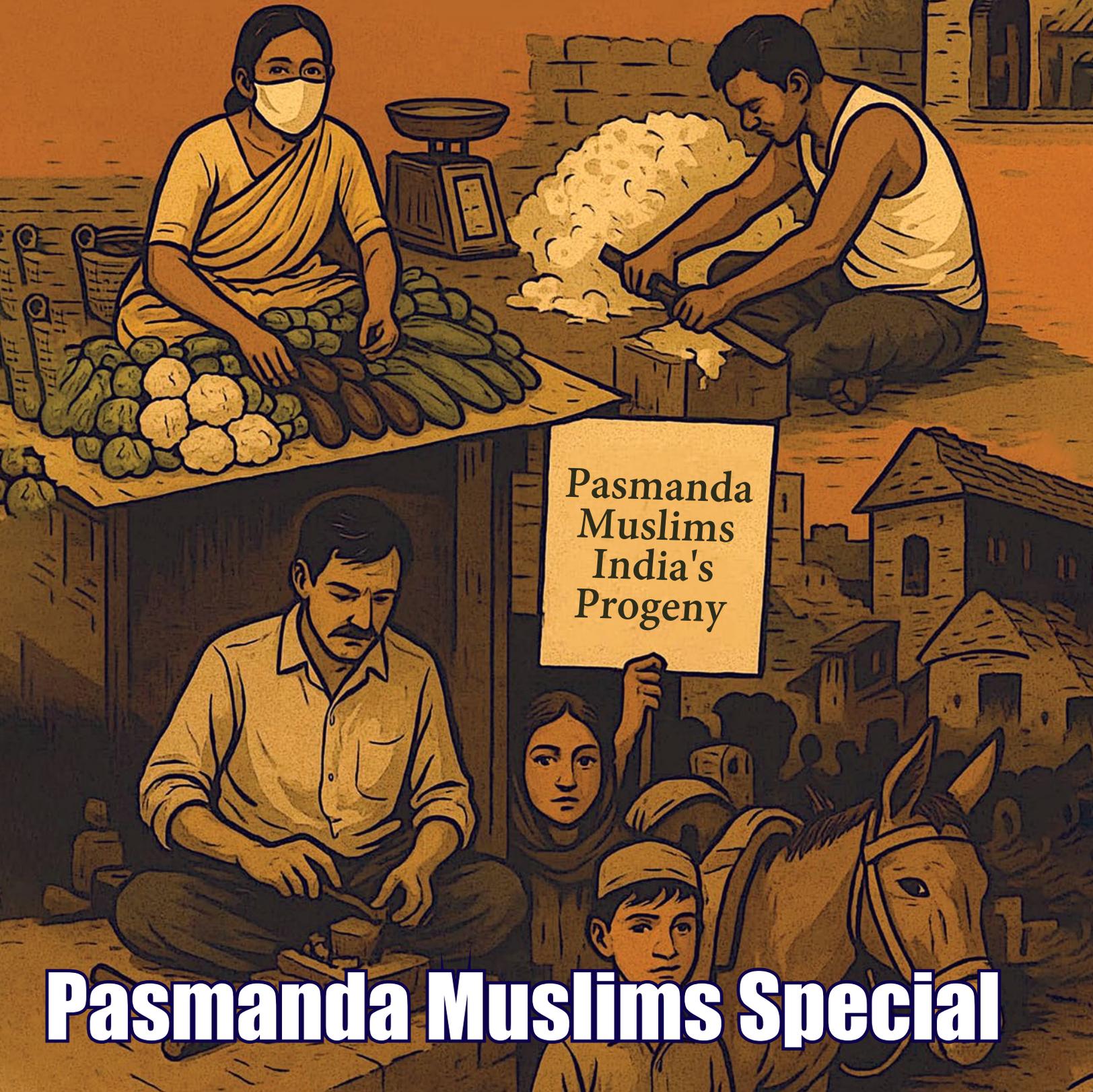


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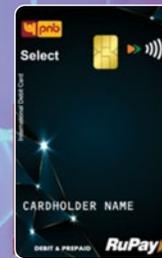
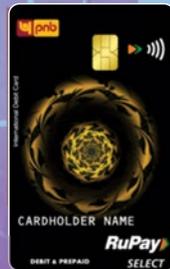
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Manthan is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed, academic and theme oriented journal dedicated to the social and academic activism, published quarterly from Delhi. It is always oriented on a particular theme. It welcomes original research articles from authors doing research in different genres of Humanities.

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Ram Bahadur Rai is the Group Editor of Hindustan Samachar and president of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). He was awarded Padma Shri in 2015. In his early days, he was closely associated with Jaiprakash Narayan and actively participated in anti-Emergency movement. Contact: rbrai118@gmail.com

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Abdullah Mansoor is a Pasmanda thinker, writer and director of Pasmanda Democracy Channel.

Dr. Ohi Uddin Ahmed is a teacher, social researcher and Pasmanda Social activist from Silchar, Assam. Hailed from a marginalized Muslim caste named maimal from Barak Valley of southern Assam, he obtained his Ph.D. degree from Assam University, Silchar, in the year 1919 writing on local caste system and Social Stratification among Muslims in the context of Indian Subcontinent. He has published numerous research paper and articles on social discrimination faced by the low caste Muslims in India in their day to day life. He is closely associated with local social movement and pasmanda Movement. Dr. Ahmed is a champion of social justice enshrine in the constitution and social equality among Muslims.

Dr. Rahil Ahmed is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at the Central University of Odisha, Koraput. He holds a PhD in Education and Political Science. He has been the co-project director of the important research project 'Evolution of Article 370: An Analysis' approved by ICSSR under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Dr. Kahkashan is currently working as a guest faculty at Swami Shradhanand College, Delhi University. She has done her Masters in Hindi Literature from Ramjas College and PhD from Delhi University. Her research topic was - Expression of Pasmanda Muslim life in Hindi novels. Dr. Kahkashan has a special interest in the interrelationship between literature and society, and her academic work makes a notable contribution to contemporary social discourses. Contact: Kahkashan.hansraj@live.com

Dr. Sharid Jamal Ansari received his Ph.D. in Persian language and literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Five books written and edited by him have been published. Currently, he is contributing to social work as an editor at Rekhta Foundation. Pasmanda is working for the upliftment and development of the deprived and neglected community of the Muslim society and has been associated with this community for the last two decades.

Dr. Pradeep Kumar Thinker, writer and journalist is currently working as Assistant Professor in the History Department of Ramjas College, Delhi University. He is also a member of the editorial team of Manthan magazine. He has previously served as Deputy Director at Mewar Institute of Management, Chaudhary Charan Singh University. He has also delivered about 25 guest lectures in various conferences/colleges. Apart from this, more than 30 research papers have been published in national and international research books. More than 50 articles have been published in various journals and magazines.

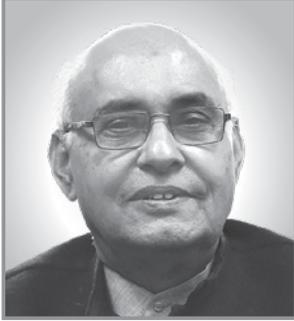
Dr. Shikha Singh Researcher, writer and teacher is currently working as TGT Hindi/Sanskrit in Swami Vivekanand Saraswati Vidya Mandir. Till now, six research papers and one book of Shikha ji "Ashram Sanskriti as described in Ramayana" have been published by Samkaleen Prakashan, New Delhi. Apart from this, she has presented many research papers in various national and international conferences.

Ramanand Sharma teaches Political Science at Aryabhata College, University of Delhi, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Delhi University. He is a recipient of the INSPIRE Award from DST, Government of India, and holds a PGDILD from the Indian Society of International Law. His research interests include Indian politics and political thought. Ramanand has contributed to various academic publications and authored chapters for SOL, DU course materials.

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Editorial



Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

A part of Indian society, which is basically Hindu society, is known by the nomenclature of converted Muslims. Due to historical reasons, some Muslims came as invaders from Iran and Central Asia, while some came to South India as traders. They too became a part of this society. Debate on how much of this participation is organic and how much is artificial constantly goes on, oftentimes also creating tension in the society.

The structure societies that are ancient and widespread is never linear; it is akin to the roots of a banyan tree. Indian society in its character is an eternal one, hence naturally, there is synthesis in it. In order to understand the synthesis of clan, lineage, caste, region, language and sects, any sociologist should himself earn the worth to actually be the discipline he undertakes to study. There are many examples of this in India. While in analysis, the duality of Hindu-Muslim is apparent, the flow of Indianness emerges in synthesis.

Since much of the Muslim community in India is a part of the Hindu society, neither rituals nor ancestors, nor history and ethnicity change with conversion. Did the Hindu synthesis of this community cease simply because of being called Muslim? Is this even possible?

This issue gives rise to many other questions. For example, the civilizational identities (cultures) from Arabia to Iran ended long ago, which is why the poet Allama Iqbal once said:

*Greece, Egypt and Rome have all vanished from this world,
But our name and trace still endure.*

*There's something about us that our existence does not vanish,
The world though for centuries, has sought our erasure.*

If many cultures of the world have been swallowed by Islam and Christianity, what is so special about India? Another poet Altaf Hussain Hali had put it succinctly:

*"The fleet of Islam that sailed from Arabia,
Conquering everything from the west to Persia,
The entire world bowed to whose victorious flag,
No danger, fear or obstacle could make it sag,
The Gulf of Amman, nor the Red Sea could hold,*

*Such was its victorious march, for all to behold,
The sword of Islam that conquered the seven seas,
Alas! Sank when it reached the banks of the Ganges”.*

However, these utterances of Iqbal and Hali are partially true, because today, India's Gandhara has become Afghanistan and has forgotten its Buddhist and Shaivite past, a process that continues in Pakistan as well.

It was not the Islam that came to Kerala which spread in India. The Islam of today's India came with the sword of Mohammed bin Qasim, who brought with him the nightmare of Jihad-e-Hind (Ghazwa-e-Hind). Today, even after almost 1,200 years, that toxic dream of Jihad-e-Hind is alive somewhere. This is the continuation of that noxious medieval aggression, with which the remainder India too continues to fight and will keep doing so.

But is this war with the Muslims of India? The Muslims of this country have been the victims of the atrocities of the invader Ashraf Muslims. From the Middle Ages till today, they have been called indigenous and converted Muslims, or Pasmanda Muslims. They are the natural offspring of Mother India. The present historians of India have committed the crime of not ascertaining their truth. That is why we do not know the martyrdom of Allah Baksh Soomro who fought against the Partition of India. We know the Muslim League, but do not know the Momin Conference.

There is also the story of the Indianization of Ashrafs, but the saga of Pasmandas continues to remain unknown. This Pasmanda special issue of *Manthan* is to highlight that saga. Fortunately, we acquired a suitable guest editor for this, Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi, I express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Faizi. It is because of him that this special issue, replete with research, could take shape.

You have read the Dalit Special Issue. I appeal to you to await *Manthan's* Special Issue on Bharatiyata (Indianness).

Shubham!!



mahesh.chandra.sharma@live.com

Guest Editorial

Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi

Pasmanda Muslims: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective

Pasmanda Muslims, a term that expresses a deep and complex social, cultural and political perspective within Indian Muslim society, has attracted special attention in recent years. The term Pasmanda, meaning “those left behind”, refers to a socially, economically and politically marginalized group of Muslims who are mostly of Indian origin and joined Islam in the later period of its spread in the country. Pasmanda Muslims occupy a significant place in the socio-political structure of India. Being an unheard and relatively less recognized community in the socio-political fabric of the country, this community has been socially and economically marginalized for centuries.

History is witness to the fact that this community has struggled for social justice for centuries. Even today, the Pasmanda community is facing many challenges. Problems like unemployment, poverty, lack of education, social discrimination are commonplace for this community. However, in recent years people of this segment have started raising their voice and governments too are taking some steps for their uplift. The study of the identity of Pasmanda Muslims, their struggles and socio-political status is essential to understand the diversity and complexities of Indian Muslim society.

This special issue of Manthan presents an in-depth analysis of the history, socio-political conditions of Pasmanda Muslims, and the challenges they face.

The history of Pasmanda Muslims, from the freedom movement to Partition, Two-Nation Theory, and contemporary political perspectives, presents an important and deep socio-political story. The article written by Dr. Upasana Tiwari and me makes it clear that the existence of Pasmanda Muslims is not limited to any one class or

group. They are part of the wider social and cultural fabric of Indian Muslim society, which is diverse not only in religious but also in economic and ethnic terms.

The history of Pasmanda Muslims is also connected with the freedom struggle. Dr. Ayub Rain has emphasized the aspect that the Pasmanda community played an important role in the freedom struggle of India, but their contribution could not always obtain its proper place. Especially at the time of the Partition of India, the conflict between the Muslim League and the Momin Conference made the socio-political situation of the Pasmanda Muslims more complicated. Abdul Mansoor's study makes it clear that the concept of the Two-Nation Theory rendered a new division not only in the entire Indian society but in the Muslim society as well.

There were fundamental differences in the views of Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad regarding the social and political identity of Pasmanda Muslims. While Patel felt the need for Pasmanda Muslims to raise their voice against social inequality, Maulana Azad, while stressing on religious unity and religious education, remained indifferent to social justice in Muslim society. The views of Dr. Sharad Jamal Ansari and Dr. Pradeep Kumar make it clear that the views of these leaders had a deep impact on the Pasmanda Muslims.

Prof. Abbu Huraira's comments on the division of Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal within the society highlight the complexity of the social structure of the Pasmanda Muslims. This class division has emerged as a sensitive issue not only within the Indian Muslim society but also in the wider scenario of Indian society.

The views presented by Shri Ram Bahadur Rai on the debate on separate electorates versus reservation in the Constituent Assembly are relevant even today. The issue of separate electorates and reservation has always kept the Pasmanda community mired in conflicts. Dr. Himanshu Rai's article focusing on the Motilal Nehru Report written by him makes a proper attempt to analyse the complex issues of Muslim society. Dr. Ohiuddin's article on the condition of Pasmanda Muslims in the Assam region in modern times forces us to think along many new dimensions.

Dr. Alisa Bano's study on the status of Pasmanda Muslim women has highlighted the special circumstances and struggles of the women of this community. The role of Pasmanda women, their voice and the attitude of society towards their rights still remain a huge challenge. Dr. Rahil Ahmed's article throws light on the first martyrdom of Allah Baksh Soomro against the Two-Nation Theory advocated by the Muslim League. Ashish Shukla has made a successful attempt to explore the representation of the Pasmanda society and understand the configuration of this particular segment. Dr. Sunil Chaudhary's views on the relationship between Narendra Modi and Pasmanda Muslims in

modern politics, particularly, are important. Dr. Kahkashan Parveen's analytical article on the mention of Pasmandas in Hindi literature is worth reading.

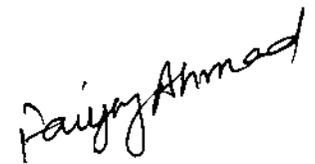
Ultimately, it is extremely important to study the identity, struggle and status of Pasmanda Muslims from different perspectives. This special issue of Manthan in the direction of socio-political empowerment of Pasmanda Muslims is important not only from an academic point of view but also for a better understanding of the entire Indian society.

Our special issue on sensitizing the rights of Pasmanda Muslims is an important document on their history, present status, and future by presenting their social, political, and cultural journey in a new light, thereby providing a new impetus to address their neglect and upliftment. It will also help all readers to become more sensitive towards the issues of Pasmanda Muslims.

I would especially like to thank each author for their hearty interest and cooperation in this endeavour.

It is a matter of great honour for me that the respected Dr. Mahesh Chand Sharma, editor-in-chief of Manthan, expressed his faith in me and entrusted me with the important responsibility of being the guest editor for this Pasmanda special issue of Manthan.

We hope that this special issue will be a source of inspiration for all those working for the rights of Pasmanda Muslims. We believe that through this special issue, there will be a positive change in the society of Pasmanda Muslims, and they will emerge by strengthening their role in the all-round development of the country.



Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi



समान नागरिक संहिता

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संपत्ति अधिकार

01 सभी धर्म-समुदायों के सभी वर्गों के लिए बेटा-बेटी को संपत्ति में समान अधिकार।

वैवाहिक आयु निर्धारित

02 सभी धर्मों में विवाह की न्यूनतम उम्र लड़कों के लिए 21 वर्ष और लड़कियों के लिए 18 वर्ष निर्धारित।

वैवाहिक पंजीकरण

03 विवाह के तय समय के भीतर विवाह पंजीकरण करवाना अनिवार्य। एक पति-पत्नी नियम समान रूप से लागू।

तलाक पर समान अधिकार

04 तलाक पर पत्नी को पति जैसा समान अधिकार, सभी धर्म और सम्प्रदायों के महिला-पुरुषों को समान अधिकार।

माता-पिता हेतु

05 किसी व्यक्ति की मृत्यु के पश्चात उसकी सम्पत्ति में माता-पिता का भी समान अधिकार होगा।

अनुसूचित जनजाति

06 अनुसूचित जनजाति को समान नागरिक संहिता (यूसीसी) के दायरे से बाहर रखा गया है।

लिव इन रिलेशन

07 लिव इन रिलेशन के दौरान पैदा हुए बच्चों को उस युगल का जायज बच्चा ही माना जाएगा और उस बच्चे को जैविक संतान के समस्त अधिकार प्राप्त होंगे।



यू.सी.सी. (ucc) की यात्रा



यू.सी.सी.

समान नागरिक संहिता का उद्देश्य

- समाज के प्रत्येक कमजोर, गरीब और संवेदनशील वर्ग को सुरक्षा प्रदान करना एवं सशक्त बनाना।
- प्रत्येक वर्ग की महिलाओं, बच्चों, युवाओं और वृद्धों को विकास की मुख्य-धारा से जोड़ना।
- एक समान कानून के जरिए प्रदेश में एकता, अखंडता और राष्ट्रवाद की भावना को बढ़ावा देना।
- विवाह की आयु बढ़ाकर प्रदेश की बेटीयों और साथ ही बेटों को उच्च शिक्षा के लिए प्रोत्साहित करना।
- वर्षों से चली आ रही कुप्रथाओं को समाप्त करते हुए सशक्त और समृद्ध समाज का निर्माण करना।
- सभी समुदाय के लोगों को समानता का अधिकार देते हुए बेटा-बेटी व स्त्री-पुरुष का भेदभाव मिटाना।

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डेस्टिनेशन उत्तराखण्ड

सतत विकास को प्रोत्साहन



21वीं सदी के विकसित भारत के निर्माण के दो प्रमुख स्तंभ हैं। पहला, अपनी विरासत पर गर्व और दूसरा, विकास के लिए हर संभव प्रयास। आज उत्तराखण्ड, इन दोनों ही स्तंभों को लगातार मजबूत कर रहा है। ये दशक उत्तराखण्ड का दशक होगा।

नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी ने 21वीं सदी के तीसरे दशक को उत्तराखण्ड का दशक कहा है। हम प्रधानमंत्री जी के विजन के अनुरूप राज्य को हर क्षेत्र में आदर्श राज्य बनाने के लिये विकल्प रहित संकल्प के साथ काम कर रहे हैं।

पुष्कर सिंह धामी
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तराखण्ड

डबल इंजन की सरकार

बड़े निर्णय - बड़ा प्रभाव

समानता की गारंटी

समान नागरिक संहिता (यूसीसी)-स्वतंत्र भारत के इतिहास में उत्तराखण्ड पहला ऐसा राज्य बन गया है, जिसने समान नागरिक संहिता (यूसीसी) को लागू किया है। समस्त धर्म-समुदायों में विवाह, तलाक, गुजारा भत्ता और विरासत के लिए एक कानून का उत्तराखण्ड में प्रावधान है। समाज में बाल विवाह, बहु विवाह, तलाक जैसी सामाजिक कुुरीतियों और कुप्रथाओं पर रोक सुनिश्चित होगी। लिव इन रिलेशनशिप के संबंध में पंजीकरण व अन्य व्यवस्थाओं के दूरगामी परिणाम निकलेंगे।

नारी शक्ति का सम्मान

30 प्रतिशत क्षैतिज आरक्षण-राज्य सरकार ने उत्तराखण्ड की सरकारी नौकरियों में महिलाओं की प्रतिभागिता बढ़ाने के लिए

ऐतिहासिक निर्णय लिया है। इसके अंतर्गत सरकारी नौकरियों में महिलाओं के लिए 30 प्रतिशत क्षैतिज आरक्षण से संबंधित कानून लागू किया गया है। उत्तराखण्ड में महिला सशक्तिकरण की दृष्टि से इस निर्णय का व्यापक प्रभाव पड़ा है।

सशक्त भू-कानून

भूमि के अवेध कारोबार पर प्रहार - उत्तराखण्ड में जमीनों को सुदृढ़-बुद्ध करने की शिकायतों को दूर करने के लिए राज्य सरकार ने सशक्त भू-कानून लागू करने का निर्णय लिया है। जनभावनाओं के अनुरूप राज्य सरकार ने उत्तर प्रदेश जमादारी चिंताश और भूमि व्यवस्था-1950 (संशोधन विधेयक 2025) में जमीन बेचने-खरीदने के लिए कड़े प्रावधान किए हैं। इस भू-कानून के माध्यम से जमीन के अवेध कारोबार पर नकेल कसना संभव होगा।

धर्मांतरण विरोधी कानून

जोर-जबरदस्ती पर रोक -दबाव बनाकर धर्मांतरण करने की कोशिशों को इतोत्साहित करने के लिए राज्य सरकार सख्त कानून लेकर आई है। राज्य सरकार ने उत्तराखण्ड धर्म की स्वतंत्रता (संशोधन) विधेयक-2022 के माध्यम से जबरन या प्रलोभन देकर धर्म परिवर्तित कराने या करने पर 10 साल तक की सजा का प्रावधान किया गया है। जबरन धर्म परिवर्तन को रोकने में यह कानून सार्थक साबित हो रहा है।

नकल विरोधी कानून

पारदर्शी परीक्षा के हक में -राज्य में परीक्षा प्रणाली में पारदर्शिता सुनिश्चित करने के लिए प्रतियोगी परीक्षा अध्यादेश-2023 लागू किया गया है। योग्य युवाओं के पक्ष में लागू किया गया यह कानून बेहद सख्त है,

जिसमें नकल करने पर 10 वर्ष तक की कैद और 10 लाख तक के जुर्माने का प्रावधान किया गया है।

दंगारोधी कानून

संपत्तियों की सुरक्षा का कवच -दंगा-फसाद और अन्य गतिविधियों के कारण संपत्तियों को होने वाले नुकसान को रोकने के लिए सरकार सख्त कानून लेकर आई है। राज्य सरकार ने उत्तराखण्ड लोक और निजी संपत्ति क्षति वसूली कानून लागू किया है। इसके दायरे में सरकारी और निजी दोनों तरह की संपत्ति को रखा गया है। नुकसान करने वालों से ही क्षतिपूर्ति वसूलने की व्यवस्था संपत्तियों को सुरक्षित रखने में मददगार साबित होगी।

आंदोलनकारियों का मान

10 प्रतिशत क्षैतिज आरक्षण-उत्तराखण्ड राज्य निर्माण के लिए

संघर्ष करने वाले आंदोलनकारियों को सरकार ने सौगात दी है। सरकारी नौकरियों में उनके लिए सरकार ने 10 प्रतिशत क्षैतिज आरक्षण की व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित की है। आंदोलनकारियों के सभी आश्रितों को भी क्षैतिज आरक्षण के दायरे में लाया गया है। राज्य आंदोलनकारियों की वर्षों पुरानी मांग को पूरी कर सरकार ने उनका सम्मान किया है।

**विश्व पटल पर
बन रही देवभूमि
उत्तराखण्ड की
अलग पहचान**

बड़े आयोजन से बनी बड़ी पहचान

ज्वलंत विषयों पर गहन मंथन: जी-20 सम्मेलन की बैठकें

जी-20 सम्मेलन के अंतर्गत आयोजित इफ्राइमर वॉकिंग ग्रुप की बैठकों का उत्तराखण्ड में सफल आयोजन किया गया। नरेंद्रनगर ऋषिकेश और रामनगर में आयोजित इन बैठकों में देश-विदेश के प्रतिनिधियों के साथ महत्वपूर्ण चर्चा हुई। प्रौद्योगिकी, इफ्राटेक और डिजिटलीकरण की भूमिका की खोज के साथ-साथ जलवायु परिवर्तन से लेकर बुनियादी ढांचे के लचीलेपन और तेज शहरीकरण और समावेशन जैसे विषयों पर विचार विमर्श किया गया।

आयुष की लौ: विश्व आयुर्वेद कांग्रेस एवं अंतर्राष्ट्रीय एक्सपो

आयुष गतिविधियों को विश्व स्तर पर विस्तारित करने के उद्देश्य से विश्व आयुर्वेद कांग्रेस एवं अंतर्राष्ट्रीय एक्सपो के दसवें संस्करण का उत्तराखण्ड में सफल आयोजन किया गया। 12 से लेकर 15 दिसंबर 2024 तक देहरादून में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में 60 से अधिक देशों के प्रतिनिधियों ने भाग लिया और आयुर्वेद से जुड़े नूतन पहलुओं पर विस्तारपूर्वक चर्चा की।

जड़ों से जुड़ाव: अंतर्राष्ट्रीय प्रवासी उत्तराखण्डी सम्मेलन

विभिन्न देशों में रहते हुए व्यापार व अन्य क्षेत्रों में नाम कमाने वाले प्रवासी उत्तराखण्डीयों को अपने साथ जोड़ने के लिए राज्य सरकार ने महत्वपूर्ण पहल की है। इस क्रम में 12 जनवरी 2025 को देहरादून में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय प्रवासी सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया गया। प्रतिभागियों ने राज्य सरकार के साथ मिलकर उत्तराखण्ड में निवेश करने और रोजगार के नए अवसर पैदा करने का संकल्प लिया।

उत्तराखण्ड में खेलों का नया अध्याय: 38वें राष्ट्रीय खेल

देवभूमि को उजत जयंती वर्ष के अवसर पर 38वें राष्ट्रीय खेलों की मेजबानी का अवसर मिला। उत्तराखण्ड ने ना सिर्फ मध्य आयोजन सुनिश्चित किया, बल्कि खेल के मैदान में अपने प्रदर्शन को नई ऊंचाई प्रदान की। दस हजार से ज्यादा खिलाड़ियों ने बेहतरीन आधरभूत ढांचे और उच्चस्तरीय सुविधाओं के बीच खेल प्रतिभा का प्रदर्शन किया। उत्तराखण्ड ने पहली बार सबसे ज्यादा 103 पदक जीते और मेडल टेबल में सातवां स्थान प्राप्त किया। खेल विकास के दृष्टिकोण से राष्ट्रीय खेल उत्तराखण्ड के लिए मील का पत्थर साबित हुए।

उद्यमियों संग आया निवेश: ग्लोबल इन्वेस्टर्स सॉमिट, 2023

राज्य सरकार ने दिनांक 08 व 09 दिसंबर 2023 को उत्तराखण्ड ग्लोबल इन्वेस्टर्स सॉमिट का आयोजन किया, जिसमें उद्यमियों के उत्साह ने निवेश प्रस्तावों की चमकदार तस्वीर सामने रखी। उत्तराखण्ड को लक्ष्य से अधिक 3.50 लाख करोड़ के निवेश प्रस्ताव प्राप्त हुए। पीस टू प्रोस्पेक्टिटी की टैलाइज़ को वास्तविक रूप से अपनाते हुए सरकार उद्यमियों का भरोसा जीतने में सफल रही। करीब तीस निवेशक अनुकूल नई नीतियों के साथ व प्रस्ताव धरातल पर उतर रहे हैं और प्रदेश की समृद्धि में भागीदार बन रहे हैं।





Dr. Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi

The Pasmandas are Indigenous Muslims

Among Indian Muslims, social segregation was first based on racial differences. A clear demarcation between the two main categories of Indian Muslims, that of foreign extraction and that of indigenous origin, reflects in the term Ashraaf or Shurafa which is used to designate Muslims of superior stock (mostly those of foreign extraction, Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal, and Pathan) in direct contrast to those of Indian origin.¹

This makes it obvious that the Muslim community in the country is clearly divided into two major segments. One is the races/castes that came as invaders from Arabia, Persia (Iran) and Central Asia who ruled over India for a long time and even today occupy more than twice the proportion of their population in the centre of governance and administration,² and those who call themselves Ashraf (superior/elite). It has been a long time since they came to India but even today these people try to keep alive their self-perception of being rulers over other people of India by keeping their foreign identity foremost. Even today, they display their pride

of being foreigners by adding the names of Arabic and Iranian cities as prefixes before their names; such as Madani, Makki, Bukhari, Kirmani, Samanani, Sherwani, etc. The second Muslim community is around 85% to 90% of the total Muslim population.^{3,4} This comprises of those who had converted from their previous Indian religious beliefs to the Islamic faith. Most of them are working class people, with some belonging to the castes engaged in waste disposal functions, and some tribal communities, which are spread across almost every region of India. These communities are completely local in their regional attire, language, food habits and behaviour and on this basis, appear totally different from foreign-origin Muslims. However, due to the influence of various Ashrafi organizations like the Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat, etc., operating in the name of Islam and Muslims, the trend of Arabization/Iranization in the name of Islamization has definitely increased in this community since the last century, yet the indigenous colour and odour is still reflected in

Muslims in India are clearly divided into two groups. One is of those who are proud of their foreign identity and the other group comprises of those who still maintain their indigenous identity. A scientific study of the society

Manthan

them. In this article, an attempt has been made to throw light on the indigenous origin of Muslims of Indian origin under the following points.

Names of Muslims

It is a well-known fact that people of any particular region name their new generation according to their local language and social beliefs. India too, is no different from this. The names of the indigenous Muslims have been indicative of their local culture. The names of the Pasmada Muslims are in accordance with the culture of the local languages such as Bechu, Bechan, Pyaru, Dileru, Jhabu⁵, Gorakh Miyan son of Ramzan Miyan⁶ Tidi Rai Bhat⁷, Mangti Mallah Ramda⁸ also according to Islamic ceremonies and festive occasions, like Sobrati, Bakridan, Ramzania⁹ Iddan, Barfati, etc., according

to the names of the days of the week, like Jumman, Buddhan, Jumrati, Peeru, Somaru¹⁰ and also according to the names of Islamic months, viz., Moharram, Razzab, Shaban, etc.

It seems appropriate to talk about some prominent indigenous Muslims names here, such as Kuber Miyan, Chikhuri Miyan, Malli Miyan, etc.¹¹ In my childhood, we used to call the muezzin (the mosque functionary who sounds the call for Azan, the Muslim prayer) of my mosque as Dalkurum Dada. Later we came to know that his real name was Abdul Karim but he was famous by the Bhojpuri pronunciation of his Arabic name Dalkurum. My (the writer's) grandmother's father's name was Laung Miyan and Laung Miyan's father's name was Meeran Miyan. My grandfather's aunt's name was Bhagiya, whom my father and

his brother used to call Bhagiya (the Bhojpuri pronunciation of Bhagiya) Dadi¹², whose husband was Haji Subhan Ali, who in his time had done the Hajj pilgrimage for a mere Rs 24.

The name of the maternal grandfather of the famous Pasmada leader Noor Muhammad who was elected to the Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1937, was Badar Miyan and father-in-law's name was Chulhan Sardar.¹³ Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan's father's name was Bachai Miyan and his brother's name was Pachkauri Miyan.¹⁴ The name of the father of freedom fighter, activist of the Champaran movement, and the doyen of Hindi journalism in Bihar, correspondent of the Hindi weekly *Pratap*, Peer Muhammad Munis, was Fatingan Miyan.¹⁵

The name of Chauri Chaura's martyr Sukai's son was Gobar, while the brother of Paramveer Chakra winner Veer Abdul Hamid is named Jhunnan. The name of the poet son of the known poet Rahat Indori is Satlaj Indori; his granddaughter's name is Ravi, while his granddaughter's name is Meera Zaryab¹⁶ The folk song artist, an activist of the Jharkhand movement, Jharkhand Ratna, Padmashri Madhu Mansuri Hasmukh was named Madhu because of his habit of licking honey in his childhood.¹⁷

Maulana Hakim (a physician), Atiqur Rahman Arvi, a staunch opponent of the Muslim



League's Two-Nation Theory, had named his two sons Mohan Lal and Sohan Lal and used to talk about having done so with great pride among his friends and colleagues.¹⁸ Several names are similar among the Hindu and Pasmanda communities, like Bhola, Chhedi, Jhangur, Raju, Lallan, Amin, etc. To differentiate between Hindu and Pasmanda names, people used to add the synonym of the Muslim word Miyan to the Pasmanda name. Actually, Miyan is the form of address among the Ashraf community which they use to accord respect each other, but the Ashrafs never address the Pasmandas with the suffix Miyan. It is worth noting here that Hindus respect Pasmandas by calling them Miyan, but the Ashraf Muslims do not do so.

In this regard, Mohan Das Naimisharay has written about quite an interesting incident, "Lalbegi Muslims use Beg as their surname but their names are Ashok, Prakash, Mohan, Surekha, Anita, etc. Very few among them like to keep Muslim names. Due to such mixed names, funny incidents take place sometimes. When Prakash Ismail Chavan of Ahmednagar was selected for the Nagarshree Samman, his full name was given in the newspapers, because of which both Hindus and Muslims got confused. The Muslims did not felicitate him considering him to be a Hindu, while the Hindus did likewise, believing that he was a Muslim.¹⁹ Not

only this, the foreign Ashraf Muslims did not allow the native Muslims to use Arabic and Iranian names like theirs. Prof. Masood Alam Falahi writes in his book *Hindustan Mein Jaat Paat Aur Musalmaan*, people of the so-called low castes were not allowed to keep good names and were not even allowed to cook good food.²⁰ But over the last few years, the use of Arabic/Iranian names has increased. Now native names are either rarely seen or are used only as nicknames (calling names). The Arabic- or Iranian-origin name is considered the main name, which is recorded in Aqiqah (Islamic naming ceremony), Nikah, school/college certificates, etc.

Mattison Mines, in his article "Social Stratification among Muslims of Tamil Nadu", has tried to depict this conflict of culture. He writes, "Among the Muslims of northern Tamil Nadu, there is some evidence of a process that can be called 'Islamization'. Their names have lost their Tamil character and they have adopted Arabic names. There is also a tendency to remove the names of sub-groups from the names of individuals (for example Shaikh Muhammad Rathore). Many insist that Urdu be accepted as the language of Indian Muslims and many Tamil Muslims in northern Tamil Nadu have accepted Urdu instead of Tamil as their spoken language at home. Apart from this, the Tabligh movement has been very popular till recently.

Like Muslims elsewhere in India, Tamil Muslims have also become conscious of their separate identity from their Hindu neighbours. But in actuality, Tamil Muslims differ from other Indian Muslims in many ways, not only in terms of Tamil heritage but also in terms of social structure."²¹ Pakistan's well-known Punjabi language and culture activist Tariq Gujar has tried to depict this dilemma in his poem-

An Unnamed Poem²²

In my home

My mother

Has chosen a name for me

From the dictionary

Of a language

She herself

Cannot read

(The original Punjabi poem was written in the Nastaliq script; this is just an attempt at translating it)

Alien Customs, Faith and Beliefs

Even after adopting the new religion, Islam, the indigenous Pasmandas could not move away completely from the local traditions, customs, beliefs and religious faith of their ancestors.

Naumana Kiran writes, "Rural Muslims were indigenous people, and were therefore highly influenced by their former culture and traditions. They took extra time to follow Islam truly."²³

Gaus Ansari writes, "The indigenous converts, on the other hand, retained many of

their original caste practices and customs. In both cases, the process of adjustment between the Ashrafs and the indigenous converts (Pasmandas) resulted in a graded scheme of Muslim social polity with the Ashrafs were ranked at the top.²⁴

William J. Charles writes in his report, "The rest of the Muhammadans inhabiting this province are probably the descendants of low caste Hindus, who in order to raise themselves in the social scale, or to find favour with their new masters, or because they had been for some breach of caste rules expelled from their own brotherhood, or for some other reason, have at various times within the last 600 years embraced the Muhammadan religion....yet the converts to Muhammadanism (of northern India at any rate) did not, when adopting the new religion entirely abandon the habits and prejudices of their forefathers — on the contrary, they remained in many respects observers of caste customs."

"There is considerable difference in the various degrees in which these people are bound by Hindu prejudices. Some of them follow all, some of them only a few, of the Hindu customs just mentioned; by some of them all these customs are rejected."²⁵

It has emerged from discussions that certain practices of worships of Muslims have connotations to their Hindu origin. For instance, sub-groups such as Pinjaras and Nadafs

It has emerged from discussions that certain practices of worships of Muslims have connotations to their Hindu origin. For instance, sub-groups such as Pinjaras and Nadafs continue to practise some of the Hindu traditions of worshipping. Although worshipping any God other than Allah is non-Islamic, Pinjaras go to temple and offer prayers to the local Hindu deities. Similarly, other groups in Islam believe that Pinjaras do not strictly perform the Namaz (prayer) and "do not perform it five times a day". As it could be seen in the area of study, Pinjaras have separate mosques in the village

continue to practise some of the Hindu traditions of worshipping. Although worshipping any God other than Allah is non-Islamic, Pinjaras go to temple and offer prayers to the local Hindu deities. Similarly, other groups in Islam believe that Pinjaras do not strictly perform the Namaz (prayer) and "do not perform it five times a day". As it could be seen in the area of study, Pinjaras have separate mosques in the village. Similarly, most Sunni groups including Syeds, Sheikhs, Pathans, Maliki and Shaffi perform several rituals, which are similar to that of Hindu traditions. Though there is a growing movement for enforcing 'pure Islamic traditions' by groups like Tablighi Jamaat in the region, several Muslims practise those rituals that are similar to Hindu traditions and which they have assimilated over a long period of time.²⁶

Pratap Chandra Agarwal writes about the Meo tribe in his article 'Caste Structure of a Meo Village in Rajasthan' that

"Even after accepting Islam they continued to follow most of the Hindu customs for a long time."²⁷ He further writes, "Muslim blacksmiths also work according to the rules of Jajmani. Then he goes a little further and reveals, "Faqir, Sakka and Mirasi are Muslim Kameen (lowly) who serve the Mayo landowners according to the rules of Jajmani".²⁸

Even after adopting Islam, they (Meo) continued to follow Hindu customs for many centuries with the help of Hindu castes, including Brahmins.²⁹ Mattison Mines writes, "While acknowledging their Tamil heritage, Tamil Muslims differentiate themselves from the Muslims of North India and the Deccan (the former Hyderabad State—some areas of Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and some areas of northern Tamil Nadu). In this way, they consider themselves an integral part of the local population, not descendants of former rulers of foreign origin. They do accept the idea of

Muslim brotherhood, but at the same time consider themselves true Tamils.

It is evident that while Tamil Muslims identify themselves closely with Tamil Hindus, they are in fact distinct from them in mores and social structures. The Tamil Muslims of Pallavaram are conscious of this difference. Because of their Islamic beliefs, they also identify themselves with the larger Muslim population of India. Yet this association is by no means perfect. They live in a Tamil cultural milieu and consider it their own. Apart from this, they appear distinct from Muslims elsewhere in India in social structures. One of my Muslim respondents went to Pakistan after Partition and returned to Pallavaram disillusioned. He displayed a “neither-this nor-that” identity clearly. He said that he had gone to Pakistan to be part of the Muslim brotherhood, but returned to Tamil Nadu because he found that there were more differences among Pakistani Muslims than among Tamil Hindus. For a people living in a hierarchical society, the Tamil Muslims of Pallavaram are surprisingly egalitarian. These people, who associate themselves with both the Hindu Tamil society and the larger Muslim population, have not been able to become an integral part of either of them.³⁰

Describing the practices of the Bhishti caste, Gaus Ansari writes, "And because some of

their customs are absolutely contrary to the teachings of Islam, we have strong arguments for inferring that they (Bhishtis) are of indigenous origin. Crookes observed that besides Allah and some Muslim saints, they also worship their *mashak* (leather bag for carrying water)."^{31,32}

The Ashraf and higher Muslim occupational castes eat the meat of properly slaughtered animals, i.e., according to Islamic standards which specify that animals must be killed with a knife (*zabiha*). Thus, the only acceptable meat among higher Muslim castes has been that of the properly slaughtered animal—cow or goat.

The footnotes of the same article say, “Among some of the lower Muslim castes, like Gaddi, Dhobi, Teli, Bhangi, Chamar, often they are not very particular about *zabiha* meat and generally do not mind eating *jhatka* meat, i.e., of the animals killed not with a knife in the Muslim way but killed by other methods as prevalent among lower Hindu castes.”³³

Further, explaining the origin of the Kasai (butcher) caste, he writes, “Among Hindus, the caste dealing in meat is the Khatik, which is considered to be both backward and depressed. For some time in the past the Chikwa, the Muslim counterpart of Khatik, was the only caste supplying Muslims with meat. Although the Chikwa still exists as a separate Muslim caste, a Chikwa does not and

cannot slaughter cows because of the traditions of his descent. But there was the need of some caste which could supply the Ashrafs with beef along with other kinds of permitted meat. Thus, the caste of the Qasab gradually came into existence, they supplied all sorts of allowed meat and did not hesitate to butcher cows.”³⁴

The Chik/Chikwa will not intermarry with a Kasai/Qasab, but only with Chikwas.³⁵

Even today the Chik community looks down upon the butcher community for butchering the meat of large animals (cows, buffaloes, etc.) and considers itself superior to them. In the chapter on “Caste and Islam”, Blunt writes, “But other Hindu customs too have survived. The Ghosi and Kingariya (the case of singers), for instance, will neither eat beef themselves, nor eat in the company of any Musalman who does so.”³⁶

Mohan Das Naimishrai has written that, “Romila Thapar also believes in a similar way that even after becoming a Muslim, caste segregation towards Dalit Muslims did not end. Certainly, this can also be called a shortcoming of the Tabligh movement. An example of what role caste played after religious conversion is the description of the gazetteer of Bijapur district in 1884. Here, the Muslim population has been divided into three classes. First come the Muslims who

came from outside; second, the local residents, and the third are those who came from northern India. Of these, we would like to provide details about the third category. The third category of Muslims, who are in very large numbers in the district, was different from the other categories of Muslims in some respects. At the local level, they had adopted Islam. Some used caste names like Momin and Kasab, but some retained the same old names which they had before conversion, like Gondi, Pinjara, Parwali. These caste names were already related to their profession. Such Muslim people also spoke less Urdu and used Kannada and Marathi more. These were called lax Sunnis (liberal Sunnis) who rarely visited mosques, worshipped Hindu deities, celebrated Hindu festivals and did not eat beef. Romila Thapar writes that their not eating beef was what set them apart from the untouchables, who ate beef.³⁷ Regarding the similarity of the Muslim Teli caste with the Hindu Teli caste, Gaus Ansari writes, "In the eastern districts of the province (Uttar Pradesh) the Muslim Teli follow the rules of exogamy of their Hindu brethren and do not marry within the *kul* (family fold)."³⁸

He further writes, "Today most Bhangis in Uttar Pradesh claim to be Lal Begi; both Muslim and non-Muslim branches often call themselves by this name. Every year, at a

The Lalbegi society is indeed a blend of culture. We felt this for the first time in Ahmednagar. When we visited the house of Lalbegi sanitation worker Ismail Chavan, he was busy preparing for Muharram. On the wall of his house were pictures of his favourite deities Rama and Krishna. Apart from these, there were also pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, the Goddess Saraswati, etc. Giving more information in this regard, Ismail Chavan said that they celebrate festivals of both religions

particular time, they celebrate the festival of Lal Beg in which both Muslim and non-Muslim Bhangis participate."³⁹

Risley has said, "The religious rites of the Lalbegi are partly Hindu, partly Muhammadan. ...A few of the Lalbegi keep the fast of Ramazan, although they dare not enter a public mosque. ...The dead may not be buried in a Mussulman cemetery, but are consigned to the ground in some waste and jungly spot. ...observing the Diwali and the Holi as the greatest festivals of the year".⁴⁰

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festivals, the influence of both religions is reflected on their customs too. Earlier, they used to call the Qazi for conducting weddings but now solemnize weddings according to Hindu tradition. But the priest does not eat food at their house. He only accepts flour, pulses and/or such grains. Earlier, when someone died, they used to bring Gawara and also sing bhajans. But after this system was ridiculed, the deceased bodies are now carried on a bier. But they do not cremate them, burying them instead. The crematorium of Mehtars (the name of the caste of sanitation workers) is separate. Their relations with other Muslims are all right, but a certain distance is nonetheless maintained.⁴¹

Rasool Galwan, a well-known explorer who belonged to the Pasmanda tribe and after whom the Galwan Valley is named, touched his mother's feet and took her blessings when he was setting out for the first journey. He himself writes in this regard, "At last, I said salaam to mother, touched her feet with my hands, and did salaam".⁴²

The well-known social worker

Tamanna Inamdar said in an interview, "People have changed their religion but still follow the traditions of their ancestors. Just like Hindus have a tradition of worshipping God and seeking blessings from their ancestors on the occasion of marriage, Muslims too read a bit of the Quran Sharif or feed people in order to appease their ancestors. Just as Hindus have a tradition of worshipping their Kul Devta (family deity), Muslims too have the same tradition. They read the Quran for this and perform the rituals of *haldi* and *mehndi* in their wedding ceremonies."⁴³

Just a few days ago, news came from Rajasthan that a Muslim family followed the tradition of giving *bhaat* (rice) in the wedding of a Hindu sister's daughter. The incident happened thus: Shankar Singh Rao's daughters were getting married in Salramla village. Shankar Singh Rao had married Durga Kanwar Rao, a resident of Mod ka Nimbahera some 20

years ago. Durga Kanwar has neither brothers nor sisters. Her parents also passed away in her childhood.

In her childhood, Durga tied a *rakhi* to Zakir Hussain Rangrez, who lived in her parental home (Mod ka Nimbahera) and accepted him as her brother. When Durga Kanwar Rao's marriage ceremony was organized, the Muslim family played an important role by giving clothes and jewellery, considering her as their real sister. Since then, the Muslim family (Pasmanda) has always been with this sister in good and bad times, taking forward this unbreakable bond of brother and sister. In childhood, Zakir Hussain Rangrez had promised Durga Kanwar that "If you don't have a brother, I am your real brother and will definitely bring *bhaat* to your house."⁴⁴

The author's grandfather, Qurban Miyan, had personally performed the *kanyadaan* of Lalita Singh, the only daughter

of his friend, Shivram Singh.⁴⁵ Ramesh Chandra Mishra, an advocate in the Supreme Court revealed about Makki Hasan of his village, informing us that he was the president of the Yuvak Mangal Dal and would be the first one to cut the ribbon for the inauguration of the Ramleela.⁴⁶

Maanganīyar/Maanganīyar Muslims even today sing hymns of Hindu gods and goddesses.⁴⁷ In the Mithila region of Bihar, the tradition of singing songs related to Islam and Karbala in the Magahi language in the form of the Jharni song is still prevalent.⁴⁸ Even today, among native Muslims, the custom of addressing the elder sister 'Didi' is prevalent in many areas.

Even today, the tradition of wearing the sari is prevalent among the women of indigenous Muslims all over India (except Punjab and Haryana). Although now the trend of wearing salwar kameez is gradually increasing, the married women of indigenous Muslims still prefer the sari, especially during festivals and marriages or any ritual. The author has not seen his 75-year-old mother and grandmother (she passed away in 2015, at the age of 97) wearing any dress other than the sari.

Festivals

There are only two festivals found in Islam⁴⁹ Eid and Bakrid (these are their local names; their Islamic names are Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Azha). But apart from that, there are many

There are only two festivals found in Islam Eid and Bakrid (these are their local names; their Islamic names are Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Azha). But apart from that, there are many festivals among Indian Muslims. Since India has been a country of festivals, even after conversion, native Muslims found scope for new festivals in Islam. The main ones among these are Kundala or Kunda and Shab-e-Barat. In Kunda, there is a custom of feeding kheer and puri in an earthen pot, hence the name of this festival is Kunda. People fill the pot with various kinds of dishes to fulfill their wishes. The night of preparing the account of the deeds done during the previous year and deciding the fate of the coming year is called Shab-e-Barat

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It is very important to know here that the tradition of celebrating the birth anniversary of Muhammad (PBUH) exists is

Among the indigenous Muslims, even in marriages, local customs and traditions prevail. Only the Nikah is solemnized according to Islamic tradition. The tradition of giving the bride a sari, sindoor, mangalsutra, etc., along with turmeric and henna is still prevalent. In our country, the items that are sent by the boy's side for the girl and the women of her house for Nikah are called *daala*.

These include jewellery, sindoor, six packets of various spices and clothes as well. A Banarasi sari is a must for the bride. Further, saris are given as attire for the bride's mother, aunt, paternal aunt, etc

only in the Indian subcontinent. It is very rare in the rest of the Islamic world. Indeed, there has been no tradition in Islam to celebrate the birth anniversary of Muhammad (PBUH) as a festival.

Marriage, Divorce and the Daughter's Share

Among the indigenous Muslims, even in marriages, local customs and traditions prevail. Only the Nikah is solemnized according to Islamic tradition. The tradition of giving the bride a *sari*, *sindoor*, *mangalsutra*, etc., along with turmeric and henna is still prevalent. In our country, the items that are sent by the boy's side for the girl and the women of her house for Nikah are called *daala*. These include jewellery, sindoor, six packets of various spices and clothes as well. A Banarasi sari is a must for the bride. Further, saris are given as attire for the bride's mother, aunt, paternal aunt, etc. After that, there are other saris for the *pauni* (women working in the house; usually five in number,

naun (the barber's wife), *dhobi* (washerman), *malan* (the gardener's wife) etc.).

Having studied this, Blunt writes, "In the matter of marriage the customs of communities descended from Hindu converts are often a curious mixture of Hindi and Muhammadan rites".⁵¹

Since marriage in Indian culture is considered a relationship that transcends even death, divorce is looked upon very negatively among indigenous Muslims. Emphasis is laid on maintaining marital life at any cost. Therefore, the tradition of divorce is not that common among the indigenous Muslims. If divorce does happen due to any reason, it is considered bad in the society, and the man and woman who get divorced are looked upon as being at fault. As a result, both the man and the woman have to face a lot of difficulties in finding a new life partner.

The practice of having more than one wife is also very rare among indigenous Muslims. This also clearly shows the

influence of their ancestors' culture on them. The indigenous Muslim society does not look favourably upon a man having more than one wife, even if there might be a valid reason for the second or third marriage.

In Islam, a daughter gets a share in her father's property, even if it is only a quarter, which is called *Dukhtari* (Dukhtar means a daughter), but this law of Islam is rarely followed among native Muslims. If a girl has availed of her *Dukhtari* share, it is not considered good in the society.

The Annaprashan Ritual

The tradition of *Annaprashan*

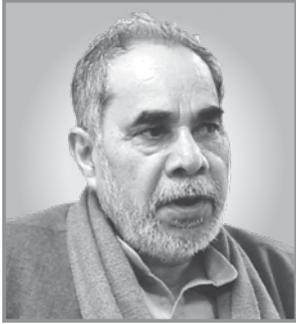
(first intake of food by a child) is still found among the Pasmanda Muslims of Bengal, just as in the Hindu society. The author had a personal experience of this during the tenure his job in Bengal. During a medical camp in Jelepara, a remote village in Hooghly district, sweets were being distributed to the people coming out of the mosque after the Friday prayers. Upon enquiry, it was found that on that day at the house of the gentleman Heera Da who was distributing sweets, an *Annaprashan* ceremony was being held and sweets were being distributed to the Namazis in celebration of that occasion.⁵²

The above descriptions, based on facts and experiences of the past, make it clear that even after accepting an external religion on a spiritual basis, the indigenous Muslims are woven with the fabric of traditions, beliefs, customs and faiths of their ancestors in their daily lives. But the Ashraf Muslims who lead the Muslim society in every field are keen on Arabizing/Iranizing the indigenous Pasmandas in the name of Islam by cutting them off from their Indian civilisation and culture and ignoring the proper participation of the indigenous Pasmanda Muslims in the political, social, religious and economic fields. ●

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Ram Bahadur Rai

Separate Electorate vs Reservation in Constituent Assembly Debate

The issues related to social reforms, which led to bloodshed in other countries, were amicably resolved by the Constituent Assembly of India through dialogue, and that constitutional order is still continuing. Here is a research-based assessment of this solution

According to well-known constitutional expert Fali S. Nariman, the makers of our Constitution have left some important questions unanswered for the future. As an example, he mentions the complicated issue of language in detail in his book.¹ But can the same thing be said about the complex social issues of independent India? The answer to this is there in the Constitution itself. That is, the Constituent Assembly pondered over the complex social issues in totality and found solutions for them. Those solutions are described in the form of formulas in the Articles of the Constitution.

The Constitution is often criticised for the fact that words, phrases and ideas have been borrowed from other constitutions of the world. Dr. Ambedkar also accepted this. He, however, said that ‘I have no regrets for this’. But what every citizen should know today has been underlined by advocate Abhinav Chandrachud in a newspaper column. He has written that “The basis on which the Constituent Assembly made provisions for quotas in the Constitution for reservation in legislatures, government jobs and

educational institutions is a unique Indian way.”²

These provisions in the Constitution have though been amended from time to time as and when needed, while keeping the basics intact. Keeping all these in mind, most of the constitutional experts have opined that the constitutional order of the social reforms is still in place even today. Obviously, while this subject has been under discussion, a lot of research works have also been carried out on it continuously. They are of two types. The nature of one of them is political. Its aim is to bring back the separate electoral system, for which preposterous questions are being raised on the issue of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This has become a burning topic because Congress made it an election issue in the Lok Sabha polls last year.

In other countries of the world, there has been bloodshed for years on such complex social issues. But in India, the Constituent Assembly resolved it amicably through dialogue and consensus. There are also notable examples of research leading to a solution parallel to the

Manthan

politics of complicating what has been resolved. There is one such research based article which is very relevant to mention here. Its author and researcher is Arvind Kumar.³ He has delved deep into the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly and discovered that the separate electoral system was scrapped by consensus. Most of the minority community members of the Constituent Assembly had clearly given their consent in favour of abolition of the separate electoral system.

Similarly, the provision of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was brought in with the aim of creating social equality. Arvind Kumar has proved in his article that the provisions made by the Constituent Assembly to eradicate social discrimination are clear and well thought out. They reveal a clear meaning, in which a circle of past, present and future being formed can be felt. The answer to what is being made a political issue today is

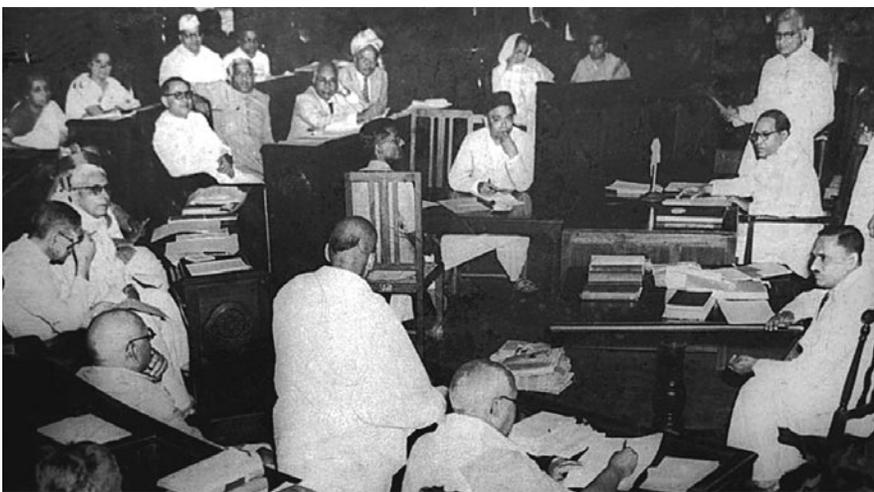
there in his dissertation. However, his work will be counted in the social category.

Therefore, the relevant debates in the Constituent Assembly need to be read repeatedly, not once but many times. Whoever does this will be able to revisit the debates related to this issue in the Constituent Assembly. It will help in removing confusion. The Constituent Assembly had formed committees in the beginning itself to study important topics and give advice. One of them was the Advisory Committee on Minority Rights. Its chairman was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. That committee submitted its report to the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.⁴

The Advisory Committee said in its report that “The first issue that we have dealt with is that of separate elections. We have found it to be extremely important for the minorities themselves and for the body polity of the country as a whole. We have decided

by a very large majority that the separate election method must be scrapped from the Constitution. In our opinion, this method has inflamed communal differences in the past to such a fatal extent that today they have become the main obstacles in the way of the progress of a healthy national life. In the new political conditions that have arisen in the country, it seems even more necessary to remove these dangers. Keeping these observations in mind, the arguments against separate elections seem completely deterministic. Therefore, we recommend that all the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies should be held through the combined election method only.”⁵

On the basis of this report, Sardar Patel put forward a proposal in the Constituent Assembly, which was accepted unanimously. This put an end to the separate election system, after which the joint election system came into operation. However, we all should know how the separate electoral system had started and from where it originated after all. “Separate election system was first implemented in 1909 during the British rule. It has a history. A delegation led by Aga Khan met Viceroy Minto. It is said that the Viceroy's team had prepared Aga Khan for this beforehand. The delegation demanded that separate constituencies should be earmarked for Muslims. The British government immediately accepted this demand because it



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had to sow the poisonous seeds of separation. In 1916, this demand spread its wings. Congress also supported this communal demand to garner Muslim support. In history, it is known as the Lucknow Agreement. The Communal Award of 1932 paved the highway for reservation and separate electoral system. The Act of 1935 gave it an important place in the Constitution. Congress learned from its experiences and adopted the constitutional path to end communalism.”⁶

“After the Partition of India, new Muslim representatives were appointed to the Advisory Committee. They were Tajamul Hussain and Begum Aijaz Rasul. Until some time ago, Tajamul Hussain was an enthusiastic leader of the Muslim League. After Partition, he did not go to Pakistan. He preferred to stay in India. The impact of Partition on the Advisory Committee was evident. In its first meeting, many members served notices that reservation for minorities should be abolished. One of those notices was also from Tajamul Hussain. But Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had a different opinion. He wanted to retain reservation on the ground that it was not removed in the draft of the Constitution. Sardar Patel ruled that there was no binding on the Advisory Committee. It could reconsider the matter. He also said that there should be a consensus among the representatives of the minority community in this regard. The question of reservation for

minorities was a major cause of controversy. In the Muslim community, nationalist Muslims under the leadership of Maulana Azad had also demanded that reservation should continue. Maulana Hafizur Rahman was the spokesperson of this group. Tajamul Hussain criticised the nationalist group in aggressive language. He actually attacked Maulana Azad indirectly.”⁷ He said, “Forget the past and help in creating a secular state.”⁸

This direct and aggressive stance of Tajamul Hussain gave strength to Begum Aijaz Rasul. Elaborating it a little more, Begum Rasul said in sharp words that “Pakistan has been formed. The interests of the Muslims in India demand that they should not remain isolated but should think of living in the mainstream of India. Therefore, it is better to give up the demand for reservation.”⁹ K.M. Munshi has written that “In that debate, Sardar Patel, the Chairman of the Minority Rights Committee, often remained silent. He would make humorous remarks occasionally to lighten the atmosphere.”¹⁰ As soon as Begum Rasul finished her speech, Sardar said, “There are still two different opinions among the representatives of the Muslim community. So they should give us some time to build a consensus. Till then, we should wait.”¹¹

In this way, the issue of quota for minorities was kept under consideration. On 11th May 1949, this issue came up before

the Advisory Committee again. That was a difficult time. In that meeting, the representatives of nationalist Muslims were silent. K.M. Munshi has written that “I came to know later that Maulana Azad had instructed them not to insist on reservation.”¹² Tajammul Hussain had gone abroad in a delegation. Begum Aijaz Rasul was disheartened in the apprehension that the nationalist Muslim community might attack her, so she was hesitating to speak. For this reason, there was no one to speak in favour of joint electorate system. Then Sardar Patel looked towards K.M. Munshi. He was sitting on the seat next to Begum Rasul. He told her quietly that “Sardar wants you to speak up.”¹³ Begum Rasul gathered courage and spoke. She said that “Muslim reservation should be abolished. The Muslims who have stayed back here after Partition are an integral part of the nation. They should now play a positive role.”¹⁴ On hearing this, Sardar Patel said, “I am happy that the Muslim community has expressed its consensus for joint electorate.”¹⁵

K.M. Munshi has written that after that, the meeting of the Consultative Committee was adjourned. Later, that meeting was held on 30th December 1948. After that, in the meeting of 11th May 1949, Dr. H.C. Mukherjee proposed that “There should be no reservation for minorities.”¹⁶ That proposal was passed by 58 votes against three.

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After that, Sardar Patel presented two proposals in the Constituent Assembly on 25th May 1949. The first proposal was to end Muslim reservation while the second proposal was to include a few castes of East Punjab, namely Mazhabi, Ramdasi, Kabirpanthi and Sikligars, in the list of Scheduled Castes of the province, so that they can also be entitled to the benefit of representation given to Scheduled Castes in the legislatures.¹⁷

Both these proposals were accepted by the Constituent Assembly. This put an end to the divisive policy of the British. The date in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly was 26th May 1949. It was not at all the case that no debate was held on this topic in the Constituent Assembly. There was a fierce debate for two days. Muslim League member Mohammad Ismail Sahib had proposed an amendment in opposition to it, thereby triggering a debate. Mohammad Ismail Sahib gave

a long speech in support of his amendment. There was a reaction to his long speech as well. Many members asked Chairman Dr. Rajendra Prasad whether there was any time limit for his speech or not. This was the parliamentary way of protest. Mohammad Ismail came from Madras. He was a member of the Muslim League. S. Nagappa was also from the same place. In his speech, Nagappa congratulated Minority Rights Committee Chairman Sardar Patel and other members. He said, "The problem which the British created in two centuries, Sardar solved it in two years. The British had spread division. The committee gave the formula of unity."¹⁸

Dr. H.C. Mukherjee put forth his views in that debate. He came from the Christian community. He said in his speech that "We should ask ourselves two questions on Sardar Patel's proposal. First, when we say that we want to establish a non-communal state, are we honest

about it? The second question is whether we want to establish a single nation. There is only one answer to this: we can't give recognition to political reservation for minorities on the basis of religion."¹⁹ Begum Rasul also said in her speech that "I support Sardar Patel's proposal. The essence of Ismail Sahib's amendment is that the separate electorate system should be allowed to continue. I find it meaningless."²⁰

Many analytical articles have been written on the completion of 75 years of the Constitution. In every article, the author also has his own opinion. Such articles generate a debate. One such article is by Rohan J. Alva. He writes that "Drafting even a simple contract becomes very complicated at times. Just think how difficult it must have been to draft the constitution of a newly independent nation at that time because the circumstances were extremely complex. Still the Constitution was drafted and it has maintained its indelible presence on the rock of time in a splendid manner. It is becoming more luminous and powerful day by day."²¹ The skill with which the Constitution makers resolved the question of reservation becomes clear when it is seen in the divisive and historical background of separate electorate.

Reservation has mainly three aspects -- political, cultural and social. To examine these three aspects in today's context, it is

Dr. H.C. Mukherjee put forth his views in that debate. He came from the Christian community. He said in his speech that "We should ask ourselves two questions on Sardar Patel's proposal. First, when we say that we want to establish a non-communal state, are we honest about it? The second question is whether we want to establish a single nation. There is only one answer to this: we can't give recognition to political reservation for minorities on the basis of religion." Begum Rasul also said in her speech that "I support Sardar Patel's proposal. The essence of Ismail Sahib's amendment is that the separate electorate system should be allowed to continue. I find it meaningless

necessary to revisit that debate of the Constituent Assembly. By doing so, it is possible to know what the circumstances were at that time, how the Constituent Assembly tackled it and why the demand for adding new groups to the list of reservation keep coming up. In the context of these questions, it is necessary to pay attention to the list of Presidential Order, 1950. It is true that the scope of reservation has increased. What was there in 1950 has been expanded. The latest expansion took place in 2019, which made a provision for reservation on economic status.

The original Constitution had a provision for reservation on the basis of social and educational backwardness. Now, apart from women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, there is provision for reservation also for other backward classes (OBCs) and economically weaker section (EWS). This is applicable in government jobs, education and legislatures. But this has been challenged from time to time. On the basis of Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution, a public interest litigation (PIL) was filed in the Supreme Court that this reservation is discriminatory. Because these provisions declare discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, sex and birth as unconstitutional. The Supreme Court heard the case. It justified the constitutional amendment by majority decision. This is a new chapter in the series of reservation.

This has given rise to further debate. The issue at the centre this time is that of quota for minorities. The argument is that Dalit Muslims and Christians are also entitled to this quota. They too should get the benefit of it. This has again led to a new debate as to who should be considered deprived in the complex social conditions of India and who has been deprived of the opportunity of reservation. The main question in this today is: Who all are left out at the lowest rung of the society? This is a new phase of the historical debate.

The principles laid down by the Constituent Assembly for reservation are still the same today. They are -- nationalism, national unity, development, secularism and social justice. On this basis, the Constituent Assembly provided reservation to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Constituent Assembly abolished the separate electoral system. In the new reservation system that was made on the basis of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, the backward among the minorities and the Scheduled Caste people have got reservation. But this is kept hidden in a corner of the debate.

In the wave of intense nationalism generated by the Ayodhya movement, the issue of reservation has again become a subject of intense discussion in a new form. It is being raised by those who want to convert India's 'diversities' into 'dissimilarities'

again. The originators of such controversy are sitting in Europe and America and their cohorts in India keep following them. One of their arguments is in the form of a question: Whether the Constituent Assembly had kept reservation in the secular category? There are two views on this. The logic by which the party system of parliamentary politics operates, the calculation of votes is important in it. The mathematics of getting or not getting power is determined by that. Based on this calculation, the UPA government first formed the Sachar Committee.

The committee was supposed to investigate every question related to the issue. Instead, the committee did less investigation and paid more attention to its patron employer. The atmosphere became surcharged on publication of its report, so much so that the government itself melted down in it. If the recommendations of the Sachar Committee had been implemented, then the path for the separate electoral system would have been paved again. The question is whether this is really needed? Is there any justification for this? What will happen if the Christian and Muslim communities are given the opportunity of reservation like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?

First of all, they are already getting the benefits of reservation in other categories. The second and more important thing is that they do not come under the

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category of Scheduled Castes. Still, why is this demand raised? How did it start? It is impossible to understand the problem without knowing the answer to these questions. Christian organisations were the first to raise this demand in their writings and speeches. The All India Christian Council and the Catholic Bishop Conference raised this demand. This is an old demand which was picked up again by the Leftist intellectuals during the days of Ayodhya movement. This is a fresh example of mental imitation. The only argument they can put forward is that social and educational backwardness should be made the basis and not religion. They think that by doing so, they will be able to find a piece of safe land for themselves in Muslim and Christian societies.

On this basis, a demand is being raised vociferously to carve out quota for Pasmanda Muslims and Dalit Christians from the reservation meant for the Scheduled Castes. But this demand is being opposed by the traditional Muslim leadership. They are scared as their dominance is in danger. This is one thing. But the other thing is whether this demand is justified? To fulfil its political interests, the UPA government formed a linguistic and religious minority commission in 2004. It was the Ranganath Mishra Commission. It was not multi-coloured but was unicoloured. A question that arises here is: when the Scheduled

Castes Commission, which functions under the mandate of Article 338 of the Constitution, had already rejected the demand for reservation for Pasmanda Muslims and Dalit Christians in 2001 with evidence, was the formation of the Mishra commission still justified? Mishra Commission's recommendations provided the basis for a new set of controversies only. Even the Presidential orders of 1950, 1956, 1990 etc. came under controversy. Various questions are being raised on them now.

It is a reality that after getting the status of Scheduled Caste, the doors of opportunities will open up automatically. Those who get this opportunity keep progressing. This is also a big reason that all those who consider themselves deprived of opportunities are eager to be included in the Scheduled Caste category. In such an environment, new intellectuals have become their spokespersons. As far as the Pasmanda Muslims and Dalit Christians are concerned, they are not as much eager to be included in the Scheduled Caste list as they are raising their voice for social equality within their respective religious communities. However, that voice has no longer remained a cry in the wilderness. It is being heard far and wide these days. There are many such voices today. They have taken the form of a social churning. One wonders whether we should consider completion of 75 years of the Constitution as

an achievement or opening of the Pandora's Box! This churning among the Pasmanda Muslims and Dalit Christians is more of social and cultural in nature at this time. Its political direction is unclear and it is still in the womb of the future.

The principle of social equality that our Constitution makers established in the Constitution and made appropriate provisions for it, is still intact in its original structure. It has the underlying emotions of Indianness. It is moving with the flow of time. Its contemporary development is taking place as well. The difference between inertia and motion is visible in these provisions. But what is not visible is the dynamics of reservation. So, it has to be felt. Still, those who do not understand that definite principle of social equality keep raising questions. On such occasions, it becomes necessary to remind again and again about how the Constituent Assembly viewed this issue and finally resolved it. There is no need to wander in the wilderness to know this. It can be known by reading it without falling into the delusion of any mirage, because every word spoken in the Constituent Assembly is available in written form.

The meaning of those words starts appearing by following and immersing in them. There is only one condition and that is -- one should read them with an open mind and understand them. The reader should try to get the

feelings and gestures of the great man, whose words he is reading, in his mind. If they are read in this process, only that will be revealed which the words express themselves. By doing this, anyone will be able to understand that there was almost a consensus in the Constituent Assembly that reservation should be given to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes so that the beneficiaries could fill themselves with the energy to cross the high wall of social discrimination. This was also a big issue in the freedom struggle. The opportunity to solve it came in the Constituent Assembly. Independent India provided that opportunity and the Constituent Assembly was only making good use of that opportunity. Those who disagreed agreed as time made them understand things. Those who were in opposition turned neutral. In this way, breaking through many labyrinths, the Constituent Assembly decided unanimously that as soon as the Constitution comes into force, the President will issue a list. It will be in the form of a notification. That notification will contain the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

It must be remembered here that the draft of the Constitution that was presented in the Constituent Assembly had a long list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The basis of that list had been explained and its definition was also given there. While

placing this proposal before the Constituent Assembly on 16th September 1949, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar said, "Initially, we had proposed to keep two parts in the Constitution in which some communities were enumerated as Scheduled Castes and some communities were enumerated as Scheduled Tribes. Now we are proposing to remove these two parts. We thought that as a result of these, a lot of burden will be put on the Constitution and it will be better if this purpose is achieved by the Order of the President. This is our proposal at this moment. In this case, in my opinion, the clauses related to the definition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will have to be kept in some other part of the Constitution and they will have to be placed in a single Article in which it will be said that the President will define who are the Scheduled Castes and who are the Scheduled Tribes."²²

V.I. Muniswami Pillai immediately supported it. The President of the Constituent Assembly announced that there is consensus in the House on this. In this way, the proposal of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was accepted unanimously. Now it was time to consider reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This subject came up for consideration in the Constituent Assembly on 17th September 1949. At that time, the issue of the definition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was a major one. It

keeps coming up even today. Explaining the process for this, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar said that the President would consult the Governor of the State on the list for which State it will be prepared. The list would then be notified and, if amendment has to be any carried out, that will be done by the Parliament.

As far as the question of the definition is concerned, it was clarified by V.I. Muniswami Pillai in his speech when he said, "On 26th January 1950, the President will publish the list of such castes which would come under the category of Scheduled Castes. But I want to apprise this House of the background of the creation of the 'Scheduled Castes'. The social evil of untouchability has been prevalent among the Hindu castes for ages. The government and the people have realised that there is a class of people who are included in the category of Hindus but have been kept outside the Hindu society. In 1916, the then government felt that something had to be done for the untouchables (whenever he mentioned untouchable classes, he always meant Hindus) and they had to be given recognition. In Madras, there were six castes which came under this classification. In the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, their number was increased to 10. It was only in 1930 when Mahatma Gandhi started his famous fast that the country came to know who the real untouchable classes were. So, in the Act of 1935,

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the then government gave full consideration to everything and, so far as Madras province is concerned, they put 86 castes in this list or category, though there were some upper castes in them as well. Now, after much deliberation, the provincial government has made a list and, in my view, as per the suggestions of the mover of the amendment, all those castes which fall in the category of untouchables and who follow the Hindu religion will be Scheduled Castes, because I want to emphasise on religion. I emphasise this because recently there have been some movements here and there. Many people have left the Hindu religion and accepted some other religion, but they too claim to be Scheduled Castes. I have no objection if the government gives these converts any concession, but I am of the very strong opinion that they should not be included in the Scheduled Castes."²³

"I am grateful to the Drafting

Committee and also to the Chairman of that Committee for making the second part of it very clear that once the President declares who will be the Scheduled Castes, then if there is a need to include any caste in the list of Scheduled Castes or to remove any caste from it, then it can be done only with the permission of the Parliament. I am grateful to him for this clause because I know that in reality, when Harijans act independently or demand their rights, the ministers of some provinces not only take action against the person doing so but also turn against the very caste of that person; and in this way, not only that person but all the people of that Scheduled Caste are harassed. In my opinion, this risk is eliminated by this provision."²⁴

There are three things in the above quote. First, the answer to why reservation is necessary for Scheduled Castes. Secondly,

this is not just an administrative and legal issue, it rather pertains to those episodes of our history which are responsible for creating the conditions for some people being considered as untouchables in the Hindu society. Therefore, in Independent India, it is necessary to give constitutional status to those measures which can provide equal social respect to the untouchables. Thirdly, this is the problem only of the Hindu religion and society. So, the solution to this lies in this measure only. But those who have left the Hindu religion and have lost their status of being Scheduled Caste can no more claim to be a Scheduled Caste any more. Even then, if the government gives them any concession, then their category will be different. Remember that V.I. Muniswami Pillai was one of those people who made the Poona Pact possible and was also a signatory to it. He was also one of Mahatma Gandhi's representatives in the Constituent Assembly.

V.I. Muniswami Pillai presented in the Constituent Assembly a clear basis for determining the definition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It was historical and social. It was accepted. There were two issues before the Constituent Assembly. First, reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Second, the solution of separate electoral system. The issue of separate electoral system was also related to the rights of the minority community. But this was not the only subject. Many subjects related to it were interlinked. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly formed a Minority Rights Committee for holistic consideration of the issue. Its chairman was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. This committee was formed on 24th January 1947

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to the rights of the minority community. But this was not the only subject. Many subjects related to it were interlinked. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly formed a Minority Rights Committee for holistic consideration of the issue. Its chairman was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. This committee was formed on 24th January 1947. It submitted its report on 27th August 1947. On the basis of this report, proper provisions were made in the interests of the minority community in the draft constitution.

When the discussion on that draft started in the Constituent Assembly, the minority provisions were also being criticised. The reason for this was the mentality and circumstances created by the Partition of India. Still, the suggestions of the Minority Rights Committee were included in the draft. It was in accordance with Indianness. It was because of this that secularism was included in the system of governance. This is also a proof of the extraordinary futuristic vision that Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar gave in his answer to the criticisms. That is also the proper solution.

He said, "The Drafting Committee has also been criticised because it provides protection to the minorities... Personally, I have no doubt that the Constituent Assembly has acted wisely by providing protection to the minorities. In this country, both the minority

and the majority have adopted the wrong path. It is the fault of the majority that it did not accept the existence of the minority, and similarly, it is the fault of the minority that it has kept itself as a minority forever. Now a way has to be found to remove both these mistakes. The path should be such that it accepts the existence of the minorities and moves forward in this regard. And at the same time, the path should also be such that one day both the minority and the majority become one. The measure that the Constituent Assembly put forward in this regard is undoubtedly commendable, because it achieves both our above objectives."²⁵ Dr. Ambedkar has used the word minority in his statement. Although all those who are not Hindus come under the purview of minority, but in the situation prevailing at that time, minority meant the Muslim community.

The Partition of India divided the country into Hindus and Muslims. This division was artificial, political and forged by foreign hands, but it had to happen because in such a difficult situation, the lamp of freedom had to be saved from being extinguished. The main responsibility of the Constituent Assembly was to make a constitution for self-governance in Independent India. From this point of view, the Constituent Assembly had to accept a challenge. It had to eradicate two curses inherited from the British

rule. One, social inequality in Hindu society had to be removed. Two, it also had to eradicate the dividing mark of British India and that was the creation of separate electorates. With this feeling, most of the Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly also cooperated in ending the separate election system. This can be read with full context from Sardar Patel's speech.

Sardar Patel said this speech was given in response to Sardar Hukam Singh's allegations. But it contains details and facts that prove that not only Muslim members but the representatives of the minority community had also got the reservation system abolished from their side. Due to this, reservation in jobs and separate election system for minorities could be abolished. Sardar Patel said that "When I was appointed as the Chairman of the Minority Committee, I took along all the minority groups. The decisions of the Minority Committee and the Advisory Committee were almost unanimously accepted. This House appreciated the work of these committees. I was even thanked for this... Under the leadership of the great patriotic Christian leader H.C. Mukherjee, a resolution was passed that they wanted to abolish the reservation system. Which reservation did they pass the proposal to abolish? Not only the petty system of reservation in jobs, but they did not want to keep the big

system of reservation in seats for Legislative Assemblies as well. They do not want reservation even in the Parliament and Provincial Legislative Assemblies.”²⁶

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel put forth a proposal in the Constituent Assembly on 27th August 1947 which said, “All elections to the Central and Provincial Assemblies will be held by joint method.”²⁷ This ended the

separate election system. But to implement it, the Constituent Assembly also passed a proposal which said, “The system of reservation for minorities other than Scheduled Castes should be abolished.”²⁸ This ended the separate election system that was in place since the British era and a new system of reservation was created. Sardar Patel said that “This decision is the result of

coordination of the views of the majority with the views of the minorities.”²⁹ That decision was taken on the proposal of H.C. Mukherjee. He had proposed that “There is no need for any reservation for the minorities.”³⁰ In this way, it was decided to start the joint election system. This new system has been in operation since the Constitution came into force in 1952. ●

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Dr. Upasna Tiwari

The Historical Roots of Pasmanda Muslims

The stratified hierarchy in Islam is based on the country of origin and nearness to the Prophet. A historical perspective of the social positioning of Pasmanda Muslims

The experiences of Pasmanda Muslims in India reveal a history of resilience and struggle in the face of deep-rooted inequalities. The socio-political history of Muslims in India is often presented through a monolithic lens, yet the community is profoundly diverse, with significant disparities within its ranks. Among the most marginalized within the Muslim population are the Pasmanda Muslims, a term meaning "those left behind."¹ Historically, Pasmanda Muslims have been subjected to systemic socio-economic exclusion, primarily occupying menial occupations such as vegetable vendors, fishermen, potters, butchers, blacksmiths, scavengers, bangle sellers, and cleaners. Despite their inclusion in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) list, they continue to face challenges in accessing the benefits intended for these categories, with limited opportunities in education, government employment, and socio-economic advancement.

The underlying factors contributing to this marginalization include not only class-based exclusion but also the

intersectionality of caste within the Muslim community. While the Pasmanda Muslims share a religious identity with the broader Muslim population, their socio-economic status is often defined by their lower-caste background. This intersection of caste and class has resulted in a persistent state of poverty, restricted educational prospects, and limited access to governmental welfare programs that were supposed to uplift these communities. The state's indifference, compounded by structural discrimination, has hindered the effective implementation of development initiatives aimed at addressing these issues.

However, a significant shift is currently underway. An increasing number of Pasmanda Muslims are becoming more conscious of their rights, and this growing awareness is leading to greater unity among them. As they come together as a collective force, they are beginning to challenge the political and governmental systems that have historically neglected their needs. This emergent Pasmanda movement is distinctly secular, marking a break from the reactive, religiously motivated

politics that have previously dominated the Muslim discourse in India. In this new approach, Pasmanda Muslim organizations are playing a pivotal role, representing a broader attempt to shift the political landscape that has long favored the elite Ashraf Muslims over the marginalized groups within the Muslim community. The rise of the Pasmanda movement highlights both the ongoing struggles of these communities and the growing potential for their empowerment. As Pasmanda Muslims continue to assert their rights, the movement represents an important opportunity to reshape both the political and social fabric of India, offering hope for greater inclusion and equity for the marginalized within the Muslim community.

This paper aims to provide a historical analysis of the Pasmanda Muslim experience, examining the roots of their marginalization, the intersection of caste and class in their socio-economic conditions, and the emerging political consciousness that is transforming their struggle

for equality and justice in contemporary India.

Historical Origins of Caste Divisions Among Indian Muslims

Although Islam preaches equality, the Indian society consisting of vivid religions whether Hindu or Muslim are based on the principle of inequality, creating hierarchies. The sub-division in Islam is basically based on division on the principles of biradari, origin, ethnicity and occupation as pointed out by the scholars are grounded mostly on the Ashraf, Ajlaf, Arzal subdivisions in India.

Earlier the distinction of Muslims was marked into two broad categories i.e. Ashraf and Ajlaf. The Arabic, Turkish, Central Asian and Iranian Muslims, claiming foreign descent belong to the former category and the lower castes local converted Muslims constituted the later one. Though this division presented a complex social stratification among Muslims. while these categories in turn are divided into various

smaller units through social intercourse. According to Imtiyaz Ahmad, " ... the greater emphasis placed on the distinction of Muslim society between Ashraf and Ajlafs tended to produce a wrong and distorted picture of the nature and complexity of Indian Muslim social stratification"²

This stratified hierarchy was based on the country of origin and nearness to the Prophet. On the top stage lie the Sayyids who trace direct descent from the Prophet's daughter Fatima, regarded as wealthy in power and prestige. Followed by Sheikh or Shareefs, Mughals and Pathans. The Ajlaf category includes the indigenous population mainly from artisan groups like carpenters and weavers with clean occupation. This conversion into egalitarian Islam did not change impacted their cultural practices and local environment. The bottom category of Arzals are believed to be shudra and adivasi converts from Dalit caste of Hindu Community, recently renamed as *Pasmanda*.

Hereditary occupation provides a close link with the prevalent caste system discussing the economic interdependence of castes. The *Jajmani System* practiced by dominant caste served the exchanges in the society, evident by the research of Zarina Bhatti in Kasauli, Uttar Pradesh. She says that -

"Interactions between the 'oonchi jati' (high caste) and 'neechi jati' (low caste) are regulated by established patron-

This stratified hierarchy was based on the country of origin and nearness to the Prophet. On the top stage lie the Sayyids who trace direct descent from the Prophet's daughter Fatima, regarded as wealthy in power and prestige. Followed by Sheikh or Shareefs, Mughals and Pathans. The Ajlaf category includes the indigenous population mainly from artisan groups like carpenters and weavers with clean occupation. This conversion into egalitarian Islam did not change impacted their cultural practices and local environment

client relationships of the jajmani system. The patrons, who belong to oonchi zat, are referred to as the jajmanis, and the clients, comprising the various occupational caste of the neechi zat, as Kamin. The Kamins, who are attached to the dominant Ashraf lineage in a hereditary relationship, provide specialized services to its members for customary payments in cash or kind. The Kamins are provided house sites by their jajmans and can also get land on lease from the jajmani for cultivation".³

The period between the 12th and 17th centuries in India saw a profound transformation in the socio-cultural landscape, particularly with respect to caste dynamics. During this time, the process of religious conversion played a significant role in reshaping societal structures. The Muslim invaders utilized two primary tools for conversion: the sword and Sufism. While the sword, often associated with force and coercion, was used as a means of converting populations, through this process number of people became Muslim, a kazi name was Mugeesutdeen advised Allaudin Khilji, "there were two options in front of Kafir either death or Islam." Most of the Hindu community were paying Jiziya for remaining in Their religion but Muslim ulemas did not like the fact that Hindu should follow there religion even after paying jiziya. Ziauddin Barani has complained if the sultan keep giving freedom of

religious to infidel [infidel] in exchange for a new coin , then the flag of Islam will not be able to fly high in India.⁴ Although, Sufism emerged as a more subtle and inclusive tool, particularly in attracting individuals from lower or 'untouchable' castes, as well as those seeking new livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

Sufism, with its emphasis on personal spirituality, equality before God, and social justice, resonated especially with marginalized communities in India. This form of Islamic mysticism, characterized by its focus on a direct and personal relationship with the divine, offered an alternative to the Hindu society. The promise of spiritual equality and the vision of a compassionate and inclusive God appealed to individuals who had been ostracized by the caste system, offering them an opportunity for both social mobility and spiritual solace. As a result, many from underprivileged backgrounds were drawn to Islam, believing that the new faith would provide them with both spiritual and material opportunities.

The irony of this conversion process lies in the fact that, while the monolithic nature of Islamic ideology emphasized unity and equality among believers, the newly converted Muslim population did not experience the social status and respect they had hoped for. Despite the inclusive messages of Sufism, the converts found themselves marginalized

within the larger Muslim community in India, particularly by the Central Asian Muslim elites who had migrated to India and established themselves as the dominant aristocracy. These elites, whose socio-political and economic power was reinforced by their noble lineage, maintained a firm grip on power and social prestige, leaving little room for the lower-caste converts within the broader Muslim hierarchy.

This dynamic is illustrated by the condemnation of converted Muslims by figures such as Minhaj-i-Siraj, who suggested that these new converts were competing with the aristocratic families of early Central Asian immigrants for positions in state service.⁵ Barani's another important chronicler, argued that children of low-born converts should not be admitted into madrasas because such education would qualify them for government positions.⁶ He believed that only the noble families, chosen by God, were fit to govern and maintain justice and stability in society. In this context, the rejection of an accountant from Amroha by Giyasuddin Tughlaq, based on his father's lowly conversion to Islam, further underscores the entrenched social hierarchies that continued to marginalize converted Muslims.⁷

In essence, while conversion to Islam offered a sense of religious identity and spiritual equality, it did not necessarily lead to social empowerment for

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the new converts. Instead, these individuals found themselves caught between two oppressive social structures—the existing Hindu caste system and the Central Asian Muslim elite, both of which marginalized them. This complex interplay between religious conversion, caste, and social mobility highlights the limitations of religious conversion as a means of achieving social equality in a deeply stratified society.

An important aspect highlighted by several scholarly groups in the study of religious conversions in India is the lack of provisions for self-purification or atonement for those who had converted to Islam and later wished to revert to their original Hindu faith. The absence of a structured process of atonement or purification often bound the hands of newly converted Muslims who sought to return to Hinduism, as there were no established or widely accepted rituals for reconversion

within Islamic traditions. This lack of formalized spiritual reconciliation and purification created a complex social and religious landscape for those who wished to return to their previous belief systems.

However, there are notable historical instances of individuals who, despite the lack of formal mechanisms, managed to revert to Hinduism. One such example is that of Khusro Khan, who was enslaved and converted to Islam during the reign of Alauddin Khilji. As a young boy, he was taken as a prisoner and subsequently converted. Later in life, Khusro Khan rejected his Islamic faith and reverted to Hinduism.⁸ His reconversion serves as a striking example of an individual who was able to break free from the constraints of conversion and reclaim his Hindu identity, despite the societal challenges involved.

Another well-known example is Bukka I, the King of the Vijayanagara Empire, who,

during a period of political upheaval, was converted to Islam. After experiencing the complexities and challenges of Islamic rule, Bukka I, along with his brother Harihara, later reconverted to Hinduism and reestablished the Hindu monarchy of Vijayanagara.⁹ The reconversion of such prominent figures highlights not only the personal desire for religious identity but also the broader political and cultural implications of conversion and reconversion in medieval India.

Moreover, Hindu texts such as the *Dewalsmriti* (a 10th-century Hindu legal and religious text) contain provisions for reconversion, indicating that reconversion was a recognized practice within the Hindu tradition. The *Dewalsmriti*, composed during a time when a significant number of conversions to Islam took place, particularly in the northwest frontier regions of India, suggested that the social and religious dynamics of conversion were fluid. This provision for reconversion reflects a broader cultural understanding of religious identity in ancient India, where individuals could return to their original faith following a period of conversion, with certain rituals and customs to facilitate this transition.

These examples and historical records suggest that the process of reconversion, while not officially formalized, was not entirely uncommon. They also point to the resilience of Hindu

An important aspect highlighted by several scholarly groups in the study of religious conversions in India is the lack of provisions for self-purification or atonement for those who had converted to Islam and later wished to revert to their original Hindu faith. The absence of a structured process of atonement or purification often bound the hands of newly converted Muslims who sought to return to Hinduism, as there were no established or widely accepted rituals for reconversion within Islamic traditions. This lack of formalized spiritual reconciliation and purification created a complex social and religious landscape for those who wished to return to their previous belief systems

religious identity, which allowed for the possibility of individuals re-embracing their original faith despite the challenges posed by political and religious pressures. But the process of reconversion was very limited that paved the [paved way] for the new converted Muslims for remaining in Muslim religion, so we can say the newly converted people not enjoyed the privilege the same which were enjoyed by the aristocrat Muslim for example right to education, right to work, right to speak, write to equality. Despite the conversion in Islam they have been following their own religious practices and rituals, which reflect in oral tradition and their life style. They left behind among the society and they did not gain the position as migrated Muslims gained in the Indian society. Religious conversion in medieval India played a pivotal role in shaping socio-political structures. While Islam, as a monotheistic faith, emphasized equality among believers, historical evidence suggests that social hierarchies persisted within the Muslim community. The Pasmanda Muslims, who largely descend from lower-caste Hindu converts, faced continued discrimination from the ruling Central Asian Muslim elites.

Ashraf Dominance and the Marginalization of Pasmanda Muslims

The terms which denotes the three broad categories of Muslim

culture : *Ashraf*, *Ajlaf* and *Arzals* are Arabic words rather than Hindi or Sanskrit terms. "Where did these terms originate if the caste/*Biradari* was not in Muslim culture? *Ashraf* is derived from an Arabic word "*Shareef*" which means "Nobles". This group constitutes of 4-upper caste Muslims i.e. Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, and Pathan. They are all descendants of Arabs, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and other subcontinents outside India.¹⁰ These groups brought with them a sense of cultural and social superiority. These groups emphasized their non-Indian origin to differentiate themselves from local converts, *Ajlaf* and *Azrals*. The *Ajlaf* and *Azrals* together form "*Pasmanda*". The *Ashraf* elites claimed excessive access to positions of authority in governance, religious leadership, and education. They often linked their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad. This distinction helps to analyse the inter-communal patterns, where *Ashraf* identity became associated with purity and prestige, further marginalizing the 'lower' caste Muslims such as *Pasmanda* community in present times. Therefore, caste differentiation exists in Muslim society ranging from upper strata to lower strata. Despite this, the *Ashraf* leaders demand Total Muslim Reservation (TMR) arguing that the entire Muslim society is backward and is suffering from socio-economic, educational, and political backwardness.¹¹ On

the other hand the leaders from Pasmanda and Dalit backgrounds and the academia claim that the natural backwardness is not the whole community but 85% of the community belonging to *Ajlaf* and *Arzals* caste group. *Ashraf* Dominance is also witnessed in the political sphere. If we delve deep into *Ashraf* versus *Pasmanda's* share a systematic imbalance is seen where a smaller historically privileged group "*Ashraf*" continues to dominate. According to Ali Anwar, "If we go through the parliament members from the 1 to 14 h general election, it appears that 400 out of 7500 members were from Muslim community. According to the 2001 census, Muslim constitute 13.4%. *Ashraf* constitutes nearly 15% of the total Muslim population. It tells that 2.01 percent are *Ashraf* Muslims, and their representation in Lok Sabha is 4.5%. It is more than double their population. Whereas *Pasmanda* Muslims constitute 11.3%, their representation in Lok Sabha is only 0.8%."¹²

This overrepresentation of *Ashraf* reflects their dominance in the political sphere as their share in parliament is more than double their population percentage. This overrepresentation of *Ashrafs* and underrepresentation of *Pasmanda* Muslims undermines the principle of equitable democracy. This marginalization of *Pasmanda* Muslims negatively impacts the Human Development Index (HDI) by limiting their access to healthcare, education,

and economic opportunities. Poor health services, low literacy rates, and high poverty levels among Pasmandas lower their quality of life and overall development.

We have to understand that Ashraf elites being dominant often take up charge of government programs and funds meant for backward classes often marginalizing Pasmanda Muslims. This keeps Pasmanda trapped in Poverty and underrepresentation despite having larger population as compared to elite Ashrafs. Reservation to Pasmanda and Dalit Muslims can play a major role in their upliftment and will also support the virtue of Equality when similar special provisions will be provided to Dalit Muslims which are implied for Dalits of Hindus, Dalits of Sikhs etc.

Pasmanda Women: Double Marginalization in Society

Working on Pasmanda Women is a challenge as there exists no documented work which would ponder on the condition, unheard voices and marginalization of Pasmanda Women. In order to understand Pasmanda Women, I would prefer the word 'Double Marginalization' rather than 'Marginalization' because these women face discrimination not only because they are Muslims and are poor but also because they are 'Women', 'Belongs to lower caste' and

are 'Illiterate'. The word 'Women' is used here instead of 'Female' as it is the society which makes females Women. These Pasmanda Women who face severe discrimination are also ignored by Feminists. This failure of Feminists to address their issues further pushed Pasmanda Women in margins of society. Even the *Anjuman Tarraqi Pasand Mussanafin-e-Hind* fails to acknowledge and provide social justice to Pasmanda Women. Within this movement, writers like Ismat Chughtai and Krishn Chander have depicted the problems of Ashraf Women, such as forced marriages, the restrictions on [like] Purdah, and barriers to educational opportunities. Ismat Chughtai's short story *Lihaaf (The Quilt)* is a well-known example¹³. This story focuses on an *Ashraf* woman of Purdah society. The protagonist felt lonely and emotionally neglected in her marriage. As a result, she develops a close and intimate relationship with her female servant. Through this story, Chughtai brings attention to hidden desires and the restrictions placed on women in elite Muslim households. When *Lihaaf* was published, it caused a major scandal because it openly discussed female sexuality, a topic that was rarely talked about in literature back then. Although Ismat Chughtai was an outspoken writer, still she did not focus on hardships of Pasmanda women notably

because of multiple reasons: First She focused more on gender related perspectives rather than caste-based perspectives, Second Ismat's readership and her social circle may have largely belonged to the Ashraf community. Writing about Dalit Muslim women might have alienated her audience.

It is observed that Pasmanda men, in their fight for getting official recognition as Scheduled Caste by the Indian State, barely include their women as participants in this collective struggle for claiming their rights to a political identity that discriminates on the grounds of their religious identity. Owing to the multiply disadvantaged social positioning, these women also happen to be the most backward as far as education (the literacy rate among Muslim women is only 4%) and employability are concerned. Also, the political discourses of mainstream feminists, Dalits, and Muslim activists reflect badly on their agenda for liberation and social justice for the Pasmanda women. Furthermore, any such inhuman practice, prevalent within the Muslim community, by its very nature is antithetical to the core principle of Islam. Thus, for them to speak, it becomes essential to create an environment that enables them to do so. However, until then the Dalit feminists and the Islamic feminists need to 'Speak for them' (Spivak 1988).¹⁴ Even this would be sufficient to render visibility to the acutely

marginalized Pasmanda women and help them recuperate their voices from the abyss.

Access to Education: A Barrier to Pasmanda Muslims

The only known Indo- Persian work of Ziauddin Barani's '*The Fatwah-I-Jahandari*' showcase the basic feature of class structure followed among Muslims. He wanted the division Of Noble Muslims into castes and subcastes, allowing them the aristocratic privileges. Since Education gives upper hand to the low born Muslims to challenge and question, he was against the idea of educating Muslims from lower social classes, fearing that it would empower them to challenge or even surpass the aristocracy. Barani even supported punitive actions against anyone who attempted to educate these so-called 'low-born' individuals, whom he deemed unworthy of advancement.

Barani's attitude towards the Muslim Working Class has been quoted as by him as-

"Teachers of every kind are to be sternly ordered not to thrust precious stones down the

throats of dogs or to put collars of gold round the necks of pigs and bears — that is, to the mean, the ignoble aid the worthless, to shop-keepers and to the lowborn they are to teach nothing more than the rules about prayer, fasting, religious charity and the Haj pilgrimage along with some

chapters of the Quran and some doctrines of the Faith, without which their religion cannot be correct and valid prayers are not possible. But they are to be taught nothing else; lest it bring honor to their mean souls. They are not to be taught reading and writing, for plenty of disorders arise owing to the skill of the low-born in knowledge. The disorder into which all affairs of the religion and the state are thrown is due to the acts and words of the low-born, who have become skilled. For, on account of their skill, 'they become governors (wait), revenue-collectors ('ami-Is), auditors (mutasarraf), officers (farman-i-adel) and rulers (farman-i-rawa). If the teachers are disobedient, and it is discovered at the time of investigation that they have imparted knowledge or taught letters or writing to the low-born, inevitably the punishment for their disobedience will be meted out to them."¹⁵

Hence Barani condemned the people who accepted Islam because of their personal choice and believed that Islam, like a fine wine, must have matured in the muscles and it should be hereditary.

Barani's views on education highlight the deep social divisions within Muslim society during his time. His efforts to restrict education for lower-caste Muslims laid the groundwork for systemic inequities that continue to affect marginalized groups, including the Pasmanda

Muslims. The contemporary struggle for educational equality for Pasmanda Muslims and other marginalized communities is a direct response to this historical legacy.

As we critically examine Barani's arguments, it becomes evident that education must be recognized as a powerful tool for social mobility and empowerment. The denial of education to certain sections of society, based on caste or class, only perpetuates the cycles of poverty and discrimination. Today, the challenge lies in addressing these historical wrongs by implementing policies that ensure equitable access to education, thereby breaking down the barriers of caste and class that continue to hinder social progress.

Barani's attitudes toward education for the 'low-born' Muslims offer a poignant reminder of how caste-based discrimination can be perpetuated through institutionalized practices such as restricting access to knowledge. This history continues to shape the lives of marginalized Muslim communities, such as the Pasmanda Muslims, who still struggle for equal access to education and social justice in modern India.

Conclusion

Therefore, caste-based divisions may persist unless there is a shift toward a more egalitarian society that rejects caste-based

discrimination, not only in name but also in practice. If the power imbalance continues, Pasmanda communities will keep facing discrimination due to both caste and class. Pasmanda women face double marginalization. Their marginalization could lessen if feminist movements and Dalit movements work together to give voice to their issues. It's time for Indian mainstream feminists, Dalit, and Muslim feminists to recognize the gaps in feminist scholarship. Pasmanda

Muslims form the majority in the community, yet historical discrimination and policy neglect continuously prevent them from entering education. The lack of affirmative action worsens their marginalization within society, especially for Pasmanda women, who have to face both caste and gender barriers. Their upliftment largely depends on inclusive educational policies. The implementation of caste-based affirmative action for Pasmanda Muslims, as well

as the inclusion of Pasmanda women in these broader social justice movements, will be crucial in overcoming the systemic barriers that continue to hinder their progress. Ultimately, a shift toward a more egalitarian society will require addressing the caste-based divisions that persist within the Muslim community, particularly through inclusive educational policies and greater political representation for marginalized groups. ●

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Dr. Ashish Kumar Shukla

Quest for Representation The Social Character of the Pasmanda Movement

The Pasmanda movement is essentially a struggle within the Muslim community for social equality. This paper is an analysis of the quest for representation among Pasmanda Muslims

In India's socio-political landscape, affirmative action policies to ensure social justice have been a crucial subject. At its core lies the question of how real equality can be achieved and how historical and systemic disadvantages faced by marginalized communities can be addressed. The Indian Constitution, through its various articles, provides reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in public positions and services. It also defines the criteria and methodology for identifying the communities eligible for such reservations.

It is within these provisions that Pasmanda Muslims begin their search for representation. The Pasmanda movement is a grassroots initiative led by Muslims from lower castes, raising the voice of a segment of the community that challenges the dominance of upper-caste 'Ashraf' or 'Sharif' Muslims. This is a fight within the Muslim community. However, it also extends beyond the community, aiming to secure the social justice granted by the Indian Constitution. In this struggle for equality and representation, the Pasmanda community engages

directly with the Indian State.

Ali Anwar supports the view that Pasmanda Muslims are more of a class than a caste and includes Dalit Muslims under the Pasmanda category, classifying all as part of the broader OBC group.

However, Ejaz Ali, who was the first to use the term Dalit Muslims and was a pioneer of the Dalit Muslim movement, argues that Dalit Muslims should be granted the same constitutional benefits as Dalit Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists with an aim to provide social justice to Dalit Muslims. The claim made by Ejaz Ali and the Dalit Muslim movement, however, contradicts constitutional provisions, orders, and laws related to the system of reservation. Against this backdrop, this article analyzes the quest for Pasmanda Muslim representation based on the Constituent Assembly debates, constitutional provisions, and judicial interpretations.

Who are the Pasmanda?

In Indian sociological studies, whenever caste systems are mentioned, the focus of all the learned experts usually turns to Hindu society, using its caste structure as

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a primary example. However, this ignores the fact that caste-based stratification exists in other communities in India as well. Many scholars and studies have confirmed that the caste system is present among Indian Muslims too which influences their social, economic, and political stakes.

The term "Pasmanda" is derived from the Persian language and means "those left behind," and refers to a socially and economically marginalized group within the Muslim community in South Asia, especially India. These are primarily converted Hindu lower castes and laboring classes who have been historically excluded from the privileges enjoyed by the Ashraf or Sharif elite Muslims. (Mandal,2012)¹

Pasmanda Muslims make up about 85% of India's total Muslim population who have long been excluded from the dominant narratives and political discourse shaped by the Ashrafs

or the upper caste elite class of the Muslims.² Although it is often claimed that the Indian Muslim Community does not have a caste system like the Hindu community, the existence of caste groups within Muslims is undeniable, and these are further divided into sub-castes.

Although caste-based discrimination does not enjoy religious sanction in the Muslim community, it is believed that such discrimination is a result of the influence of Hindu society³. On the contrary, some scholars argue that the caste system in the Muslim community is not inspired by Hindu society but has always been an inherent feature of Islam.⁴ The three terms that denote hierarchical division in the Muslim community — Ashraf, Ajlaf, and Arzal — are derived from Arabic.

According to Ali Anwar Ansari, the pioneer of the Pasmanda movement, 'Ashraf' comes from the Arabic word

'Sharif', meaning noble. This group includes castes with non-Indian origins. Similarly, 'Ajlaf' is derived from the Arabic word 'Jalf', meaning downcast or dishonored. This mainly includes castes engaged in clean, traditional occupations and comprises the Muslim OBC or middle castes⁵. The third term, Arzal, is derived from the Arabic word 'Razal', meaning despicable or vile. This caste group includes those engaged in "impure" professions. These are often called Dalit Muslims and are considered equivalent to Hindu Dalits.⁶

The 1901 Census also mentioned caste-based discrimination among Muslims. It highlighted two main caste divisions:

1. **Ashraf or Sharif**—associated with upper-class Muslims, including non-Indian Muslim lineages and upper-caste Hindu converts. This group includes Sayyads, Sheikhs, Pathans, Mughals, Maliks, and Mirjas.
2. **Ajlaf** – includes lower caste Muslims whom other Muslims often avoid. Examples are Sheikh farmers, Pirahi and Thakurai, Darji, Julaha (weavers), Fakir, Rangrez (dyers), Badhai (carpenters), Bhatiyara, Dhobi (washermen), Hajjam (barbers), Chik, Chudihar, Dai, Dhawa, Dhunia, Gaddi, Kaala, Kasai, Bamu, Bedia,



Bhatt, Chamian, Dafali, Mocchu, Nagarchi, Nut, Panwaria, Madariya, Tatia and so on.

The Arzal, or the lowest group, includes Bhanar, Halalkhor, Harja, Kasi, Kunjra, Lalbegi, Mangta, and Mehter. According to Ashfaq Hussain Ansari, caste-based discrimination among Indian Muslims is as ingrained as it is in Hindu society over centuries. Denying this is ignoring the facts.⁷

Pasmanda Movement and the Concerns for Social Justice

The Pasmanda movement, which has gained momentum in recent years, represents the concerns of marginalized sections within the Muslim community in India. Its aim is to organize the oppressed Muslim castes to challenge the dominance of the Ashraf or Sharif Muslims. The movement has brought to the forefront the internal diversity of the Muslim community, which is otherwise portrayed as a homogeneous

group in public discourse.

The movement diverges from the attraction of the elite Muslims towards cultural and symbolic issues, and instead focuses on social issues related to the day-to-day struggle of majority of Muslims for their survival. It seeks to establish an anti-hegemonic cultural space that prioritizes the everyday struggles for existence faced by common Muslims over elite aspirations.⁸

In India, the Pasmanda movement has emerged as a significant political and social campaign focused on the rights and representation of marginalized Muslim communities, particularly Dalits, OBCs, and other backward groups.⁹ In the past decade, the movement has gained substantial traction, with activists and organizations challenging the dominance of Ashraf Muslims and advocating for the social, economic and political empowerment of Pasmanda groups.

The movement has played a crucial role in highlighting the

socio-economic and political challenges faced by the Pasmanda communities — such as limited access to education, employment opportunities, and political representation. The Pasmanda movement supports the extension of constitutional affirmative action provisions within and outside the Muslim community to ensure social justice for the historically marginalized. These provisions include access to education, employment, and other benefits through affirmative policies.

Within the Muslim population, Pasmanda groups — Dalits and other backward classes — have long faced systemic discrimination and social, economic and political exclusion. They argue that they should be eligible for the same constitutionally guaranteed reservation benefits given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.¹⁰

However, the Pasmanda demand for this concern faces opposition from two directions :

1. From the Ashraf Muslim elite, who wish to retain their dominance.
2. From the Government of India, which has not expanded the reservation system to include Pasmanda Muslims based on constitutional provisions.¹¹

Thus, the Pasmanda movement is engaged in a long legal and political battle to secure social justice and representation for itself.

If we analyze the demand

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for Muslim reservation, it can be broken down into three key components:

1. A reservation for all Muslims.
2. A separate quota for the OBCs.
3. Inclusion of Dalit Muslims under the Scheduled Castes (SC) category.¹²

The first demand comes mainly from the Ashraf section of the Muslim community, which advocates for declaring the entire Muslim population as 'backward'. According to them, the whole community is socially, economically, education wise, and politically backward.¹³

On the other hand, Pasmanda and Dalit leaders and scholars argue that this backwardness does not apply to the whole Muslim population but only to the 85% who belong to Ajlaf and Arzal caste groups. The Sachar Committee also stated that only the caste groups at the lower levels within the Muslim community are genuinely underprivileged. Even in the political sphere, leadership has remained in the hands of Ashraf Muslims.

The Ranganath Misra Commission recommended giving reservation to Muslim and Christian religious communities. It suggested that all minorities in the country should be given 15% reservation, of which 10% should go to Muslims, and the remaining 5% to other minorities¹⁴.

Through its report, the Commission attempted to redefine the "religion of reservation" and concluded that

the Indian Constitution does not restrict Scheduled Castes to any one religion.

Since this study is focused on Pasmanda and Dalit Muslim demands for reservation, it will not delve deeply into the larger debate of reservation for all Muslims.

The second type of demand relates to a separate quota within the existing OBC list. Some data and studies indicate that Muslim OBCs are not benefiting from the OBC quota.¹⁵

Therefore, there is a demand for a separate OBC category for Muslims. Various data on the socio-economic conditions of Indian Muslims show that Muslim OBCs, due to their marginalization, are often unable to avail the benefits of existing schemes. The available data suggest that Muslim OBCs do not receive equitable access due to their disadvantaged position.¹⁶

As the Mandal Commission stated, Muslim OBCs form 8.44% of the total OBC population (52%). Based on this, two organizations related to backward Muslims— All India Backward Muslim Morcha and All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz — during the "Arakshan Bachao Rally" in Delhi in 1998, demanded that out of the 27% OBC quota, 8.44% should be earmarked specifically for Muslim backward castes.¹⁷

The third demand for reservation concerns the inclusion of Dalit Muslims in the Scheduled Caste (SC) category. In the areas

of education, employment, socio-economic and political concerns, the marginalized groups — the Dalits — required affirmative discrimination for their upliftment.

Accordingly, in 1950, Dalits (i.e., Hindu Dalits) were granted benefits in education, employment, and legislative and parliamentary representation through quotas under the order of the President of India.¹⁸ In 1990, this reservation was extended to Buddhist Dalits as well.¹⁹

In addition to this, various upliftment policies were implemented, and the SC-ST Commission was also established. There are constitutional provisions for the protection of their rights. Special laws have also been enacted to control atrocities against Dalits. They have representation in state legislatures and Parliament. Political representation is considered an instrument for socio-economic change. After 70 years, Dalits have emerged significantly in socio-political spheres.

According to supporters of Dalit Muslim reservations, Dalit Muslims share the same socio-economic conditions as Dalit Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the discriminatory stance of the Presidential Order of 1950. In this regard, multiple petitions have been filed; and several studies have been conducted to validate the inclusion of Dalit Muslims.

Both the Sachar Committee and the Ranganath Misra

Commission recommended that Dalit Muslims should be categorized under the Scheduled Castes (SC) list.²⁰

Challenges and Resistance to the Pasmanda Movement

Despite its constitutional basis, the quest for representation and social justice by the Pasmanda movement has faced significant challenges and resistance from various groups.

First, from the Ashraf Muslim elite, who have historically dominated the political and social landscape of the Muslim community. These elites have been reluctant to share their status and privileges with Pasmanda communities. Pasmanda activists have had to face criticism and opposition from Ashraf Muslims, who argue that including Pasmandas in the reservation system would reduce the representation and influence of Ashraf Muslims.

Second, the demand to include Pasmanda communities under the Scheduled Castes (SC) is also contrary to the image

that the Muslim community attempts to present — that it is a discrimination-free and untouchability-free society. This image is often highlighted as a major feature of the Muslim community, which supposedly acted as a pull factor for Hindu Dalits to convert to Islam. Therefore, even the upper-caste Muslim leaders have never supported this demand by the Pasmandas.

Third, the Government of India has maintained a cautious stance toward the Pasmanda demand, citing potential constitutional and legal obstacles. The government argues that providing social justice through reservations to religious minorities would require a constitutional amendment, which may face significant political and legal challenges. Additionally, the government states that the socio-economic and educational condition of Pasmanda communities is not significantly different from the general Muslim population, and that including them in the reservation system might create an imbalance in the distribution

of benefits.

The Pasmanda Muslims are demanding inclusion in the Scheduled Castes on the basis that Article 341 of the Constitution defines such lists as religion-neutral, and that nowhere in the article is there a specific exclusion based on religion.²¹ Although, a close reading of the Constituent Assembly debates on the issue of Scheduled Castes and reservation makes this claim baseless.

Constituent Assembly's Stand on Reservation for Religious Minorities

In India, the issue of granting reservation to Dalit Muslims and Christians has been a contentious subject since the country's independence. The Constituent Assembly, which was tasked with drafting the Indian Constitution, faced a complex dilemma — balancing equal opportunity with the recognition of the rights of religious minorities.

At the time of independence, the idea behind the newly established framework of equal opportunity was to create a secular state that would not discriminate based on religious identity. However, this universalist approach was criticized for failing to adequately address the unique challenges faced by religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, who had to face “discrimination and harm on issues of security, identity, and marginalization.”²² To address these imbalances

In India, the issue of granting reservation to Dalit Muslims and Christians has been a contentious subject since the country's independence. The Constituent Assembly, which was tasked with drafting the Indian Constitution, faced a complex dilemma — balancing equal opportunity with the recognition of the rights of religious minorities. At the time of independence, the idea behind the newly established framework of equal opportunity was to create a secular state that would not discriminate based on religious identity

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and ensure adequate equality for marginalized religious communities, reservation has been proposed as a means of redress.

The Constituent Assembly debate on August 24, 1949, reveals that under Article 292, the original draft of the Constitution provided reservation for religious minorities, namely Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Parsis.

All major leaders of the Congress Party had initially accepted this provision. However, two years later, in 1949, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, rejected the proposal for special provisions to protect the interests of religious groups, stating:

"...Minorities themselves began to feel that we should reconsider our decision. Under the leadership of a great Christian nationalist leader, they brought a proposal that they wanted to give up reservation. And what kind of reservation? — not the small one in services, but the major reservation in legislatures at both the Centre and the Provinces. They agreed to a joint electorate and no longer wished to be part of this communal separation. When they expressed this, I called a meeting of the Minority Committee and the Advisory Committee. Decisions were taken as per their wish."²³

Since Sardar Patel is often seen as a symbol of Hindu conservatism, an attempt was made to blame him for removing

the reservation provisions for religious minorities. However, the Constituent Assembly debates clearly show that members of the religious minorities voluntarily gave up their reservations, which had been granted by the colonial government.²⁴

Initially, Patel's proposal — that Muslims and Sikhs should be granted reservation in legislatures — was accepted by the House. It was a wise decision and a step forward in nationalism. The later decision to abolish reservation for Muslims and Sikhs in government services was seen as another such step.²⁵

M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar's interventions also confirm this logic that:

♦ "Article 292 originally mentioned reservation for the Muslim community, Indian Christians, and others. But they voluntarily gave it up, and now reservation has to be provided only for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."²⁶

Sipat Rai Kapoor, welcoming this decision, said:

"The agreement to give up reserved seats in separate constituencies happened in the Minorities Committee. Our Muslim friends, Christian friends, and Sikh brothers agreed to give up reserved seats in different legislatures. I would like to congratulate all of them for this wise and brave decision, which they made in the larger national interest. I especially congratulate my Muslim

brothers, because for many years they had separate electorates and separate representation, and they had believed that this was the only path to their salvation."²⁷

During the Constituent Assembly debates, one of the major concerns was the communal quota system implemented under colonial rule, which was viewed as a mechanism that:

♦ "Encouraged communal appeals to minority community voters" and "which contributed to polarization and led to Partition."²⁸

There was a fear that granting reservation to Dalit Muslims and Christians might increase religious polarization and weaken national unity.

On the other hand, supporters of reservation for religious minorities argued that the criteria should be based on economic and social backwardness, not religious affiliation, so that the most marginalized sections of these communities could be uplifted.

The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities recommended 10% reservation for Muslims in government services, noting that:

> "The judiciary has delivered many historic and sound judgments protecting the rights of Muslims, Christians, and other minority communities in India."²⁹

Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly did not include any explicit provision for reservation

on the basis of religious identity. This decision reflected the complex balance between equality, minority rights, and the divisive legacy of communal politics under the colonial system.

However, in contemporary India, the debate continues, as various groups persist in demanding greater recognition and empowerment of religious minority communities.

The Constitutional Position on Reservation

In the context of the demand for reservation by Dalit Muslims, the movements advocating for it, and the various objections raised, it is important to analyze the constitutional position of reservation.

The authority to determine which caste or tribe is to be considered Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) in a state or union territory is vested in the President of India through Articles 341 and 342 of the Indian Constitution

The Indian Constitution, through various articles, provides for equal opportunities and fair representation to socially and economically backward groups.

Article 15 prohibits

discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and allows the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward citizens, or for SCs and STs.

Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment and allows the state to reserve a certain percentage of jobs for underrepresented groups.

In addition:

Article 330 provides for reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament).

Article 332 provides for such reservation in State Legislative Assemblies, which guarantees their political representation. Further, through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, specifically: Article 243-D (for Panchayats), and Article 243-T (for Municipalities), the Constitution mandates reservation of seats for members of SCs and STs in proportion to their population at all levels of local self-government. These also include one-third reservation for women of these groups within these reserved seats.

Although these provisions

are exclusively for SCs and STs, and the criteria for reservation is social and economic status, these Articles must be understood in the context of various constitutional orders issued over time.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and its amended order in 1990 clearly states that no person who professes a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste. However, no such religious restriction exists for Scheduled Tribes.

Based on these orders, the Pasmanda Muslims' demand for SC status appears legally baseless. However, a core demand of the Pasmanda movement is that these constitutional orders are discriminatory and must be amended

Key Judicial Judgments on Religious Reservation

The issue of religion-based reservation in India has been a complex and contentious subject, where the Supreme Court of India has played a crucial role in shaping the legal landscape surrounding this matter.

The judiciary has had to balance the need for affirmative action for marginalized religious communities with the fundamental right to equality enshrined in the Constitution.³⁰

One of the landmark decisions on this subject came in 1963, in the case of *M.R. Balaji v. State of Mysore*, where the Supreme

The issue of religion-based reservation in India has been a complex and contentious subject, where the Supreme Court of India has played a crucial role in shaping the legal landscape surrounding this matter. The judiciary has had to balance the need for affirmative action for marginalized religious communities with the fundamental right to equality enshrined in the Constitution

Court ruled that reservations solely based on religion are unconstitutional. The Court emphasized that reservation should be based on social and educational backwardness, not religious identity.

However, the Court's stance has evolved over time. It has acknowledged the need for special provisions for certain religious minorities.

In 1992, in the case of *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court observed that the Hindu caste system is not exclusive to Hindus, and that reservation policies could have been extended to other religious communities if they were found to be socially and educationally backward.³¹

Though Muslim communities currently benefit from OBC reservations at the central and state levels³², the question of whether Dalits who have converted to Islam should be entitled to SC reservations remains unresolved. Several legal petitions on this issue are pending before the Supreme Court.

To address the complex issues of religious conversion and social justice, a commission was set up in 2022 under the chairmanship of former Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan. The commission is

scheduled to submit its report by October 2025.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), however, has opposed granting SC status to Dalits who have converted to Christianity or Islam.³³

Conclusion

The quest for representation by Pasmanda Muslims focuses on the one hand on ensuring social justice within their own community and outside, and also on engaging with the Constitution of India. In their efforts, they are concerned both with society and with constitutional guarantees. To succeed, the movement must justify its claims at both these levels.

A review of the Constituent Assembly debates, constitutional provisions, and judicial decisions relating to minority reservations makes it clear that the Scheduled Castes list has never been truly religion-neutral.

As for the inclusion of backward sections of the Sikh community in the SC list, they themselves renounced the right to separate legal identity in order to be included in this list. In contrast, the Muslim community focused more on protecting its religious, cultural, and educational rights,

and not on reservation.

As a result, the Muslim community was excluded from the SC list, primarily because its leaders historically refrained from participating in any agreement — especially the Poona Pact of 1932 — that would have addressed the issue of untouchability. Their participation might have raised questions about the egalitarian nature of India's religious minorities.

Due to these complications, Muslim members were discouraged from raising the issue of SC status for Pasmanda Muslims in the Constituent Assembly, because doing so might have endangered their claim to the constitutional right to freely practice and propagate their religion.

In contemporary India, the demand for SC status is growing not just among Pasmanda Muslims, but also among other social groups.

Presenting the exclusion of Pasmanda Muslims from the Scheduled Castes list solely as an issue of communal discrimination is not only unfair to the complexity of the issue, but also contradicts the constitutional logic embedded in various reservation-related Articles of the Constitution. ●

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Dr. Abu Horaira

Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal Muslim

The vocabulary used in this research article basically hails from Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. The famous dictionaries of these languages are Alkamus, Firozul Lughat and Farhang-e-Farsi. As the languages are different, we have used the connotation of those words as transliteration. Also, the reference of the same has been presented at the end.

Caste is a very complex issue in the social system of Indian Muslims. But Muslims deny the existence of distinctions like upper caste or lower caste in their community. In this sequence, when we first investigate the origin of the words Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal, we find that the word 'Ashraf' has originated from the Arabic word 'Sharf'. According to Arabic-Urdu dictionary 'Alkamus', 'Al-Ashraf' (or Ashraf) means 'great people' or 'people of higher status'.¹ Similarly, the root word of the word 'Ajlaf' is 'Zilf' whose plural form is 'Ajlaf', which means 'foolish' or 'stupid'² while the word 'Arzal' has originated from the word 'Razl' which means 'worst', 'very low' or 'low class'.³ It should be noted that the above words are not related to

any caste system, the reason behind this is that Arab society did not have a caste system like the Indian society.

In Persian-Urdu vocabulary, according to Farhang-e-Farsi dictionary, the meaning of the word 'Ashraf' is 'elder'⁴ and 'Ajlaf' means 'bastards' or 'foolish people'⁵ while the meaning of 'Arzal' is 'disgraceful' or 'lowly'⁶. According to Persian-English dictionary, the meaning of the word 'Ashraf' is 'noble', 'grandees', 'gentlemen' or 'men of high extraction'⁷ and the meaning of the word 'Ajlaf' is 'ignoble', 'wretches' or 'tyrants'⁸ while the meaning of 'Arzal' is 'vile', 'ignoble', 'the vulgar' or 'the rabble'⁹.

In the Urdu dictionary 'Ferozul Lughat', the meaning of the word 'Ashraf' is given as 'people of noble families or respectable people', 'respected' or 'gentle people'¹⁰ and the meaning of 'Ajlaf' is 'scoundrels', 'Shudras' or 'people of shameful professions'¹¹ while the meaning of 'Arzal' is 'very shameful' or 'extremely mean'¹². According to Rabia Urdu Lughat, the meaning of the word 'Ashraf' is 'good man', 'sourceman'¹³ and the meaning of 'Ajlaf' is 'scoundrels',

The caste system is a complex issue in the Muslim community of India. Here is a social assessment with a linguistic analysis of the words related to it

‘people of low class’, ‘inferior’ or ‘Shudra’¹⁴ while the meaning of ‘Arzal’ is ‘extremely shameful’, ‘extremely mean’ or ‘a very hateful person’¹⁵.

In Arabic dictionaries, the meaning of the words Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal is general in nature and these words are not related to any caste or class. But the meaning given to these three words in the Urdu dictionary indicates the social structure and these words indicate caste identity. In accordance with the Indian social structure, the meaning of these words took the form of caste as per their practical usage and profession of the person it is meant for.

According to the Sachar Committee report, “The Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950, popularly known as the Presidential Order 1950, gives the status of Scheduled Castes only to those Hindu groups whose occupation is not clean. Hence, their non-Hindu counterparts were considered converted intermediate castes and were

declared OBCs. Hence, there are two main categories of OBCs among Muslims. Halalkhor, Hela, Lalbegi or Bhangi (Jamadar), Dhobi (washerman), Nai or Hajjam (hair cutter), Chik (butcher), Faqir (monk) etc. are those who come under Arzal and who are converts to Islam from untouchables. Momin or Julaha (weaver), Darzi or Idris (tailor), Raain or Kujra (vegetable seller) etc. are Ajlaf who are converts from clean occupational castes. Hence, it can be assumed that there are three groups among Muslims - (1) Those who do not have any social disqualification - Ashraf, (2) those who are equivalent to Hindu OBCs - Ajlaf, and (3) those who are equivalent to Hindu SCs - Arzal. Those who are addressed as Muslim OBCs are a combination of categories (2) and (3).”¹⁶

If we look at their class division in this way, then Ashraf conventionally meant for upper caste, Ajlaf for lower caste and Arzal for very low caste. In this way, upper caste Indian Muslims come under Ashraf while lower

and very low caste Muslims come under the category of Ajlaf and Arzal; who are collectively called ‘Pasmanda’ Muslims.

In the book ‘Muslim Caste In Uttar Pradesh’, Gaus Ansari writes about Ashraf that “Thus, among the Indian Muslims, as among the early Aryans, social segregation was first based on racial differences. A clear demarcation between the two main categories of Indian Muslims, that of foreign extraction and that of indigenous origin, reflects in the term Ashraf or Shurafa which is used to designate Muslims of superior stock (mostly those of foreign extractions like Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal and Pathan) in direct contrast to those of Indian origin. Both the terms, Ashraf or Shurafa, are the plural form of the Arabic word Sharif, meaning honourable.”¹⁷

The tragedy of class and racial division is prevalent in almost every society and culture in the world in some form or other. With the spread of Islam in India, only the name of the religion changed but no radical change is seen on the cultural front. The main reason behind this is that systems like caste and racial discrimination already existed in the cultures that came to India. When Muslim invaders came to India, the culture here proved to be favourable for them. Therefore, the social and cultural system remained as it is. As a result, the Muslims assimilated the Indian culture in accordance with their principles. But

The tragedy of class and racial division is prevalent in almost every society and culture in the world in some form or other. With the spread of Islam in India, only the name of the religion changed but no radical change is seen on the cultural front. The main reason behind this is that systems like caste and racial discrimination already existed in the cultures that came to India. When Muslim invaders came to India, the culture here proved to be favourable for them. Therefore, the social and cultural system remained as it is. As a result, the Muslims assimilated the Indian culture in accordance with their principles

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class, racial and caste divisions remained. The Hindu lower castes were socially humiliated, disrespected, exploited, tortured and oppressed in the name of caste. To escape this pain, they had to take recourse to other cultures and societies and one of the options before them was Islamic culture. The Hindu lower castes saw their revival in it and assimilated into the Islamic culture. But their caste identity and social system remained as per their profession, which can be directly found in today's Muslim society too.

In Indian society, caste division happened on the basis of Varna Vyavasta which is completely based on inequality, domination and exploitation. There has been a long tradition of struggle against this caste related inequality, domination and exploitation where for centuries a section of the society has been struggling for social justice, whom we know today as Dalit community. Whatever be the religion prevalent in India, the structure of caste diversity remains the same - whether one is a Sikh, Jain, Christian or Muslim. Mahatma Gandhi tried to give a respectful status to the Dalits by calling them 'Harijan'. He has written in the article named 'Harijan' that "Even if a Harijan becomes a Christian, Muslim or Hindu, and now a Sikh for the name's sake, he will still remain a Harijan. He cannot erase the stains inherited from the so-called Hindu religion.

Even if he changes his attire and calls himself a Catholic Harijan or a Muslim Harijan or a neo-Muslim or a neo-Sikh, his untouchability will not leave him for generations."¹⁸

The struggle for social justice intensified after India got independence. These marginalised castes fight hard for justice. As a result, reservation was provided in the Constitution to empower the castes coming under Hindu, Sikh and Jain religions socially, politically and economically as well as to bring equality. But this justice remained incomplete because no such provision was made for these castes coming under Islam and Christianity, the struggle for which continues till date.

If we talk specifically about the Indian social structure, the very basis of it is caste, and the basis of the social structure of the Indian Muslim community is also caste. This is the reason that if we look at all the formats of equality in Islam, we come to know that here also there are three classes like Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arzal. The form of division of these three classes in the Indian social caste system appears to be similar to the Indian social Hindu caste system. The castes under Ashraf class are Sayyed, Sheikh, Pathan, Khan, Mughal, Mir, Mirza etc. and the castes coming under Ajlaf are Darzi, Julaha, Faqir, Rangrez, Badhi, Bhatiyara, Chik, Churidaar, Dai, Dhobi, Dhunia, Gaddidar, Kalal, Butcher, Kula, Kunjra, Laheri, Mahifarosh,

Mallah, Nalia, Nikaari etc. while the castes falling under Arzal are Bhanar, Halalkhor, Lalbegi, Bhogta, Mehtar, Nat and Dafali etc. Since there is diversity in India, the caste hierarchy also differs from one state to another.

According to the Indian social justice system, the Ashraf class was included in the general caste and the other two classes Ajlaf and Arzal were included in the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Since the concept of social justice had been initiated even before Indian independence, the proof of which is 'Momin Conference', consciousness developed among these classes regarding social justice after Independence also and they started fighting for it.

This struggle took the form of a movement which we know today as 'Pasmanda movement'. The word 'Pasmanda' came to be known for the castes coming under Ajlaf and Arzal classes. Talking about the origin and definition of the word 'Pasmanda, it is made up of two words of Persian language 'Pas' and 'Manda'. According to Zaid Firozul Lughat, 'Pas' means 'behind', 'after' or 'far behind'¹⁹ and 'Manda' means 'that which is left behind'²⁰. According to Rabia Urdu Lughat, the meaning of Pasmanda is 'to be behind'.²¹ Hence, the meaning of 'Pasmanda' is 'that which is left behind', that is 'backward' or 'lower'.

While defining Pasmanda, Ali Anwar Saheb writes in 'Masawat Ki Jung' that 'Pas' is a Persian

word. So, Pasmanda is a Persian word which means 'behind'. 'Manda' means 'left behind', which means 'one who is left behind' is called Pasmanda.²² Pasmanda activist Abdullah Mansoor defines the word in his article as "Pasmanda is a Persian word which means 'those who are left behind'. It refers to Muslims belonging to 'Shudra' (backward) and 'Ati Shudra' (extremely backward or Dalit) castes. The word Pasmanda is currently seen in connection with the Pasmanda ideology and Pasmanda movement. The Pasmanda movement emerged as a post Mandal movement of 1990s as a response to the discrimination and marginalisation faced by the Pasmanda castes within the Muslim community."²³

It is clear from the above definition that the term Pasmanda in general refers to a community that has been neglected and marginalised within Indian Muslim community. It specifically refers to those Muslims who are outside the elite classes. The Pasmanda community thus exists within the Muslim communities which belong to different castes, regions, occupations and traditional practices. The origin and identity of the Pasmanda community is primarily linked to the complex caste system of Indian Muslim community. Traditionally, the Muslim society was divided into upper and lower castes and the Pasmandas were seen as those Muslims who were socially and economically

neglected by the ruling class or the upper class. A kind of social hierarchy had developed in the religious and social life of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, as a result of which the Pasmanda community was excluded from the mainstream.

The effects of caste discrimination are clearly seen in the Pasmanda society, especially in the Indian Muslim society, in which some communities were considered 'upper' while the Pasmanda is considered lower and backward or most backward. Indian Muslims are not simply Muslims but before someone identifying himself as a Muslim, he also has to clarify about the caste he belongs to. A major problem of the Pasmanda society is also their social and economic backwardness. The reason behind it is the people belonging to this community often live in poverty in rural areas. They are deprived of education, health and other basic facilities. Special schemes have been framed by the government for their welfare but implementation of these schemes is nominal. The Pasmanda community is not able to take advantage these schemes because they are educationally backward. The literacy rate in the Pasmanda community is very low as this community lags behind in the field of education. The main reason behind this is poverty, lack of resources and social discrimination.

The Pasmanda community has been socially, politically,

economically and educationally backward for centuries. When we study about it, we find that the main reason behind this backwardness is the caste system. The Ashraf class has established its pillar on all those bases of social structure. They adopt every trick to maintain their dominance. They try to placate the backward Pasmanda communities in the name of religion and garner their votes by raising the slogan "We the Muslims are all one, there is no inequality among us." For example, whether we talk about political participation or studying and teaching in educational institutions, the character of the Ashraf class is the same. Establishing their own rights by snatching the rights of Pasmanda Muslims is an example of this. Apart from safeguarding their own benefit, the Ashrafs never raised their voice for the rights of Pasmanda Muslims.

Apart from Pasmandas, there is a provision of reservation for other backward castes also who belong to the Scheduled Caste category. But citing the religious jingles that 'there is no inequality in Islam', the Ashraf class of Muslims deprived them of this benefit for whom this reservation has been prescribed in the Constitution, by taking benefit of which they too could have developed themselves. The 2006 Sachar Committee report has brought the fact to the fore that there are Ajlaf and Arzal communities in the Muslim community who are

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living in worse conditions than the Dalit Hindus. If we talk about political matters, Delhi Assembly elections were held recently. Okhla is a Muslim-dominated constituency where the population of Pasmanda Muslims is the highest, but all the three candidates there were from the Ashraf class.

By submitting fake certificates (especially the OBC ones) during the admission and appointment process in the educational institutions, the Ashraf class has deprived the Pasmandas of the benefits so that it can further establish itself and maintain its dominance. Mentioning this in 'Masawat Ki Jung', Ali Anwar Saheb writes, "Some system of nature and human nature is such that people keep fighting in their own way against all kinds of oppression and fraud in the society. A similar case of recruitment on the basis of fake certificates of 'Momin' in engineering services was filed in the High Court as a writ petition. As a journalist, I have only added that the accused is not an

ordinary man but the grandson of a leader who has been the Chief Minister of the state. Obviously, such cases are not one or two. The way news are trickling in, it seems that there are thousands of such people who have got into gazetted and non-gazetted, state government and Central government jobs by getting fake 'Momin' certificates made. Where a wrong person gets a job, a right person's share is taken away."²⁴ It is also worth noting here that in Muslim dominated institutions, the Ashraf class maintains its 'ownership' over OBC reservation by doing such fraudulent work.

The Pasmanda community has always struggled for its rights. This community has been a part of various movements to improve its social, political, economic and educational status. The leaders and organisations of the Pasmanda community have raised the issue on various platforms that they have been marginalised by the upper class of the Muslim community itself. As a result, the Pasmanda movement has been

able to bring to the fore the issues of social justice, equal rights and opportunities. At present, organisations like Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj are guiding the community and providing energy to its struggle.

The main issue raised by the Pasmanda community in the fight for their rights is social justice. Social equality is more important for the Pasmanda community because there is no biological difference between the people belonging to different castes and classes. The Pasmanda community should also get equal rights in the society, especially at par with the upper classes. The biggest problem faced by the Pasmanda community is its low literacy rate. If reservation is given to Dalit Pasmanda in the Constitution (since many castes among the Pasmanda Muslims who are given reservation under the OBC category come under the Scheduled Caste i.e. Arzal class which have been included in the OBC list, Dalit Muslims i.e. Arzal Muslims should get reservation at par with the Scheduled Caste, for which there is no provision in the Constitution, as mentioned in the report of the Sachar Committee 2006), then the children of these communities can get better education and employment opportunities. Moreover, if government schemes are implemented honestly, then also this class can fully develop itself.

Even from the political point of view, Pasmanda Muslims are very backward. There is no

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one to lead them. Despite being more than 85% of the Muslim population in the country, presence of their leadership in higher positions is negligible - be it in political parties or in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha or any other such democratic institution. Poverty, unemployment, population growth etc. are the common problems among them. It seems that these classes have only the right to vote, but not to acquire power.

Wherever communal riots take place in the country, the people who get killed are mostly Pasmanda Muslims. This is a matter of great concern that when there is no one to raise the voice of Pasmanda Muslims, how their families would be supported if they are killed. In

such a situation, women of the Pasmanda community wander from door to door with their children while their minor children are forced to live as slaves in cities, metros or Gulf countries. We should first know the whole system working behind this. Only then, we can reach the real issues. Otherwise, there is no justification in keeping on discussing the same rote, clichéd things again and again.

The Pasmanda community is an important part of Indian Muslim community, which is still neglected and backward in social, economic and political terms. Issues like social justice, equality and education are very crucial for this community. At the end, this community should get more political representation

so that their issues can be raised in the right way and at the right forum. To improve the social status of the Pasmanda community, there is a need for creating widespread awareness, availability of equal opportunities and effective implementation of government schemes. Along with this, to protect the rights of the Pasmanda community, it is necessary to include them in the mainstream and eliminate social discrimination. To promote the Pasmanda movement and literature, it is also necessary that research work is done in this direction and such project work should be carried out both at government and non-government levels. People should be awakened and made aware of the reality of brotherhood. ●

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Dr. Ayub Raeen

Freedom Movement and Dalit Muslims

Pasmanda Muslims have contributed as much to the freedom movement of India as other castes. It is a different matter that they were not given proper importance in history. Here are the brief biographies of 25 of those great men

There had been many stages of the Indian freedom movement and at these various stages, the contribution of Dalit Muslims, better known as Pasmanda, has been almost ignored. Even if it was discussed, their caste identity was muddled up. Now when the times are changing and every class, group and community is looking for its heroes, it is visible, somewhat clear and somewhat hazy, as to how Dalit Muslim freedom fighters have been omitted from the pages of history.

In this sequence, among the stages of the freedom movement comes the Sufi-Sanyasi movement and the first freedom movement of 1857, which Sir Syed Ahmed Khan dubbed as a rebellion, and while flattering the British, he even went to the extent of describing it as a “rebellion of low caste weavers.” In this research article, I have tried to collect biographies of 25 freedom fighters by searching and digging into some faces from the Khilafat Movement, Salt Satyagraha, Chauri Chaura Movement and Quit India Movement, that took place decades after 1857.

They include Majnu Shah Malang Madari, Shaheed Sheikh

Bhikhari, Peer Ali Khan (Kagzi), Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim Ansari, Battakh Miyan Ansari, Basarat Khalifa (Bakkho), Peer Mohammad Munis Ansari, Abdullah Chudihara, Qari Mohammad Usman (Ansari), Rashiduddin Ahmed Qureshi, Asim Bihari (Ansari), Khalil Das (Shah) and Abdul Ahad Mohammad. I have also made an attempt to compile the biographies of Noor (Ansari), Atiqur Rahman Arvi (Mansuri), Nematullah Ansari, Abdul Kaiyum Ansari, Sami Nadvi (Ansari), Sagir Ahmed (Ansari), Bhadaai Kabadi (Raean), Bikaau Ahmed Qureshi, Ahmed Ali Ansari, Abdul Wahid Qureshi, Fida Hussain Ansari, Bilt Darji and Siddique Chudifarosh.

It is rightly said in an Urdu couplet that -

*Hajaron saal Nargis apni be-noori
pe roti hai,*

*Badi muskil se hota hai chaman me
dida-bar paida.*

(For thousands of years, Daffodil cries over its lack of sheen,

It is very difficult for a visionary person to be born in the garden.)

The introduction of life-struggle of such great freedom fighters is being presented here in brief:

Majnu Shah Malang Madari (Shah)

Baba Majnu Shah Malang Madari (Rah.) was a Sufi saint in the 18th century who was famous in Bihar, Odisha and Bengal region and a freedom fighter who was a staunch opponent of the East India Company's rule. He gave impetus to the Madariya Sufi order in Bengal and Bihar in the mid-18th century after the death of Shah Sultan Hasan Surya Burhana in Himmatabad of Dinajpur district in Bengal.

Baba Majnu Shah Malang Madari (Rah.) was born on 25th March 1731 in Mewat. His real name was Abu Talib Burhan and his nickname was Majnu Shah Madari Malang. He received his early education at home. After this, he received Fiqh, Tafseer and modern education from Madrasa Paifjan-e-Aam in Makanpur. Thereafter, he continued to work for Islamic education and social reform in Bihar, Bengal and Odisha. He was also a Hafiz-e-Quran. He had also received

various types of education. Finally, he was associated with Tasawwuf and spirituality. He belonged to the Malang order in the Sufi community.

When Baba Majnu Shah Malang Madari (Rah.) faced the problem of protecting the motherland, he left the Khanqah (Sufi monastery) and started leading the army against the British in the battlefield and was ready to take life and give life. He sacrificed everything - life and property - for the service of the country.¹ He organised and strengthened a mixed platform of Sufi saints and Yogic monks. He remained firmly active in religious, social and freedom struggles. He led the Fakir-Sanyasi rebellion that started in 1760 and remained active for 28 years against the East India Company.

Hazrat Majnu Shah Malang was the first freedom fighter of the country from the Shah (Fakir) community who sacrificed their life for the freedom struggle.

The role of Maulana Majnu Shah Malang has been recorded in the Fakir-Sanyasi movement of 1760 and the decades thereafter. The movement that started in 1760 against the British rule had gained momentum by around 1763. He took part in various battles against the East India Company.

Majnu Shah Malang lived in Balia Kundi of Thana Himmatabad in Dinajpur district and also had his residence in Madarganj in Bogra. He could gather more than 50,000 Fakirs and Sanyasis together who could face the war with the British. He was also adept in guerilla warfare. His actions created an atmosphere of fear in the company's official circles, its revenue offices and other departments. The company's forces also had to suffer financial losses. He also built a permanent strong fort in 1776 in Bogra district which was named Mastangarh. After some time, a permanent place was also established in the name of Madarganj.

Baba Majnu Shah Malang Madari (Rah.) was injured in a battle on 8th December 1786. Following this, he went to Dargah Madar Shah (Kanpur) where his wounds were treated. He died in Makanpur Sharif on 26th January 1788 while undergoing treatment. He was buried in Makanpur Sharif itself, where his tomb is situated.

Martyr Sheikh Bhikhari (Ansari)

Sheikh Bhikhari, who fought in



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the 1857 War of Independence, was born on 2nd October 1811 in Hokte village of Ranchi district in a weaver Ansari family to Jagirdar Sheikh Pehlwan. Since childhood, he used to raise his family by doing his family profession of preparing coarse cloth and selling it in the market. When he was 20 years old, he took up a job with the Maharaja of Chhota Nagpur. After a few days, he achieved a good position in the king's court. Later, Barkagarh Jagannath king Thakur Vishwanath Shahdev appointed him as his Dewan (registrar). Sheikh Bhikhari was given the responsibility of the army of Barkagarh. When the British planned to attack the kings and Maharajas, the latter started anticipating this. When Thakur Vishwanath Shahdev got the inkling of this, he consulted his minister Pandey Ganpat Rai, Dewan Sheikh Bhikhari and Tikait Umrao Singh.² All of them decided to take a stand against the British and corresponded with Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagannathpur.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Bhikhari started recruiting young men of Ranchi and Chaibasa in the army of Barkagarh.

Suddenly, the British attacked in 1857. In protest, the regiment of Ramgarh killed its British officer. Nadir Ali Havaladar and Ram Vijay Sepoy left the Ramgarh regiment and joined the army of Sheikh Bhikhari in Jagannathpur. In this way, the fire of freedom struggle spread in Chhota Nagpur. The British fled from the districts of Ranchi, Chaibasa and Santhal Pargana. Meanwhile, the British army under the leadership of General Macdon reached Ramgarh and started marching towards Ranchi through the Chuttupalu hill route. To stop them, Sheikh Bhikhari and Tikait Umrao Singh reached Chuttupalu hill with their army and blocked the way of the British. Sheikh Bhikhari broke the bridge connecting the valley of Chuttupalu and blocked the road by cutting the trees on the road. Sheikh Bhikhari's army showered bullets on the British and made them run for their lives.

This battle continued for many days. When Sheikh Bhikhari started running out of bullets, he ordered his army to roll stones. Due to this, the British soldiers started dying after being crushed under the stones.³

General Macdon, however, gathered the local people and got information about another way to climb the Chuttughati hill. He then climbed the Chuttughati hill through that secret route. The British surrounded and arrested Sheikh Bhikhari and Tikait Umrao Singh on 6th January 1858. After setting up a military court on 7th January 1858 at the same place Chuttughati, Macdon pronounced death sentence for Sheikh Bhikhari and his companion Tikait Umrao. On 8th January 1858, Sheikh Bhikhari and Tikait Umrao Singh were hanged from a banyan tree at Chuttughati.⁴

Peer Ali Khan (Kagzi)

Peer Ali Khan was a resident of Mohammadpur in Azamgarh district. When he ran away from home in childhood and went to Patna, he was brought up by the landlord of Patna, Nawab Mir Abdullah. He was also imparted education. He had acquired good knowledge of Urdu, Persian and Arabic languages. Later, for livelihood, Peer Ali opened a shop of books and stationeries with the help of Nawab Mir Abdullah. However, the shop gradually turned into a hub of revolutionaries. His shop was at

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There was another secret hidden behind the management of that shop. His main objective was to propagate books related to revolution among the people. He would first read the book himself and then give it to others to read. In this way, he started the initial revolutionary work of agitating his acquaintances. His main objective was to free India from the shackles of slavery. Peer Ali believed that slavery is worse than death.⁵ Peer Ali lived in Sonar Toli of Patna city. He was a Kagazi (Daftari) Muslim by caste. He used to get paper from the tonga of Chhotu Tamtam Wala of Mohalla Sadiqpur in Patna city who belonged to the Muslim Chik caste. He used to get books bound and transport them from the warehouse to the shop. Some incidents of Peer Ali's movement have added golden chapters to the history of patriotism. He was not just a leader of Muslims. He had the trust and support of all the revolutionaries of that time. The story of the 1857 revolution in Bihar will be incomplete without mentioning the exploits of Peer Ali. On 3rd July 1857, Peer Ali attacked the administrative building of Patna with 200 armed revolutionaries from this shop. Commissioner William Taylor survived but Dr. Loyal was killed. Many revolutionaries were also martyred in this incident.

On 3rd July 1857, hundreds of people gathered at Peer Ali

Khan's house and devised the entire plan. Representing more than 200 armed people, Peer Ali Khan decided to attack the administrative building located in Gulzar Bagh.⁶ Peer Ali Khan and his companions were arrested on 4th July 1857 for waging rebellion. On 7th July 1857, Peer Ali was hanged along with 21 of his companions in the middle of the main square of the city. William Taylor had proposed that if he revealed the identity of the revolutionaries and their hiding places, he could be released. But the book seller rejected Taylor's offer of amnesty. Peer Ali had roared, "You can hang me and others like me every day, but know that thousands of people will rise in my place and you will never be able to succeed in your goal."⁷

Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim (Ansari)

Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim was originally a resident of Sarai Sattar Khan Mohalla in Laheriya Sarai of Darbhanga city. He was born on 17th February 1856 in a weaver family. Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim's father's name was Munshi Zahuruddin. He received his early education at his residence from Maulvi Nabi Baksh, who was a popular teacher of Persian language. After his early education, he enrolled for Arabic language in Madrasa Imdadia. He had an interest in philosophy since his student days. After receiving education, he also went to Tonk to fulfill his

interest. In his childhood, he was taught Arabic and Persian. In his youth, he went to Calcutta (now Kolkata) and then joined the handloom cloth business there for employment.⁸

He used to regularly participate in the activities of Ansari Samaj going on in Kolkata. Also, being in contact with freedom fighters, he was associated with the freedom movement. When he went back to Darbhanga, there also he used to prepare the youth of that time for the movement through his activities.⁹ This had an impact on the youth who had a lot of respect for Maulvi Mohd. Ibrahim in their hearts. Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim used to participate in the Khilafat movement with great enthusiasm.¹⁰ He used to participate in the conferences held in Amritsar, Delhi etc. regarding the Khilafat movement. Khilafat committees had started being formed at various places across the country regarding the Khilafat movement. Only the members identified from the said committees used to participate in the conferences held regarding the Khilafat movement. Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim Darbhanga used to participate from Bihar.

Battakh Miyan (Ansari)

There were some followers who fearlessly saved the lives of freedom fighters in difficult times. In the series of such people, Battakh Miyan Ansari, a man of simplicity from East Champaran in Motihari district of Bihar, set

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an example by saving the life of Mahatma Gandhi in 1917. He created a new benchmark with his action and foresight which is like an invaluable lesson of patriotism and help in difficult times.¹¹ Battakh Miyan was born on 25th June 1869 in the house of Mohammad Ali Ansari and Rukhsana Khatoon in Siswan Ajgari village of Motihari district. His real name was Bakht Miyan Ansari, which became popular as Battakh Miyan in colloquial language.¹² Battakh Miyan worked as a cook in the Britishers' 'Niley Kothi' in Motihari.

Mahatma Gandhi had gone to Champaran in 1917 to take stock of the atrocities of the British rulers and the Niley Kothi. Dr. Rajendra Prasad and many other leaders were also with him. When Gandhiji heard the reality of atrocities on the farmers cultivating indigo from the village farmers, he raised his voice along with the villagers against the oppressive officer of the British government. When

the British officers came to know about this, they started plotting to kill Gandhiji for helping the farmers. When Gandhiji reached Motihari Circuit House with Rajendra Prasad to rest, an English manager Mr. Irwin was appointed to serve him. He invited many leaders including Gandhiji for dinner. At this moment, Irwin called Battakh Miyan and told him that "You are an Indian cook; you are skilled in making Hindustani food. No one will even suspect you. Therefore, you have to do one this task of mine quietly. You have to do the work with tactfulness. After dinner, when you will give goat milk to Gandhiji, mix poison in it, after drinking which he will die. If you do this work, you will be rewarded with immense wealth in return, and if you do not do this work, you will be removed from the job of cook, your property will be confiscated and your life will be ruined."

Instead of falling prey to the threats and allurements of the British administrator, Battakh

Mian Ansari realised the impact of the conspiracy and considered it his duty to save Gandhiji's life. During dinner at Niley Kothi, Battakh Mian Ansari put poison in the glass of goat milk in front of the British. While giving the glass of milk to Gandhiji, his hand trembled and the glass slipped from his hand. Thus, the poisonous milk fell on the ground. Due to this, our famous national leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhiji remained safe and the cook presented an ideal example of love for humanity and patriotism.¹³ Dr. Rajendra Prasad was an eyewitness to this incident. The next day Gandhiji left for Patna from Motihari with his friends. After this incident, the British officials fired Battakh Miyan from his job as a cook. His land and property were confiscated and he was inflicted with extreme troubles, which he continued to endure. Even after Independence, he did not tell anyone about the troubles given by the British. Rajendra Prasad threw light on the reality of this subject in a Motihari public meeting held in 1950.¹⁴

After becoming the first Indian President after Independence, a welcome ceremony was organised in 1950 in honour of Dr. Rajendra Prasad at Motihari railway station in Champaran. A large crowd had gathered to see him and listen to his speech. At the beginning of the welcome ceremony, while passing through the railway tracks, he saw a short, dark complexioned, well-

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When Gandhiji reached Motihari Circuit House with Rajendra Prasad to rest, an English manager Mr. Irwin was appointed to serve him

built man wearing a thick Khadi dhoti and vest who was listening to the speech. Rajendra Babu recognised him and asked him with hand gesture to come close to him. When he went close, Rajendra Babu hugged him and asked about his wellbeing. The people present at the meeting place were surprised to see this union. In his speech, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that “This is our same old friend and a trusted person of the country and the people, whom we all know as Battakh Miyan Ji. He proved through his deeds that love for humanity and love for the nation are half of one’s faith. He is the same person through whom the British officers had conspired to kill our national leader Mahatma Gandhi Ji by putting poison in his glass of milk through a terrible conspiracy. But Battakh Miyan Ji’s Islamic education, vast knowledge and understanding averted a major tragedy of Gandhi Ji’s life and today we are waving the flag of freedom in independent India.”

Basarat Khalifa (Bakkho)

Basarat Khalifa was born on 20th May 1878 in Khusrupur area of Patna. Being born in a nomadic and poor family, he could not receive any early education. There were many wrestlers among his ancestors. Many of them were very famous wrestlers. Dehu Pahalwan, Natthu Pahalwan and Alauddin Pahalwan were among them. When Basarat Khalifa was 7-8 years old, Natthu Khalifa

adopted him as disciple and taught wrestling tricks. People who do wrestling suffix the word Khalifa to their name. At that time, these people used to work for big landlords, who used to keep wrestlers in their mansions with pleasure, bearing all their expenses including their food and cloth.

Basarat Khalifa was 6 feet 9 inches tall and fair in complexion. He always carried a 6-feet stick with a brass tip in his hand and wore a turban on his head. He also played an active role in the Quit India Movement. He participated in the ‘Rail Todo Andolan’ (uprooting the rail tracks) from Khusrupur to Patna in 1942, but did not get the credit for it because he belonged to a nomadic caste. Whenever there was a fight with the British forces, he used to flee from that place at night and hide somewhere else. In a village near Khusrupur in Barrackpore, his two disciples - Rama Khalifa and Manna Khalifa, during conversations, often used to narrate to the villagers in detail about the many battles fought by their guru Basarat Khalifa with the British.

Basarat Khalifa always kept the Holy Quran with him. He was also very strict about Namaaz. In 1942, during the ‘Rail Todo Andolan’, he fought his last battle for freedom from the British rule near Khusrupur railway station, in which he got badly injured. Later, due to the pressure of the British army, he fled from Khusrupur to Dhamon village

in Samastipur. After a few days of treatment in the same village, Basarat Khalifa died in Dhamon on 26th September 1942 and was buried there itself.

Peer Muhammad

Munis (Ansari)

‘Munis’ was the pen name of Peer Muhammad Ansari. Munis was born on 30th May 1882 in a middle class family of Bettiah town. His father’s name was Fatingan Miyan. The name of this person who fought throughout his life for the national language Hindi, the country’s Independence, literature and journalism is neither taken in the literary world nor in journalism. Peer Muhammad Munis was a strong advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁵ He was not just a soldier with a pen, but also a ‘satyagrahi’ (truth seeker) through the pen. He not only wrote about the sufferings and struggles of Champaran, but also participated in the fight against it.

On not getting any news of Gandhiji, Pandit Rajkumar Shukla sent a letter written by Peer Muhammad Munis to Mahatmaji on 27th February 1917, in which he mentioned many things and incidents related to Champaran.¹⁶ Munis was a correspondent of Hindi weekly ‘Pratap’ and he had written many articles about the atrocities on the indigo planters in Champaran; he had also published letters. From the beginning of publication of ‘Pratap’ in Kanpur, he started

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regularly narrating the sad story of the suffering people to the countrymen. Mahatma Gandhi sent a telegram to Shuklaji, "I am going to Kolkata and will stay at Bhupendra Nath Basu's house there. Come and meet me there." On receiving this telegram, Shukla went to Kolkata and met Gandhiji there, and returned to Patna with him.

Mahatma Gandhi reached Bettiah from Patna via Muzaffarpur. He heard the sad stories of the farmers of Champaran.¹⁷ On 23rd April 1917 at 5 pm, he went on foot to meet Peer Muhammad Munis' mother at his home. Even before Gandhi's arrival in Champaran, Peer Mohd. Munis had written many articles in 'Pratap' about the atrocities in Champaran. So, when Gandhi launched 'Champaran Satyagraha', Peer Muhammad Munis was already doing campaign journalism for the country while living in Champaran itself. When Gandhiji went to Champaran to agitate against the British, Peer Mohammad Munis stayed with him like a shadow. His only mission was to drive out the British and free India. Munis was such a freedom fighter who devoted his entire life to the freedom struggle.¹⁸

Abdullah Chudihara alias Sukai (Chudihara)

The history of Chauri Chaura rebellion is discussed not only in India but also abroad. But unfortunately, the martyrs

belonging to the Pasmada community are discussed less, and the Indian society has not yet become familiar with the dreams and sacrifices of one of those great freedom fighters, Sukai. Abdullah Chudihara aka Sukai was born in 1882 in Chudihara Tola of Rajdhani village, 12 miles from Dumri Khurd of Chauri Chaura, 20 km south of Chauri Chaura station and 8 km south-east of Tarkulha Devi Sthan. Sukai's father's name was Gobar. He used to do his ancestral business of making and selling bangles.¹⁹

On 8th February 1921, Mahatma Gandhi held a meeting in Bale Miyan ground in Gorakhpur and called upon the youth to overthrow the British rule. On the call of the great leader, the youth of dozens of villages including Chauri Chaura jumped into the freedom struggle. Sukai may have been uneducated but his political consciousness had increased a lot. He returned to his village after staying in Ahmedabad for about a year. On coming back to the village from Ahmedabad, he started working to spread Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement to every village. On 13th January 1922, after the establishment of Mandal in Doosri Khurd, Sukai became a volunteer. Sukai and people like him hoped that Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement would solve all our problems.

Sukai and his fellow volunteers Bhagwan, Vikram, Dudhai, Kalicharan, Latoo, Mahadev

etc. together had propagated this movement so intensely in such a short time in the villages around Chauri Chaura that on the day Chauri Chaura police station was burnt down, a crowd of about 3,000 people had gathered there. A weekly market used to be held on Saturdays in Chauri Chaura's Mundera Bazar town, where foreign clothes, intoxicants, marijuana, cannabis, toddy and liquor were openly sold. The volunteers started burning foreign clothes and preventing sale of intoxicants. The then police station officer of Chauri Chaura, Gupteshwar Singh, insulted the volunteers and beat them up. As a result, the matter worsened and the workers turned violent. Seeing the matter worsening, the police inspector had to apologise, but he was upset with the public apology and decided to teach the volunteers a lesson.

The inspector ordered for lathicharge on the crowd and the guards started raining batons on the people there. In order to save themselves, the volunteers ran helter skelter and stood on the side of the railway track. The guards then started firing at them. A restive crowd hit back in response. Sukai also joined them in beating the inspector and the guards. In the meantime, some of the volunteers went a little away from the police station and picked up the stones lying on the railway tracks and started pelting them on the British guards. Moreover, most of the crowd which had gone back, came

back and attacked the guards. Out of fear, the policemen hid in the police station building and locked themselves inside. This proved fatal for them. That building was set on fire. All the people hiding inside the police station were burnt alive while the guards who were outside were picked up by the crowd and given a sound thrashing.²⁰

In all, 224 people were convicted for Chauri Chaura rebellion and awarded capital punishment. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya fought the case on behalf of them. While 151 people were saved from death sentence, 19 people were hanged between 2nd and 11th July 1923. In this incident, 14 people were sentenced to eight years of rigorous imprisonment. The 19 people who could not be saved included Sukai, Nazar Ali and Lal Mohammad. Ultimately, Sukai was hanged in the district jail of Barabanki on 3rd July 1923 at 6 am. After Sukai's hanging, his wife and child were also subjected to immense harassment.

Tuti-e-Bihar Qari Mohammad Usman (Ansari)

Qari Mohammad Usman belonged to Bariaul village in Singhwada block of Darbhanga district in Bihar. Mohammad Usman was born on 1st January 1888 in the house of a poor farmer Mohammad Shahamat Hussain. Mohammad Usman was very intelligent since childhood and this is the reason that he

Qari Mohammad Usman belonged to Bariaul village in Singhwada block of Darbhanga district in Bihar. Mohammad Usman was born on 1st January 1888 in the house of a poor farmer Mohammad Shahamat Hussain. Mohammad Usman was very intelligent since childhood and this is the reason that he completed Hifz at the age of just 10 years. His guru was Maulana Mohammad Ali Mungeri under whose leadership and guidance, he received the title of Fazil

completed Hifz at the age of just 10 years. His guru was Maulana Mohammad Ali Mungeri under whose leadership and guidance, he received the title of Fazil.

At a very young age, he jumped into the freedom movement. He came in contact with the then Ulama Rashid Ahmed Gangohi, Mahmoodul Hasan, Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, Sheikhul Islam Madni Saheb etc. and started attending the meetings being held for the freedom movement. Soon Qari Mohammad Usman became famous as a good speaker.²¹ There came a time when the atrocities of the British government on the Ulama increased a lot and the Ulama were imprisoned at many places and a large number of them were martyred. In such a critical period, Qari Usman secretly completed his education in Hakimi from Madrasa Mumba Tibb in Lucknow and opened a Hakimi dispensary in the name of Nomani Shafakhana in Lucknow. He used to practice Hikmat (Hakimi) in Lucknow and also used to secretly attend the meetings of the freedom movement. Because by then, the

British government had banned processions and gatherings. Seeing the increasing pressure of the British government, Qari Usman left Lucknow and moved to Kolkata and opened a Hakimi dispensary in the name of Usmani Shafakhana in Matia Burj there. As per his habit, he began participating in the meetings and agitations for the freedom movement there too.²²

Qari Usman soon became famous in Kolkata too. After being recognised and coming under the notice of the British government, he had to leave Kolkata too. He then settled in Giridih of the then united Bihar and started running Usmani Shafakhana there. He kept traveling from one place to another for the freedom of the country. When he was in Giridih, his Guru Maulana Mohammad Ali Mungeri came there and told him to devote himself to the service of religion and country. After the order of his Guru, he closed the dispensary and started serving the country with all his might. Meanwhile, in the presence of great scholars and leaders at Emarat Sharia in Phulwari Sharif, he was given

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the prestigious honour of 'Tuti-e-Bihar'.²³

Rashiduddin Ahmed Qureshi

Veteran freedom fighter and founder of Kul Hind Jamiatul Qureshi, Alhaj Hafiz Rashiduddin Ahmed Qureshi was born on 24th March 1888 in the house of Hafiz Abdul Karim Qureshi, who headed a respected family of Meerut. The city was then famous for education and mutual harmony.

Rashiduddin Ahmed Qureshi started his education from the Divisional College of Meerut. He had keen interest in English, Arabic and Urdu medium. He also had an inclination towards poetry. He served the people as a Tehsildar, due to which people were highly influenced by him. With the aim of taking an active part in the freedom struggle, he resigned from the post of Tehsildar and remained active in the freedom struggle continuously between 1914 and 1931.²⁴

He remained active in public service through organisations like Educational Conference, Anjuman Khuddamul Islam, Anjuman Islahul Muslimeen etc.

Maulvi Ali Hussain Asim Bihari (Ansari)

Maulvi Ali Hussain Asim Bihari was born on 15th April 1889 in Mohalla Khasganj, Bihar Sharif. For 13-14 years, he was educated under the supervision of his grandfather Maulana Abdul Hakim.²⁵ This gave him

the opportunity to understand the depth of devotion to god, piety and Islamic education.

From Maulana Abdul Hakim to Asim Bihari, his family struggled and sacrificed for the country's Independence, equality, national harmony, justice, education and development. Despite belonging to a poor family, he continued to work for the public welfare in villages, cities and all possible places as per his ability. Despite opposition and facing difficulties, he continued to move towards his goal. He continued to work for the poor and the downtrodden by sacrificing the entire energy of his tongue, pen, heart and soul for the society and the country. He even formed a strong all India organisation for this purpose.

Baba Khalil Das (Shah)

Baba Khalil Das, a fierce freedom fighter, renowned poet, great Sufi and author of many important books, was born in Siwan of Bihar. He was born on 21st March 1898 (Friday) in a middle class family of Kagji Mohalla in Siwan. His father's name was Shah Amir Hasan. According to the tradition of that time, his education started with Arabic, Persian and Urdu. After this, he got enrolled in V.M. High School of Siwan and passed matriculation from the school in 1916. At that time, there was no college in Siwan, so he went to Patna for higher education and took admission in B.N. College. He started studying Sanskrit and Hindi there.²⁶ When he had just

appeared in his B.A. examination in 1921, the Non-Cooperation Movement started. At that time, Baba Khalil Das lived with Maulana Mazharul Haq Saheb in his mansion located in Sikandar Manzil, Fraser Road, Patna.

This house was the centre of all political activities during the Non-Cooperation Movement and all the famous and well-known politicians of the country used to visit there. By staying there, Khalil Das got the opportunity to meet almost all the Hindu and Muslim leaders of the country and to serve and listen to them closely. Khalil Das took inspiration from Maulana Mazharul Haq and Mahatma Gandhi and left his studies and started participating in the freedom movement. He started giving sermons based on love, goodwill, unity and brotherhood. While living in the proximity of Haq Saheb, the flame of freedom had been lit in the mind and heart of Khalil Das. He started going to the Congress meetings with Haq Saheb. Hence, Khalil Das participated enthusiastically in the Non-Cooperation Movement and left further studies.²⁷

There is an exciting story behind the suffix 'Das' being added to the name of Baba Khalil Das. It was April 1921. A Congress meeting was organised in Bankipur area of Patna under the chairmanship of Mahatma Gandhi. Leaders like Motilal Nehru, Chitta Ranjan Das, Braj Kishore Prasad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maulana

Mazharul Haque and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were present in that meeting. Among the above leaders, Chitta Ranjan Das had the specialty of using Sanskrit verses and proverbs in his speeches. When Khalil Das was invited to give a speech in this meeting, he also surprised everyone by using Sanskrit verses appropriately like Chitta Ranjan Das. Mahatma Gandhi was overwhelmed by listening to Khalil Das' speech and said in a cheerful mood that "Today, Khalil also spoke like Das". About 10,000 listeners were present in that meeting. They took the words of Mahatma Gandhi in literal sense and started calling Md. Khalil as 'Khalil Das' from that day.

The first political guru and guardian of Baba Khalil Das was Maulana Mazharul Haque, who was famous as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity and a respected national leader. His second guru was Dr. Rajendra Prasad but Maulana Mazharul Haq is known as his first mentor and guide. Because of him, he started living in the Sadaqat Ashram where he also got the opportunity to meet national level agitators and scholars. There, he wrote the nationalistic song 'Bharat Janani Teri Jai Ho'. This song became very popular. Baba Khalil Das also got recognition at the national level due to this song. Independent India's first President Dr. Rajendra Prasad has also written in his autobiography 'Atmakatha' that

at that time, every meeting of the freedom fighters used to start with this song of Khalil Das. Some excerpts from the song²⁸ -
Bharat janani teri jai ho,
teri jai ho
Tera vijay surya, mata uday ho
Gandhi rahe woh Tilak, yahan
pe phir aawe
Arvind, Lala, Vipin - teri jai ho
Tere liye jail hi swarg ka dwar
Bedi ki jhan-jhan me veena
ki lay ho
 (O Mother India, You be
 victorious
 O Mother, let the sun of Your
 victory rise
 Gandhi & Tilak would remain
 here
 as they would come again and
 again
 Long live Aurobindo, Lala
 Lajpat Rai, Bipin Bihari Pal
 For you all, jail is the door to
 heaven
 Let the tinkling of the shackles
 Have the rhythm of the Veena)

Abdul Ahad Mohd. Noor (Ansari)

Murad Ali had three children - Mahmuda Khatun, Noor Mohammad and Wali Mohammad. The third one Wali Mohammad died in childhood. Noor Mohammad, better known as Mohd. Noor, was born on 1st August 1899.²⁹ Murad Ali died of cholera in Makhanaha village, after which his wife along with the children moved to her father Badruddin or Badar Miyan's house in Madhepur and started living there. Badar Miyan used to do farming and run the loom

to earn his living. He took care of his daughter and her children and nurtured them.

Noor Mohammad was enrolled in the school of Panchlal Jha Pandit of Madhepur in the name of Mohammad Noor. He completed Middle School from there.³⁰ Thereafter, he stayed in Darbhanga for some days and then went to Muzaffarpur. There, he also did newspaper hawking for some days. Then he got himself enrolled in Muzaffarpur Government School. He got married to Naseeba Khatun during his studies. In 1918, he got through the matriculation examination in second division from Muzaffarpur Government School. While staying in Muzaffarpur, he had started establishing contacts with political leaders of the District Congress and began attending their meetings.

Mohammad Noor was active in the 1942 movement. Due to his activism, the English soldiers began the process of his arrest. When he got an inkling of it, he escaped to Kasaha Kamat and evaded arrest. But this worsened the financial condition of his family. His wife Naseeba Khatun somehow continued to raise the children. Sometimes he would come home at night and then go back in the darkness. His family had to suffer a lot in those days.

He contested the election from Madhepur in the year 1946 and after winning the polls, he reached the Bihar Assembly as an MLA. In that election, out of

40 Muslim seats, six MLAs of Momin community were elected. He held the post of Deputy Minister from 1951 to 1962 and looked after the work of many departments. He left the ministry with Chief Minister Vinodanand Jha under the 'Kamaraj Plan'. Before this, he had also been the Municipal Commissioner of Purnia municipality for 10 years and a member of Purnia District Board for five years.

Maulana Atiqur Rahman Arvi (Mansuri)

Maulana Atiqur Rahman was born in Baraon Kalan village under Dehri On Sone police station of Shahabad district on 25th March 1903 in a Mansuri (Dhunia) family. His father Samhar Ali was a soldier. Samhar Ali's father, i.e. Maulana Atiqur Rahman's grandfather, Sheikh Hussaini Miyan was a trusted soldier of Babu Kunwar Singh in Jagdishpur. Atiqur Rahman received his primary education from Madrasa Moinul Gurba and higher education from Darul Uloom in Deoband. After receiving education, he worked as the head of the Munazra section in Deoband itself. There was no salary system for this in those days. When the salary system was implemented, he resigned from his post. To liberate India from the British, he toured small and big towns and cities of Bihar as well as Gorakhpur, Banaras, Dehradun, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar. He worked to spread the message

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of the freedom struggle in every household of the country through his speeches without any religious discrimination. Later, the British took him into custody in Dehradun and sent him to Lahore jail.

After being released from jail, Maulana Arvi returned to Bihar and again started uniting people against the British rule. His close associates were Jaiprakash Singh, Gudri Singh Yadav and Jagdish Sahu. He was one of the prominent disciples of Hazrat Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madni. It was the period of the freedom struggle. His interest in politics was increasing. While studying in Darul Uloom of Deoband, he came to be known as a good speaker. Maulana also kept himself connected with the movement of backward castes of Muslims.

In the Quit India Movement of 1942, popularly known as the August Movement, when the treasury of the Irrigation Department and the Post Office was looted in Nasriganj and a

series of arrests began, Maulana Arvi lived in hiding in Palamu, Garhwa, Daltonganj, Banu, Chutru, Ranka, Hathua and other places.³¹ During this time, he opened many Madrasas at those places. When the country became independent, he went to Darul Uloom in Deoband and took up the job of a teacher there.

In 1937, the Muslim League passed a resolution to create a country called 'Pakistan' and appealed to Muslims to celebrate 'Pakistan Day' with great enthusiasm. However, a true nationalist like Maulana Arvi strongly opposed it and completely rejected the two-nation theory propounded by Jinnah. He always stressed that Islam does not allow the division of the country on the basis of religion. He had unwavering faith in 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb' and the principle of Hindustan.

Nematullah Ansari

Nematullah Ansari was born on 28th September 1903 in a prosperous family of Gorakhpur.

While studying in Kolkata, he left his studies at an early age and joined Gandhiji's 1920 Non-Cooperation Movement. He participated as a representative in the 1925 All India Congress Session in Gorakhpur. He also participated in the 1930 Salt Satyagraha.³² He was elected the president of Gorakhpur City Congress Committee in 1936. He too was arrested in the 1942 Quit India Movement. Nematullah Ansari was also associated with the Momin Conference. He even played a key role in organising the Momin Conference held in Gorakhpur in 1939.

Abdul Qayyum Ansari

Abdul Qayyum Ansari was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim national unity, communal harmony and social justice. Along with looking after social work and ministry work, he was also strict about Namaaz, Roza etc. He was such a leader who broke political lines and dominated the political field. He was at the forefront of the fight against the British. He strongly opposed the ideology of two nations of Jinnah and his Muslim League and opposed the Partition of India. As a result, the Muslim League could not win a single seat in Bihar in the 1937 elections.³³ He also opposed casteism, high-low class and evils prevalent in the Muslim community between Ashraf and Arjal. He embraced the downtrodden and oppressed people of the society. Along with this, he kept their economic,

social and political status as well as education, welfare and equality at the centre of his politics.

Qayum Ansari was born in a middle class, prosperous family on 1st July 1905 in Dehri On Son of the old Shahabad district. His father's name was Maulvi Abdul Haq. Mother Safia Begum was a Hafiz-e-Quran. In 1913, he was enrolled in Dehri Middle School. In 1917, he joined Sasaram High School. Qayum Ansari decided to join the Momin Conference in 1937 and dedicate his entire life to it.

He also founded the 'Indian Muslim Youth Kashmir Front' in 1957 for the liberation of the Pakistani-occupied areas of Kashmir. Apart from this, he also encouraged Indian Muslims to support the Government of India in its fight against the anti-India revolt of Razakars in Hyderabad during September 1948. Abdul Qayum Ansari, who opposed the separatist policies of the Muslim League and worked for the upliftment of the poor and backward classes by running the Momin movement during 1937-38, was not only a good leader but also a high standard journalist, writer and poet.³⁴

By winning six seats in the Legislative Assembly under the banner of the All India Momin Conference in 1946, Abdul Qayum Ansari gave a befitting reply to Jinnah by openly opposing his two-nation theory, the communal policy of the Muslim League. Ansari Sahab, the hero of the poor and backward

people, got the All India Backward Classes Commission formed by the Government of India in 1953, which was indeed a big step.

Maulvi Abdul Sami Nadvi (Ansari)

Darbhangha district of Bihar is known throughout the country for its literature, education and politics. Darbhanga has produced numerous talents in the fields of literature, education, medicine and politics. One of them is Maulvi Abdul Sami Nadvi. He was born on 13th August 1905 in Maharajganj Mohalla located in Laheriyasarai of Darbhanga district. Maharajganj Mohalla is known as an educated Muslim majority area in the entire district.

In 1939, he was elected as a member of the Darbhanga District Board and remained on this post till 1942. When the Quit India Movement started in 1942, he left his post and became active in the movement. Due to his active participation in the movement, other male members of his family also had to go to jail. After Independence, he was appointed as the general secretary of Darbhanga District Congress Committee for five consecutive years from 1948.³⁵

Maulvi Sagir Ahmed (Ansari)

Abdul Majid and Ayesha Khatoon, residents of Maharajganj Mohalla in Laheriyasarai of Darbhanga city, had three sons and two daughters. The sons were Qari Yahya,

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Mohd. Zakaria and Mohd. Sagir Ahmed. Abdul Majid's younger son Sagir Ahmed was a freedom fighter. Mohd. Sagir Ahmed was born on 5th February 1910. He received his primary education at Madrasa Imdadia situated in Laheriyasarai. He then received his higher education at a Madrasa in Deoband of Uttar Pradesh. His classmate in this Madrasa was Minatullah Rahmani of Munger, the famous 'Khanqah Rahmani' of Bihar. A very close relationship had developed between the two. Maulvi Sagir Ahmed came in contact with freedom fighters while studying at the Deoband Madrasa. He also started participating in the meetings related to the movement and jumped into the freedom movement completely. He continued his activities even when he went back to Darbhanga. He was also involved in the Darbhanga Treasury robbery incident. At that time, he had a narrow escape from being shot by the British soldiers.

He was a victim of the lathi and whip of the British soldiers many times. During the movement, he was once caught by the British police and then he was imprisoned in Delhi jail, where he created a lot of ruckus along with other freedom fighters. Being disturbed by this, the Delhi jail police beat him with a whip so much that he fell unconscious. Then, on the orders of the top officials, Maulvi Sagir Ahmed and other freedom fighters were imprisoned in

Old Central Jail in the city of Multan (now in Pakistan) on 15th September 1932, from where he was released after about nine months. Due to active participation in the freedom movement, Maulvi Sagir Ahmed had very close relations with the leading figures of the freedom movement like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru etc.³⁶ This was the reason that when Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who became the first President of Independent India, visited the 'National School' located in Lalbagh Mohalla of Darbhanga during his tenure as the President and expressed his desire to meet Maulvi Sagir Ahmed. Coincidentally, Maulvi Sagir Ahmed used to run a shop of porcelain and Moradabad utensils on Darbhanga Tower in those days. The soldiers engaged in the security of the President informed Maulvi Sagir about Rajendra Prasad's desire to meet him and thus two great personalities, who led the movement for the freedom of the country, met on the land of Mithila.³⁷

In the year 1972, on the 25th anniversary (Silver Jubilee Year) of Independence, the freedom fighters were honoured by giving copper plates. Freedom fighter Sagir Ahmed ji was also honoured with a copper plate by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.³⁸ He died on 17th November 1989 at the age of 79 years.

Bhadai Kabadi (Raen)

Bhadai Kabadi was born in 1914 at Choraut village of Sitamarhi district in Bihar. There is also a block named after this village in Pupri sub-division of the district. There are a total of seven panchayats in this block. This block is considered to be the most backward block of the district. Martyr Bhadai Kabadi was a resident of this Choraut village. There is a hamlet of Choraut dominated by Raen caste, which is known as Kabadi Tola. It is also called Choraut Dakshinbari Tola. But the government school established in this hamlet is named 'Rajkiya Prathmik Vidyalaya Kabadi Tola'. It is established in Choraut West Panchayat Ward No. 8.

Munne Miyan was married twice. Alijaan and Mohd. Jaan were born from his first wife. After the death of his first wife, Munne Miyan got married for the second time and had two sons - Bhadai Kabadi and Abdullah alias Dasai Kabadi - from the second wife. Bhadai Kabadi and Dasai Kabadi were basically farmers and were doing farming. However, Bhadai Kabadi also used to do wrestling. Both the brothers came in contact with the freedom fighters about two years before the Quit India Movement of 1942 and started participating in the activities of the movement. Bhadai Kabadi and his younger brother Abdullah alias Dasai Kabadi were very active in the freedom movement.

On 25th August 1942,

hundreds of people gathered at Pupri station with axes, sticks, kerosene oil pots, spears etc. They had gathered at Pupri station to protest against the arrival of the British officer and started uprooting the tracks in protest. The police used lathicharge to disperse the agitators, which made them more violent. Both brothers Bhadai Kabadi and Dasai Kabadi were also among these agitators. To forcefully remove the agitators from the tracks, the police started firing at them. About a dozen people were martyred in the police firing. Among them, there were Hindus as well as Muslims. Among the Muslim martyrs was Bhadai Kabadi who was shot by the British police. Bhadai Kabadi's younger brother Dasai Kabadi was involved in the 25th August 1942 movement and narrowly escaped the bullet of the British. All the Muslim martyrs were buried in the cemetery located in front of the Pupri police station.

The celebration of Bhadai Kabadi's martyrdom day every year started in 2020 with the joint efforts of social workers Vinod Bihari Mandal, Nitish Mandal, Naval Mandal etc., all residents of Sitamarhi district.

Bikau Ahmed Qureshi (Qureshi)

Bikau Ahmed Qureshi was born on 20th April 1916 in Saraiya village under Aurangabad post office, Taludhu police station, Rohtas district of Bihar. His father's name was Hussaini

Qureshi. Bikau Ahmed started his family business of Qureshi, but his heart was restless with slavery and he had a strong feeling for achieving independence. Due to this inner feeling, he was also highly influenced by the movements of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Mahatma Gandhi. In the year 1942, when Mahatma Gandhi gave the slogan of 'Quit India', his inner feelings woke up, due to which Bikaau Ahmed Qureshi, along with some of his friends, vandalised the Taludhu Bazar Post Office and set the entire post office on fire.³⁹ After this incident, an arrest warrant was issued against him.

The British police made a lot of efforts to arrest these people but could not succeed. He remained hidden in Dehri On Sone. There also, he, along with some people, in a planned manner, vandalised the Dehri On Sone railway station extensively and also set it on fire. The British made every effort to arrest Bikau Ahmed Qureshi but were unsuccessful. Freedom fighter Bikau Ahmed Qureshi was associated with the freedom movement with his body and soul and hence, could not pay any attention to his family. Due to this, his children had to live a life of poverty and deprivation. But despite that, Ahmed Qureshi remained associated with the freedom movement of the country.

In the year 1947, the country was freed from slavery and Independence was declared.

After that, the brave freedom fighter Bikau Ahmed Qureshi started his Qureshi business again and brought his children to Dehri On Sone and raised them. Due to his active participation in the freedom movement, his children could not get education and they too joined their traditional Qureshi profession.

Haji Ahmed Ali (Ansari)

Haji Ahmed Ali Ghazipuri was born on 20th April 1917 in a middle class, respectable family. His father's name was Jaan Muhammad. He had two brothers and was a businessman by profession. He used to supply blankets etc. to the police and army. His ancestors were a family of great respect and honour. They had converted from Hinduism to Islam. He was a Thakur from his paternal side and a Brahmin from his maternal side.

More than his ancestral profession, he was very interested in wrestling, volleyball and football etc. During the Second World War, when the atmosphere against the British was heated in the country, Ahmed Ali joined Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauz and did not care about his family at all.⁴⁰ After the end of the World War, he returned to the country and soon joined the Kolkata police.

Abdul Wahid Qureshi

Born on 1st July 1922 in the family of Bismillah Qureshi in Sardhana (Meerut), Abdul Wahid Qureshi entered politics when

he was pursuing a law degree at Meerut College. In the year 1953, he was elected Chairman of Nagar Palika Parishad of Sardhana for the first time and held the post for 18 long years. In the year 1953 itself, he was initially elected a member of Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee twice in the Indian National Congress. In the year 1967, he left the Congress party and joined Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD). In the year 1986, however, he was elected MLA from the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD).

Haji Abdul Wahid Qureshi was like a lighted lamp among the educated and learned people. His family was known as 'Mahia Walon' (affable people). He had a special contribution in the integration of the society. Apart from this, he had a great contribution in the Bhamouri agitation. On 18th August 1942, British officers had opened fire on the protesting people in Bhamouri village of Sardhana block in Meerut district, in which 28 people were martyred. The incident is known as 'Mini Jallianwala Bagh'.⁴¹

People of every community addressed Abdul Wahid Qureshi as 'Babuji'. Despite becoming an MLA, he remained famous as 'Chairman'. His leadership abilities and the respect he commanded was such that any social or religious event was incomplete without him. Popular social worker Babu Abdul Wahid Qureshi died on 3rd March 2018 at the age of 96.

At a very young age, he started participating in the meetings related to the Quit India Movement of 1942. He was also a part of the violent movement that took place in Samastipur during the Quit India Movement. In those days, he used to run the handloom and Khadi clothing shop established by his father there. But he used to secretly participate in the freedom movement going on in the country. During the Quit India Movement, the British government banned the sale and purchase of Khadi clothes and shops selling Khadi clothes were sealed at various places. In the movement going on in Samastipur city, people reached Samastipur railway station in the form of a procession, where it turned into a violent agitation

Fida Hussain Ansari or 'Bunkar Gandhi'

Mohammad Ibrahim Ansari, a resident of Maulaganj Mohalla of Darbhanga city, was a businessman. Fida Hussain Ansari was born in his house on 16th March 1928. He received his primary education from Madrasa Hamidia located in Kilaghat. Thereafter, he was enrolled in Shafi Muslim High School, from where he passed the matriculation examination.⁴² He could not study further and started devoting time to his father's handloom and Khadi clothing business.

At a very young age, he started participating in the meetings related to the Quit India Movement of 1942. He was also a part of the violent movement that took place in Samastipur during the Quit India Movement. In those days, he used to run the handloom and Khadi clothing shop established by his father there. But he used to secretly participate in the

freedom movement going on in the country. During the Quit India Movement, the British government banned the sale and purchase of Khadi clothes and shops selling Khadi clothes were sealed at various places. In the movement going on in Samastipur city, people reached Samastipur railway station in the form of a procession, where it turned into a violent agitation. The agitators were trying to uproot the railway track. When the news of Fida Hussain Ansari being injured in it reached Darbhanga, his father left for Samastipur on a bicycle looking for his son.

In fact, when the agitators started going out of control at Samastipur Junction, the soldiers of the British government started firing at the agitators to break their movement, in which many people were injured. Teenager Fida Hussain saved his life by hiding behind the compartments of a goods train. He then escaped from there and started moving towards Darbhanga on foot.

On the other side, his father coming on bicycle learnt about the wellbeing of his son and met him in Jatmalpur. After asking about their wellbeing, Ibrahim sahab gave his bicycle to his son Fida Hussain to reach home soon and he himself started walking towards his house in Maulaganj Mohalla.

Young Fida Hussain was restless for the freedom movement. He soon joined the movement near the Darbhanga treasury. When the agitators became violent, the police opened fire and many people were killed. A tall young agitator in front of Fida Hussain got shot and Fida sahab escaped narrowly.

The third incident occurred at Muhammadpur Bazaar which is located near the railway station. Muhammadpur station is located between Darbhanga and Sitamarhi stations. This place is about 10 km from Darbhanga city. Ibrahim Ansari had a handloom and Khadi clothes shop in Muhammadpur Bazaar. This shop was run in the house of Hakim Noman of Muhammadpur. The British, who were furious with the 1942 movement, used to raid such shops because of the sale and purchase of Khadi clothes. A similar raid was also carried out on the shops of Muhammadpur Bazaar. Interestingly, Fida Hussain hid the clothes from his shop under the seat of a tonga and made Qadir Ansari, a famous doctor of Darbhanga, wear a hat and sit on that tonga. Dr. Qadir

had a clinic in Muhammadpur Bazaar. He was tall and fair. The policemen apparently mistook him to be an English officer going in a tonga. Therefore, the tonga was not searched. At that place, though Fida Hussain did not have to face the bullets of the police, he had to face the harshness of the cops.

Meanwhile, the country became Independent on 15th August 1947 and the interest in politics started growing in the young Fida Hussain. He became the General Secretary of the District Congress Committee and a member of the State Congress Committee. He was also a member of the All India Congress Committee since 1974. He remained a lifelong member of Congress.⁴³ A 'karmayogi' all his life, Fida Hussain Ansari left this world on 30th June 2009.

Bilat Darji

Pradeep Sharma and Bilat Darji were shot by the British on 18th August 1942 in Ratanpur village of Ratanpur panchayat in Jale block of Darbhanga district. After Independence, that place was renamed as 'Shaheed Chowk' (Martyrs' Square) and the statues of Pradeep Sharma and Bilat Darji were installed there. It is said that the British shot Bilat Darji in both his knees, due to which he died. Bilat Darji was the younger of the two brothers and was also a bachelor. His elder brother Yakub Darji had taken up their ancestral profession. He had three sons, of which the middle one,

Mohammad Akhtar, has passed away. Now, the eldest, 70 years old Phool Mohd. and the youngest Mohd. Wazir are alive. The family members of Bilat Darji informed that they never got any pension from the government. The condition of all the 10 families of Darji caste living in this village is quite pathetic.

Siddique Chudifarosh

The people of Chudihara caste, who are politically marginalised, have also been freedom fighters. In the 1942 movement, after a clash in Pali Kachheri of Ghanshyampur block, many bullets fired by British soldiers hit the leg and hand of Maulvi Siddique. In the inscription installed in the list of freedom fighters in Ghanshyampur block office, the name of Mohd. Siddique Chudifarosh is also mentioned. His widow Zaitoon Khatoon has also received pension till 2008. Maulvi Siddique was once imprisoned in Darbhanga jail along with famous freedom fighters Suryanarayan Singh and Lakshmi Narayan. There, he also taught Urdu language to Lakshmi Narayan Ji. When the festival of Eid came during his imprisonment, Maulvi Siddiq had recited a couplet⁴⁴ -

*Aaj to sab milte honge apne
apne yaar se,
Aaj bhi hum mil rahe hain jail
ke peheredar se.*

*(Today, everyone must be
meeting their nears and dears,
But even till today, we are
meeting only the jail guards.)* ●

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Prof. Sunil K Choudhary

Integrating the ‘New Subalterns’: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Pasmanda Muslims

Narendra Modi is the first Prime Minister to understand the caste division in Muslim society and give it a clear acceptance. A look at the implications, far-reaching consequences and challenges of this acceptance

Majority - Minority relations are central to democracies and democratic regimes across the world. Premised on numbers, democracies are increasingly built on the majority-minority support for government formations. The changing demographic composition of the majority or minority communities in maturing democracies acquire salience in terms of voting support for the political parties. Initially dominated by the community consideration based on religion, the majority-minority electoral participation in the democratic politics has started centring around social stratification and ethnic polarisations. The post-Independence Indian polity witness divergent trends of majority-minority orientation in the formation of governments from the assembly to the parliamentary elections.

As a peculiar feature of the Hindu-driven majority politics during the past seven decades, caste started acquiring new dimensions in the minority politics – the Muslim politics, particularly from the last one decade or so. The rise of *Pasmanda*

Muslims and their growing electoral presence and political salience appear to make them as one of the important players in India’s contemporary electoral politics.

This paper is an attempt to sketch the role of caste-driven Muslim minority politics from the perspective of the *Pasmanda* Muslims on the one hand and the special electoral overtures delineated for them by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014 on the other.

Minority vs Minorityism: Muslims in Post-Independence India

Partition of India based on religion redefined the majority-minority relations. The principle of universal adult franchise guided the democratic politics of post-Independence India by challenging Daniel Learner’s prophecy that the fledgling democracies would never turn out to be mature democracies in the absence of literacy, urbanization and media access. Spearheading the freedom struggle, the Indian National Congress became the biggest votary of votes and beneficiary of support from all communities, classes, castes and clans.

Amidst the pangs of partition, the electoral politics sought to subsume the majority-minority discourse under the umbrella organization of the Indian National Congress. The miniscule number of the Hindu religious sects as minorities – the Sikhs, the Jains and the Buddhists as well as the microscopic presence of the Muslim minority failed to leave any decisive impact on the electoral outcomes nearly during the first three decades of the Indian parliamentary politics. The political discourse using *Minority as vote* and *Minorityism as vote bank* started gaining the attention of electoral politics only from the 1980s onwards.

One can sketch the Majority-Minority and Minority-Minorityism discourses in the post-Independence India from the following three trends, viz., Alignment, De-alignment and Re-alignment.

a) Muslim Alignment – The Aligned Voters

When an independent India decided to choose its first elected

government, it had a majority Hindu population comprising 304 million and constituting 84.2 per cent of the mainland. The Muslims with 35 million people bearing merely a 9.6 per cent of the population constituted the second largest community and the biggest minority in Indian politics. The Christians, the Sikhs, the Jains and the Buddhists - all combined together forming nearly 23 million people with a 6.2 per cent of the population at the time of independence. Despite the prevalence of other minorities in terms of their demographic presence and electoral salience, the democratic politics in the post-Independence India sought to hover around the Hindu majority and Muslim minority discourse.

The first five parliamentary elections to the post-Independence polity from 1951-52 to 1971 also witnessed a rising number of electors from 173.2 million to 274 million voters¹ (Choudhary, 2018). Though there is no field-based empirical electoral study during this period,

it is broadly acclaimed that the Muslim voters happened to be the *aligned voters* expressing their political alignment to the Nehru and Indira-led Congress. One of the key factors attributed to the politics of Muslim alignment in the formative phase of post-Independence polity was the prevalence of the *Congress System*² (Kothari, 1964).

Amidst the partition agony, the Muslim electors preferred to extend their political loyalty to the Indian National Congress for securing a secular national identity of India. The Muslim alignment in the formative phase of parliamentary politics thus broadly converged to the principle streamlining the politics of Indian National Congress stating *India was Congress* and the *Congress was India*.

b) Muslim De-alignment – The Tactical Voters

The year 1977 marked a watershed in India's electoral politics. The one-party dominance at the central and state levels got challenged with a bi-polar politics. The *Congress System* which began dismantling from 1967 elections onwards got a serious democratic jolt in 1977 with the formation of the Janata Government – the first anti-Congress, non-Congress conglomeration of political forces.

As happens in a system of *first past the post system* (FPPS) where more than two candidates contest the election and the defeat



of a strong candidate or party could be ensured through tactical voting against such candidate or party, the electoral politics in the post-1977 period till the beginning of the 1990s started unfolding the practice of tactical voting built on the premise of defeat of some and victory for others in elections.

Expressing their resistance to the Indian National Congress, the Muslim voters started following the politics of de-alignment by making effective use of their strong demographic presence in various constituencies of the country. Scholars have tried to theorize the tactical voting in terms of ‘Second Democratic Upsurge’³ (Yadav, 2000) highlighting three key characteristics⁴ (Choudhary, 2024).

Firstly, the tactical voters generally vote as caste, community and clan as theorized in terms of *cleavage voting*⁵ by Lipset and Rokkan. The voters in such case vote enblock for their respective castes, communities and clans. Secondly, the key focus of the tactical voters would always be on the defeat of particular parties or candidates in election rather than victory of their own. Finally, supported by their solidarity, the tactical voters could decisively influence the electoral outcome

Employing enblock voting as a tool of community solidarity, the minorities in India, particularly the Muslims, started turning into tactical voters with the sole objective of defeating

the Congress initially and BJP subsequently in almost all elections – assembly as well as Lok Sabha. Though scholars like Hilal Ahmed⁶ (2019) in his works countered the enblock voting by the Muslims and refuted the argument that there is a national Muslim vote bank in India; electoral trends and results from the post-1990s suggested that the Muslim minority-dominated constituencies witnessed electoral outcomes in accordance with enblock voting against BJP.

As tactical voters, the electoral orientation and voting preference of the Muslims during the second phase overtly remained *expressive as well as decisive*⁷ (Choudhary, 2024).

c) Muslim Re-alignment – The Silent Voters

Silent Voters have been a peculiar feature of Indian electoral politics which was theorized for the first time by the author in his work, *The Changing Face of Parties and Party Systems: A Study of Israel and India* based on the outcomes of the elections of the Lok Sabha, 2014 and the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) 2015. *Saliency of the Silence: The Silent Voters* according to the author referred to the ‘young voters whose increasing participation and critiquing orientation of party platforms and policy decisions of the existing political dispensation immensely changed the fortunes of the so-called winnable parties and governments’⁸ (Choudhary, 2018 and 2024).

The parliamentary politics from the 21st century onwards witnessed a shift from alignment and de-alignment to re-alignment of voters across regions and religions. Expressing their solidarity through community participation in elections in terms of enblock voting, the Muslim voters during the past one decade began assuming the role of *Silent Voters*. The electoral studies undertaken by the Centre for Global Studies (formerly Developing Countries Research Centre), University of Delhi under *CGS Samiksha Election Series* covering assembly and the parliamentary elections held in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Delhi, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand during 2017-2024 validated the argument of the Muslim electors casting their votes as *Silent Voters*.

As different from the aligned and tactical voters, the Silent Voters are those voters who already make up their mind with the onset of the process of election and the course of electioneering does not change their voting preference and electoral orientation. Defeat of the party, mostly the ruling one – BJP led NDA and victory of the alternative party/alliance – Congress-led INDIA constitutes the rationale of the silent voting in contemporary polity.

The results of Lok Sabha election 2024 as well as the assembly elections in the states

followed, particularly Jammu and Kashmir⁹ and Jharkhand¹⁰ broadly justify the salience of the silent voters in form of the Muslim voters theorized as *decisive without being expressive*¹¹ (Choudhary, 2024).

Muslims and Social Stratification: The Case of Pasmandas Muslims

With its origin being located in the beginning of the 7th century, Islam is one of the four oldest religions of the world after Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. Despite diversity in its theological foundation, philosophical interpretation and political succession, the followers of Islam in India have varying sects and sub-sects. The Islamic scholars believe that the diverse sects and sub-sects are the outcome of varying assumptions and interpretations of Islam notwithstanding sharing 'religious and cultural connections'¹² (Kusserow and Pawlak, 2015) with each other.

Unlike Hinduism which in its formative phase was marked by functional classification as embedded in the Manu Smriti based *Varna System*, Islam in South Asia in general and India in particular has come to be denoted by social stratification. While Islam at the world level is broadly classified into three key sects/branches – 'Sunnis, Shias and *Khawarij/Kharijiyya*'¹³ comprising more than 1.50 billion population living majorly in Asian, Asia-Pacific and

African regions; Islam in India began increasingly identified with *sect embedded in caste*. Bypassing the pure-impure binary in which the Hindu caste system has long been defined, the social stratification within the Muslim community has come to be interpreted broadly in terms of succession and conversion.

It is claimed that Islam believes in egalitarianism and recognizes class, nay caste, as the basis of its theological foundation; the Muslims in the Indian communitarian discourse are classified into three social categories based on caste hierarchy, viz., the *Ashrāfs*, the *Ajlāfs* and the *Arzāls*.

a) The *Ashrāfs*

The *Ashrāfs* (an Arabic word meaning nobleman) constitute the nobility in the Muslim social hierarchy in India. Characterised by their ethnic origin, economic standing, social lineage and political connections, the *Ashrāfs* came to occupy higher socio-economic and political status in India. Descendants of the Arab Muslim immigrants who emigrated from the Middle East and Central Asia, the *Ashrāfs* are sub-divided into four groups¹⁴ (Britannica, 2021), viz., *Sayyids* (descended from Prophet Muhammad's family), *Shaykhs* (mostly linked to the Persian immigrants), *Pashtuns* (hailed from Afghanistan) and *Mughals* (imbibing Turkish lineage arrived during the medieval era). Some of the upper caste Hindus who

got converted into Islam during the Mughal period, particularly the Rajputs of Rajasthan, also became part of the *Ashrāf* nobility in India.

In view of their elevated prominent position within the Islamic society and culture, the *Ashrāfs* came to acquire dominant role in the post-Independence politics of India. Their decision to stay back in India by nullifying Pakistan and accepting India as their home nation further strengthened their loyalty and provided greater opportunity to be part of the nation-building process with their Hindu counterparts. Adhering to the Islamic practices, the *Ashrāfs* began accepting both secularity and modernity in their march towards development and governance in post-Independence India.

b) The *Ajlāfs*

The *Ajlāfs* are the second social caste-based category of Muslims in India. They come mainly from the Hindu converted castes and broadly correspond to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) of India. Located during the Mughal empire when many forcible conversions took place, the *Ajlāfs* came to engage themselves in the menial professions like 'weavers, cotton-carders, oil-pressers, barbers, tailors'¹⁵ (Ahmad, 1967). Some scholars found the *Ajlāfs* in the ancient Aryan Hindu society and equated the category with the twice-born rank castes like *dwijas* comprising the subdued classes.

Though some researchers working on the Muslim society questioned the broad classification between the *Ashrāfs* and the *Ajlafs* for their non-existence in some Indian states like Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat or presence of altogether different social groups amongst the Muslims in states like Uttar Pradesh, the *Ashrāfs-Ajlafs* stratification in the Indian Muslim society made it a unique feature of Islam appearing to be somewhat analogous to the Hindu society.

The *foreign-local, outsider-insider* and *external-internal* origin thus laid the basis of social stratification between the *Ashrāfs* and the *Ajlafs* categories in India. The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations advocating affirmative action through OBC reservation made the *Ajlafs* as one of the biggest beneficiaries in India from the 1990s.

c) The *Arzals*

The third constituent of the Muslim social stratification in India is the *Arzals*. The *Arzals* are the most excluded sections of the Indian Muslim society. Many contemporary scholars and social scientists have begun comparing the *Arzals* with the lower Hindu castes, viz., *Untouchables*, *Shudras*, *Dalits* and *Adivasis* by calling them as *Dalit Muslims*.

Feeling marginalised and humiliated within their own Hindu sub-castes and with an anticipation that they would get a

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respectable elevated place in the Islamic stratification-free society, the *Untouchables* fell prey to the conversion during the Mughal and colonial eras. The 'criteria of original caste status, traditional occupation and caste customs and practices'¹⁶ (Ahmad, 1967) seemed to be intruded into the Indian Muslim society with the passage of time thus rendering them equally vulnerable to both caste discrimination and caste atrocities.

The onset of independence and the constitutional protection to the *Untouchables* or *Shudras* enshrined in the Constitution through positive discrimination ignited the call for reservation by the *Arzals*. The *Arzals* still constitute the socially discriminated, economically deprived and politically unrepresented community in contemporary India despite forming three-fourths of their population within the Muslim society. These groups have failed to get any caste-based policy support both by the Union and the State Governments as accrued to the *Dalit Hindus*. Facing double atrocities from their erstwhile

Hindu *Varna System* and the newly converted Muslim society, the *Arzals* representing the *Dalit Muslims* began clamouring for reservation at different platforms as done by their *Dalit Christian* cohorts, particularly from the past one decade.

Sensing their strong demographic presence and electoral salience, the *Ajlafs* and the *Arzals* came to be characterised by a new political discourse, viz., the *Pasmanda Muslims* from the 1990s onwards.

Integrating the *Pasmanda Muslims* in Democratic Politics: Narendra Modi and the 'New Subalterns'

The sect-driven religious division in the Muslim society reflecting between the Sunnis and Shias transformed into the caste-oriented social stratification from the 1990s onwards. The increasing mobilization of the backward castes and classes in Indian politics in the aftermath of the 'Second Democratic Upsurge'¹⁷ (Yadav, 2000) had a significant bearing amongst the non-*Ashrāf* Muslims too, viz., the

Ajlafs and the *Arzals* constituting a new political discourse in the name of *Pasmanda* Muslims. Representing the backward OBC and Dalit communities and castes respectively, the *Ajlafs* and the *Arzals* came to represent an umbrella organization under the rubric of the *Pasmanda* Muslims.

Denoting the Persian term as someone 'left behind', the *Pasmandas* are the New Subalterns in the contemporary Indian political discourse for being 'marginals who had long been the victims of dominance, subordination and alienation by the mainstream political elites'¹⁸ (Choudhary, 2024). The publication of the Sachar Committee Report, 2006 highlighting the backwardness of the Muslims along caste lines imparted the momentum of 'mobilisation of the *Pasmanda* identity'¹⁹ (Allie, 2024), particularly in Northern and Western Indian States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Maharashtra. Conceptualized for the first time by the *All-India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz* (AIPMM) during the 1990s under the leadership of Ali Anwar Ansari, a former

parliamentarian from Bihar; the term *Pasmanda* soon became a *catchy conclave* for the backward Muslims seeking *reservation, representation and restoration* in Indian society, economy and polity as part of their unique identity.

With its focus on *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas* (Cooperation and Development of All) in 2014 Lok Sabha elections by adding *Sabka Vishwas* (Conviction of All) from 2019 elections onwards, Prime Minister Narendra Modi realized both the essence and salience of the *Pasmanda* support for the BJP. Constituting approximately around 85 per cent of the Muslim population in contemporary India, the *Pasmandas* acquired great strategic and political significance during the elections to the 18th Lok Sabha, 2024.

Narendra Modi looked at the *Pasmandas* from the perspective of *New Subalterns* for being subjected to *ignorance, indifference and isolation* both by the dominant Muslim elites coming from the forward castes and the erstwhile previous political regimes. Hence, Modi approached the *Pasmanda* community by undertaking triple strategies, viz., reaching out, roping with and

restoring confidence amongst the *Pasmanda* Muslims.

a) Reaching out to the *Pasmanda* Muslims

Though the BJP-run NDA Government's policies under Modi 1.0 and 2.0 towards the Muslims per se had never differentiated in terms of sects – Sunnis or Shias; Modi's call for crossing 400 in 2024 election through a popular campaign, *Abki Baar, 400 Paar* (Crossing 400 Seats in 2024 Lok Sabha Election) unfolded the BJP's strategies and statistics. The *Pasmandas* appeared to be figured at the centre of BJP's 400+ campaign.

Targeting the *Pasmanda* Muslim voters – men and women alike, Modi asked his party cadres and political representatives reaching out the *Pasmandas*, especially those who were the beneficiaries of the Union Government's popular schemes like *Ujjwala Yojana, Awas Yojana and Ayushman Yojana*. BJP, for instance, undertook 'a special drive in 65 minority-dominated Lok Sabha constituencies'²⁰ (*Deccan Herald*, 30 June 2024) across the country to reach out to the *Pasmanda* Muslims by assuring them to be the priority of the *plans, policies and programs* of the BJP-led NDA Government.

Holding *Pasmanda*-centric rallies and meetings like *Sneh Milan*²¹ (*Deccan Herald*, 7 March 2023) with the notable community leaders, enlisting Modi Mitras or Friends of

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Modi²² (Allie, 2024) appointing *Pasmandas* to the higher organizational positions, asking party MPs of celebrating *Raksha Bandhan* with *Pasmanda* Muslim women, etc. were some of the special initiatives undertaken by Narendra Modi for cementing strong electoral ties with the *Pasmanda* community.

Whether these political overtures of Narendra Modi reflected into friendly electoral gestures by the *Pasmandas* in the 18th Lok Sabha election during April-May 2024 have yet to be ascertained?

b) Roping the *Pasmanda* Muslims

The second step of integrating the *Pasmandas* with the mainstream politics as undertaken by Narendra Modi aimed at roping them through special endeavours. Unlike the Congressional palliatives as outlined through Sachar Report, Modi wanted to associate the *Pasmandas* as decision makers by empowering them through the BJP-led Government's strong policies. Castigating the graded and exploitative system under the Islamic social stratification, Modi wanted to empower the *Pasmanda* women by banning *Triple Talaq* – 'a practice of instant oral divorce by a Muslim husband to his wife by uttering *talaq* thrice'²³ (Choudhary, 2024). Initiated the legislation in December 2019 after the 17th Lok Sabha election, it started having its spillover effects, particularly on

the *Pasmanda* women.

Though it is true that none of the *Pasmanda* Muslims was given tickets by BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, for elections are contested and won based on winnability of candidates; their electoral support was sought by associating them to the key organizational positions by the party. Tariq Mansoor, the former Vice Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University and a member of the *Pasmanda* community, was appointed one of the Vice Presidents of BJP in July 2023. At the local elections in Uttar Pradesh Panchayats and Municipalities, a good number of *Pasmandas* were picked up by the BJP as its candidates. Countering discrimination in the *Haj* pilgrimage where the state subsidies are usually appropriated by the *Ashrāf* Muslims, Narendra Modi pledged to place special Haj Quota for the *Pasmandas*.

Moving beyond the Minority-Minorityism discourse, Narendra Modi sought to integrate the *Pasmanda* communities – both the *Ajlafs* and the *Arzals* as part of his political campaign based on *Santushtikaran* [Satisfaction] instead of *Tushtikaran* [Appeasement].

c) Restoring Confidence amongst the *Pasmanda* Muslims

Himself coming from the OBC community which constitutes the lower rung of the Hindu society, Narendra Modi legitimised his position as a real spokesman of

the backwards and a harbinger of change for them in New India. Emphasising the *autonomy, identity and dignity* of the *Pasmanda* community, Modi pledged to place the *Pasmandas* at the priority of BJP-led NDA governance. Without making difference between his words and actions, Modi with the help of his party workers, cadres and legislators spearheaded the momentum of inclusion for the *Pasmandas* both in party organization and party government.

Modi's pragmatic endeavours began showing results when the Muslim leaders across India and the globe started hailing him as a champion of the minorities. The Muslim World League Chief Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa applauded the Prime Minister Modi for ensuring 'inclusive growth' (*The Times of India*, 13 July 2023) by respecting the constitutional morality. Through the Mann Ki Baat (A Radio Program reflecting the aspirations from the core of the heart), Modi kept galvanizing all sections of the society, including the Muslim women towards self-empowerment. The program touched the chord of the *Pasmandas* as it sought to address their common problems by offering collective solutions. Formation of the Weavers' Cells and special economic packages to the artisans and craftsmen – most of them coming from the *Pasmanda* Muslims is a testimony of Modi's restoring confidence in

the community.

Modi's filing nomination from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh for the 2024 Lok Sabha election witnessed a secular rainbow of all castes and classes, majority and minority, cadres and voters. The joining of the *Pasmandas* reflected 'a carnival of true Kashi spirit'²⁴ (*The Times of India*, 14 May 2024). When the election campaigns for the 18th Lok Sabha began turning towards Hindu-Muslim polarization, Modi countered the Opposition

by stating that he would prefer to quit politics than to do a Hindu-Muslim politics.

The Future Road Map

The *Pasmanda* have become the *New Subalterns* in Indian Muslim Society. Sharing similar backward traits of discrimination, subjugation and exploitation as analogous to the Hindu Dalits and Backwards, the *Pasmandas* and their ideologues would build pressure on the ruling elites for expanding the umbrella of

affirmative action in the name of inclusion and integration.

The outcome of the Lok Sabha election, 2024 does not substantiate the equivocal support of the *Pasmandas* for the BJP or Narendra Modi. Addressing the core concerns of the socio-economic and political upliftment of the *Pasmandas* without challenging the affirmative action embedded in the Hindu caste system would remain a critical challenge for the Modi Government 3.0. ●

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Prof. Himanshu Roy

M.A. Ansari, Nehru Committee Report and Separate Electorate

Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari's opinion against separate electorate was a radical departure from the politically accepted sin of the Congress. An analytical study

Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari (1880-1936), the Congress President in 1927 who presided over the All-Parties Conference, which was comprised of Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, and others, for drafting India's constitution had delivered an important speech in his Presidential address at the National Convention. It contained, in germinal form, the seed against the separate electorate that was created and constitutionalized by the colonial state in connivance with the Muslim League, which was formed to regain the declining political power of the feudal Muslim elite. Reclaiming this power for political parity with the Congress, the separate electorate was projected and philosophized as the expanding individual rights and social justice for minorities. The religion-based separate political rights were being translated as an integral part of secularism after 1916, when Congress accepted it at its Lucknow meeting.

Against this backdrop, Ansari's Presidential address at the All-Parties Conference against a separate electorate was a radical departure

from the politically accepted sin of the Congress. Citing from the observation of the committee of League of Nations, he stated that 'the true safeguard of the minority is the goodwill of the majority,' which comes from the trust it creates through 'patriotism, public spirit and devotion to the country.'¹ The psyche of fear and the projection of being a victim due to the loss of political power among the Muslim nobility after 1857 (the abolition of the Mughal monarchy) had created a fetish among them for constitutional safeguard despite Congress's political assurance and acceptance of it in 1916. In his contest with Gandhi, Jinnah, for political supremacy, always created impediments to making national political consensus. Attacking this fetish, Ansari stated that "constitutional safeguards are bounties on inefficiency. The more a minority has of them, the more it will need: and protected from the bracing spirit of free competition by the charitable provisions of the constitution, it will sink deeper and deeper into ignorance, fanaticism, and sloth to be stifled ultimately by those who had adhered to offer it a partial

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support”.²

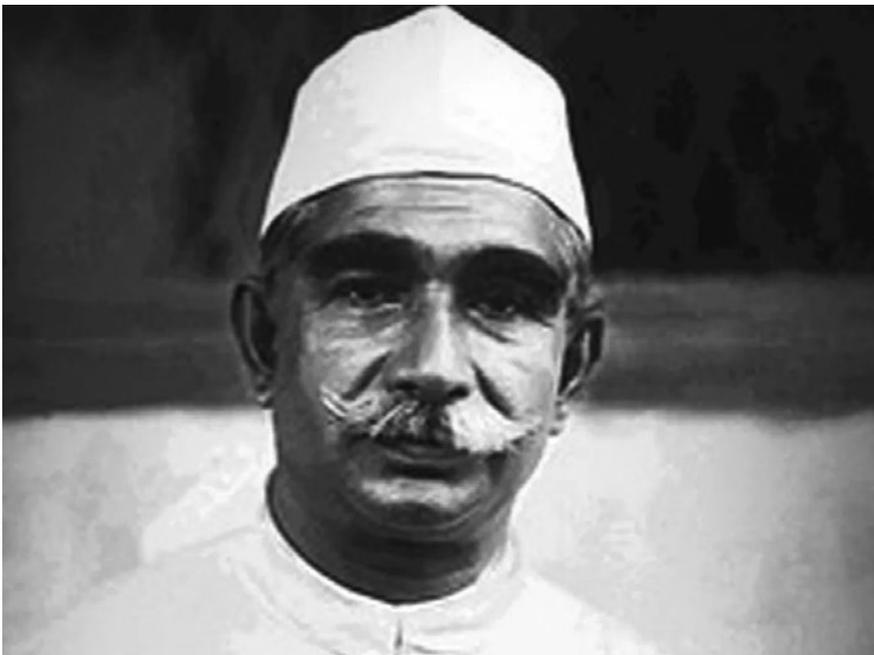
The observation was prophetic. It not only stifled the flowering of the community but also broke the country; it continues to haunt the nation even today. He had suggested universal rights, freedom to compete, and a spirit of competition premised on capabilities within the framework of a liberal democratic national consensus with the intent of development of all. He was well aware of the danger of inefficiency and religious separation resulting from the political demands of the Muslim League.

As we know, the Muslim League was seeking a legislative mechanism for the reservation of seats³ to represent the Muslims in the Central Legislature and the provinces of Punjab and Bengal in -lieu of debunking separate electorate, which was rejected by the Nehru committee

chaired by Motilal Nehru. The premise of rejection was based on the logic that they (Muslims) were already in the majority in these two provinces, which is incompatible with the system of representation. They do not require any aid of reservation for political safeguard. In the Hindu-majority British provinces, the Nehru committee, however, continued with the system of religion-based reservation in the legislature to provide them representation, but it did away with the 'principle of weightage' agreed upon by the Congress as part of the Lucknow pact. In the central legislature, the demand for reservation of one-third of seats was also not agreed upon; it was argued that there was an uneven distribution of their population in every constituency, which does not make it feasible to apply the principle and the mechanism of reservation. Motilal was

earlier, in 1927 the votary of this principle of reservation to earn the trust of Muslims. Top do away with the separate electorate was strongly opposed by the different non-League leaders in different provinces, forcing him to change his track. The opposition to this principle had begun to grow after the Lucknow pact.

The political acceptance of a separate electorate by the Congress at Lucknow 1916 was a 'great blunder' that Lajpat Rai accepted later to Thakurdas on 13th December 1924⁴. Earlier, Gandhi had witnessed this blunder being committed in Lucknow. He had not then opposed it in public, but in private, he was not in agreement with this principle. The Pact, a 'patch-up affair' between the Congress and the Muslim League, extended the principle of a separate electorate in the provincial councils, even in the Muslim-majority provinces of British India. In connivance with their feudal nobility, the Muslim business elite needed this political representation in the provincial councils and the central legislature to protect their trade and business interests through provincial and central laws and strengthen their Chambers of Commerce. In the absence of their representation in the central legislature, they felt lagging behind the different regional business chambers (South Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, Bengal National Chambers of Commerce and Industries, Andhra National



Chambers of Commerce and Industries) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) which was formed in 1925 and was dominated by Hindus and Parsis. The Muslim business elite to compete with them created a narrative of political protection from majoritarian dominance, for which it was pursuing the case of legislative representation under the facade of proportional religious representation. The facts were contrary to their narrative. The Muslim elite had ruled India for centuries before the British replaced them. They never raised the issue of religious minority ruling over the majority. After the formation of the Congress in 1885 and the demand for creating democratic institutions and procedures began, the Muslim elite began to raise the issue of their religious representation in the legislature. It was propped up by their business elite and the traditional nobility who had felt their declining fortunes in the 19th century in the face of non-Muslims' rising business and politics. The separate electorate in British provinces, particularly in presidency towns were their business and politics were located, provided the few leverage in the face of business and political competition against non-Muslims. Among the registered voters, as it was based on tax payment, the Muslims were less. The artificial protection created through separate electorates helps them

Ansari was charged with betraying the Muslims, for blind adherence to Hindus, and for killing the Congress, which earlier, after 1916, was 'National'. Now, it was made an 'adjunct of the Hindu Mahasabha'. The more he peddled the Nehru Committee Report as the 'dawn of a brighter day' as Congress president, which had recommended the abolition of separate electorate, reservation of seats in Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab and weightage for them in other provinces, the more he was charged for being intentionally contemptuous to Muslims and legalizing 'tyranny of numbers'

secure seats in District Boards, Municipalities, and Provincial Councils through which they can pursue their politics, make laws that keep their business artificially propped up against their competitors by creating local tariffs through provincial governments and municipal bodies. The competitors, both in business and politics, were projected as religious adversaries intending for majoritarianism, and in this fight, the *Pasamanda Samaj*, the majority of them being non-voters, were used as canon fodder.

Ansari's Presidential address, therefore, was a radical departure in the backdrop of a social-political narrative and vested interest of the non-Congress Muslim elite that had been peddled for almost half of a century. His focus on 'inefficiency,' protection from 'free competition', and 'charitable provisions' of constitutional safeguards, which were a critique of the demands of the League, were unacceptable to them, for the Muslim League was born out of the midwifery of the

colonial state, and was existing due to its charitable provisions. The more the League lacked popular support, the more it demanded or sought support for its charitable provisions from the Congress and the colonial state for its existence. In 1930, for example, "when Iqbal presented his historic address... demanding a Muslim state in North Western India, the meeting at Allahabad did not even have its quorum of seventy-five members (the delegates)⁵"; and there was no resolution seconding it. Seven years later, the colonial state enacted the Shariat Act in the central assembly.

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majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab and weightage for them in other provinces, the more he was charged for being intentionally contemptuous to Muslims and legalizing 'tyranny of numbers'. But more than what was visible in the public domain was the unhighlighted recommendation that had fanned the fire. The residuary powers of the provinces were to be transferred to the central government. This had created panic among their regional business chambers, which feared further loss to their business. The demand of the FICCI for a centralized pan-Indian business law was not an usual coincidence. It was felt that Ansari was speaking the language of the FICCI when he spoke of 'free competition'. The landowners who were nominated and elected members of the Councils and municipal boards/District Boards (through separate electorates and the weightage system) had their

own grouse in case the separate electorate was to be abolished subject to acceptance of Reports. Thus, The Nehru Committee Report threatened their political representations and business interests. Ansari, therefore, was charged for giving free reins to the 'communalism of the majority', and it was the Muslims of the United Province who (had) 'spearheaded the crusade' who were fighting 'for the supposed rights of the Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal'⁷.

The Nehru Committee Report (Motilal Nehru, chairman of the committee; Jawaharlal Nehru, secretary, members Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jayakar, and Anne Besant). It seemed it was determined to do away with the blunder Congress had committed at Lucknow in 1916. However, it did not completely remove the political privileges of the Muslims that were bestowed to them after 1909. It substituted

the separate electorate with the reservation in legislatures in the constituencies where Muslims were in the minority and for non-Muslims in North West Frontier Province. It was not applicable in Punjab and Bengal. Earlier, Motilal and Sapru had already declared the separate electorate as a 'pernicious principle in public life' and 'necessary evil', respectively. Reservation was a better choice in comparison, and it would not have been without the support of Ali Imam, Anne Besant, and M.A Ansari. It proposed the reorganization of the provinces premised on the linguistic principle that Congress had earlier agreed to. It, however, proposed transferring the provinces' residuary power to the center. It also proposed to shift trade and commerce external and internal and taxation on customs, revenue, excise, income tax, etc., to central subjects. Such proposals were hitting the business and political interests of the Muslim elite of the League. The League was willing to forego the separate electorate if it was to be substituted by one-third of the reservation in the central legislature. The Nehru committee did not recommend it. Ansari argued that the 'interest of the motherland' and 'national patriotism' are more important than the sectional interests of the representatives. He pleaded for a 'sympathetic compromise', 'charity of hearts', and 'duty to our country'. It will be apt here to cite⁸ him from his presidential

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address to the Indian National Convention in 1928:

After several years of utter darkness characterized by the utmost confusion of aims and objects- a darkness in which the spectre of communal differences oppressed us like a terrible nightmare- the work of the Nehru Committee has at last heralded the dawn of a brighter day.

Immediately after him, Motilal Nehru presented his Report with the chairman's address. He called it 'interests (of the country)', 'interests of the communities', and 'rights of the minority and the majority'. He termed his Report as 'a complete organism', 'a structure' out of which it may crumble if one brick is taken out. Yet, he did not recommend it for its enforcement and acceptance; rather, he kept it open to abide by, 'and to stand corrected' by the sectional interest of the representatives⁹. He cautioned, of course, the delegates of the consequences of recommending the modification of the Report. The Report, actually, it may be clarified here, faced resistance from the Muslim delegates of the UP who had attempted to reject the Report

through political mobilization in different provinces. But most of the Muslim delegates except for Bombay had accepted the Report, including those from Bengal and Punjab. The three amendments proposed by Jinnah were also rejected. The amendments were as follows: one, one-third of the members of the central legislature should be Muslims; second, in the event of adult suffrage not being introduced, Punjabi and Bengali Muslims should have reservations of seats for ten years; and finally, the residuary powers should vest in the provinces¹⁰.

Motilal had pinned his hope on Jinnah. He had felt that Jinnah would accept the Report. But his (Jinnah's) last two proposals, despite being defeated at the Convention, kept the unity among the Muslim elite intact. The Nehru Report created a temporary discord among them, which was bridged by Jinnah's proposal in the post-Convention years. Nehru was willing to negotiate Jinnah's proposal, but Lajpat Rai and Moonje cautioned him (Motilal) not to make further compromises on the communal representation.¹¹

The brilliance of Anglicized

Jinnah in the 1920s and 30s was in keeping the Muslim elite intact. He had lacked the popular support of the Muslims, which are best reflected in the then-existing membership of the League. The number of League's delegates or the lack of quorum in its conferences add to the evidence. Iqbal's proposal in 1930 at Allahabad for a Muslim state had no required quorum of delegates. Even there was no one to second his proposal¹². This critical shortcoming of lack of popular will was compensated with political belligerence, innovations, improvisations, and media visibility. Popular metaphors, pedantically acceptable as gospel of universal truth was often used to project League as representative of Indian Muslims. In Western attire, Jinnah was the darling of the English press, backed by the colonial state. Despite the defeat, his three proposals at the Convention carried the Muslim elite with him. Had the Nehru Report been implemented, the possibility of Jinnah becoming politically obsolete would have increased. India might have been saved from partition. ●

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Abdullah Mansur

The Partition of India: The Muslim League versus Momin Conference

At first, the Ashraf intellectuals opposed democracy, but when this did not work out, there was talk of including the Pasmanda castes in the community. A historical account

The history of the Muslim community in India has been complex and multifaceted. From the medieval to the modern period, Muslim society witnessed social and economic divisions between different classes and castes. There has been a clear division between the Ashraf (upper class) Muslims and the Pasmanda (so-called lower caste) Muslims. The Ashraf Muslims, who were of foreign origin, often looked down upon the local Muslims. They degraded the local culture, considering their own culture and language to be superior. Thus, Muslim society was never a homogeneous entity but remained divided on social and economic grounds. During Muslim rule in medieval India, government departments and high positions were dominated mainly by Muslims of foreign origin. Local Muslims were kept away from these positions. Even those upper caste Hindus who converted to Islam did not find a place in the administration initially. In modern India, the British adopted several strategies to promote religious identity in India. After the Revolution of 1857, they used religion to consolidate their power.

They tried to create differences between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The British promoted the religious identity of the Muslim community as the primary identity of the latter. They attempted to weaken other important identities such as caste, class and language.

At the conclusion of the annual session of the Mohammedan Educational Conference in Dhaka in 1906, about 3,000 prominent Muslim delegates from various provinces of the Indian subcontinent attended a special meeting at the invitation of Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dhaka (Nawab Sir Khwaja Salimullah Bahadur, 1871-1915). It was decided in this meeting to establish a political organization for the political leadership and guidance of the Ashraf Muslims. However, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had advised Muslims to stay away from politics. But with the consent of Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk, one of his prominent followers, admirers and an important member of the Aligarh Movement, and these three thousand delegates, the All India Muslim League was formed. Its first president became the 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili sect, Aga Khan (Sir Sultan Mohammed

Shah bin Imam Aga Ali Shah, 1877-1957). The main objective of this organization was to clarify and safeguard the civil rights of the Ashraf Muslims. But later, it supported the partition of the country on the basis of the Two-Nation Theory. Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1917) furthered this ideology.¹ The British too helped in the formation of the Muslim League and supported the demand for separate electorates for Muslims. Their aim was to prevent Hindu-Muslim unity and weaken the nationalist movement. In this way, the British tried to divide Indian society on religious grounds, resulting in separatist tendencies emerging among Muslims.

The League believed that Muslims were a separate 'nation' and should be recognised as a distinct political entity. They wanted Muslims to have equal representation with Hindus, even if they were less in number. The League demanded separate

electorates for Muslims and reserved seats in the government. They believed that only Muslims could represent Muslims. The League saw society as a group of religious communities, not as individuals. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 were important in this context, which recognized Muslims as a separate political group. This law promoted the division of Indian politics on the basis of religion. The Act of 1909 was an important law that changed the political status of Muslims in India. This Act recognized Muslims as a separate political group. It included not only Muslims, but also various communities and sub-communities within them. Also, people of different languages and castes were included in it. After this law, Muslim candidates had to pay more attention to the interests of their religious community in order to win elections. Even though they wanted to play a big role in the

politics of the entire country, they had to talk more about the issues of their community. On the other hand, Hindu candidates no longer had to think about the Muslims of their area. They could focus only on the votes of their community. Although according to the law a Muslim could contest elections from any seat, but if he were to do so, he would not get Muslim votes. Because Muslim voters could vote only for Muslim candidates. Under this system, there were different religious groups and sub-groups. Therefore, no candidate wanted to run the risk of contesting elections without the support of people of his religion. Thus, this law of 1909 proved to be a promoter of division on the basis of religion in Indian politics.²

The Ashraf ulema rejected democracy, declaring it to be a Western import, which was not in accordance with Islamic principles. They believed that the only purpose of politics was to serve the great objectives of religion, which included establishing a relationship between believers and God, and therefore religious norms should never be subordinated to political objectives. Intellectuals of the modern period like Sir Syed and the poet Mohammad Iqbal too were against democracy. The Ashraf intellectuals were worried that if democracy came to India, it would be the majority that would rule. Sir Syed strongly opposed the formation of the Congress and its political activities. When



A rare group photograph, taken during the session of the Momin Conference in Gorakhpur in 1939

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the Congress raised the question of Indian representation in the government, Sir Syed, as a representative of the Muslim elite, argued against this demand. He said that whenever elections were held, the number of Hindu voters would be much higher than that of Muslims and obviously, Hindu candidates would obtain more support. The Syed opposed the representative system by saying that Muslims were not equal to Hindus in property, wealth and education, and would therefore not get equal representation either.... Muslims were not able to forget the fact that they had ruled over Hindus on the basis of their physical power and by instilling fear in them that Muslims are a superior race. They were not able to accept that the same people over whom they had ruled should now have rule and authority in their hands.³

The Muslim elite (Ashraf) pressurized the British to take care of their influence and honour. They made an appeal in the name of “representation of the Muslims of UP” and told the government that as the *jagirdars* of the country, they still had influence over the provinces, and were therefore more important than the numerical majority. For this reason, importance ought to be given to family lineage. Iqbal expressed the same sentiment in his Allahabad address when he said that Western democracy cannot work in this country. Anti-democratic ideas are evident in his poetry too (e.g., “Jamhooriyat

ek tarj-e-hukoomat hai ki jisse bandon ko gina karte hain, taula nahi karte”, i.e., “Democracy is a system of governing where people’s heads are counted; they are not weighed”). This reflects the mindset of the Muslim elite (upper class) in which this class did not want to lose its perceived sense of social status by mingling with the common man. They wanted to secure and maintain their superiority.⁴ At first the Ashraf intellectuals opposed democracy, but when this was not possible, there was talk of including the Pasmada castes in the community so that they could show an increase in the numbers of their community in comparison to the Hindu society. Here too, the Ashrafs did not consider the Pasmada castes to be anything more than mere numbers.

David Page’s book, titled *Prelude to Partition* focuses especially on the events that took place in the 1920s. Page has tried to find the answer to the question as to what was the reason that Hindus and Muslims, who had been living together peacefully for centuries became enemies of each other, and these differences and hatreds gave birth to the spectre of communalism. He starts with his stating of these reasons with the reforms the British government initiated in India. For example, when local self-district level and municipal elections were introduced in 1880, it made the importance of numbers clear

to both Hindus and Muslims, i.e., the community with more numbers would win the election. The reforms of 1909 were related to provincial elections, and thus one of its effects was that local issues became more important for the people than national ones. When elections were held in the provinces in 1919 and some powers were given to Indian representatives there, the nature of politics took a provincial turn. When Sindh too was declared separate under the 1935 Act, it further increased the importance of provincial politics. What was the result of this? The objective of the British government through this was to break the national parties and especially the Congress. Because these reforms gave birth to provincial leaders and enhanced their importance, while the importance of national leaders reduced. Due to this, the influence and power of the old Muslim families in northern India and their established leadership was broken as a result of this process. The fear of losing their leadership and influence now took root in their minds, and due to this reason, they began using religion and language to stabilize their position, so that through these symbols they could unite the common Muslims and maintain their leadership. But the result was that when the Congress was successful in the 1937 elections and formed its governments in the provinces. This strengthened the position of the Congress. The Muslim League, too,

understanding the importance of the provincial regions and their issues, demanded a weak centre and strong provinces. The Muslim League was successful when it accorded priority to the problems of the provinces over national issues. Therefore, the hue of provincialism that politics took on ultimately determined the path of the partition of India. David Page has also thrown light on the methods adopted by the British government to keep the rich, landholders and influential individuals of India under its control. For example, government jobs during this period were given to the sons of those rich and landholders who were loyal to the government. In 1896 there were 161 deputy collectors in UP; of them only 15 were intermediate pass, 9 had a degree, the rest were exempted from it. Of 225 tehsildars, 4 were intermediate pass and only one had a degree. Nominations were effected for higher posts.⁵

Communalism had not played a significant role in Indian politics till 1937. The Hindu-Muslim issue was not raised even in the provincial elections held during this period. Provincial politics was still aloof from these hatreds. When the Congress formed ministries after winning the elections in 1937, even Jinnah was ready to compromise with the it. But in Nehru's view, the only two parties in India were the Congress and the British government. This acrimony further intensified when the

Congress started a campaign to contact the Muslims. Jinnah reacted to it, because the aim of this campaign was to weaken the leadership of the Muslim League. Under these circumstances, Jinnah reorganized the Muslim League and launched a campaign against the Congress and its ministries. However, till 1939 the Muslim League was not popular among all the Muslims of India, nor were the Muslims positioned as a separate nation till then. When the Congress resigned from the ministries in 1939, Jinnah made full use of the opportunity and cleared the way for the Muslim League by celebrating "Yam-e-Najat" (Day of Liberation).

In the Lahore Resolution passed in March 1940, Jinnah declared, "I wish to assure my Muslim brothers that...when the territory of India is partitioned, exchange of population will, as far as possible, be considered. Secondly, the Muslim minority is misled into thinking that any scheme of partition or division of India will make their position worse and leave them in the lurch. I can explain that the Muslims, wherever they are in a minority, cannot better their position either under a united India or a central government. Whatever happens, they will remain a minority. They can demand all the safeguards that any civilized government can conceive of to its utmost extent. But they cannot better their position by standing in the way of the partition of

India. On the other hand, by their obstructionist attitude, they will bring the Muslim homeland and the 60 million Muslims under one government, in which they will forever be nothing more than a minority... The question for the Muslim minority in Hindu India is whether the whole of Muslim India of 90 million should be brought under Hindu-majority rule, or whether at least the 60 million Muslims living in those areas should have their own homeland and thus have the opportunity for their spiritual, cultural, economic and political development to the best of their abilities and to shape their future destiny, while allowing Hindus and others to do the same. In the Muslim homeland, the Hindus and other minorities would be in a similar position."⁶

Thus, the Muslim League presented Indian Muslims as a separate 'nation' as it sought recognition of them as a distinct political entity. The League believed that the religious and cultural identity of Muslims was different from that of Hindus and could not be protected in a Hindu-dominated India. The League wanted equal political representation and 'real power' for Muslims. It feared that independent India would be dominated by Hindus and the interests of Muslims would not be protected. The League then went on to claim that Muslims and Hindus were two different nations with different customs, traditions and ways of life. It believed that

Islamic law and values could be properly implemented only in a separate Muslim state. The League tried to grab more support and concessions from the British by presenting Muslims as a separate nation.

The Momin Conference

Muslims of the lineage of weavers were considered the lowest of the Muslim communities and were subjected to forced labour in many areas. For example, the zamindars of Gaya and Shahabad employed them as traditional porters. An illegal tax, *kathiyari*, was levied by the zamindars on their looms, and a royalty was levied on the monthly net profit of the looms in the form of *masarfa*. In many villages the zamindars levied an illegal house tax called *ghar-dwari*. Tales and sayings in Urdu and colloquial languages castigating the weavers were common in UP, Bengal and Bihar and were widely seen as confirmation of their oppression by the *sharifs* (Ashrafs).⁷ It is worth mentioning an interesting case here. The zamindars and Ashraf Muslims of Gorakhpur were collecting a “Rezalat Tax” from the Pasmada (Ajlaf/Arzal) Muslims, as they considered these communities to be “Razil” or low caste. When Niamatullah Ansari protested against this unjust tax, the zamindars first resorted to threats and later Qazi Tasadduq Hussain filed a suit in the Gorakhpur Munsifi Court. He claimed that Niamatullah had not paid the tax for many

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years, the Ansari community was “Razil/low (Dalit) caste”, and being an Ashraf and zamindar, he had the right to collect this tax. Niamatullah Ansari strongly opposed this suit and on 22 May 1939, the Munsif dismissed the Qazi’s suit, saying that “Jolahas are not Razil”. The Qazi appealed against this decision in the Gorakhpur Sessions Court and then in the Allahabad High Court. The case was run in the High Court under the title “Kya Jolaaha Razil Hai” (are the Jolahas Razil?), where both the parties presented their arguments. The arguments of the Qazi side were later published in a book called *Jolahanaama*, while the arguments of Niamatullah’s side were published as *Kazinaama*. The proceedings of this case were published regularly in the Momin Gazette newspaper and other publications. Along with Qazi Tasadduq Hussain, his son Qazi Talmand Hussain too was active in this case, who was a respected member in the translation department of the Osmania

University. He made every effort to prove the Jolahas as “Razil”, but in the end the Qazi side had to face defeat and the court ruled in favour of the Jolahas. This historic case is an important example of caste discrimination and struggle for social justice in the Indian Muslim society, which began from the lower court of Gorakhpur and reached the High Court.⁸

Under the influence of democracy and social consciousness in India, caste-based organizations began to emerge in Muslim society after 1910. From the end of the nineteenth century, many weavers in North India began to try to change their identity. They abandoned their old Hindu names and the use of the term Julaha. Instead, they adopted new names such as ‘Momin’ (meaning an honest or honourable person), ‘Ansari’ (the name of an Arab ancestor to whom they related), or ‘Momin Ansar’ or ‘Sheikh Momin’. Although the term Momin was probably in use in

some places before the nineteenth century, this trend of name-changing was clearly visible in the 1911 census report. There were two main motives behind this name-changing—to acquire a status equal to that of the upper castes and to forge a pure Islamic identity. In this way, the weaver community tried to raise its social status and strengthen its religious identity.⁹ Attempts to organize the Momin community as a socio-political movement began in Calcutta in 1914 through the formation of the Falah ul-Mominin (Well-being of the Believers), followed by another association, the Calcutta Jamiyat-ul-Mominin, in December 1923. This organization was the predecessor of the All India Jamiyat-ul-Mominin or All India Momin Conference, which was founded in December 1926 under the leadership of Haji Mohammed Farkhund Ali of Sasaram. The initial objectives of this organization were to revive the traditional craft of the weavers, promote self-respect, religious observance and economic independence. Reorganization and unity of the community was essential to achieve these objectives. This organization functioned as an effective body for the social upliftment and political expression of the weavers and also as an organized trade union. At the first annual session in Calcutta in April 1928, under the presidency of Abdul Majid-al-Hariri of Banaras, the leaders

blamed the English-educated class for their degeneration and advocated a national education system through the establishment of madrasas. It was also expected that the chieftains and ulema of the community would work for social reforms like the reduction of lavish weddings and other evil practices. In fact, just before the formation of this national-level body, several local jamaats in UP and Bihar were active for the unity and reform of the Ansari community. To understand why this organization was formed in Kolkata, it is important to bear in mind that Kolkata was the economic capital of India in those days. There was a large number of migrant workers there, mostly from the Ansari community. Living together increased their social and political awareness. The growing democratic influence in India also promoted their awareness and unity.

Following the passing of the Government of India Act of 1935, provincial elections were held in 1937. Communal politics was at its peak in that period. As a representative of the oppressed Muslim communities, the role of the All India Momin Conference became very important in political discourse. The All India Muslim League was seen as the representative body of the upper-class Muslims, from which the All India Momin Conference had to maintain distance (from the Muslim League) to safeguard its identity. Under these circumstances, the Indian

National Congress was seen as a political alternative with which the Conference could associate. Jawaharlal Nehru observed that “In U.P. and Bihar, the Momins (mainly the weaver class) and the Muslim peasants were in favour of the Congress because they considered the League to be an upper-class organisation of feudal landlords”. Jawaharlal Nehru assured the Bihar Jamaat-ul-Mominin on the eve of the 1937 elections that “We are fully aware of the importance of the Momin community and will gladly do everything in our power to help it”. Hence, soon after the elections, the Executive Committee of the Bihar Jamiyat-ul-Mominin demanded representation of the Momins in the Bihar Congress cabinet, particularly in the portfolio of textiles and other cottage industries. Meanwhile, the Muslim League also criticised the Congress’ attempt to divide the Muslim community through mass literacy and Muslim contact campaigns. The grant of Rs. 10,000 for the upliftment of the Momins was also opposed. The Muslim League asked the Momin members of the Bihar Legislative Assembly to resign if they were not willing to join the Muslim League. The Momin organizations responded by dissociating themselves from the Muslim League and showed their willingness to form a separate party affiliated to the Congress.

The Muslim mass contact campaign launched by the

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Congress Party after the 1937 elections mobilized the Ansari community in favour of the Congress in the United Provinces and parts of Bihar. The Ansaris of Ghazipur, Mirzapur and other adjoining areas in the United Provinces moved away from the Muslim League in large numbers under the significant and favourable influence of the Momin Conference. By this time, the Indian political scene had become divided into a bipolar world of the Congress and anti-Congress political forces (which included the Muslim League). The Muslim League had begun to claim to be the 'sole spokesman' of Indian Muslims, which the Congress rejected by claiming either neutrality or support of various Muslim groups and organizations. In response to Mohammad Ali Jinnah's claim of the Muslim League as the official and representative organization of Indian Muslims, Jawaharlal Nehru referred to Muslim organizations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, All India Shia Conference, Majlis-e-Ahrar, All India Momin Conference, etc., which shared the same political platform as the Congress. Another Congress leader Rajendra Prasad rejected the Muslim League's claim because he believed that the Momins formed a very substantial part of the majority of Muslims, who were organized in their own separate Jamaat and who openly and repeatedly rejected the Muslim League's claims. Paul Brass has observed

that "The Muslim League, which was run by elite Muslim leaders, had no influence on the Momins, while the Congress, with its Gandhian charkha symbol and promises of support for indigenous handicrafts, appealed to the economic interests of Muslim handloom weavers." But more than Gandhian programmes, the Congress' appeal that at least superficially included all classes by ending elite dominance (authority or control) proved more attractive to the Momins as well. Generations of discrimination and inferiority complex have had such a deep impact on society that it has influenced people's political choices as well. This impact may prove to be even more powerful than an attachment to Gandhian ideas."¹⁰

Momins Versus Muslims

The terms 'Muslim' and 'Momin' were in fact used and continue to be used in different contexts. 'Muslim' is a blanket term used for all followers of Islam. The term was more specifically used to refer to Ashraf (upper caste) Muslims. The term 'Momin' was used specifically for backward class Muslims, such as Jolaha (weavers), Dhunia and other backward castes. Before and even after independence, the term 'Muslim' is often used to refer to the Ashraf castes, while the term 'Momin' is used to refer to Ajlaf and Arzal (backward and Dalit) Muslims. This division reflects

the caste discrimination that existed in Muslim society, where the Ashraf castes (Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan) considered themselves to be higher, while other castes were considered lower.

The Momin Conference stood up most vocally against the Muslim League in the 1940s. From the beginning, Maulana Ali Hussain (15 April 1890-6 December 1953) tried to make other Pasmanda castes other than the weavers, aware, active and organized. Many people knew him as 'Kamli Baba'. His speeches were in a simple language which even illiterate people could understand. In the organization, Asim Bihari always kept himself behind and pushed others ahead. He never made himself the president of the organization, and despite many requests from people, he limited himself to the post of general secretary. Asim Bihari decided to keep the organization away from political compulsions.¹¹ He kept advocating within the organization that the independent existence and viewpoint of the Momin Conference should be maintained. It should never become the B-team of the Congress. Asim Bihari established the organization in many states including UP, Delhi, Punjab and organized the first All India Conference in Kolkata in 1928. He played an active role in the Quit India Movement and in the protest against the partition of the country.

Another prominent leader of the Momin Conference, Abdul Qayyum Ansari (1 July 1905-18 January 1973) emerged as a leader in the movement against the caste system in the Muslim society and further intensified the movement. It is said that the incident of contesting elections for an assembly seat in Patna in 1938 brought Ansari sahib closer to the Momin Conference. A provincial leader of the Muslim League accepted his application, but as soon as he came out, he heard the taunt, "Now even Julahas (weavers) have begun dreaming of becoming MLAs." In 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding the creation of Pakistan under the Lahore Declaration. On 21 April, 1940, at Alamganj (later renamed Mominabad), Patna, a meeting of the Bihar Provincial Momin Conference was held against the Lahore Resolution. This meeting declared that the entire community of Momins intended

to oppose the partition in its entirety and since the Muslim League did not represent the Momins, it had no right to decide their fate. It was also reported that even in the Muslim majority provinces, Momins and other working class Muslims were regarded and treated as Razils. For the Momin Conference, the slogan "Islam is in danger" was nothing but a ploy to distract the Momins from organizing themselves. Momins (Ansaris) were advised to keep away from the upper caste-led capitalist and power-hungry Muslim League. In Muzaffarpur, at a meeting of the District Momin Conference, all Ansaris were urged to oppose the Muslim League.

Qayyum Ansari's speech at Patna on 21 April, 1940 shocked the Muslim League as Mr. Ansari declared the idea of Pakistan to be a defeat for Islam. Asim Behari said that the Momins had no religious, linguistic or cultural fears. Wherever they

lived, that was their Pakistan. A similar reaction came from A.A. Muhammad Noor. Addressing the All India Momin Youth Conference meeting at Patna, he said that the Pakistan scheme was un-Islamic and absolutely impractical.¹² Abdul Qayyum Ansari, the vice-president of the All India Momin Conference, fed up with the constant attacks on the meetings of the Momins, issued a warning: "We Momins, though very peace-loving, do not follow the Gandhian principle of non-violence. We also believe in the tradition of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. We will not stand with folded hands against the attacks and absurd antics of the Muslim League goons". In 1940, the workers preparing for the Azad Muslim Conference to be held in Delhi were also attacked. The Muslim League in a planned way formed a group to beat up those patriotic workers who were carrying out various tasks related to the conference. Many workers were seriously injured in these attacks.¹³

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The Azad Muslim Conference was held on 27 April, 1940 in Delhi. The main objective of the Conference was to maintain the unity and integrity of India, oppose the partition of India, and oppose the Two-Nation Theory put forth by the Muslim League. Many organizations participated in this conference, such as the All India Majlis-e-Ahrar, Khudai Khidmatgar, Bengal Krishak Praja Party, All India Muslim Parliamentary Board, Anjuman-

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e-Watan, Balochistan, Jamiat Ahle-Hadis, etc. The Momin Conference too participated along with these organizations. History is witness to the fact that a huge demonstration was held in Delhi in May 1940 to oppose the demand for Pakistan raised by the Muslim League, in which Momin Conference along with 40,000 weavers participated at India Gate in Delhi, but the Congress leaders ignored this warning. Later, in the historic Congress-League agreement talks, the representatives of the All India Momin Conference were not even invited. Ignoring the demands of the Momin Conference gave the Muslim League an opportunity to emerge on the political horizon as a communal organization, which proved fatal for the unity of the country.¹⁴

Nevertheless, what was said in this historic conference is still important. Allah Baksh Soomro, who was presiding over this conference, said, "Whatever our religious beliefs may be, we should live in an atmosphere of complete harmony in our country. Our mutual relations should be such that in a joint family, brothers and others with different faiths can live their faiths without any hindrance, and this difference should not create any hindrance in the use of their common property". Responding to the supporters of the Two-Nation Theory and the plan to create Pakistan, he

said: "9 crore Indian Muslims, who are the descendants of the earlier inhabitants of India, are sons of this soil just like the Dravidians and Aryans. They too have a right on this common land like other people. Citizens of different countries do not change their citizenship with the change of their faith. When Islam spread all over the world, people belonging to different countries and cultures adopted it as has been seen all over the world. No separate or special area, but the whole country of India is the motherland of Indian Muslims. No Hindu or Muslim has the right to separate them from even an inch of land of this motherland."¹⁵

This movement of Muslims opposing Partition never gained any importance. Although the World War (II) was going on, the British relied on the continued support of the Muslim League, princes, landlords, Hindu and Muslim communalists. Moreover, they had created a framework in which only the Congress and the Muslim League were recognized as the two major political institutions representing the opinion of the Indian people. The British regime was anxious to maintain peace and law and order in India, and then Viceroy Linlithgow and the Colonial Office were anxious to thwart the threat posed by the Congress.¹⁶

In the 1946 elections, the Muslim League performed

well in U.P. and Bihar, but despite winning 33 out of 40 seats in Bihar, the candidates of Jamiatul Momineen (Momin Conference) gave a tough fight to the League and managed to win 6 seats. The importance of the 1946 general election increased even more when it was considered a referendum on the question of the formation of Pakistan. It is important to mention here that in these elections, only about 13 percent of adult men and women had the right to vote. Only those who paid 64 rupees annual land revenue, one and a quarter rupees *chowkidaari* tax, and men who had passed matriculation and literate women had the right to vote. The value of one rupee was huge in those days. One pair of sari and dhoti was available for one rupee. The price of ten seers of cooked rice was only one rupee. Had everyone been given the right to vote in these elections, then perhaps India would not have been divided into two.¹⁷

Some Ashrafs were with the Congress and opposed Pakistan, but the Ashrafs as a class supported the Pakistan movement. The activism of the Momin Conference from 1936-1946 kept the Pasmada community, especially the weaver community, away from the separatist politics of the Muslim League. By giving importance to caste instead of religion, the issue of livelihood

of the Pasmanda community gained prominence. Social justice was emphasized in the Muslim society and a voice was raised against religious fundamentalism. Thus, the Pasmanda movement strengthened the fight against casteism within the Muslim society and made the Pasmanda communities aware of their rights. This movement played an important role against the religious fundamentalism of the Muslim League and in protecting the interests of the Pasmanda community.

Ashraf Muslims, who consider themselves of high lineage, have always looked

down upon Pasmanda Muslims. This discrimination was widely prevalent in social, economic and political spheres. At the time of the Partition of India, this division became even more evident. While the Ashraf class was chiefly supporting the Muslim League and the idea of Pakistan, the Pasmanda Muslims stood firmly in favour of the unity and integrity of India. Organizations like the Momin Conference strongly opposed the idea of Pakistan and fought for the unity of India. Even today, Pasmanda Muslims feel proud of their Indian nationality. They believe that the whole of India is their

motherland and they cannot be separated from even an inch of its land. This firm belief and patriotism of theirs is a legacy of the sacrifices made by their ancestors who sacrificed everything for the unity and integrity of India. Thus, the Pasmanda Muslims not only raised their voice against Partition but also sacrificed their lives for the unity of India. This contribution of theirs is an important chapter in Indian history, which reflects their patriotism and dedication to national unity.

The author runs the Pasmanda Democracy YouTube channel 

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Dr. Ohi Uddin Ahmed

Pasmanda Muslims of Barak Valley of Assam

The Word Pasmanda stands for those who left behind. The historical origin of Pasmanda Muslims in India was associated with the conversion of millions of indigenous people - *dalits*, untouchables, Buddhists and aborigines to Islam. They embraced Islam with the hope to get rid of social injustice and inequality but simultaneous growth of caste among newly emerged Muslim society pushed them to the margin of society. They remained deprived and discriminated and hence, left behind the mainstream society. The Pasmanda Muslims known in different names such as *Ajlaf*, *Arjal* or *Atrap* Muslims living in every parts of Indian sub-continent are still date differentiated from Ashraf or Upper caste Muslims.

Introduction

Barak Valley of southern Assam comprises currently three districts- Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj inhabited by a numbers of Pasmanda Muslim communities. The former two districts were plain region of erstwhile tribal Kachari kingdom. During the pre-British period, there was scanty human settlement due

to several reasons including natural calamities and devastating seasonal flood. But devastating flood had other positive outcome- creation of fertile land suitable for cultivation. Hence large numbers of *Bengalees* from neighbouring Bengal district especially Sylhet migrated in large numbers. During the colonial period, Cachar became a *Bengalee* colony with substantial numbers Muslim population. Karimganj was a part of Sylhet district of present Bangladesh and added to the Indian Territory of Assam as a consequent of Sylhet referendum during partition. The overwhelming majority of *Bengalee* settlers were cultivators, yet Muslims associated with other profession came to settle here includes Mahimal (Muslim Fisherman), Kiran (tenant Cultivator) or Nankar Kiran (bonded labour), Patikar (hereditary mat artisan), Hajjam (Muslim barber), Bajunia (Muslim Musician), Tanner (Khalia) and Khari (ex-bediya)

Sylhet region of Bangladesh experienced large-scale conversion to Islam among indigenous population after the Muslim occupation during the fourteenth century and coming of famous Sufi

Barak Valley in Assam has a significant number of Pasmanda Muslims. An account of their socio-political position

saint Sheikh Shah Jalal Yemani. Before this historical evidences only refer two Muslim families.

But the census of 1872 returned almost equal numbers of Hindu and Muslims population and

status in Hindu society. The vast Muslim populations were basically recruited from the native groups like Pod, Chandal, Koch, Rajbhansi etc little influenced by Aryan culture.² After the advent of Sufi Sheikh Shah Jalal Yemeni during the thirteenth century, large scale conversion took place among the indigenous people. Mahimal were the Muslim converts from indigenous fisherman castes and after conversion, they remained tied with their ancestral profession. As the new Muslim society emerged, came to be divided on the basis of two important food producing activity - fish and rice. Those associated with the cultivation came to be known as 'Baangal' and fisherman were called Mahimal or Maimal.

thereafter Muslim population increased in subsequent censuses.

Table – I

Muslim Population in Sylhet

(Hindu-Muslim Population in Censuses)

Year	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	+/-
Hindus	49.97	48.21	47.16	46.80	44.44	43.27	40.87	36.88	31.51	-18.46
Muslims	49.67	49.57	52.17	52.65	55.19	56.40	58.87	60.71	67.77	+18.10

Source – Censuses from 1872 to 1952

The Muslim society in Barak Valley originated as consequence of migration and partly as result of local conversion. Since the converts were indigenous, they were more accustomed to their pre-converted social traditions and cultural practice. Therefore, they came to be divided into different social groups and sub-groups based on their pre-converted status. They continued to profess their ancestral occupation looked down upon by their upper caste co-religionists. The existing social differentiation was further reinforced by the emergence of socially stratified agrarian system or feudalism. The social rank of different Muslim occupational groups downgraded further.

During the Muslim period, rigorous landed institution characterized by feudalism developed leading the origin of socially stratified agrarian system. Therefore, those associated with the landed institution became the

upper strata of the society or Ashraf while people associated with different occupational groups became Ajlaf. The Ajlaf communities remained away from the mainstream Muslim society came to be regarded as Pasmanda Muslims. The Pasmanda Muslim communities of Barak Valley are discussed below

Mahimal

Mahimal (locally known as Maimal) is the largest caste group among the Pasmandas of Barak Valley. The word Mahimal originated from two Persian word 'mahi' meaning fish and 'mallah' meaning boatman. Mahimal were those indigenous converts associated with the fishing and boating.¹ The erstwhile Sylhet-Cachar region was characterized by the presence of large numbers of water bodies including rivers, lakes and wetland abundant with fish. The fishing and cultivating castes like Kaiberta, Chandal, Patni, Namasudra, and others were dominant population holding extremely degraded

The Mahimal constituted 20% of Muslims in erstwhile Sylhet region.³ Muslim fishing castes were known by different names in different parts of India, James Wise mentions Muslims Fisherman caste such as Mahiferosh or Nikari in the context of Bengal. Even after conversion to Islam, they remained tied with their ancestral occupation. Initially, they mostly settled in the riverside and water logged areas out of necessity of their occupational reason. The bulk of the fishermen were also engaged in cultivation. They served as the *rayat* or tenant of the *mirasdars* (landlords) of Choudhury or Talukdars and gradually won land. But they remained isolated from the

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mainstream Muslim society due social discrimination by their *Ashraf* co-religionist. They were subject to various forms of exploitation and oppression by their *mirasdars*. As such they were even not permitted to walk in front of landlord's house wearing shoes and using umbrellas.

Fishing was the most stigmatized occupation hence it was considered as demeaning one. Thus no other Muslim was to engage in it.⁴ The profession of fisherman was regarded as degrading all over Bangladesh.⁵ Since the hunting and fishing were the most primitive occupation of Bengal, the Muslim invaders always regarded the indigenous people of Bengali as low.⁶ Those who did not embrace Islam and remained in the fold of Hinduism were present day Scheduled caste communities such as Kaiberta, Patini, Namasudras and so on.⁷ In course of time many fugitive Afghan soldiers have taken shelter in the forested Sylhet region in the wake of Mughal

invasion, many of whom adopted the occupation of fishing and merged with the Mahimal. The erstwhile low castes Hindus like Dom, Chandal, Mal, Patini upon conversion to Islam used to write 'Mahi' suffix with their names.⁸

They were many a times treated like untouchables and hence, there is tendency among them to identify as '*Sheikh*'. The Maimal were also included among the *Nankar Proja* or bonded cultivators. They were also tenants of landlords and fisherman by occupation.⁹ The fishing was the most stigmatized occupation in East Bengal and they were despised more than any other community. The naked form of caste discrimination among Muslims found its expression in upper caste Muslim's perception towards the Mahimal. Upper caste Muslims observe prayer and fasting but miserably failed in the appraisal of value and principle of Islam which apparent age of ignorance (*Jihiliyat*).¹⁰ They were the largest Muslim caste group in

Sylhet region

The Mahimals of Barak Valley were mainly migrants from neighbouring Sylhet district. Out of necessity of their occupational reason, they mostly settled near water bodies and remote localities. The Bulk of the fishermen were also cultivators. On the one hand, they were subject to natural calamities damaging their houses, crops, domestic animals while rivers erosion regularly demolished their villages, on the other hand were subject to severe discrimination by their upper caste co-religionist. Their socio-economic condition remained unchanged. The Mahimal faced severe social exclusion and marginalization for decades.

For the first time the Mahimal community raise their voice against the miserable socio-economic condition and during 1930. They demanded preferential treatment from government inspired by the Momin Conference of UP. Efforts were also made to create awakening among their people. The Muslims fisherman in co-ordination with their Hindu counterpart in Sylhet formed an organization named Assam-Bengal Matsyajibi Sannam (Assam-Bengal Fisherman Conference). This conference held its first session near Sylhet and was graced by Akshay Kumar Das, minister of undivided Assam.

The Mahimal of Sylhet also rejected the two-nation

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theory of Muslim League. They nominated candidates in Assam provincial election against Muslim League. Afaz Uddin, a Mahimal candidate contested election against League nominated candidate Dewan Abdul Bari Choudhury, but was defeated by a slight margin. But this defeat strengthened the commitment of Mahimal to fight for their socio-political right.

The partition of country followed by Indian independence was no doubt a severe blow to their social movement. The Mahimal of Sylhet voted en mass against Pakistan and Muslim League despite tremendous communal provocation. As a consequence of Sylhet referendum (1974), Sylhet district of erstwhile Assam was included with Pakistan (now Bangladesh) bearing three and half *thana* area now formed Karimganj district of Assam.

As a consequence of political separation, the Mahimal people living in Barak valley in Assam alienated from their counterparts in East Pakistan. Most of their intellectuals and social activists remained there. Mahimal of Barak Valley of Assam lost their guardians. Under the circumstances, a few educated persons from among the community came to form an organization during the 1960's. This organization relentlessly tried for social emancipation and their socio-political upliftment and finally, Mahimal community was accorded OBC category by

Government of Assam in 1966.

Patikar

An artisan Muslim occupational caste of erstwhile Sylhet-Cachar region was known as Patikar or locally known as Patiara. They were known by this name for hereditary occupation of manufacturing of a special quality of mat called *Pati* from the reed of a special kind of cane named *murta* naturally grown abundant in Sylhet-Cachar region. This special type of mat was widely known for its artistic quality that involved hereditary skill gathered from generations. *Pati* is finer and comfortable that gives cool impression during hot season and hence called *sheetal pati* also.¹¹ W W Hunter also praised the product for its finer, artistic and glazed texture, higher price and demand among elite people.¹² There were both Hindu and Muslim branches of Patikar. The Hindu Patikars were called Patiara Das.¹³

According to tradition popular among them, they were descendants of Qazi Umar an native of Badakash, one the disciples of Sheikh Shah Jalal Yemeni. After the Sylhet conquest of Muslims, his disciples spread towards various places and Qazi Umar settled in Kaliganj region of Karimganj where his holy shrine is still there. The Patikars were claimed to be the descendants of those people who came and settled there with Qazi Umar from Afghaistan. But there is no

historical evidence to support this view. There are about 20 thousand Patikars settled in Barak Valley, mainly Kaliganj area and rest in Sylhet region of Bangladesh.

Their claim of foreign origin cannot be accepted because manufacturing this mat is only found in Sylhet and Siliguri region of Bengal. The invention of foreign ancestry was common among converted Muslims throughout India. They were indigenous converts from similar Hindu artisan castes and embraced Islam with the hope to get rid of social injustice and oppression since the artisan caste such as Dom and Chandal were untouchables in Hindu society. The low social status assigned to the Patikars due to the fact that the artisan caste such a Dom and Chandal were despicable and considered as out caste during their pre-converted times. Their socio-economic conditions remained unchanged hence remained at the bottom of Muslim social hierarchy. They were looked down by their ashraf co-religionists mainly because of their association the the demeaning occupation.

The Patikars were poor and bulk of them abandoned their hereditary occupation but stiil remained segregated from the Mainstream Muslim society. Patikar is exclusively an endogamous community very little social inter-course with the rest of the Muslim society. They were included in

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Other Backward Class in the year 2001.

Kiran

The group of people associated with the profession of agriculture and cultivated the land of landlords or *mirasdars* were known as *Kiran*. The Persian word *Kiran* reportedly originated from the word *kisan* or cultivators. However, others believed that the word originated from Persian word “*kiraya’an*” meaning rented or tenant. The *Kiran* were not a particular caste or ethnic group rather an organized class of people in the erstwhile Sylhet-Cachar region involved in cultivation as tenant farmers. They were indigenous converts to Islam from different occupational castes treated as demeaning in Hindu society.

The Muslim invasion in Bengal and Sylhet in particular led to the far reaching changes in prevailing agrarian structure with emergence of socially stratified agrarian system. The *Rurko-Afghan* rulers initiated massive economic expansion in

the uncultivated forested land in search of state revenue led to the massive Islamization. The farmer living in periphery embraced Islam as a religion of plough.

During the Muslim period, elaborate landed institution developed in Sylhet region characterized emergence of powerful landlord’s i.e., *mirasdars* with exclusive right over land. Many of them were treated as king within their respective estate. The farmers and peasants were left at their tender mercy resulted in their prolong exploitation and oppression. The situation of the farmers called *Kiran* were worst off being treated as merely slave or serfs as compared to European Feudalism. The origin of *Kiran* community was the outcome influential landed elite class pushed the status of tenant-farmer to the extent of serf.

There were two categories of *Kiran*- general *Kiran* and *Nankar Kiran*. The general *Kiran* settled in the landlord’s land and paid rent. The latter were allotted

a plot for their house and land for their livelihood and lieu of this including their womenfolk have to render various services to their master. Their status was nothing more than slave or serf and had executed every order of landlord, often serve as *lathials* against rival landlord. They faced serious physical punishments including eviction in case of minor offences. Their women were used by the landlord as a means of entertainment. The *Kiran* community during thirties raises their arms against their exploitation and oppression by their landlords, but was brutally suppressed by their landlord with the colonial administration. They were further forced to accept slavery with more rigorous terms.

Originally, *nankar proja* includes various occupational groups. The present day *Kiran* were the descendents of *nankar proja* of Sylhet (including *Karimgaj*) The *Kirans* of Cachar and Hailakandi were mainly migrants from Sylhet. Even after decades, their socio-economic condition remained unchanged due to any drastic transformation in social sphere. Their despicable social status was due socially stratified agrarian system that awarded them a low social status. Majority of them are living below poverty line and poor profile in education deprived them from all kinds of government appointment. *Kiran* is an endogamous community with almost no social inter-

There were two categories of *Kiran*- general *Kiran* and *Nankar Kiran*. The general *Kiran* settled in the landlord’s land and paid rent. The latter were allotted a plot for their house and land for their livelihood and lieu of this including their womenfolk have to render various services to their master. Their status was nothing more than slave or serf and had executed every order of landlord, often serve as *lathials* against rival landlord. They faced serious physical punishments including eviction in case of minor offences. Their women were used by the landlord as a means of entertainment

course with the so-called Ashraf class. Government of Assam accorded them Other Backward class in the year 2003.

Hajjam or Napith

The groups of people traditionally associated with the occupation of barber were called Hajjam or Napith and occupy a very low status in Muslim society. They were assigned a very despicable social position correspondence to their Hindu counterpart. The Hajjam constitutes two branches- one group engaged in circumcision while others in hairdressing. The Muslim Hajjam of Barak Valley had almost abandoned their ancestral occupation because of barbering is considered as a stigmatized profession. The circumcision is executed by professional medical practitioner now days.

Hajjam caste of Barak Valley were descendent of indigenous converts from various Hindu castes associated the occupation of barbering. They are settled in different parts of Barak Valley as a marginal community. Due to absence of caste census, their population could not be estimated. They were endogamous group with very little social intercourse with upper strata of Muslim society. They are eco-socially backward with poor profile in education and hence deprived in all kinds of government appointment. Government of Assam included them in OBC in the year 2003.

The Muslim caste traditionally associated with the profession of musician was called Bajunia or Dhulia (drum player) in local Muslim society. Indeed prohibited in Islamic society, music was played in various Muslim celebration including weddings. The people belonging to the Bajunia caste settled in different parts of Barak valley and their exact population could not be ascertained due to absence of caste census. They were indigenous converts from the Hindu barber caste and remained tied with their ancestral profession even after conversion. They were assigned a very low status in Muslim society not only scriptural prohibition of Music in Islam rather due to their pre-converted status

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The Bajunias of Barak valley were mainly migrants from the

Bengal districts and settled here in search of livelihood in the past. The bulk of their population had abandoned their ancestral occupation and adopted agriculture and other pretty job. They are economically very poor, educationally backward and socially segregated due mainly due to their forefather's association with a demeaning occupation. They are exclusively endogamous group with very little social intercourse with rest of the Muslim society. They were included in the OBC category by the government of Assam in the year 2003.

Mirshikar

A very small group of people settled in the Langai area of Karimganj known as mirshikar traditionally associated with bird hunting. The marshy region of Sylhet-Cachar region reportedly first inhabited by food gatherer called *nishada*. The extensive marshy wet land were natural habitat for different species of

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birds. Indigenous people were habitual of hunting and eating birds, some birds were kept as pet.

The Mirshikar of Bengal were presumed to be converts from indigenous shikari castes and migrated to this region from Bengal district. The Hindu Mirshikar were Chiri-man, a small sub-division of bediya.¹⁴ James Wise mentions about a Muslim shikari caste.¹⁵ a semi hinduized caste constituted only 188 persons in Sylhet in 1982.¹⁶ Therefore, it is simply presumed that Muslim Mirshikars were converts from Hindu Mirshikar caste and remained tied with their ancestral occupation. The census of 1091 enumerated Mirshikar a separate caste constituted on 395 persons.

The Mirshikar of Barak Valley mainly settled in Langai area of Karimganj but following the Hindu-Muslim

communal tension during 1950, majority of them migrated to Sylhet. They have abandoned their traditional occupation partly due to extinction of bird and government prohibition on hunting. Traditionally hunting and fishing were considered the most despised occupation hence, they were assigned a very low status in Muslim society. Mirshikar is an extremely marginalized caste, economically poor and educationally backward. They were also endogamous caste with rare cases of inter-marriages. Even they were not accorded OBC status by the government.

Urdu Speaking Muslims

The Muslims who came to Assam from different places of north-Indian states during the British period as labour in tea plantation

and settled in Assam were called Urdu speaking Muslims or Hindustani Muslims. They were mostly settled in different tea estate areas of Barak Valley. In Brahmaputra Valley, they were called Julah and recently included as an indigenous community of Assam.

The Urdu speaking Muslims are a marginalized Muslim group and apart from the mainstream Muslim society, not only due their different language and cultural background but also poor socio-economic condition. They were severely exploited by the owners of tea estate and hence, great many of them abandoned their ancestral occupation and adopted other pretty job. They were endogamous group having very little social inter-course with other Muslims. Government of Assam had accorded them OBC status. ●

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Dr. Rahil Ahmed

Allah Bux Soomro: First Pasmanda Martyr Against Pakistan Proposal

Allah Bux Soomro had to pay the price with his life for opposing the division of India on religious lines. Here is a brief account of his principles and efforts to keep the country united

Partition of India is considered to be one of the most tragic events in human history. That is why commemoration of 14th August as 'Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas' (Partition Horrors Remembrance Day) has been started since last few years. It is an established fact that since the movement for Partition of India to create a separate Muslim nation was run by the extremist Muslims, the nationalist Indian Muslims did not choose the fundamentalist Islamic nation called 'Pakistan', they rather considered the democratic, secular and diverse nation India as their motherland. Pasmanda Muslims and their popular mass leaders, whose role was important in countering communal hatred and the politics of partition of the country, are almost missing from the pages of history. One such hero was Allah Bux Soomro. His popularity had posed a big threat for the divisive Muslim League. Soomro came to the fore in his role in the freedom struggle when he served as the Premier (chief minister) of Sindh for two terms (March 1938 to April 1940 and March 1941 to October 1942).

Soomro then renounced his title of 'Khan Bahadur' to support the Quit

India movement and fought with all his life not only for the independence of the country but also for keeping the country united. He was a committed patriot who was much hated by the Muslim League. Hailing from a local Jat Sindhi family, Soomro was known for his simple life and commitment to democratic values. The story of Allah Bux Soomro, a Sindhi Pasmanda nationalist Muslim politician, has found little place in the history of Indian freedom struggle. However, his influence on the provincial politics of Sindh in the late 1930s and early 1940s was extremely significant. He spent only six years in active politics and during this period, he became the first Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly and twice the chief minister of the province before being dismissed by the British Governor. Soomro's patriotism was so strong that to confront the foreign rule and the communal forces within as well, he fearlessly published a newspaper called 'The Azad'. The articles published in it ignited the flame of freedom struggle in the minds of the Indian people and kept the government circles tense and terrified.

Today, his commitment to a united India needs to be given adequate space.

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Soomro was a torchbearer of patriotism and a strong opponent of British domination. Due to this, he emerged as a major challenge to the divisive politics of all kinds of communal forces, especially the British-nurtured politics of the Muslim League. Soomro's newspaper 'The Azad' challenged the regressive and divisive forces that were eager to divide the country on the basis of religion in the 1930s and 1940s. Allah Bux Soomro was born in 1900 in Shikarpur town, which was once a trading hub of Sindh. Soomro received his early education in Thul taluka of Jacobabad, from where he completed his matriculation in 1918. His father Haji Mohammad Umar Soomro was a famous contractor and businessman of his time. Allah Bux Soomro joined his landlord father's business as a contractor. Then, at the age of 23, he entered politics and was elected to the Jacobabad municipality. Due to his education and astuteness as well as his family's political connections and links with the British system, Soomro rose rapidly in the political circles of the province and soon he became the chairman of the local district board.

In 1926, he defeated an influential landlord opponent and represented North Sindh in the Bombay Legislative Council (BLC), where he held the position for the next 10 years. He represented Sindh for nine consecutive years until Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency in 1937.¹

As Sindh's representative in the Bombay Legislative Council, he stood firm on the issues related to the Bombay Presidency and his own province Sindh. His efforts led to the construction of the Sukkur Barrage in the region which was an ambitious project that provided the people of Sindh a golden opportunity to pursue their economic goals and improve their lifestyle, built with modern and scientific agricultural systems. Later, after Sindh was separated from the Bombay Presidency, he was elected to the newly formed Sindh Legislative Assembly as a member of the Sindh United (or Ittehad) Party (SUP) and became the chief minister of Sindh province on two occasions between 1938 and 1941. Known for his honesty, patriotism, modesty and unshakable dedication to the welfare of his province, Soomro left a lasting impact on the political scene of Sindh. His influence is still reflected in the



Photo: Allah Bux Soomro

sway his descendants have in the local politics of the region even today.

Soomro contested the first provincial election under the banner of Sindh United Party and, after winning seats, he was even elected as the leader of parliamentary party. Though Sindh United Party emerged as the single largest party in the parliament, the Governor of Sindh, Sir Lancelot Graham, set an undemocratic precedent and invited Sir Ghulam Hussain to form the government whereas his party Muslim League had won only three seats out of the total 60 seats of the House. In such a situation, Allah Bux Soomro had to remain satisfied with the post of Leader of the Opposition. However, the undemocratic arrangement of the Governor failed when the Cabinet, formed through such manipulations and undemocratic methods, had to resign.

This in turn gave Allah Bux Soomro the opportunity to perform his duties as the chief minister of Sindh province during his first term from 23 March 1938 to 18 April 1940. As soon as Soomro took charge, his liberal, anti-communal government worked dedicatedly for the welfare of the people, rising above caste and creed. His positive role and progressive thinking took the province forward on the path of progress and created unity and harmony among different communities. He also took up many important reforms in the agricultural sector. In such a scenario, the Opposition

started conspiring to oust Soomro fearing his popularity, democratic behaviour and anti-communal working style.

After Soomro formed the government, a massive conference was organised by the Muslim League in Karachi in October 1938 where the League stalwarts displayed aggression against the Hindus, Congress and Allah Bux. They also passed a resolution which called for self-determination for the 'two nations' of Hindus and Muslims. Subsequently, the Sindh Leaguers, affiliated to the Muslim League, decided to take advantage of the communally explosive Masjid Manzilgah issue² to spread religious hatred. Masjid Manzilgah was a domed building in Sukkur city of Sindh which the local Muslims wanted to take control of, on the ground that it had once been used as a mosque. It may be noted that the location of the Manzilgah was right in front of a Hindu temple. Obviously, the Sukkur municipality wanted to avoid communal tension and therefore had rejected the claim. But they raised the issue of restoration of the Manzilgah and launched a movement to destabilise Soomro's government. As the talks progressed, the atmosphere in Sukkur became communal in nature. The Muslims took control of the disputed building by force.³ Ultimately, it resulted in a wave of communal unrest and riots that spread from Sukkur to the surrounding districts. This destabilised Soomro's government. In such a situation,

Soomro felt that the seeds of communalism were very harmful and dangerous for the great land of Sindh. Therefore, without any bargaining on this issue, he tried to face the communal elements fearlessly and considered it better to give up his post rather than surrendering before them and resigned.

Thus, the Sindh Leaguers achieved their primary goal of overthrowing the government of Allah Bux, but both the image of the League and the communal peace of Sindh had to pay a heavy price for it. Because the loss of the post did not push Soomro to the background in provincial or national politics but the communal face of the Muslim League came to the fore clearly and it strengthened Soomro's policies and principles. After the fall of the government, when elections were held again for the Sindh Assembly, Soomro won with a huge majority and again took over the reins of Sindh province as the chief minister from 7 March 1941 to 14 October 1942. As soon as he took charge again, the first thing he did was to present a Bill against the feudal system and get it passed in the Assembly. He also wrote a letter criticising the communal forces to those who were conspiring to grab political power by inciting communal sentiments among the people. This letter made its place as a valuable document in the literary history of the Indian freedom movement.

Available evidence shows that due to his popularity and influence in Sindh, he was invited

to join the Muslim League several times. Even Mohammad Ali Jinnah personally contacted him and requested him to join the All India Muslim League, but Soomro never deviated from his opinion. He vehemently rejected their request, saying that the establishment of political parties on the basis of religion was against the basic tenets of Islam. He stuck to his version of politics based on secularism and provincial autonomy. He was neither a Leaguer nor a Congressman. In view of his work in the province and his coordinating role in the burgeoning freedom movement, he was conferred the title of 'Khan Bahadur' as well as the 'Order of the British Empire' (OBE) by the British government.

In response to the communal politics of the Muslim League and the indifference of other so-called nationalist Ashraf Muslim leaders in the freedom movement, Soomro formed an all-India non-communal party named 'Azad Muslim Conference' in March 1940 and was elected its president. The Muslim League passed a resolution in Lahore on 23 March 1940 recommending an independent country for Muslims. Soon after that, Soomro successfully organised a huge conference of nationalist Muslims (mostly Pasmandas) in Delhi from 27 to 30 April 1940 in protest against the League proposal. He called it the 'Azad Muslim Conference'. This meet succeeded in bringing together on one platform several 'nationalist'

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Muslim political formations, all of which were opposed to the 'communal' view of the Muslim League, such as Ahrar, Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, Shia Political Conference, All India Momin Conference, Ittehad-e-Millat and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's 'Lal Kurti Army' etc.

From the platform of Azad Muslim Conference, Allah Bux Soomro opposed the efforts of Muslim League and Mohammad Ali Jinnah to create Pakistan and condemned the League, saying that it is the main obstacle in the path of India's progress.⁴ His visionary presidential speech on this occasion is a historical document and a beacon for the future. In his presidential address, Soomro exposed the wrong arguments of the Muslim League in the name of religion and heritage. In his speech, he spoke in detail about India's shared history and shared Indian heritage and emphasised on nationalism and the Indian nation created by bringing everyone together. He pointed out that there is no benefit to anyone in breaking the coordination between different communities.

According to known sources, about 75,000 people from all over the country participated in that conference to condemn the divisive politics of Muslim League. Most of the people who participated in the conference were associated with different political and social organisations. They mainly represented the backward and working class of the Muslim society. Their participation in

the conference made it clear that the Muslim League was the representative party of the Ashraf or privileged upper class of the Muslim society⁵ and the politics of the Muslim League did not have any support among the majority Ajalaf or backward Arzal class. Certainly, the Muslim League was not a representative organisation of the common Muslims. To protect their interests and implement their divisive policies, the British had identified the elite class (Ashraf) of the Muslims as their ally and encouraged them to form the Muslim League to carry forward their conspiratorial plan.

In such a situation, the conference of Soomro surprised the imperialist British, who even discussed it in the British Parliament. The conference also created doubts in the minds of the British officials about the Muslim League's capability, but despite not wanting to, they were not in a position to accept the reality. Clarifying the League's position, in reply to a question in the House of Commons in March 1942, when it was reported that "the representatives of the large and influential Muslim communities are rejecting Jinnah's Muslim League in favour of an independent and unified India," Secretary of State Amery confirmed that "I am aware that Mr. Jinnah's leadership is not accepted by all Muslims, but I have no reason to doubt that the Muslim League remains the principal organisation expressing Muslim political opinion."⁶

On 23 March 1940, just a

month after the Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, Allah Bux Soomro, who was one of the most popular Muslim leaders then, said regarding the creation of Pakistan that "This demand is based on many false notions which assume that only Hindus and Muslims live in India. It is necessary to state that all Muslims of India are proud of being part of an Indian nation." On 28 April 1940, a conference chaired by Soomro declared that "India with its geographical and political boundaries is an indivisible whole and as such is the common motherland of all citizens irrespective of caste or religion who are the joint owners of its resources."⁷

On 28 April 1940, 'The Sunday Statement' carried the following excerpt from Allah Bux Soomro's speech: "The majority of the 90 million Muslims are among the oldest peoples of India and are sons of the soil like the Dravidians and Aryans. They too have a claim on this land like the earliest settlers. One does not become a nation merely by adopting a different religion; in the process of global expansion, Islam has mingled with many nationalities and regional cultures." Referring to the long history of common heritage of Hindus and Muslims, Soomro aggressively spoke against the two-nation theory of the Muslim League. An excerpt from his speech was published in the Hindustan Times also. "It is a fatal mistake for Hindus, Muslims or any other people to claim the

whole of India or any part of it is meant for them only. As a complete, integrated and united unit, this country belongs to all the people living here and Indian Muslims have as much right to its heritage as other Indians,” it read.

Under these circumstances, the country was thrown into the World War without taking the Indian people into confidence and the failure of the Cripps Mission in 1942 completely changed the political scenario of the subcontinent. In such an adverse situation, Mahatma Gandhi had to start the ‘Quit India’ movement and also to give the call of ‘Do or Die’. With the announcement of the movement, the repression of the British rule also started and Indians had to undergo many tortures. The cruel actions of the British forced Allah Bux Soomro to strongly oppose the British policies.

On 19 September 1942, he wrote a letter to British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. Soomro addressed the letter to the British empire and renounced his titles 'Order of the British Empire' and 'Khan Bahadur' in protest against the repression. In the letter, Soomro wrote, "They (the titles) could not support the continued subjugation of India by Britain for its imperialist purposes. I am fully convinced that India has every right to remain independent and the people of India should get such conditions in which they can live in peace and harmony. But the declaration and actions of the British government have

made it clear that instead of helping the various Indian parties and communities to settle their differences and handing over power to the people of the country and allowing them to live happily in freedom and shape the destiny of their own country according to their birth right, the policy of the British government has been to continue its imperialist control over India and to subjugate it, to exploit political and communal differences for propaganda and to suppress the national forces for the fulfilment of its imperialist aims and purposes... I feel that in the given circumstances, I cannot continue to retain the honour I have received from the British government, which I regard as the very symbol of British imperialism.”⁸

With both Gandhi and Nehru in jail custody, Soomro thus specifically rejected British authority through this harsh letter, which led to Subhas Chandra Bose praising his work on the radio. The reaction of the British administration in response to this letter of Soomro was so fierce that on 10 October 1942, the Governor of Sindh, Sir Hugh Dow, declared that he had no confidence in Soomro. Later, Allah Bux Soomro was dismissed from his post even after winning the confidence vote in the Assembly. Soomro declared this as an undemocratic and unconstitutional act. Nevertheless, even after his dismissal, he continued to play his political role against imperialism, separatism and religious division,

due to which vested interests and selfish forces considered his very existence as a threat to their future plans. On 14 May 1943, Soomro was murdered in broad daylight while travelling in a horse carriage in his hometown Shikarpur.⁹

Who was behind his murder remains a mystery till date. Most probably, the Muslim League, which believed in two-nation theory, was behind it. Although some people were tried and punished, the truth could not be revealed. Many newspapers saw his murder as a national disaster. The expressions given by contemporary newspapers and reputed nationalist leaders after his untimely death easily give an idea of his personality and the kind of loss his demise caused to the country. Hindustan Times wrote about him, “He was a quintessential Sindhi, a true Muslim and one of the most glorious sons of India. He loved the land like the peasants and always wore khadi. He had started wearing khadi since the age of 20 because he loved the poor. Hindus and Muslims alike considered him their leader. Even in the times of division and bitterness, he believed in a free and united Hindustan and dreamt of creation of a United States of Asia in the years to come.”¹⁰

Amrit Bazar Patrika wrote that Allah Bux had an “impressive personality with a high sense of responsibility and an unprecedented courage of his conviction. He was respected and admired by all, even those who

held views different from him.” Further commenting on his death, the paper wrote: “A life of immense promise has come to an abrupt end and today, India has become a little poorer at the death of this 42-year-old young man, whose patriotism and devotion to duty will be greatly remembered after passing of today’s tragic situation.”¹¹

According to Sindhi nationalist Indian politician and journalist K.R. Malkani, “The humble Allah Bux sat next to the driver. He never hoisted the official flag on the bonnet of the car. He never accepted invitations to receptions or parties. In the train, he used the upper berth and allowed others to use the more comfortable lower berth. Once, when flood waters threatened Shikarpur, he broke the

canal which saved the town but his own lands submerged. But above all, he was non-communal and a nationalist.”¹¹ Allha Bux Soomro made courageous sacrifices for a united India. As a leader, he organised a fierce conference in Delhi in favour of a united India within three months of the Muslim League resolution to divide India. There has been no leader after him with such courage and activism. Had this vivacious leader been alive at the time of those unfortunate events of 1946-47, history might have changed. Had the Congress leaders, who were in constant negotiation and compromise with the Muslim League, supported Soomro's 'Azad Muslim Conference' or 'Momin Conference' and not considered

Jinnah the sole leader of the Muslims, perhaps history would have been something else. Not only did the Congress not take Soomro or the Pasmanda organisations along during his lifetime, but even after Independence, they always denied his leadership. This is unfortunate.

Today, due to the awakening among the Pasmanda Muslims, the fact is being highlighted that the common Muslim of India was not with the Muslim League. Unfortunately, in Indian politics, only the Ashrafs were considered Muslims, as a result of which the poisonous vine of communalism and separatism kept on growing. Only the memory of great men like Soomro will possibly reduce this toxicity to some extent. ●

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Dr. Kahkashan

Hindi Literature and Pasmanda: A Critical Analysis

The Muslim community has certainly been given space in Hindi literature, but it has been limited to its upper caste segment only. The backward class has lagged behind in this matter too. Here is a critical analysis of the issue

Hindi literature has been a powerful medium to express various aspects of Indian society. It highlights the pain, struggle and consciousness of the marginalised communities of the society. There has been a wide discussion on the Dalit and tribal literature, but the Pasmanda community, which has been neglected socially, economically and politically, has not been able to find space in Hindi literature as prominently. The limited presence of the Pasmanda community in Hindi literature indicates that either there has been a lack of literary consciousness about this class or the Pasmanda community has been ignored due to the dominance of upper caste Muslims in literary discourse. Whatever may be the reason, the Pasmanda community is still found lying in the back row of our society. This community is also deprived of social rights.

The Concept of Pasmanda & Its Neglect

The word 'Pasmanda' comes from the Persian language, which

means 'left behind'. In the Indian context, it is used for those sections of the Muslim community which are socially, economically and educationally backward. Ali Anwar Ansari's book 'Masawat Ki Jung' (2001) makes it clear that caste discrimination is also prevalent in the Indian Muslim community and Muslims are mainly divided into two classes - 'Ashraf' (upper caste Muslims) and 'Pasmanda' (backward and Dalit Muslims).

According to the Sachar Committee Report (2006), about 85% of the total Muslim population of India belongs to the Pasmanda castes. However, the presence of this community in Hindi literature has been very limited. Whatever writing has been done about Muslim life in Hindi literature, most of it has portrayed the upper caste Muslim community. Novels written by famous authors like Premchand, Rahi Masoom Raza, Ismat Chughtai and Qurratul Ain Hyder, Abdul Bismillah do contain some pictures of Muslim life, but there is very little discussion on the internal caste inequality within the Muslim

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community and the plight of the Pasmanda Muslims.

Portrayal of Pasmanda in Hindi Literature

The suffering of the exploited classes of Indian society has got a special place in Premchand's literature, but there is very limited mention of the Muslim society, especially the Pasmanda community, in his works. Stories like 'Godaan' and 'Kafan' illustrate the life of the Dalit and poor classes of rural India, but the social reality of Muslims, especially the Pasmanda community, has not found any place in it. Some Muslim characters are definitely found in 'Gaban' and 'Rangbhoomi', but they are mainly from business or general middle class background. This makes it clear that Premchand's class sensitivity is extended to Hindu

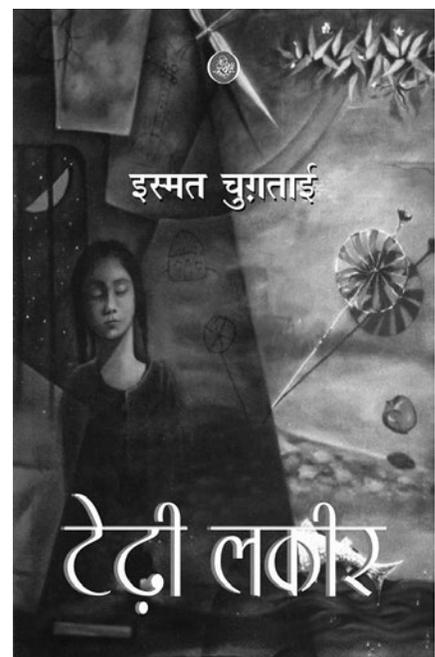
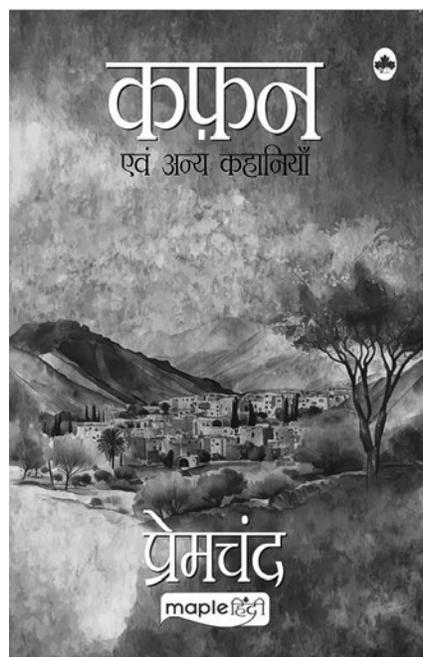
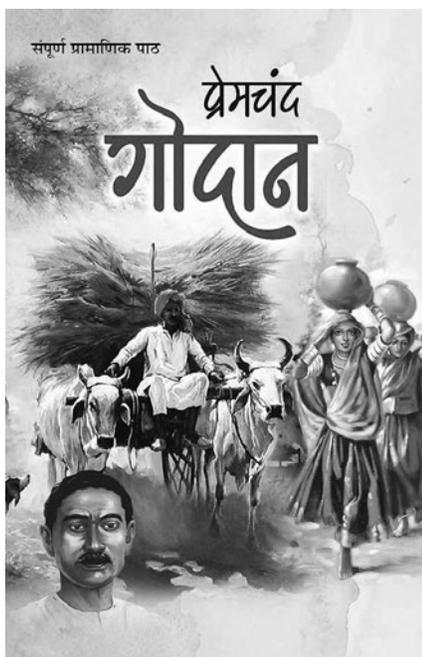
Dalits and poor farmers, but he did not give any special place in his novels to the majority of the deprived sections of the Muslim society, or it can be said that the Pasmanda community was not socially visible even at that time.

Ismat Chughtai challenged the patriarchal nature of Muslim society in her novels and stories. In her works like 'Tedhi Lakeer' and 'Lihaaf', she kept the status of Muslim women at the centre, but even here the presence of the Pasmanda community was limited. It seems that Chughtai's focus was mainly on the rights of Ashraf Muslim women and their suppressed aspirations, while the plight of Pasmanda women is reflected indirectly in her literature. It would not be an exaggeration to say that where the Pasmanda society was almost non-existent or

invisible, one cannot even think of the status of women there.

If any novel in Hindi literature has kept the life of the Pasmanda community at the centre, then it is Abdul Bismillah's 'Jhini-Jhini Beeni Chadariya'. This novel highlights the socio-economic condition of the weaver community of Varanasi and their life full of struggle. In this novel, the problems of the Pasmanda community have been intensely depicted through the weaver community (Ansari). This is the first novel after Independence that has been written keeping the Pasmanda community at the centre.

Rahi Masoom Raza's 'Topi Shukla' highlights the caste discrimination and communal division in the Indian Muslim society, but it mainly focuses on the upper caste Muslims



and Hindu-Muslim relations. Similarly, Arshad Ali's 'Pasa' and other writings of Shamsul Islam closely depict the marginalised situation of the Pasmanda community within the Muslim society. However, the number of such writers is limited and their works have not got the expected place in the mainstream Hindi literature.

Criticism and Future Prospects

The absence of the Pasmanda community in Hindi literature shows that the mainstream of Hindi literature has considered the Muslim society to be homogeneous and has ignored the caste inequality present in it. This trend is not limited to literature alone, but it is also indicative of a widespread intellectual insensitivity, where the Muslim society has been seen only on the basis of religious identity instead of Dalit vs upper caste. This has forced the Pasmanda community to live like an extinct species for so many years. And due to these reasons, their condition has become unbearable today.

The absence of the Pasmanda community in Hindi literature shows that the mainstream of Hindi literature has considered the Muslim society to be homogeneous and has ignored the caste inequality present in it. This trend is not limited to literature alone, but it is also indicative of a widespread intellectual insensitivity, where the Muslim society has been seen only on the basis of religious identity instead of Dalit vs upper caste. This has forced the Pasmanda community to live like an extinct species for so many years. And due to these reasons, their condition has become unbearable today

It is ironic only that the way Dalit and tribal discourse has got a prominent place in Hindi literature, the Pasmanda discourse has not yet got the literary recognition in the same way. Some writers like Abdul Bismillah have written on this subject, but that is not enough. The life, struggle, consciousness and movement of the Pasmanda community need to be presented more widely in Hindi literature, so that this discussion can become a part of the mainstream. For this to happen, not only the writers of the Pasmanda community will have to come forward, but the mainstream writers will also have to think seriously on this topic.

Conclusion

The portrayal of the Pasmanda community in Hindi literature is still limited and incomplete. This literary neglect is proof of the fact that the marginalised communities in Indian society get a place only in those discourses which have already been established in the literary sphere. Just as the Dalit literature has made a place for itself, the Pasmanda literature will also have to struggle in the same way to make its place. To make Hindi literature inclusive and more sensitive, it is necessary that the life and struggle of the Pasmanda community get more space in it and this discourse becomes an integral part of the literary mainstream. ●

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Dr. Shahid Jamal Ansari

The Ashraf Nature of Maulana Azad

Maulana Azad has been accorded the honour of being a great freedom fighter in India's freedom struggle. He participated in this struggle shoulder to shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi. While rebelling against the British Empire during this struggle, he had to endure the oppression of its regime and was forced to spend precious time of his life behind prison bars.

Maulana Azad's tenure as the first Minister of Education in independent India marked a significant phase in the country's educational history. He spearheaded numerous initiatives aimed at democratizing education and expanding access to quality learning opportunities. One of Azad's most notable contributions was the establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1953, which aimed to regulate and promote higher education across the country.¹

In independent India, Maulana Azad was given the responsibility of an important department like education and the people of the whole of India showed their faith in him. This was because Maulana Azad was a freedom fighter as well as a prominent leader and had also been the president of the country's largest

political party Congress during the British rule. Being in the Congress and being close to Mahatma Gandhi, he was also considered secular. Whether he was secular or not is a matter of debate. To further strengthen his secular image, he also opposed Muslim reservation in the Constituent Assembly. But in reality, Maulana Azad was an opportunist. In the initial days of the freedom struggle, he lent full support to the Khilafat Movement.

Maulana Azad convinced Mahatma Gandhi too for the Khilafat Movement. Gandhi agreed to this movement and also participated in it and agreed to fight against the British to save the Ottoman Caliphate. Due to Gandhi's participation in the Khilafat Movement, Muslims too very quickly accepted Gandhiji as their leader. Thus, Gandhi became a great leader and mahatma of the Muslims and Muslim leaders.²

First of all, it is wrong to call Maulana Azad an advocate of democracy, because he initially lent his full support to the Khilafat Movement and accorded it so much importance that Gandhi himself became a supporter of that movement. The Khilafat Movement

Dynasty and casteism are neither new in Islam nor alien to its character. Maulana Azad's thinking and actions are living examples of this

was a kind of uprising to fight the British. Had this movement been successful, there would have been no establishment of democracy. Instead, the deceased Mughal Empire or Khilafat rule would have come back, in which 80 percent of the population would have been subject to a particular community.

When the Khilafat movement had no existence in the country, Maulana Azad who jumped into the freedom struggle by stirring up the Khilafat agitation here, because no struggle could materialize without the participation of the majority community. That is why after the Khilafat movement, the Maulana started eulogizing democracy and voicing demands for it. Again, it was in this scheme of things that he joined the Quit India movement.

Maulana Azad carved out

a credibility for the Sharia law making the Khilafat Movement as its basis. The Maulana never dreamt of seeing an independent India. He wanted to see this country go back into the hands of foreign Muslims after the British left. If the Khilafat Movement had succeeded, the Muslim Caliph would have been the ruler of India; otherwise, he would have appointed a king or emperor under him who would have taken charge of ruling India. In support of this argument, Faiyaz Ahmad Faizi writes in this context in his article “Pasmanda Vimarsh aur Maulana Azad”:

“Maulana Azad, responding to this in favour of the Khilafat movement, wrote a book of more than two hundred and twenty-five pages called *Masla-e-Khilafat*. In that book, the Maulana delved into the said Hadith to verify the Islamic legal validity

of the Turkish Caliphate, and tried to prove with the help of various Hadiths and quotes from books written by Islamic ulema (scholars) that apart from the Quraish tribe, people of other castes can also lead the Muslims if they are capable.”³

Maulana Azad argues for a Caliph who is not of Sayyid or Arabic descent, narrating a Hadith:

“(Even) If a lowly looking Habshi (black African) slave is made your Amir (leader), you must listen to him and obey him.”⁴

In the kind of research work that Maulana Azad did, on the basis of the fundamental objectives of Islam towards the Khilafat movement and through its references in his book *Masla-e-Khilafat*, he described the above Hadith and demolished the basis of race and caste for the Khilafat. Azad writes in his book:

“Owing to the rest of the Caliphate, a large group of Islamic scholars of Abbasid Egypt were of the opinion that according to the Hadith ‘Inna Hazal Amr Fil-Quraish’ the Caliph should (always) be a Quraish (i.e., from the Quraish clan). That is, if Muslims appoint a Caliph, while many other qualities should be present in him, he must also be from the family of the Quraish.”⁵

Maulana Azad, however, has tried to argue in his book *Masla-e-Khilafat* that it is not necessary for the Caliph to be from Ahl-e-Bait or Arab for a Muslim empire. Rather, an individual from Azam can also enhance



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the dignity of the position of the Caliph. He supported the Khilafat Movement because he wanted to see himself as the Caliph of a Muslim empire through this. For this, he won over even Gandhi to his side. The Mughal dynasty came to an end with the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar. Hence, there was no claimant left from the Mughal dynasty who could claim the Caliphate or sultanate. Now through the Khilafat Movement, the intention was to bring Hindustan under a Muslim yoke again or to run the Caliphate from India. In other words, Maulana Azad did not want any freedom struggle for independence, but a 'Ghazwa-Hind'.

"The Maulana had also formed a *jamaat* (organization) 'Hezbollah'. His intention was to bring Muslims into politics through religion. However, Jamaat-e-Hezbollah achieved only initial milestones."⁶

In the situation after the First World War, India came under the influence of the Khilafat Movement and supported Britain, and exacted a promise from the British administration that after Germany's defeat, Britain would not take any action against the Turkish Khilafat and would in fact, protect the Muslim Khilafat. But this did not happen. In response to this, in February 1920, as the President of the Bengal State Khilafat Unit Conference, Maulana Azad, while debating on the religious structure of the Khilafat Movement, said:

"The Sharia law of Islam

lays down that there should be a Caliph and Imam of the Muslims in every era."

For centuries, the position of Islamic Caliphate has been held by the Ottoman Sultans and at present, according to the Shariah (theology), is both the Caliph and Imam of all Muslims of the world. Whoever disobeyed them shed the encumbrance of Islam from his neck and chose the darkness of infidelity instead of Islam. Whoever fought against them or sided with their enemies in reality fought against God and His prophet. The Islamic Shariah (theology) orders that Jazirat-ul-Arab (the region of Arabia, or the Arabian Peninsula) should be kept safe from non-Muslim influence. A part of Iraq and Baghdad are also included in it. If any non-Muslim regime wants to occupy it or detach it from the rule of the Caliph of Islam and bring it under its control, it will not be just a matter of an Islamic country leaving the fold, but more than that, a very peculiar situation will arise, i.e., the influence of *kufir* (infidelity) will spread on the central land of Islam. In this situation, the first duty of all Muslims will be to stand up to remove that occupation from the world.⁷

Muslims accepted Gandhi as their leader and honoured him with the title of 'Bapu'. Not only did the Muslim masses accept him, even the religious folk like Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar and Maulana Shaukat Ali considered Gandhi to be the

greatest personality after Prophet Mohammad and used to say that for us, after the Rasool (Prophet Mohammad), it is Gandhiji's commands that hold good.⁸

Upon his release from jail, Maulana Azad first went to Gandhi's ashram and following the latter, he began wearing an attire that stretched only till the knees and elbows, just as Gandhi used to wear. Azad was with Gandhi in word and deed.⁹

Maulana Azad was looked upon with respect and honour in the Muslim community. He was also given the title of a religious leader in the community, although in reality this was not the case. Maulana Azad was not a certified religious leader. He received such respect and honour in the Muslim community that despite not being a proper religious figure, he became ensconced as a great religious leader in the community. Now no one can say with certainty whether this respect was due to his being in the Congress or his proximity to Mahatma Gandhi, or was there some other reason.

Maulana Azad belonged to a high Muslim lineage and in his mind, also subscribed to the same mode of thinking in which was no place for Pasmanda Muslims. Despite being a prominent leader and enjoying religious recognition in the Muslim society, he did not do anything for that neglected segment of the Muslim community. He did not even raise his voice against the exploitation and injustice of this community, whereas at that time

the Maulana's political stock was at its peak. Had he wanted, he could have presented a demand for reservation and special grants for the Pasmanda Muslim community in the Constituent Assembly. It was not that Azad was unaware of the pitiable condition of this community because at the same time his political career was at its zenith, the Pasmanda movement too was at its peak. Prominent Pasmanda leaders like Abdul-Qayyum Ansari and Asim Bihari had raised their voices for the Pasmanda Muslim community.¹⁰

Azad is seen to be supporting equality and opposing dynastic politics when it comes to staking a claim to the Caliphate. For that he takes the help of Hadith and other logical arguments and references. At the same time, he neither utters a word against the injustice and dynastic politics prevalent in the Indian Muslim society, nor writes any book in favour of this community, in the way he wrote *Masla-e-Khilafat* in support of the Caliphate. On the contrary, he defends Ashrafism and when the time comes, sees the entire Muslim society in the form of one single community. He deliberately turns a blind eye to the caste system and social discrimination prevalent in the Muslim society.

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The Momin Conference was established in the middle of the freedom struggle and the Muslim Pasmanda community began uniting to raise their voice for their rights. This indigenous community had strongly faced Muslim fundamentalism. The Muslim League had to face defeat even in Muslim-dominated areas. The Muslim indigenous community had completely rejected Hindu-Muslim politics and opposed the Muslim League in the interest of the country. In the Constituent Assembly, all Muslim leaders opposed reservation for Muslims on the sole grounds that if they demanded reservation for the community, it would be a demand for reservation on the basis of religion and ultimately, this reservation would have to be given to the Pasmanda Muslim community

Muslim fundamentalism. The Muslim League had to face defeat even in Muslim-dominated areas. The Muslim indigenous community had completely rejected Hindu-Muslim politics and opposed the Muslim League in the interest of the country. In the Constituent Assembly, all Muslim leaders opposed reservation for Muslims on the sole grounds that if they demanded reservation for the community, it would be a demand for reservation on the basis of religion and ultimately, this reservation would have to be given to the Pasmanda Muslim community. Could Ashraf Muslim leaders like Azad or Tajammul Hussain digest the fact that a community that is at par with the oppressed class and the Dalit community and whose standard of living is also similar to the latter, should become partners with them in government and its organs?

This Muslim community is actually a native society. It is

not related to any other country but is originally Indian society, who for some reason has had to leave Sanatan Dharma and accept Islam. Most of its members are working class people of India and are socially speaking, uneducated, suppressed and backward and even after accepting Islam, there has been no improvement in their social status. Rather, the Muslim Ashraf community has kept this segment in the Muslim category only for making up the numbers and counting heads, while Muslim scholars like Sir Syed used to address them with derogatory terms like *mlechchha*, *kamin*, *badjat*, etc.

At the time of independence, the Muslim League functioned in the same way as Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Ittehadul Muslimeen is doing today. The Muslim League too chose Muslim-dominated areas for elections and achieved its agenda by dividing the society. The local society rejected the Muslim

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League. The Mumin Conference too opposed the League.

In fact, in the speech given by Maulana Azad in the grounds of the Jama Masjid, he did not talk about saving the country but called for saving Muslim heritage, or more accurately, its patrimony. On the basis of the above fact, we can say that the motive of Maulana Azad was 'Ghazwa-e-Hind'. In his address to such a large crowd, he asked Muslims to save the mosques, madrasas, dargahs, etc., that were left in India following Partition. He totally ignored the Pasmanda community in this speech too.

The Maulana did not have any sympathy for the Pasmanda community. If he had had any, then when reservation for Dalit and tribal community was being conceived of in the Constituent Assembly, he could have demanded reservation for Dalit Muslims in the same Assembly on the basis of issues like injustice, exploitation, untouchability,

etc., prevalent in the Muslim community. Pasmanda thinker Faiyaz Ahmed Faizi claims in his article that Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar had asked Maulana Azad to demand reservation for Dalit and backward Muslims in the Constituent Assembly, which was presented by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. But when it came to the proposal that Dalit and backward Muslims too need reservation, Maulana Azad along with the other four Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly opposed any government aid or grant for them and argued that there is no caste system among Muslims. While in the above-mentioned excerpt, which is quoted from Azad's own book *Masla-e-Khilafat*, in the context of a Hadith, he writes, "It is obligatory for the Caliph to be a Qurashi", this implies that evils like dynasty or casteism, etc., very much exist in the Muslim society. It is a different matter that the Maulana has presented this

Hadith in his argument against it, in which it is not obligatory for the first Caliph to be from any particular dynasty. In the Constituent Assembly, Maulana Azad, Tajammul Hussain, Maulana Shaukat and others opposed that preamble. Faiyaz Ahmad Faizi writes in his article "Pasmanda Vimarsh aur Maulana Azad" in *Aawaaz* the Voice:

"During the discussions in the Constituent Draft Assembly, for quick and logical solution of the problems of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities, Tribals and Excluded Areas, Dr. Ambedkar proposed the formation of a sub-committee under the leadership of Sardar Patel, which was accepted.

In this context, Ambedkar says in his speech that when the Constitution was being made, I met Maulana Azad, who is nothing but a puppet in the hands of the Congress. Just a day before the meeting scheduled to discuss the political future of the minorities, I gave him a brief description of all the issues and possibilities of the matters related to the Muslims.

But this Maulana did not attend the meeting the next day. As a result, there was no one other than me who could strongly protect the rights of the Muslims. Since I was alone in supporting the reservation of constituencies for Muslims. Pandit Nehru opposed my proposal on behalf of the Congress and as a result, O my Muslim brothers, you people were deprived of the powerful

The Momin Conference was established in the middle of the freedom struggle and the Muslim Pasmanda community began uniting to raise their voice for their rights. This indigenous community had strongly faced Muslim fundamentalism. The Muslim League had to face defeat even in Muslim-dominated areas. The Muslim indigenous community had completely rejected Hindu-Muslim politics and opposed the Muslim League in the interest of the country. In the Constituent Assembly, all Muslim leaders opposed reservation for Muslims on the sole grounds that if they demanded reservation for the community, it would be a demand for reservation on the basis of religion and ultimately, this reservation would have to be given to the Pasmanda Muslim community

political right in the form of reservation of constituencies.”

The level of discrimination and discrimination among Indian Muslims is so horrific that it cannot even be imagined. The renowned Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir writes the names of all the members of his family in his book *Zikr-e-Mir* and is also proud of them, but does not mention his mother's name anywhere. The reason for this was that his mother belonged to a family of the Pasmanda society. He does not provide information about his mother's family because it has a (supposed) status in the society, whereas his mother belonged to a so-called low caste family. Mir Taqi Mir has claimed to be a Syed, but according to the research of Qazi Abdul Wadud, Mir Taqi Mir was a Sheikh. Syed Shah Waliur Rahman writes in his article “Mir ki Daastan”:

“... Mir has claimed to be a Sayyadat (a Sayyid), but a famous researcher of Hindustan, Qazi Abdul Wadud ---- has proved

that Mir was a Sheikh. He also believes that Mir's mother was a non-Kufu (socially not equal in lineage, wealth, class, etc.) woman and this was the reason why Khan Arzoo and his real nephew Hafiz Mohammad Hasan hated her. Mir did not even mention (describe) his mother in this book as to which family she belonged to. Qazi thinks that the reason for his silence was only that she was Majhool-un-Nasl (i.e., one whose lineage and origin are in doubt).”¹¹

If Maulana and Tajammul Hussain claim that there was no caste or distinction of high and low among Muslims, the above statement made by Syed Waliur Rahman is comprehensive evidence that the caste system has been prevalent in Muslim society right from the beginning. Similarly, Jaun Elia has presented advocacy for Pasmanda Muslims in his book *Shayad*, and has written that the Ashraf Muslim community had demanded Pakistan because they

wanted to retain land ownership, government assistance and high positions and were able to do so.

“The thing is that the Muslim League, especially the students of Aligarh (who needed jobs after education), landlords, jagirdars, small traders, small investors—that society was the society of “Tabaqa-e-Ashraf” i.e., Sheikhs, Sayyids, Mughals and Pathans. These Ashraf used to dub their deprived Pasmanda and Muslim brothers of various professions as ‘Ajlaf’ with great contempt.”

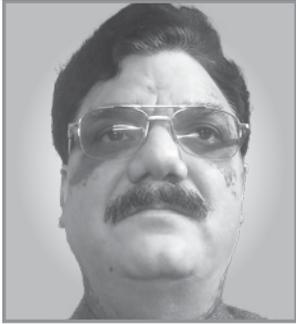
These ‘Ajlaf’, oppressed for centuries, were known as the subjects of the Ashraf.

“Since the Ashrafia class had been privileged and enjoyed special rights for centuries, it was more educated and cultured.”¹²

From the above article, it becomes clear that Maulana Azad and his other colleagues who were given a place in the Constituent Assembly were totally casteist and were representing the Ashraf, i.e., the forward and privileged segment of Indian Muslims. ●

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Pasmanda Muslims and Sardar Patel

Sardar Patel, who unified the princely states, had a completely different opinion about the Pasmanda Muslims. An objective study

Sardar Patel is counted along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi among the tallest leaders of the country's independence movement, but each of them was of a different mould. Their background, and views on many issues too were different. Despite this, the desire to free India from the bondage of the British kept the three together. Mahatma Gandhi was accepted as their leader by the other two without any hesitation. Despite some ideological differences, both of them bowed to the ideas of the Mahatma in the perspective of broader interests. Mahatma Gandhi made Hindu-Muslim unity an important issue to deliver Swaraj for crores of people of the country and kept underlining its importance throughout the freedom movement. But on the question of Hindu-Muslim relations, Patel, unlike Gandhi and Nehru, believed that as long as British rule remained, this unity was not possible. From the very beginning, Patel pitted all his strength in fighting the British Raj; communal unity came later for him. He also kept trying continuously for communal harmony, and was not against it. No one accused him of

communal bias during the freedom struggle. He always treated Hindus and Muslims equally. Yes, Sardar felt more comfortable among Hindus. In 1937, when the leadership of Muslim League passed into Jinnah's hands, Patel's views too underwent a change. He began doubting the loyalty of Muslims. The partition of the country and its consequences further strengthened his convictions on this score. His colleagues, Maulana Azad and Jai Prakash Narayan, openly began dubbing him communal.

A deep study of Patel's personality and work shows that unity can be forged even in diversity. When one talks about the early years of his public life, it comes to mind that even though Sardar was the most widely accepted leader of Gujarat, he did not do anything against the Muslims. When Mahatma Gandhi decided to cooperate with the Ali brothers on the question of Khilafat, Sardar Patel was the first person to instinctively follow Mahatma Gandhi. Later, he became the leader of this movement. Despite the opposition of most Congress leaders, Patel did not have the slightest doubt about the relevance of this movement. His

vision was clear and positive. He organized the Gujarat Political Conference in Ahmedabad. In this conference chaired by retired High Court judge Abbas Tayyab ji, Patel got a resolution passed unanimously in support of the movement. He explained in his speech why Hindus should support Khilafat. He toured the entire Gujarat to garner public support. Other Congress leaders wavered on the question of Muslims, but Patel stood like a rock with Gandhi. Patel united the country by integrating 565 princely states and also promoted Hindu-Muslim unity. He had come to know that there are clear differences among the Muslims living in India. He found the native Indian Muslims and the self-proclaimed upper class foreign Ashraf Muslims different from each other on the basis of character, behaviour and thought process. For the converted native Pasmanda Muslims, he used words like ordinary Muslim, loyal Muslim, village Muslim, agricultural Muslim etc. Sardar

Patel was clearly aware of the social, economic and religious differences between Ashraf and Pasmanda Muslims. Addressing the indigenous Muslims, he had said that as far as ordinary Muslims are concerned, their roots, holy places and their centres are in this country. The Sardar understood why ordinary Muslims are being deliberately deceived on the Two-Nation Theory and the creation of Pakistan. At the time of Partition, when the fires of communal riots broke out all over the country, Sardar Patel appeared as the protector of the Pasmandas and appealed to the Hindu society to forget the past. Whatever happened was the mischief of a handful of people living in cities. Lakhs of Muslims in villages did not even know anything about this, and they had not even thought about Pakistan. What crime had they committed that they should be treated differently?

In this context, it becomes even more necessary to study and analyze the views of Sardar Patel

and Nehru with regard to the indigenous Pasmanda Muslims. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru is known for his nation-building, but he remained inactive on the questions of social reform and justice in the Muslim society. His government did not deem it appropriate to take any step towards reforming the Muslim Personal Law. Like her father, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also made the mistake of considering the Muslim community as a homogeneous unit. In the case of Muslims, she, like her father, remained dependent on the Ashraf Maulvis. To appease the Ashraf Muslims, Indira Gandhi brought a law in 1981 and restored the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University by overturning the 1967 decision of the Supreme Court. It is well known that due to the minority status of AMU, the entry of Pasmanda Muslims into this university, who constitute 80 percent of the Muslim population, as academic, non-academic staff and students became almost impossible. Rajiv Gandhi became the next Prime Minister of India with a historic victory by garnering sympathy votes owing to the assassination of his mother. Due to his clean, unblemished, honest and secular image, the Pasmanda community also harboured fresh hope in him. But like his mother and maternal grandfather, Rajiv Gandhi too considered the Muslim society a homogeneous unit and functioned solely on the advice



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of Ashraf leaders, maulanas and intellectuals. The attitude of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi regarding the Pasmanda community is also not very clear. Till now, there is no clarity in their activities regarding the basic problems of the Pasmandas. According to Chapter 10 of the Sachar Committee Report, the condition of Pasmanda Muslims is not very good in the society. They are backward and suppressed in economic, social and educational fields. The movement to provide social justice to the Pasmandas had started even before independence. At that time, Abdul Qayyum Ansari and Maulana Ali Hussain Asim Bihari, who came from the Julaha (weaver) community, were among its foremost leaders and they opposed the communal politics of the Muslim League. Their opposition began during the freedom movement by forming the Momin Conference to counter Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory. After independence, in the 1980s, the All India Muslim OBC Organization of Maharashtra fought for the rights of this community and Pasmanda Muslims were included in the OBC list in Maharashtra. In the 90s, Dr. Ejaz Ali (All India Backward Muslim Front), Ali Anwar (All India Pasmanda Muslim Samaj), and Shabbir Ansari strengthened this movement through their respective organizations. The people of the Pasmanda community are present in about

18 states of the country. Their number is greater in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Telangana, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. The highest number is in Uttar Pradesh and their presence is quite good in every assembly seat, which includes about 44 castes like Raini, Idrisi, Nai, Mirasi, Mukeri, Bari, Ghosi, etc. On the basis of population, the Muslim population is 25-30 percent in Assam and Bengal, about 17 percent in Bihar, about 20 percent in Uttar Pradesh, 10-12 percent in Delhi, about 12 percent in Maharashtra and 30 percent in Kerala.

It is well known that the indigenous Pasmanda community is the most neglected and deprived community of India. It has been suffering from the communalism and racial and caste oppression of the Ashrafs. Whenever there is a discussion on Ashraf communalism, the creation of Pakistan, the character of the League and the Muslims who remained in India, secular and liberal intellectuals have always presented a negative image of Sardar Patel. Whereas Sardar Patel's personality was one of positive thinking, action and harmony. He was used to making quick, strict, intelligent and just decisions. It was a unique characteristic of his working style that he remained firm and steadfast on his decisions without being rude. The Ashrafs have been the root cause of communalism in India. The notion of Hindu communalism

came into existence solely as a reaction to the Muslim communalism generated by Ashrafs. Sardar Patel did not show leniency towards any side in dealing with this. Many incidents prove that Patel did not spare Hindu and Sikh criminals and protected Muslims from them. The ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is also an example of this. Sardar Patel was well aware of communalism, he knew how to deal with it and indeed, did so. The irony is that to prove Sardar Patel anti-Muslim, the Ashraf class, the so-called secular liberals, ran a narrative against him on a war footing. Maulana Azad had openly called him communal. The steps taken by Sardar in the interest of the country to deal with communalism were called pro-Hindu by Maulana. The truth is that it was Maulana Azad who was the biggest advocate of the interests of the Ashraf class in the Congress, while Sardar Patel did not have any feeling of bias, narrow-mindedness and prejudice towards any religion or sect. Mahatma Gandhi had even said that calling Sardar anti-Muslim would be making a mockery of the truth. Sardar Patel was well aware of and understood the activities, indecisiveness and soft attitude towards Muslim communalism and Muslim League, double talk and tendency to deceive of Maulana Azad, Maulana Hifzur Rahman, Dr. Syed Mahmood, Mian Iftikharuddin

Chaudhary, Khaliquzzama, Qasim Rizvi, Josh Malihabadi, etc. The conduct of the Nawabs at the time of transfer of power after independence also raised the Sardar's doubts about the loyalty of the Ashraf community. Ticking off and reprimanding the Ashraf leaders, especially Dr. Syed Mahmood (Congress) and Maulana Hifzur Rahman (Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Hind), Patel had stated that at this critical moment, merely declaring your loyalty to the Indian Union is not enough. You will have to prove it. I want to ask you that when Pakistan attacked Indian territory with the help of border tribes, why did you not openly condemn it? Is it not your duty to condemn every attack against India? Sardar Sahib in very strong words called upon them to shed their separatist mentality and live in the same boat with Hindus and others, and learn to sink or swim together. He had said, "I want to tell you people clearly that you cannot ride two horses. Choose the one you like". The character of the Ashrafs has always been of double standards. As far as Pasmanda

Muslims are concerned, the servant Muslims of Bakrol, the tenant Muslims of Karmasad, the Muslims of Sabarmati Ashram, the Muslims of the village etc. backward Muslims have different tendencies, thoughts, behaviour and conduct.

Sardar Patel knew, understood and observed that there was a clear difference among the Muslims living in India. He found the native Indian Muslims and the upper class self-proclaimed foreign Ashraf Muslims very different from each other on the basis of their conduct, character, behaviour, thinking and attitude. For the converted native Pasmanda Muslims, he used words like ordinary Muslim, common Muslim, loyal Muslim, village Muslim, agricultural Muslim. Therefore, it is clear that he was well aware of the difference between the Ashrafs and Pasmandas and was also aware of their social, economic and religious differences. He did not differentiate between agricultural Hindus and agricultural Muslims. He considered their

hard work and sufferings to be the same and used to say that nature does not discriminate on the basis of religion. He had appealed to his religious brothers to stop distrusting Muslims. If they thought that they would continue to harass loyal Muslims because they are Muslims, then our freedom would not be meaningful.

Sardar Patel understood the indigenous Pasmanda psyche and was deeply troubled as to why ordinary Muslims were being deliberately deceived on the Two-Nation Theory and the creation of Pakistan. Why were they blindly worshipping a leader who was leading them on the wrong path? To counter the growing popularity of the Muslim League, Patel suggested to the Congress that instead of talking to the elite Muslim (Ashraf) leaders of the Muslim League, the Congress should talk to ordinary Muslims (Pasmanda). Sardar Patel was totally pro-Pasmanda in his thinking, ideas, conduct and behaviour. This thing was more clearly reflected before the country when, despite strong opposition from Maulana Azad, the supreme leader of the Ashraf lobby of the Congress, he gave a place in the cabinet to the non-Congress leaders of the first Pasmanda movement in the state of Bihar, Noor Mohammad and Abdul Qayum Ansari, who had defeated the Muslim League in the elections, without even enrolling them as members of the Congress party. It was an

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irony in itself that Maulana Azad was denying the representation of backward Muslims and Patel was delivering them their rights with firmness and justice. In this episode, the distorted mentality of Ashraf Muslims and the goodwill of Hindu society towards the native Pasmanda Muslims is clearly visible.

This was the second time in the history of India, after Mohammad bin Tughlaq, that anybody had striven to deliver rights and a place in the government to the converted indigenous Pasmandas. The present government should install a plaque in the courtyard of Sardar Patel's huge statue detailing the work done by him for the indigenous Pasmanda community, so that it may be realized in the wider world how a person who ensured political participation of Muslims, who constitute about 90 percent of India's total Muslim population, can never be anti-Muslim. With the death of Sardar Patel soon after independence, a well-wisher of the Pasmanda community, one who had their interests in mind, was taken from them under very adverse circumstances, the consequences of which the Pasmanda community is suffering till date. Even today, if the government has to deal with communalism in a proper way, it should follow Sardar Patel's guidelines and his model in this regard.

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Freedom fighter and a resolute activist of the first Pasmanda movement, Abdul Qayyum Ansari had also written several letters to Nehru on these issues. J.B. Kriplani had said at the time of the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act that the Nehru government should also have made provisions for enforcing monogamy for Muslims and Muslim society was ready for it. If there was any shortcoming, that too ought to be considered. He was perhaps referring to the social movement of Asim Bihari. Asim Bihari had created significant awareness within the Pasmanda Muslim community through a specific campaign advocating social justice, women's education and adult education within the Muslim community

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not have the courage to bring about social reform against the discrimination prevailing in the Muslim society. Congress leaders and the ultra-conservative Ashraf Maulanas of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind strongly opposed reforms in the Muslim society and reservation for social justice, and declared that the Muslim society is governed by Sharia law and there is no casteism in Islam. Prominent among them were Maulana Azad, Zakir Hussain, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Syed Mahmood, Tajamul Hussain, Maulana Hifzur Rahman and former Muslim Leaguer Begum Qudsiya Ejaz Rasool, etc. Begum Ejaz Rasool had praised the Sharia law and said that Muslims are proud of the fact that Sharia law gives a great deal of rights to women. Other leaders like Sardar Patel, Dr. Ambedkar, Kripalani, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari stressed on the need for social reform in

the Muslim society. Meanwhile, Ashraf Muslim MPs praised Nehru for reforming Hindu society while not reforming Muslim society. It is an irony that while the modern world was appreciating the reforms, Ashraf leaders and intellectuals were praising the lack of reforms and the Nehru government remained a silent spectator to the entire episode. During the debate on reform of the personal law of Hindu society, the Congress' treatment of Muslims as a separate category only encouraged Muslim communalism and hindered the progress of society. Nehru could not do justice to his concept of secularism on this issue but his views changed towards the end of his life. In his last interview given in May 1964, he approved of the foreign-identified Ashrafs and the indigenous Pasmandas, saying that most of the Muslims living in India were natives converted from Hindus. But it was too late by then and the Pasmanda

society had already suffered the consequences. Nehru died a few days after this interview.

Nehru will always be remembered as a nation builder, but as a secular Prime Minister of a secular country, his policies towards the Muslim community created obstacles in reforming the evils of the Muslim society, promoting social justice in the Muslim society and preventing Muslim communalism. In these ways, he laid the foundation of Muslim appeasement. It seems that the Ashraf leaders of that time and the Maulanas of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind were responsible for all this, under whose influence Nehru shied away from reforms in the Muslim society. Like her father, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi too made the mistake of looking at the Muslim community as a homogeneous unit. In the case of Muslims, she, like her father, remained dependent on Ashraf power brokers and Maulvis. The All India Muslim Personal Law

Board was born as a result of Muslim appeasement. At that time the Indira government was about to bring amendments in the laws for adoption of children, but Ashraf leaders, intellectuals and clerics strongly opposed the same. They came together and under the guise of protecting Muslim personal law, a fundamentalist religious organization was born which believed in medieval feudal mindset, anti-women and anti-Pasmanda Muslim racial and caste hierarchy in Islam. Indira did not even attempt to ascertain the stand of the native Pasmanda Muslim community on this issue; otherwise, the situation could have become somewhat positive. At that time, prominent and vocal voices of the native Pasmanda community were present in the form of the ministers Noor Muhammad and Abdul Qayyum Ansari of the Congress government in the state of Bihar. But the weak, deprived, indigenous Pasmanda Muslims were left at the mercy of the Muslim Personal Law Board, which was an organization of Ashraf leadership with a medieval feudal and religious fundamentalist mindset. Indira Gandhi always kept herself away from the important responsibility of social reform among Muslims. This was not appropriate for the Prime Minister of a secular country. The main reason for this seems to be her excessive dependence on Ashraf leaders. Nazma Heptulla and Abida Ahmed, despite being

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women, adhered to the Ashraf mentality in this matter and kept misleading Indira. Rajiv Gandhi too considered the Muslim society a homogeneous unit. Due to this, both the country and the Pasmanda community suffered a huge loss and Rajiv's secular image also got tarnished. This was evident in the way he appeased the Ashraf Muslims in the Shah Bano case, assimilated the anti-women character of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and overturned the decision of the Supreme Court by bringing a law in Parliament. Pasmanda Muslim women were deeply hurt by this. It is worth noting that divorce and polygamy are not a big issue among Ashraf Muslims. On the contrary, divorce and polygamy are considered indecent and antisocial acts among Pasmanda Muslims who have struck deep roots in Indian civilization. Even in the Babri Masjid and Ram Janmabhoomi case, Rajiv's entire inclination was towards the All

India Muslim Personal Law Board and Maulvi Ali Miyan Nadvi. By sidelining Hashim Ansari, a Pasmanda Muslim and the main litigant in the dispute, Rajiv Gandhi made the issue more complicated. It would be interesting to remember here that the country's well-known Pasmanda activist and famous surgeon Dr. Ijaz Ali had declared that we do not want Babri, we want *barabari* (equality). A study of the then media reports clearly shows that the agreement to open the locks of the Babri Masjid and lay the foundation stone of the Ram temple was the result of the consent and connivance of the then President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Ali Miyan Nadvi. Another act of Rajiv Gandhi, making Urdu the second state language of Uttar Pradesh, was also a result of Ashraf Muslim appeasement. It is worth noting here that Urdu is the language of Ashraf Muslims which they have honed

as a communal tool. The native language of Pasmanda Muslims in Uttar Pradesh has been Hindi and they use the regional dialects of Hindi language like Awadhi, Braj, Bhojpuri, Bundeli etc., for reading and writing. Rajiv Gandhi is known for bringing a computer revolution in the country but his negative attitude towards social reform and social justice in the Muslim society became a huge obstacle in the upliftment of native Pasmanda Muslims. Sonia Gandhi's attitude on Muslim affairs has remained the same as that of her late husband and mother-in-law. Recently, before the Lok Sabha elections, Rahul Gandhi's not giving proper share to Pasmanda Muslims in his "Bharat Jodo Yatra" and "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra" shows that his view on Muslim affairs will remain the same as that of his parents and grandparents, which is neither in the interest of the Muslim society nor that of the country. ●

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Ramanand Sharma

Pasmanda: A Journey of Identity

Introduction

People often see Indian Muslims as one large and uniform group. However, they have social divisions and hierarchy within the religion in reality. Some historians contend that these differences were impacted by the social structure of the Indian subcontinent which have had definable social hierarchies for centuries. Others believe that the small differences among Indian Muslims have continued over time because of the community's unique social, economic, and historical factors. In this social hierarchy, the Pasmanda Muslims are placed at the lowest position. The term is derived from the Persian word Pasmanda, which means “those left behind” which indicates their socio-economic condition in history¹. This group consists of Dalit, OBC and ultra poor marginalized Muslims who have been traditionally discriminated and excluded against. Even though, Pasmanda Muslims constitute about 80-85% of Muslims in India, they continue to be voiceless in social, economic and political domains of the country². Their access to education, jobs, and political opportunities is severely

limited, which has led to their struggles in development.

Though this divide can be seen across India, this internal stratification is more pronounced in poor states such as Bihar. The Muslims in Bihar totaled 137.2 lakhs, representing 16.5% of the State's population and 9.9% of the nation's total Muslim population, as per 2001 Census³. Among them, Pasmanda Muslim like the Ansaris and Dhuniyas continue to experience hardships to education, employment, and political activity. With the passage of time, their struggle for empowerment has developed in reaction to system-based discrimination as well as caste-based division in Muslim society. Different commissions, such as the Kaka Kalelkar Commission, the Mandal Commission, the Ranganath Misra Commission, have all recognized the presence of caste divisions and discrimination based on caste in Muslim society. Their movement aims for more political representation, and socio-economic reforms to address the challenges of Pasmanda Muslims. Thus, the movement is valid and rightly demands affirmative policies

The struggle for empowerment of Pasmanda has rather evolved in response to the caste-based divisions that exist within Muslim society. A sociological analysis

especially in poor states like Bihar and UP.

The Muslim Order and Historical Background of Pasmanda Muslims

The caste hierarchy divides Muslims into three broad categories—Ashraf, Ajlaf, and Arzal—and numerous smaller biradaris or sub-castes⁴. The Ashraf are at the top. They trace their origins from Arab, Persian, or Central Asian ancestors (such as Syed, Sheikh, Mughal, or Pathan) or from upper-caste Hindu converts (such as Muslim Rajputs or Tyagis). Among them, the Syed biradari is considered the most prestigious, like the Brahmins of Hinduism. This ranking, referred to as "Syedism," has brought about inequality. The lower ranks, Ajlaf (backward Muslims) and Arzal (Dalit Muslims), have been resisting this inequality since the

early 1900s. These backward Muslims were once lower caste Hindus who converted for a better social standing. However, the conversion to Islam did not bring much difference to their life and they again found themselves in lower order of Islam which they thought was casteless.

Artisans, weavers (Julahas), sweepers, and other working-class Muslims are often regarded as non-Arabs and labeled as "arzal" (meaning "degraded"). Many of them, who converted from Indian tribal and Dalit (formerly untouchable) communities, face significant discrimination. In Bihar, this bias is so strong that upper-caste Muslims opposed burying backward-caste Muslims in the same cemetery⁵. These lower order Muslims are in significant population as well, yet they have little political power.

This absence of representation brings up questions regarding who represents their interests in India. Leaders such as Abdul Qaiyum Ansari have resisted the oppression of upper caste Muslims in the early 20th century. Later organizations such as the All India Momin Conference opposed the Muslim League's leadership claim on all Muslims. These oppositions demonstrate that this conflict is not novel and lower caste Muslims have always been oppressed.

These oppressions gave rise to a movement by the marginalized Ajlaf and Arzal Muslims under the umbrella name of Pasmanda movement. The movement strives for social and political justice. Its motto, "Dalit-Pichda ek Saman, Hindu Ho ya Musalman" (Dalits and backwards are the same, whether Hindu or Muslim)⁶, is all about unity over religion within Islam. This movement resists the Ashraf elite's dominance. It also challenges the argument that lumps all Muslims together for political purposes and does not address their internal conflicts. The 2006 Sachar Committee Report by India's Ministry of Minority Affairs is widely referenced to note differences in education and economy between Hindus and Muslims, but it also analyzes differences within the Muslim community, particularly on a caste basis⁷. Clustering non-upper-caste Muslims into the OBC Muslim category, the report contrasts OBC Muslims



Rally of Pasmanda Muslims

with General Muslims and OBC Hindus. According to this report, Muslim OBCs performed poorly compared to both General Muslims and Hindu OBCs on scales of education, employment, and economic standing. General Muslims are those in the Ashraf category in the report's groupings, while OBC Muslims comprise the Ajlaf and Arzal, who together form the Pasmanda category.

To really understand this division, we must look back in the history. Prior to the partitioning of India, a mere 19% of Muslims were to be classified as upper caste, with the remainder being lower castes. This profound dichotomy framed India's Muslim social and political terrain, especially in states such as Bihar. Bihar's Muslim population comprising of 17% is representative of entrenched caste gradations. Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) comprise a total of 63% of the population in the state, whereas the upper castes—who include about 5% upper-caste Muslims—only have 15.52%. Even among the Muslims, there exist privileged categories like the Sheikhs, typically in support of the Ashraaf elite, who traditionally received greater chances, whereas the systemically deprived Pasmanda categories like the Ansaris and Dhuniyas persist in suffering from socio-economic backwardness. Even with their sheer numbers,

Pasmanda Muslims are still heavily underrepresented in all the main areas of society, such as jobs, politics, and community leadership positions. At the national level, while they constitute around 11.3% of India's population, their number in the Lok Sabha is only a dismal 0.8%. This is a stark difference that highlights the ongoing fight for equal representation and inclusion.

The Conditions Before Partition

The first half of the 20th century saw political and social mobilization among Pasmanda Muslims, as their leaders tried to resist their marginalization. The beginning of the movement can be traced back to 1910s, with the growth of groups like Jmait-ul Ansar. This movement grew and later merged into the Momin Conference (MC), led by influential personalities like Abdul Qaiyum Ansari and others. This party played an important role in tackling the socio-economic woes of lower-caste Muslims, mainly in urban areas like Kolkata. They also promoted political consciousness and solidarity. To again escape this discrimination, during the 1911 Census, Julahas began adopting titles such as 'Ansar' or 'Momin,' which indicated their developing identity⁸. In the backdrop of the Muslim League's call for partition, Pasmanda or lower-caste Muslims, mobilized under the Momin Conference, strongly

resisted the partition. Under the leadership of individuals such as A.Q. Ansari, they denounced the League's "Islam in Danger" slogan as a ploy to silence their mobilization. Ansari stressed that the League represented elite interests, ignoring marginalized communities like Rayeen, Mansoor, Idrisi, and Quraish.

The Momin Conference demanded socio-political emancipation for more than 80 million backward Muslims, challenging the Ashraf-dominated discourse and claiming a wider, inclusive identity for Pasmanda Muslims. By the late 1920s, the movement had gained significant momentum, leading to the formation of the All India Momin Conference⁹. This platform posed an immediate threat to Ashraf-dominated elites and fought for more political representation and social acceptance of deprived Muslim groups. The most pivotal moment arrived when the 1931 Census threw light on the demographic relevance of the Julahas, who comprised a weavers' community among the biggest occupation-based groups within North Indian Muslims. The Pasmanda Muslims of Bihar, especially the Ansaris / Momins, were firmly against the partition of India and the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution of 1940¹⁰. In April 1940, more than 40,000 Ansaris came together in Delhi and Patna to refuse the League's call for Pakistan, stating that it did not speak for them¹¹. They

contended that even in Muslim-dominated regions, lower-caste Muslims such as Momins were considered inferior, and hence Pakistan was a nonsensical solution.

Pasmanda leaders branded the concept of Pakistan "anti-Islamic" and appealed for resistance against the elite-led League. The Momin Conference also rallied other oppressed Muslim communities, to rally behind a united front against the League's sectarian politics. In the 1940s, these groups became organized and vocal in their resistance, as seen in papers such as *The Searchlight*. The Pasmanda Muslims of Bihar, therefore, opposed partition strongly and instead called for unity and social justice. Their call for political recognition, separate electorates and specially designed policies, represented a direct challenge to established Ashraf hegemony. Yet the road to recognition and justice has been complicated. The Shekhra community, traditionally involved in bone-picking occupations, is representative of the challenges for many Pasmanda groups. Originally identified as belonging to Central OBC and EBC categories, their struggle for reservations and redistributive justice was subsequently subverted by intra-group identity contradictions, most notably self-identification with the Sheikh Biradari, a class traditionally accorded Ashraf status.

Indian Political Leaders on Caste-based Discrimination Among Muslims

Pasmanda Muslims, especially Indian Muslims suffering from caste discrimination, is an important but underreported issue. However, the Indian Political leaders have supported their cause throughout history. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the first to recognize caste distinctions within Muslim society. In his 1946 publication, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, he cited the 1901 Bengal Census, which divided Muslims into three categories: Ashraaf (elite or foreign origin), Azlaaf (lower-ranked converts), and Arzaal (the most downtrodden). He pointed out that Arzaal Muslims also suffered from discrimination as in Hindu caste systems, where they were usually excluded from mosques and graveyards. Ambedkar accused the Muslim society of not taking note of these injustices and of opposing social reform, as he wrote, "Muslims are entirely unaware of these evils and take no interest in eradicating them. In fact, they oppose any effort to reform their social usages." Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also condemned casteism among Muslims. He pointed out that Islam preaches equality but there are caste divisions. Dalit Muslims were generally kept out of mosques and burial grounds.

Kanshi Ram, an activist for downcaste and backward

communities, attempted to get Muslim leaders onboard for this movement. He saw that upper caste Syeds, Sheikhs, Mughals, and Pathans had a stronghold in Muslim leadership and oppressed lower caste Muslims like Ansaris, Dhuniyas, and Qureshis. Kanshi Ram chose to work towards empowering Pasmanda Muslims, a group who are derived from Hindu Scheduled Caste origins for leadership positions. In contrast to Hindu reform efforts, Muslims made little attempt to tackle these issues. Ambedkar contended that most Muslims did not consider caste an issue and even opposed change. In the same vein, Ram Manohar Lohia also condemned Indian politicians for neglecting oppressed minorities such as backward castes among Hindus and Muslims. Even though the followers of Ambedkar, Lohia, and Kanshi Ram have been influenced by them, they have made little attempt to address Pasmanda Muslims. Pasmanda Muslims are discriminated against in politics. When they run for elections, upper-caste Ashraf Muslims ridicule their caste identities and struggle to defeat them. Voting for Ashraf candidates is framed as a religious obligation. This systematic exclusion further fuelled the Pasmanda Movement.

Their Conditions After Partition

Pasmanda Muslims, who consisted mainly of artisans,

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workers, weavers, barbers, butchers, and other working-class groups, were also actively involved in India's freedom struggle. Pasmanda Muslims, particularly those involved in trade and small industries, helped Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress during the Khilafat movement and Non-Cooperation Movement. Most of them experienced police brutality and financial losses. The Pasmanda Muslims, especially from Bihar and Bengal, opposed British policies and participated in nationalist movements. In contrast to most elite Muslims who favored the Two-Nation Theory, a large number of Pasmanda Muslims were against Partition, knowing that it would only serve upper-caste Muslim elites while they would be disadvantaged even more.

Post-Partition, Pasmanda Muslims were economically ruined as traditional industries like weaving, leatherwork, and handicrafts were destroyed because of the absence of state patronage. Livelihoods were lost as enterprises faltered in the newly independent country. Politically, they were marginalized, with Ashraf Muslims still dominating religious institutions, political parties, and leadership roles. Discrimination based on caste continued even among Muslims, where Pasmandas were generally assigned lower social status in spite of their numerical strength. Pasmanda Muslims were not

given affirmative action at first and were added to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category later, which again did not meet their historical disadvantages.

The Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (PMM)

In background of such discrimination and marginalization, the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (PMM) was established in 1998 by Bihar-based journalist-turned-politician Ali Anwar Ansari. His objective was to challenge and address the historical socio-economic and political marginalization of Pasmanda Muslims in India¹². One of the primary reasons for the establishment of the PMM was the political exclusion of Pasmanda Muslims, even though they comprised almost 85% of India's Muslim population. The Muslim leadership dominated by Ashraf had traditionally been preoccupied with religious identity politics and had tended to support personal laws and causes such as triple talaq, Babri Masjid, and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA-NRC), while neglecting socio-economic causes that disproportionately harmed Pasmanda Muslims. The PMM countered this narrative and claimed that the actual concerns of the majority of Muslims were poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and economic exploitation, not religious symbolism. The

movement also brought to the forefront that the majority of Muslim victims of communal violence, police atrocities, and economic marginalization were from Pasmanda backgrounds. However, elite Ashraf Muslims still dominated leadership in political parties and organizations. Thus, one of the central demands of the PMM has been to ask for reservations and affirmative action policies for Pasmanda Muslims.

Although most backward-caste Muslim communities have been covered under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) list, the advantage of reservations tended to be cornered by elite Muslim communities in OBCs. The PMM has advocated sub-categorization under OBC reservations to provide Pasmanda Muslims with their due share of benefits. In addition, it has insisted that Dalit Muslims (those who work in "unclean" professions like scavenging and tanning) be declared Scheduled Castes (SCs), just like Dalit Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, to enjoy special protections and benefits. The movement has also insisted on government patronage for traditional Pasmanda Muslim professions like weaving, leatherwork, and small-scale industries, which have been hit by economic liberalization and absence of institutional support. Politically, the PMM has been influential in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, where it has organized

Pasmanda Muslims to seek greater representation within regional and national parties. It has effectively shaped political discussion by advocating for Pasmanda candidates in elections and holding elite Muslim leaders accountable for neglecting caste concerns.

In Bihar, Nitish Kumar's government reacted to Pasmanda demands by introducing sub-quotas under the OBC category, providing more access to education and employment. In Uttar Pradesh, the increasing awareness of Pasmanda issues has compelled political parties such as the Samajwadi Party, BSP, Congress, and BJP to cater to their needs, instead of depending on Ashraf Muslim leadership alone. The BJP, in specific, has attempted to win over Pasmanda voters by providing them with focused welfare schemes and prioritizing economic growth over religious identity politics. Outside of politics, the PMM has also been influential in academic and policy discourse. It has brought the government and research into conducting studies and reports on the socio-economic status of Pasmanda Muslims, resulting in reports like the Sachar Committee Report (2006) and the Ranganath Misra Commission Report (2007), which both authenticated that Pasmanda Muslims were socially and economically as backward as Dalits and Adivasis. In bringing these

concerns to the fore, the PMM has countered the conventional Ashraf-led discourse of Muslim backwardness, contending that caste, rather than religion, is the primary reason for Muslim marginalization in India.

Though successful, the Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz still struggles with opposition and challenges from within and outside the Muslim community. Most elite Muslim organizations, including Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and All India Muslim Personal Law Board, have been resistant to accepting caste-based discrimination among Muslims for fear that it would undermine the political cohesion of the community. Also, the broader Indian political space continues to be dominated by upper-caste Hindu and Ashraf Muslim elites, and it is challenging for Pasmanda voices to be heard at the national level. But with spreading political consciousness, grass-root movement, and a growing presence in public discourse, the PMM keeps striving towards a more equal and equitable socio-political framework, so that the Pasmanda majority's predicaments are not overlooked in the political and development policies of India anymore.

Achievements so far

Pasmanda activists have successfully built a counter-hegemonic discourse by emphasizing bottom-up social issues connected with everyday survival struggles.

This has opened the door for an alternative narrative challenging the dominant political discourse commonly influenced by majoritarian forces. By bringing to light the daily experiences of Pasmanda Muslims, these activists are not merely combating entrenched social inequalities but also developing a more cohesive identity and empowerment within the community. The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) Act 2004 extends minority status to educational institutions founded by six religious communities: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis (Zoroastrians), and Jains. This legislative framework has enabled Pasmanda Muslims to establish and run schools, thus enhancing access to learning opportunities and socio-economic mobility. In addition, constitutional protection under Articles 29 and 30 enforces the rights of minority groups to safeguard and promote their educational interests.

The demand for reservation among Muslims has been there for a very long time. The movement acquired momentum in the 1990s and brought into being the Association for Promoting Education and Employment of Muslims (APEEM) in 1994 that actively advocated on behalf of having a separate quota for Muslims¹³. Though this movement has lost steam to a certain extent, bodies such as the All India Muslim

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Pasmanda Mahaz remain strong proponents of these rights, keeping the issue in focus within political and scholarly forums. More recently, controversy within discussion forums in institutions like Ramjas College, Delhi University, has renewed interest in reservation policies in academic courses, showing that young researchers remain engaged on this topic.

Recently, the Pasmanda Muslim community has seen significant developments in political activity, especially during recent elections. In a report by News18 in July 2022, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited BJP members to approach 'Pasmanda Muslims.' Addressing the party's national executive meeting at Hyderabad, he stressed the imperative of looking beyond narrow electoral calculations¹⁴. Soon in the 2022 Delhi Municipal Corporation elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tactically fielded four Pasmanda group candidates, indicating increased political recognition of their existence. Likewise, in the Uttar Pradesh urban local body elections conducted in May 2022, the Yogi Adityanath government put up 395 Muslim candidates, with almost 90% being from the Pasmanda community¹⁵. Numerous Pasmanda members claim that Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) failed to notice their efforts. This led to 61 Muslim representatives being elected, a sharp increase

in comparison with past election rounds and there was a surge in Google search regarding Pasmanda Muslims. In July 2024, the BJP initiated the Pasmanda Sneh Samvad Yatra, or a "journey of love and conversation," which ended on October 15, the birthday of APJ Abdul Kalam, a much-admired personality among the Pasmanda Muslims¹⁶. The move was tactically devised to reach out to Muslim back wards with the goal of unifying with these communities as part of the party outreach drive before the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Though, these achievements can be seen as a great progress, the real development of the community would require ground results.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

For attaining real progress of the community, Anwar, a Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz founder represented Janata Dal (United) in Rajya Sabha from 2006-2017. He was expelled later due to his denunciation of the party's action in terms of snapping ties with the Rashtriya Janata Dal and going with the BJP in Bihar¹⁷. In two open letters in 2022, the first to Modi and the second to opposition party leaders, Anwar raised a question mark on the intention and genuineness of BJP's Pasmanda outreach efforts. Anwar sees the Pasmanda movement as part of the larger Dalit-Bahujan movement, stressing that it is not complete without assimilating

the "Pasmanda-tareen" (Arzal) community.

Anwar thinks that the BJP does not provide a safe political ground for Pasmanda Muslims, blaming the party for practicing communal politics. However, the results of the elections present a different picture. The victory of the BJP in the Rampur and Azamgarh Lok Sabha bypolls, both strongholds of the Samajwadi Party, indicates that a substantial number of Pasmanda Muslims is supporting the BJP¹⁸. Still, internal factions in the community dilute their collective bargaining capacity and thus structural changes remain out of reach. Efforts at recent political engagement have yielded some exposure for their cause. Nevertheless, bringing lasting social and economic transformation requires sustained attention by the policymakers, more representation, and an integrated movement promoting their cause.

Conclusion

The struggle of Pasmanda Muslims for recognition and equality is not just a demand for social justice but a call to rectify historical wrongs and systemic exclusion. Despite centuries of marginalization, their resilience and unwavering efforts continue to challenge entrenched hierarchies and demand rightful representation in education, employment, and politics. True progress lies in embracing their voices, acknowledging their

struggles, and fostering inclusive policies that uplift the most disadvantaged. The path forward

requires collective action, where equity replaces discrimination, and every Muslim, regardless of

caste or class, stands as an equal stakeholder in India's democratic and social fabric. ●

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Alisha Bano



Amit Kumar

Mainstream Feminism and the Pasmanda Woman An Analysis

The struggle for identity is a socio-political movement wherein a community raises its voice for its rights and recognition against the oppressor. However, on the other side, the major issue with identity politics is that it tends to ignore the internal divisions within the community itself. Consequently, the socially, economically, and politically dominant men and women of that community establish supremacy, while the marginalized remain excluded. The position of Pasmanda women in Pasmanda politics is a significant example of this exclusion.

The term ‘Pasmanda’ is derived from Persian, which means “those left behind.” Thus, it refers to those sections of the Muslim community that have fallen behind from the socio-economic and political mainstream. Among those neglected, Pasmanda women find themselves on the lowest rung, representing nearly half the Pasmanda population. These women are mostly from backward, tribal, and Dalit castes and remain distant from the mainstream. They are subject to multiple layers of exclusion and discrimination.

Pasmanda women are doubly

oppressed—externally by caste-based discrimination as Dalits and backwards, and internally through patriarchy of the Pasmanda males within their own community. This paper focuses on the social, cultural, and political issues faced by Pasmanda women and highlights their various ideological dimensions.

The Pasmanda Movement and the Pasmanda Woman

Although theologically, Islam does not recognize caste hierarchy, in practice, caste stratification exists among Indian Islam. The Muslim caste system closely resembles the Hindu caste system, like practicing endogamy, maintaining social distance, believing in hierarchy, and caste being determined by birth. Scholars like Ghaus Ansari (1960), Imtiyaz Ahmad (1975), Ali Anwar (2001), and Masood Alam Falahi (2007) have drawn attention to this issue.

Ghaus Ansari observed that Islam was not egalitarian when it came to India. Presently, Indian Muslim society is divided into two broad sections: Ashraf and non-Ashraf. The Ashraf are divided into four groups—Syeds, Sheikhs, Mughals,

There exists a mainstream feminism, but the Pasmanda woman remains outside its discourse. Why? And what are her fundamental questions? An outline

and Pathans. Inter-caste marriage is permissible among them. The Syeds claim foreign descent and consider coming from foreign lineage as something special, possess most of the governing and religious power and claim to be descendants of the Prophet or his family. Sheikhs associate themselves with the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh. Mughals trace their lineage to Babur, and Pathans to Afghanistan and Pakistan's Pashtuns. Non-Ashraf Muslims, by contrast, are considered indigenous and are thought to have converted from Hindu castes. Among non-Ashraf, the Ajlaf and Arzal castes are clubbed together as Pasmanda. These include castes like Julaha, Manihar, Mansoori, Nai, Hazzam, Qasai, Dhobi etc. (Zarina Ahmad, 1962).

The Pasmanda movement, which advocates the rights of backward-caste Muslims, has focused mainly on two goals: securing special benefits for them and increasing political

participation (Alam, 2022). However, it largely ignores several concerns of its own groups like social, economic, and cultural issues. It has also failed to reinterpret Islam, promote inter-caste marriages within the community, or improve the economic status of working-class Muslims (Ansari, 2009).

Because the movement is dominated by Pasmanda men, they consider the issues of Pasmanda women as secondary. Women-specific issues such as triple talaq, lack of education, less participation in public life, and opposition to patriarchal practices like the purdah system are often neglected, reflecting the male-dominated mindset within the movement. Although activist Asim Bihari did create a women's wing, it failed to make a lasting impact.

While the movement advocates inter-caste marriage under the slogan "From Caste to Community," in reality, deep impact of socio-cultural barriers,

political priorities and caste hierarchy, prevented it from being effective. (Ansari, 2023)

Inter-caste marriage and ending gender discrimination play an essential role in dismantling caste hierarchy. (Ambedkar 1936) If we analyze deeply, the Pasmanda movement's apathy towards women's issues may stem from three key reasons:

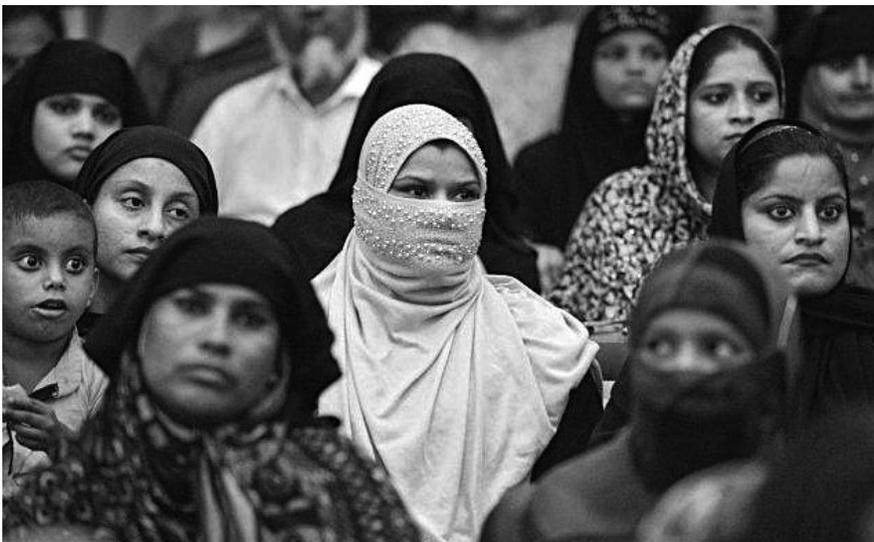
- Male dominance within the movement
- Failure to acknowledge the difference between male and female priorities
- Viewing gender-based exploitation as part of normal social structure

Mainstream Feminism and the Pasmanda Feminist Perspective

The history of feminism, both as a concept and a movement, has been evolutionary in nature. Over time, it has adapted its scope and nature to address various dimensions related to women's rights alongside changing times.

Due to its evolving nature and its tendency to address non-communal issues, defining feminism becomes complex. At its core, feminism is rooted in the fundamental structure of society and advocates gender equality, and equal economic, social, and political rights between men and women.

Modern feminism is generally believed to have originated in Europe. Its early awakening began with religious and philosophical discourse,



eventually evolving into political movements and contemporary activism. The philosophical and religious discourse of feminism's evolution reflects the evolution of feminism during the medieval period and the renaissance in Europe. On the other hand, the evolution of political movements and contemporary activism showcases the different waves of feminism (Walters, 2005).

In the evolution of feminism during the medieval period in Europe, the religious and philosophical discourse featured writers like Hilde Guard and Christine de Pizan, who, through their writings, emphasized women's intellectual growth and moral equality. Given the limited social opportunities during the Middle Ages, there was no major transformation, but these writings laid the foundation for feminist consciousness.

Later, during the Renaissance, women writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Astelle vocally advocated for women's rights. In her book 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1792), Wollstonecraft opposed the idea prevalent at that time that women are naturally inferior and meant solely for domestic duties. She argued that the reason women appear inferior is not their gender, but their lack of access to education and equal opportunities.

She also criticized the claims made by Rousseau in his book *Emile*, where he stated that women are naturally gentle,

The second wave of feminism focused on rights such as abortion, reproductive freedom, workplace equality, equality in education, and personal and social equality.

Notable figures from this era include Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, and Carol Hanisch. Simone de Beauvoir, in her book 'The Second Sex' (1949), stated that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman"—highlighting that society, through its customs and traditions, moulds women into submissive beings to facilitate their exploitation

submissive, and exist to fulfil the needs of men. Wollstonecraft countered this by asserting that women, like men, deserve intellectual development and the opportunity to contribute to society—an idea she advocated through her writing.

On the other hand, the establishing of feminism as a political movement and contemporary activism was significantly shaped by various waves of feminism.

The first wave of feminism began with the Industrial Revolution and the universal suffrage movement. The Industrial Revolution challenged traditional norms and brought economic changes that allowed women to participate more in public life. Key feminist thinkers and writers of this era included Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth, and Lucy Austin, who advocated women's right to vote, property rights, and gender equality—particularly influencing countries like England and Sweden.

Virginia Woolf, in her book 'A Room of One's Own' (1929), emphasized the importance of

economic independence for women. She argued that a woman must have her own money and a room to think and create freely.

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Carol Hanisch promoted the idea that "the personal is political," so that exploitative personal practices considered legal through laws could be stopped.

The third wave of feminism highlighted the rights of marginalized women—including women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and women living on the margins of society. It also sought to understand the

challenges of women in third-world countries, utilizing technology and social media as tools for activism.

Prominent thinkers of this wave include Rebecca Walker, Judith Butler, and Bell Hooks. Judith Butler, in her book 'Gender Trouble', connected gender identity, social roles, and performativity. She argued that gender identity is not natural but rather socially and culturally constructed, formed by repeatedly performing certain norms or patterns.

The third wave, while criticising the second wave, expanded feminism's perspective to include new dimensions such as caste, class, race, and regional inequalities. This led to the intellectual emergence of Black feminism, Dalit feminism, and Pasmanda feminist perspectives.

In academic spaces, Pasmanda feminism has received far less attention compared to Black and Dalit feminism. Yet, if we examine it at the intellectual, social, and cultural levels, the Pasmanda feminist perspective differentiates itself from both

Black and Dalit feminism. It also challenges many assumptions of mainstream feminism. These distinctions can be seen in the following points:

- Mainstream Indian feminism tends to view womanhood as a singular consciousness or a homogeneous idea. It is largely shaped and dominated by upper-caste women, middle class women, and elite-class women who attempt to frame the women's movement and feminist discourse in a uniform, one-dimensional way (Hecker, 1951). In contrast, the Pasmanda feminist perspective argues that feminism in India society is not a unified consciousness—because Indian women are divided by caste, class, and religion, leading to diverse needs and issues. This social hierarchy plays a vital role in perpetuating women's exploitation. The intersection of caste, religion, and class only worsens gender-based discrimination.
- Mainstream feminism

focuses heavily on urban issues like workplace harassment, statutory equality and wage equality. (Dalit Women's Collective, 2008). However, it largely ignores caste-based exploitation, manual scavenging, poverty-rooted domestic and public oppression, racial and cultural stigmas—factors central to the lived realities of Pasmanda women.

- Mainstream feminism is primarily led by upper-caste Hindu and Muslim women and often fails to adequately recognize or engage with the experiences of Pasmanda women.
- It emphasizes universalization of values rooted in European modernity, which leads to a misreading of cultural practices like the hijab as a tool of oppression. For instance, mainstream feminism often views hijab as a symbol of oppression for Muslim women, while many Pasmanda and other Muslim women consider it part of their cultural and religious identity and tie it to their dignity.
- In the name of representation, mainstream feminism tends to serve the special needs of its own class, while sidelining the issues of marginalized groups. A recent example is the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023, passed by the Indian Parliament. It

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provides one-third reservation in the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, and legislative councils of Delhi and Puducherry. However, apart from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women, it fails to allocate any sub-quota for backward and Pasmanda women. For women living on the margins, this omission reflects a lack of attention to their fundamental needs. Feminist discourse at every level of empowerment remains dominated by upper-caste and upper-class women, making it difficult for truly marginalized women to access and assert their rights.

Differences between Dalit Feminism and Pasmanda Feminism

While mainstream feminism speaks of "sisterhood" and collectively resisting patriarchy, in practice, it often empowers a limited group of women while marginalizing others (Lorde, 2005). The emergence of Dalit feminism and Pasmanda feminism is an ignored part of mainstream feminism. Both these streams of thought use lived experience and political intervention to challenge mainstream feminism. Although they share several similarities and stand united in resisting dominant feminist ideologies, they differ fundamentally in their foundations and objectives which gives them authenticity:

- Dalit feminist discourse

begins at the intersection of gender, caste, and class (Pan, 2020). In contrast, Pasmanda feminist discourse begins at the intersection of gender, caste, class, and religious minority status.

- Dalit women are predominantly from Hindu backgrounds, where the concept of purity and impurity forms the ideological basis of the caste division (Chakravarti, 1993). Dalit women are placed at the lowest rung of this hierarchy and therefore face issues like untouchability, gender-based violence, caste oppression, and denial of entry to temples. In contrast, Pasmanda women belong to Islam, which, at the ideological level, emphasizes equality (Afzaruddin, 2023). However, in practice, caste-based discriminatory tendencies persist. These manifest through issues like the practice of purdah, triple talaq, and not allowing entry of women into mosques. The so-called upper-caste Ashraf Muslims within the Muslim community often play a central role in this caste-based oppression.
- From the perspective of knowledge politics, Dalit feminism emerges as a strong, assertive, and proactive intellectual challenge to mainstream feminism. It strongly critiques the non-activity

of feminism towards the caste system. Politically too, it has aligned itself with movements that ensure representation and integration—for example, the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, Pasmanda feminist discourse lacks such robust intellectual frameworks or political backing. It has not yet been able to articulate a powerful resistance against the caste dominance within the Muslim community, nor has it any political leadership which can ensure inclusion of its concerns in policy making.

- Dalit feminism views the caste hierarchy within Hinduism as a mechanism to control economic and social resources. In contrast, Pasmanda feminism has yet to direct such a strong critique toward Islam or its institutions.

Conclusion

Mainstream feminism—whether Western or Indian—has not made a sincere effort to recognize and integrate knowledge born out of lived experiences of marginalized women that lie beyond its own intellectual domain. In the process of gaining knowledge, experience plays a crucial role, and that is precisely why the Pasmanda woman's perspective, shaped by her caste, gender, and religious marginalization, gives rise to an entirely distinct

feminist lens.

This lens significantly differs from the lived realities of upper-caste or mainstream women. Philosopher Michel Foucault, in his work "Two Lectures", discusses two types of knowledge:

- Totalitarian Forms of Knowledge/Theory
- Subjugated Forms of Knowledge/Theory

He explains that totalitarian knowledge is monolithic and dominant, but in doing so, it inadvertently gives rise to parallel and resistant forms of knowledge—which he calls

subjugated knowledge. This kind of knowledge is not centralized but decentralized, rooted in experience, and emerges as a challenge to the dominant narratives.

Foucault states that subjugated knowledge is completely autonomous, capable of asserting its own validity.

When this concept is viewed through the lens of Pasmanda women, their feminist stance can be understood as a subjugated form of knowledge. It arises in parallel to mainstream feminist discourse and is built on lived

experiences of marginalization—thus creating a decentralized stream of feminist knowledge.

In a way, it could be said that this Pasmanda feminist discourse has emerged precisely because of the existence of dominant, mainstream feminism. It not only challenges mainstream feminist narratives based on issues of caste, religious minority, and gender—but also offers an opportunity: an invitation for mainstream feminism to become more inclusive by acknowledging and incorporating the concerns of Pasmanda women. ●

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“विश्व पटल पर देवभूमि उत्तराखंड की बन रही अलग पहचान”



हमारा लक्ष्य उत्तराखंड को एक विकसित और आत्मनिर्भर राज्य बनाना है। इसके लिए हम जो भी कदम उठा रहे हैं वह इसी लक्ष्य के अनुरूप है। हम सेवा सुशासन और विकास के नए आयाम स्थापित करके हर क्षेत्र में प्रगति सुनिश्चित करने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के मार्गदर्शन में हम एक मजबूत समृद्ध और सक्षम उत्तराखंड के निर्माण के लिए प्रतिबद्ध हैं।

पुष्कर सिंह धामी
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तराखंड

सांस्कृतिक धरोहर और फिल्म शूटिंग का केंद्र

उत्तराखंड की लोक कलाएं, संगीत, नृत्य और परंपरिक व्यंजन इसकी समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक विरासत के परिचायक हैं। राज्य सरकार इन परंपराओं को संभालने और उन्हें वैश्विक स्तर पर प्रदर्शन करने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है।



- **स्थानीय त्योहारों का आयोजन:** नौगंगा, धी संजंति, फूलदेई जैसे पारंपरिक त्योहारों को बढ़ा देने के लिए आयोजित किया जाता है ताकि नई पीढ़ी अपनी जड़ों से जुड़ी रहे।
- **हस्तनिर्मित और हथकरघा को प्रोत्साहन:** रूपा, गिलास, ब्रॉडवैड, ऊनी बस्तों को बढ़ावा देने के लिए विभिन्न योजनाएं चलाई जा रही हैं।
- **फिल्म शूटिंग डेस्टिनेशन:** उत्तराखंड अपनी नैसर्गिक सुंदरता के कारण फिल्म निर्माताओं की पर्यटन गन्तव्य बनता जा रहा है। राज्य सरकार फिल्म नीति के माध्यम से फिल्म शूटिंग को सुगम बना रही है, जिससे न केवल पर्यटन को बढ़ावा मिलता है बल्कि स्थानीय कलाकारों और तकनीशियनों को भी रोजगार मिलता है। कई बॉलीवुड और अंतरराष्ट्रीय फिल्मों की शूटिंग ने उत्तराखंड को वैश्विक पर्यटन स्थल बना दिया है।

डिजिटल उत्तराखंड भविष्य की ओर एक छलांग

डिजिटल इंडिया के विजन के अनुरूप, उत्तराखंड तेजी से डिजिटलीकरण की ओर बढ़ रहा है। सरकारी सेवाओं को ऑनलाइन किया जा रहा है, जिससे पारदर्शिता और दक्षता बढ़ी है। युवाओं को डिजिटल कौशल में प्रशिक्षित किया जा रहा है ताकि वे भविष्य की चुनौतियों का सामना कर सकें। ऑप्टिकल फाइबर नेटवर्क का विस्तार कर दूरस्थ गांवों तक इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी पहुंचाई जा रही है।

साहसिक पर्यटन का नया क्षितिज: रोमांच की भूमि

उत्तराखंड की भौगोलिक विविधता इसे साहसिक पर्यटन के लिए एक आदर्श गंतव्य बनाती है। ट्रेकिंग, रिबर राफ्टिंग, पैराग्लाइडिंग, स्कीइंग, माउंटेनियोरिंग, यहाँ हर रोमांच प्रेमी के लिए कुछ न कुछ है।

- **ऑर्गेनो:** स्कीइंग के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर प्रसिद्ध औली हिमताल पर्यटकों को आकर्षित करता है। यहाँ आयोजित होने वाले राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्कीइंग टूर्नामेंट ने इसे वैश्विक मानचित्र पर स्थापित किया है।
- **ऋषिकेश:** गंगा में रिबर राफ्टिंग का रोमांच अद्वितीय है। बंबी राफ्टिंग, फ्लोटिंग फ्लोटिंग जैसी गतिविधियाँ भी युवाओं को खूब प्यारी हैं।
- **ट्रेकिंग:** मकरन्द, फूलों की घाटी (दुर्गेश्वर विधवा घाटी), रूपकुंड, पिंडारो स्टेरिंग, हर की दूत जैसे मनोरम ट्रेकिंग मार्ग प्रकृति प्रेमियों और

हिमालय की गोद में बसा, गंगा-यमुना जैसी पवित्र नदियों का उद्गम स्थल, और अनगिनत ऋषि-मुनियों की तपोस्थली-उत्तराखंड, जिसे देवभूमि कहा जाता है, सदियों से अपनी आध्यात्मिक आभा, प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य और शांत वातावरण के लिए विश्वविख्यात रहा है। यह देव भूमि है जहाँ प्रकृति अपने सबसे मनोरम रूप में प्रकट होती है, जहाँ ऊँचे-ऊँचे हिमाच्छादित पर्वत शिखर आकाश को चुमते हैं, घने जंगल रहस्यमयी कहानियाँ सुनाते हैं, और कल-कल करती नदियाँ जीवन का संगीत गाती हैं। लेकिन आज, यह देवभूमि केवल अपनी पारंपरिक पहचान तक सीमित नहीं है। एक नए, सशक्त और प्रगतिशील उत्तराखंड का उदय हो रहा है, जो अपनी जड़ों से जुड़े रहते हुए भी विकास की नई ऊँचाइयों को छू रहा है और विश्व पटल पर अपनी एक विशिष्ट एवं बहुआयामी पहचान गढ़ रहा है।

निवेश का नया गंतव्य : विकास की ओर बढ़ते कदम



उत्तराखंड अब केवल पर्यटन और आध्यात्म तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि यह निवेश के एक आकर्षक केंद्र के रूप में भी उभर रही है। मुख्यमंत्री श्री पुष्कर सिंह धामी के नेतृत्व में राज्य सरकार 'ईब और डिजिटल बिजनेस' पर विशेष जोर दे रही है।

औद्योगिक क्षमता और भविष्य की संभावनाओं को दर्शाते हैं। **सिंगल विंडो क्लीयरेंस:** निवेशकों को सुगमता प्रदान करने के लिए प्रक्रियाओं को सरल बनाया गया है। **सेक्टर-स्पेसिफिक नीतियाँ:** पर्यटन, वेलनेस, आर्युज, सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी, खाद्य प्रसंस्करण, फार्मास्यूटिकल्स, ऑटोमोबाइल और नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा जैसे क्षेत्रों में निवेश को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए विशेष नीतियाँ बनाई गई हैं। **कनेक्टिविटी में सुधार:** सड़क, रेल और हवाई संर्चना को बेहतर बनाने पर लगातार काम हो रहा है।

जैलीगांट हवाई अड्डे का विस्तार और पंचनगर हवाई अड्डे का विकास इस दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। ये प्रयास उत्तराखंड को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने और युवाओं के लिए रोजगार के नए अवसर सृजित करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रहे हैं। राज्य सरकार का लक्ष्य है कि उत्तराखंड न केवल भारत में बल्कि विश्व स्तर पर एक पर्यटन निवेश गंतव्य बने।

चारधाम यात्रा को सुलभ, सुरक्षित और सुविधाजनक बनाने के लिए अभूतपूर्व कदम



- **चारधाम ऑल वेदर रोड परियोजना:** यह महत्वपूर्ण पर्यटन कनेक्टिविटी में ब्रांति ला रही है, जिससे यात्रा सुगम और वर्षा ऋतु में संभावित हो रही है। प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व में इस परियोजना ने तीर्थयात्रियों के लिए एक पर्यटन का काम किया है।
- **केदारनाथ पुनर्निर्माण:** 2013 की आपदा के बाद, केदारनाथ का जिस भव्यता और सुनिश्चित तरीके से पुनर्निर्माण किया गया है, वह दुर्इ इच्छासाक्षि और कुशल प्रबंधन का प्रतीक है। यह पुनर्निर्माण न केवल भौतिक संरचनाओं का था, बल्कि आस्था और विश्वास का भी था।
- **ऋषिकेश-कर्णप्रयाग रेल परियोजना:** यह परियोजना पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों को रेल नेटवर्क से जोड़ने की दिशा में एक मील का पत्थर साबित होगी, जिससे न केवल पर्यटन को बढ़ावा मिलेगा बल्कि स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्था को भी मजबूती मिलेगी।

होमस्टे योजना: स्थानीय संस्कृति और अतिथि को बढ़ावा देने के लिए होमस्टे योजना को प्रोत्साहित किया जा रहा है। इससे पर्यटकों को स्थानीय जीवनशैली का अनुभव कर लेना है और ग्रामीणों को आय का एक अतिरिक्त स्रोत मिलता है, जिससे पर्यायन पर भी अनुकूल लग रहा है।

इन प्रयासों के परिणामस्वरूप, उत्तराखंड में आने वाले पर्यटकों और तीर्थयात्रियों की संख्या में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि हुई है। यह केवल संख्यात्मक वृद्धि नहीं है, बल्कि यह उत्तराखंड की उस क्षमता का प्रमाण है जो विश्व स्तरीय आध्यात्मिक और पर्यटन अभूतपूर्व पदान कर सकती है।



21 वीं सदी के विकसित भारत के निर्माण के दो प्रमुख स्तंभ हैं। पहला, अपनी विरासत पर गर्व और दूसरा, विकास के लिए हर संभव प्रयास। आज उत्तराखंड, इन दोनों की स्तंभों को मजबूत कर रहा है। यह दशक उत्तराखंड का दशक होगा।

नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

आध्यात्म और पर्यटन का अद्वितीय संगम: एक वैश्विक आकर्षण

उत्तराखंड की आत्मा उसके आध्यात्म में बसती है। चारधाम, यमुनोत्री, गंगोत्री, केदारनाथ और बद्रीनाथ - करोड़ों हिंदुओं की आस्था के केंद्र हैं। हेमकुंड साहिब सिख समुदाय के लिए 'पवन पुरुबस्थ' स्थल है। इन तीर्थस्थलों के अतिरिक्त, ऋषिकेश को 'योग नगरी' के रूप में मान्यता प्राप्त है, जहाँ योग और आत्म-खोज के लिए दुनिया भर से साधक आते हैं। राज्य सरकार ने इन आध्यात्मिक पर्यटकों को और अधिक सुलभ, सुरक्षित और सुविधापूर्ण बनाने के लिए अभूतपूर्व कदम उठाए हैं।

सतत विकास और पर्यावरण संरक्षण: भविष्य की नींव



विचार की दृष्टि में उत्तराखंड अपनी सबसे बड़ी चुनौती - पर्यावरण - को विस्तृत नहीं कर रहा है। राज्य सरकार सतत विकास को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए पर्यावरण संरक्षण को प्राथमिकता दे रही है। **इको-टूरिज्म को बढ़ावा:** संवेदनशील पर्यटन के तंत्रों में पर्यटन को इस प्रकार विनियमित किया जा रहा है कि पर्यावरण पर न्यूनतम प्रभाव पड़े। **प्लास्टिक अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन:** सिंगल यूज प्लास्टिक पर प्रतिबंध और प्रभावी अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन प्रणालियों को लागू किया जा रहा है।

नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा: सौर ऊर्जा और जल विद्युत परियोजनाओं को बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है ताकि पारंपरिक ऊर्जा स्रोतों पर निर्भरता कम हो सके। **वन संरक्षण और वृक्षारोपण:** राज्य का एक बड़ा हिस्सा वनाच्छादित है, और इसके संरक्षण तथा विस्तार के लिए निरंतर प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं। जलसंधि परियोजना के तहत वन में पर्यावरण संरक्षण के लिए एक आयुर्वेदिका है, बल्कि एक नैतिक जिम्मेदारी भी है। जी-20 की बैठकों का सतत आयोजन इस बात का प्रमाण है कि उत्तराखंड वैश्विक स्तर पर पर्यावरण संरक्षण और सतत विकास के मुद्दों पर नेतृत्व करने की क्षमता रखता है।

एक उज्ज्वल भविष्य की ओर अग्रसर देवभूमि

आज का उत्तराखंड केवल एक आध्यात्मिक केंद्र या पर्यटन स्थल मात्र नहीं है। यह एक जीवंत, प्रगतिशील और महत्वपूर्ण राज्य है जो अपनी प्राचीन विरासत और आधुनिक आकाशमार्गों के बीच एक सुंदर संतुलन स्थापित कर रहा है। मुख्यमंत्री श्री पुष्कर सिंह धामी के नेतृत्व और दूरदर्शी नेतृत्व में, 'विकसित उत्तराखंड' का सपना साकार हो रहा है। आध्यात्म की शांति, प्रकृति का सौंदर्य, रोमांच का उसाह, निवेश की संभावनाएं, सतत विकास के प्रति प्रतिबद्धता, और सांस्कृतिक समृद्धि का अमूल्य मिश्रण उत्तराखंड को विश्व पटल पर एक विशिष्ट पहचान दिला रहा है।



यह देव भूमि है जहाँ परंपरा और प्रगति का संगम होता है, जहाँ आध्यात्मिकता आधुनिकता से मिलती है, और वहाँ प्रकृति का संरक्षण विकास का अभिन्न अंग है।

चुनौतियाँ और भविष्य की राह

यह सच है कि उत्तराखंड के समथ्र अंग भी चुनौतियाँ हैं, जैसे कि पर्यटन क्षेत्रों में पलायन, मानव-वन्यजीव संघर्ष, और प्राकृतिक आपदाओं की संवेदनशीलता। लेकिन राज्य सरकार इन चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए पूरी तरह सचेत और कटिबद्ध है।

- **पलायन पर रोकथाम:** पलायन के कारणों का अध्ययन कर प्रभावी समाधान ढूँढे जा रहे हैं। स्वरोजगार योजनाओं और ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत करने पर जोर दिया जा रहा है।
- **आपदा प्रबंधन:** आपदा प्रबंधन तंत्र को और अधिक सुदृढ़ किया जा रहा है। अर्ली वार्निंग सिस्टम और त्वरित प्रतिक्रिया दलों को मजबूत किया गया है।
- **संरक्षित विकास:** यह सुनिश्चित किया जा रहा है कि विकास का लाभ समाज के हर वर्ग और हर क्षेत्र तक पहुँचे।

शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और महिला सशक्तिकरण : एक समग्र दृष्टिकोण

किसी भी प्रदेश की प्रगति उसके मानव संसाधनों के विकास पर निर्भर करती है। उत्तराखंड स्वास्थ्य शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और महिला सशक्तिकरण पर विशेष ध्यान दे रही है।

- **गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा:** नए स्कूल, कॉलेज और व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण संस्थान खोले जा रहे हैं। दूरस्थ शिक्षा में शिक्षा की पहुँच सुनिश्चित की जा रही है।
- **बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएँ:** जिला अस्पतालों का उन्नयन, नई चिकित्सा इकाइयों की स्थापना और टेलीमेडिसिन सेवाओं का विस्तार किया जा रहा है ताकि हर नागरिक को सम्यक गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सेवा मिल सके।
- **महिला सशक्तिकरण:** 'लक्ष्मी शक्ति' योजना, सरकारी नौकरियों में महिलाओं को 30 प्रतिशत शीतल आरक्षण, और स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से महिलाओं को आर्थिक रूप से आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं। महिलाएँ अब उत्तराखंड के विकास में कंधे से कंधा मिलकर योगदान दे रही हैं।



उत्तराखण्ड शासन

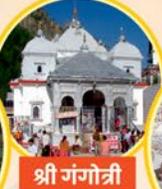


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उत्तराखण्ड



श्री यमुनोत्री
30 अप्रैल, 2025



श्री गंगोत्री
30 अप्रैल, 2025



श्री केदारनाथ
2 मई, 2025



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हरित

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