondents who is studying engineering and says,

> "I love stereotypes, because it gives me an opportunity to talk and you can see that I love talking I mean *ita time ho gaya hain phir bhi bole ja raha hu mein*... So I love them because I love telling I mean if someone comes upto me and tells me something like oh you are a Muslim and you are dirty... You guys don't take bath... So then I can go ok you think that so let's discuss this let's start talking let's see *akhir baath kya hai* ... So I can talk to him about what Islam talks about cleanliness, I mean *wazoo karna* is a must every time five times a day before I pray I have to do my *wazoo*, to clean myself... It gives me an opportunity to talk to them about my religion so I like that a lot. I love it then it gives you an opportunity to think about Islam. It allows me to answer your doubt. You talk about four marriages and I say that Islam is the only religion which says only marry one, you talk about divorce and I say to you that Islam is the only religion that talks about divorce no other religion has divorce, which is accepted by all the countries in the world today.

> Secondly a lot of things are being said about how Islam is disrespectful to women particularly because you can say *talaak* thrice and give divorce to a woman... First thing that should be cleared is that Kuran says that it is against divorce, Allah has said that he hates divorce and if there is no other solution and you have no other choice but to give a divorce then a man can do it by saying *talaak* thrice, but not at the same time he can say talaak after a period of some gap and these gaps between saying it from one time to the other are actually chances so that one can reconcile. But suppose I say divorce and then again I reconcile and then again I say divorce and again reconcile and then I say divorce for the third time and also reconcile, then God says that you are treating this girl and marriage as a joke and as a punishment to you for taking this woman so lightly you can never have her back. Because you have treated her with such less respect and thought of marriage as a joke you can now never get her back. This is also done to ensure that no man takes divorce lightly and every guy who is going to divorce at least asks himself am I sure, am I doing the right thing because once I give her a divorce she can't come back to me. People today are so irresponsible they don't take any

responsibility I mean breaking up over small issues like something as trivial or silly as 'You are not looking beautiful today let's break up'. So Islam ensures that there is some degree of responsibility that is there. These strong rules are there in order to protect the rights of some of the women.

Similarly they also come up with terrorism....I mean it is too funny I actually wrote a post on my wall where I wrote that the hyppocrisy of terrorists are finally exposed... I wrote it after after the incident in Peshawar... I mean the terrorist groups claim that they are fighting for Muslims... fighting for Muslims by killing Muslims. So now you know... that is what I told my friends that now you know that they are not fighting for Muslims they are fighting for their own reasons. Whatever their reasons or agenda is they will not fight for Muslims or Islam it is not Jihad or anything to do with religion. Which religion would say that you go and kill children just because they don't believe what you do... So the hyppocrisy of these terrorists are exposed and they should not be associated with our religion and should not be used as a stereotype for my community. They are what 60,000 to 100,000 in number in a population of 200 million that is like what 0.008% I think we should not talk about them the less we do the better it is for us... I mean the more *bhao* we give them the more advantage they will try to take of us so I don't talk about them I think ha what can they do, I mean I think they are like *bigra bacchha* hain what is the most that they can do."

The other kind of behaviour is seen among those respondents who said that they never faced any such acts of discrimination but what becomes obvious is that they never really challenged the hegemonic culture they never really stepped out of that space which was not governed or regulated by their religious belief or beyond what could be concerned as their Islamic culture, they are in a situation where their lifeworld and those around them are same and for most it is a conscious choice so that they can avoid any misgivings and bad experiences. The answer from a thirty-five year old female respondent mirrors that idea, where she says,

"*Alhumdo –lil-lah* I never faced any problems like this I could practice whatever my religion told me to when I used to go out as in I used to teach in Gibreel International School I never faced any problems and it was completely an Islamic school and Hijab was allowed there so I had no problems I resigned for some personal problems and I am home now but *Insha –Allah* I will join again. So I never had any problem because even when I go out the environment is completely Islamic... Yeah, but I chose that environment honestly it was conscious decision I

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didn't want to compromise with my religion so I chose an environment where I was more comfortable and more in sync with my personal beliefs."

The third kind of reponse that emerged from these respondents was how they believed and pointed out also that even though they take up markers of religious identiy and as a result of which it would probably be easier to stereotype them, that after conversing with them that idea would change; basically they put forward the idea that even though they belonged to a particular community or a group they were also individuals in their own right and they maintained that individuality which becomes extremely clear when and if one would talk to them. Believing in the same ideals a twenty -five year old respondent said,

> "I do not reinforce their idea I mean if they judge me just by looking at me then they may go home with a particular idea because I dress a certain way... the way if you may but if you talk to me then you will realise I am a very liberated women or lady as you would say under my own religious aspects. The idea being of course that I can do anything and everything by being within the tenets of Islam I don't really have to move out to gain any thing I can achieve anything I want while following my religion and if there is something that Islam stops me to do then it is not the right thing... because Islam would not stop you from doing something good or fruitful or right. I mean everything that is made good is made *halal* and is allowed in Islam and to Muslims so we enjoy everything for me it is not being a bit of both but rather conquering the world my way and why in someone else's way."

Fear Of The World Out There And Fear Of The World Within

The respondent exhibited two kinds of fear both of which were related to their identity but more importantly were about the continuance of their religion, which according to most of them was also their only source of salvation and rectitude. The one fear was from the outer world especially from the current political scenario which most of them (ten out of the thirteen) believed was going to take a turn for the worse. It was the second fear however that was given more importance by all the respondents, which was associated with the future of Islam. While talking about their fear and anxiety about the current political environment a female respondent said,

> *"Of course of course there is this fear there is this anxiety I mean this man is responsible for something like Godra, aur jab se yeh Godhra ka incident hua hain*

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na is desh ki jo Muslim population hain na woh oos incident ko yaad karke abhi bhi unka dil dehla dete hain dehla jata hain kyu ke hum sab ko pata hain ki waha pe kya hua tha, matlab humesha yeh darr rehta hain ki Allah na kare lekin kal agar yeh humare saath hua toh hum kya karenge hum kaise bach payenge. Aur Yakeen mano Aafreen humesha yeh soch ke lagta hain ki waha jo women's ka saath hua hain jo humne suna hain, newspaper mein... nahin nahin newspapers mein kaha diya, kaha tha kuch likha is ke baare mein yeh toh jab humne jaanne ki bahut koshish ki tab jake hume pata chala... Lekin agar woh cheese ko hum apne dimmag se nikal dete hain ki kya hua kya hua hume shayad kuch milta nahin par waha pe bahot bahot bura hua tha. Aur hume bhi darr lagta hain ki hum India mein hain na aur kabhi bhi agar yeh humare saath bhi hogaya na because we are Muslims kyu ki aisa ho hi sakta hain toh humara kya hoga... darr lagta hain, actually darr hamesha laga rehta hain kabhi riots hua yah kuch hua... Matlab agar Hindu aur Muslims ke beech kuch bhi hua toh humara kya hoga agar Godhra jaisa kuch hua toh hum kya karenge, kyu ki waha pe itna bura hua itna bura hua ki ki apne sapne mein bhi na soch pae ki kitna bura hua aur aurto ke saath toh aur bhi jo batsalukhi hui na matlab dehshat ho jata hain...

Aur abhi jo Prime Minister aye hain woh tab waha per Chief Minister the na... Toh hakeekat bata rahe hain ki woh jab Prime Minister bane toh I mean, I am not... I... mein toh bilkul hi khush nahin thi exactly hum tumhe bata rahe hain bahut saare log jab bole Modi bana Modi bana toh maine kaha nahin yeh theek nahin hain mujhe toh bahut darr laga kyu ki tab woh waha pe Chief Minister the ab woh purre India mein agaya hain toh woh ab humare saath kya karega Musulmano ke saath kya karega... Ha theek hain bhalei woh development ki baath kar rahe hain aur shayad humari country ko achha banayega lekin Muslims ke saath woh kya karega?... Kyu ki jab woh Chief Minister tha toh woh Muslims ke saath itna bura kiya itna bura kiya ki hum abhi bhi sochte hain toh kaap jate hain toh ab jab woh India mein aagaya hain toh shyad woh pura alag kar ke maar dale sab Muslims log ko... Isliye bahut darr lagta hain... Ha uska reponse dekh ke abhi lag raha hain ki nahin shayad woh theek karega lekin yeh bhi to hain ki woh post mein rehne ke liye aisa karta hoga maybe isliye hain na.... matlab tumne poochha isliye maine bata diya." ("Of course, of course, there is this fear there is this anxiety, I mean this man is responsible for something like Godhra, ever since the Godhra incident has happened the Muslim population of this country remember it and it brings in them a feeling of fear, of heart wrenching fear and a question, Allah if something like this happened to us what would we do? And believe me Aafreen there is always this tension with regard to whatever happened to the women there, whatever we heard, whatever we read in the newspapers... no no there was nothing in the news, what was written in the newspapers what was

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written about it any way it was only when we tried to find out that the truth came out... But if we had not let those things affect us, if we had never asked those questions we probably would have never known, and whatever happened there was very bad. Now I am scared we live in India if something like this happened here what will happen to us, because we are Muslims, because something like this can happen to anyone of us if there is ever a riot... if something happens between Hindus and Muslims, if something like Godhra happens here then what will happen to us, Because it was so bad, so bad that we can't even imagine it, I mean if you think about it you feel bad and whatever happened to the women the ill - treatment that they received only leads to fear...

And the now Prime Minister was the Chief Minister then... so I'll tell you the truth that when he became the Prime Minister then I mean... I am not... I ... was not happy and when a lot of people said that 'Modi won, Modi won' I said this is not right, I was really scared, because he was the Chief Minister there now he has control over the entire country, so what will he do to us to all the Muslims of the country... Yes alright maybe he is talking about development and maybe he will make our country better, but what will he do with the Muslims? Because he was the Chief Minister then and the Muslims were really badly treated... I mean even now if I think about it cold shivers run down my spine, and now that he has come to govern the whole of India maybe he will just separate us and kill all the Muslims... that is why I am scared all the time... Yes so far his response had not shown any such tendencies but for all you know he is doing it to stay in power maybe that's why right? ... I mean you asked me the question so I said whatever it is I felt and had to say.")

There is of course another group who even though anxious and weary have their faith in Allah and hope and believe that even though the situation is pretty tense that maybe it will get better. One among them says that,

"Abhi ki joh party hain woh kehti hain ki woh Muslims ke favour mein hain lekin woh joh kaam karte hain woh toh Muslims ke favour mein nahin hota, abhi uska koi admi kehta hain 'Pakistan chale jao' inke admi bolte hain lekin khud Modi sahib toh kuchh hi nahin bole, koi inke admi aate hain joh bolte hain yah toh tum 'Raam zyade ho yah tum Haraamzaada banke raho' inke aage sab koi bahut kuchh bolke chale jate hain par yeh khud kuch nahin bolte, ab kuch din pehle jo U.P.mein chala yeh 'love jihad love jihad' ab yeh love jihad kya hota hain jihad toh ek alag cheese hain uska matlab toh struggle hain... Har tareekein se baath ko divert kiya ja raha hain aur humare upar jo log hain jo hukumat mein hain woh kuchh nahin kar rahe hain... Isliye hum log bahut zyada na umeed bhi nahin hain

lekin bahut zyada bharosa bhi nahin hain. Ha humlog abhi bhi na umeed nahin hue hain abhi toh saath mahina hua hain is sarkar ke jaise ki kal kisi ne kaha ki nahin nahin hum unke favour mein nahin hain hum yeh ghar wapsi aur issab ke favour mein nahin hain toh yeh baath khud Modi kyu nahin keh dethe, aur agar nahin kehethe matlab unka conscience aur back of the mind mein chal raha hain... ki woh R.S.S. ke favour mein hain humlogoko lag raha hain waisa lekin humlog abhi bhi naumeed nahin hue hain. Ya phir aisa bhi sakta hain ki' paswan milgaya kaabe ko', iska matlab janti hain. Iska matlab yeh hua ki Rasool ke joh chahcha the woh Kaaba Sharif ke sardar the lekin unhone kabhi khud Islam ko nahin apnaya. Ha magar unhone Prophet Mohammad ke upar kabhi koi aanch nahin aane diya lekin woh zindagi bhar kafer rahe per kaaba sharif ka rakhwali kiye. Toh yahi instant deke Dr. Iqbal ne yeh lines kahe the, matlab ki khud budh ke poojne wale mein unko paswan matlab darwan mil gaye. Toh Allah ko jab kaam karwana hain toh unhone non –Muslims se bhi karwaya, dekhiyega yeh surah toh Koran mein bhi hain. Isliye na umeed nahin hona chaiye kabhi bhi... Ha darr toh lagta hi hain par apne liye nahin aane wale generation ke liye, dekhiye India ka partition toh aise nahin hua than a ek referendum hua tha jis mein puchha gaya tha ki kis ko Pakistan jana hain aur kisko yahan rehna hain Jo waha chale gaye aur hum jo yaha pe ruk gaye apni marzi se toh hum yahi ke hogaye, hum bhi Indians hain aur constitution ne humme rights diye political kaho yah civil kaho agar tum Artcle 25 of the constitution dekhti ho toh tumhe pata chal jata hain ki yaha hume koi bhi apne religion follow karne se nahin rok sakta hain lekin aaj halaat woh nahin hain hume bahut demoralise kiya ja raha hain. ("The party that has come to power says that it favours Muslim, but the actions that they do don't favour Muslims. Now one of his men says, 'Go to Pakistan', his men do, Modi Sahib never says anything himself, one of his men came and said, 'either you are Ram's son or stay as illegitimate sons', a lot of people and come and say a lot of things in front of him but he never says anything himself, now few days back in U.P. there was thing about 'love jihad love jihad' now what is this love jihad, jihad is a different thing and it means struggle ... From every possible way the issue is being diverted and the people who are above us the people who govern us are not doing anything about it... That is why we haven't lost all hope but we don't trust them either.Yes, we haven't lost all hope yet, it has only been seven months of this government, like yesterday someone from this government said that we are not in favour of this, we are not in favour of ghar wapsi, we are not in favour of all these actions, so why doesn't Modi say it himself and if he doesn't say it himself then it means in his conscience and in the back of his mind ... he supports the R.S.S. we are thinking like that but we still haven't lost hope . There can be another reason as well, *'paswan milgaya kaabe ko'*, it means that

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Rasool's uncle was the chief of Kaaba Sharif, but he himself never converted to Islam. Yet he ensured that prophet Mohammad would be unharmed and safe. So by giving this instance Dr. Iqbal said these lines, it means the he who worships idols is made the '*paswan*' whch means the guard. So when Allah wants something done he has used non Muslims also to fulfil his deeds, you will see that there is this verse in the Koran as well. That is why I haven't lost hope... Yes but I do feel scared but not for myself but for the generations to come, see it is not like the partition happened just like this, there was a referendum that was passed, where it was asked who wanted to go to Pakistan and who wanted to stay, those who left went there and we who stayed back became citizens of this country by our own free choice, even we are Indians and the Constitution has also given us our rights you can call it political or civil, if you look at Article 25 of the constitution then you will see that we are entitled to follow our religion freely but the conditions today are such that we are being demoralised.")

Then of course there were two respondents the youngest in the sample size who actually felt that there was nothing to fear as Muslims under the current government, and said that,

"Things are more matured now I mean firstly the Prime Minister of this country has been given a clean chit so there is no point talking about it... Secondly I think the party is more matured now, maybe some leaders' within the party and some party members are bringing the small and petty issues up but atleast the Prime Minister is not saying anything... Yeah like you said that that he keeps mum but maybe by keeping mum he is condoning these statements. I know a lot of people can think that silence can be a form of support but it can be the other thing also."

The other kind of fear that was there among all the respondents irrespective of their age, gender and socio - economic group was with regard to the future of Islam. This fear was more internal as most of them believed that it would be difficult to keep the followers in the right path, which as one of the respondents said was ''holding the rope of Allah, that is reading the Quran'' and following the tenets of Islam. This fear is mentioned time and again and at times seems like the biggest fear for these people. One such musing or reflection was from a sixty -seven year old respondent, who said,

"Bahut bhayanak hoga aage wala din, humlog Musulman bhi reh paenge ya nahin iski guarantee nahin hain. Aajkal ke bachho ko bol do ki do kalma suna do, woh nahin bol payenge zara puchlo ke huzoor ke abba ka naam kya tha, unki amma ka naam kya tha, woh nahin bata pata hain. Hazrat Ali kaun thhe, Hazrat

Osman, Hazrat Omar Farookh kaun thhe nahin bata payega woh usko chhoro woh toh bachha hain uska baap hi nahin bata payega, yeh jo cheese jo tradition hoti hain na hum sochhteh hain ke Islam bachega ya nahin aur bachega toh uska shakal kya hoga. Wakt achha nahin halaat achhe nahin hain hum ko dekh kar achha nahin lag raha hain.

Apne toh History mein para hi hoga ki Spain mein Muslims ruled for eight hundred years aaj Spain mein ek bhi Musulman nahin hain yeh sochne ki baat hain. Aur bas thera baras mein Islam phela teis baras mein Kuran utra aur tera saal mein Islam phela joh aaj duniya ke samne hain, English mein hum jisko Gibraltar kehte hain jab unhone apna ghoda dauraya Pacific Ocean ke upar toh unhone bola 'ki yah Allah teri duniya itni chhoti hain, agar iske aage bhi duniya hota toh hum waha pe bhi Islam phela dethe' toh ye tha Islam per aajke halath dekhe toh aur kya bas khauf aur dukh hoa hain. ("The days ahead would be horrible, there is no guarantee whether we will even surivive as Muslims or not. Look at todays kids if you ask them to tell you a hymn they won't know, just ask them who was Huzoor's father, what was his mother's name they won't be abe to answer, they won't be able to tell you who were Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Osman, Hazrat Omar Farooq, forget them they are kids I am sure their father's also won't know. This tradition that is there I wonder if Islam will survive or not and if it does then what what form it will take. It is not good, the time and conditions are getting worse; I don't like whatever it is I see around.

You must have read in history that the Muslims ruled over Spain for eight hundred years, today you will not see a single Muslim in Spain, it is something to think about. In just thirteen years Islam spread, in twenty - three years the Kuran was revealed and in thirteen years Islam spread and the world can see its impact today. What we call as Gibralter in English, it is said that when he rode across the Pacific Ocean on his horse he said, 'Ya Allah, your world is so small if there was a world beyond this one then I would spread Islam there as well.' This was Islam but today if you look at Islam's condition then you feel fear and sadness.")

CONCLUSION

In the introduction of this dissertation some research questions were posed. While two of those were answered in the previous chapter, one has to see if this chapter has answered the rest of the questions. One of the questions asked was, what are the reasons for the rise of religious identity among the Muslims in the city? Another

question asked was, do they realise that by asserting their religious identity they perpetuate the cycle of stereotyping?

As seen in the previous chapter there is an assertion of identity among the Muslims but the reason seems less to do with the larger political context and more with dynamics of the community itself. The assertion of their identity is based on two basic principles, one is the feeling of nostalgia and the other is the feeling of fear or anxiety. The nostalgia of a better and glorious past when their religion was at its peak is something that is seen time and again in their responses, and in their belief that if they walk along the same path that the previous generation did than they would also reach the same pinnacle of success. The second principle of fear and anxiety is at two levels, one where the fear is associated with the external world, where the fear is complete assimilation or unification which in turn would lead to the absorption of the community completely and the second fear is for the younger members of the group where the idea is that they would leave the path of Islam and stray away and therefore forget identity. The reason why this fear is so grave is because as mentioned earlier Islam is more than just a religion for those who follow it, it's the only way of life, so if one let's go of their religion or their religious identity than the belief is that they completely lose themselves. Both these principles are used together time and again to maintain the "distinctness" of the Muslim community in Kolkata which in turn becomes an act of assertion for the community.

The second question regarding the perpetuation of stereotype is completey broken by the respondents' answers and their belief; all of them through their answers bring out a very unique pattern where they reason that they are actually breaking the cycle of stereotypes through their activities, because whatever misgivings people have about their community or religion is proven wrong through their actions in their capacity as Muslims.

In the end one would just like to say that in 1974, M.R.A. Baig had written a book titled 'The Muslim Dilemma', where he argued that if the Muslim community had to progress it had to let go of its pan - Islamism, that there should be an emphasis for Western education along with religious identity or belief. The solution was to merge with the rest of the population by suspending the cultural aspect of one's religious

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identity which also stemmed from one's religious belief. The findings from the above sections may seem to provide a better alternative to what M.R.A. Baig had provided; these respondents who are from different walks from life hold their religious belief and their religious identity very close but that does not mean that they don't believe in Western education or in its ideals; they have in their own way broken the categories that have been created around religion in general and Islam in particular in India.

A major question regarding Muslim identity has been with regard to its pan - Islamic nature, where it is believed that a primacy would be given to relgion and not any ther identity. These respondents through their narratives have shown that there is no one Islam; they in their own ways have created a new way of understading or interpreting Islam where both its teachings and principles can be seen to work along with the other spheres of one life. In fact the teachings of Islam are so interpreted, so as to be used used in present contexts of one's life.

So while one can't deny that there is a rise of religious assertion among Muslims, the reasons are not so devious or separatist as one would assume. It is basically a group of people who are trying to hold onto their religion in one hand so that they can pass it along to the future generation, and on the other, they are realising that it is the need of the hour to hold on to their identity so that they can break all the myths that are their surrounding there religion. In a world where the slogan is 'All Muslims are terrorists!!' it is seen by many as the only option to right the wrong to show that all those who follow this religion are not terrorists and that the stereotype and stigma that is associated with their religion and religious identity does not really hold true.

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

We began this endeavour with a research objective – to understand the dynamics of Muslim identity in a Mini – Pakistan and in our effort to enquire and understand this phenomenon we dealt with several aspects of what were considered to be Muslim identity. Each of these aspects was dealt with in different chapters of this dissertation.

The first chapter dealt with the theoretical questions that needed to be answered before moving ahead with the research by answering the various questions related to group identity at large and the Muslim identity in general. This chapter provided the theoretical anchor that was needed to begin one's enterprise in answering the questions at hand. This chapter in explaining the methodological stand also ensured that the questions regarding the use of certain methods would also be answered and ensure that a certain degree of clarity would be maintained. The historical background also prepared one to understand the current situation of the country particularly when looking at the Muslim question of identity.

The second chapter provided us with answers regarding the problems that Muslims have to face in the country. Using Galtung's (1990) argument, this chapter showed how the Muslims who stayed back in the country still had to pay a price for the act of few. This chapter also questioned a very basic argument given by most regarding the violence associated with the two communal riots. While agreeing that the current situation of communal riots did have its root in the Colonial Rule and their policy of Divide and Rule and while it was the Census report of 1872 that led to the construction of the two communities as Hindus and Muslims, it also brings out a very important dimension to the communal politics of today – the reason why there is communal and divisive politics to such degree in this country even today is because of the inability of the people to let go of partition and move on. This chapter brings into focus how communal riots and propaganda are used as tools to ensure that direct as well as structural and cultural violence is perpetuated on the Muslims of the country and then looks at certain events in the post independent period at both scales – one of nation and other at level of Bengal and Kolkata.

The second chapter while talking about the tools used by elements of divisive politics also mention the manner in which the above mentioned tools have been used and may have morphed into something else. Using the time frame of post Godhra Riots of 2002 this chapter demonstrates how the same ideas of communal politics are used but in a different manner to ensure a facade of violence - free nation. The reason for providing such a detailed account of the current socio-political condition was to illustrate how these acts of violence – direct, structural and cultural – actually produces a situation where the Muslim community moves into their shell and start holding on to the religious identity with their dear life. This inclination that most Muslim show towards their religion and their religious identity is actually a by-product of the divisive politics impact on them. Being excluded from and marginalised in all the spheres of public life – The Sachar Committee Report of 2006 provides evidence that shows the Muslim community at large being on the lower side of the scale of all the indices regarding development and decent standard of living – it is only their belief in their religious identity and their belief that acts as a solace, a healing touch for the people of this community.

This chapter helped by providing the conditions under which Muslim identity seems to have been gaining prominence. The findings of this chapter, and the arguments put forward in the previous chapter, act as the back drop to the particular research questions and pave way for the questions of Mini – Pakistan and Muslim identity to take centre stage.

The third chapter while describing the field of study, the 'Mini – Pakistan', sheds some light on the relations and workings of this area and brings forward how the ideals of universalism, pluralism and cosmopolitanism that is associated with Park Circus and the city at large is all a farce that people actually do believe in religious polarisation and segregation and while they may talk about camaraderie and fraternity when they look at the space the only thing they see about the place is its population belonging to a particular religion and associating that religious group with the other and the place that they live in, as also a separate entity – as a space that is beyond the boundaries of one's nation. The impact this idea of being associated with a particular religion can be seen among the Muslims themselves, who as one realises by the end of

the chapter, have started describing themselves only along their religious identity and asserting it as well.

The third chapter therefore answers two very important research questions in affirmative, one, regarding the presence of religious polarisation and two regarding the assertion of Muslim identity.

The fourth chapter seeks to provide answers for the rest of the questions – one, about the causes associated with this assertion and two, regarding the perpetuation of stereotypes that comes from asserting the Muslim identity. As the third chapter provides with answers regarding the assertion of Muslim identity, the fourth chapter seeks to provide a greater understanding of the ground reality. The various themes under which excerpts of the narratives are categorised, leads one to make the following analysis: while there is an assertion of religious identity among the Muslims, the reason behind such a phenomenon seems less to be with the larger political conditions and more with internal dynamics of the community itself. One realises that the assertion of their identity is based on two principles, one that is associated with the feeling of nostalgia while the other is the feeling of fear or anxiety. The nostalgia of a better and glorious past when their religion was at its peak is seen to reflect again and again in most of the responses and it is this feeling of nostalgia that leads them to believe that if they walk on the same path as their ancestors did, they would reach the same apex of glory and prosperity. The second principle of fear operates at two levels, one where the fear is associated with the external world that is, the fear of complete loss of identity resulting from absorption or assimilation of the community. The second fear is for the younger group where the idea is that they would leave the path of Islam and move away from the tenets of the religion and as a result of which their identities would cease to exist. Both the above mentioned patterns are seen time and again among the respondents who use it to maintain their 'distinct' identity.

The second question regarding the perpetuation of stereotype of the community is completely broken by the respondents' answers. While most of them do agree that they have been victims of stereotypes and do realise that there are certain stereotypes with the way they dress but the idea behind going out like that – with all the religious

markers – into the world is to change the perception of the world. They all believe that through their actions, they are breaking the cycle of stereotypes. They truly believed that whatever misconceptions and misgivings that are there about their religion are proven wrong through the actions that they undertake in their capacity as Muslims.

By the end of this chapter, therefore one realises that Western education or ideals that are considered universalistic do not really stand opposition to what religion in general, and in this case Islam, stands for. Through their responses these respondents bring out a very important element, that there is no one definition of Islam and the assumption that is always made about the Muslims in India giving more importance to pan-Islamism doesn't seem to apply among the residents of Park Circus who have created their very own understanding of Islam, where both Islam's teaching and principles can be seen as working along with the other spheres of their life. They provide a new interpretation of Islam which seems to be more at pace with today's time.

This dissertation while talking about identity, brings out a very important association between the locale of the people and their experiences. As David Harvey (1989) mentions while talking about spatial distribution within the city, that when people of a certain group are all put together and there is sense of discrimination from the rest of the city, where the rights to the city are such that a particular group is pushed to one corner, then they develop a community consciousness, which he mentions is stronger than class consciousness as the feeling of togetherness is stronger. This feeling of togetherness of course comes from the fact that they all share a similar lived experience. For the space and the community in hand, this shared experience comes from the pain of being considered outsiders, as being the 'other'. The process of 'other'-ing is so strong towards this community that even the space they occupy is named after a place which is not part of the country they belong to. This notion of hurt and humiliation is seen time and again when these respondents talk about Park Circus. While for all them it is their home, they can never forget that for the rest of the city it is nothing more than a 'Mini – Pakistan'. Another aspect of the place that they lived in and the effect it had on their identity is seen when these respondents also talk about the area they live in. While some of them talk about a level of decay in what they consider to be the morality of the youth there are others who have time and again

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pointed out that there has hardly been any development in their area, a twenty-two year old respondent explains the situation perfectly, when he said,

> "Well nothing much has really changed you know... honestly if you ask me the only thing that has happened is that a number of street lamps have been built and some of the things have been painted blue and white... that is about it..."

The younger respondents had a different kind of understanding of their humiliation, equating it with the absence of indicators for a better quality of life and what most of them described as development. The older generation's feeling had more to do with their experience of carrying a stigma. The stigma is of being associated not just with a particular community but also a particular space and this is a recurrent emotion in almost all their experiences. An excerpt from one of the older male respondent, who is a lawyer, reflects this hurt most eloquently. His experience becomes even more important because he provides a comparative view of what his life was before he left home and came to the city. He said,

> *"Na mane ami toh 1976 end e after my graduation consultancy aar L.L.B. korte aashi aar oi Calcuta University r oi hostel mane ami thaki toh amar life shuroo hoechhe oi 1976 er end theke ashole ki taar aage ami graamei schoole pora shuna korechhi aar graduation o korechhi."* ("No actually I came to Calcutta after my graduation for my consultancy of L.L.B. and it is only then that I started to stay at the Calcutta University and it is from then that my life in the city began. Before that I used to stay in the village I did my schooling and graduation from there").

> **"Achha apni toh eto bachor toh Kolkata shahore chhilen toh or environment er byapare kichhu bolun..."("So, you have stayed in the city for quite some time what do you think about the environment of the place?")**

> *"Na mane amra toh gramer chhele toh graamer loker je ei feeling achhe ba ei je honesty ja byapar ache, sheta ki, ei city life e mane ei shahore ki taar obhab achhe..."*("No I mean we from the village so people from the village have a very different attitude this attribute of honesty that is not here in the city life there seems to be a shortage of that.").

> **"Jemon?"("Like?")**

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"Jemon ki ei ummm... oi communal byapar ta ki mane oi Hindu Muslim er modhe kono omni feeling deshe kono deen feel koreni ki kintu Kolkata eshe nana rakhom kagoje ba newspaper e jakhon mane ke amar naam jigesh korchhe aar naam ta theek bhabe uchharon korte pare na ba naamer spelling bhul kore. Tarpore jigesh kore ki tumi Bangla ki kore bolo ba aar oi shob ki..." (" Like this ummm... communal thing meaning this difference between a Hindu and a Muslim I had never felt this feeling when I was growing up... But when I came to Kolkata different papers or newspapers would ask me my name and then they would pronounce it incorrectly or write the spelling of my name wrong. Then they would also ask how could I speak Bengali and all that...)

"Achha ta chhara?" Jakhon ora bhabun ei para ke niye kichu bole jemon ei Park Circus area ke je Mini – Pakistan bola hoe takhon apnar ki mone hoe?" **("Other than that? When let's say they say something about this locality, like this Park Circus area is called a Mini – Pakistan then what do you feel?")**

" Koshto hoe dukho a laage je eto bachhorer por o amader ke eta shunte hoe, amra ato tai Indian jato era, eder ke toh keo jigesh kore na amader ke keno? Ebar mone hoe je eder ke kichu na bolai bhalo. Tai amar mone hocche aar ki je jara ei I.A.S. bolun ba ei W.B.C.S. bolun tader lojja kora uchheeth aar ki karon era educated na era shudhoo qualified. Education aar qualification ek jineesh naa aar ki maane ekta doctor she qualified hote paare kintu she educated ki na sheta onno ekta jineesh, educated hote gele aaro anek jineesh laage jeta oder kacchhe nei. Toh ei shob lokder lojja kora ucheeth aar ki je oder kachhe etoh tah common sense nei. ("I feel hurt and sad as well, that even after so many years we still have to listen, we are as much Indians as they are, no one asks them anything why just us? Now I think it is better not to say anything at all. That is why I wonder that all these people today who are becoming I.A.S. or W.B.C.S. they should be ashamed of themselves because they are not really educated, they are just qualified. Education and qualification are two different things, I mean a doctor can be qualified but is the doctor educated or not that is another matter, to be educated you need something more than that which they lack. So these people should all be ashamed of themselves that they don't even have that much common sense.").

Therefore it becomes clear that this assertion of Muslim identity is an effect of the hurt and pain that this community feels but instead of it having any negative or divisive elements it seems to evoke a more positive feeling among the residents. It is acting as counter mechanism to the humiliation associated with the identity of all those who are living here, it is actually instilling in them a sense of pride. They are

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actually using the same term of being a Muslim but instead of it being a source of stigma they are seeing it as a source of their pride. They are simply changing the meaning and the usage of the term and probably in this way hoping to break the derogatory classification or category of living in a 'Mini – Pakistan'. The fact that this idea has already taken root is seen in the answers of the younger respondents. One among them expresses this idea by saying,

> "Okay so the best form of *dawah* is through your actions, so I am not saying that I am very big *dayi* or something I am I am nothing I mean but I try to in my own little way to reach out to people. I am not really concerned about the Muslims or the Non – Muslims at this time I am concerned with the Muslim community only, so maybe in the centre what we are trying to do maybe we are not even able to touch a percentage of the Muslim community because very few children come here but we are trying to touch their life make them feel confident about their identity of being a Muslim, which is somewhere lacking why are people uncomfortable in wearing a hijab because somewhere they are uncomfortable being a Muslim. Someone would want to flaunt his or her thing you know... like someone is a pilot or someone is a Miss World she would love to show off her tag. That is because you are proud of that but you are not proud of your own identity."

The findings of the dissertation leads one to understand that three layers of arguments can be formulated and needs further questioning and elaboration which in turn can provide one with scope fo further study of the area in question. These three layers of the argument are from the theoretical understanding, the current socio – political conditions of the country and finally regarding the change in the dynamics of the Muslim identity in the area concerned.

The findings of this dissertation makes one realise the futility of use of terms like secularism in India. While the ideal was integrated in the constitution to ensure that the seeds of communalism do not grow in India, from the way this dissertation unfolds it becomes evident that even though a gallant attempt was made by the founding fathers of this country, communalism has become too deep-rooted in India. What is worse though, is that it actually created a feeling of apathy in those who believed in the ideals of secularism. This is evident when one looks at how the present generation grew up in an environment where religion was given primacy as compared

to their parents and is a recurring pattern in all the narratives used here from the age group of twenty-two to thirty- five. The reason as one understand, has everything to do with the disillusionment of the previous generations belief in secularism and being victims of communalism and is reflected in their experiences even in organistations associated with the state or with institutions that are suppose to treat them equally like schools.owever, the question that becomes pertinent at this juncture is regarding the Muslim community and what needs to be further dealt with is what does secularism mean for them? Do they really hope and belief that there would be a time when they wouldn't have to answer questions regarding their loyalty?

The second layer of argument that needs further reflection has to do with the current socio- political atmosphere of the country and the fear and anxiety that the Muslim community associates with it. The current political party in power has been associated with right wing fundamentalists like the 'Rashtrya Swayamsewa Sangh' and the 'Vishva Hindu Parishad' and even a lot of anxiety is associated with the current Prime Minister. While some had expressed their fear implicitly there were those who were far more vocal about their inhibitions. What their narratives now do is lead to questions about the future and the anxiety that comes with it for this community; questions regarding their identitiy, but most importantly it leads one to wonder if their fear is justified or unfounded; to seek an answer to this question one needs to wait to observe the policies of the government in the future and the impact it has on the Muslim population as well as their reaction.

The changes in the dynamics of Muslim identity in the area concerned are at a more nascent stage and there is a major possibility of it changing its course. However, one can't deny that the changes that are happening in this part of the city resemble a lot to the Black Movement that occurred in the United States of America during the 1960's and 70's. In the same manner in which the Black areas were segregated and marginalised the Muslim areas, the 'mini – Pakistans', are also treated. The assertion of Black identity and changing the meaning of what it meant to be Black seems t o be mirroring among the Muslims in this part of the city who are also trying to assert their religious identity and at the same time are trying to break all the stereotypes about the community. Just like in the Black movement there was also a realisation that there was a need for Western education and a desire to live in better conditions, a similar

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aspiration and realisation can be seen among the Muslim residents of this area who have not forgone or denied the importance of education or occupation. It seems they have decided to follow an important teaching of the Quran, "God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves". While one does realise that unlike race religion is a much more complex institution one can't help but wonder if this continues what would be the condition of the Muslims in the city? Would this assertion lead to a betterment of their condition? Would this unity continue or crumble once individual needs take centre stage but most importantly, how would all this affect the larger dynamics of the city of Kolkata?

One would like to conclude at a more personal note and point out that Anthony Giddens(1987) was right about 'What is it that sociologists do?' If one hadn't studied this area in a more detailed manner then the commonsensical understanding would prevail where this act of assertion would either be reduced to an act of aggression or as a political gimmick used by a religious community and would never understand the pain and hurt that comes from being called an outsider from another country which most would believe to be an enemy country and how it is this hurt and which pain actually morphs into something else which has the bearings of a movement. If these respondents can be seen as a reflection of what is actually happening then probably a movement that will instil a degree of pride in those who feel humiliated, and at the same time provide them with a strength that would ensure them to move towards better conditions in all the dimensions of public life.

APPENDIX - I

Secularism

The term secularism was first used in 1648 at the end of the thirty years war in Europe. It was used to refer to the transfer of Church properties to the Princes. Later the term again found usage during the French Revolution in 1789; the usage remained the same where, "Tallerand announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the dispersal of the nation." (Chisti 2004: 183). The term secularism has two very different meanings for the west as well as India. This extended footnote would try to explain it in short how the meaning of the term varies for the West and India.

Secularism is a belief that all the aspects of the public sphere – economics, politics, education, as well as literature and art should be free from the realm of religion and should not have any influence of any religious belief. The origin of the concept can be seen in the Renaissance period from fourteenth to sixteenth century in Europe, which was basically aimed at the revival of the Greek philosophy of reason free from the influence of religion. But this concept gained momentum only during the Enlightenment period; from seventeenth century onwards, there was an increased inclination towards rationality, reason and scientific temper which was also supplemented by an increased penchant for the rejection of religious dogmas and superstitious belief.

Secularism later developed as having two meanings or thoughts in the Western political discourse, which are as follows,

> "Broadly speaking, two divergent concepts of secularism developed in Western political thought. According to the first which may be called liberal concept of secularism, the state should neither be religious nor anti-religious. It should not only have no religion but should be neutral towards it. There should be a complete separation of religion and politics. Religion should be regarded as a private matter of an individual and there should be no place for it in public affairs. The second concept, which may be labelled as the Marxian concept, regards secularism as an anti-thesis of religion. The Marxists believe that the inducement of religion was

> developed by the capitalist class to establish its hegemony and for countering the
> class struggle by using religion as opium." (Naidu 2007: 608).

After the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War, the prevalent meaning of secularism in the West is the one associated with the liberal school of thought which promotes absence of religious ideas or beliefs from the public sphere. While it may seem to be a desirable idea to have a society free from religious influence, this concept does have major shortcomings. One of the biggest drawbacks of this thought is that it homogenises differences which in turn can be a very big problem when one looks at minority rights and identity and it is the same problem that plagues the West today with regard to secularism.

In India, secularism is an important guarantee of the constitution which the founders of the nation realised would be an extremely important need for the people of this country who are so diverse from each other and also very easily swayed along the lines of their ascriptive identity. Though the kind of secularism that India has is very different from that of the West, instead of believing in a system where there is complete absence of religion from the affairs of the state, the Indian constitution believed and promoted the idea of a nation where all the religious communities are treated alike and to ensure that this is maintained, no government encroaches on the rights of the individual citizen particularly the minorities. Incorporated in the constitution as Fundamental Rights, the freedom to practice one's religion without any fear or insecurityis provided to ensure that these minorities are guaranteed their safety by making the state accountable for any anti- religious actions.

But there is a difference between ideals and reality and the secularism in India is far from what it was supposed to be. One major flaw with the way secularism is used today is defined as hegemonic secularism. According to Manoranjan Mohanty (1989) Indian secularism is hegemonic in two respects – first, it seeks to only promote the interest of the ruling class by manipulation of the various religious groups particularly the religious minority groups' sensibilities. For example,

> "When it has suited the Congress (I) it has given the appearance of protecting the
> interest of the minorities. On other occasion and in general it has carefully
> maintained its Hindu base." (Mohanty1989: 1219).

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Second, the development strategy that was used along with secularism, has actually stream rolled cultural identity in the name of universality, as a result the very essence of secularism which was unique to India seems to have been loss.

The need of the hour therefore, is democratic secularism, which according to Mohanty (1989) should be based on two assumptions – one that secularism is an important process of democratic transformation, which depends on the liberation of people from domination of agents of social stratification; and two, that there should be an emphasis on reason which in turn would generate new values.

The Veil

The Quran which is the holy book of the Muslims dictates that all Muslim women must dress modestly and go about with caution and circumspection in the public domain. Over the years, this has come to mean that women should take the veil. The usage of veil however had nothing to do with religion, it was a practice that was common in ancient Arab as it was in Greece, and it was also a common practice among the Jews, Assyrians and the Romans. It was practised among the upper class women of all these communities.

It was actually only with colonialism and the oriental attitude of the colonisers that the veil came to be associated with the Muslims of the world; it was used as propaganda of the West to show the backwardness of the Muslim community, of equating them with being uncivilised and illiterate. The effect of such a representation of Islam was that Muslims all over the world as a defensive move started taking up all those aspects of their religious identity that the West was demeaning, the intention was to counteract west's understanding if Islam and at the same time show solidarity with the members of the community all over the globe. In the midst of all this veil either in the form of *abaya, hijab* or *burkha* became the marker of Muslim identity for women whether they agreed with it or not.

The debate regarding the veil has come under the limelight again especially in the international community because of the controversial nature of certain laws that are being carried out in European countries, particularly in France, where the government is banning head scarves in school or long black skirts. While the French Government point out that it is done for the security of students, that it also ensures a degree of uniformity and most importantly it goes against the ideals of secularism that France believes in, there are a number of Muslim scholars who see it as an act of aggression against the Muslims. But the debate that is extremely intriguing is the one that is coming from within the women of the community itself, because there are arguments for both against the use of veil as well as for its use.

Those who are arguing for the use of veil point out that it being represented as oppressive or backward is a colonial construct; while they feel that it empowers them and brings a sense of sisterhood as people of the same community recognise each

other and feel for each other. But most importantly they find it empowering because it brings a sense of satisfaction for them knowing that they are wearing a marker of their religion. They also ask a very relevant question – "... whether those committed to the abandonment of the veil seriously believe in the liberation of women." (Ahmad 2006: 5038).

The other side of the argument comes from those Muslim women who equate all the discrimination as well as backwardness of being a Muslim woman with the veil; for many of them the veil represents patriarchy in its most heinous form as it makes someone completely invisible. Many women even point out that this invisibility is worse because even while being present, they are not acknowledged. The veil for them has acted as a cloak of invisibility, one that they didn't ask for, and one which ensured that their movement along with aspirations are all restricted.

 To conclude therefore one would like to mention that even though they talk about what the veil means to them, nevertheless, both these arguments fail to ask a very important question – "Who has a right to decide whether or not the veil as an item of women's apparel is relevant to women's rights?" (Ahmad 2006: 5038).

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