

Abstract

The central idea of the thesis is to explore the dynamics of communal relationships between middle-class Hindus and Muslims in the mixed neighborhoods of Calcutta during 1947-1992. It employs a conceptual triad involving communal identities, middle-class status, and spatial politics to illustrate the nuances of these relationships. Methodologically, the thesis combines archival research with ethnography, involving interviews with middle-class residents from these neighborhoods to understand how they navigate daily life and construct their identities in relation to each other. Also, within this framework, the thesis examines major historical phenomena such as Partition, riots, Hindutva politics, and the Babri riots, aiming to understand the extent to which these events complicate everyday relationships. It argues that the idea of home is related to the extension of the outer world; hence it breeds a sort of anxiety among the interlocutors when they construct their identities vis-a-vis the other communities based on their claims in the city. Thus, the Hindus who belong to the majority community in the city as well as in India feel intimidated and persecuted while staying in these areas. They look at their co-religionists who live in traditional Hindu *paras* as the privileged citizens. Contrariwise, the Muslims who had been ghettoized in these areas feel intimidated once they step out, more so in recent times. The feelings of antagonism, otherization and estrangement are not measurable in absolute terms; they vary in degrees and manners; often socio-political events enable contingent conditions for a certain type of behavioral pattern and identity formation. Instead of looking at the binaries of the Nehruvian era belonging to the domain of liberal secular sanitized politics and the present regime as inherently authoritarian and anti-minority, the thesis looks into identitarian fault-lines from within on the backdrop of the mixed domicile in the city of Calcutta.