

**SITUATING THE MUSLIMS IN WEST BENGAL:
A CASE STUDY OF KOLKATA 1947-77**

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SRIMANTI ROY

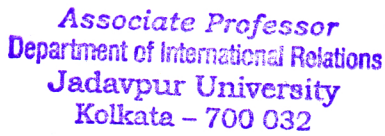
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Declaration

Certified that the thesis entitled “**Situating the Muslims in West Bengal. A case Study of Kolkata 1947-77**” submitted by me for the award of the Doctor of the Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my own work carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Bijaya Kumar Das**, Associate Professor Jadavpur University, Department of International Relations , Kolkata and neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/ elsewhere.


Countersigned by the Supervisor

Date: 4/2/21
Seal: 

Signature of the candidate

Date :

Dedicated to the memory of
My loving mother.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Humayun Kabir once said that “We can not have a democracy without minorities, without distinct and different groups”¹. He also said that “In a sense the problem of minorities is a special feature of democracy, where there is no democracy, the question of minorities as such can not arise”². The father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi also said that “A civilization can be judged by the way it treats its minorities”³. The same words was echoed also by the first prime minister of the country Jawaharlal Nehru when he said “It is the dominant community and it is its responsibility not to use its position in any way which might prejudice our secular ideal”⁴ or “Hindus must always remember that the interest and the well-being of the minority are their sacred-trust. If they fell in their trust then they injured not only the country but themselves. Any narrow or aggressive attitude on the part of the majority community would create a feeling of apprehension in the minds of the minority community”⁵.

So, it is easily understandable that, the issue of ‘minority’ is one of the important aspects in any democratic country, India is no exceptional, being a ‘Secular-democratic’ country the rights of the minorities has always appeared as an important characteristics or feature of the constitution.

Muslims in India undoubtedly form a minority⁶ both on account of their numerical strength and because of their position in the power structure. For majority of the Indians they are responsible for partitioning the country, and also the brutal partition riots in Kolkata. The Muslims of India have a troubled historical legacy, which still they carried in their shoulder.

Indian Muslims still bears the stigma of the past. Till now the identity of Muslim communities has been defined through religious lenses. The minority status and the attendant marginality of Muslims within the wider spectrum of post-1947 India are common; the social, economic and political positions are not. Social and political developments with regard to Muslims are watched with anxiety and alarm. Partly for religious and partly for historical reasons. But would it be right to accept the theory that all the Muslims were the supporters of the ‘Muslim League’ or ‘Partition’. There are many studies which clearly pointed out that although the mass-

mobilization strategy of Muslim league effected a large Muslim population but that does not mean that all Muslims were influenced by the two-nation theory propagated by league and also Muslim League was not sole responsible for the partition of the country. The causes of partition were manifold, complex and multifaceted.

Nonetheless the partition completely changed the position of the Muslims in the country. The Muslims, who stayed on, suddenly realize that they became the ‘wrongdoer’ in a country, which is also their birthplace, which they considered their homeland until a few days ago. Their loyalty has been continuously questioned by sections of the state, by the newspapers, some of the political parties and most importantly by the majority of people. Partition made the ‘religious identity’ as a determinant factor for the people of undivided India to choose their country or state.

Famous Urdu writer Sadat Hasan Manto wrote “The Partition of the country and the changes that followed it, left feelings of revolt in me”. What his mind could not resolve was:

What country did we belong to now India or Pakistan ? And whose Blood was it that was being so mercilessly shed every day ? And the bones of the dead, stripped of the flesh of religion, were they being burnt or buried?when I sat down to write , I found my thoughts scattered. Though I tried hard I could not separate India from Pakistan and Pakistan from India. I would repeatedly ask myself : to whom will now belong what had been written in undivided India ? Will that be partitioned too?

“When we were not free, we used to dream about freedom. Now that freedom had come, how would we perceive our past state?

“India was free, Pakistan was free from the moment of its birth, but in both states, man’s enslavement continued: by prejudice, religious fanaticism, by savagery”⁷

It was not easy to divide a nation. As Mushirul Hasan rightly pointed out that “It was not at all easy to come to terms with a nation carved out of one’s own homeland. There were memories on both sides of the fence, memories of living side by side for generations with a shared social and cultural heritage, memories of friends and comrades and of long standing associations”⁸ . It was indeed “the worst of times”, and the minorities in both the country became the worst victim of it.

The main three issues which concern the state authority most, were the issues of i) Refugee ii) Rehabilitation iii) Minority. These three interrelated issues became one of the prime concerns for the Nehru administration in the post-partition years. From the time of his birth Pakistan declared himself as an 'Islamic State', so it was easy for the Hindu community there to realize their position as a minority, but as far India was concern, she has been declared herself as a 'secular' country, means roughly speaking , where the rights every citizen possessed are equal; irrespective of their religion, caste and creed. But nonetheless, after partition the Muslims, who stayed on became the 'unreliable minority' in the popular and government perception. It was assumed by majority of the people in the country that as the state divided on religious basis, and Pakistan became an Islamic State so naturally the Muslims have their loyalty on the other side of the fence.

Partition proved to be a permanent wound which is positively injurious to all the Muslims in the state. The Muslims of Kolkata were not exception.

Bengal and Punjab was the worst effected province in the partition and the way government takes the initiatives to rehabilitate in Punjab, Bengal did not get the help that way, so the social, political and economic situation in the province was vulnerable, turmoil and devastated. And if we see the studies related with Partition we can see there are plenty of studies regarding the different aspect on Partition- the social, political, economic, cultural changes in the province, about the plight of the refugees, the process of their rehabilitation, the relationship between the government and the refugees, and many more- except in one aspect that is about- the largest minority in the province –the Muslims. It is really very interesting to note that during the time of boom in partition studies, the position of the minorities in the province does not get so much attention of the scholars except the few. Joya Chatterji who is pioneer in this area of minority's problem, mentioned that "Historians concerned with counting the human cost of Partition have concentrated on refugees drive across borders by the painful and violent vivisection which it entailed. Partition's impact on the minorities, it created on both side of the border, who remained where they were and did not migrate as refugees to the new nation of their co-religionists has not received the attention that it deserves"⁹ . It is not just Historians who have not noticed

this feature, the political scientist, the sociologist, the economist nobody focuses on the minorities after partition in the state of west Bengal. Although there are books about the political situation, the role of the political parties that time, books about the political explanation in the changing political condition of West Bengal. No one tried to give an account of the minorities. As a major student of history who is equally interested in the political domain, it surprised me a lot. So the main focus of my thesis is the Muslims in the capital of the province- Kolkata after partition who stayed there as a minority. How were they affected by Partition? And how they contend with it? What kind of difficulties they faced? These are the important questions of my thesis.

Although there are books about Kolkata's Muslims like '*Margins of Citizenship' Muslim Experiences in Urban India* by Anasua Chatterjee,[Routledge,2017] '*People without History : India's Muslim Ghettos* by Jeremy Seabrook and Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, [Narayana Publishing,2011] but most of them deal with the contemporary Muslim socio-political structure in the city. There is a huge gap in studying the Muslim politics in the city, where the pre-partition studies about them suggests different kind of aspects in their political arena, the contemporary studies suggested the trend of exclusion they have, but what about the "partitioned times". There is a very interesting fact that after the great Calcutta Killings of 1946, which accompanied by partition and Independence of the country, the number of communal riots were low in the province as well as in the city. Definitely there were riots in 1950s and also in 1964 but the intensity of them was much less in comparison to some other provinces in the country. But unfortunately this does not prove that the acceptance of the Muslim society is much more here than in other cities. From the study of the contemporary Muslim society in the city we can see that, till date the sign of communalism here is like the quicksand. Muslims are concentrated in certain geographic zones of the city and lead a ghettoized existence. They do step out of these neighborhoods to travel, to work ,but cannot find a place to own, buy or rent in their preferable locations due to communal prejudices and this has become an open secret in the city. Neo-liberal jobless growth affects them and has deepened their poverty. Local prejudices, assisted by older forms of widespread communal myths played a key role in their living style. The question which is very important in this aspect that whether this trend of exclusion is a part of the

contemporary political process or it is the continuation of the trend which started after partition? This question has motivated me to explore the issue.

A long time has passed after partition; now it's time to rethink and re-formulate the actual situation of Muslim communities in Kolkata. We can trace their evolution post independence, both historically and socially. We can focus on the timeline from 1947 to 1977.

The questions which I tried to find answers mainly are a) whether the Muslim politics in the city changed completely after Independence or is it just the continuation of the Muslim politics in the pre-partition era. b) How the Partition affected the Muslim Communities in Kolkata? c) How the communal attacks and riots have affected the Muslims in the city in pre-partition and post-partition era? d) Is there any difference between the riots before partition and after partition?.

For understanding the Muslim politics of the city in post-partition era, it is very important to understand the dimension of the Muslim politics in pre-partition era, because without understanding Muslim politics in the pre-partitioned times, it is very difficult to understand the political discourse Muslims have in the post-partitioned times.

In the first chapter I have tried to give '***A brief historical account of the Muslims in the city of Kolkata***', the inner division between them, the differences between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims, and how the difference has played an important role in the Muslim politics of the state in the colonial and also in the post colonial times. These issues are very important for us to understand the fact that the Muslims were not a homogeneous entity, neither in India nor in Kolkata, neither in the time of pre-independence nor in the post –independence era. There are class and caste, ethno-language division between them, which is very much responsible for shaping the politics in the city. There is also a difference between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims , which has become an important factor for the city's Muslim politics, which I also discussed in this chapter, even after the partition the issue was a salient one; although, that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. Here I have tried to give an idea about the difference between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims , and who are the Bengali Muslims in brief, because without understanding

this notion it is very difficult to understand the city's Muslim politics. I have also discussed how Kolkata became an important centre of social, cultural and political movements for the Muslims.

In short, I have tried to portray an idea about the history of the Muslims in Kolkata, it's a small attempt to show that how important part they are in this city, from the very beginning.

The second chapter deals with the '*Muslims in the political discourse of the British ruled Bengal*', it's very important for us to understand the colonial politics and how they permanently sealed the future of these two communities, through their diplomatic measures.

I have tried to focus on the administrative measures taken by the British government and its consequences. I have tried to show that the policy of the British government whether to show the Muslims as a majority in the census, or the first Bengal Partition in 1905 where the first concept of Muslim majority east Bengal and Hindu majority west Bengal came, The legislative reform of the 1909 and finally the Communal Accord of 1932 all this were responsible for Muslim separatism in the province. The British by their diplomatic policy created differences in the political arena encourage communal attitudes between two communities, the final result of which was the partition of India. The seeds of dissonance which they sowed now became a tree in the country. I have tried to explain that the political discourse of the Muslims in the city is very much interrelated with the policy of the British 'divide and rule', the education policy of the British, the search of Bengali Muslim identity, the conflict between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims, the role and attitude of the Hindu middle class towards the Muslims. The counter attitude of the Muslim middle class as well as the newly emerged Bengali Muslim middle class. The inner conflict between the Krishak Praja party and Muslim League. The mass mobilization policy of the Muslim league and the Hindu Muslim relation in the province all are equally involved to shape the Muslim politics in the pre-independence era of the province and to determine the future of the Muslims in the city after independence. It is a long interrelated process. Each of the political moves is important to shape the political discourse in the province.

The communal riots form an integral part of the Hindu Muslim politics in the country, in the third chapter '***Pre-Partition Riots in the city Of Kolkata***' I have mainly focused on the riots in the pre- partition era and how it changes its nature with the course of time. It is very important for us to understand the politics of riot because till now India is not free from this curse.

While Discussing about the three major riots in the city in 1918, 1926, and 1946, I have tried to explain that how the riot became a determinant factor for the course of politics. The differences among the above mentioned riots are the clear indicators of the conviction that how 'religious identity' became one of the most important factor in the political and social life of the city which has prevailed after the partition also. The interpretation of the riots helps us to understand the nature of the post partition riot and how the invented tradition played an important role to constructing the idea of nations and movements after the independence.

The fourth chapter of my thesis named '***Changing Dimension of the Muslim Politics in The City of Kolkata***' where I discuss changing nature of the Muslim politics in the city. How the social, political environment changes and how it affected this community, their anxieties , insecurities, what kind of problems they faced in this new situation, and how they cope up with it..

The fifth chapter or the final chapter is the ***conclusion*** one, where I try to summarize the findings of my work, and insights I gathered from this.

My literature survey fall into four major parts and each of the parts are divided into two sub-parts, based on the Chapterisation I provide. The books about Kolkata's Muslims are very limited, among them the M.K.A Siddiqui's '*Muslims of Calcutta: A study in aspects of their social organization*', [Anthropological Survey of India,1974] '*Hindu-Muslim Relations*' [Abadi Publications 1993], *Institutions and Associations of the Muslims in Calcutta* [Institute of objective studies ,1997]are important. In his books Prof Siddiqui give us a picture about the Muslims who resides in the city, the social stratification among them, his books gives us a clear idea about the different class, caste in the Muslim Society, and also the socio-economic and educational condition of the Muslim artisan in the city. The book '*Calcutta Mosaic: essays and interviews on the minority communities of Calcutta*'[Anthem Press,2009] edited by

Himadri Banerjee, Sipra Mukherjee, Nilanjana Gupta gave me the idea about “space”, which is very important feature relating with the issue of “locality” or the ‘living area’ of the Muslims. Apart from these , there is an article named “Becoming a minority community :Calcutta’s Muslims after Partition” by Anwesha Sengupta in Tanika Sarker and Sekhar Bandhopadhyay edited book “*The Stormy Decades*”[Esha Betellie,2015] , where she also try to focus on the Muslims in the city . The books which I discussed to gather insights about Bengali Muslims orientation are “*The Bengali Muslims; Quest For Identity 1871-1906*, “ *Understanding the Bengal Muslims* [oxford university press1981] by Rafiuddin Ahmed, “*Bengali Muslim Thought: Its liberal and National trends 1818-1947* [K.P Bagchi 1991] by Pradip Kumar Lahiri, *The quest For Modernity and the Bengali Muslims 1921-47* [Minerva, 1995] by Soumitra Sinha.

About the politics related with the India’s Independence and partition, the books which are important in this aspect are, *Modern India* by Sumit Sarker [Laxmi Publications, 2008] “ *Muslim Politics 1906-47 and other essays*” [Firma k.L Mukhopadhyay, 1969]by Humayun Kabir, “*Muslim Politics in Bengal*” [Impex India 1976] by Shila Sen, “*The Muslim Microcosm, Calcutta 1918 to 1935*” [Franz-Steiner Verlag,1974] by Kenneth Macpherson, “*Roots of separatism in Nineteenth Century Bengal*” [Ratna Prakashan, 1974] by Amalendu De, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947* [Cambridge University Press,2002] by Joya Chatterji, *Crises and Creativities : Middle Class Bhadrolok in Bengal c1939-52* [Oxford university press,2005] by Amit Kumar Gupta .

After reviewing these books, it becomes clearer that, politics can never be one-dimensional, it has multiple layers. The course of politics depends on the social, economic structure of that time. ‘Value judgment’ has been emphasized most of the time in the case of politics and political history of India. But is it unerring? Is it possible to call any political policy or program completely wrong and completely right , now it is time to rethink about it. As Oscar wilde says ‘.. the truth is rarely pure and never simple’ so does the politics where ‘Muslim microsom’ by Macpherson focuses on the internal political conflict among the Muslims in Kolkata, he misses the part of conflict among the Bengali and non-bengali Muslims in the city and also the role of the ‘rural politics’, which started to gain influence on that time, the focal point

of Shila sen's 'Muslim Politics in Bengal' she only looked at the change in Muslim Politics, but without the larger political context and the role of the Hindu middle class, and their communal attitude towards the Muslims, the study of Muslim politics is incomplete. Joya Chatterji focus on the issue of Hindu Bhadrolok communalism in her book *Bengal Divided*, but she consider the Hindu Bhadrolok class synonymous with Hindu middle class, this notion is not completely true, 'Bhadrolok' is a socio-cultural category where middle class denote the socio-economic category. There may be sense of communalism among the middle class as well as among the 'Bhadrolok' but there were differences among them in their attitude towards the Muslims, and also not all of them were anti-Muslim. It is an old habit of us that we consider 'fragments' as 'complete', it is very important for us to redrafting this notion, because each and every aspect of this phases are responsible for shaping the future of the Muslims in the city.

As far the Communal riots were concern about the province and in the city also, '*Communal Riots in Bengal 1905-1947*' [oxford university press, 1993] by Professor Suranjan Das is the torch-bearer in this section. Apart from this '*Communalism in Bengal From Famine to Noakhali*' 1943-47 [Sage Publications,2005] by Prof Rakesh Batyabal, '*Riots and Victims: violence, Construction of communal identity among Bengali Muslims 1905-1947*' [Westview press, 1999] by Patricia A. Grossman, '*Making Peace Making Riots, Communalism and Communal Violence, Bengal 1940-1947, Making Peace, Making Riots*' [Cambridge University Press,2018] by Anwesha Roy are noteworthy.

Prof Suranjan Das focuses on the transformative character of the riots in undivided Bengal, He shows that how the economic, social factor were related in the first phase of Kolkata riots and how it changes where "religion" became the sole component of the riots. For Rakesh Batyabal although communalism is an ideology, but for him "political parties are one of the prime channels through which it is articulated. The nature and characteristics of its transformation can be understood by reading the changes in the agenda and the role of different political parties"¹⁰. So for him the role of the political parties are important he focuses on the event of Bengal Famine and the role of the political parties during that time, He came to a conclusion that the role of the political parties during the famine, and the mobilization strategy

used by the political parties on 1945 elections contribute also to nurture the communal consciousness people already have. Patricia A. Grossman's work *Riots and Victims* violence and the construction of Communal identity among Bengali Muslims 1905-1947 where she mainly focuses on the communalism among the Muslims. She conclude by saying the 'riot' has become the regularized mode of enacting mass politics, and play a critical role in crystallizing popular construction of identity and forging group solidarity. In Her opinion "The years between 1926 and 1941 opened up new opportunities for Muslim leaders in Bengal to position themselves as leaders of a community which was self-consciously Muslim". Although her works primarily focus on the Muslims of east Bengal and the construction of communal identity among them, she did not focuses much on the 'Hindu Communalism' by the Middle class people, that make her study somehow incomplete in this regard. Anwesha Roy in her book *Making Peace, Making Riots* tries to focus on the complexity and the interconnections between different socio-economic and political aspects, which in her opinion were the factors for rise of communalism and communal politics.

To understand the ideology of communalism I mainly discuss the books by Bipanchandra "*Communalism In modern India*"[Har-Anand Publications,2009] , "*Communalism in Indian Politics*" [Rainbow publishers,1998] by Rajni Kothari, "*Politics India*"- *the state society interface*[South-Asian Publisher,2002] edited by Rakhahari Chatterji , *Communalism Contested : Religion, Modernity and Secularization* [Vistar publication,1997] by Achin Vanik . Each of the book throws a new light about the idea of communalism , the effects of it, and how the identity of the people, and politics surrounding them changes by politicization of religion.

For the post-partition scenario ,where the books written by Gazala Jamil "*Accumulation by Segregation: Muslim Localities in Delhi*" [oxford university press,2017] , "*The Long Partition: and the making of Modern South Asia, Refugees Boundaries, Histories*" [Penguin Random House,2008] by Vazira Fazila – Yacoobali Zamindar , "*The Spoils of Partition*"[Cambridge University Press 2007] and "*Partition Legacies*" [Permanent Black,2019] by Joya Chatterji, "*Partitioned lives : Migrants, Refugees, Citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947-1965*" [oxford university press,2012] by Haimanti Roy, *Legacy of a divided Nation : India's Muslims since Independence* [oxford university press,1997]. *Moderate or Militant : Images of*

India's Muslims [oxford university press,2008] by Mushirul Hasan, *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India* [oxford university press,2003] by Paul.R.Brass, shape my ideas about the post- partition condition in the country from different aspects the books including *The Disinherited State: a study of West Bengal 1967-70* [orient longman, 1971] by Shankar Ghosh, *Calcutta 1964: A social survey* [Lalvani publishing house,1968] by Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Calcutta: Its urban development and employment prospects* [Concept Publishing Company,1974] by Harold Lubell, “*Food movement of 1959: Documenting A turning point in the History of West Bengal* edited by Suranjan Das & Premangshu Kumar Bandhopadhyay,[K.P Bagchi,2004] ‘ *The Marginal men*’[Lumiere books,1970] By Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarty, *Politics in West Bengal , Institutions, Processes and Problems*[wordPress,1985] edited by Rakhahari Chatterji, *Radical politics in West Bengal*,[MIT Press,1971] and *Political Development and Political Decay in Bengal* by Marcus F. Franda [Firma.K.L Mukhopadhyay,1971] gives me an idea about the political situation about the state.

I have also consulted different kinds of journals for better understanding of the topic, among them Adjustment and Accommodation: India's Muslims after Partition, (Social Scientist,1990) ,Muslim Intellectuals , Institutions and Post-Colonial predicament (India International Centre Quarterly: 1995) by Mushirul Hasan, On Being stuck in Bengal : Immobility in the ‘Age of migration’(Modern Asian Studies, 2017), South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946-1970(The Historical Journal, 2012), Dispositions and Destinations : Refugee Agency and “ Mobility Capital” in the Bengal Diaspora ,1947-2007(Comparative Studies in Society and History: 2013) by Joya Chatterji, Communal Violence in twentieth Century Colonial Bengal : An Analytical Framework (Social Scientist,1990), Towards an understanding of Communal Violence in Twentieth Century Bengal (Economic and Political Weekly 1988) by Suranjan Das, Problems of Muslim Minority in India by Suneet chopra (Social Scientist, 1976) , Tombs and dark Houses : Ideology , Intellectuals and Proletarians in the study of Contemporary Indian Islam by Peter. B Meyer (The Journal of Asian Studies,1981), Rethinking the Muslim question I post-Colonial India by Maidul Islam (Social Scientist, 2012) , Religion, Economics and Violence in Bengal : background of the Minorities Agreement by Richard.D. Lambart (Middle East Journal , 1950) , The Search For order : Understanding Hindu- Muslim Violence

I post-Partition India by Stuart Corbridge, Nikhila Kalra and Kayoko Tatsumi (Pacific Affairs 2012) and many more are important.

The various books and Journals I have consulted to base my research work, apart from that, through the different sources like intelligence reports, Police reports, newspaper reports, I try to find the answers of my questions. I try to follow a descriptive analytical approach for this subject matter.

There are limitations in my study, many reports which I wanted to see, could not see, because of the official obligations, many books which I wanted to study, could not do because of the difficulties to collect them. The Pandemic situation has become an obstacle in front of me to collect more information. Nonetheless, I tried my best to shed some light on this matter.

Ranabir Samaddar once said “ This History [The history of Partition] is lost in quagmire of the present, that does not allow the partition to become a thing of the historical past. Partition’s history is thus an incomplete one. At once an event of the past and a sign of the present times”¹¹. If we look at the Muslims in the country their status in the socio-economic structure, it became more clearer, that how they fight with the shadow of partition.

I try to focus on one of the incomplete aspect of Partition politics. Becoming a minority was always a difficult experience, I try to tell the problems, the difficulties they faced from their perspective, in that case my work focuses on the “ politics from below”. there are policy, rules, regulations provided by the newly formed State for the protection of the minorities, but how far that would have been implemented is a matter of assessment.

Notes and References:

¹ Massey, James; Minorities and Religious Freedom In a Democracy, Manohar, 2003, New Delhi. P-17

² Ibid, Massey- p-17

³ Ibid, Massey p-17

⁴ Rajasekhariah, A.M, Jawarlal Nehru’s contribution to secularism in India- an estimate, The Indian Journal Of Political Science, vol-48, No-2 (April-June 1987)p-219

⁵ Ibid p-219

⁶ Although India have different kinds of minority depending on different features, but my work focuses on the largest minority community based on religion in India- the Muslims.

⁷ Hasan, Mushirul, Adjustment and Accommodation: Indian Muslim’s after Partition, Social Scientist, Vol-18, No.8/9(Aug-Sep, 1990)p-50

⁸ Ibid, Hasan p-50

⁹ Chatterji, Joya , The Spoils of Partition . oxford University Press . 2007 New Delhi p-159

¹⁰ Batybal , Rakesh , Communalism In Bengal; From Famine to Noakhali. Sage publication. 2005, New Delhi p-380

¹¹ Sinha-Kerkhoff.K Tyranny of Partition, Hindus In Bangladesh and Muslims in India Gyan Publishing House 2006, New Delhi – p-20

Chapter -1

***A brief historical account of the Muslims
in the city of Kolkata***

Chapter -1

A brief historical account of the Muslims in the city of Kolkata.

Calcutta or Kolkata is neither a modern nor an ancient city-it is not a proper medieval city either. It is in the year 1690 which is considered the last phase of the medieval times in the country did Kolkata emerged as a city, when a British trader named Job Charnok came here to establish a factory. The areas that first developed as the city consisted of three villages Kalikata, Sutanoti, Gobindapur. It is true that the foundation of the city predates the British era because there were references about Kolkata, 'the then Calcutta' found in Bipradasa's Manasamangal (1495A.D) and also in Abul Fazal's Ain-e-Akbari (1592 A.D). However with the advent of British the history of Calcutta or Kolkata started to rebuild; with the British the city started to come into prominence.

The geographical location of the city inspired the British to develop this as one of the main commercial centres. They understood the importance of the city's vast hinterland (which expanded from northwest to Punjab) to fulfil their expansionist dreams. Job Charnok established a factory in 1691 at the bank of the river Hooghly under a licence from the Nawab of Bengal for trading purpose, Sir John Goldbrough who succeeded Charnok in 1693 obtained further concession for the expansion of settlement. Following that Sir Charles Eyre hoisted the union jack in 1702 over the fort which they had started to build from 1697. Kolkata became one of the most important Commercial centre for the British. As one of the British agent wrote in 1698 "The best money that ever was spend"¹ referring to the purchase of the three villages constituting Calcutta nowadays Kolkata.

The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 created an unprecedented opportunity for the British to consolidate their economic and political power in the country, and the first phase of this process was started by establishing their right over Calcutta.

The first confrontation between the British and the Bengal Nawab Siraj-Ud-Doula took place in 1756. The Nawab came to the city to teach the British a lesson because of their ill-legal trade activity, their arrogant attitude towards the Nawab and most importantly despite the prohibition by the Nawab about the renovation of their fort in the city, the British started to renovate it . The Nawab army defeated the British troops and captured the city with all its fortification on June 18, 1756. Nawab

renamed the city as Alinagar, appointed a governor for the city and returned to Murshidabad. The rule of Nawab in the city did not last long because the British never wanted to leave their rights from Kolkata, because for them Kolkata was a sea of opportunity. Subsequently they gathered more soldiers from madras (nowadays Chennai) and regained their authority in the city. Nawab felt very insulted in this incident and started preparations for the war again but this time, the 'luck' was with the British, both the forces meet in Plassey and for the betrayal of Mir Jafar Nawab's army was defeated. The battle of Plassey was won by the British.

It is said to be a watershed moment in Indian history, because the victory provided the British not only the authority of the city and the power of Bengal but also the key to the door of the entire country. Calcutta remained the seat of their government until it was shifted to Delhi.

The 'heterogenetic' character is one of the major feature of any commercially developed city, such character is demonstrated where in the population comes from a wide hinterland to various ethnic, linguistic, cultural backgrounds who are mostly associated with the technical and commercial order of that city. Calcutta too demonstrates heterogeneity by its constantly shifting population coming into its fold from various parts of the country, as well as from the world. Hence characterizing Calcutta as a 'migrant city' is not an exaggeration. It is this migrant population which lends variety and heterogeneity in the character of the city. One can get a fair idea about the different communities in the city on reviewing the 1837 census.

Communities in Calcutta 1837

<i>Communities</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of total population</i>	<i>Communities</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total population</i>
ENGLISH	3,138	1.61	MUHAMADDENS BENGALI	4567	2.34
EAST INDIANS (EURASIANS)	4,746	2.43	HINDUS BENGALI	1,23,318	63.14
PORTUGUESE	3181	1.63	HINDUS UPCOUNTRY	17,333	8.87
FRENCH	160	0.08	ARABS	351	0.81
CHINESE	362	0.19	MAGHS(BURMESE)	683	0.35
ARMENIANS	636	0.33	MADRASSIS(SOUTH INDIANS)	55	0.03
JEWS MUHAMMADENS	360	0.18	INDIAN CHRISTIANS	104	0.05
MUGHALS	527	0.27	PARSEES	40	0.02
UPCOUNTRY	16,677	8.54	UNSPECIFIED LOWER ORDER	19,084	9.77

2

After analysing the above population, one can get an idea about the different communities who live in the city as well as it gives us another important feature of the city as to who are the majority and who are the minority here.

In a country like India the criterion of the majority and minority community is based mainly on two aspects, firstly religion and secondly the language. It should be noted also, that in many places these two feature overlap with each other, in spite of this, these two features are considered as indicators for the specification of the majority and minority community in a specified space. Kolkata is no exception; one can easily get an idea about different religious and linguistic group after analysing the census of the city.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
HINDUS	65.04	69	79.06	68.71		83.41	83.95	83.13			77.68
MUSLIMS	44.7	25.65	21.92	26.00	24.03	12	12.78	14.19			20.27
CHRISTIANS	2.2	4.24		3.97	0.79*	2.98	1.52	1.40			0.88
SIKHS	1.5	0.13		0.39	0.41	0.56		0.36			0.34
BUDDHISTS	0.34	0.26		0.25		0.37	0.31	0.29			
JAINS	0.15	0.2		0.27	0.32	0.46	0.58	0.60			0.46
CONFUCIANS	0.02	0.12		0.11							
ZORASTRIANS	0.04	0.05		0.10		0.06					
JEWS	0.28	0.22		0.15		0.08					

3

LINGUISTIC GROUPS IN CALCUTTA 1901 TO 1996-97

(SHARE IN TOTAL POPULATION)

%OF TOTAL POPULATION	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1996-97*
BENGALI	51.3	49.04	49	55.7	65.6	63.84	59.94	62.9
HINDI	37.6	34.01	34	36.6	20.3	19.34	23.24	28.5
URDU		7.05			6.7	8.98	11.07	5.2
ORIYA	3.6	4.06		2.5	2.3	2.1	1.34	0.9
TAMIL		0.42		2.4	0.31	0.52	0.42	
GUJRATI		0.31				0.71		0.6
GURMUKHI					0.8	0.67		
PUNJABI		0.19			0.2	0.21	0.84	0.5
MARWARI		1.00			0.2	0.46		
RAJHASTHANI					0.3	0.19		
ENGLISH	3.4	3.11	2.7	2.7	1.1	0.95	0.64	0.5
CHINESE		0.28				0.3	0.22	
ARMENIAN		0.03				0.001		
HEBREW		0.07				0.0004		

SOURCE – CENSUS OF INDIA, FOR THE RESPECTIVE DECADES.⁴

From the aforementioned charts it is clear that the Hindu Bengali speaking people formed the majority here. So apart from them all the people from different communities are the minority here. After the Hindus, the people who formed the majority in this town and still now a ‘majority’ after the ‘Hindu majority’ are the Muslims. The Muslim constitutes a significant component of the city’s demographic profile. If we analyse the chart below we can find that there is hardly any municipal words in the city that does not have any Muslim presence.

% of Muslims in the total population	Wards/Areas in				
	1911	1921	1931	1941	1961
Very high (more than 50%)	Kalutola, Taltola, Beniapur, Ekbalpore	Ballygunge, Tollygunge, Alipore	Kalutola, Beniapur, Garden Reach	Kalutola, Taltola, Ballygunge, Watgung, Hastings	51,57,60
High/ Medium (35-49.99%)	BowBazar, Fenwick Bazar, Colinga, Ballygunge, Tollygunge	Kalutola, Fenwick bazaar, colinga, Beniapur, Ekbalpore	Fenwick Bazar, Taltola, Colinga, Ballygunge, Ekbalpore, Maniktola	Fenwick Bazar, Colinga, Maniktola	45,55,74
Medium (20-34.99%)	Sukea's street, Muchipara, Park street, Baman Bustee, Hastings Entally	Muchipara, Bowbazar, Hastings, Entally, Watgung	Muchipara, Bow Bazar, Park street, Baman Bustee, Tengra, Entally, Alipore, Watgung and Hastings, Beliaghata, Belgachia, Cossipore	Muchipara, BowBazar, Park Street, Tengra, Entally, Garden reach, Beliaghata, Belgachia	23, 31-33,50,53,54
Low/Medium (5-19.99%)	Shampukur, Bartala, Jorasanko, BaraBazar, Waterloo Street, Alipore	Shampukur, Bartala, Jorasanko, Waterloo street, Park street, Victoria Terrace, Bhawanipore	Shampukur, Bartala, Sukea street, Jorasanko, Bara bazaar, Waterloo street, Bhawanipore, tollygunge, satpukur	Bartola, Sukea street, Jorasanko, Bara bazaar, paddapur, Waterloo street, Baman Bustee, Bhawanipore, Ekbalpore, Tollygunge, Satpukur	1,3,5,13,16,21,22,27,29,34,35,37,39,42,45,47,48,49,65,69,71,75,76,78
Low (less than 5%)	Kumartoli, Jora bagan, Paddapur	Kumartuli, Jora Bagan, Paddapur	Kumartuli, Jora Bagan, Paddapur	Shampooker, Kumartuli, Jora bagan	2,4,6,10,11,12,14,15,17,20,24,26,28,30,36,43,44,46,61,64,66,68,70,72,77,79,80

5

The 'Muslims' are not a 'homogeneous' community, they also are stratified in different castes. One of the remarkable features of the Muslim community in Kolkata is the aspect of their social stratification. This community was represented by several linguistics groups including Bengalis. Prof: Nirmal Kumar Bose had mapped the spaces of the Muslims on two basic divisions- into Bengalis and non-Bengalis;

and into upper, middle and lower class. He also opined that the Muslim population although not fractioned by caste but is quite explicitly stratified by class”⁶. The non-Muslim population traditionally views the Muslims as a monolithic community which is incorrect. They also have caste like features it is just that they are united by a common religion. The Muslim population of Kolkata is the perfect example to understanding the internal social division they have.

The Muslims of Kolkata: Historical Background.

There is no accurate information as to when the Muslims started to come for settle down in the city. It is assumed that since the time of Nawab Siraj-ud-dula’s attack in the city some Muslims started to live here. Later, when Kolkata was slowly developing as an urban centre, Muslims from different places came here and got involved in various fields. It should be noted that historically, it is true that the relation between the Muslims and the British were never cordial. But in spite of that, the help of the Muslims was essential in some important spheres of urban development in the city. To quote Prof. Siddiqui here we can say that “Muslims in India had acquired a reputation of specializing in a number of crafts, inevitably necessary for urban development. These included architectural designing and masonry works, carpentry and woodcrafts, glass and ceramics, tailoring and garment designing chemical works and soap making etc.”⁷ This statement gives a sense of how the Muslim people were involved in the development of the city.

The Muslim population of Kolkata can be divided into two main categories: i) Foreigners ii) Indians(although there are differences in the Indian Muslim community, which will be discussed later). Among the foreigners the Muslims who are still visible in the city although few in numbers are the Afghans. They are coming from Jalalabad Kandahar, Ghajini, Mazar Sharif- different places of Afghanistan .Most of them used to lend money as their profession , The contextual note is that they cannot bring any female member of their family to India, according to the rules of their government. Apart from them according to the 1961 census there were 42 Iranians and Arab Muslims lived here, but in subsequent census reports no mention of them are found.⁸

Indian Muslims in the city, started to live here long before the British came into the city. They started to live in the coastal area, as sea-farers and most of them

were the rural Bengali Muslims coming from rural areas of East Bengal. As Kolkata developed into an important commercial centre, Muslims from different parts of the country, with different purposes, added to the populace.

Two of the most significant events in Kolkata's Muslim history are: the coming of the two royal families in the city. In 1798 came the family of Tipu Sultan and in 1856 came the dethroned King of Awadh Nawab Wajed Ali Shah. They settled in the then Calcutta, as a result of their internment by the British government in Tollygunge and Metiaburj area of the city, respectively. With them a new category of Muslims were introduced in the city space. These families specially the Awadh family made a huge impact on the education and cultural life of the city. Besides them The Murshidabad family, The Dhaka and The Bogra family also built a residence in Calcutta, for the purpose of dealing with the British or to have closer contacts with them. The credit for the construction of many architectural marvels like the Karbala, mosque, and imambara in this city goes to them.⁹ But, unfortunately these architectures don't exist today.

The Muslims who had settled in Kolkata, Prof Siddiqui, have divided them into four main categories. i) north western, comprising the Punjab, Kashmir and former NWFP [north-western frontier province] ii) western, consisting of Rajasthan and Gujrat as well as Maharashtra iii) Southern, comprising the Dravidian speaking areas of south India iv) northern region denoting the valley of the Ganga and the Jamuna extending to Haryana and Brij speaking area including Mathura, Alwar, Bharatpur and Mewat upto the borders of Rajasthan. The Muslim community that came to Kolkata from U.P and Bihar, belonged to two social categories. There were groups of mainly those who were associated with fruit business, and their reason for setting in the city was limited to mercantile purposes. People from lower-middle class came to Kolkata to provide labour. When Kolkata emerged as an industrial city, these people came here to work in the newly founded factories. The Muslims who came from various areas of Alwar, Bharatpur, Punjab and Rajputana set up a horse market in the Lockgate region of north Kolkata. The Muslims are also called the pioneer of the milk and Dairy trade in Kolkata, the sheikhji Muslims of Haryana, the meo Muslims of Mewat and the ghoshi and gaddi community of Uttar Pradesh started this trade in Kolkata. In the hide and skin trade there was the monopoly of Muslims. Because of the Religious restrictions Hindus did not take part in this trade. So a large

number of Punjabi Muslims, the Bihari Muslims And the Ranki (Iraqi) Muslims of Uttar Pradesh were engaged in this business, in addition to them, there were few Bengali and Tamil Muslims who also took part in this business.

The Rajasthani Muslim group, Nilgar, Sonar, Manihar etc., came to the city on the basis of their traditional occupation. From the Kachch and Hallar area of Gujarat, the Bohras and Khojas came to settle down in Calcutta. They were mainly traders of clothes. The famous Nakhoda Mosque of Kolkata was created by Kachchi memons in 1926. In addition to the other Muslim communities, Tamil maraykar (seafaring traders), who settled in the city from the middle of the 18th century, The kshatriya Muslims, who introduced themselves as "quam-e-punjabian" came from different parts of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh , started to live here from the time of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Besides them, the shishgars were the notable among the early migrant Muslims in the city. The shishgars had the traditional occupation of glass works; they manufactured not only glass bangles but also glassware. They were also pioneers in establishing soap industry and had monopolistic control over the trade until the days of the swadeshi movement, when many more people appeared in the scene.¹⁰

Debasis Bose notes that in 1856, there were about 28 street names in Kolkata that are related to Muslims like Sadaruddin-Dedar Buksh-Alimullah, Lal-Budhu-Gulu-Nawabdi Ostagor, Karim Buksh Khasma etc.¹¹ It is a proof that despite their varied social position how the Muslims from different classes attached to Kolkata.

The above discussion clarifies that the Muslim community in Kolkata was not a monolithic community, and in the very first phase of the city they engaged themselves in various vocations. The two main characteristics of the Muslim population in Kolkata as follows are –i) they were usually regionally constituted, which meant the migrant Muslim groups from different regions of India settled in different continuous stretches of the city that eventually developed into neighborhoods and second, most such neighborhoods displayed an occupational basis specializing in one trade or another meant for urban consumption. Thus the glass makers from Uttar Pradesh settled in cossipure, milkmen from the Bihar on B.T road , dealers in skin and hide from Punjab around colootola traders in dry fruits and woolen garments from the north west frontier provinces and Kashmir in mechuabazar,

rajasthanis artisans near the traditional Hindu Marwari patrons in the areas around burrabazar and so on.”¹² As a result, it may be said that the entire Muslim community's population in Kolkata resulted in the formation of small pockets of area based on the profession of the different community, although there were differences among them according to their class and caste but they are all united by the common religion they have.

The Bengali Muslims and their relation with the city.

The Muslims who are mentioned in the above writings are other than the Bengali-speaking Muslims. A close review of the census reveals that following the Bengali speaking Hindus there are the Bengali speaking Muslims who formed the majority before the partition. They are also formed the majority among the Muslim community in Kolkata. According to the Census of 1837 there were 45,000 Bengali speaking Muslims in the city, while the numbers of Muslims who speak in other languages were about 20,000. The Bengali speaking Muslims represented a separate majority in the town, which deserves a separate mention. The question which arise when we discuss the Bengali Muslims are: Who are these Bengali Muslims? Who are called Bengali Muslims? What are their characteristics? What is the difference between the rest of the Muslim community in Kolkata with the Bengali Muslims that lived here? How much is their acceptability in Kolkata's social life? What is their position in the social structure of this city?

The Bengali Muslim term is very controversial for ages. Almost every Bengali Muslim is questioned whether he is a Muslim or a Bengali? Being a Bengali, is it possible to become a proper Muslim at all? In order to find the answers of the questions mention above, we must have the basic understanding of the two main perspective; firstly, What is meant by the word 'Muslim' in India? Does it merely indicate a religious group or refer to something more than that? And secondly the history of the origin of Bengali Muslims, although the two subject are very much interrelated with each other.

Who are the real Muslims? Every time the Indian Muslims face this kind of question, they point their fingers towards the Arab and Persian traditions. They think that those with whom Islam has entered into this country, with whom the prophet has his relation, only they can be the true followers of Islam and following them is the

only way to become a real Muslim. In this context the foreign origin was given the utmost importance.

The historical legacy of Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, Lahore (mainly the places situated in north India) made them the most important centre of Islamic culture in India. The Arabic, Persian and later Urdu cultures of these places drew the attention of the majority of the Muslims of this country. These three cultures altogether became known as the Islamic tradition or culture of India, and gradually it became synonymous with what the people thought as real Islamic tradition. As the Persian Urdu based culture of North India is described as the original Islamic culture, it creates a problem i.e. in a vast country like India the promotion or the advancement of Islam was not followed by the same tradition or path everywhere. There are many places where the local tradition, culture, custom (which symbolizes religion) played an important role for the propagation of Islam and as a result of that a mixed culture is formed, this 'syncretist culture' is completely different from what came to be known as proper Islamic culture. But since the North Indian culture has started to be viewed as synonymous with Islamic culture, this local mixed culture has never been approved by the mainstream culture even the follower of the so called authentic Islamic culture started calling it un-Islamic. As a result, there was a strange kind of suspicion among the people in those areas, about their identity as Muslim. The identity of Bengali Muslims must be found in this context.

Why was the entry and spread of Islam in Bengal left out of the so-called mainstream? If the distance was the first reason to be blamed, then its social and political perspective is the other reason. As Rafiuddin Ahmed pointed out "the Muslim conquerors ... encountered in eastern Bengal, when they first arrived in the thirteenth century were cults of gods, goddesses and spirits shaped by an overwhelming concern for survival. They did not immediately set about transforming the society; they neither had the time nor the zeal. Their principal goal was to consolidate their own political power in a territory which was almost non-Muslim. Creation of an institutional infrastructure to solidify support for the new Muslim state was considered critical; they thus built mosques and madrasahs patronized Islamic scholars and preachers, gave support to Islamic religious endowments, appointed qazis (Islamic judicial officers) who would promote Islamic ideals in addition to their juridical responsibilities, and encouraged immigration. These measures gradually

contributed towards a slow process of expansion of the Muslim society, primarily through acculturation of new cultivating classes¹³. So to understand the character of Islam in Bengal, it is very important to know about this background.

The transformation of a group of people into a community, is never predetermined. At times it is based on the ethnicity, at others the medium is a common language. However the primary aspect to become a community is to have a common place or territory. The Religion, though, plays a special role in it, is not the only factor. This equation is particularly applicable to the Bengali Muslims, because language and place are the two most important factors for the formation of Bengali Muslim community.

In Bengal, the Muslim society was divided into three main sections: "Ashraf", "Atrap" and "Arzal". Ashraf means 'noble or persons of high extraction'. It included 'all undoubted descendants of foreigners and converts from the higher caste of Hindus' This group included Syed, Sheikh, Pathan, Mughal, Mallick, Mirza¹⁴. There are three subdivision within the Ashraf class, they are - The urban urdu speaking Ashraf, the urban urdu-bengali speaking Ashraf and the Bengali speaking rural Ashraf. The urban Ashraf (both the urdu speaking and bengali-urdu speaking) followed the language, culture and tradition of their north-Indian co-religionists. The rural Ashraf class was mostly Bengali speaking and tried to emulate the culture and customs of the urban Ashraf classes. The question of genealogy is very important for this class. However there is an important distinction. Most of the rural ashraf were sunni where as the urban ashraf were shia. The Ashraf group specially who lived in the city always maintain a distance from the other classes.

The second category was Ajlaf or Atrap class, considered as lower classes. Generally, the people converted from Hinduism were considered as belonging to this class, and the third category were the arzal or degraded Muslim communities. They were considered untouchables in the Muslim society.

Dr. Rafiuddin Ahmed correctly remarked that the "two strata of Bengali Muslim society represented two distinct streams of "Muslim culture; the one 'foreign' to Bengal, the other indigenious origin. The former was hostile to all local associations, the latter was closer to the land- its language and cultural traditions. In their names, dress, and manners, the two groups differed fundamentally"¹⁵

These two factions became salient in the Muslim politics in Bengal, the first one is the city-centric high class Urdu-language section, and the other was village centric Bengali speaking community. The interests and the demands of both of them were completely different, there was no concern about the condition of the rural Muslims in the minds of the urban Muslims. They don't even bother to know about the problem which is faced by the poor rural Muslim community at that time. Later, gradual improvement of communication system which started bringing villages and cities closer, the growth of education which gradually created a group of educated Muslim middle class, political dissatisfaction between the Hindus and the Muslim population and above all, the emergence of Muslim separatist politics, brought the rural and urban people much closer.

As Prof A.F. Salahuddin rightly pointed out “that the characteristics feature of the Muslims of Bengal has been their isolation”¹⁶ A review of the social and political life of the Bengali Muslims reveals huge differences among the Urdu-speaking Muslims and the Bengali speaking Muslims socially as well as culturally.

In the city of Kolkata in 1830, there were about 45,000 bengali Muslims, making up one third of the city's total population. But most of this population was poor, working mostly as a dockworkers, day labourers, coachmen, book binder, washermen, as a cook in a rich household etc ,but the situation changes gradually as they understand that the major reason for their backwardness in the social, political and economic sphere of the country is in their attitude towards the western or modern education. They became determined to change the situation , The keyrole of The Mohammaden literary association, Central National Mohammedan Association, Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Parishod for the promotion of modern education among the Muslim community in kolkata are noteworthy in this aspect .

One of the important aspects of the Muslim society that prevailed in that time is that the upper section of their society considered education as an exclusionist privilege ,However the new education system by the British had no place for such mentality. A bulk of the people who came to Kolkata for education belonged to different classes of the social structure. There were people who came from the rural Ashraf classes , the professional classes of the countryside and most importantly the sons of the rural agriculturalist people who later formed the educated Bengali middle

class. These middle class people started a new phase in the Muslim politics of the city, raising the awareness about their common identity which is based on language .

Gradually, the number of Bengali-speaking Muslims in the city increased and in the changed economic situation, the Bengali Muslims who were generally labeled as socially inferior, lesser privileged tried to establish themselves in the city's political and social affair. These changes took place from 20th century onwards and a self-aware educated middle class Muslim community started to grow, they all began to emphasize on Bengali language, and based on this language, they developed their own identity; with this identity they gradually associated themselves with various political and social activities of the city. Many Bengali-speaking Muslims came to Kolkata from different parts of East Bengal with varied purposes. People came here for various trades, clerical jobs, and for higher studies. Thus emerged a new world where Bengali Muslims started to live .The problems faced by most of the Bengali Muslim students in the city were the problems related to housing, the city's Hindu population did not want to give them a room because of the social prejudice. So, many students started to live with the Muslim family living in the city as a private tutor for their children , while many chose the 'Messses' as their place of residence. In this kind of household where different professional groups coexisted with groups of Muslim students became a very strong centre for exchange and sharing ideas and views among the people of different spheres. It can be said that "the living spaces of the Bengali speaking Muslim "brought together students and non students who shared one of these identities , it gave them a security of a collective existence in an unfamiliar environment. This was the world of the lone male who had left behind his family unit when they arrived in the metropolis in search of education and jobs The Bengali Muslims took a long time to accept that they are the 'minorities' based on the language they speak. One of the major reason for this acceptance was the influence of western education ,and secondly in spite of their fondness or weakness for the classical language , it was very difficult for them to learn so many languages (a Muslim student had to learn Persian, Arabic, Urdu, English and Bengali where as the Hindu students learn only Bengali and English) . The Muslims understood that learning English in this changed circumstances was important for their career development and there was no place for Arabic, Urdu, Persian languages in the newly founded administration of the country. And most importantly they started to relate

their identity with the language they speak i.e Bengali. The language became the most prime factor of their newly emerged identity.

The Bengali Muslim identity was actually an expression of consciousness based on language. It was more likely to have linguistic proximity rather than the religious identity. As Dr. Rafiuddin Ahmed rightly pointed out in an article that “The Bengali Muslim puzzle or so we call it , offers interesting insights to a historian and a social scientist on the problems of cultural adjustment of people. The ambivalence is remarkable; at one time, religious, at another linguistic cultural, identity appears as dominant factor in Bengali Muslim identity:”¹⁷

The history of Muslim politics in the city of Kolkata is also the history of finding the identity of Bengali Muslims, as well as the history of conflict between the interests of non-Bengali Muslims with the Bengali Muslims.

Calcutta as a centre of social, cultural and political movement for the Muslims -

Kolkata was also became a field for the political, cultural, and social movements of the Muslim community in India. The establishment of Madrash –e-Aliya often known as Calcutta Madrasah in 1780 and The Fort William College in 1800 , made Calcutta an important place for education in the country. Muslims started coming to (especially from northern India) Kolkata in large numbers for studying as well as for teaching .Fazal Ali Fazli, Mirza Kajim Ali Jawan, Bahadur Ali Husaini, Maulvi Ikram Ali , Mir Aman were notable among them. Urdu prose literature was started from this city. A lot of books of Persian and Arabic were about to get translated into Urdu which created a new trend in the Islamic world of Calcutta. There were approximately 100 Urdu books translated by the scholars of the Fort William College. By the first quarter of the 19th century there were also Muslim scholars who represented in Calcutta School Book Society. Calcutta has remained a particular centre for the publication of Urdu books for catering to the needs of the whole of eastern India.

Urdu journalism was born in this town, Urdu version of Samachar Darpan known as Jan-E- JuhanNama was published in 1822 from this city. Apart from this Ain-e Sikandar, Mah-e Alam Afroz, Sultan-el-Akhbar are some famous newspapers in the 19th century published by Bengali Muslims.

In the later years Molana Mohammad Ali's 'Hamdard', Moulana Abul Kalam Azad's 'Al Hilal' Moulana Abdul Wasey Siddiqui's 'Rashad' Moulana Shaiq Ahmed Usmanis Asr-e-Jadid, Moulana Malihabadis's Azad Hind all published from Kolkata have been landmarks in the history of Urdu journalism in the country.

Kolkata's place was very important in the sphere of Muslim politics in the country. During the Khilafat movement Kolkata became one of the most important centers. , the Khilafat Committee was established in the year 1918-19. It was also, in 1921-22, by Mohammed Ilias The tableeghi Jamat developed an important center in Calcutta.

It becomes apparent that the Muslims were deeply entrenched to the city's social life ,economy and politics from the very beginning of this city, when analyzing the character of the Muslim population of this city, it is observed that although the Muslims of this city came here from different places of the country, but the Muslim society have a predominantly north Indian character the reason for this is being- "The population is largely drawn from the entire hinterland of the port of Calcutta roughly reflecting high numerical preponderance from the cities of comparatively close distance from the city. Linguistically the Hindustani or Urdu speaking Muslims constitute seventy percent of the total population or about 9 percent of the total population of the city. The next largest group is that of the Bengali Muslims followed by rajhasthani, gujrati and malayali groups.

The most surprising aspect of the Muslims in the city of Kolkata is perhaps the relation they shared with their co-citizen, who obviously follow the 'other' religion and formed the majority here. It is so astonishing to see that there are no place for the Muslim culture in the dominant majority discourse in this city, the city in which the Muslims became an integral part from the very beginning. Why their co-citizen treat them as "others"? Why there are so much ignorance till now about their culture, social and economic condition?

It becomes much easier to answer these questions if we divide the history of city Muslims into two stages, the pre-partition and the post partition era. During the British period when Kolkata emerged as an important social, political and commercial centre the differences between the two communities get politicized by the British .The Divide and rule policy of the British, communal riots, communalization

of politics, difference in social custom, attitude of the Hindu community, are responsible for the 'otherization' process, and subsequently the partition was the last nail in the coffin. Partition created poverty, rioting, social chaos. Moreover the description of the communal violence by the East Bengalee refugee created a stir among the Hindu population as a whole. All these are responsible for creating the differences among the people of these two communities. One of the strange feature of the relationship between these two communities is that due to the circumstances these two communities almost equally became victims of communal clashes, but they never become sympathizer to each other., rather as the days past, the distance increased.

In this context, the most appropriate explanation was given by Yusef Heiem Yerushalami in his book 'Zakhoor', where he wrote, although the word "remember it" and "don't forget it" sounds similar but the meaning of these two is not same at all. In his opinion with the word 'remember it' comes with a sense of moral responsibility. Memorization itself involves a sense of moral responsibility, the sense which is formed, depending on the particular situation, creates a different personality, depending on the person's ethics and values. In Kolkata after partition the Hindu population drove much by this kind of mentality, The politics of divide and rule, communal clashes, riots, etc have caused them to consider their relation, with the Muslims in a very different way. The tribulation faced by the people of that time was propagated by generations after generations they feel that these are also the part of their experience, they have made a part of their own identity on the basis of this history of their previous generations. The attitude of hatred, mistrust, became an inevitable part of the majority Hindu community towards the Muslims in the city.¹⁸

From the sides of the Muslim community, it can be interpreted in a different way, after the partition, most of the Muslim upper and middle class people went to Pakistan. Those who remained here were mostly poor classes, who had no way to go anywhere, and they realized that their place in the society of a newly independent nation has changed drastically, they are in a true sense minority now, And in this changed social, political situation, they will have to compromise in many cases for the sake of their own security, and for the sake of this security driven mentality they themselves have built some pockets for their habitation in some parts of the city, which is called Ghetto¹⁹ now a days.

The above discussion is just a brief outline of the history of the Muslims in Calcutta, It is a small attempt to show how important is the contribution of the Muslims for the city. In the subsequent chapters we can see how the course of politics changed the dimension of the freedom movement which ultimately lead towards the vivisection of the country and gave the Muslims ‘minority’ status for lifetime, and how their position changed in the city where they once played a vital role.

Notes and References:

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 - ³ Ibid p-28
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 - ⁵ Ibid pp40-41
 - ⁶ Ibid p-41
 - ⁷ Siddiqui. M.K.A Muslims In Calcutta A Study in aspects of their Social organization p-20
 - ⁸ Islam, Sheikh Maqbul . Itihaser prekhite kolkatar sonkhyaloghu somproday; Kolkatar musulman somaj. Poschimbongo Itihas Samsad p-32
 - ⁹ Op.cit Siddiqui p-31
 - ¹⁰ I must mention that the entire chapter is primarily based on the account of M.K.A siddiqui's book.particularly from page 15-35.
 - ¹¹ Op.cit Banerjee p--112
 - ¹² Ahmed , Rafiuddin. The Bengali Muslims 1871-1906 , quest for Identity p-8
 - ¹³ Ibid p-14
 - ¹⁴ Ibid p-16
 - ¹⁵ Ibid p-17
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 - ¹⁷ Ahmed , Rafiuddin edited ; Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative essays. Oxford Universitt Press 2001. New Delhi. P-20
 - ¹⁸ Kafi, Abdul, smriti, porichiti ar somoyer swad in Desh potrika 2nd June 20018 pp21-23
 - ¹⁹ Peter Marcuse define a ghetto as an area of spatial concentration used by forceswithin the dominant society to separate and to limit a particular population group defined as racial,or ethnicor foreign, and held to be and treated as inferior by the dominant society. see Chatterjee, Anasua Margins of Citizenship ; Muslim Experiences in urban India Routledge India 2017 p-34.[endnote -1]

Chapter - 2

***Muslims in the political discourse of
the British Ruled Bengal***

Chapter - 2

Muslims in the political discourse of the British Ruled Bengal –

The history of ‘institutional politics’ covers much of India’s history of independence, where political parties, political leaders, the policy of the governments, the role of different political organizations became the most important factors in the polity. In the ‘terms’ of political science we can call these the organized sector of politics – For a long time we were taught that the history and politics of India before and after independence is synonymous with the politics of these organized sectors, this is the only political dimension India have. But, this is not true at all ; because politics can never be monolithic so as political history .There are always two kind of politics in the history of India. Partha Chatterjee once commented that there was two different worlds of politics India have- one, the organized world of governments, parties, legislatures etc., and second, the unorganized world of the politics of the peasant communities¹. But it would be a lie to say that the unorganized sector of politics is only limited among to the peasant community. The periphery of these kinds of politics was much more, the working class of the industrial belt, the unorganized working class in the rural and urban areas each of them has their own political orientation and sphere. Later when the communist movement gained momentum in Bengal, the peasants and the working class of the factories came under the umbrella of communism and create the parallel political sphere and history of their own.

Bengal as well as Kolkata was no exception. The politics of Kolkata lay between these two genres of organized and unorganized sector of politics. Between these two main categories there were multiple layers or sub-layers we can find in the political history of this city. Apart from these two prominent category of politics,-- there was one more category or genre of politics which was also very popular that time i.e the ‘native politics’ or the ‘local level politics’. The conception of ‘space’ and ‘community’ is very important in this kind of politics, because the intensity of this kind of politics is dependant upon that particular space, community as well as the people of that places who would become the leaders of that places. Most of the time these kind of politics were centered on the concept of ‘populism’ and relatively short lived. These kinds of politics influenced the city and the history of independence of the country.

In the context of discussing ‘Muslim Politics’ in the country, it is important to keep some of the factors in mind that-

- i) The ‘ Muslim Politics’ as we termed it , is neither homogeneous nor static. There are different kind of political class, community orientation involved in their politics. So considering the ‘Muslim Politics’ as a homogeneous entity will lead us astray.
- ii) The British through their historiography always tried to convince us that the Muslim period or the middle ages in the history of India was detrimental for the people of India , The British always wanted to imply that Hindus were the real inhabitants of India , and the Muslim people were the invaders or outsiders. The most important factor for the British to establish their theory of insider and outsider was the religious difference these two communities have. And based on this religious ground they try to create the division between the two largest communities of the country for fulfilling their colonial interest. There is no doubt that they succeeded in their strategy – and the final outcome of their policy was the ‘partition of the country on the basis of religion’.

In this above context we must remember also that a huge difference lies among the Muslim politics in different regions of the country. One can’t compare or explain the politics of United Province and Bengal in a same manner. The variation depends mainly upon the social and economic position of the Muslims in those places, their class interest, and many more other factors. Precisely “the ‘ Muslims’ except for a short time before independence were never united so extensively”.²

In the city of Kolkata the so-called ‘Muslim Politics’ changed its course repeatedly and influenced the politics of Bengal. Although it was wrong to say that the politics of Kolkata Was the sole factor behind the political situation of Bengal-Dhaka, Mymensingh, Burdawn, Murshidabad they were all important as province. But, the way the politics of Kolkata affected Bengal and controlled the province, no other city can do that; so Kolkata had a different status in Bengal politics. The Calcutta Municipal Corporation was one of the most important centres for establishing the political dominance in the city, and there was a rivalry between Hindus and Muslims over the issue of leadership and dominance of this institution.

If we analyze the politics of Kolkata within a larger framework, we can see that each of the sections and sub-sections were dominated by different class of people. They were different not only from economic background, there was a huge difference between their social positions as well as their political orientations. Thus in the first phase of Muslim politics in the city – We see that the ‘Ashraf’ people were mainly represented the class from which they belong i.e the upper class in the socio economic structure. Later some of them joined in the National Congress and gained acquaintance as ‘Nationalist Muslims’ , apart from that a large section of this class joined in the Muslim League.

The people who were involved in the ‘local level’ politics in the city , most of them coming from the middle or lower class background of the society, consisted imams of local mosques, small businessmen who established their dominance in a locality or a small leader of a political party. Whether there was a communal clash or a spat between the two people of the same community in the locality, they would try to settle it. Sometimes they also worked as a middleman between the organized political sphere and the local level.³

If we divide the history of Muslim politics in Bengal and Kolkata into several segments . We can see that the history of Muslim politics is very much interrelated with the policy of British Divide and rule, the search of a Bengali Muslim identity, the conflict between Bengali and non Bengali Muslim , the role and attitude of the Hindu middle class towards the Muslims. The inner politics between Krishak Proja Party and Muslim League. The mass mobilization policy of Muslim League, and the Hindu Muslim relation in the province are all equally involved to shape the Muslim politics in the pre independence era of the province and to determine the future of the Muslims in the city after independence.

The Creation of the Division of “Others”- The British Policy of Divide and Rule; The early phase of the Muslim politics of the city.-

The widespread publicising of the phrase ‘Muslim Politics’ in the context of India’s pre-independence politics marks one of the breakthroughs of the British diplomatic discrimination policy, it is true that the differences between the Hindu and the Muslims are enormous as Dr R.C Majumdar rightly pointed out in his book “Glimpses Of Bengal in the nineteenth Century” that “ A fundamental and basic

difference between the two communities was apparent even to a casual observer. Religious and social ideas and institutions counted for more in men's lives in those days than anything else; and in these two respects the two differed as poles asunder.....The literary and intellectual tradition of the two communities ran on entirely different lines, and they were educated in different institutions, tols and madrassas. It is a strange phenomenon that although the Muslims and Hindus had lived together in Bengal for nearly six hundred years, the average people of each community knew so little of the others tradition".⁴

However, it was the British who used these differences for their own self-interest. The British by their diplomatic policy created differences in the political arena, encouraged communal attitudes between these two communities, and the final result of this was the partition Of India. We may say that the seeds of dissonance which they sowed now became a tree in the country.

The first manifestation of the 'Divide and Rule' policy by the British was seen in the decision of first partition of Bengal in the year 1905. It was argued by the British, in favor of this policy that -it was adopted for administrative convenience. By this measure the British created two provinces by partitioning the Bengal i) The Muslim majority east Bengal ii) The Hindu majority west Bengal. One can easily understand after studying the books related with the 1905 Bengal partition whether this policy was taken for administrative convenience or it was taken as an aid to the British policy of segregation.⁵ But whatever the motive of the British behind this policy for the first time the Muslim political consciousness was created throughout the vast area of Bengal. The Muslim people realized the need for a united political platform for the community. This thought was manifested through the establishment of 'Muslim League' in 1906 at Dhaka by the Nawab of Dhaka Salimullah.⁶ Although it is true that- the political awareness that was seen in the upper class Ashraf Muslims was not seen among the lower rural Muslim population but the ashraf class realized the importance of 'mass' in the sector of organized politics in this context.

The Ashraf class also understood that for the development of themselves it's important for them to stay loyal to the British and the British on the other side realized that in order to satisfy their own political purpose or goal they needed to help the Ashraf class of the community directly or indirectly.

The second British policy which can be mentioned in this context is the ‘Legislative Reform of ‘1909’. In this reform as Leonard A. Gordon rightly explained “There was a provision for separate Muslim and Hindu or general electorates. This stipulation favored by the viceroy Lord Minto and the Urdu Muslims of North India had the long run effect of encouraging political organization and affiliation with a given territorial constituency”⁷. This is the first step of communal award of 1932 which effected the Hindu masses very badly.

And finally The British policy of ‘Communal Accord of 1932’ put Hindus and Muslims against one another. By this act the British, based mainly on caste and religion, made some of the more division in the legislative council, and by this the number of seats of the Hindus decreased. Specifically in Bengal this act made the Hindu middle class Bengalis agitated so much that they collectively started protesting about it.

For the British this act was another way to increase the difference these two community already had. The British realized that if they wanted to stay in power in a country like India they had to adopt some such policy which could cause the inner conflict among the people of India, and to create this dissension nothing is more effective than ‘religion’. The British exploit the religious difference in every possible way and succeeded.

Joya Chatterjee in her book ‘Bengal divided’ or ‘Bangla vag Holo’ clearly pointed out the reason behind the adoption of this policy by the British. She explained that according to the opinion of British Essentialist Inden-

“ অদ্ভুত ও পরস্পরবিরোধী এক মিশ্র সমাজের প্রতি ভারত আস্থাবান” – ঐ সমাজে ভারতীয়দের সকল কর্মকাণ্ড পরিচালিত হয় জাতি, গ্রাম, ভাষাগত অঞ্চল, ধর্ম ও যৌথ পরিবারের মত সামাজিক গ্রুপগুলির জন্য। কারন ভারতে ‘ব্যক্তিগত’ বলে কিছু নেই – ‘ব্যক্তিস্বাতন্ত্র্যকে ভারতীয়রা অসং কাজ বলে মনে করে। দশকওয়ারি আদমশুমারি ভারতীয় সমাজের এমন একটি চিত্র গড়ে তোলে যা কিনা ‘বিশেষ স্বার্থ’ এবং গ্রুপগুলোর একটি সম্মিলিত রূপ। এক শতাব্দীর বেশি সময় ধরে ব্রিটিশরা তাদের চিনহিত ভারতীয় সমাজের সহজাত নেতৃত্বদের স্বার্থের সাথে এক প্রকার সখ্য গড়ে তোলে যাতে একজনের বিরুদ্ধে অন্যকে

ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখা যায় এবং ভারতে ব্রিটিশ শাসন কে নিশ্চিত করে সবাইকে অধীন রাখা যায়।⁸

So it is clear from the above statement that the British wanted a group of people, who will not oppose their work and also became loyal to them. The British found this ‘class’ among the traditionalist Ashraf Muslims.

The British realize that it was much more easier for them to control or manipulate the Muslims rather than the Hindus. There were several reasons behind it- firstly, numerically there were more Hindus in comparison to their Muslim counterparts in the whole country. So it’s much more easier to mobilize the Muslims rather than the Hindus.

Secondly, since the Hindus started educating in western education long time before the Muslims, it’s already created a political consciousness among them. They started to think about the issues like ‘Independence’, ‘Colonial rule’, ‘Exploitation’, ‘political unity’ etc. And this kind of thinking compelled them to realize the importance of the political organization, which was manifested through the establishments of organizations like Indian Association in the year 1870, and most importantly Indian national congress in the year 1885. It is needless to say that the British did not look well at these attempts by the Hindus. Although it was wrong to call these institution ‘Hindu Institution’, but there is no denying about the fact that the members of these institutions were predominantly upper class Hindus, and the policy taken by these organizations some time clearly reflected the class and the community orientation or interest. Although these institutions influenced the masses in a very nominal way. They created a consciousness among the masses nevertheless.

On the other hand, the western education for the Muslims took place in a completely different way. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan through his Aligarh movement started to convince the upper class Muslim population that the main reason of their backwardness or lagging behind the Hindus is the lack of western education among them. It is impossible for them (Muslim masses) to improve their condition in the British India without the western education. If the Muslims wanted to become equivalent or co-equals with their Hindu counterparts they have to change their attitude towards the western education.

It can be stated that through this Aligarh movement , a kind of consciousness was emerged among the Muslims , mostly belonging from the upper strata of the society. They understood the importance and necessity of western education, they realized that the Hindus based on this western education were much ahead of them in the political , social, and economic sphere of the country and it was impossible for them to achieve the same based only in ‘education’ , so they need the help of the British in a conciliatory way to regain their position or power in the country. The British on the other hand considered this as the finest opportunity to maintain their domination all over the country by implementing their policy of ‘divide and rule’.

One of the important feature of this whole political scenario was that the Muslims who became friendly towards the British and known as the ‘Loyalists’ came mostly from the Ashraf class. They considered themselves as the protector of their community, but as they belong from the upper strata of the society, and considers themselves as ‘highborn’ people , they were very disrespectful towards the lower classes of the society, and there was no communication as such between these two classes. This picture was the same for all over the country whether it was United Province or Bengal a huge difference prevailed between the Ashraf Muslims and the rest of them.

Nawab Abdul Latif was one of the prominent leaders among the Muslims of Calcutta. Inspired by Syed Ahmed khan’s Aligarh Movement, he established the 'Muhammadan Literary Society' in Calcutta in 1863. The objective of this institution was- “ impart useful information to the higher and educated classes of the Mahommedan Community.... On various subjects in literature, science and society, which are delivered at the monthly meetings in the Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and English languages”⁹. In 1870 there were 500 members in this organization, and most of them were from Kolkata, it is true that this institution never associated itself with any political activity, but the influence of this organization was well known among the elite Muslim class of Calcutta. Another organization which was able to influence the Muslim community in Kolkata is the Central National Mahommedan Association, The objective of this association was to increase the political and social consciousness among the upper class Muslims, and prepare them for the political activities in the

future. This organization was also found by Nawab Abdul Latif along with his friend Ameer Ali.

The characteristics of these organizations were not at all anti-british, in the words of Macpherson we can say that “they were strenuously loyalist and opposed the growth of the Indian National Congress blocking Muslim participation whenever possible in the belief that the future of Islam and India lay behind a bulwark of British protection against the supposedly more aggressive Hindu community”¹⁰

It is important to note that most of the Muslims, who belonged from the lower and middle class in the social structure of the city space, were not very much influenced by these organizations. Their political friends were the imams of the local mosques, or the local leaders of those places. The important organizations of that time were Anjuman-i-Waizeen, Anjuman-i- Mafidul –Islam, Anjuman-i- murtazavim, Anjuman-i-talim-o-Tariqqi, Beniapukur Moslem association etc . Each of these organizations was run by the Urdu-speaking , non-Bengali Muslims , who mostly belonged from lower or middle classes. These organizations were involved in various social activities. These organizations consciously distanced themselves from the Bengali speaking Muslims as well as with the western educated Muslims who were mostly belonged to the ashraf class. Since the Muslims had not entered the ‘organized political field’ till then , there were two parallel streams of politics that flowed in the city; on one hand it was the Ashraf class and their elitist politics on the other hand it was the local populist leaders , who were associated with the voluntary association of lower class Muslims based on religious, trading and charitable interests. Talking about the relationship between these two classes Macpherson stated that “such groups may have looked to upper class Muslims for representation of the highest levels but in return they provided such leaders , or rather spokesmen with grass root support”.¹¹

The Muslims who belonged to the lower and middle classes in the city , were not very much concerned about the issues of western education, relationship with the British , or the power politics in the Calcutta Corporation, the most important concern for them was to feed their family who either resides with them or live in the villages.

The Ashraf class was also not concerned about them, although they considers themselves as the guardian, of their community , but their class consciousness

compelled them to look at these people with compassionate outlook. They have no idea about the struggle faced by these classes on a regular basis, or about their ways of life. The Ashraf class thought that the rest of their community would follow them, but the ‘ashraf’s’ themselves were completely secluded from the rest of them. So there was a huge difference between the Ashraf and the other classes in the Muslim society. This difference between the classes of the Muslim community was one of the main obstacles to the formation of an organized political arena in the city of Calcutta.

So, it can be said that the first phase of the so-called Muslim politics in the city was unorganized, where the class orientation of the social structure played an important role.

The first Phase of political consciousness among the Muslims in the City and the City Politics -

The first partition of Bengal in 1905 was marked as a watershed in the history of Muslim politics in the province. Although it was cancelled in the year 1911 for the pressure created by the people of the province, the policy taken by the British ruler made a profound impact among the Muslim masses. It was a landmark event in the history of the province in two ways; firstly – This administrative decision brought the ‘divide and rule’ policy by the colonial ruler to the fore. Secondly, It can be said that it was through this policy, the seeds of Muslim separatism in the organized sector of politics were first sown in the province.

It was stated by the colonial ruler, that for the purpose of better administration, they divided the Bengal province into the Muslim majority east Bengal and Hindu majority west Bengal. The policy immediately raised hope among the upper class Muslims to regain their lost power and dominance centered on Dhaka. On the contrary this policy agitated the Hindus because the Hindu upper classes living in the city have lots of land and properties in East Bengal, naturally they started protesting against it. The diplomacy of the British to create the division between these two communities became successful in some way, because the lower and middle class Muslims who at first supported the anti-partition movement later withdrawn their support from the movement. Suranjan Das writes about this in his seminal work ‘Communal Riots in Bengal’ that “ successful British propaganda to the effect that the new province with a Muslim majority would provide more jobs and

opportunities for the Muslims- detached a large section of the upper and middle class groups of that community from the movement . At the same time Hindu revivalist trends within the swadeshi provoked antagonism in the Muslim popular thinking”¹² .

The Nawab of Dhaka established the Muslim League in these circumstances with the help of the British in the year 1906. A branch of this organization was also established in the city of Kolkata although the influence of it was limited. To quote Macpherson in this context we can say that “A provincial branch of the organization was established but it made slow progress in Calcutta where Muslim interest in the new province was minimal until offence at the tone of Hindu agitation began to rouse Muslim ire”¹³ . But despite all this it would be wrong to say that all the Muslims supported the partition. There were also several groups of Muslim people , who irrespective of their class position rejected the idea of partition, and supported the anti-partition movement. A completely opposite kind of organization of Muslim league was established just after the short period , named the ‘ Bengal Presidency Mohameddan Association. The people who were involved with this organization , among them Abdul Jabbar, Abul Kasem, Mujibar Rahman were important. Apart from them Moulana Akram khan , A.K Gaznavi were also involved with this organization. These two organization were completely different in nature; the Muslim league was communal in outlook, Urdu oriented, and elitists in interests, whereas the association was in favor of the Indian National Congress, they were against the partition on the ground that the partition gave the power to the reactionary Muslim groups and they were also in favor of communal co-operation in the emerging struggle for independence from British Rule.

Although , this organization did not influence much of the Muslim masses because of the lack of mass mobilization technique by them , till then the leaders of any kind of Muslim political organization were not very much well aware of the fact of ‘ mass politics’. The ‘organized political sphere’ was limited to the upper class only, but the situation changed gradually and during the khilafat movement the Muslim masses became equally important in the political field. But Nonetheless it is very important to say that the BPMA or the Bengal presidency Muslim Association was the first one to criticized the traditional, orthodox Muslim leadership and expressed their view against it and while the immediate response was not

overwhelming, it influenced the thought process of some group of Muslims in the near future.

The Khilafat movement was the first political movement by the Muslims where the Muslim masses became important.

After the dissolution of Bengal Partition in the year 1911, a new chapter in Muslim politics in Kolkata and Bengal began to take place. The annulment of Bengal partition by the British created a huge dissatisfaction among the upper class loyalist Muslims. They think that the British have betrayed them, and started campaigning against the British. The western educated urban Muslims who considered themselves as the new political leader of the community began to take full advantage of this situation, just as they began to oppose the British on the one hand; on the other side they stand against the loyalist, orthodox Muslims.

They started criticizing the pro-British attitude of the loyalist Muslims, the narrow, sectarian policy of the Muslim league also became the target of their criticism. They stated that the pro-British attitude of the loyalists and the narrow-communal policy of the Muslim league – none of this policy are good for the future of Indian Muslims. A group of Muslim leaders led by Shibli Nomani started to write about this context. They criticized the pro-British policy by Syed Ahmed Khan and also questioned the rationale for the Muslim's policy of staying away from the Congress. They also stated that the demands of congress are more feasible rather than the reactionary and short-sided demand of Muslim league. They also vowed for Hindu –Muslim unity to achieve the independence of India. The writings of Nomani and others like him made a profound impact among the Muslims. Because of these writings, the league leaders like Hakim Ajmol Khan were forced to think about the changes in the activities of league.

In this circumstances the liberal wing of the Muslim League under the guidance of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mazhar-ul-Haq persuaded the league to arrive at a settlement with the congress. In the annual session of the league in 1912 at Kolkata the same opinion were echoed among the delegates, and in 1913 the league expressed their opinion in favor of self-government status. Jinnah comprehended a common nationality. Finally In 1916 the congress and the league signed the famous

lucknow pact. Among the many terms and condition two of the major terms was – by this pact 1/3rd representation was given to the Muslims in the central government, and separate electorates for all communities until a joint electorate is demanded by all .

The lucknow pact although gave the impression of Hindu- Muslim unity in the national political scene , but it was short lived , we may say that the agreement between the parties on a separate electorate formally established the communal politics in the organized sector of politics and INC although always talking about the necessity of non-communal politics for India's independence , tacitly accepted that India consisted of two different communities with different interests.

During this circumstance, the anti-khilafat policy and the internment policy of the Muslim leaders under the defense of India act made the Muslims more anti-British. It's true that the khilafat movement was a pan-Islamic religious movement, but it should not be denied that this movement gave Muslims their first joint political platform against the British. Apart from the khilafat issue there were two more incidents which made the Muslims exasperated firstly – The governor cancelling his meetings with the Muslim leaders of Bengal Abdullah Suhrawardy and Abul Hasan along with K.P Jayaswal. And the second reason was the demolition of a mosque for the purpose of a road construction in Kanpur.

The economic condition of Kolkata during that time (1918-19) was very distressful due to the first world war. The middle class of both the communities was living in dire financial straits, but the worst hitters of this financial crisis was the workers of the factories in the city. Irrespective of their religion they were living in extreme poverty. Khilafat movement gave them the platform for expressing their dissatisfaction against the colonial ruler.

Mahatma Gandhi was the first political leader, who bringing the Hindus and Muslims in a same platform for protesting against the British. Mahatma Gandhi was the first one who brought a specifically Muslim religious issue in the larger political domain. By associating the khilafat movement with the non-cooperation movement , “religion” for the first time entered in the field of organized politics.

Two prominent Muslim leaders who worked intensively in the khilafat movement were Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Moulana Mohammed Ali . Azad

through his paper Al-Hilal and Mohammad Ali through his papers Comrade (in English) and Hamdard (in Urdu) extensively propagated for the need of Hindu Muslim unity against the British. Moulana Akram Khan's newspaper 'Muhammadi' and Mujibar rahaman edited newspaper 'Mussalman' both in Bengali language also strongly propagated the Khilafat's ideology among the Bengali Muslims. During this tenure in the politics of India , the idea of religious tolerance and unity became popular. Most of the Muslim leaders or the leaders in the Congress pledged for religious conciliation.

On October 1919 a new era of Muslim politics in Kolkata began with a strike on the occasion of khilafat movement by the people of both the communities. Albeit , this time also the leadership in the Muslim community in the city divided into two opposing ideologies – on one side it was the socially conservative opponents of the British rule , and on the other side there were young , western educated people who also wanted to oust the British. Talking about the leadership in the period of 1919-1923 in Kolkata Macpherson stated that “The years between 1919-1923 were therefore years of tremendous turmoil within the Muslim community of Calcutta. The old politically conservative leadership mainly remained on the sidelines but centre stage was occupied by the struggle between erstwhile allies, the western influenced radical leaders and the socially conservative but politically radical spokesmen of the Muslim Petty bourgeoisie”¹⁴ Khilafat movement was able to bring them under the same umbrella, but it is also important to note that the failure of this movement exacerbated the inner-conflict between them.

A large part of the working class in the city were Urdu – speaking Muslims, mostly coming from United Province and Bihar. Apart from them there were Bengali Muslims who came from the rural side of the Bengal to work in the factories. These two groups of Muslims in spite of their same economic position, maintained a considerable distance between themselves. The Khilafat movement started to commence a relationship between these two; irrespective of their differences, the Khilafat movement gave them a new kind of identity based on Islamic Brotherhood. The ideology of pan-islamism made them aware of their ‘ Muslim identity’ and their most important means of self-identity.

Apart from this the miserable economic condition of them, and the oppression by the British in the country in every possible way, created a huge resentment against the British, and strongly encouraged them to join the movement. It can be said that although the main reason behind the movement was religious but the khilafat movement became a platform for all the grievances faced by the Muslims from the British.

On November 1919, Moulana Abdul Rauf Dinajpuri formed the Khilafat Committee in Calcutta, Akram Khan was elected secretary, and members of the Muslims of various levels of the society became members. Their first task was to organize a 'boycott' in Kolkata to defend the caliphate against the British government. The responsibility of 'boycott' in the city was given to the two prominent leader of that time- Akram Khan & Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, it is worth mentioning that both of them were Bengali Muslims.

In Kolkata the success rate of the 'Boycott' movement for protesting against the British was successful but apart from the city this movement did not succeed very much specially in the rural areas of east Bengal. There were many reason behind it - firstly, The organizations like Presidency Muslim League or the Calcutta Khilafat Committee was not strong enough in the countryside like Kolkata. Secondly , the Muslims in the rural areas mostly belonged from the Bengali speaking peasantry, who were not well aware of the issues like ' Pan-Islamism' , economic exploitation by the British, or the problems faced by their friends lived in the city. Thirdly, There is a huge difference between the urdu-speaking urban population in the Calcutta with the peasantry of rural West Bengal , the identity based on pan -Islamism does not affect them the way it influenced the urban Muslim Bengali and non Bengali population.

In Kolkata the 'Boycott' program was a mere success, the Marwaris supported the boycott and the Hindu Bengali and non Bengali who mostly were associated with the congress supported the Boycott. But one feature which is important in this context is that, the Bengali Hindu who was not associated with Congress or any other political organization as such, refrained themselves from the movement. Most of them neither closed their shop nor joined in the protest. This "stay away" mentality of the Bengali Hindus from their Muslim Counterparts later encouraged the separatist politics in the province.

The Bengali Hindus always had a dilemma, skepticism and mistrust about their relationship with the Muslims. They always gave importance about the 'numbers' of Muslims, because the urbanized Hindu middle class and the landowners were well aware of the fact that they exerted the economic hegemony over the Muslim masses. If, they encouraged them (the Muslims) in their political activities, then maybe it will be the cause of their loss or deprivation in the future.

The problem with the Muslim leadership was that they did not make any attempt to spread the Khilafat movement in the mofussil or suburban division and the rural areas in the province. There was always a dichotomy that worked in the mind of urban Muslims, that whom they should give the utmost importance to whether it was the rural Bengali speaking peasantry or the urban Muslims. The urban Muslims could never be coordinated with their rural fellow. There was a huge gap culturally, socially, economically that lay between these two communities. Just before the partition the urban Muslim political leaders understood that without the help of the rural Muslims it was impossible for them to achieve the dominance or the power in the province. In this context they started to mobilize the rural people, and gave them a false sense of unity. The association of the 'city' with the 'villages' never lasted long, because most of the time the association was done as a means of fulfilling the self-interest of the urban class. Fazlul Huq with his Krishak Praja Party tried to change the situation, but he had to face failure in the future. Huq and His party KPP was made irrelevant in the course of politics.

The next date of strike regarding the Khilafat movement was fixed on 14th march and as Macpherson stated – “ In Calcutta – however the hartal was near complete . Muslims and Marwari shops and stalls closed , the dockyards were paralysed , industrial plants closed and taxis and carriages stayed of the street. Crowds of Muslims, Marwaris and up-country Hindus has tended to mosques throughout the city where they listened to wild exhortations. Nevertheless there were no violent incidents and the day passed quietly”¹⁵

It can be said that the Khilafat movement in Kolkata was successful. The intensity of this movement in Kolkata was noticeable. The Bengali, Urdu and English newspapers published from the city were full of British criticism. This created a huge impact on the Muslim masses. Apart from these newspaper reporting the strikes ,

processions , public meetings on a large scale gave a new dimension to the Muslim politics in the city. The leaders now realized the importance of the ‘masses’ in the political field, on the other hand the ‘masses’ understood their role as well their strength in the organized political sphere. During this period the Hindu- Muslim unity was one of the notable features. We can say that “Though the Khilafat movement had its orthodox origin , it could generate liberal ideas along with the involvement of the people belonging to two major communities of the country”.¹⁶

But, unfortunately this rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims could not stay longer after the movement. It is true that during the Khilafat and non-co operation movement these two communities worked together, but this was just the cortex of the Indian political structure. The establishment of democratic regime by Kamal Atatürk in Turkey, makes the context of Khilafat irrelevant in the country and the incident of Chaurichoura forced Gandhi to stop the non-cooperation movement also. “Although these are the simply the causes which explain the collapse of the superstructure and they fail to explain that why the rapprochement was unable to sustain itself by other external political stimuli.”¹⁷ But nonetheless we can say that the failure of this movement created a political vacuum in the country and made a blow to the Hindu Muslim unity.

The Communal role of the ‘Hindu Bhadrolok’ community and reactive communalism of Muslim Intellectual leaders-

One of the important aspects in the history of Muslim Politics in Bengal – is the relationship between Muslims with the Hindu middle class, the class which wrongly became synonymous with the term ‘Bhadrolok’. To consider Hindu middle class and ‘Bhadrolok’ same , identical or uniform lead us to a wrong notion that “Bhadrolok” has to be a Hindu which, is not true at all.

The term ‘Bhadrolok’ denote, a socio- cultural category, whereas the word middle class denotes a socio-economic category. Amit Kumar Gupta in his book ‘ Crises And Creativities : Middle Class Bhadrolok In Bengal 1939-52 ‘ tried to explain the definition of ‘Bhadrolok’; he says that “ The Bhadrolok in Bengal essentially a socio-cultural category , who has a distinct way of life , characterized by ascertain standard of personal and familial refinement, a code of public and societal conduct and a well laid out systems of values . Socially the category incorporated all

members of the middle class(both the upper and lower) excluding strictly those who performed manual labour of any kind and those who were educationally handicapped (roughly those who do not complete school education and who were not self educated above the high school level) but included liberally the members of the rich , the entrepreneurial section , the Zamindars and others landlords the commercial highups all the men and women of very considerable means”¹⁸.

So it was clear from the above explanation definition that the term ‘Bhadrolok’ has nothing to do with religion. The above mention features defined the characteristics of ‘Bhadrolok’ irrespective of all religion. There is ‘Bhadrolok’ class in every religious community, not only in Hinduism. There is ‘Bhadrolok’ class among the Muslims, Christians and many others.

Now talking about the ‘middle class’, it’s basically a socio-economic category. The people who belong to the middle income group in the socio economic structure in the country are known as middle income group. The range of this middle income group is so vast that it is divided into two groups; the upper middle class and the lower middle class. Religion also doesn’t have any relation with this. The middle class are present in every religious community, be it Hindu, Muslim or Christians.

But , it has been seen in Bengal that there is a tendency of people, as well as scholars to use the term ‘ Bhadrolok’ interchangeably with the term ‘ Hindu bhadrolok’ , which lead us to a huge misconception in the social-political analysis of the province. To understand this issue we must focus on the background of ‘western education’ in Bengal.

The Indian middle class specially the Bengali middle class was by far the product of British administration. The changing social and economic condition helped to create ‘ a Indian middle class’ whose work primarily lay in to assisting the British in their administrative affair. In this context western education became the most important factor. The Bengalis were the first one to adopt the western education and based on this education they are capable to break the tethers of ‘traditionalism’ and established themselves as the newly emerged middle class in the country. The ‘western education’ gave them the privilege to consider themselves as ‘Bhadrolok’ in

the society. The above mentioned features in the definition of a Bhadrolok apply to all of them, irrespective of their religious status.

But for the Muslims, the situation was completely opposite. The fate of Bahadur Shah Zafar , the last mughal emperor in the hands of British, different policy taken by the British governors towards the princely states and Ashraf Muslims disgrace them as well as dismounted them towards the poverty. So they were very agitated towards the British and did not pay any attention or interest towards the western education. They thought it would be disgraceful to adopt the western education for them.

The issue of western education created a huge gap between these two communities, where Hindus, adopting western education to established themselves in the field of different jobs in the newly emerged socio-economic structure; the Muslims keep away themselves from this and lagged far behind the Hindus.

The Aligarh movement , was the first initiative for the Muslims to realize the importance of western education, and they started to educate themselves in western education. The spread of western education among the Muslims helped to the emergence of Muslim middle class just like their Hindu counterparts. In Bengal along with the growth of western education another aspect of Muslim politics was emerging, i.e the rise of ‘Bengali Muslims identity’ . The Bengali Muslims specially the middle class wanted to liberate themselves from the dominance of the Hindu middle class by focusing on the Bengali language, and the newly western educated Urdu speaking middle class Muslims in the city trying to establish them in the socio-political life of the city. Naturally there was a confrontation taking place between the Hindu and Muslim middle class for the economic, political and social dominance in the city. The political situation of that time also helps to fuel the conflict.

Although the Bengali Hindu middle class, who were known as ‘Bhadrolok’, never involved in a direct friction with the Muslim masses before the 1946 riot , but the relationship between these two had never been amicable, barring a few instances that prove otherwise.

The ‘ideology of communalism’ among the Bengali middle class was subdued in a sense that they never involved themselves in direct confrontation with the

Muslims, but this does not prove that they were not communal. The ideology of communalism among the Hindu middle class is very complex in nature and the expression of it is completely different from the others communities in India. The inwardness of the communal identity among the 'bhadrolok' community lies in the historical process by which they were constructed.

Joya chatterjee writes in her famous book 'Bengal Divided' 'that " If there was a single unifying symbol of Bhadrolok Identity in the first half of twentieth century , it was arguably 'culture'. Since the late nineteenth century the Bhadrolok had regarded themselves as a group that was 'cultured'¹⁹, by the early twentieth century , they saw themselves, more specifically as heirs to a particular cultural heritage, ' Bengal Renaissance'.²⁰ Although there is a debate regarding the fact t whether it is right to call it 'Renaissance' , but there is no doubt that one of the features of this renaissance was to- "evaluate Hindu society in the light of its encounter with western rationalism and colonial domination"²¹ . They try to establish a 'cultural tradition or heritage' based on Hinduism which, if not better than the western culture must be equivalent to it in the least. Later the bhadrolok community based on that 'Hindu cultural tradition' started to construct their own history.

One of the fundamental foundation to construct a ' heritage' or a ' cultural legacy' is- 'history'. James Mill's conception to divide the history of India in Ancient, Medieval ,and Modern era influenced the ' bhadrolok' people so much that they started to re-build their history based on this 'division of era'. They started to write the history of Bengal in such a way, where the main focus lies in promoting the greatness of Hinduism, and to devaluate Islam for that. It's true that the portrayal of the negative image of Islam was not done consciously in many cases, but it helped to create the communal feeling among the masses. Anguriyo binimoy'written by Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, 'Maharastro Jibonprabhat', 'Rajput Jibonsandhya' written by Ramesh Chandra Das were significant among this. Nabinchandra Sen in his 'Palashir Judho' portrayed Siraj -Ud - Doula as an obnoxious man. Talking about this kind of tendency, Joya chatterjee writes that " The driving sentiment behind these romantic historians was patriotic: past heroisms against ' alien' rulers were recalled or invented to inspire the Hindu 'nation' of the day to fight its foreign overlords. But they undoubtedly played a crucial part in the creation and popularization of communal

stereotypes , by depicting Muslim rule as ‘tyrannical’ and Muslim rulers are cruel , violent , fanatical and sexually unlicensed.²² She also write that “ These descriptions were doubly derivative : they took on board many of the assumptions of European imperial discourse on Islam as well as the paradigms of colonial and ideological writings on Indian History.²³

One of the important writers of that time was Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay . If we divided the novels written by him according to historical, social , and nationalist discourse, we can see that his idea of ‘patriotism’ or ‘nationalism’ is completely different from the western concept of these two. Bankimchandra’s nationalism or the feeling of Patriotism is based on Hindu tradition, values, morality and ethics. It is related with the moral purification of the people. In the background of great Bengal famine of 1770 Bankimchandra writes his famous novel ‘ AnandaMath’ based on the Sanyashi-Fakir rebellion , in this novel he only blamed Nawab of Bengal for the Famine, which is not true at all. Bankimchandra blamed Nawab not only for the famine but also for destroying Hindu religious beliefs. The entire Muslim Community has been blamed for the plight Of Hindus based on One Muslim Ruler. He consciously excluded Muslim participation in the revolt. There was no mention of the topic that the Muslims people were equally affected by the famine. The structure on which the novel was based although it was not synonymous with ‘Hindu Nation State’ but there is no denying of the fact that in future the Hindu communalists got a lot of impetus from this.

Apart from Anandamath, many other writers in their writings also propagate the Muslim era as the era of oppression, torture, and persecution. Sir Jadunath sarker In his book ‘ History of Bengal’ indiscriminately followed various European views on India and called the Muslim era a dark age and also an age of relentlessly unrelenting oppression. He said that the British rule was the precursor of a new and enlightened cultural system. In the conclusion of his book he wrote that The Muslim era(1200-1757A.D)gave nothing to the people of Bengal except brutality and oppression. They (the Muslims) have no place in modern enlightened Bengal. It was created by the ‘bhadrolak’ by collecting the enlightenment given them by the British.

He also stated that there was no places for Muslims in this ‘ New Bengal’. The bhadrolok community established Bengal as the centre of Indian civilization, so only they have the right over the Bengal. It is a place only for Hindus.

Two things stand out strongly from this type of writing – i) It was a place of Bengali Hindu people, there was no place of Muslims here. In this way the Bengali identity of the Muslims were also denied. ii) The Muslim rule was illegal, this rule denied the inherent right of the Hindus and made them slaves in their own land. No doubt this kind of writing had a strong communal influence in the Hindu mind.

In an article presented at the Hindu Mahasabha conference in 1920, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay , one of the famous literary writer of Bengal made a statement about the difference between these two community and why they never be united. In his opinion the cultural difference between these two community was the main reason behind their conflict. It is pertinent to note that culture here refers to the ‘gentleman’ characteristics of the Hindus which according to the author was inherent among all the Hindus but were not present among the Muslims. Saratchandra relied on his own self described definition of ‘culture’ to establish the fact that the lack of this ‘culture’ was the cause of the barbarism and religious madness of the Muslims.

In the year 1932 B.C Chattopadhyay in his book ‘Betrayal of Britain and Bengal’ described the battle of Plassey as the moment from when Bengal was liberated from Muslim Oppression.

Naturally these kinds of writings created a huge reaction among the Muslim masses. Not only were the writings responsible for encouraging the separatist trend in the province of Bengal, the political activities were also a part of this. Based on Hindu religion some of the organizational work started specially in Calcutta. In the year 1867 Nabogopal Mitra with the help from Thakurbari, established Hindumela. The orgaqnizers of Hindumela were against the foreign intervention in matters of social reform because they thought that the main reason behind the downfall of the Hindus was their association with the non-Hindus. The organizers of Hindumela encouraged the conservatism of people like Radhakanto Dev as well as they also braced up the way of ‘Neo-Hinduism’ led by Bankimchandra.²⁴

Rajnarayan Basu felt the need for an organization to strengthen the nationalist thinking on the basis of religion. In his book ‘The old Hindu Hope’ he considered sikh, jain, Buddhist, bramho, as a part of Hinduism and proposed to establish an organization called ‘Maha Hindu Samity’. It was said that only Hindus became the members of this society, because the main purpose of this society was to protect the rights of the Hindus from the foreign interference ;so the Muslims who are belonged to a from different culture , and had a huge difference with the Hindus in the customs can’t be the member of this association. Although it is important to note that the issue of political co-operation with the Muslims was seen in a positive way.²⁵

Rajnarayan Basu make this statement that – Just like Muslims have their own organization named National Mahammedan Association. The expact British have Anglo-Indian Defence Association. The Anglo-Indians have their own Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association. The Hindus should have an organization like this.²⁶

Bipin Chandra Pal also said that he felt the difference between the politics of the last decade of the nineteenth century with the politics of previous era. The politics of the previous era was much more secular in comparison to the latter. In the later period religion specially Hindu religion became one of the important factors in the political arena. The ‘Indianisation’ was started to build on the grounds of Hindu religion and the Bengali Hindu bhadrolok pioneered of this propensity.

Reactive Communalism of the Muslims-

From the Muslim side the matter of ‘communalism’ was completely different. It was much more visible and harsh.

The Muslims who came late in the light of western education developed a sense of separatism based mainly on the social and economic issues. The question of ‘culture’ which is one of the important aspects of Hindu Bhadrolok communalism was not very important for the Muslims. The political situation of the country, the unequal competition with the Hindus in the economic sphere, the social position of them, the communal attitude of the Hindus towards them, the relationship between the two communities ,and the inner conflict between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims for dominance-- all of these issues were the part of rise of ‘separitism’ or ‘communalism’ among the Muslim masses in the province.

The failure of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement sent the Hindu Muslim relation into a new direction. The failure of the movement created a huge disappointment among both the communities. The conciliatory approach which is seen during the time of movement gradually changed its way and both communities were responsible for that. The Moplah uprising and communal riots in various parts of the country deteriorated the relationship between these two communities and helped to encourage the communal spirit.

“ The Tabligh and Tanzim movements were sponsored by the Muslim leaders to help the developments of the communal trend and to counteract the growing influence of the shudhi and Sangathan movements”²⁷

The murder of Swami Shradhanand in the year 1926 further deteriorate the relationship between these two communities. The Ulemas were also responsible for spreading the hatred among the masses. “The Jamiyat-al-Ulama-Hind was successful in converting a large number of non Muslims and won over many apostates”²⁸

As I pointed earlier that the social and economic context of this period were also responsible for Muslim separatism. In the second half of the nineteenth century due to the western education the, Muslims of the upper and Middle classes began to take part in the government jobs and also associated themselves with other respectable professions too. It can be said that “they increased their numbers and wealth through their participation in government service , law profession, business and investment in Land”²⁹. In the field of government employment , employment in the educational sector these two communities faced considerable competition. The newspapers which were published by the Muslims carried out a massive propaganda about the Hindu domination in the society and economy; they also urged to the Muslims through the newspapers that the Muslim community must increase their domination in the society. The Muslim chamber of Commerce was established by the upper class Muslims in order to influence the economic field and maintain their commercial interests. The economic position and rivalries of the two communities were, in many respects responsible for their communal thinking. The policy of the British Government further complicated the situation as Pradip Kumar Lahiri rightly pointed out that “there was no organization to save the society from separatist ideas created by land

settlements and class divisions introduced by the British Government in the Country”³⁰

Among the Muslim leaders in Bengal Abdur Rahim and Nawab Ali Chowdhury were very prominent and they both were influenced by the separatist and communal ideas and formed the sectarian and orthodox group among the urban educated Muslim community, they also supported the separate electorate for the Muslims.

In the annual conference of the league Abdur rahim criticized the shudhi and sangathan movement by the Hindu fundamentalists. He repeated the opinion once Hunter said that the Muslims enjoyed power and benefits during the Muslim period but under the British they became less powerful. So in these circumstances it was the duty of the British to come forward to help the Muslims.

Abdur Rahim formed the Bengal Muslim Party for the purpose of obtaining benefits; he also wanted the distribution of political power among the general population as a measure to prevent the domination by a class of intelligentsia³¹. In all parties conference at Kolkata in 1928 as a representative of the Bengal Muslim Party he criticized the Nehru report. Although he was a supporter of India’s freedom struggle but there is no doubt about the fact that he was communal in his ideas.

Moulana Akram Khan was another example of a separatist leader, although he supported the Hindu Muslim unity during the time of Khilafat movement, but after that he was influenced by the separatist ideas; he with his followers trying to influence the Muslim masses with the “orthodox trend”. He focused on issues like population, literature, syllabus of the educational institutes etc in his paper Mohammadi and tried to create the separatist feelings among the Muslim masses. He wrote in one of the (1336 B.S Ashwin) edition of Mohammadi that “The impact of the Hindu ideas are found in the textbooks of schools and pathsalas. The history of the mediaval Muslim rulers is taught in a distorted form. The syllabus should be changed in order to acquaint the Muslim students with the basic principles of Islam and glorious history of the past. The Bengali Muslims will be again to establish their domination through Islamic unity solidarity and Islamization”³².

Sir Mohammed Iqbal was the first person who wrote about Muslim India as a nation and demanded for a separate state for the Muslims. Dr Abdul Latif Iqbal wrote about to protection of the cultural identity of the Muslims, this kind of idea influenced the communal people.

All of these increased the differences between these two communities and lead them in the way of segregation, the final outcome of which was the partition of the country on the basis of religion.

The 1932 Communal award and the final blow to the secular politics :

The last weapon of the British government's divisive policy was the communal award of 1932. This law clearly highlights the difference between these two communities and also destroys the foundation of future co-operation. Based upon this law, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims reached such a point, where the partition became an inevitable affair.

According to this law , in Bengal legislative Assembly³³ based on the census of 1931, 119 seats were given to the Muslims, and 80 seats were given to the Hindus, among this 80 seats 10 seats were reserved for the scheduled castes according to the Puna pact ; so the number of the general Hindus seats finally settled in 70, only 28% of the total . It created a huge fury among the Hindu Bhadrolok of the Province, and they started to protest against it vociferously.

But what is most surprising about this 'protest' is – the Muslims became the target of the 'protest' rather than the colonial ruler. The numerical strength of the Muslims became the most important factor for the Hindu Bengalis. In the issue of AmritBazar Patrika 18th August 1932 it was reported that the Muslim political Leaders were delighted to see the annoyance among the Hindus, and organized a big party for this. Although this news was a baseless one, but such 'stories' helped to create an atmosphere of doubt and hostility and also encouraged Muslim hatred in the minds of ordinary Hindu. The Hindus of Bengal gave a memorandum to Lord Jelrand in the form of a book Called Bengal 'Anti-Communal award movement – A Report' ; The main concern of this book was demanding the minority rights for themselves , as they became the 'minority' in the province so they are entitled to the ' minority status' by the colonial ruler just like other the other minorities in the country. They

also claimed that although the Hindus are numerically less in comparison to the Muslims, but culturally they were more superior than the Muslims, in this context it is unfair to give the Muslims more 'representation' in the council. The issue of "intellectual backwardness" of Bengali Muslims emerged as a strategy for the Bengali Hindus, and the 'cultural superiority' became a key feature of Hindu identity in Bengal. This booklet also states that political competence can't be separated from the larger intellectual perspective and based on this aspect the Bengali Hindus were much ahead from the Muslims in the province.³⁴

This kind of justification indirectly acknowledged the British justification for ruling in India; as they always propagated that they are much superior to the Indians intellectually, so it was their right to rule the country and also responsibility to educate the Indians.³⁵

Rabindranath Tagore opposed this act but obviously in a different way, he acknowledged that the act would increase the division between the communities, but at the same time he wrote that "Our Muslim brethren have suffered long for long from inequality of advantages in various lines. With all my heart I should welcome its being gradually brought to a balance"³⁶. He also writes that "I earnestly request my Hindu brethren never to lose their temper and aggravate the injury into suicide"³⁷. Naturally no one listened to him.

B.C. Chattopadhyay of Hindu Mahasabha said that if the power goes to the hands of the Muslims. The British what they have done till now in Bengal will be denied, and a new chapter should be written in the history of Bengal titled 'Betrayal Of Britain and Bengal'.³⁸

This kind of behavior of the Hindus was not well accepted by the Muslims, but at the same time it was true also, that the Muslims were not organized against this immediately. The political condition of that period was responsible for that.

After the failure of Khilafat and non-cooperation movement, the relationship between two communities became incommensurable. Das pact or the Chittaranjan Das's Hindu-Muslim pact was cancelled and the behavior of the Hindus during the termination of the pact caused deep resentment among the nationalist Muslims. Joya Chatterjee writes that – Muslim nationalists are hurt by the unpleasant events

associated with the cancellation of the das contract and they also realize that the Bengal Congress can no longer be trusted to protect the interests of the Muslims. Apart from this , during the discussion of the Bengal Tenancy Act Bill of 1928 , relatively young and more reformist Muslims were *liberated* from the Congress. The purpose of the law was to increase the power of the peasantry against the landlords . During the discussion of this act Congress and all branches of the Swarajya Party unitedly opposed the implementation of the law . It created a huge resentment among the Muslims in the province specially among the Bengali Muslims. They realized that congress represented the rich landlords, middle class educated urban people . They don't really so much bothered about the peasantry and the working class in the factories.³⁹

Although the statement was a little extravagant , but there was no doubt about the fact that, as because the main support behind the Congress was the above mentioned classes , it was not possible for the party to dismay them or going against 'their' 'interest'.

The Muslims after criticizing the congress and leaving it , could not establish any political organization which is equivalent to congress. Neither the Muslim league nor the Krishak Praja Party became the sole representatives of the Muslims as a whole. The extreme opposition coming from the Hindu Bengali middle class helped the Muslims to unite about the issue of Communal accord. As a result the Hindus and Muslims in the province confronted each other on the issue based on the communal accord. Congress as a political party also opposed this act , and thereby lost their acceptance among large sections of Muslims.

The last couple of years before Independence were particularly very important in history of Muslim Politics. Communal politics gained a new momentum as a result of the activities done by the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, and Congress. We can say that “ The decade of increasing communal polarization culminated in the tumultuous events that signified the British exit and the partition of India into Muslim majority and Hindu majority nations”⁴⁰

The Muslim League sought to propagate the ideology of Mohammaed Ali Jinnah in Bengal. The Calcutta centric non- Bengali and the elite Bengali Muslims

became mainly the supporters of the league. Newspapers like Star of India in English and Mohammadi in Bengali campaigned extensively in favor of the league. The newspaper published by Akram Khan in Bengali named 'Azad' also worked as a mouthpiece of the league in the rural and urban area of the province.

Although in spite of this, most of the peasant community of Bengal supported KPP rather than the Muslim League, because for them the policy of KPP which includes abolition of Zamindari system, solution of food problems along with the issue of Muslim unity found greater acceptance. When the 1937 election was held according to the government of India act of 1935, the seat were distributed based on the 'Communal Award' of 1932. It was seen after the results were announced, that Muslim League got the 27.10% vote where as the KPP got 31.5% vote in the Muslim Seats. Fazlul Huq of KPP requested congress to make an alliance for forming a government in the Bengal Assembly Of 250 seats. But Congress refused the proposal by Huq and Huq was compelled to form a government together with the League.

This was perhaps the worst imprudent attitude of the Congress in the history of Indian Independence, which greatly affected not only the politics of Bengal but also of the whole country. Things change rapidly after the KPP-League government came to power in Bengal. It was true that Fazlul Huq himself was not a communal person, but situation compelled him to work as a propagator of communal politics. He joined the Muslim League and started to oppose the Congress. Even he supported the 'Lahore Resolution' also. Huq understands that if he wanted to stay in power, he would have to support the league. The league took this opportunity to expand their influences in the province. They realized that it is very important to gain the support of the middle class and the rural peasant Bengali Muslim community in order to established their dominance over the province of Bengal. So, they started a massive propaganda based on the communal ideology. In cases of peasant movement, they used to talk about the 'Community' rather than the 'economic class'. They also get the support of the orthodox ulemas who played an important role in the rural life; and because most of the zamindars were Hindus, it became easy for them to mobilize the rural Muslim masses. A huge number of rural Muslim peasants were influenced by the league propaganda and supported the league in the election of 1946.

The Calcutta university came under strong criticism by the orthodox ulemas and Muslims. The syllabus of the university, the use of Hindu symbols, use of the song 'Vandemataram' in the convocation all of these became the issue of discontent among the Muslims, and thus created a confrontation between the two communities. Even in Dhaka University- because there had a large number of Hindu teachers teaches in the university , the orthodox Muslims including Akram Khan started to call it ' Dhakeswari Vidyapith' . The government funds were discontinued in the Buddhist and Sanskrit educational institution as well as in the university of Calcutta.⁴¹

Khawaja Nizamuddin who became the home minister of this government , was a member of the Muslim league and supporter of Muslim separatism. He started giving priority to the Muslims in the field of government jobs, especially there was a huge recruitment of Muslims in the field of Bengal Junior Civil Service and Deputy superintendent Of Police. He also gave a huge amount of donation to the popular football club of Calcutta 'Mohammedan Sporting ' . These kinds of works increased the popularity of the league among the Muslim masses, on the other hand it created a huge discontent among the Hindus.

As a result of this , the heat of communalism in the politics of Bengal increased gradually , the improvidence of Congress , the irresponsible attitude of Fazlul Huq, The league's desire to gain power singlehandedly in the province, and the diplomacy of the British to fulfill their self interest – all of these took the politics of Bengal to a stage where ' Partition' became inevitable.

Fazlul Huq's policy as a chief minister created a huge resentment among the Hindus, Fazlul Huq later realized his fault and started to correct it, but the damage was already done. The tenure of Praja-league ministry was not long, the ideological difference between Bengali muslims dominated KPP and non-bengali muslims dominated league created a huge conflict among them. The indirect influence of Jinnah upon the Bengal Provincial Muslim League created discontent within Huq. He Said - " It Is not the ministers functioning under the government of India act that are ruling Bengal but it is the autocracy of Jinnah which guides the administration, and Mr. Jinnah is exercising all this authority without being hampered by any responsibility to anybody"⁴² . These conflicts among the two most prominent Muslim leader of that time led to the fall of the praja- league government in 1941.

Fazlul Huq himself was not a communal person, but he became a puppet in the hands of League Government. In the first phase of ministry, he supported the policy of the league leaders and lost his credibility to the Hindus. Hence, the changes in his attitude became synonymous with his personal conflict with Jinnah. After the fall of the ministry, Huq was able to reconstruct the government named 'Progressive coalition Ministry' with the help of Sarat Bose. But unfortunately Sarat Bose had not become the member of the ministry, because of the diplomatic policy of British Government. They realized that it was a huge threat for them if the government was formed under the leadership of Huq and Sarat Bose, so they arrested Bose on the ground of meeting with the Japanese⁴³. As a result the arrest of Sarat Bose just before the formation of the cabinet created an immense vacuum in the politics of Bengal. Huq was forced to create the ministry along with the Hindu Mahasabha leader Shyamaprasad Mukherjee.

The ministry didn't have any acceptance either among the Hindu or the Muslim masses, Majority of the Hindus were the supporters of Congress, so for them without Congress the ministry was unworthy, for them Hindu Mahasabha was not the appropriate replacement of Congress. For the Muslims it was impossible to accept a leader like Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, who was a leader of a Hindu fundamentalist party.

The break out of Second World War changed the course of politics of Bengal once more. The Congress resigned from the ministry in the Hindu majority province in order to protest against the war, whereas League declared to observe this day as a 'deliverance day'. The League started massive propaganda against this new constructed government; Jinnah called Huq a traitor to form a government with a leader like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. For the British it was an easy choice to choose between Huq and Muslim League, Naturally they chose Muslim League to support.

During the world war the opportunity came to establish the Muslim League in power of Bengal. Governor Of Bengal John Herbert forced Fazlul Huq to resign from the post, in context to the possibilities of attack by Japan. When Huq resigned after talking about the ministries of all party, Herbert accepted his resignation and made Nizamuddin of the Muslim League the prime minister of the province.

The congress leaders were imprisoned and the league government was in power of Bengal. This was the finest opportunity Muslim League got to raise their support in the province. The league took full advantage of the situation and started massive mass mobilization, specially in the rural side of Bengal because they understood, it was not possible for them to accomplish their interest without the support of the rural Bengali Muslims. The general secretary of the league that time was Abul Hashim , who was a Bengali Muslim leader from Burdawan district and played a very important role in this. Hashim was independent till 1943 , after that he joined the League. Hashim and his followers carried out extensive propagandas about the ideology and politics of the league. He was able to bring many Muslim students, intellectuals and independent political activists, supporters and workers of KPP under the cover of league. Abul Hashim strengthened the league organization in every possible part of Bengal where, there were some Muslim population. It can be said that “ both urdu speaking and Bengali speaking Muslims in Bengal flocked to the league in the few years before the partition as never before and never again after 1947”⁴⁴

After the second world war , the British government decided to vote in the provincial autonomies. In the election the candidates of the leagues won all the seats reserved for Muslims in Bengal. The mass mobilization strategy of the league proved to be a huge success. The success of the league gave them the right to form the government ‘all alone’ and H.S. Suhrawardy became the prime minister of the province.

In all India context the failure of cabinet Mission established Congress and League as main oppositions to each other for the purpose of domination in the independent state. In the cabinet Mission where congress refused to join the government, and league agreed. In this circumstances the statement by neheru about the ‘ changes’ in the cabinet mission plan made league apprehensive about the intention of Congress. And finally the mission was failed. The Muslim League directly accused Congress for the failure of the mission and declared 16th August as a direct action day in order to protest against this.

The communal riot which lasted about three to four days in Kolkata in the eve of Direct action Day was perhaps the worst example of communal riots in the history

of India. Thousands of People were killed , displaced, traumatized. Thousands of shops were looted. The 1946 Calcutta riot was considered as one of the gruesome incident in the history of riots.

Many historians have commented that the 1946 Calcutta riot had a profound impact on the history of Bengal and India. It was decided by this riot that partition was inevitable. This riot affected the Hindu Muslim relation in the worst possible way and destroyed the place of minimal faith.

This ‘broken faith’ or mistrust, hatred towards one another completely ruined the relationship between these two communities, this ‘mentality’ of distrust , hesitation prevails till today even after the 73 years of Independence.

If we had to explain the ‘Muslim Politics’ in the pre-independence era in terms of identity politics only, then this political analysis would be incomplete. It’s true that ‘ religious identity’ became one of the prime factors in the politics of colonial India , specially for the Muslims because the idea of nationalism league propagated is based on the ‘ ‘community identity’, they were not pledged for ‘territorial nationalism’ like congress. But it’s also true that to consider Muslims synonymous with Muslim league is wrong. There are many layers and sub-layers in the Muslim politics of the sub-continent. In Bengal it was divided into many levels the most prominent was the conflict between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims. It can be said that before the years of partition, the unity between them did not take place. We have seen various reasons behind it and reviewed it, and we understand that talking about the Muslim Identity homogeneously a big mistake, done by us. So it is our responsibility to understand the odious situation to understand the multidimensional Muslim politics in the country, before and after the Independence, and stop blaming them for the partition. Asok Mitra the editor of Indian Annual Registrar rightly pointed out that “One Must understand the evil spirit of 1946 to understand why the partition was accepted in 1947”⁴⁵ .

Notes and References:

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 - 25 Ibid Dutta p-13
 - 26 Op.cit Dutta pp15-16
 - 27 Op.cit Lahiry p-102
 - 28 Ibid Lahiry p102
 - 29 Ibid Lahiryp- 103
 - 30 Ibid Lahiry p-6
 - 31 Ibid lahiry p-15
 - 32 Ibid Lahiry p-23
 - 33 Total number of seats in the legislative assembly in Bengal were 250
 - 34 Op.cit Chatterji Bengal Divided p- p19-20
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 - 36 Op.cit Gordon p-296
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 - 38 Op.cit Chatterji Bangla Bhag Holo p-203
 - 39 Ibid Chatterji p- 33
 - 40 Op.cit Gordon p-296
 - 41 Op.cit lahiry pp 133-134
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 - 43 The British considered the Japanese as their enemy.
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Chapter – 3

Pre-Partition Communal Riots in the city of Kolkata

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Pre-Partition Communal Riots in the city of Kolkata.

The ‘Communal clashes’ and ‘Riot’ form a distinct place in the history and politics of Indian subcontinent, Kolkata being no exception. If we don’t discuss the communal violence, riots, in the city, then there will be a huge gap of understanding between the position of the Muslims in the city, as well as their relationship with the Hindus in the post partition period. So in the current chapter I will mainly try to give a brief description about the riots in the city and how these riots gradually changed their nature and character. How the politics of hatred gradually influenced the Hindu and Muslim populations in the city, whose final outcome was the terrible riot of 1946, after which partition became inevitable.¹

It can be said that where in one hand these riots were one of the reasons for the partition of India, on the other hand these riots are also responsible for shaping the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims of the city after Independence. So, discussions about these riots will give us a picture about the politics of partition and also how these communalized politics affected the relationship between these two communities in long run.

The first communal riot that took place in the city was in the industrial suburb of Kolkata in May 1891, subsequently the riots during the time of Bakr-id, and the Tala outbreak both in year of 1896.²

The main features of the above mentioned riots were that- all of these riots happened in the working class area. These events, which started mainly due to labour unrest, subsequently took the form of communal clashes. How in particular circumstances the class interests became one with community interests really a claim to be analyzed separately.³

These riots are kept out of the current discussion because the impact of these riots was mainly confined to those specific areas and their surroundings. It did not affect the city as a whole, and the participants of these riots were mainly from labour class people of those areas, there was no role of the “masses” as such. But, in this chapter I will mainly focus on those riots whose impacts have spread throughout the

city and which have become the motivating force of change in the state politics. The description and analysis of the riots also help us to understand the nature of the Muslim politics in the pre-independence period of the city.

It is very important to note that there is a huge difference between the riots in the villages and those of the city's. Although in many cases it can be seen that the reason behind the riots may be the same like, music playing in front of the mosques or quarrels during the time of holi , but the nature and extent of these riots are completely different in these two places.

Before Discussing about the Kolkata riots, there is a need to discuss the features of the riots a little. Rioting usually refers to a 'form of civil disorder commonly characterized by a group, lashing out in a violent public disturbance against authority, property or people'⁴.so it's very clear from the definition that the character of the riot is never unidirectional, or the target of its attack is never static .In the countries where religion plays an important role in social life, like India, most of the time the riots have been shown from the religious perspective.

The ideology of communalism is very important in this context, it is very important to understand that communalism is not synonymous with communal riot. There is a difference between communalism, communal clashes or violence and communal riot although they are very much interconnected and interrelated, but not the same.

In a country like India, Communalism is basically an ideology, which rooted in the social environment. It is constructed and nurtured by organized political domain, which creates a community consciousness among the mind of the people of the same community. This community consciousness creates a unidirectional "negative"⁵ identity based mainly upon religion; religion became the only symbol of identity of them. They started to believe that people who follow the same religion have common social, political, economic and cultural interests. They also started to believe that the interests of the followers of different communities are mutually different, antagonistic, and discrepant. So the interests of the people of different communities (here Hindus and Muslims) of a same country (in this case India) cannot be the same. They are bound to be opposed to each other.

Communalism provides a religious identification of the enemy and also gives a religious legitimacy to the attack upon the so called enemy. Communal violence and communal riots are not the same. Although both uses communalism as their base or foundation but there is a subtle difference between this two, communal clashes are spontaneous and temporary where as communal riots are organized, pre-planned in most of the cases and long lasting. One of the important aspect of the riot is that it tries to gain support and legitimacy from all levels of the society, this aspect is absent in spontaneous communal clashes.

We can easily understand these features after analyzing the riots in the city of Kolkata.

One of the notable riot in the city of Kolkata was the riot of 1918, where about 43 persons died. Among them 36 were Muslims and 7 were Hindus. The clash began on 9th September and continued till 11th September.⁶

The reasons behind the riot were divided into two stages, the first was the immediate cause and the second was the inherent causes of the conflict. The immediate cause of the conflict was the publication of an objectionable and regressive article about Prophet Muhammad in an Anglo- Indian newspaper named “Indian Daily” on 27th July 1918. In this article ‘prophet’s tomb’ was compared with a gutter. This article was immediately condemned by two Urdu newspapers of Kolkata ‘Naqqash’ and ‘Jamhoor’. It was also condemned by Bengal Presidency Muslim League (BPML) and vowed to bring legal action against the paper.⁷ This article created a huge fury among the Muslims and they wanted government intervention on this matter, but the government did not take any action resulting dissatisfaction among the Muslims⁸.

In these circumstances an organization named “ Anjuman-e Mainul Islam” called an All India protest rally in Kolkata on 8th, 9th and 10th September and a meeting also in front of the Nakhoda Mosque. It was decided that in this meeting, there will be also a discussion about the issues related to the growing dissatisfaction of the Muslims towards the government.⁹ The government did not accept these activities well, and banned the meeting by showing the reason of ‘law and order’. But the Muslim crowd, who started to gather for the meeting, became enraged at this

announcement. In this circumstance a group of Muslim leaders went to give a deputation at the governor's house and it was decided that the leaders will talk about this matter in front of Nakhoda Mosque on 9th September. But after waiting for a long time no news was received by the crowd and they started a procession towards the governor's house. The procession was interrupted by the police and in this situation, Muslim Leader Fazlul Huq gave a speech about unsatisfactory and uncompromising attitude of the government, this instantly made the crowd furious, their dissatisfaction transformed into anger, and its manifestation was seen in indiscriminate attacks on people and property.¹⁰

If we analyze the first phase of the collision, we can see that the main target of the attack was the British Government and the Government's property. That's why the attackers mainly attacked the transport, government offices, military and police because in their perception these "objects" or "element" represents the government.

But very soon the clashes changed their direction and turned into Hindu Muslim violence. The incident which led towards this was an attack on a Marwari house in Zakaria Street by some drunken Muslims and impeded by the guards of the household, and in this strife two Muslims were died, and immediately the conflict turned into a Hindu-Muslim conflict¹¹. The incident which started as an anti-government, anti-British outlook took the form of anti-Hindu outlook immediately. The worst affected areas in this riot were Zakaria Street, Chitpur, and Mechuabazar.¹²

In this anti Hindu environment two characteristics of the riot which would be very important to note – are

- i) The Bengali Hindus were not attacked by the rioters, as well as they were not involved in the riot also. The Marwaris were the main targets of attacks.
- ii) The Muslims who participated in the riots were mostly non-Bengali upcountry Muslims, the people who migrated mostly from Bihar, Uttarpradesh, and some other provinces, and most of them belong to the lower strata of the society. From the Hindu side, the rioters were also non-Bengali, upcountry people who came to the city for job. They are also mostly belonging to the lower strata of the society.

These two particular features remained same till the riots of 1946. The riots of 1946 obviously saw a huge participation of both the Bengali Hindus and the Muslims which will be discussed later.

Naturally, in this circumstances the question which came first in the mind that why the Marwari's became the prime target of Muslim attackers. With the answer of this question, the internal causes of the riot are involved. But before answering this there is a need to talk about the social, political, economic condition of that time.

In the years before 1918, the price of the essential commodities continued to increase due to the World War I. The price hike mostly affected the working class people who lived in the slums; among them the migrant Muslims formed a huge part. Naturally it affected them badly. It was true that prices increased across the country due to the war situation, but in Kolkata there was also another reason for the price hike, and the Marwaris were responsible for that. The Marwari's stored the two essential commodities; food and cloth in their warehouses for earning more profits in the future. That became an open-secret in the city, but no action was taken by the government against them. This created a huge agitation among the lower class people in the city; they thought as the Marwari's gave a huge amount of money in the war-fund, the British government don't take any action against them, which is partially true also. This attitude of the government and the Marwari's creates a huge distress among the poor section of the society, of which large portions of the people were Muslims.¹³

On the other hand, the Marwari's had a hostile attitude towards the Muslims from the very beginning because of their religious difference. Many attempts were made by the Marwaris to stop the ritual of 'sacrifice' done by the Muslims during the time of Korbani, just four months before the riots of 1918, the Marwaris stopped the construction of slaughterhouse which was a means of livelihood for the poor Muslims. The Marwaris also appointed their own native people in the post of their Coachmen, syecs, sacking the Muslims employees. Such incidents were considered to be a direct attack on the livelihood of the Muslims, and created agitation among them. Another incident which also became an important factor in this Muslim Marwari strife was the 'clearing up' programme of the Calcutta Improvement Trust where many

slum areas where mostly the poor Muslims lived were given to the Marwari's to build houses and shops.¹⁴

The worst affected wards in this venture were the Baman Bustee, Collinga and Park Street which recorded a 43 percent, 32 percent, 13 percent decline in population respectively¹⁵. In Baman bustee 325 huts were demolished, in collinga the number of bustees were reduced from 99 to 54, and in Park Street over 150 huts were removed.¹⁶

So naturally for all the above mentioned reasons the Muslims became agitated against the Marwari's and they became the main targets during the riots. The shops of essential commodities and the warehouses of Marwari's were mostly affected in these riots. It was clear from the character of the looting that there was an economic perspective related in this riot. Rioters mostly attacked the shops which stored the food items and also the clothing shops, the prices of which commodities were very high that time but were also essential for living.

In short, the price hike, the attitude of the Marwari's, the discriminatory attitude of the British towards them, the social humiliation, and all these things created a huge fury among the Muslims. And finally the attack upon their religious sentiment gave them a way for their outbursts.

The religious perspective of the riots cannot be denied but the economic context of the riot is equally important. As Suranjan Das rightly pointed out that "Communal violence in this period of Bengal's history provided a channel for an expression of the socio-economic grievances of the lower social order"¹⁷

The next riot which will be discussed here was the riot of 1926. These riots in three phases affected the city. The first phase was happened between 2nd-14th April, the second phase was between 22nd April- 8th May and the third and final phase of the riot takes place between 11th-25th July.¹⁸

When analyzing the reasons for the riots of this period, the feature which will be seen is that there was a huge change in the nature of these riots. The religious issues take the position of the socio-economic perspectives of the previous riots. Religion, religious issues, and religious identity became the prime factor of the

organized and unorganized sector of politics. After analysing the causes of the riots, it became much easier to understand how politics gradually changed its nature and religion became the most important medium of mobilization.

The reason behind the first phase of riot was a procession of Arya Samaj consisting of 500 people in North Kolkata with loud music. When the procession passed in front of the Dinu Chamrawalla mosque at the time of evening prayer, a police escort ordered the group to stop playing music before mosque. The music was not stopped until some Muslims came out of the mosque to complain, and even then one drummer continued to play, prompting a number of Muslims to pelt clods of dirt and an empty packing cart at the procession. The processionists retaliated until they were driven off when more Muslims joined the group at the mosque, which then began stopping trams and buses and took to assaulting Hindu passengers. Within minutes, groups armed with lathis, appeared and both Hindu and Muslim neighbourhood were attacked¹⁹. The riot was started. In this riot 584 people were injured, 44 were dead and 500 were arrested²⁰

In the second phase, the riot started because of a quarrel between a Hindu shopkeeper with some drunken Muslims. The number of the casualties in this riot were 66 persons were dead 391 injured and the number of the arrested people were 567.²¹

The third phase of the riot was again started relating to the issue of music before mosque. In this phase 226 people were wounded, 28 dead and 363 were arrested.²²

So it was clear from the above description how religion became an instrument to mobilize people in organised and unorganised sector of politics. These riots were much more organized. The issue of playing music before mosque became an important domain to show power or superiority among the Hindu organizations, and in most cases they have a strong political backing also. Somnath Lahiri, a prominent C.P.I leader wrote in his memoir how the procession of Durgapuja in his childhood, playing loud music in front of the mosque purposely, later when he asked about this to a person, he replied that it is the way to show them (the Muslims) their power.²³ As far as the Muslim politics in the province is concerned Grossman noted rightly that

“these riots marked a political conjuncture that altered the course of Muslim politics in Bengal, because unlike the riot of 1918, these violent outbreaks did represent planned attacks designed to polarize the Hindu and Muslim populations. The Intra –Muslim aspect of this competition was particularly intense, as rival would be representatives attempted to generate political consensus around these particular symbols of identity”²⁴.

The issue which mostly precipitated the violence in Kolkata as well as in the countryside in Bengal was the issue of music before mosques. This specific issue was not very common before the 1920's, sporadic incidents of music before mosque could not have prepared either community for violence. But, as the situation changed gradually, the Muslim political leaders started to depend more on their religious perspective to mobilize the people. As Hobsbawm has noted “invented traditions play a critical part in construction of the ideologies of nations and movements. In the process, history is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so”²⁵. The religious procession, places became important in this matter for both the communities because they were a way of acting out the political power struggle by laying claim to public places.

The areas which were most affected in the riots as stated by Suranjan Das “The area bounded by Beadon street on the north strand road on the west, Bow Bazar on the south and college street on the east”²⁶. This particular area was also grievously affected by the previous riot of 1918, the main reason behind this is perhaps that this area of the city which was densely populated had the largest concentration of mixed population and constituted the business centre of the metropolis.

We could see that there were some similarities and some discrepancies between these two riots .Like the previous riot the Marwari's were the main target of attacks, the poorer section of both the communities were worst affected. The Marwari food and clothing shops were again attacked ruthlessly. The police and transport system were also attacked, and in this riots also Bengali Hindus and Muslims were not involved or attacked except two or three areas- like the attack on the Kali temple at kalitola in south Kolkata drove the local Bengali youth to join their upcountry co-

religionists fighting the Muslims.²⁷ But the nature of the attack by the Bengalis was defensive, and they never took the initiative by themselves to attack the Muslims.

Talking about the differences of these two riots, two new features of these riots were very much significant, firstly, the organized attacks on the religious places were very much prominent in the 1926 riot, where in 1918 the only religious place that was attacked is Kolutola Jain Temple but in 1926 there were 11 temples, several gurdwaras, mosques situated in north and central Kolkata were attacked by the organized group of people²⁸. This trend of establishing superiority of the community by domination over the religious places was absent in the earlier rioting of Kolkata. The conflicts of the previous riots were very spontaneous, where the 'idea of enemy' was derived from the social and economic context, religion worked as a means to express the anger. But gradually the situation changed, the organized political sphere created the concept of enemy based only upon the religious identity, so these religious places, religious symbols became increasingly important.

The second feature which was seen for the first time in these riots and extensively used in the infamous riot of 1946 was the well planned attacks from the houses of the Hindus. Some of the renowned Hindus like Madan Mohan Barman who was a Hindu Mahasabha leader, and also the big houses of Marwari's in the central avenue , Armenian street was used as a base to store arms for the rioters²⁹. The terrace was used to throw stone, brickbats, hot water etc at the Muslim masses.

Two incidents during the time of the riot clearly shows how much organized the riot was, the first was that some of the supporters of Arya Samaj dressed up as Muslims attacked the Hindus to create friction.³⁰ Secondly, ample numbers of pamphlets containing hate speeches by several organizations of both the communities were circulated throughout the city, which deeply affected the masses.³¹

The leadership which is involved in the 1926 Kolkata riot came from two levels or layers from the society, one group consisting of educated and established political leaders with a communal outlook, who through their speeches and writings kept the communal tension at a high pitch and the second one arising from the violence, with no political background as such. On the Hindu side 'leaders of the Suddhi and Sangathan movements as well as politicians eager to gain popular support

among their community to win the coming elections' involved in this riot.³² The 'Akhras' also played an important role to mobilize the Hindu masses for the riots.³³

While Discussing about these riots leadership, Suranjan Das wrote that "Their ("the first group of leader who were educated and coming from established political domain) interests in communal hostilities primarily lay in the constitutional concessions, they had no wish to see the violence escalate beyond controllable limits. As a result the Hindu and Muslim political leaders often toured the disturbed areas to restrain violence"³⁴. But in most of the cases the leaders did not have any control over the furious masses. Instead of them who came forward to lead were the 'faceless', 'unnamed' persons ,coming mostly from the lower strata of the society , formed the second layer of the society whose leadership period was only during the time of clashes. Suranjan Das writes in this context that- " Their socio economic grievances came to be expressed through a religious idiom, and at the same time the feeling that they were acting on behalf of the community gave them a sense of righteousness for what was being done"³⁵

These organized riots helped in raising communal feeling and community consciousness among the people of both the communities. Leading Muslim newspapers declared the loss of Muslim confidence in Hindu leaders and Hindu Mahasabha condemned the systematic attack on Hindu processions and religious institutions at the incitement of Muslim 'publicists' and urged its followers to face the challenge.³⁶ This community based politics or as we call it the 'identity politics' became a prime feature of the political events in Indian subcontinent till now.

Due to the riots the spatial layout of the city gradually changed. The people of both the communities started living with their own communities, and created "ghetto" , although the term ghetto was not very common and popular then, people using the term like Muslim mohalla or Hindu para instead.

The mobilization of the people in the name of religion became much easier by the economic and social condition of the city. The economic disparity between two classes of two different communities resulted in anger among one group of people (in this case the Muslims). So for many times 'riot' became the way out or medium of

discontent to express their anger, agitation, dissatisfaction; which could be justified by religion.

Renowned Communist leader Muzaffar Ahmed wrote that “the upper strata of society have all along been plundering the lower ones. The looting which has today taken place on Calcutta Streets under the cover of Hindu Muslim dissensions is but the reaction from (sic) the spoliation (by the rich). The matter for regret is that the affair has floated before our eyes with a religio communal hue³⁷ .

The best example of how the effect of organized political mobilization on the religious line affected the ‘en masse’, was the riot of 1946 in Kolkata. The atrocity of this riot exceeded all the riots before happened in the city.

As renowned historian Tapan Roychowdhury who was an eye-witness of the riot writes in his autobiographical sketch Bangalnama that –

“ আমার ধারণা ,’৪৬ সনে কলকাতা শহরে দাঙ্গা বলতে যা বোঝায় তা বিশেষ ঘটেনি। দুই দল ক্ষিপ্ত মানুষ পরস্পরের সঙ্গে লড়াই করছে, এ দৃশ্য যতই বেদনাদায়ক হোক, মানুষের ইতিহাসে সংঘাত অপরিহার্য জেনে ওই দৃশ্যে কোথাও যেন একটু মনুষ্যত্বের তলানি পাওয়া যায়। কিন্তু কলকাতার রাস্তায় যা ঘটেছিল তার ভিতর মনুষ্যচিত কোনও ব্যবহারের লক্ষণ দেখা যায় নি। বিবেকবর্জিত কিছু দ্বিপদ সম্পূর্ণ অসহায় কিছু নারী পুরুষকে নৃশংসভাবে হত্যা করে। হিন্দু পাড়ায় মুসলমান আর মুসলমান পাড়ায় হিন্দু নর-নারী-শিশু কোতলে-আম নীতির শিকার হয়। প্রতিরোধের প্রশ্ন প্রায় কোথাওই ওঠেনি”³⁸।

For him, there was no riot that happened in 1946, some unscrupulous frantic people killed some defenseless, helpless people in the name of religion. There was no sign of humanity at all. Muslims and Hindus ruthlessly killed each other; the question of resistance did not even arise.

The 1946 riot was a terrible consequence of the unrest caused by the two communities (Hindu and Muslim) conflict on the ‘direct action day’ called by Muslim league. This riot was completely different from the riots Kolkata had witnessed before; it became one of the major determinant factor of the Hindu Muslim relationship in the post-partition period of the city. As Suranjan Das rightly named

this as a 'partition riot; it eventually determined the fate of India in favor of Partition. The riot of 46' rapidly transformed the politics of all the political parties.

Before going into the accounts of the riot, it's very important to understand the political condition of the state as well as at Kolkata that time.

The compromise between KPP [Krishak Praja Party] and Muslim League broke in the year 1942 for the growing bitterness between Jinnah and Fazlul Huq. The second government formed by Huq Named Progressive Coalition Party consists of KPP, Forward Bloc, and Scheduled Caste Group. But, the independent attitude of Huq was not liked by the Governor of Bengal John Herbert. He forced Huq to resign from the ministry, saying that he would set up an all-party government. But, instead of an all party government he asked the leader of Muslim league to form a government with the help of Anglo-Indian and Europeans. This led to the formation of 'Muslim League' ministry in the province, and it worked as a huge boost for them.

In this context a brief description about the political situation of the Muslim league in Bengal is important. As we discuss in the previous chapter that before coming into the power, the influence of Muslim league was mostly limited to the urban areas like Kolkata, Dhaka, among the up-country mostly non- Bengali Muslim people, where as in the rural areas of Bengal mostly comprising the Bengali peasant Muslims community, supporting the KPP led by Fazlul Huq .

After coming into power the leaders of Muslim League clearly understood that if they wanted to establish themselves as the sole representative of the Muslims, they must gain support from the entire sector of the community; especially in Bengal where a large number of Muslims lived in the countryside. They realized that it is impossible for them to stay in the power of Bengal without the support of the Bengali Muslim community. So they started a huge propaganda campaign based on the religious line.

After coming into power, as we all know already that Abul Hashim became the new general secretary of the party, and he was mainly engaged in strengthening the power of the league in the districts of Bengal. The Pakistan proposal was being presented in such a way to the rural masses that they felt that Pakistan is such a place where they would be protected from Hindu zamindars and moneylenders. On the

other hand, in the cities and towns of Bengal the middle class Muslims were deeply influenced by the moral, economic, and political objectives of the draft manifesto of Pakistan prepared by Hashim himself. So in this way league working on the religious line started to establish itself as a mass based organization as well as the sole representative of the Muslim masses.

Another important attribute of the league's politics was the – 'involvement of the students' in the realm of politics. Especially the students who came to study to Kolkata started to take interests in the politics and a major part among them were the Bengali Muslims. In 1942 a militant front of the league named 'The Muslim National Guard' was formed in the city. The Islamia College, Baker Hostel became the stronghold of the league.

In these circumstances the election was held in 1946. The election was based purely on the communal line, and more specifically on the Pakistan Proposal. The Muslim League won the 119 seat out of 250 seats in the Bengal legislature and formed the government under the leadership of H.S Suharawardy. The Muslim league won the 93% seats of the Muslim constituency, and secured 30 seats in the central cabinet. League won all the seats which were reserved for the Muslims. Congress won 52 seats among the 62 general seats. By this election the Muslim league established itself as a sole representative of the Muslims in India.

The league and congress have to face the cabinet mission in this situation. As we all know congress refused to join the interim government but agreed to join in the constituent assembly but League was interested to join in the interim government. In this situation Nehru told in a press conference on 10th July 1946 that "although his party would join the assembly, it was free to change and modify the cabinet mission plan as it thought fit"³⁹. This made league suspicious about the intentions of the congress and Jinnah abrogated the proposal of cabinet mission, also 16th August was selected as the day of protest against the Congress and caste Hindu domination and also against the British government.

The day was called the 'Direct action day' by the league or more specifically by Jinnah. There is huge debate about the word 'Direct action' by Jinnah , what he

wanted to mean by the word was still an area of research, but one thing which is sure that, Jinnah never expected this kind of outcome.

A strike was called on that day. Meetings were held in many places of the country in support of this and the league leaders gave very strong communal speeches in these meetings. Jinnah commented on this issue that “What we have passed today (the day when the league council passed the direct action resolution) is the most heroic act in our history. Never have we done anything except by constitutionalism. But now ... We bid goodbye to constitutional methods”⁴⁰.

As there was Muslim league in power in Bengal, it was expected that they chose the day to show their power and authority to the masses, specially to the Hindus. So despite congress's extreme opposition, the league announced the day as a public holiday and an announcement was made about a meeting in front of the monument, where the important leaders of league were scheduled to speak in favor of the Pakistan proposal. Extensive propagation about the meeting was carried out by the league supporters. It was stated in the campaign that if the Muslims want to protect their religion from the hands of the Hindus then the establishment of Pakistan is the only way, and for this the Muslim masses have to do the sacrifices.

The Muslim National Guard, which is the volunteer organization of the Muslim league, opened their headquarter in Wellesley street at Kolkata in the month of august. They also announced the recruitment of volunteers for the protection of the interests of the Muslims⁴¹. Apart from this the student organization of the Muslim league takes the responsibility to mobilize the Muslim students. Rallies and squad drills of the Muslim National Guard were held regularly in different parts of Kolkata.⁴²

On 4th august a meeting was held at the Muslim Institute hall , presided over by Suhrawardy. Speakers at this meeting criticized the British cabinet mission for breaking their pledge to Muslims. They attacked the congress for its preparations to dominate Muslims.⁴³

Suhrawardy also declared in the council meeting of the league on 29th July that the congress was “out to destroy Muslim resurgence in this country let the congress beware that it is not going to fight just a handful of people fighting for power

but a nation which is struggling for its life and will secure that life”⁴⁴. Abul Mansur Ahmed recalls that Nazimuddin had declared openly before the Direct Action Day that their battle was not against the Indian Government, but against Hindus”⁴⁵.

On the other hand the Hindus were not silent at all. In a general meeting of the General council Of Hindu Mahasabha the participants discussed ‘the necessity of starting immediately some effective direct action to force the government, the congress and the Muslim league to recognize the Hindu Mahasabha as the sole representative to the Hindu community in any future administration of India’⁴⁶.

Sir Francis Tuker the lieutenant general in charge of the eastern command of the army reveals that different political parties had begun militant preparations from June .“The Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, a militant body of the Mahasabha was naturally making headway, using the rising tide of Muslim opposition to induce more recruits to join the banner of Hindu bigotry⁴⁷, just like their league counterparts. “The Mahasabha had been encouraging Hindus to prepare secretly against any future communal trouble; all even the goondas were to be trained in staff and dagger play”⁴⁸.

Rumors played an important role in this incident. P.K Ray a congressman recalls in his memoir that “There were rumors all over India [that] the Muslim were collecting arms, mainly daggers and swords for mass and concerted attacks on Hindus”⁴⁹. Tapan Roy chowdhury also writes that -

“অগাস্ট মাসের গোড়া থেকেই শহরে নানা গুজব ছড়াতে থাকে, দাঙ্গা নাকি হবেই, শোনা গেল লিগের পক্ষ থেকে অস্ত্রশস্ত্র সরবরাহ করা হচ্ছে। কোন কোন অঞ্চলে হিন্দুদের বাড়ি আক্রমণের জন্য নির্দেশ দিয়ে হ্যান্ডবিল বিলি হয়েছে। রাজাবাজার এবং অন্যান্য মুসলমান প্রধান পাড়ায় রোজ সন্ধ্যায় নাকি ট্রাকে করে লীগের প্রচারকরা দাঙ্গা করার জন্য পুজানুপুজ নির্দেশ দিয়ে যাচ্ছে। কিছু কিছু অস্ত্রশস্ত্রও বিলি হয়েছে। এইসব গুজব নিয়ে কলকাতার রক এবং চায়ের দোকানের আড্ডা তখন সরগরম ঠিকই, লোকের মুখে প্রায় অন্য কোনও কথা নেই।⁵⁰

It stated that since the beginning of august there were different kinds of rumors spreading in the city , like , the riot was inevitable, arms were supplied by the league, handbill was circulated in some areas with the direction of attacking the

Hindus houses. The league supporters came by truck in Rajabazar and other Muslim areas for giving the direction about the riot etc. Roy chowdhury also stated that he thought that people did not believe in this tittle-tattle talk consciously. As a reason for this he stated that the people of Kolkata did not leave their houses for security purpose, which they did during the time of world war ii when the rumors of Japanese invasion proliferated across the city.

Two issues are very important in this context, which are overlooked by Roychowdhury: the character of rumor never have been 'static', it took the form of 'temporal reality' when the conflict started, and gave people the 'justification' of their deeds. Rumor worked as a faceless element to intensify the riot. As Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak pointed out that 'rumor derives its function as "not belonging to any one voice-consciousness..... Rumor evokes comradeship because it belongs to every 'reader' or 'transmitter'. No one is its origin or source.⁵¹ It is clearly understood from the writings of Prof Roy Chowdhury when he mentioned that how the atmosphere of his hostel changed because of the rumors of killing thousands of Hindu in the RajaBazar, Park Circus, and kalutola area, but nobody took the responsibility of 'fact checking' or authenticity of the incident⁵².

The role of the radio can be mentioned in this context because the news which was broadcasted by the radio was believed to be censored news by the people and they more relied more on the rumors. Newspapers of both the communities helped to intensify the riot by publishing fake news. Tapan Raychowdhury writes in this context that during the riots, a newspaper used to come in his hostel, whose name he had never heard before, and was filled with a lot of misinformation, fake and exaggerated stories of the riots, and most of the people used to quote from this falsely filled publication, and if asked how you knew whether it was true, then people would stop talking to the questioner⁵³. So there is no disagreement about the fact that rumors had affected the riots in a big way. The organizers and the anti-social elements, who were mostly involved in the riot, took full advantage of it.

In the all India aspect, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS raised the slogan of Hindu state, but what is more important in the political context of this time, even within the Congress, a group of people started to believe the idea of 'Hindu Rashtra. Although

they were not believers of fundamentalist Hinduism. Nehru has repeatedly faced problems with the Congress workers of this communal outlook after independence.

In Kolkata the communal activities were also started by the Hindu fundamentalist group. "The Arya Samaj initiated a campaign to prepare the Hindus against any future Muslim onslaught⁵⁴ as well as Mass struggles were threatened if the Pakistan demand was conceded⁵⁵.

Just before the direct action day, on 14th August Congress brought out a rally of 5000 people in South Kolkata against this strike; in this meeting, Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Kiran Shankar Roy said that the attempt to call the strike on 16th August is a way to force the Hindus to support the league. It was the duty of the Hindus not to join in the strike and continue their normal activities. The leaders of the Sikh and Gorkha community also said that they will support Congress in this matter.

This kind of campaign faced extreme opposition from the leaders of the Muslim league. The leaders of Muslim league complained against the Hindu Mahasabha and congress leaders that they had been creating fear and hatred among the Hindus against the Muslims.

The role of congress was not above suspicion. "Their campaign inflamed the Hindu mind against the direct action day"⁵⁶.

One of the important aspects of this riot which was absent in previous riots, was the mixing of organized and unorganized political sector. In the previous riots when the condition was getting worsened by violence, the leaders of both the communities tried to pacify this. But this feature was absent in this riot because the leaders of both the communities consciously mobilized the people in the name of religion. Riot became a way to show their superiority and power.

The nature of the politics of Muslims changed completely. Previously the nature of their political movement was based mainly on the 'oppression' 'backwardness' 'exploitation',-where religion played a role of stimulant, these movements were 'defensive' in nature. But the situation changed completely in 1946. The main issue of Muslim political movement in Kolkata as well as in the country was, 'The Pakistan proposal' by league. Huge campaign was carried out by league

throughout the country. A large number of leaflets and pamphlets were printed in support of Pakistan, which had a profound effect on Muslim minds. The league backed newspapers like *Asre- Jadid* also started strong publicity for 'Pakistan Proposal' in their editorials. It was also stated on those writings that it was the duty of the Muslims to protect their rights, even if it comes in exchange of their lives.

These kinds of reports create an inflammatory effect on the popular mind of the Muslim community, and inspired them for violence. They considered themselves as representatives of the league, and it was their moral duty to get Pakistan at any cost. They started to consider 'violence' as their 'justification' to get Pakistan.

On the other side, the Hindus were not far behind. The Hindu fundamental organizations like Hindu Mahasabha strongly contested the work done by league in a similar communal tone. It was very clear from the pamphlet they circulated in opposing the issue of Pakistan; it stated that – "Hindus to give a clear answer to this act of effrontery. It is the duty of every Hindu to carry on as usual his normal occupation. The Hindus must make organized efforts to see that no Hindu, non-Muslim or non- league Muslim is forced to join the hartal. We therefore request the public to continue on that day their nominal work. They must not yield to any coercive measures. Remember that to join the hartal is to support the demand for Pakistan⁵⁷.

The Bengal provincial Hindu students Federation which was the student organization of Hindu Mahasabha also stated in their pamphlet that " The Hindus must make organized efforts to see that.....(none) is forced to join the hartal(on 16th August)....Remember that to join the hartal is to support the demand for Pakistan⁵⁸.

Hindu Shakti Sabha and other local organization also distributed lots of provocative leaflets to oppose the declaration of holiday (on 16th august) as well as the proposal of Pakistan. The rightwing Hindus wanted to spread the message that the Hindus are not scared of the Muslims. The Hindu newspapers like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Jugantor*, *Hindusthan Standard*, *AnandaBazar Patrika* etc played an important role to mobilize the Hindu public opinion.

One of the major characteristics of 1946 riot in Kolkata is that- the 'elite mobilization' and 'self mobilization' happened simultaneously, the people of both the

communities were well aware about their doings and they considered it as their moral duty to act that way.

There is no accurate information about how many people came to the meeting organized by league on that day. The information gathered from the sources stated that Sohrabardy repeatedly addressed the crowd by saying that the military and police had been restrained, and this word created a strange mentality in the mind of the people who were present in the meeting , as Suranjan Das rightly pointed out that “ This Was probably interpreted by the gathering as an open invitation to commit violence on its rival community and processionists started attacking Hindus and looting Hindu shops on their way back from meeting⁵⁹.

The clashes which started on 16th August were continued till 19th August. An official estimate stated that 4000 died and 10000 were injured⁶⁰ . From 20th August the city slowly started to calm down, and finally from 29th August the troops which had been called out to help the civil authorities were gradually withdrawn.⁶¹

A memorandum by the Secretary of State for India on 11th November 1946 mentioned: “Right of an unprecedented gravity occurred in Calcutta between 16 and 19 August. The proximate cause of the outbreak was the decision by the Muslim League Council to celebrate 16 August as Direct Action Day. The most recent estimate of casualties during the four days is given as roughly 4000 dead and 10,000 injured”⁶².

Abul Mansur Ahmed, a Muslim league member that time, recalled that some people literally lost their sanity, being continuously exposed to gruesome murders on the streets. The will to kill became an instinct, while compassion was an unacceptable sentiment.⁶³

The riot was first started in north Kolkata, later spreading towards south Kolkata. Muslims in south Kolkata were much more affected, whereas in the north Kolkata, the number of victims from both the communities were very close. The worst affected areas in this riot were – “The sector bounded on the south by bow Bazaar Street on the east by upper circular road, on the north by Vivekananda road and on west by strand road. The areas under the police stations of Jorasanko, Taltola, and Park circus, Entally, Amherst Street, Bowbazar, and Manicktola were became a

grazing ground for the rioters. The slums of Kalabagn, Rajabazar, Nikashipara, Watgunge, Sovabazar, Lalbagan, Zakaria Street also became the soft targets for the furious crowd⁶⁴. In south Kolkata Ballygunge, Gariahat, Lake Market was most affected by riots⁶⁵.

Congress leader B.C Roy's house was attacked by the rioters, his house was set on fire by the rioters. Another congress leader Kiran Shankor Roy's eldest daughter and son-in law lived in a house of Christopher lane and it was also attacked by the poor Muslims who lived in a slum near to their house⁶⁶.

From august 16 to September 6, about 2547 people were arrested in the city, among them 1227 were Hindus and 1304 were Muslims⁶⁷. One thing which is very clear from the number of the arrests is that the two communities were equally involved in the riot, Therefore it is inappropriate to blame any one of them.

The types of looting were another aspect where the riot was different from the previous ones. In the previous riots as we see earlier the shops and warehouses of the Marwari's were severely affected, Bengali Hindus were excluded from the attacks. The property of the government also became the targets of the attackers. But in this riot the main targets of the attacks were the Hindus including the Bengalis. Both the communities were involved severely in the looting, and also in some areas it was seen that the rioters kept a symbol (most cases a religious one) or writing like the 'Hindus shop' or the 'Muslim shop' to understand properly who this shop belongs to.

The most affected areas were those where one community was minority. Apart from this, a new trend which was seen for the first time in this riot and became an important characteristic of the post-independence riots in the province was- "religious symbols of the rival communities became the targets of collective violence". Burial, Cremation grounds, cattle sheds were selected as targets by the rioters. Apart from these, the religious places like temples, mosques were also attacked by the rioters like the previous one, and in most cases the attacks were well-planned and organized. The Hindus were more aggressive in this affair, they entered mosques, killed the imams, burnt the holy book. An eye-witness of the riot Mizanur Rahman wrote that during the riots his father was admitted to the school of tropical medicine in the city, and his father told him that Muslims were killed in nearby

mosque at the time of fajr prayers⁶⁸. According to one estimate 52 mosques and almost equal numbers of temples were desecrated.⁶⁹

Educational institutes were not also excluded. Schools, libraries, hostels all were attacked. Tapan Roychowdhury wrote in “Bangalnama” that at Vivekananda road there was a hostel for Muslim girls named ‘Munnujan’ hostel, where the author had a couple of friends. After the city became a little quiet, he went to lookout for them and saw that some broken suitcases and burnt books were spread in front of the hostel, and it was completely empty. Later he heard from his friends that their hostel was attacked, and among the attackers many of them lived on that ‘para’⁷⁰ and had a Hindu middle class background. Some of them were also acquaintances of the victims, whom they called ‘dada’⁷¹. As the author pens down that the normal relationship between ‘him’ and ‘them’ was never restored.

Perhaps this is the biggest harm that a riot can do. It completely ruined the “trust” between the people in such a way that the ‘distrust’ have been passed on to generation after generation.

Mijanur Rahman another eye-witness of the event wrote that the Jubilee school and its adjoining hostel which is reserved for the Muslim students were completely burned down. Everybody who was present there was died in that fire. As he write down -

“সারা রাস্তা জুড়ে বিভিন্ন দেহভঙ্গির পোড়া লাশ- কারো ঝলসানো হাত উরধে
উৎক্ষিপ্ত, কারো মাংসহীন করোটী দেহ থেকে বিছিন্ন, কারো পুরো দেহটাই
ঝলসানো কিন্তু আশ্চর্যভাবেই চোখের মনি দুটো অক্ষত, কেউ উবু হয়ে বসে
আছে, কেউ চিং শয়ান- সে এক ভয়াল ভয়ংকর বীভৎস দৃশ্য । দেহগুলো দেখে
বোঝা যাচ্ছে প্রায় সবাই বালক পুরো স্কুলটাই ঝলসানো দেখলাম - তার
মানে ছাত্রাবাসের ঘরে ঘরে পুড়েছে সবাই - মাকে ডেকেছে , বাবাকে ডেকেছে
অনুনয় বিনয় করেছে একটু বাঁচার জন্য - না কেউ সারা দেয়নি সে ডাকে - বন্ধ
ঘরে কি ভয়ংকর সমাপন!”⁷²

This kind of atrocities Kolkata did not witness in her previous riots. As Suranjan das rightly explained: “A form of violence which however attracted particular attention in 1946 consisted of attacks and murders committed by small but determined group of people. The emphasis here was on revenge and control over the

physical body of the enemy; the aim was to cause the greatest possible humiliation, pain and suffering.”⁷³

The poor people like Milkmen, mill workers, Muslim tram drivers, hawkers, Muslim tailors, and Hindu sweet shopkeepers became the soft targets of the rioters and were severely attacked in this riot.

Two important new aspects which can also be found in this riot are -

Firstly, the attack upon the women was one of the new and prime aspects of the riots of 46’. This particular trend was absent in the previous riots of the city. Yashodhara Bagchi and Suvoranjana Dasgupta show in their book ‘Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and partition in Eastern India’ how women are identified as the main object of ruthless conquest; how the female womb became a symbol of conquered territory and attacks on them became a direct attack on the honor and integrity of the rival community.

This feature clearly shows us how the religion based politics of hatred entrenched so much in the minds of the people that they lost all of their human sensibilities.

Secondly, another aspect which was prominent in this riot were, the people who were known as ‘anti-social’ in the city life of Kolkata, suddenly became the savior of their respective communities. These people started to justify their work like looting, killing etc under the cover of religion, and in many cases they were attached with the organized political authority, and their action was well planned.

There is a lot of debate about who was responsible for this riot. Congress and Hindu Mahasabha directly accused the Muslim league for the massacre. They both said in a similar tone that the league government gave their supporters an opportunity to attack the Hindus by declaring 16th August as a public holiday. Communist leader Jyoti Basu commented “If the league leaders really wanted an anti-British hartal they should have approached not the governor for the declaration of a public holiday but the fellow non-league patriots for a joint and powerful demonstration against the British”⁷⁴

There is no doubt that many activities of the Muslim league are sufficiently questionable, like- among the twenty four police stations in the city twenty two police stations were keeping in charge of the Muslims and the rest of the two were under the hands of Anglo-Indians. The Hindus were removed from the important positions. The statement by the Muslim leaders created a sense of anxiety, fear, and excitement among the Hindus. And most importantly Suhrawarady's attitude was not above suspicion, as Taylor noted: "with such irresponsible and unscrupulous persons in the authority, it was extremely difficult for the police to deal with the dangerous situations"⁷⁵.

The Hindus were not less responsible. They also took various defensive programmes such as collecting arms and bombs from American soldiers, collecting knives, brickbats, iron rods and stored it in the slums etc.

The Marwari traders and the popular Hindu houses of Mahasabha leaders were used as a base to attack upon the Muslims. Hemchandra Nasker, an MLA, and also the owner of Keshoram Cotton Mill and Bharat Mihir Press, who owned the 'Rashbihari mansion' in the belegkata area, attacked the Muslims from there. The Ganesh Kuthi situated in the crossing of chitpur-mechuabazar, Koley building in the Vivekananda road, all were used as a place for the attack upon the Muslims⁷⁶.

The Muslim league defending themselves stated that because the number of casualties was much more on the Muslim side, so it was wrong to say that the league was solely responsible for the riot. They also alleged that congress leader Kiran Shankar Roy and Sarat Bose did not participate in any peace rally until 20th august, it was the league leaders who toured the affected areas and organized the peace rally.

The most acceptable reports regarding the riots of 1946, was perhaps by the American Intelligence. In one of their reports it was said that "while both communities had made preparations for self-defense, it was Muslim provocation followed by instant Hindu retaliation which caused the crisis"⁷⁷

The British officials also could not devoid themselves completely from the responsibility of the riots. The governor was biased towards the league from the beginning. He did not oppose the announcement of public holiday on 16th august. He was well aware of the fact that congress and Hindu Mahasabha both opposed this idea

very strongly, even when Suhrawardy was continuously interfering in the work of police he did not try to restrain it.

Although it is very hard to say whether the British officers kept themselves away from the riot intentionally, but it is true that any attempt to suppress the riots has not been done from the beginning. As a result, the situation was getting more complex.

Like other riots, in this riot also the most active rioters were the upcountry people of both the communities. Among them there was a significant number of goalas, sweepers, rickshawpullers, durwans of government offices and business establishments personal retainers of prominent persons of the city, carters were mentionable.

However, one of the major characteristics of the riots of 1946 which distinguished it from the other riots was the participation of the Hindu middle class Bengali 'bhadrolok'. The way the middle class Bengali Hindu was involved in this riot is unthinkable. Tapan Roychowdhury wrote that from the balcony of his hostel, he saw a nine or ten year old Muslim mango seller who came out to sell mangoes to that area, was beaten to death and among those who did this work, majority were the Bengali Hindu gentlemen.⁷⁸ (bhadrolok)

Bengali Hindu businessmen, influential merchants, artists, shopkeepers, etc were arrested on rioting charges⁷⁹. In central Calcutta bhadroloks joined others to disrupt a Muslim meeting being addressed by the chief minister himself. A large portion of crowd which killed Dr. Jamal Mohammad an eminent eye-specialist, consisted of educated youths. The police officer khondaker deposed before the enquiry committee that Hindu activists included "young men of better standard" it was not surprising that many of them spoke English with police officers"⁸⁰

The ex-INA officials also participated in this riot on behalf of the Hindus. The Muslim leaders specifically complained about the attacks from the ex-INA people. This incident showed how the politics of hatred changed the human nature of the people, where the people of a non- communal organization like INA also became the participants of the massacre.

This riot completely devastated the city life of Kolkata. Schools, colleges, courts, markets were all closed. Food became insufficient and expensive. A large number of people left the city. According to a government estimate about 10,000 people left the city. The condition of the city is perhaps best described by the poem of Bengali poet Jibanananda Das, as he pens down the lines:

“Is everything today hazy? It is now difficult to think clearly
The rule is to keep everyone informed with half-truths, In darkness;
And then alone in that darkness, it has become the Practice.
To surmise the other half of the truth; and everyone
Looks at everyone else out of the corner of his eye.”⁸¹

An invisible barbed wire was created in the city; the Hindus left the Muslim locality and vice versa. The riot hit every aspect of the city life. Both the communities developed their own system of defense. 10,000 people were homeless. Everywhere there was an ambience of distrust. This riot affected the Hindu-Muslim relation in the city extremely and it became a determinant factor of the relationship between them for the coming years.

This riot sealed the future of India. The congress and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders accepted that the partition is inevitable. Moulana Azad commented that The 16th August 1946 was a black day not only for Calcutta but for the whole of India. The turn that events had taken made it almost impossible to expect a peaceful solution through meeting between the Congress and the Muslim league; this was one of the greatest tragedies of Indian history.

Kolkata again faced communal clashes when the legislative assembly voted for the Bengali section, which resolved that Bengal's western part including Kolkata was to remain with India, and Eastern Part of Bengal would be included in East Pakistan, the regional capital of that province was Dhaka. With the loss of Kolkata, Naturally the Muslim leaders became frustrated, while the Hindu Mahasabha leaders again started propaganda to include East Bengal in India. This again resulted clashes in the city, although the Hindus were more responsible for these clashes because they considered Kolkata as their home ground where the Muslims were outsiders.

In April 1947, the Congress president Kripalani formally said to Mountbatten, “Rather than have a battle we shall let them (the Muslim league) have their Pakistan , provided you will allow the Punjab and Bengal to be partitioned in a fair manner”

A settlement which is distressing for the nationalist Indians but which satisfied the departing British officials as is evident from the following comment of John Smith, the Private secretary to the Bengal Governor “What a truly remarkable achievement it was to create two new dominions and to divide two of the largest and most troublesome Provinces in India – Bengal and the Punjab”.⁸²

From the above discussion we can understand that how riot became an important element in socio-political process of Kolkata before independence, how different layers of the society came and got mixed in the riots.

There were three stages we can see in the riots of Kolkata from the time of khilafat movement to the pre partition years. The riot changes its form – from unorganized, less related with institutional politics, with a volatile class orientation to an organized, well connected with institutional politics, with religious orientation. Kolkata witnessed this all.

These riots reconciled a large section of the subordinate social groups in the Hindu and Muslim population to the idea of partition, This was reflected in the changed attitude of nationalist Muslims, and the congress leadership (except Gandhi) whose secular stance gave way to the acceptance of Pakistan as ‘the only real alternative’.

It’s very important to understand the politics of riot before the partition, without understanding this it’s impossible to understand the complexities of the relationship between these two communities. As Suranjan das writes that “a riot is a transformatory as well as on historical event. It shapes and alters perceptions and aspirations. People are changed: their attitudes to each other and their ways of thinking about themselves are transformed. The violent and intense nature of a riot is not easily forgotten by the individuals involved or threatened and tends to overshadow their other personal and historical experiences⁸³.

The riot shaped the future relationship of Hindus and Muslims, and how it changed the social, political perspective of the city, we will discuss in the next chapter.

Notes and References:

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- ³ Ibid Das : p-3
- ⁴ en.m.wikipedia .org/wiki/riot
- ⁵ The term negative used here represents same as Scribner pointed out ‘negative assimilation’ during the time of German reformation – where the common person convinced of the rightness of the ‘evangelical cause’ and therefore felt compelled to support the movement or ideology. Scribner R.W , For the Sake of simple Folk Popular propaganda for the German reunification Cambridge University Press 1981 pp245-46
- ⁶ Op.cit. Das pp 66-67
- ⁷ Grossman. Patricia.A : Riots and Victims : Violence and the construction of communal Identity among Bengali Muslims, 1905-1947. Westview press 1999 p-40
- ⁸ The other reasons of dissatisfaction among the Muslims were the imprisonment of ali brothers, absence of the facilities of korbani , the ignorance towards the community in montegu-chemsford act by the government. Op.cit Das p- 64
- ⁹ Ibid Das p-66
- ¹⁰ Ibid Das p-66
- ¹¹ Ibid Das p-67
- ¹² Ibid Das p-67
- ¹³ Ibid Das pp 62-63
- ¹⁴ Ibid Das p-62
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- ¹⁷ Ibid Das p-74
- ¹⁸ Ibid Das p-81
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- ²⁰ Op.Cit Das p-81
- ²¹ Ibid Das p-81
- ²² Ibid Das p-81
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- ²⁷ Ibid Das pp91-92
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- ³² Ibid Das p-95
- ³³ Ibid Das p-95
- ³⁴ Ibid Das pp95-96
- ³⁵ Ibid Das p-96
- ³⁶ Ibid Das pp96-97
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- ³⁸ Roychowdhury , Tapan : bangalnama : ananda publishers Kolkata 2009 . p-154
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- 62 Op.cit Roy p-159
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- 64 Op.cit Das o-172
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- 72 Op.cit Rahman p-64
- 73 Op.cit Das p-169
- 74 Ibid Das p-185
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Chapter – 4

***Changing dimension of Muslim Politics
in the city of Kolkata***

Chapter - 4

Changing dimension of Muslim Politics in the city of Kolkata.

“Partition Came and we accepted it because we thought that perhaps that way, however painful it was, we might have some peace to work along our own lines. Perhaps we acted wrongly. It is difficult to judge now. And yet the consequences of that partition have been so terrible that one is inclined to think that anything else would have been preferable. That is no going back now to India as it was before the Partition”

Nehru to the Nawab of Bhopal, 9th July 1948.¹

The last line of the above mentioned letter is perhaps the best reference to the post-partition scenario in India. ‘There is no going back’, partition drastically changes the social, political, economic context of the country as a whole. It changes everything, not only the above mentioned context; it changes its people, the relationship among them, their identity, everything. Suddenly the words like ‘Refugee’, ‘Migrants’, ‘Muhajir’, ‘Majority’, ‘Minority’ started to get associated with Indian politics, and became an integral part of Indian history.

The three major issues which became utmost important for the country to deal with were i) Refugee Problem ii) Minority Problem and iii) the rehabilitation issue. These three interrelated problems completely shook the stability of the newly formed state of India. The two states which came into existence after August 1947 are the Islamic state of ‘Pakistan’ and Secular State of ‘India’. India was divided along with the religious line, with the famous ‘Two nation theory’ of Jinnah, where it was decided that Pakistan was made up of Muslim majority areas and would be known as an Islamic state, and India became a secular country, where a person’s religious identity could not be the determinant factor of his or her citizenship, but it was also true that the issue of ‘majority’ ‘minority’ came to prominence after that. In a country, divided on religious grounds Hindus became the majority, and people of other religions except from Hindus became the ‘Minorities’. From this perspective it is true that other than the ‘Hindus’ everyone else, like Buddhists, Christians, Parsis, Jains and Muslims come into the minority fold, but it is also true that history

witnesses -the way Muslims had to fight with their ‘ Minority’ stigma, people of other religions did not have to do this.

There are two simple yet complicated explanations for these which are very popular also , the first explanation states that the birthplace of Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism are all in India, so naturally there should no question about their loyalty towards the country. Apart from them the Christians , jews, parsis ,although their birthplace is different but they have been living in this country for a long time and recognized the culture of this country as their own and helped to improve it, so there are also no doubt about their loyalty towards the country. But in the case of Muslims the problem is different, it has been stated that although the Muslims lived here for a long period of time but they don’t consider it as their own, their allegiance is always towards the countries like Arab, Persia, Turkey etc, and because it is assumed that they have been primarily responsible for the Partition and creation of Pakistan based on Islamic brotherhood , so naturally they will have their allegiance towards Pakistan now and secondly , because Pakistan created as a Muslim State, the Muslims should have to go to that country. The ‘Secular’ nature of India became a secondary matter here.

Partition drastically changes the position of the Muslims in the whole country. Kolkata was no exception, S.P Chattejee in his book ‘Bengal In Maps’ clearly stated that by the middle of the twentieth century Muslims were concentrated in two distinct regions of western Bengal. The First zone of it included the industrial and urban tracts around Kolkata , the 24 parganas, and the Howrah Hooghly districts². In Bhatpara, Dumdum,Kamarhati,and Asansol, Muslims were one in four and often one in three of the population . In the Garden reach dockland area on the southern banks of the Hooghly, there were as many Muslims as there were Hindus³. By 1947, certain parts of Kolkata had already become predominantly ‘Muslim’ , notably Park-Circus and Karaya, which were residential areas favoured by the literati, BowBazar,Calcutta’s commercial heart, and Ekabalpur , where poorer Muslims lived.⁴ But after the partition these scenario changed completely, although ,it is important to note that the records of the governments or the studies by the scholar do not provide us any concrete information about the displaced Muslims, The official records contains only the passing references of the displaced Muslim refugees.⁵ It was clear from the 1951

census , which is referred in the ‘Survey Of Unemployment in West Bengal 1953, it discussed the Muslim diaspora but failed to produce a full reliable account of how many Muslims had been displaced.⁶

The fact that the population of the Muslims has decreased in the city of Kolkata is clear from the chart below .

Hindus and Muslims In Calcutta , 1901-1951 .

YEAR	HINDUS	MUSLIMS	MUSLIMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF HINDUS.
1901	603,310	270,797	44.9
1911	672,206	275,280	41.0
1921	725,561	248,912	34.3
1931	796,628	281,520	35.3
1941	1,531,512	497,535	32.5
1951	2,125,907	305,932	14.4 ⁷

According to the 1951 Pakistan Census also there were 700,000 Muslim ‘muhajirs’ mentioned in East Pakistan, of whom two-thirds or 486,000 were known to be refugees from west Bengal.⁸

There are plenty of examples from where we can understand that there was also a ‘Muslim Migration’ that happened in the province of west Bengal. But it is also true that till now there is a dearth of sources about the causes of their migration. There is no official record about the causes for which, after India declaring herself as a ‘Secular State’ so many Muslims left the country, however it is not difficult to understand by reviewing the history and politics of communalism and communal riots in the post partition India why so many Muslims left their country. The major reason for migration of the Muslims from this country was ‘Safety and Security’, just like their Hindu counterpart in Pakistan. If we see the migration pattern of the Muslims we could find that it was same just like their fellow Hindus on the other side of the border. The first wave of migration was done by the urban elite who had some hold in the new state. These people with the help of their acquaintances in the other part of the border found a way to earn a living. As far as the Muslim government officials were concerned, they were given a choice of where they would like to work , and for

obvious reasons most of the Muslims opted for Pakistan . Along with the government officials there were plenty of subservient employees like peons, watchmen, police constables , orderlies who all went to Pakistan. And Finally in some instances Muslims who had estates in west Bengal were able to make deals with propertied Hindus from the East by which they exchanged their plots and holdings with each other, whether in legally or in less formal way.⁹ It was clear that the upper and the middle class Muslims were more inclined towards migration. But for the poorer Muslims whether rural or urban, migration was the least possible option for various reasons. Although they would leave their place during the communal conflict, but afterwards they would return or try to return . These poor, unorganized Muslims became the ‘Majority’ among the ‘Minority’ Muslim Community in India and also in the city and also they became the most vulnerable one.

It is true that there are many Muslims who have left India but it is also true that for every Muslim who left west Bengal after partition , there were many more who stayed on¹⁰. According to Prof Joya Chatterji , it is assumed that some 750,000 Muslims out of a total population of 5 million left West Bengal soon after 1947 , and this suggests that for every Muslim who left , more than four stayed behind¹¹. It can be assumed they are from the poorer sector, who have no connection in the newly formed state, as far as the urban population was concerned among them there were many who worked in the factories, who had no ‘land’ in their native place and they established their permanent settlements in the city as an industrial worker. Apart from them, there were plenty of people who permanently settled in the city based on their work in the unorganized sector , in rural areas the Muslims who stayed on only had their small land as which is a source of their income , so it is impossible for them to leave the land and go away.

The physical geography of Kolkata changed drastically after partition , two major important characteristics were responsible for that i) the influx of the refugees ii) the changing nature of the Muslim localities.

The changing nature of the Muslim localities is very much interrelated with the condition and difficulties faced by the Muslims in post-partition period.

The Muslims who remained in India realized that they would have to carry the burden of partition for the rest of their lives. They understood that their position in this country now became that of a second class citizen. They have become a minority in this country in every possible way and from now, their loyalty towards the country will always be viewed with suspicion. The Muslims of Kolkata was not out of this thought either.

The first difference which has come to notice among the Kolkata's Muslim is about their 'physical space'. Their 'physical spaces' started to shrink after partition. There were many reasons behind it, the first reason obviously for safety and security.

We have seen in earlier chapters that although the Muslims population in Kolkata mostly resides in groups but the groups would form depending on the caste and the economic position of them. Partition completely changed this aspect, Bihari, Gujrati, Bengali Muslims all who resided after partition in Kolkata, got acquainted with only one identity that they are all 'Muslims'. Partition erased the division among the Muslims in Kolkata. The Muslims who lived in the city also understood this. They realized that right now their existence is confined with two words only, i.e Muslim and Minority, there is no difference between a Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims in the eyes of a majority community here, so for safety and security they also started to live together in spite of their internal differences. This process resulted in contraction of their living places.

Secondly, whenever, there was a communal riot or communal violence after partition, Muslims tended to leave their places and they left it, and went for a secure place in suburb or rural area where they had some contact or associate, but after that when they came back they noticed that their properties had been confiscated. Sometimes it was the refugees and some time it was the local people (mostly from majority community) who did not want 'Muslims' in their locality. Obviously there was Evacuees property act by the Government of India but the implementation of it was not at all easy. The public opinion as well as the sympathy towards the refugee stood in the way for implementation of this law.

The area constituted of Sukea Street, Colootola, Fenwick Bazar, Maniktola, Belighata, Belgachia, and Cossipure were mainly the localities of mixed population,

so for obvious reason during the time of communal violence these areas became most vulnerable, and the Muslims who lived there , they would flee for safety, but gradually the Hindu refugees started to establish their settlements in these places. It was clear from the Census of India that from December 1950 to March 1951 the mixed population character of these places were changed completely, obviously there are some blocks where Muslims have settled themselves , and in these blocks there are very few settlements of people of other religions located. It was pretty clear that the localities which had the mixed population earlier , after partition ,it changed their nature and turned into a majority block, minority block , or more specifically Muslim Block , Hindu Block.¹²

Nirmal Kumar Bose in his book ‘ Calcutta : 1964 a social survey’ clearly indicates this pattern, about the ‘ living space’ of the Muslims in the city , in his own words that “ there is a large concentration of the Muslim labourers, artisans and craftsmen in wards like 15,16,48,49,55,57,73,74 and part of 75. The majority of them belong either to Bihar or Uttar Pradesh.

Formerly those who lived in Wards 15, 16,33,35 etc were employed largely in soap or leather works , carried out on a household scale . But after the Hindu-Muslim Riots of 1946-47 , there has been some amount of re-distribution of population, while Bustees have been largely cleared out in this area . Muslims have consequently , moved into greater concentration in wards like 32,33,34 and 35 and work as masons in the building trade or as artisans in various industries.¹³

Prof Joya Chatterji explained this ‘shrinking nature’ of Muslim neighbourhood very well. She writes, “Over time, as each incident of rioting and tension sparked off an exodus of frightened and vulnerable Muslims fleeing to safer areas, and as each temporary flight became a permanent exile, Muslim Communities which had been large and well established before partition now disappeared altogether or shrank into tiny clusters. Particularly in the towns and cities of southern West Bengal , where Muslims had once played a prominent part in Urban life , now they huddled together in small areas, hemmed in by colonies of Hindu refugees that sprang up around them. These tiny Muslim pockets surrounded and continually squeezed by hostile neighbors, became increasingly crowded little enclaves with the distinctive air of the ghetto about them.¹⁴

It's not only that they lost their 'Physical Space', they also started to lose their 'rights'. The rights which they have been enjoying since long , after partition they started to compromise with it. The Muslims who lived in the city after partition started to realize , that partition made them the most unprotected, unsafe, endangered community as a whole, so in this changed situation if they wanted to 'protect' themselves from the rage of the majority community, they have to sacrifice and compromise on some of the ground which may cause fury or agitation among the Hindus or the majority. Among this the major prerogative was the right of 'Korbani' (Most of the time there was a cow which the Muslims slaughtered during the time of Eid) , that was sometimes voluntarily given up by the Muslims in a couple of instances. The issue of cow-slaughter or 'Go-Korbani' is a very sensitive matter from the very beginning, there was a long history of conflict regarding this issue among the Hindus and Muslims. But after partition , the Muslims realized that their position has changed , they have actually become second class citizen here. So for the sake of their safety many times they decided not to perform the ritual of 'Cow Slaughter' or Korbani. Apart from this the procession of holi, puja before the mosque was also a matter of conflict before the partition, but after partition Muslims became silent about these issues, There was one instance which came to notice from the report of the Kolkata Police, where the leader of Anjuman-e- Mafidul –Islam S.M Salahuddin contacted the Mohalla Sarders of PhulBagan and Tanti Bagan locality of Beniapukur , and urged them to be quiet during the festival of Holi, and did not give in to any kind of persuasion¹⁵. The report of popular Muslim Newspaper 'Paigam' of 17th August 1954 confirmed that at the behest of the Indian government the West Bengal government has closed the special Haj office in Kolkata, and why this office has been closed , or when will it reopen or re-open at all, nothing was said about this¹⁶. There are also incidents where the poor Muslim people were forced to give ¹⁷up their rights over their cemetery.

Giving up these kind of rights is not something that the Muslims would do spontaneously, Rather they were forced to do it and they realized that perhaps this was the right way to protect themselves. Although this does not mean that Hindus started to sympathize with them, they take these 'signs' as a subordination stance for the Muslims. The majority of Hindus started to think that the Muslims don't have the right to perform their Korbani, in a country where they have become the minority.

There were plenty of instances found in the year 1948, 1949 where despite all the assurance from the Muslims like the choice of the place for korbani , where no Hindu lived or the sounds of korbani would have not reached any the Hindus, Hindus were vehemently opposed to the idea of Korbani , as well as threatened them.¹⁸ During his survey Nirmal Kumar Bose found that in ward number 14 there were 12 mosques and four of them were actually in possession of refugees from East Pakistan who used them for their residential purposes¹⁹. These examples are enough to prove how the majority try to pressurize the ‘Muslims’ in the very ‘physical’ and ‘public’ spaces of them.

But it would be wrong to think that the Muslims accepted their destiny as subordinate citizens. Obviously they realized that their position in the country changed, but with the course of time they also realized their importance in the politics of the country, the Muslims of the city were no exception. They also started reckoning with different political parties.

After independence, Muslims started to rely on Congress , one of the reasons behind it was obviously the assurance given by Pandit Nehru towards the minorities and secondly the ideology and policy of ‘territorial nationalism’ and ‘secularism’ propagated extensively by Congress from before Independence, and finally to protect themselves from Hindu communal organizations like RSS. There is a letter written by President of CoochBihar District Committee Ansaruddin Ahmed , where he stated that “ Muslims , originally wary of Congress , had eventually “ veered round and agreed with us that in the secular Constitution of India laid down by the Congress lies our greatest safety and if congress did nothing but give us this Secular constitution it was enough for us and we would stand by the Congress”²⁰. As a result, after independence a large number of Muslims started to rely on Congress. As far as the Muslim politicians were concerned there were two kind of politicians. We could find the first category including people who joined in the congress. It was the easiest way to secure their political life, and on the other hand for Congress they became the proof of secularism , the ideology that the congress has been talking about from the beginning. There were 82 Muslim candidate during the time of 1952 election where 21 of them were from congress , 14 from the other political parties or oppositions , and 45 of them were stood Independent in the election , 17 Congress Candidate won

along with the 2 Independent candidate, what is important that no one from the any opposition won. This is a clear example that the way in which the Congress was able to gain the reliability of the Muslims after independence was not possible for any other political party.

But , gradually the situation began to change, each and every political party realized the importance of ‘ Muslim vote’ and tried to achieve it. On the other hand Muslims also realized their importance in the ballot box , and started to reunite. If we observe the trend of Muslim politics in the post independence period in west Bengal as well as in Kolkata , we understand a number of political trends, the first one obviously sided with the congress, the second one was the trend of Independent leaders, other than these there were some people who started to lean towards leftist politics. As we all know that in politics there is no place for a feature like ‘distinct’ or ‘Obvious’ , Muslim politics in the city was complex ,multidimensional and indistinct.

One of the important aspect which was seen in post- partition Kolkata was the censorship over the newspapers. There are plenty of newspapers published from Kolkata that had a wide circulation among the Muslims of Kolkata, among these ‘Paigam’, ‘Asre- Jadid’ , ‘Imroze’, were noteworthy. There is a note about ‘Paigam’ in the Intelligence branch of the west Bengal government, a report which is sent to the Police Commisioner for his action , the report stated “ “ Paigam is a Bengali bi-weekly. It professes to be an organ of the Muslims. The tone of the paper is anti-national and highly communal. Shri Khairul Anam Khan who is the editor of this organ is an ex Muslim leaguer and is well known for his pro-Pakistan propensities and anti state activities. Since its very inception this bi-weekly has been persistently publishing dirty lies regarding the treatment meted out to the Muslims in India. The sole objective of this bi-weekly seems to spread canards, obviously to bring slur on the fair name of the government of India and thereby, tending to show that Indian Union is anti-secular in character. Possibly Shri Khairul Anam Khan has taken the cue in this respect from his father Sri Akram Khan (editor of Azad) who is well known for his anti Hindu and anti-Indian outlook. From continuous vile propaganda against India, it is very apparent that it has become the accepted principle of this bi-weekly to manufacture stories of miseries and woes of the minorities in Indian Union. Such fabrication of news is obviously intended to whip up hostility towards India among

the Muslim masses in Indian Union. The cumulative effect of this continuous vile propaganda will make the Muslims readers of this bi-weekly think that the Muslims in India have been continuously persecuted in some form or other²¹.

There are plenty of reports published in 'Paigam' which are false, and exaggerated. For example there was one report published on 14.8.54 where it was stated that in the city of Pilbhit in Uttarpradesh, Muslim shops were set to fire in the presence of police, and for the biased attitude of the police the riot escalated²². There was another report in the newspaper on 18.5.54 that certain Abdul Gaffar wrote a letter. He wrote that for the purpose of road construction in the Memari-monteswar locality of the Burdwan District, the Mosque was demolished but the temple was preserved, and he stated that although India declared herself as a secular country, but the idea of secularism is not being applied properly²³, subsequently there was another editorial published on 19.6.54 over the issue of preaching Christianity by the missionaries in MadhyaPradesh. In this account, it was stated that the poor are being offered money in order to change their religion, but because these poor people belong to the majority community, or more specifically Hindu, the government is worried and initiated proper steps. If they were of another religion i:e Islam, whether the government would take any action at all the paper asked. This question was been raised, and the newspaper further stated that in the past years when several complaints were raised from different provinces about conversion, most of the provincial government adopted the policy of 'silence', the reason behind this as far as the newspaper report was concerned, it mentioned that because the previous complaints were done by the minority community against the majority community, that is why there were no steps taken by the government²⁴.

These three issues were investigated by the Intelligence Branch of west Bengal, and said that the incident of Pilbhit was exaggerated by the press, the incident of Memari was completely baseless, and the report regarding the conversion, was very much provocative, and communal.²⁵

The role of the newspapers are very important in this context because newspapers were one of the important sources for collecting information and helped to build public opinion also, and it applied equally to both the communities. There were a couple of important issues which were very important for the minorities who

lived in the city as well as in the state and also for the majority in the post-partition period , i) the political situation in East Bengal , ii) the communal riots in East Bengal and other places of India. The Muslim newspaper as it was often called in colloquial terms, and the so called 'mainstream' newspaper both published false, exaggerated news, but what is significant is that , where the Muslim newspapers were heavily monitored by the administration, the mainstream papers were free from such surveillance.

The relationship between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims in Kolkata was very much dependent on the events of East Pakistan. Although in the changing circumstances they started to live together in many places, but that did not suggest that they forgot their internal differences. There were many examples where the events of East Pakistan clearly exemplified the contradictions among the Muslim Community in Kolkata, the inner conflict between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims. One such incident was the clash between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims at Narayangung in Dhaka²⁶.

According to the Intelligence Branch report, the fray between Bengali and non- Bengali Muslims in Narayangung of Dhaka created an unrest among the Non-Bengali Muslims in the Khidderpur area of Kolkata. It was also reported that the leaders of the Muslim league took it as an opportunity to ignite the non-Bengali Muslims, and campaigned that there was no safety and security of the non- Bengali Muslims residents in East Pakistan and also the Prime minister of East Pakistan has taken the policy of expelling them from there. The popular leader of Khidderpur area Salahuddin , called the non-Bengali Muslims to boycott the Bengali Muslims in the city, especially in the Khidderpur area. It was also in the report from an unconfirmed source, that the Muslims of east Bengal, mainly who were Bengalis , had tea or other shops in Khidderpur locality might be attacked²⁷. There is another report regarding the secret information of I.B[Intelligence branch] dated 27.5.54 which says that it is known that over the issue of the recent riot between the bengalee and non-Bengalee employees of adamji jute mills, narayangunj jute mill, Dacca. Great sensation is prevailing amongst the Bengalee and non Bengalee seamen of Khidderpur area. The domiciled Muslim seamen of Calcutta are now claiming themselves to be non-bengalee Muslims. They are now holding group meetings almost everyday in the

different parts of Khidderpore area over the said issue Samsuddin Ahmed, Md.Ibrahim, Kashem Ali(All clerks of the maritime board) and Abdul Rashid(Darwan of the maritime board) are the main leaders who are for the organizing these group meetings. They are provoking non-Bengali Muslim seamen against the Bengali Muslim seamen saying that the Bengalee Muslims of east Pakistan were responsible for the rioting and killing of the non-Bengalee Muslim employees of the mill. By organizing the riot the Bengalee Muslims of East Pakistan wanted to drive away the non-Bengalee Muslims from there. They did not even spare the women and children. This sort of propaganda created great sensation among the non-Bengalee Muslim seamen. Samsuddin Ahmed is provoking the non-Bengalee Muslim seamen for taking retaliation on Bengali Muslim Seamen. He is saying that after seeing the result of the discussions between the chief minister of East Pakistan and the prime minister of Pakistan over Adamji Jute mills affairs, action will be taken accordingly. Samsuddin is also saying that he has no faith in any other political party except the Muslim League. To have implicit faith in any other party means treachery to Pakistan. All other parties of East Pakistan are more or less guided by Indian Political parties and this is the only reason why the other political parties of East Pakistan are helping on the same lane as India against the Pak-Usa military alliance.²⁸

There is also a report about Muslim activities from a reliable agent that a secret meeting of the influential non-Bengali Muslim Khalifas and Sirdars residing in different Muslim Mohallas of Calcutta was held at a room on the 2nd floor of ‘Sobhan Kuthi’ at Kesab Sen Street, Calcutta on 28th May under the presidentship of Mr.Akram, who is secretary of Parkside Muslim association,Kolkata. It was stated in the report that about 45 such sirdars and Khalifas attended the meeting. Md Akram while addressing the meeting said that he came to know from some of his relations and friends who recently came to Calcutta[now Kolkata] from Dacca that a certain section of the Bengali Muslims in east Pakistan was making secret plans to make fresh attacks on Bohri and non-Bengali Muslims in East Pakistan after the Id-festival. Mr. Akram said that the only remedy to prevent such repeated attacks on the non-Bengali Muslims in East Pakistan was to retaliate by attacking on East Pakistani Bengali Muslims living in Calcutta and its suburbs²⁹. He also said that Haji Yousuf Seth of 26 Noor Ali Lane and S.M Salauddin of 2/E Cantopher Lane who became popular as leaders among the non-Bengalee Muslim community in the city were

watched by plain cloth policemen and that's why failed to attend the meeting. He said that Haji Yousuf Seth donated Rs 300/ to publish 10,000 Urdu handbills to be distributed on ID-Day among the urdu speaking Muslims of Calcutta. There were two types of hand bills they wanted to distribute. In one the urdu oriented organizations in West Bengal would be requested to organize protest meetings in different places condemning the govt of East Pakistan for its utter failure to protect the non-bengalee Muslims and, the second handbill he said would be anonymous which would contain an appeal to the non-Bengalee Muslims of Calcutta to attack on the east Pakistani Muslims residing at Patwaribagan and Khidderpur areas of Calcutta in order to take revenge on the action of the Bengali Muslims who mercilessly butcherd the non-bengalee muslims during the recent riot in Narayangunj. At the end of the meeting an action Committee consisting of about 14 leading non-Bengali Muslims of Calcutta was formed and it was decided that they would guide and supervised the aforesaid movement in Calcutta and suburbs after Id-day³⁰.

The following were selected as the members of the action committee:

- 1) Haji Yusuf Shah- ex M.L.C and president of ward 20 of the then Muslim League Calcutta
- 2) Maulvi MD Ismail –B.A. B.L ex member of Muslim league's all India Council 8, Mistripara Lane.
- 3) Maulvi MD.Yahya – ex president of City muslim league Calcutta 33. Beniapukur Road
- 4) Akram Hussain Secy , Parkside Muslim association Calcutta and ex-instructor of Muslim national Guard 3, ostar lane Calcutta
- 5) ATU Khalifur , sardar of chhote Karaya (recently came from Dacca) of 4, Jannagar road Calcutta
- 6) Fayaz Ahmed, proprietor sansar 'Zardah' factory 10, jhautala road
- 7) Qumruzzaman, owner of a bus 11C, Tantibagan lane
- 8) Sadruddin Ahmed , connected with organizing committee , west Bengal Muslim Jamat residing at belgachia
- 9) Abdul matin Chaudhuri , secy Momin H.E School Calcutta
- 10) S.M Salauddin a landlord of 2/e/2 cantopher Lane

- 11) Ostad ameer ahmed Khan , proprietor circus restaurant 2, Congress exhibhition road
- 12) Samsuddin , landlord of 2A , Congress exhibhition road
- 13) Mir sahib of 1, Kimber Street
- 14) SK Yusuf jan a beef merchant of mallick Bazar .³¹

One can easily understand the economic position of these people, it was not that , they were all well settled and rich people , but the ‘identity’ played a huge role to take them towards these kinds of steps.

From another Report , it was also known that in the house of Janab S.M Salauddin 2E/2 Cantopher Lane , there was a meeting of the non- Bengali Muslims, which was called by Haji Mohd Yusuf who was an Ex MLC of west and treasurer of Calcutta Muslim League. The agenda of the meeting was about the situation in East Pakistan due to the clash between Bengalee and non-Bengalee Muslims³².

Salauddin stated on behalf of his friends and patrons who were present at the meeting that mass meetings should be held in Calcutta and its suburbs as a protest against the inhuman attack on the non- Bengali Muslims at Narayangung Dhaka (E.P). Resolution was passed at the meeting against the new cabinet in East Pakistan who failed to protect the life and property of the non-bengali Muslims in East Pakistan.

Salauddin further stated in the meeting that the non-Bengali Muslims of Kidderpore should start a social boycott campaign against the Bengali Muslims immediately , and also the tea-stalls etc which were owned by the east Pakistani Muslims in kidderpure area, Salauddin suggested that they also attacked these in future by way of retaliation.³³

It was also learnt from the meeting that Haji Yusuf Sett said that within a couple of days all the non-Bengali businessmen and influential persons should assemble to chalk out the program to start a movement against the so-called leaders of East-Pakistan. Janab Aminul Huq and Md Ismail B.L proposed that all their preliminary activities in this connection should be kept secret

It was also decided to call their second meeting on Wednesday and the place of meeting will be announced through invitation cards.

The people who attended the meeting are as follows -

Fayazer Ahmed propriter of sansar zardah factory, Md. Ismail B.A,
B.L propriter of Dacca Hosier
Masant M.D Yahya ex- president of city Muslim League
Masant M.D Yahya ex- president of city Muslim League
Haji Md Yusuf –Ex MLA of West Bengal and treasurer of
Calcutta Muslim League
Haji Golam Rosul of Humayun Court
Mir Osman Ali . Propriter of Park Show House Park Circus etc .³⁴

How the incidents of East Pakistan affected the Muslim community in the city, Narayungung incident was one of the prime examples of it. How the non-Bengali Muslims in the city planned to retaliate against the Bengali Muslims in the city clearly indicates about the fact that the difference between Bengali and non Bengali Muslims existed even after the partition.³⁵

The role of the newspaper also became very important in this matter, the note in the Intelligence Branch report showed that there was a secret meeting of the Muslim Editors of Calcutta held at 17.5.54 at the office of the Calcutta Muslim association in Bentinck Street with the editor of the 'Al- Huq' as the president. The news editor of another paper 'Asre jadid' Md. Ali Saheb said that he had a talk with Haji Yusuf Seth and other influential Muslim personalities of Calcutta regarding the recent barbarous attacks on the non-Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan by the Bengalee Muslims . He also said that the protest meetings should be organized in Calcutta and social boycott campaign against the East Pakistanis residing in Calcutta and its suburbs started in this connection. He wanted to know how far this movement could get the support of the local Muslim presses. He also said that the appeal should be made by the newspaper in their editorial to organize protest meetings as well as social boycotting, but Israil Ahmed news editor of Al-HUQ opposed this idea , he said that it was not prudent to make appeals through editorial for launching such a movement in Calcutta, if these kind of propaganda causes any bloodshed between the local east Pakistani Muslims and non- bengalee Muslims, then the govt would hold the editor responsible for that and further the ill cultured and illiterate bihari Muslims in Khidderpure and Calcutta started disturbances in the city. He also suggested in this

meeting that they should only condemn the bad motive of east Pakistan Muslims through their news columns and publish self written letters in their letters to the editors column, in support of organizing protest meetings only in Calcutta and its suburbs. He further stated that although the east Pakistani ministers assure that there will be no disturbances but the spat between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims became a daily affair and in order to prevent that ,peace meetings are also important not only in Calcutta but in other provinces also. He suggested that letters should be written to the all Urdu editors of different provinces in this connection. This suggestion was accepted unanimously in the meeting.³⁶

If we analyze the above mentioned reports, two features of the so-called ‘Muslim Politics’ of the city become clearer, that is, whether on one hand, they were very much aware about the Bengali – non-Bengali Muslims conflict regarding the differences among themselves, they were also aware of the fact that if there is any fray between the Bengali and non Bengali Muslims in the city, government should hold them responsible for it, and in these changed circumstances after partition they never wanted that. Even not only that, there is a difference between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims- the editors of these newspapers called the Bihari Muslims ‘ill-cultured’, ‘ill-literate’ , it clearly indicated that there was also a difference between the Muslims depending on their class and caste which prevail after partition also.

It was also known from the reports of the police that, S.M Salauddin who was the managing editor of ‘Nai Manzil’ said that some urdu handbills should be distributed among the local Muslims urging them to organize protest meetings and he was ready to take initiative in the matter. Ahmed Syed Mahilabadi editor of ‘Azad Hind’ opined that the recent riot in Narayangung might have been engineered by the Indian Government to endanger the security of Pakistan and to disseminate provincial hatred between the two wings of Pakistan. If continual rioting becomes a moral feature of East Pakistan, the people of west Pakistan would naturally demand the enforcement of sec 93 there and this would enrage the united front supporters who would try to fight the central government with the slogan “do or die”. Nustaf Sabiri editor “Asre-Jadid” however disagreed with him and said that even if it is true, they must protest vehemently against the actions of the east Pakistani Muslims³⁷.

From another report it came to be known that there was a tiff between Bengali and non- Bengali Muslims in the Chamru Singh Lane of Beliaghata locality , but due to Police intervention in right time, the conflict did not became a big one³⁸.

It was also known from the reports , that the non- Bengali Muslims who lived in the Metiaburuz and Khidderpur area of the city wrote to their relatives to come back because they thought, that the situation in East Bengal is not at all safe for the non- Bengali Muslims.³⁹

It was also stated in the reports that Moulavi Ismail who stayed in 8, mistripara lane, a meeting was held on 22.5.54 at 7:30 P.M there over the issue of the condition in east Pakistan. In this meeting local sardars, Khalifas and influential non-Bengalee Muslims of Calcutta were all present. It was decided in the meeting that posters and leaflets would be posted and circulated on 25.5.54 for holding public meetings as a protest against the action of the Bengali Muslims, and S.M. Salahuddin of 2/E/2 Cantopher lane along with a few Bihari young men were contacting the local sardar, khalifas and influential non-bengali Muslims in different mahallas in this connection.

The report also stated that the non-bengali muslims of Tantibagan, PhulBagan, Bright Street, RajaBazar, Dent Mission road , Iqbalpore lane, Mominpure Road had a general feeling that they should retaliate on the bengalee muslims hence for their recent brutal attacks on their relations and countrymen in east Pakistan.⁴⁰

According to one of the reports of the I.B, a meeting was also held on 26.5.54 on the 2nd or 1st floor of the premise of 168 , Keshab Sen street , focusing on the incident and situation of the east Pakistan and the present duty of the upcountry Muslims in Calcutta. It was stated at the meeting that information had been received at Calcutta that the Bengalee Muslims in east Pakistan were preparing themselves to retaliate against the up-country Muslims there after the eid festival. Hence the upcountry Muslims in Calcutta had to prepare similarly to attack the Bengali Muslims after the eid festival. They were assured about that the people like Set Haji Yusuf and other would defend them in court.

The decision of the meeting as follows-

- i) That ten thousands leaflets in this connection would be printed soon in urdu and distributed amongst the upcountry muslims on Idd day.
- ii) Daggers, lathis, Crackers etc would be gradually accumulated at 168 Keshab Sen Street and other places.
- iii) The eastbengali muslims in patwarbagan, Rajabazar, should be attacked first and then the muslims in Khidderpure area
- iv) At the first attack , they would only resort to looting of properties of east Bengali muslims and would take up further violent methods if situation demanded so afterwards.

It is important to note that the copy of this report has been given to the Deputy Commissioners of North, South and central Detective dept..... it was also stated that no action should be taken at this stage , but the district deputy commissioner and deputy commissioner detective department are requested to watch the activities of the persons mentioned and to keep an eye on the areas noted in the statement.⁴¹

The newspaper reports are also very important in this regard:

The Urdu daily ‘Asre-Jadid’ dated 17.5.54 blamed the East-Bengal Muslims for the riots at narayangunj over some labour troubles at Adamji Jute Mill. It said that the east Bengal Muslims took advantage of their majority and committed atrocities on the Bihari and U.P Muslims.

The daily “Azad Hind” dated 17.5.54 said that provincialism was at the root of the riots in East Pakistan. During the riots which occurred in the vicinity of the central jail in Dacca. The Bengali warders of the jail picked up quarrel with non-bengali betel shop keepers and later injured 17 non-bengali Muslims and killed one 17 year old boy. In its issue dated 19.5.54 the same paper criticized the prime minister of Pakistan for accusing the communists for the incident at narayanganj.

The Daily Al-Haq dated 15.5.54 said that the bengalee Muslims were at the root of the riots at Narayangunj and that retaliation from the non- Bengali Muslims came later.

The daily “Insaaf” dated 17.5.54 said that the central govt of Pakistan sent the defence minister to make enquiry on the spot and take strong action against the mischief mongers. It hinted that it was a general complaint of the non-bengali Muslims that the local govt officials did not take adequate measures to quell the riot.

The daily ‘Rozana-Hind’ dated 16.5.54 said that the language problem has the root of this trouble. In its issue of 17.5.54 the paper editorially said that provincialism prevailed among the Bengali muslims and while killing the non-bengali muslims they shouted Zindabad Moulana Bhasani and United front Zindabad. It also accused the the chief minister of east Bengal of partiality towards Bengali Muslims and called it un-islamic. In its issue of 18.5.54, it suggested that central govt of Pakistan government should set up a commission independent of the East Pakistan govt for the sake of justice. In its issue dated 21.5.54, the paper clearly declared that united front leaders were responsible for the narayangunj murder, and this mass slaughter had a political background and was premediated. They also stated that the internal conflict between fazlul huq and Suhrawardy group will not spare the Hindus also.⁴²

The daily ‘Imroze’ dated 16.5.54 said that non-Bengali Muslim refugees near the Adamji jute mill were attacked by the Bengali Muslims, their house were burnt and their children were killed. In its issue dated 17.5.54 the paper said editorially that the elections in East Pakistan brought death to the non-Bengali refugee Muslims, observing that neither women nor children were spared. It said that the miscreants shouted in the name of Bhasani, while killing the non-bengali Muslims.

It was added also that the communists sided with the Bengali Muslims. As the non- Bengalis formed the capitalist class there, It accused the chief Minister of East Pakistan of provincialism . The paper of 21.5.54 said that the high officials of East Pakistan were so much panicky , over the issue that they were either going on leave or proceeding towards India to tide over the critical period. Referring to the Bihari Muslims it said that these people had been victimized for the second time. It branded Janab Fazlul Huq’s clearance certificate to the communists as a clever device to camouflange the conspiracy, recalling Bhasani’s dissemination of anti-bengali feelings and anti- capitalist attitude. It said that the recent incident was the natural outcome of all those. It urged the East-Bengali governor to take over the administration and requested the prime minister of Pakistan to hold speedy enquiry into the matter for the

sake of justice. In its issue dated 22.5.54, the paper said that the opening of a new department on external affairs was the latest move of Janab Huque calculated to separate east Bengal from the centre. It also accused the govt of India for not holding an enquiry into the number of Indian Muslims killed in Narayangunj riot and observed that the Indian govt would surely have done so, if the Pakistani Hindus were the victims.

At that time newspapers were the only source of information for the masses, so the reports published in the papers caused a reaction among the people. Newspaper reports did not only widen the gap between Hindus and Muslims, it also encouraged the conflict among the Muslims themselves. The above mentioned reports are clear indicators of that.

There are more couple of reports which specify that the relationship between the Muslims in the city how much affected by the incident.

There is discontent amongst the Bengali Pak Muslims and they are virtually boycotting the shops and hotels owned by the non-bengali muslims in Kidderpure area as they regarded them as being responsible for the “great killing” in Adamji Jute Mill (Narayangung East Pakistan). A section of the Muslim domiciled in Calcutta area, however supported the action of Mohd Ali and denounced Fazlul Huq as a Kafer. It is learnt that the Calcutta Muslims and the non- Bengali Muslim students of the Anjuman Mofidul Islam, Mominpur road are propagating in favour of the action of Mohd Ali. No organized move has however been taken on this issue by any of the parties.⁴³

In another report it was stated that the editor of “Sadaqat weekly” has written a letter to the home minister of govt of India on 8th June 1954, complaining that since the occurrence of the riot between the Bengali and the non-bengali Muslims of Narayangunj in East Pakistan, eight local urdu newspapers gave publicity to the “behari” plight in East Pakistan and thus agitated the urdu speaking non-bengali muslims of Calcutta and its suburbs. A secret meeting of the well known urdu-speaking non-Bengali Muslims of Calcutta was called by Haji Yusuf a Muslim League leader, where it was decided that Narayangunj riot would be retaliated in Calcutta and for this purpose all the Muslim goondas and ringleaders would be

contacted. Some representatives of the local muslim papers and organizations informed the govt of west Bengal regarding the secret plan of Haji Yusuf Sett and a complete list of interested goondas were forwarded but no step was taken by the local govt as yet and if the govt of india do not take any precautionary measures there is likelihood of an outbreak of riot in Calcutta. Sanjar Azim Abadee(who is accustomed to write letters to the ministers of Central Cabinet)further gave suggestions in his letter that all the well known goondas of RajaBazar and Coolotola areas and their leaders behind the screen(ex-muslim leaguers) should be arrested under the preventive detention act or they should be sternly warned by the local authorities. A list of 32 goondas and 12 Muslim leaders was attached to this letter to the Home Minister.

There was a confidential report about a spat between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims in Patwarbagan area after the 2/3 days of Narayangunj riot. It was stated in the report that there was a petty quarrel between Madhu Miah who was a East Bengali Muslim of Patwarbagan lane with SK. Dearu who was a behari muslims of Patwarbagan lane , over the issue of a common water tap. It was also stated in the report that the same day one Shamsul Haque an east Bengali muslim in patwarbagan area held meetings with all the east Bengali muslims group by group at patwarbagan secretly agitating the east Bengal muslims to attack the upcountry muslims at patwarbagan to take revenge on the Adamji jute mill riot at Narayangunj. It was also mentioned in the report that on the other hand a behari muslim named Golam Moula , living in a house adjacent to 10/D Patwarbagan Lane and a special constable of the area held a secret meeting in the house of another bihari muslim Yunus Miah , who lived at 166, Keshab sen Street (Kasai Bustee) with the upcountry Muslims of Kasai Bustee, PatwarBagan and discussed the situation of Karachi and east Bengal and asked the all upcountry Muslims to unite and be prepared to attack the east Bengali muslims of PatwarBagan after Ramzan, But on the same night at about 9 P.M the east Bengali Muslims numbering about 500 congregated in a big card board box factory at patwarbagan under the leadership of Shamsul Haque, and attacked the behari Muslims of that area with soda bottles and brickbats. But due to the timely arrival of a wireless van and the local police, it could not spread and immediately a peace conference was held between both the groups was held between two groups.⁴⁴

It is learnt from another meeting that S.M Salahuddin of 2/E/2 cantopher lane has decided after consulting some workers of the Razae Mustafa, Anjuman Tanzimul Momenin and other local muslim parties to abandon the idea of creating any disturbances in Calcutta and its suburbs. He has also informed his uncle Hazi Yusuf Seth that he will not co-operate with him anymore in this connection.

But there was an informal emergent meeting of the local non- Bengali Muslim goondas held on 26.5.54 at 168/B Keshab Chandra Sen Street (2nd Floor). Md. Akram, who was the secretary of Parkside Muslim Association, and who also represented Haji Yusuf seth said that seth and salauddin could not attend the meeting because of vigilance by the police, He thanked ATU Khalifa at the outset for organizing the meeting and stated that the influential muslim personalities of Calcutta had decided that there would be no more mass meeting as per previous arrangement as the government of west Bengal would then hold them responsible for any future disturbances in this regard. So according to the old Calcutta tactics, they might start attacking the Bengali Muslims of Pakistan in Calcutta through the help of organized groups before the Idd festival. Hand bills would be distributed among the Urdu knowing Muslims asking them to retaliate in Calcutta. According to the report, he stated that he had come to know that after the idd festival the Pakistani Bengali would again attack the non-Bengalis in East-Pakistan. In order to counteract the same, they must attack the Pakistanis here and it would have a good effect in East Pakistan. Hazi yusuf seth and others were ready to render all possible financial help. He observed that the illiterate sardars were capable of doing anything while the literate ones would think several times before doing so. It was stated in the meeting that from a religious point of view, the butchery at Narayangunj could be treated as the second tragedy of Karbala, where Imam Hussain was mercilessly butchered by the so called Muslim army of Yazid and the Eastern Pakistanis could be classified as the followers of Yazid. To take vengeance on these Yazedees would be quite legal in the circumstances.⁴⁵

It was also reported that there was a goondas den at 168 B, Keshab Chandra Sen Street 2nd floor and the name of the owner was SK Gora. Some unlicensed arms and ammunition were likely to be found there. During the last communal riots, this den was the headquarters of stray attackers. Another man named Abdul Latif of the

same address was helping the goondas from this den to launch an attack on Daftaripara near Patwarbagan where the east Bengal Muslims are residing⁴⁶.

So , it was pretty much clear from the above mentioned reports how the incidents of East Pakistan affected the Muslims in the city. It was always assumed that the condition of the minorities in this country specially in this province depended on the condition of the minorities in East Pakistan. As Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel held the view that “Indian Muslims were hostages to be held in security for the treatment of Hindus in Pakistan”⁴⁷ . But these incidents distinctly point out that how the inner conflict between the Muslims became a determinant factor for shaping the relationship between the Muslims in the city, which is a part of free India.

Although it was wrong to assume that all Muslims in the city was involved in the conflict between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims in the city. There were many Muslims who were worried about this internal- conflict among them. It was learnt from a report that at a joint meeting (300) of the Tantibagan Bustee Panchayat, Tafaquia Committee and Tanjimul Momineen held on 4.9.54 at the function of Tantibagan lane and Cantopher Lane, MD Zakir Hossain councilor Calcutta Corporation was presided in this. Ekbal Azmi and a few others referred to the lack of solidarity amongst the Muslims. They accused the government of having a pathetic attitude towards their suffering. They held that the Muslims in India did not derive any benefit from independence and alleged that government did not look after their deserted mosques. They called upon the Muslims not to be misguided by others but to consolidate themselves.⁴⁸

The other incident which caused great dissatisfaction between the Bengali and non- Bengali Muslims in Kolkata was , the imposition of governor’s rule in East Pakistan, it was stated that this was the result of Adamjee Jute Mill riot, between Bengali –Bihari Muslim tiff. Although it is needless to say that this was not the only reason but it’s effect on Kolkata’s Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims was disastrous. If we analyze the reports published in the newspapers which are published from Kolkata about this issue, we can clearly understand the internal conflict among the Muslims resides in the city, more specifically Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims.

Rozana Hind dated 1.6.54 said that the change in ministry would have been welcome. The paper adds that there may be widespread unrest in East Pakistan over this issue, though the situation is peaceful now.⁴⁹

Azad Hind published this news dated 1.6.54, criticising the governor's rule and said that Pakistan was being dictated by the Americans and was at their instance that the Governor's rule had been imposed on East Pakistan. It further added that the real dispute was not between east and West Pakistan. The Britishers helped in the defeat of the Muslim League in East Pakistan and bringing of the united Front into power, but the Americans who had greater influence in the centre overthrew the united front govt⁵⁰.

Imroze dated 31.5.54 said that Governor's rule attributes the Muslim league's crushing defeat in the last election to growing provincialism between East and west Pakistan.⁵¹

Asre Jadid dated 1.6.54 published that governors rule in East Pakistan was welcome by the people of East Pakistan. The Industrialists, mostly non-bengalees were very Jubilant. The situation in East Pakistan was peaceful. In spite of the arrests of M.L.As and others. The Paper editorially stated that the charge leveled against Fazlul huq by the Pak-Prime minister was not Correct, but it was true that the East-Bengalee Muslims took the initiative in Narayangunj riots and then Huq ministry failed to restore peace. The paper, however is of opinion that the governors rule would not prove helpful in bringing peace there⁵².

Another newspaper ' Morning News' stated on 1.6.54 that they welcome the governors rule in East Pakistan and congratulated Janab Ghulam Muhammad for his strong action in saving east Pakistan from the hands of traitors, like Fazlul Huq. It added that barring anti Pakistani elements and communists all would hail this change⁵³.

According to the intelligence report the paper uses strong language and said that East Pakistan arose.... A danger to the fair name of East Pakistan had been removed. It goes on to say, in Countries behind the iron curtain, the idols of Mr.fazlul Huq's followers, traitors to the nation face the firing squad.⁵⁴

So, it is understood that the role of the newspaper was very important in this case also for constructing public opinion in the city. Each of these newspapers has their own target audience or reader, and they published news according to that perspective and tried to explain it also. Not only the reports published in the newspapers, but also the news's which were obtained from the intelligence department sources draw our attention to the internal conflict between the Muslims of Kolkata at that time.

A report of the Intelligence Branch stated that "A meeting of the Bengalee Muslims of Calcutta was held at the house of M.A. Zakaria who was a ex-mayor of Calcutta Corporation and resided on 68, Syed Amir Ali Ali Avenue. The meeting was held on 31.5.54 from 19:15 to 20:30. It was stated in the report that there were about 21 persons including 7 hindus who attended the meeting. The meeting was presided by Dr. A.M.O Ghani. Mr. Zakaria, Masud a barrister and Dhirendranath Bhowmik, the secretary of Indo-Pakistan friendship association were the main speakers of this meeting. Each of the speaker vehemently criticized the role of Pakistan Government, for imposing governors rule in East Pakistan. A resolution was taken in this meeting on behalf of the Progressive Citizens of Calcutta , and the main assertion of the resolution was that they considered the imposition of governor's rule and suppression of the peoples government in East Pakistan as entirely unconstitutional and undemocratic in nature and that such a step was taken by the Govt of Pakistan under the instigation of a foreign country. The resolution also condemned any misunderstanding on bitter relationship or hostility between Bengalee and Non-Bengalee Muslims both in India and in Pakistan. The resolution also stated that the progressive citizens of Calcutta felt it their duty to contradict false and malicious accusation that Fazlul Huq advocated in Calcutta against partitioning of Bengal or the creation of Independent East Pakistan. Another resolution was passed which stated that the Progressive Muslims were really shocked at the overthrow of the duly elected Govt of East Pakistan and viewed with great concern the political consequences, and repercussions in East Pakistan if constitutional and democratic government was not restored soon, and appealed to the people of Pakistan to maintain friendly relationship with all section of the people. Syed Maqbul Murshid who was a bar-at-law moved a resolution which said that this was a matter of great regret that though several Urdu speaking Muslims were invited to the meeting but none of them cared to attend.⁵⁵

It was also stated in the report that the Urdu-speaking Muslims in Calcutta have been delighted in the news of governor's rule imposition in East Pakistan. The Muslims of Tantibagan and Phulbagan offered Namaz, in their opinion it is the result of the misdeed done by the Huq administration where they killed more than thousand non-Bengali Muslims including women and children, and through this 'Governor's rule' God has taken revenge against them.⁵⁶

It was also said in the report that from an unauthorized source they came to know that ex-Muslim leaguers were very happy in this news, and they were having informal discussions saying that Ghulam Mohd. Governor General of Pakistan saved East Pakistan as Fazlul Huq was ready to adopt all measures to reunite both the Bengals, and even sell the freedom of East Pakistan to the Hindus.⁵⁷

In another report it was stated that the Bengali Muslims were very much upset and annoyed with the sudden decision of the Karachi government. They felt that Karachi govt was at the root of civil liberties in East Pakistan. The United front under the leadership of Fazlul Huq won the last elections by a thumping majority but Huq cabinet dissolved within a month. This was nothing but autocracy on the part of the Pak central Govt. They also felt that on the return of Bhasani from Berlin and following the Awami league meeting at Dacca on 6.6.54 a severe campaign would be started in East Pakistan in a way more vigorous than the last language agitation and the Pakistan Govt would not be able to check the democratic movement of the masses backed by the students. The governor's rule aided by the military and the police would not be able to curb their onward march towards the realization of their objective autonomous state.⁵⁸

In another report there was an information received about the present situation in East Bengal, it was stated that the majority of the Muslims in east Pakistan were very much jubilant at the success of Fazlul Huq in the last general election. They were all disgusted with the league ministry, but all their hopes had been shattered, following the introduction of the governor's rule there. The local Muslims were now more or less passive and they infact were not co-operating with the present administration. Their voices have been stifled by the military rule. Batches of military men were making patrol throughout the city of Dacca extending upto Narayanganj for 24 hour. Both foot and lorry patrols were going on and they were fully equipped with

sten-guns, gas-masks,wireless etc. Majority of the educational institution district board and other important offices of Dacca were being properly guarded by the military personnel. A recruiting centre had also been opened behind the Dacca court compound for the enrolment of soldiers⁵⁹.

All the Bengali high officials in Dacca had been transferred to unimportant places so that they could not overwrite the decision of the govt in matters affecting the Bengali Muslims if any.

The report also stated that on minor pretexts, the Hindus of East Pakistan were being arrested or harassed, they were termed as communists. This had frightened the innocent Hindus in the state. They were now thinking of coming down to west Bengal.

The non- Bengali Muslims were frightened after the adamji jute mill incident as they thought that they would be treated very ruthlessly by the Fazlul Huq ministry, but after the imposition of sec92A , they were feeling very happy and secure. They now put all the blame on the Hindus and the Bengali muslims.

Fazlul Huq was not a free man as announced by Iskander Mirza. He was not allowed to come out of his house or none was permitted to see him there. His house and also those of the united front MLAs were being well guarded by the military. Most of the Muslim students leaders had been kept behind the prison bars in order to stop any movement by the students after the re-opening of their schools and colleges. The students were also being arrested from their village homes⁶⁰.

We can also learn from the intelligence report that how this turmoil political situation in East Pakistan became a factor of resentment among the Bengali Muslims in the city, not only that; it created a huge reaction among the East Pakistani Muslims who resides in the city also.

In another report, it was stated that at the initiative of Mofazzal Hossain Khan of 12/13 Patwarbagan lane Bustee and of village Baladhara P.S Singari, Dacca(East Pakistan)and Jt secretary of the newly formed Ad hoc committee of East Pakistan muslims in Calcutta. A meeting had been Convened at 4 p.m on 20.6.54 on at wellington square to protest against the dissolution of the United Front Ministry in

East Pakistan and the alleged oppression of the despotic government on Fazlul Huq, who is a sincere patron of the peasants, middle class and poor people. Dr Shamsul Haque son of Arhan Khan secretary bangiya Book binders association of 12/13 Patwarbagan Lane and of village pipolia P.S Harirampur Dacca (East Pakistan) was one of the main organisers of the meeting and he would likely to address the same.

Processions from different Muslim localities of the city will converge at the aforesaid meeting. Its object was to mobilize all the East Pakistan Muslims living in Calcutta under the banner of the committee and to set up permanent committee by holding meetings in the city of Cossipure, Taltola, Park Circus, Ballygunge and Khidderpure etc.

After the wellington square meeting a joint procession proceeded either to the officer or residence of the deputy high Commissioner for Pakistan in Calcutta and thereafter, a deputation would wait on him.

It was also stated in the report that a tension among the Bengali and non-bengali Muslims was already prevailing in Patwarbagan area over the recent developments in Pakistan.⁶¹

In the report about the meeting in Wellington square on 20.6.54, it was stated that there was more than 300 people present in the meeting. Abdul Rashid Khan chaired the meeting. In the meeting, following resolutions were passed 1) they were expressing their grave concern over the imposition of governor's rule and termination of popular ministry in east Pakistan followed by curtailment of Civil Liberty 2) Protesting against the allegation of treason made against Mr. Fazlul Huq, premier of east Pakistan based on some of his alleged statements in Calcutta, which were not in favour of political re-union of the two Bengals as charged by Mr Mohd Ali, prime minister of Pakistan, but only pointed out the basic cultural unity such as existed between the two Bengals and creation of friendly and brotherly feelings among the peoples of the two Bengals. 3) Alleging that the move against Mr. Huq was engineered by his political opponents so as to remove him from power 4) Declaring their confidence in the political leadership of Mr. Huq 5) Demanding his reinstatement as the chief minister in East Pakistan. 6) Condemning the Pak-US military pact which it was apprehended, might ultimately reduce Pakistan to a puppet govt of U.S. 7)

Requesting the Prime Minister of Pakistan to suspend the implementation of this pact
8) Demanding compensation to the sufferers of the recent disturbances in Adamji Jute Mill at Narayangunj.

The speaker of the meeting was Dr. Shamsul Haque, who was a resident of Patwarbagan, along with Abdul Haque, Ismail Haque and Abdul Rashid Khan who was also the president of the meeting. All the speakers spoke of supporting the above mentioned resolutions and appealed to the people of East Pakistan to give a fitting reply to this offensive act of Muslim League. Ismail suggested to boycott American goods and requested the president to include this in the resolutions, but the president disagreed. Abdul haque held the Muslim league responsible for the communal riots in 1946 and all other disturbances which recently took place in West and East Pakistan. He asserted that the people of East Pakistan would never tolerate all this oppression and they must bring Sri Huq back to the power, whom he called a true friend of the suffering people of the Pakistan.

According to the report it was also decided in the meeting that there will be another meeting after 2/3 weeks at the foot of the monument where from a procession would be taken out to the office of the Deputy High Commissioner for Pakistan in Calcutta.

So, it was understandable how the events in East Pakistan affected the Muslim community in Kolkata, where the Bengali Muslims supported Fazlul Huq, the non-Bengali Muslims were the supporters of Muslim League. The conflict between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims, which had been going on for a long time, this difference emerged as a field of domination among them in East Pakistan, the end result of which was the creation of Bangladesh.

This stream of events shed light on the contradictions among the Muslim Community in the city, as well as it clearly clarifies that although from the majoritarian perspective the Muslims were considered as a homogeneous community in most of the time, they were not, still now they are not. In the changed circumstances, after partition, although they started to unite, the internal conflict between them still prevail, and during the course of time these differences became an important factor in shaping the relationship between the Muslims. Thus the difference

between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims and the course of events related with them became an important feature for the Muslim politics in the city. These course of events also helps us to understand how wrong the “ Two-nation theory” was, and helped us to understand that a person had multiple identity, which identity of him became dominant, it is completely depended upon the social factor he or she had on that particular time .

A completely different kind of interpretation of the events whether the riot in Adamjee Jute Mill or the Governor’s rule imposed in east Pakistan coming from us from the Seamens Association of the City , where CPI influence was started to gained momentum.

In the Seamen’s affairs in the city, it was stated in the report that at a meeting (300 mostly seamen of pak Nationality) held under the Joint Seaman’s Union’s On 6.6.54 at 14 Dent Mission Road with Shorab Ali the general secretary Seafarers Union Of India as President Ajit Roy (who was incompletely identified as the report suggested) they tried to describe the riots and the situation in East Pakistan from a completely different perspective. In their opinion the recent riot was the outcome of a pre-medidated plan of Mohd.Ali and Gola Mohd under the direction of the USA. As the United Front Ministry opposed the establishment of American war bases in Pakistan, the riot was fomented and the ministry was dissolved by Golam Mohd and Mohd Ali, who were the “agents Of America”. He said Fazlul Huq was called to Karachi on a false plea but the objective really was to prepare for the dissolution of the Huq Ministry and further remarked that the people of east Pakistan could not expect any benefit from Major General Iskendar Mirza, who he said was a descendent of traitor ‘Mirzafor’ . He also said that the clash between Bengali and non-bengali Muslims in east Pakistan was in fact a struggle between the capitalist employers and the exploited workers and warned those who were present that the rift among the Bengali and non-bengali Muslim working classes would frustrate their united movement. M.A Sayeed genl secy of United Seamens union stressed the necessity for amity between the bengalee and non-bengalee Muslims and observed that the suppression of the popular ministry in East Pakistan was a setback of the seamens movement in India against the pre-entry medical board and the proposed govt employment exchange. He urged the Pak Seamen to launch an agitation for the

withdrawal of the governor's rule. It was a joint meeting by United Seamen's Union, Seafarers union of India and Quarter Masters Union of India.

In the meeting the resolutions were also adopted expressing grave concern at the situation in East Pakistan, Condemning the alleged American interferences there and stressing unity among the people of Pakistan for the interest of the working class.

It was also noted in the report that on 6.6.54 a batch of Pak seamen left Sealdah Railway Station for East Pakistan being escorted by Niranjan Routh of the United Seamen's Union, who was also a member of C.P.I.⁶²

As these reports help us understand that the activities of the communists were also monitored by the Intelligence department. It also helps us to understand that the communist party, however, interpreted the situation completely differently. Through Seamen's association they tried to focus on the economic aspect of the incident they tried to convince the people that it was a clash between capitalist employers and exploited workers, the capitalist class wanted to break the workers' unity by creating conflict between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims. And in their opinion it is a plot of America, the large imperialist power. It is very important in this context because whereas everybody focussed on the issues relating to the 'identity' or 'majority-minority' dichotomy, the Communist party solely represented itself as a non-communal party, and tried to gain the support from different organizations. The influence of them among the Seamen's association was clearly visible.

Apart from this a new kind of politics started to grow in the city depending completely on the 'Muslim Identity', and for this the Muslim social organizations became the most important medium. There were some old and some newly formed social organizations in the city which started to mobilize the Muslims masses on different contexts. Among these organizations, The Tablighi Jamat, The Jaamat Isami, The Momin Conference, The Anjuman Tanzimul Momenin, The Jamat ul Ulemai Hind and The West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Committee became very important. The Muslims irrespective of their caste and creed differences, understood that it was much easier for them to inform the government about their plight through the medium of social organization because they realized that in this changed social, political condition if they established any kind of political organization, it would create a

suspicion in the eyes of the government as well as in the eyes of majority. They expected the social organization through their different kinds of activities informing the government about their condition, and also it helped to unite Muslims from different class and caste to come under one umbrella.

If we discuss or analyze the program and the policy of the West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation association in this aspect it becomes much more clearer to understand this aspect and also it gives us a clear idea about the condition of the Muslims after partition.

As far the Muslim Rehabilitation Committee was concerned it was known from the reports of the intelligence Branch that on 10.8.52 at the Islamia High School a group of representatives of the Muslims held a meeting. Prof Abdur Rahman played the role of the president in the meeting. It was said in the meeting by Khalilur Rahman ansari that the displaced Muslims had been suffering a lot for the years after Independence , but no action was taken for them to return their respective houses. The monetary help given to them by the government was very meager. He suggested that the government should form a Muslim Rehabilitation Board to meet its demands. He also pointed out that for the purpose of organizing conference in this connection, a reception committee should be constituted with Dr. R Ahmed KHuda Bux, Abdul Matin Chaudhuri and others. A provisional reception committee was formed with the following : Khairul Anam Khan as chairman, prof Abdur Rahim and Md.Salim as a vice-chairman, general secretary AKM munsef Ali and Khallilur Rahman ansari as an asst secretary. It was also decided in the meeting that the next meeting of this committee would take place on 17.8.52 at 3 p.m at 13/1 wellesley square to finalise the date and venue of the conference and also to select its president.⁶³

In another report it was stated that in the meeting of the reception committee of the West Bengal Displaced Muslims conference held on 17.8.52 at 13/1 wellesley square with Moulana Khairul Anam Khan in the chair, the name of the proposed conference was changed from West Bengal Displaced conference to the West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Conference. It was decided that the conference would be held during the puja holidays with Charuchandra Bhandari as president and that Moulana Hafizur Rahman of Bihar would inaugurate the same. The office of the reception committee would be located at the house of Moulana Khairul Anam Khan at 43,

Lower range . It was further decided that although the proposed conference would mainly discuss about the rehabilitation of the Muslims but other allied problems related to the Muslims too could be taken up, if considered necessary. It was decided that invitation would be extended to the Muslims of West Bengal irrespective of the party or group affiliations. The delegates fee was fixed at Re 1/.

After the meeting of the reception Committee the persons present held another meeting at the same place with Prof Abdur Rahim as President.

In this meeting the following resolutions were passed.

- i) Protesting against the publication of a certain news item in the Amrit Patrika Allahabad, wounding the religious feelings of the Muslims.
- ii) Demanding the release of the Muslim leaders, arrested in connection with the demonastration held over the aforesaid issue and withdrawl of orders u/s 144cr P.C. which are in force in different places of U.P.
- iii) Urging the authorities to impose exemplary punishment on the people, responsible for the publication.

With regard to the above noted resolution demanding the withdrawl of orders u/s 144 of p.c, the president pointed out that it was an administrative measure and that the meeting had nothing to do with it. He added that if this resolution was passed he would disassociate himself from the meeting. After the passing of the resolution, the president was given assurance that his name would not be connected with the resolution nor it would be published in any newspaper.⁶⁴

After analyzing the above mention reports some features which is came to notice that this was created as a platform to unite Muslims, and it was said repeatedly that all Muslims irrespective of their class and party affiliations was requested to join in this conference.

Secondly the resolutions which were passed in the meeting were against the persecution of Muslims that has took place elsewhere in the country, it can be said in this context that through this they are also try to inform the Muslims in the city about what is happening in the other parts of the country.

Thirdly and most importantly, when the President said about the u/s 144 P.C that was an administrative measure and it could not be the work of this committee in any way to prevent it. It clearly indicates that this organization was not interested in taking any action even in the case where there was a possibility of a slight dispute with the government.

There are other reports which are significant in this aspect, for example the report about the selection of the president. A report regarding the reception Committee held on 15.9.52 at 43, lower Range with Khairul Anam Khan as president- Molla Jan MD contended that some Muslim leaders should be selected to preside over the ensuing convention instead of inviting Charuchandra Bhandari. He wanted to know if the president and other office bearers of the committee had obtained the consent of the Muslim leaders before choosing Sri Bhandari. The President then explained that the organizers of the convention had consulted almost all the Muslim leaders, but none actually came forward in this matter and said that he differed fundamentally with Molla Jan MD that no non-Muslim should be brought to deal in the Muslim affairs. He remarked that it was the intention of the organizers to hold the convention on a non-communal basis. If Molla Jan Md and the people with a similar line of his way of thinking, considered it better to have a Muslim President, they might do it but they should not thereby shut the way of enlisting the support and co-operation of the Hindus in solving the problems of the displaced Muslim. Molla Jan MD wanted time to contact all the Muslim MLAS and MLCS and other leaders and placed their views in the next meeting of the Reception Committee. In another report it came to know that on 17.9.52 A.K.M Munsif Ali issued a notice to all the members of the reception committee with a view to reconsidering the selection of the inaugurator and the president of the convention , an emergent meeting will be held at the Punjab Muslim Club on 21. 9.52 at 10 a.m.⁶⁵

In another report it was came to be known that – An emergency meeting of the Reception Committee for the West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation convention was held at 28, circus avenue on Sunday, the 21st of September at 10 a:m under the chairmanship of Maulana Khairul Anam Khan. Many leading Muslims of Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly and 25 parganas attended the meeting . Among them Syed Badruddoza, A.K.M. Munsef Ali, Khairul Anam Khan, Molla Jan Muhammad, M.R Chaudhuri, Zafir Ahmed, Qazi Nasiruddin, Saifuddin Kashmiri, Prof Abdur Rahim

they are all from Calcutta. Apart from them Dr. Ghulam Ali of Tollygunge , Shamsul Huda of Howrah, Dr. Z.H Johar of Howrah muslim Orphanage, Hafiz Jamaluddin of Pilkhana Howrah, anisur rahman Saqi of Howrah and Noor Mohammad and waziur rahman of Hooghly were present in the meeting.

In this meeting Prof Abdur Rahim stated that Syed Badruddoza⁶⁶ approached him and complained to him that he was deliberately removed from the reception committee and the reception committee was formed hastily in his temporary absence from Calcutta. In this context Prof Rahim remarked that he wanted a leader like Syed Badruddoza for the presidency of the convention. Zafir Ahmed pressed for offering presidency to a Muslim than to a hindu as, according to him, no Hindu could feel the grievances properly. Molla Jan Mohammad also supported Jan Mohammad in strongest term. Saifuddin kashmiri , in course of his speech stated that Sri Charu Chandra Bhandari M.L.A , who had fought in the assembly for the grievances of the Muslim Refugees , would be the best man to preside over the Muslim Convention. He also added that Sri Bhandari was not afraid of counting arrests in case of leading any agitation for good of the Muslim. But then, Syed Badrudozza delivered a lecture in the meeting and said that he was always eager to serve the Muslims as a true follower of Islam and he was ready to sacrifice his life for the cause of his brother in faith. He also assured the house that he would be the first man to lead any agitation if started for the good of the Muslims and that he was not afraid of the Bidhan Government in working for the welfare of the Muslims. Molla Jan Md then convinced Munsef ali that if badruddoza was not selected as the president of the convention , his group which was majority in the meeting would surely boycott the convention and bring them down from the reception committee and, then, Munsef ali ,after a little discussion with Khairul anam khan proposed the name of syed badruddoza as the president for the convention, Moulana hafizur rahman M.P as the inaugurator and Sri charu Chandra Bhandari M.L.A as the guest-in-chief. This decision was unanimously supported by the members of the convention. It was also decided in the meeting that a steering committee will be formed immediately with 15 members in consultation with Syed Badruddoza, which was also unanimously accepted by the house. The members of the steering committee then proposed to hold a press conference in the Amjadia hotel at zakaria street within a week to order to enlist the support of the pressmen for the Muslim convention.⁶⁷

It was clear from the reports that when one group of Muslims conceded to work together with the Hindus, another group of Muslims is opposed it. There were confusion among them regarding the way for solution of their sufferings. It was a clear indicator of the relation between the two communities, where the 'distrust' of the Muslims towards the Hindu's was clearly visible.

From another report it came to notice that although the organizers appealed to the all sections of Muslims, but the Momins, however decided not to participate in the conference. According to the report, the momins preferred to have the co-operation of the congress party and opined that an approach to the govt of India in a conciliatory mood would produce better results and the union govt may sanction the necessary funds for the rehabilitation of the displaced Muslims.

Each of these incidents was a clear example of how diversified the Muslims were among themselves on the lines caste, class and economy.

There are another two other reports which are important in this aspect- in one report it was stated that the rejection of Charu Chandra Bhandari as proposed president of the convention lies on the ground that his party K.M.P.P was responsible for getting the refugee eviction bill shelved in cold storage. Although Saifuddin kashmiri earnestly urged the members to retain Charu babus name as the president because during the last communal riots he saved many lives of Muslims his own risk and he was never a communal minded man. And then Finally AKM Munsef Ali moved a comprising proposal to make Charu Chandra Bhandari as chief Guest. In this report it was also stated that Molla jan Mohammed in his concluding speech gave out that after the proposed convention was over they will form a party and the members of which shall be prepared to go to jail if their demands for rehabilitation of displaced Muslims were not taken seriously by the government. In his opinion the convention was nothing but a preparatory move in that direction and they should not allow the displaced Muslims to remain in the streets when hundreds and crores of rupees were being spent after Hindu refugees. He felt the necessity of launching a strong agitation in a peaceful and unified way, otherwise there was no hope of getting any justice from the government. It was also decided in the meeting that the steering committee members would hold meetings atleast once a week.⁶⁸

And the other one is a report about Molla Jan Mohd visiting Dhaka, east Pakistan on 16th September and it is reported that he met the present Muslim League leaders and informed them of the present situation of west Bengal and their efforts to hold a convention in the name of west Bengal displaced Muslims in Calcutta. He returned on 20th September to Calcutta with the instruction to keep alive the communal feelings among the Muslims. It was also stated in one of the meetings of the reception committee of this convention held on 21st September at 28, circus avenue Park Circus by Molla Jan Md and Md Salim that the muslims were ready to sacrifice their lives in order to protect their rights and privileges and this was the opportune moment to launch an agitation on the issue of rehabilitating the displaced Muslims and suggested that no Hindus should be allowed to take part in the proceedings of the convention. But Syed Badruddoza said without the help of the Hindus no movements should be launched at this stage as the support of Hindus like Sri Charu Bhandari and Haripada Chatterji(MLS) would be required to assert their(Muslims) rights and privileges.⁶⁹

One can easily understand that there are different kinds of trends in the political domain of the Muslims in the city which are visible, for example one group of Muslims like Syed Badruddoza wanted to work along with the Hindus, for asserting rights and privileges for the Muslims. Where other groups would cut ties with Hindus. The extremist people like Molla Jan Mohd who is also a pro Muslim leager according to the reports suggested said that no Hindu should be required in their movement.

The role of CPI was important in this context. As a major opposition to the Congress, they started to solidify their position in the province. One of the important characteristics of their politics is that they used 'Democratic Front' or 'Mass Organization' as their medium of mobilization .In post-partition west Bengal just as they sought to increase their influence among the refugees, they were also trying to seek their influence among the Muslims. They understood that in future the refugees and the Muslims would take an important part in the 'vote-politics' of the province, and it was from these two sides that the greatest criticism of the work of Congress was likely to come. So, they expressed their desire to attend this conference. It was known from the reports that five members of the CPI sponsored Indo-Pak goodwill Mission including Bhupesh Gupta, Dr. Dhiren Sen attended the steering sub-

committee meeting of the West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention. It was also learnt from the reports that Bhupesh Gupta in the course of his speech requested Syed Badrozza and his group to co-operate with the Good-will mission and become its member in helping the mission to undertake tour in different places in East Pakistan and West Bengal to usher in an atmosphere of peace, amity and restore confidence among the minorities of both the countries. In reply to the request Syed Badruddoza said that he had recently been to Dacca (east Pakistan) and held discussions with Khwaja Nizamuddin, the premier of Pakistan regarding the introduction of the passport system followed by the exodus of the Hindus to west Bengal. He told him about the situation arising out of fresh exodus of Hindus from Pakistan to India and appealed to him that unless this exodus was stopped totally the Muslim population of Indian Union would also have to migrate to Pakistan. They also pointed out that the general Muslim population of India were also feeling insecure at the moment as the Hindus driven out of Pakistan might take revenge on them. He also pointed out that East Pakistan failed miserably to implement the Delhi pact⁷⁰. At this Khwaja Nizamuddin replied that he intended to relax some of the causes of the passport act but due to the strong opposition of Zafurullah Khan, Nurul Amin and other stalwarts of the Muslim League, he had to abandon it. Nazimuddin expressed his inability and helplessness in doing anything tangible to stop the migration of the Hindus but also said that he would try to take all the possible steps so that the exodus of Hindus was stopped and security of their lives and property safeguarded.

Syed badruddoza on behalf of the west Bengal Displaced Muslims Rehabilitation Convention in expressing sympathy and support for the good will mission, which was proposed by the CPI member DR. Bhupesh Gupta and Dr. Dhiren Sen. They proposed to lead a good will mission to Pakistan and wished to include some of the prominent Muslim leaders in the said mission. Syed Badruddoza said in this context that the Pakistan Government would not probably allow the Good will mission to enter Pakistan as it was being sponsored by the C.P.I. He however assured them of his co-operation and sympathy in maintaining communal harmony and civil liberty in the Indian dominion.⁷¹

In another report it was stated that in a joint meeting of West Bengal Displaced Muslim Rehabilitation Convention and CPI held at the residence of Yusuf

Jamal of CPI at 4/C Auckland Square on 28.10.52 with Nirmal Bhattacharji in the Chair , prof Kalyan Dutta moved the resolutions – where-

- a) Expressing grave concern at the heavy exodus of the Hindus from the East Bengal
- b) Demanding abolition of the passport system and introduction of free trade between two states and
- c) Supporting the move of west Bengal Peace council CPI to hold a conference on 6.11.52 in this connection.

Syed Badruddoza supported the resolutions, but Md Zaffir spoke against the abolition of the passport system as the system would check the refugee traffic both ways. Prof Abdur rahim supported the previous speaker. Khairul Anam Khan requested a postponement of the move of west Bengal Peace Council for the present. Mr. Choudhuri declared that the passport system could not be suspended. He further suggested that efforts should be made to pacify the people of India before sending out a goodwill mission to Pakistan.

Mr Kalyan Datta proposed to amend the same suggesting that the passport system be liberalized and reconsidered. Yusuf Jamal supported the amended resolution. MR. Chaudhury further suggested that “exodus from both Bengals” should be mentioned in place of “ exodus of Hindus from east Bengal”

Prof. Dutta agreed to amend accordingly. The president exhorted the audience to make the maiden rally to be held on 1.1.52 a success. At the end of the meeting the CPI leaders tried to obtain the signatures of the Muslim leaders for issuing a joint statement. But did not succeeded.

This incident draws our attention to one important feature that, although they started to sympathize with the above mention resolutions by the C.P.I , they are skeptical about anything related with the direct domain of politics, specially with the communists as the communists were also under the radar of the government radar.

It was also stated in the report that Bengali leaflets captioned “ Paschim Banga Shanti Samsad” –Pak Bharat Maitri Saptaha paloner jonnyo abedon issued by the West Bengal Peace Council were distributed at the aforesaid meeting. The leaflets

state that the passport system will embitter the relationship between India Pakistan and offer fresh opportunities to the foreign powers to exploit the two states. It demands the abolition of passport system, settlement of the problems through the two countries mutual discussion, and withdrawal of the Kashmiri issue from the UNO. It also suggests exchange of goodwill mission between the two countries and calls upon the people to observe the week from 26.10.52 to 1.11.52 as Indo-Pak friendship week.⁷²

It was noted in another report that narhari Kaviraj, Yusuf Zamal, S.A Saleque and one Ajit of the party contacted and intimated the members of the steering committee of Displaced Muslim Rehabilitation Convention, That the communist Party was more friendly to the muslims than any other political party and that it would take the following steps to promote amity between the hindus and Muslims and it was decided in the meeting that –

- a) The party would give a reception to Mian Iftakharuddin in Calcutta on his way back to Pakistan from Peking Peace Conference.
- b) It would send a deputation to wait on the Pakistan authorities with a request to take steps to ease the present tension.
- c) It would seek the co-operation of the Pakistan Peace Committee to establish peace and amity between the two states.
- d) It would Observe an Indo-Pakistan unity week from 1.11.52 to 7.11.52.
- e) It would launch a movement to secure the abolition of the passport system.

It was also decided in the meeting to hold another meeting of the leaders of the two organizations at the house of Yusuf Zamal at Auckland Square on 28.10.52 to continue further discussions on the subject.⁷³

There is also a report regarding the meeting of Yusuf Jamal of CPI with Khairul Anam Khan ,where the previous one suggested that the words “ Muslim” henceforward be dropped from the name of the organization as the CPI viewed it as a “Communal” one and that the organization should merge with the refugee front with the CPI. But the proposal was not accepted by Khairul Anam Khan, Munsef Ali, and

others who claimed the organization to be a non- communal one as it included the representatives of all political shades.⁷⁴

It was also known from other reports that Some of the CPI members of West Bengal Peace Council led by Narhari Kaviraj and Yusuf Jamal met Syed Badruddoza, Khairul Anam Khan and others members in the meeting discussed the possibility of sending a goodwill mission to east Pakistan comprising of leading members of both the communities and also of receiving a similar mission from East Pakistan for fostering good relations between two countries. In support of the proposal Narhari Kaviraj observed that the communal situation in both the countries had deteriorated extremely and it might ultimately culminate into a major conflict between the two countries endangering the peace of Asia. Narhari Kaviraj also gave out that the Pakistan delegates names. Iftikaruddin Ahmed and others had been invited to Calcutta on their way back from Peking, when the proposal of sending and receiving Goodwill Missions to and from East Pakistan finalized, Syed Badruddoza, Khairul Anam Khan and others supported the proposal, but they remarked that the government and the people of East Pakistan would not agree either to receive or depute any such missions until and unless the exaggerated reports of torture of the hindus by the muslims in east Pakistan, which were published in the Indian press and also the anti-Pak propaganda that was being carried on by some responsible leaders in India advocating economic blockade of the East Pakistan had stopped. Narhari kaviraj added that Jyoti Basu MLA was in favor of the proposed West Bengal Displaced Muslim rehabilitation Conference and was willing to be a participant. Syed Badruddoza and Khairul anam Khan were glad to hear it and sent a formal letter to Jyoti Basu requesting for his co-operation and presence at the convention.⁷⁵

So, it is understood that through these kinds of programs, CPI started to influence the Muslims, trying to build trust among them. And, since ideologically they are anti-communal, none of their programs were religiously oriented, and their role during the time of riot, had an influence among the Muslims. As a result they gradually made a soft corner for themselves in the minds of many Muslims⁷⁶.

It was learnt from a press conference done by the reception committee of West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention on 11.10 .52 at Amjadia Hotel Moulana Khairul Anam Khan that about 7 lac Muslims had become displaced and

about 3lacs had made their hearths and homes on the street and their conditions were very miserable. He complained that the government had spent more than 50 crores for rehabilitation of Hindu refugees but had done practically nothing for the displaced Muslims. He accused Khuda Bux M.P for misappropriation of huge amount given to him by Government for extending relief to the Muslim victim of 1950 riot. He urged the reporters to give wide publicity in their respective papers regarding the ensuing displaced Muslim convention⁷⁷.

There were some clear examples of how the Muslims would take a defensive stance if they sensed any kind of communal activity, according to the reports, and how panicky they became in the post-partition scenario. From a report it came to know that due to heavy exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan on account of the passport system, the west Bengal Muslims became panicky. They apprehended that the reports emanating from Bengali Hindu Migrants during migration ,the refugees are being subjected to various sorts of oppressions at the border by East Bengal Muslims with the active support of east Pakistan government, will create unfavourable reactions for the muslims, they say that in 1950 consequent on similar reports being made by the incoming hindu refugees from east Pakistan, there were communal clashes in Calcutta and suburbs. So Syed Badruddoza, Khairul Anam Khan and others were thinking of postponing the proposed West Bengal Displaced Muslims Rehabilitation Convention to avoid clash during its session on 16.10.52. The steering sub-committee of the convention met at 8, Zakaria street (khilafat office) and decided to postpone the convention.⁷⁸

In another report it is came to notice that on the 16.10.52 a meeting of the steering Committee of the West Bengal Displaced Muslims rehabilitation Convention was held at 80, zakariah street under the presidentship of Saifuddin Kashmiri (Proja Socialist) and was attended amongst others by Syed Badruddoza, AKM Munsef Ali, Molla Jan Md, and Taibul Haque narrated the tension prevailing in West Bengal due to the influx of the refugees from East Pakistan. They gave out that during the past one week they had received large number of letters and representations from Muslims of West Bengal alleging that the Hindus were threatening the Muslims to quit immediately for Pakistan. These threats were generally coming from Hindu refugees who had already settled in West Bengal for long.They were also spreading the rumors

amongst the illiterate Muslim villagers that very soon the government was going to decide for exchange of population. They also complained that a few days ago some Hindus held up beef carts which were being taken to the market from the slaughter house. The Hindu inhabitants of Baithakkhana road and Mirzapur street were threatening the Muslims to quit the place at an early date.⁷⁹

These kind of reports clearly help us to understand how the position of the Muslims changed in this province, and also how interrelated the fate of the ‘minority’ in both country.

It was also learnt from the reports that Muslims are forming an association in Kolkata based on this convention. According to the report The displaced Muslims of West Bengal have recently formed an association styled as West Bengal Displaced Muslims Association with its temporary office at 43, lower range, the residence of Khairul Anam Khan. The aim of the association is to put pressure on the government for arranging the rehabilitation of the Muslims. The association is taking steps to organize the W.b Displaced Muslims Rehabilitation convention in Calcutta.⁸⁰

The association is being financed by Mohd Salim, Molla Jan Mohd, Khairul Anam Kha, AKM Munseef Ali and others. It includes members of the five political parties in its fold besides independent Muslims. The members were Janab Yusuf Jamal (Bar-at-Law) of C.P.I., Socialist by Saifuddin Kashmiri, K.M.P.P represented by CharuChandra Bhandari, Muslim League by Molla Jan Mohd, Md. Salim, Khairul Anam Khan and Congress represented by Md Nasim Ali and prof Abdur Rahim.

The association has plans to set up local committee in the predominantly Muslim inhabited areas in Calcutta as well as other districts. It is learnt that two such committees have already been formed in Beliaghata and Manicktola Areas.⁸¹

The reaction of the Hindus, regarding this conference was massive. A letter published in AnandaBazar Patrika dated 14.10.52 is very important in this context. The statement of the letter is as follows –

“ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানদিগের এক সম্মেলনের আহ্বানের আয়োজন চলিতেছে। অভ্যর্থনা সমিতির সভাপতি হইয়াছেন স্বনামধন্য মহাম্মদ আক্রাম খান এর জ্যেষ্ঠপুত্র মিঃ খয়রুল আনাম খান, সভাপতি হইবেন সৈয়দ বদরুদ্দোজা এবং

প্রধান অতিথি হইবেন শ্রী চারুচন্দ্র ভাণ্ডারী, এবং সম্মেলনের উদ্বোধন করিবেন জমিয়ৎ-উল- উলেমাই-হিন্দ এর সাধারণ সম্পাদক মৌলানা হাফিজুর রহমান। মিঃ খয়রুল আনাম খাঁ এর মতে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানদিগের সংখ্যা হইল সাতলক্ষ্য এবং ইহার মধ্যে তিন লক্ষ্য স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানের প্রজাস্বত্ব অপরে ভোগদখল করিতেছে। মিঃ খয়রুল আনাম খাঁ এই অভিযোগও করিয়াছেন যে পূর্ববঙ্গ হইতে আগত ২৫ লক্ষ্য উদ্বাস্তুদিগের সাহায্যের জন্য সরকার ৫০ কোটি টাকা টাকা যে ক্ষেত্রে ব্যয় করিয়াছেন, সে ক্ষেত্রে স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানদিগের সাহায্যের জন্য সরকার মাত্র ৯ লক্ষ্য টাকা ব্যয় করিয়াছেন। একসঙ্গে এতগুলি অদ্ভুত বস্তুর সমাবেশ দেখিয়া কোনটিকে আগে বাহবা জানাইব বুঝিতে পারিতেছি না। যেমন অদ্ভুত সম্মেলন, তেমনি অদ্ভুত তথ্য, তাহা অপেক্ষা বেশী অদ্ভুত হইল অভিযোগটি। হিন্দু উৎসাদনে নিযুক্ত পাকিস্তানের সম্মান রক্ষা করিবার জন্যই কি পশ্চিমবঙ্গে স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানদের এই কাল্পনিক সংখ্যার এই হিসাবটি তৈয়ারি করা হইয়াছে? মিঃ খয়রুল আনাম এর মস্তিষ্ক প্রসূত সাতলক্ষ্য স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানেরা এতই দুরবস্থায় পড়িয়াছে যে তাহাদিগকে উদ্বাস্তু হইয়া পাকিস্তানে যাইতে হয় নাই, তাহারা পশ্চিমবঙ্গেই রহিয়াছে, বদরুদ্দোজা, খয়রুল আনাম খানদিগকে আমরা সবিনয়ে নিবেদন করিতেছি যে রাষ্ট্রের বিরুদ্ধে কূটঘাতী প্রচারণার এই পথ যেন তাহারা বর্জন করেন। ইয়াকি করিতে হইলে তাহার জন্য অন্য বিষয় আছে এবং অন্য ক্ষেত্রও আছে। স্থানচ্যুত মুসলমানদিগের একটা কাল্পনিক হিসাব কপচাইয়া রাষ্ট্রীয় মর্যাদার সাথে ইয়াকি করা চলে না।^{৪২}

It was clear from the above mentioned letter that the plight of the Muslims, could not have any effect on the minds of a large numbers of Hindus, they considered the numbers given by the authority about the displaced Muslims as wrong, baseless. It was clear from the statement of the letter how much hatred there was in the minds of a large number of Hindus at that time.

On the other hand from the side of the Muslims, it was stated in the press conference on 11.10.52 at Amjadia Hotel by Khairul Anam Khan , who was the chairman of the West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention that , they were drawing the attention of the government of India to the problem of rehabilitation of the minority communities in west Bengal which was rudely shaking the very foundation of the entire society and calls for immediate solution. He alleged that the claims of these uprooted Muslim Citizens were being totally ignored and their fundamental rights were being systematically denied by them. He called upon all the

citizens of the state, irrespective of their caste, creed, community and belief to participate in this convention.⁸³

Analyzing the activities of this organization will make it easier for us to understand the problems of the Muslims at that time. It was stated in the reports about the convention that West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention held at the Muslim Institute Hall on 15.11.52 with Syed Badruddoza in the chair, Khairul Anam Khan observed that the aim of the convention was to find out ways and means to ameliorate the conditions of the Muslims who lost hearth and home during the communal riot of 1950. AKM Munsef Ali moved the following resolutions urging the govt: i) To rehabilitate all displaced Muslims. ii) To accord same facilities to the Muslims as is given to the refugees from East Bengal. iii) To make arrangements so that all the Muslim workers who had got unemployed since the last communal riot are re-employed. iv) To take steps so that the displaced Muslims get back their properties. v) To see that the mosques are not defied and to renovate the mosques that are in dilapidated conditions. Resolutions were also moved appealing the members of other minority communities to support the cause of the displaced Muslims and expressing regret for the miseries of the refugees from Pakistan. All Resolutions were passed. Munsef Ali also criticized the alleged step-motherly attitude of the govt towards the Muslims and added that the Congress leaders wooed the Muslims to win their votes during the election but after coming to the power they were doing nothing to redress the grievances of the Muslims. The delegates from different districts of West Bengal also narrated the plight of the Muslims in their respective districts of west Bengal. Srikumar Chatterji requested the audience to think about themselves in terms of “Indians” first and minorities afterwards. Col Jiban Singh of INA stated that there was no discrimination among the Hindus and the Muslims in the Azad Hind Fauz. He pleaded for full protection for the Muslims. Syed Badruddoza criticized the provisions of act XVI of 1951, which laid down that the occupants of the vacant Muslim houses would not vacate their possessions till they could get other dwelling houses. It was also proposed to form a West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Association” to provide relief to the displaced Muslims.

The resolutions which were passed in the convention were as follows :-

- 1) Expressing grave concern at the miserable plight of the thousands of Muslim refugees and deploring the callous attitude of the West Bengal Government in their Rehabilitation.
- 2) Urging the West Bengal Government to treat the displaced Muslims of the state and the refugees from Pakistan on an equal footing and to grant adequate compensation for the loss and damage suffered by the displaced Muslims during and after the communal disturbances in 1950.
- 3) Requesting the government to arrange for the immediate restoration of lands and properties to the displaced Muslims of the state.
- 4) Exhorting the government to generous review the cases of thousands of Muslim employee unjustly thrown out of the employment during the disturbances of 1950 and to reinstate them forthwith.
- 5) Appreciating the genuine sympathies of generous souls in the majority community for the distressed Muslims in the various disturbed area of the state.
- 6) Sympathising with the bonafide refugees from East Bengal in their distress
- 7) Insisting on the government either to promulgate an ordinance or set up a tribunal for summary trial of unregistered exchanges made on insufficient stamp papers and for the restoration of these exchanged properties to the actual owners.
- 8) Requesting the government to take suitable action against the eviction of displaced Muslim tenants for non-payment of arrear rents.
- 9) Appealing to all to support the legitimate demands of the Muslim citizens of the state.
- 10) Urging the government to arrange for necessary repairs or reconstruction of the mosques desecrated or damaged by miscreants and take effective steps for the immediate eviction of the unauthorized occupants there from and restoration of the same to the local Muslims.

- 11) Starting a relief fund forthwith for giving relief to the displaced Muslims in their distress.
- 12) Drawing the attention of the govt to the unfortunate developments in certain parts of the state consequent upon the on-rush of refugees and requesting the govt to stabilize the situation and prevent recurrence of the same etc.

Khairul Anam khan and AKM Munsef Ali the chairman and secretary of the reception committee of West Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention both opined that the attitude of the west Bengal government and the India government towards the Muslims was pathetic ,they both said that in spite of repeated request to the govt for the Muslim rehabilitation, specially those who were forcibly ousted from their hearths and homes by the East Bengali refugee in 1950 violence, the govt took no proper action in this matter. They said that the east Bengali Hindu refugees were being backed by the government officials who are related to them were the only forced occupants of the Muslim houses, but the real refugees were dying at Sealdah , Bongaon and other places even without food.

Sukumar Bhattacharji, Bansdrone, Tollygunge 24pgs, an old congress worker urged upon the delegates to be united to launch a movement jointly with the Hindu refugees and displaced Muslims against the government for the rehabilitation of both the communities. Colonel Jiwan Singh and Ajit De of Nadia spoke about the alleged pitiable condition of the Muslims residing on the border of Nadia.

They strongly condemned the alleged unsympathetic attitude of the govt officials as well as the Hindus in rendering adequate help to the displaced Muslims for their rehabilitation.⁸⁴

The resolutions which were taken by them regarding the issue of 1950's violence as well as the problem of displacement by the Muslims were as follows.

- 1) Demanding the introduction of suitable and fresh legislations or amendment of existing laws to enable the displaced Muslims to regain their properties lost or disposed of during the disturbances in 1950 without recourse to civil court.
- 2) Suggesting that the East Bengal refugees who are now in possession of displaced Muslim properties should be rehabilitated on lands the government

have acquired or are contemplating to acquire under various development schemes.

- 3) Deciding to open a relief fund to assist displaced Muslims in distress.
- 4) Deploring the Callous attitude of the state administration in the matter of rehabilitation of the displaced Muslims and restoration of their houses and properties.
- 5) Urging the government to treat the displaced Muslims of the state and refugees from Pakistan an equal footing and also to grant adequate compensation for the loss and damage suffered by the displaced Muslims during the disturbances in 1950 and after and to arrange for immediate restoration of lands and properties to the displaced Muslims of the state, and to reinstate the Muslims unjustly thrown out of employment in 1950.
- 6) Condemning the vandalism of miscreants in having desecrated ,damaged and destroyed a large number of mosques in the city and suburbs and appealing to the government to arrange repairs or reconstruction of such mosques.
- 7) Suggesting formation of Thana Committeess in every districts of west Bengal.⁸⁵

Syed Badruddoza, the president of the convention then moved for the formation of an association styled West Bengal Muslim Rehabillitation Association and it was accepted by the delegates. The objective of this association is to look after the rehabilitation and grievances of the Muslims of the state.

Sri Charu Chandra Bhandari M.L.A said that though the problem of the rehabilitation of the East Bengal refugees should receive the top priority. The problem of the rehabilitation of the displaced Muslims in the state should not be ignored. Necessary measures should be taken by the state govt to arrange alternative accommodation for the refugees in unauthorized possession of houses of displaced Muslims in the state and for restoration of these houses to the owners and thus the Hindus as well as the Muslim displaced persons could be rehabilitated he added.

So it was clear from the above mentioned reports that the major problem which is faced by the Muslims in post-partition Kolkata as well as in the province is

about their “living Space”, about their “rehabilitation”, their “property”, “employment” “ Reconstruction of the Mosques” . They repeatedly focused on the issue the way government was concerned about the east Bengalee refugee , they are not concerned about them, their rights. These issues caused deep dissatisfaction among them.

These issues are clear indication of the process of marginalization they started to face from the post-independence India, a feeling of exclusion from the mainstream, till now which is a feature of the Muslim Society.

It was learnt from another report that at a meeting of the west Bengal Displaced Muslim Rehabilitation Association held on 10.12.52 at the association office and attended by Syed Badruddoza, Khairul Anam Khan, Munsef Ali, Golam Ali and others where the present aims of the organization were enunciated as follows-

- 1) To build up a solid Muslim Organisation to ventilate Muslim grievances through press, public meetings and to safeguard the Muslim rights in west Bengal by sending deputation from time to time to the state authorities.
- 2) To demand separate electorate, protection of Muslim culture and sacred places and facilities for adequate education and suitable government services for the Muslims.
- 3) To set up local committees all over the state for a) holding public meetings and press propaganda in demand of Muslim rehabilitation. b) collecting detailed information of displaced Muslims c) recruiting members to the association.⁸⁶

It was also learnt from another report that they are going to place their grievances to the Chief Minister Bidhan Chandra Roy. It was stated in the report that a deputation led by Syed Badruddoza, Bazlur Rahman Dugapuri, M.R Chaudhiri, Khairul anam Khan and Munsef Ali met the chief minister Dr. B.C Roy on Monday, the 15th December at the writers buildings Calcutta. The deputationists placed the grievances of the west Bengal Muslims including the cases of the forcible occupation of the Muslim houses by the east bengalee refugees. Dr. B.C Roy assured the deputationists that he was quite alive to the grievances of the displaced Muslims and that he would be very happy to see the end of the miseries of the displaced Muslims.

The chief minister also requested the deputationists to inform him from time to time the statistics of the displaced Muslims.⁸⁷

There is also a report also about the letter by the deputationist with a copy forwarded to the Prime minister, minister-in-charge of the Rehabilitation department govt of india also the minister in charge of relief and rehabilitation departments, govt of west Bengal. The statement of the letter is as follows :

- 1) This Meeting views with very grave concern the extreme miseries of hundreds of thousands of Muslim citizens of the state uprooted from their homes and hearths during the disturbances of 1950 and thereafter and deplores the callous indifference of the state administration in the matter of rehabilitation of those unfortunate people and restoration of their houses and properties.
- 2) This meeting views with regret the policy of discrimination hitherto pursued by the government in the matter of relief and rehabilitation between its own citizens and those uprooted from Pakistan and urges upon the government to treat the displaced Muslims of the state and refugees from Pakistan on an equal footing and also to grant adequate compensation for the loss and damage suffered by the displaced Muslims during the disturbances, and thereafter.
- 3) The meeting urges upon the government to arrange for immediate restoration of lands and properties to the displaced Muslims of the state , if necessary , by means of such suitable legislation or necessary amendment in the existing legislations as will enable them to get back their houses and properties without any recourse to dilatory court proceedings.
- 4) This meetings urges upon the government to generously review the cases of thousands of Muslim employees unjustly thrown out of employment during the disturbances of 1950 and to re-instate them in their former posts without any further delay.
- 5) This meeting appreciates the genuine sympathies of generous souls in the majority community for distress. Muslims in various disturbed areas. In the state and has nothing but unstained admiration for some non-offiocial agencies in having so far rehabilitated a number of Muslim families in Nadia.

- 6) This meeting sympathizes with the bonafide refugees from East Bengal in their distress.
- 7) This meeting urges upon the government to either promulgate an ordinance or set up tribunals for summary trials of unregistered exchanges and transfers of titles made on insufficiently stamped papers and for restoration of such properties to the actual owners.
- 8) This meeting urges upon the government to take suitable action to prevent eviction of displaced Muslim tenants for non payment of arrear rents and non occupation of their holdings owing to circumstances over which they had no control.
- 9) This meeting fervently appeals to all fair minded people of various schools of thought and shades of opinion in the country as also to the democratic organizations in the land to support the legitimate demands of the displaced Muslim citizens of the state.
- 10) The meeting condemns the wanton vandalism of miscreants in having desecrated, damaged or destroyed a large number of mosques, dargahs, and other sacred places in the state and appeals to the government to arrange for necessary repair or reconstruction of those sacred places so desecrated or damaged and to take effective steps for immediate eviction of the unauthorized occupants there and restoration of some of the Muslims of the respective localities.
- 11) This meeting urges upon the government to arrange for rehabilitation of refugees in occupation of Muslim houses and properties in lands already acquired by the government under the development act in order to rehabilitate Muslim displaced persons in their own houses and properties without any future delay.
- 12) This meeting draws the attention of the government to the unfortunate developments in certain parts of the state, consequent on the rush of refugees and urges upon it to take immediate action to stabilize the situation and prevent recurrence the same.⁸⁸

After analyzing these reports an important feature that catches our eye is that, where 'religious identity' played an important role for their changing position in the post-partition west Bengal, it was also their 'religious identity' which was working to bring them together, they realized that irrespective of their class and caste differences, the problems which they faced are more or less same, they all became the 'lost child of Partition'.

The same statement was heard from Janab Lutful Huque , who was the only independent Muslim MLA in west Bengal , he said that the attention of the government of India to the problem of Rehabilitation of the displaced Muslims and has pointed out that though the govt professed to be secular in its nature, it had been badly exposed in its policy towards the displaced Muslims. He regretted that thousands of Muslims who have been uprooted from their homes and hearths are not recognized as refugees either by the president of India or the govt of west Bengal and points out that though the India government has so far spent 150 crores of rupees for the Pakistani refugees, it has spent only a nominal sum on this score for the Muslim refugees of this country. This differential treatment naturally leads to suspicion about the sincerity of the policy of the government of India towards the displaced Muslims and Janab Lutful Huq adds that in this secular state, government itself has kept communalism alive by following such a policy⁸⁹.

Where Muslims were trying various methods to get themselves out of this predicament, hoping for governments help, two letters came to our notice where the picture of the helpless situation of that time came before us.

There is a letter from C.N Chandra ,ICS , secretary to the government of India to the Chief Secretaries to all state government regarding the issue of treatment of minorities. The statement of the letter stated that "Under the constitution , the minorities in India enjoy equal rights with the majority , and there should be no reason for them to fear any differential treatment, There has been some nervousness, however, in recent past consequent upon the events in East Bengal. An agreement has been broached between the Prime Minister of India and Pakistan in regard to the treatment of minorities and it is the desire of the government of India to implement it fully in letter and spirit.

There are two important laws with the administration of which this ministry is concerned- the evaquee property act and the influx from Pakistan act which affect the minority community. Although the agreement did not directly concern these laws, the government of India was anxious. So to administer them that an increased sense of confidence and security should prevail amongst the minorities, not only should justice be done, but it must be manifest beyond doubt that it is being done. The government of India, has therefore decided as follows:-

- a) all pending cases under the evaquee property act should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible so that uncertainty and suspense are removed.
- b) cases filing under sections 2(d)(i) and (ii) of the evaquee property act (i.e those concerning persons who have already gone to Pakistan or are living there) may be dealt with the sub-ordinate officer, but all cases falling under section 2(d)(iii) should be invariably dealt with either by custodian personally, or by the highest officer available in the district, who will normally be the collector or the deputy commissioner of the district.
- c) All cases under section 19 of the act (declaration of intending evaquee) should also be dealt with only by the custodians or in districts, by the deputy custodians.
- d) no cases under section 22(b) of the act should be taken up till the end of June 1950.

The government of India have also decided that in pursuance of the assurance given by the Honourable Minister for Rehabilitation of the floor of the house, while piloting the evaquee property bill certain class of persons will be exempted from being treated as having left India for purpose of section 2(d)(i) of the act. The necessary notification is being issued in the gazette of India under section 52 of the act. This should be borne in mind dealing with cases falling under section 2(d)(i).

In regard to the influx from Pakistan act, Indian nationals are fully safeguarded by the issue of “no objection” certificates issued by collectors and deputy commissioners to persons wishing to visit Pakistan temporarily.

Permanent return permits are issued by the high commissioner or deputy high commissioner in all such cases as a matter of course. Difficulties can arise only if a person overstay the permit without proper extension. The High commissioner and deputy high commissioner are being instructed to grant extension liberally to those who approach them for such an extension during the currency of the “ No Objection NO Return” certificate. Any hard case that may come to the notice of the state government should also be dealt with in the spirit of the new agreement.

It is requested that necessary instructions may issue to all officers in your state who may be concerned with the administration of these laws, so that the orders now issued are carried out in letter and spirit. This copy is also distributed to all commissioners of the division, all district officers, Deputy commissioner of Police s.b Calcutta ,DIG,IB, CID,West Bengal, I.G of police of West Bengal, all superintendents of police, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta.⁹⁰

There is another report about a case which was recently been reported to govt in which some muslims who were stated to have left West Bengal for Pakistan came back with letters of request from local officers of Pakistan asking west Bengal local officers to rehabilitate them(returning muslims). The Following two questions arise in this connection namely:

- a) Whether any authority in east Bengal can approach any authority in this state on matters relating to the rehabilitation of Muslims in this state.
- b) What action is to be taken by the local officers of this state on requests from returning Muslim migrants for their rehabilitation.

With regards to the first question the position in the matter of rehabilitation of returning muslim migrants ,the request, if any to the west Bengal govt will come either from the govt of east Bengal on a govt to govt basis or from the relief commissioner, east Bengal to Sri K.C Basak I.C.S secy co-operation credit , relief and rehabilitation dept west Bengal. The district officers of this govt will get all such request for rehabilitation from the dept of west Bengal govt or from the secy co-operation, credit, relief and rehabilitation dept of west Bengal. the district officer however has a free hand if approached by such individual returning migrants , in

rehabilitating returning muslim migrants to their original dwellings or lands in accordance with the law and orders of the government.

The second question is not free from complications. The expression “rehabilitation” means either

- i) ensuring that the migrant is to be put back into possessions of his house and property or
- ii) giving relief and assistance to the returning migrant absorbed in the social economy and in earning his living.

There may be other aspects also , if it means simply helping the individual , in getting back his property , necessary action in this respect can be taken by the local officers in accordance with law and orders of the govt. If it can be done without using force the position becomes simple. Failing that, legal powers have to be used. The instruction issued in this department official letter no3439-C.R/ endorsement no 3439/ICP dated 8th July 1950 may be seen in this connection.

The govt is considering legislation to take powers to use force to evict trespassers, but until such legislation is enacted, force can not be used for the purpose. As regards to relief and assistance in getting absorbed in the social economy, separate orders have already been issued.

In the circumstances stated above it was decided by the government that they requested the local authority about the pending settlement of the questioning of legal authority for causing eviction of persons in occupation of lands and buildings, They [local authority] may render all possible aid to the returning migrants in re-occupying their original houses or lands in your district in accordance with the existing law and the instructions referred to above and such other instructions as may hereafter be issued by the govt. The government was requested that the above position may be explained to all concerned.⁹¹

In a letter to the chief secretaries to all provincial governments about the issue of permit system for permanent resettlement in India, it was stated that the following information are necessary for the Muslim applicant who wanted to come back to

India; such as ; reasons why he went to Pakistan and the list of property of the applicant. And most importantly there was a point where it was clearly written that it is important for the administration to know that if the applicant comes to India permanently will that affect the rehabilitation plans of the government⁹². There is another file regarding the issue of rehabilitation as well as relating to the permit system. A Letter from the ministry of rehabilitation to Sri Sukumar Sen , who was the chief secretary of the government of west Bengal where it was clearly said that “ You were requested not to recommend cases for the grant of permits for permanent settlements to Muslim evacuees except in cases of genuine hardship, as you are presumably aware we have over 7 lacs of displaced persons receiving free rations in camps of India. The government of India attached great importance to their early rehabilitation..... Return of Muslims from Pakistan was bound to regard the rehabilitation of displaced persons. In these circumstances it is hoped that provincial governments will not allow permits for permanent settlements to Muslims wishing to come back to India till the displaced persons had been satisfactorily rehabilitated”.⁹³

These two letters make it clear that even if the government had made an honest effort, it would not have always been possible to implement it, and the situation of that time was primarily responsible for it. This letter also clarified the priority of the government.

There are reports about the Communalism Resistance Committee in the city, where it was stated that a multiparty communalism resistance committee has been set up in Calcutta to combat the communal frenzy, generated by the anti-cow slaughter movement through peaceful and non-violent means.⁹⁴

It is learnt from the report that on the night of 1.9.54 near about circus maidan M.R chowdhury and kalimuddin Shams, two prominent members of communalism Resistance Committee were found distributing posters issued by communalism resistance committee for making anti-propaganda against anti cow-slaughter movement for the purpose of posting these on the walls at conspicuous places of the city. It was learnt from them that 400 such posters were printed for the purpose.⁹⁵

Apart from this committee Janab M.R choudhry, propaganda secretary All India Muslim Jamaat stated that the committee has resolved to offer satyagraha and

five volunteers have been detailed to undertake simultaneous hunger strike so as to strengthen the hands of justice.

He continued , India is a secular state it will be an infamy if a minority here is compelled to amend its religious practices but to satisfy the religious prejudices of a major section of the population. Hence any ban affecting sacrifice of cattle in qurbani will constitute a negation of our secular ideals.

Bitterly condemning the anti-cow slaughter movement, he contended that it is economically unsound and aims at formenting communal troubles.

Abolition of all restrictions affecting slaughter of cattle for religious purposes and punishment of the leaders of the anti- cow slaughter movement will constitute the main demands of the communalism resistance committee, the signatory stated.

He also said that : The Jan Sanghis and their benchmen are out to foil what the father of the nation fought for. Presently things have become intolerable. The zero hour has stuck and the clarion has been sounded. Let us those who stand for secularism and democracy amass our resources and strive to achieve the unfinished task of Bapuji. Let those who are true to their secular ideals extend unflinching support to the communal resistance committee.⁹⁶

This change, however needs separate mention because in first phases after Independence, where they voluntarily gave up their rights about the cow- slaughter, later they, with mention of the characteristic of a secular country started talking about protection of their religious right. This clearly indicates that they strengthen their position based upon their religious identity, because they realize that although their religious identity was primarily responsible for the misfortune in their own homeland, but this identity is also their armor for self- defense.

In order to strengthen their unity, they also formed different kinds of social organization, as we have seen earlier that it was easy for the Muslims, to unite under a social organization, Tanjim-ul- Momein was one of it. As the cause behind the formation of this organization it was stated that the prominent muslim leaders like Khan Bahadur Md Solaiman, Mr. Choudhuri, Kalimuddin Shams and others felt that the All India Muslim Jamat and Jamait-Ul-Ulema-i-Hind failed to bring all Muslims

into one fold and they were gradually losing control over Muslim masses in absence of any concrete political and social program. This according to them resulted in the division amongst the Muslims and in creation of different small parties under different names. In order to check this a central organization styled Anjuman Tanjim-Ul-Momeneen was formed towards the latter part of 1953⁹⁷.

It was also stated in the report that the open activities of the party was confined to cultural and constructive works but its main objective was to form a single organization by removing the existing differences among the Muslims. In fact the organizers wanted to make it a strong organization just like the Muslim league of undivided Bengal. The party Supports the leftist parties specially C.P.I on political issues where the interest of the Muslims was involved.⁹⁸

About 25 splinter organizations of the Muslims have been affiliated to the party among them there are couple of names like 1) Gharibul Muslimeen 2) Hindusthan Muslim Club, TantiBazar, Calcutta 3) jamiatul Quraish 4) National Unity League of kankinara 24pgs 5) Ittefaquie Committee of Khidderpore 6) Jamit Falahul 7) Falahul Muslimeen 8)Terhetti Bazar Mosque Commiittee .⁹⁹

Most of the organizations involved themselves in different kinds of social activities; like The Hindusthan Muslim Club ran schools in slums, and trying to improve the condition of the Muslims living in slums and many others. The Khidderpur Ittefaquia Committee had a free reading room, and got a small library, this committee also had a night school upto middle standard and their objective was to do social work among the poor Muslim community. The welfare organization also ran a free reading room and a tiny library. They also ran a free night school upto class IV. Its objective was also to do social work among the poor muslim community.¹⁰⁰

Another feature which is seen after the post- partition scenario in the city among the Muslim society, is the creation of ‘Mohalla Committee’ and ‘ Defence Committee’ . The reason behind the formation of ‘Mohalla Committee’ as narrated in the report is that, Syed Badruddoza, khairul Anam Khan, and A.K.M Munsef Ali in a joint statement narrate the pitable plight of the displaced Muslims of West Bengal and the callousness of the government in their rehabilitation. They alleged that the government have spent crores of rupees, for their rehabilitation of the East Bengal

refugees but they have not allotted, even one percent of the same for those Muslims, so they are now feeling helpless in these circumstances. The hope of the entire Muslim community that the congress will ameliorate their condition when returned to power and which they voted for them has also been belied. They urge the Muslims to shun the fear complex and consolidate amongst themselves to better their lot. They have been advised to form Mohalla committees in their localities and prepare statistics of the Muslims who have suffered during the last communal riot etc. They also called upon the Muslims to send their names who were willing to join the proposed convention of displaced Muslims in Calcutta in the near future to the editor of this paper to enable them to form a preparatory committee beforehand so that the displaced Muslims might be given adequate relief.¹⁰¹

As far as the 'Defence Committee' was concerned it was stated in the report that, at a meeting of the muslims of the taltolla area held on 14.5.52 at 23 dedar baksh lane . S.M salahuddin secy of Anjuman Mufidul Islam who convened it said that in 1951, he failed to enlist support of the Muslims in his attempt at forming Muslim Defence Committes in their localities but following the communal clash on 9.5.52 at Komedan Bagan, they had realized its necessity.

He heard that the Hindu refugees of Devendra Manison and David Manison had decided to start communal riot as soon as the pickets were withdrawn from that area and also to spread the same all over West Bengal. He added that on 13.5. 52 , the muslim bustee at Prince Anwar Shah road was attacked by some refugees and that one Mansur Alam of Kala Bagan bustee was stabbed but no arrest was made by the police.¹⁰²

But about the stabbing incident it was written in the police note that the muslim was stabbed by some hindus no doubt but due to some previous enmity, 7 hindus were also arrested in this connection(vide B.P Tollygunge P.S case U/S 147/326 IPC). Salauddin exhorted the audience to inform all communal incident to the D.H.C for Pakistan and himself, 21 persons were enrolled as volunteers to perform vigilance duties for the whole night in two shifts on the roofs of bordering houses and mosques and in case of any sign of attack to shout "Allaho Akbar" a sum of RS 75/ was also collected for the legal defence of the four Muslims arrested at Komedar Bagan.¹⁰³

There is also a report about the formation of a secret vigilance party. It is stated in the report that Mohd Abul Kalam of 33, Dent Mission Road has recently formed a secret vigilance party styled as Ittafakia Committee at 8, dent Mission Road with the following Mohd Abul Kalam as a secretary , Mohd Kaiser as asst secretary S.K Rahim as a commandant , and a dozen of others.

It is further learnt that the said organization has been formed to safeguard the interest of the muslims in case of emergency. The Secretary has been empowered to enlist new members. Salauddin of the Anjuman Mofidul Islam is said to have visited the office a few days ago.¹⁰⁴

These reports highlight two features of that time, first, that the Muslims are trying to form a parallel security among themselves. Second, how Pakistan is interested to collect information about the communal incidents of the country, as the political situation here became an important factor to shape the political and social sphere of their Country, and viceversa also.

From another report it came to be known that It is learnt that Dr. K. Ahmed of 29. Shamsul huda road and his two compounders viz Jahangir Alam and Goda Gaffar of 12, Shamsul Huda Road, Jharu Mian Of Shamsul Mian Road, Barkati of Bright street bustee. M.M osman, a retired police officer and others were mobilizing their kinsman of the locality against any aggression of the Hindus in future. The Muslims of this area are apprehending that the east Bengal Hindus are likely to create communal disturbances to feed fat their grudge against the proposed implementation of the permit system between two Bengals.¹⁰⁵

Although there was no report about the communal disturbance about the issue, but it was an indication that the Muslims were anxious about anything related with East Pakistan, they felt panicked. The same condition was also applied for the Hindus in East Pakistan.

There was report also regarding the formation of a people's welfare society in place of Ismail Street- Phulbagan Bustee Commiittee. Under the Banner of Anjuman Mafidul Islam a charitable organization some voluntary association including Mohalla committee was formed . It was stated in the report that a “ Peoples Welfare Society” was formed at a public meeting held on Sunday 5th August 1951 at 20 Noor Ali Lane,

replacing the Ismail Street PhulBagan Bustee Commiittee. As the areas which they have undertaken to serve are on the border line of Beniapukur and Enatally Police Stations.

The rules and regulation of the society as mentioned in the letter were –

- 1) The Society shall be called the “Peoples” Welfare Society.
- 2) The aims and objects of the society shall be a) to combat all sorts of social evil b) to provide educational and cultural facilities for poor boys and girls of the localities. c) to secure and provide medical aid for the poor and to develop sense of proper sanitization among the people d) to maintain peace in the localities and to settle minor disputes.
- 3) The society shall co-operate with local organizations, governmental or semi-governmental authorities to fulfill the aims and objects of the society.
- 4) The society shall organize a civil volunteer crops to help the governmental authorities in checking theft, robberies, black marketing, gambling and such other social evils which are likely to degrade peoples morality.¹⁰⁶

There is a report about the organization named “ All Calcutta Muslim’s Students welfare Association” , it was stated in the report that a meeting was held in the Muslim Institute hall, where Syed Muzzafar Hossain, Secy of the organizing Commiittee, said that poverty and lack of special facilities made it difficult for the muslim students to receive higher education. He observed that the Muslim Students used to enjoy all facilities for higher education in the Islamia College (renamed as the central college), which had been stopped after Independence. It was stated that the aim and object of the organization was to provide for full educational facilities for the poor muslim students in order to make them worthy citizens of India. The activities of the organization he added would be to i) collect funds to help the needy Muslim Students. ii) to establish a book –bank for such students. iii) to get in touch with the govt and the authorities of the educational Institutions to secure more educational facilities for the Muslim Students.¹⁰⁷ In another meeting of this organization in the Muslim Institute Hall on 3.12.55, S.A Masud bar-at-law demanded more govt scholarship and opportunity for foreign study for the muslim students. Syed Badruddoza also stated that due to the step-motherly attitude of the govt towards the

Muslim students they suffer a lot. He also stated that political, social, and religious privileges of the Muslims suffered since the partition of India, in spite of their contribution towards the independence of India. He further regretted the changes in name of Islamia College to Central College, and Govt's alleged indifference towards their demands for restoration of Muslim houses and places of worship. He also urged the Muslim students for the restoration of their previous status in India. According to the constitution the aims and objective of this student's welfare organization are-

- a) To propagate and promote education among Muslims.
- b) To safeguard the interests of the Muslims students studying or intending to study in an educational institution in Calcutta and in its suburbs or intending to sit for any examination as private candidates.
- c) To foster brotherhood among the students of all communities.
- d) To raise funds for helping the poor and/or meritorious students studying in any educational institution in Calcutta and in its suburb with stipends, scholarship, loans or any other allowances.
- d) To establish a students home in Calcutta or in the suburbs for providing accommodation to the Muslim students who do not find suitable place to live in Calcutta during the period of their studies.
- e) To establish a library in Calcutta for lending books in general and text-books in particular to the deserving student members of the society for study.
- f) To provide medical aid to the deserving student members.
- g) To do any other act or thing that may assist in or be conducive to the welfare of the students.

If we analyze the above mentioned reports, we can understand that these are the clear example of marginalization they started to face after partition. They are socially, politically, economically ignored, neglected and excluded from the so called mainstream. Massey and Denton are credited with a framework, for understanding residential segregation. They specified five dimensions of residential segregation namely

- i) evenness- which was related to the distribution of the minority community's members across the city and was said to have an inverse relationship with segregation
- ii) exposure- which was the measure of the degree of the potential contact of the minority group with the rest of the population of the city,
- iii) concentration- which was the amount of the physical area that minority groups occupied relative to their proportion in the population.
- iv) centralization- which was the proximity of minority groups to the city centre
- v) clustering – which was the extent to which minority groups live in contiguous areas¹⁰⁸.

If we take these features as indicators, then we can

understand each of the above mentioned reports tell us the story of Muslim segregation and lead them towards the societal marginalization. They have been socially, politically, economically excluded from the mainstream because of their 'religious identity'. They started to form their own organizations based on their religious identity to combat with their plights, but the process of exclusion which is started after partition still haunting them.

The political situation of the province changes gradually, on different kind of issues the congress started to loosing their ground. As we have seen earlier that, the Muslims supported the congress after Partition in most of the time, but in Bengal gradually their position started to shake, specially after the demise of Chief Minister B.C . Roy. The socio-economic system of that time helped the communists and price hike and unemployment were two of the biggest issues that were plaguing the middle class and the poor. Congress did not dissolved these issues satisfactorily, and thus created a huge resentment among the general masses irrespective of their religion. Moreover, the rehabilitation process in Punjab by the same government further angered the Bengali people. Communists, kept protesting regarding these issues, as well as the issues which were important for the Muslims like the Kashmir and the Hyderabad problem. In this diplomatic way they influenced a large number of people in the province.

In the post independence era, the politics of Bengal was multi layered and complex and it is definitely true that partition affected the politics, economics and sociology of Bengal on an epic scale. No other state in the country had to pay this level of penalty for the scar of partition. Punjab did not have to face it because the central government did a great job of rehabilitating in Punjab something that was hugely amiss in Bengal. Politics in Bengal was volatile and disturbed.

The last nail in the coffin of congress came from food movement in the sixties. P.C Sen who became the chief minister after B.C Roy, restricted the movement of the food, and as result the situation started getting out of hand. The price rise did not go down and additionally , the black marketing and corruption surrounding food also reached the zenith. The situation got so bad that congress themselves divided on this issue. One of the key figures of Congress, Ajay Mukherjee quit congress and started a new party named Bengal Congress or Bangla Congress .

Many disillusioned congress workers along with Jahangir Kabir , who played an important role in post-partition politics of west Bengal among the Muslims also joined with him. Even the communists joined force with Ajay Mukherjee to fight congress in the election.

In the election of 1967 Ajay Mukherjee succeeded against the congress and took oath as the first chief minister of united front. His government was heavily dependent on communists and the Muslims.

Naturally Congress in Delhi did not welcome this change in Bengal and started to interfere with the state politics and as a result Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was elected as the chief minister after the downfall of the first united front government. Naturally, the people of Bengal did not welcome this change and considered it as a betrayal. As a result of this Congress did poorly in 1969 interim election and the united front assume power for the second time. The communists did exceedingly well and their victory by this time, did not just lay on the votes of the working class, but the Bengali middle class also took an active interest by the policies of the communists.

Afterwards the policies that the communists took for the refugees or for the peasants, upset the interests of the congress because traditionally congress supported the causes of the Zamindars and the factory owners or the capitalist class. The communists policies however not only put Congress at a disadvantaged position in the province, but also in centre ; as a result president rule was deployed in 1971 in Bengal. Afterwards when the sham of an election happened in 1972, Congress came to power with a rigged election, and that started an era of attack on communists.

To speak briefly of the events that followed in the words of Jaya Chatterji “ despite brutal repression from centre.....the parties of the left in Bengal somehow came through these dark years, with their popular following intact, indeed stronger than it had been in 1971. When the emergency was finally lifted and elections held in 1977, West Bengal’s electorate cut the congress down to size , reducing it to an insignificant rump of just twenty members in the assembly and put a Marxist-dominated Left front government into office”¹⁰⁹

It is true that Hindu 'bhadroluk' supported partition on the premise that it would lessen Muslim population in Bengal and would make Bengal a Hindu majority state. However, they were not even remotely aware of the extent of damage caused, and additionally they had no clue that partition would not help evacuate the existing Muslim population, or the refugee crisis that was to ensue. Partition not only ruined the economy of Bengal, but also changed the social and political structure of the Bengali society to a point of no return. It is true that Muslim population decreased and they inched closer to marginalized. They as a community became an important factor for the political sphere. But in no way, the hostility between two communities lessened. If anything happened, the gap got wider. In the post-partition scenario the failure of the administrative authorities to ensure law and order in case of riots left thoroughly dissatisfied. To ensure an environment of security, they started to live together leading to the formation of Muslim Pockets, which eventually got to be known as 'ghettos'

It can be said that the political confusion of the fifties and sixties determined the course of politics of Bengal in the decade to come. When the left front finally came to power in 1977, they stayed in power till 2006. Congress never saw any success in this phase.

It is true that during the time of left front, they tried to find solutions to the refugee crisis, and at the same time they managed to assuage the feeling of insecurity among the Muslims. However it did not mean that it decreases the sense of alienation among the Muslims or they started to do significantly better economically or socially. But it is also true that later there was no massive communal riot in Bengal, and the so called Hindu nationalists failed to wield their influence in West Bengal. The politics of Bengal although based not on Identity politics or Communalism but that does not secure the socio-economic or political advancement of the Muslims.

Communal Riots in Post- Partition Kolkata-

Although the Country was divided on the religious grounds, it is wrong to assume that 'communal riots' which became an important feature in the pre-partition country, completely stop after partition. In Kolkata the riot of 1950 and 1964 is helped us understand that, how the roots of communal politics have become deeply ingrained in the Indian society. Though the nature and context of the riots completely changed

after the partition, but it is needless to say that in these riots also the poorer section of both the communities suffered the most.

The riot of 1950 –

The main reason behind the riot of 1950 was the strategy by East Bengal government to deal with the communists in the province. In 1950, month of January, a police officer along with a few police constables and saontals (tribals), peasants were killed in a clash in Nachol of Rajshahi district in connection with ‘Tebhaga Movement’¹¹⁰. In reaction to this incident, the military and the police started massive repression in the villages, peasants were mercilessly tortured and tribal women were raped.

One of the important leaders of this Tebhaga Movement, Ila Mitra, was brutally tortured in various ways including rape. This pervasive and multidirectional torture compelled several Saontal peasants to migrate to West Bengal.¹¹¹

The officials of East Pakistan, seen the communist not only as their political opponents but also as ‘Hindus’ and considering them as a threat of the Islamic Country. As Sekhar Bandhopadhyay rightly pointed out that “ when pakistani police came to village Kalshira in Khulna District in search of communist suspects on 20 December 1949 and was actively resisted by the villagers, it no longer remained a mere anti-communist operation. It became a part of anti-hindu campaign , as it was here that a policeman was beaten up and killed by Hindu Namasudra villagers, inviting a massive reprisal the following day by the police and Ansars. As anti-hindu violence began to spread, the hindu villagers began to flee and came over to bongaon across the border, and from there by train arrived at Sealdah Station in Calcutta”¹¹²

By 10th February , there were 13,000 refugees at the Sealdah Station, recapitulating their horror stories of suffering and privation for an incensed Calcutta press and an irate Hindu public.¹¹³

The first incident of violence in Kolkata took place on 8th February, centring on an incident in Ultadanga. Incidents of stabbing, plundering and arson took place in different places. On 9th February army was called to help the civil authority to maintain law and order in Calcutta and curfew was imposed from three days from dusk to dawn.¹¹⁴

A press note of west Bengal Government pertaining to Calcutta riot on 10th February 1950 stated: “ From 10th February morning incidents of arson, looting and attack have lessened in consequence of rapid patrolling of police and army in the affected areas. Curfew areas have been increased in volume and curfew will be imposed on Saturday in a few areas for the whole day. Due to these steps and for the police and army patrolling it was expected that panic would decrease. A number of people had left their home towards the area of Park Circus and Beniapukur. Some have assembled in Narkeldanga area, others have gone to Zakaria Street and Khidirpore area.

Private and schools buildings have been requisitioned for arrangement of shelter for the refugees..... News upto 10.00 P.M, revealed that during the day 56 persons were injured, one of them died. Ten cases of arson have occurred.¹¹⁵

On February 10 and 11 curfew was declared in different areas from 6.00 P.M to 5.00 A.M.¹¹⁶

On February 12, the curfew was imposed in the some places of Entally police station. On 14th February curfew was extended to five areas as the new situation developed. In some places almost Day and Night curfew had to be imposed as vulnerable situation developed. In Maniktala main road, in the south rail line in the east and canal east road in the west (including all these roads) it was from 6.00 P.M to 6 A.M besides 2.00 P.M to 6.00 A.M.¹¹⁷

It was observed that the situation again worsened in some places at the beginning of March. Government press note revealed that opponent groups (Hindu and Muslim) clashed face to face in Beniapukur area of Calcutta. Similar incidents claimed many lives in Entally area.¹¹⁸

Around April the riot situation in Calcutta, Howrah started to improve and the situation gradually came to normal.

After the deadly riots in 1946, the city again witnessed the curse of communalism. The result of this riot was the agreement between Nehru and Liaquat Ali on 8th April 1950 about the minorities of the two countries, which popularly known as ‘Delhi Pact 1950’. Nehru himself was a non-communal person but that did

not necessarily imply that all of his congress co-workers were committed towards the idea of secularism. A letter he wrote to the chief Ministers in context of the 1950 riot helps us understand how much annoyed he was about these incidents. He wrote that - The outstanding event in India , during the last fortnight has been the recrudescence of communal warfare on a fairly large scale in East Bengal and Calcutta. This led to a large number of persons mostly belonging to the depressed class migrating to India. The stories of atrocities in Khulna district, and the plight of the refugees provoked people in Calcutta , and there was some trouble there in certain Muslim localities. Fairly large scale arson and looting took place there and a number of people were killed. News of this made matters worse in Eastern Pakistan , which were bad enough already, much worse..... it is clear that what happened in Eastern Bengal was on a bigger scale than we had hitherto since August 1947, what happened in Calcutta was also on a considerable scale , though from such accounts as we have received the persons killed were not many. The situation is still far from normal either in Eastern Pakistan or in Calcutta and there is always an apprehension of further trouble. About Calcutta I can say that while petty incidents continued to occur , the general situation was well in hand. I think that the Chief Minister and his governments in west Bengal handled the situation with vigour and speed. Maulana Abul kalam Azad went to Calcutta today . The main difficulty in Calcutta at present is the large number of Muslims who have left their houses and have congregated in other places for safety. Some of these mohallas have been burnt down. It is hoped however that most of these Muslims will return to their old houses.

He also stated that what has occurred in east Bengal with its repercussions in Calcutta is serious enough, the only very partial consolation is that it might have been worse in the sense that it might have been more widespread and continuous. Of course it is difficult to be certain yet as to what further consequences might occur , as the situation is still very abnormal , we near to live somewhere near the top of a volcano and any parts tends to waken it into eruption. We succeeded more or less in bottling it up again , but the volcano remains and we hear the rumblings of it. It is natural for our people to be excited at the news of terrible happenings in East Bengal and when retaliation takes place at this end , stories of it excite and inflame people on the other side . There is this action and reaction repeatedly and a vicious circle is created .How are we to get out of it?¹¹⁹

This letter clearly states how Nehru worried about the situation, in the country. For him the Delhi agreement was the medium or way to restore confidence and feeling of security among the minorities. Though Shyamaprasad Mukherjee and Dr. K.C Neogy of Hindu Mahasabha resigned from the ministry over this issue, because in their opinion- “the Hindu refugees could never again go back to Pakistan and feel safe. So the only solution to the minority problem was an exchange of population and Carving out a slice of territory from Pakistan to rehabilitate the refugees”¹²⁰ . Naturally Nehru opposed this idea because for him “Any such exchange would have upset the whole fabric of our state in theory and in Practice”¹²¹

The idea or thought which is propagated by ShyamaPrasad Mukherjee and his party unannouncedly propagate the idea that there was no place for the Muslims in the country and they belonged to Pakistan.

Although Nehru did not accept this theory but that does not mean that the feeling of insecurity among the largest minority in his country was not present. The Muslims who returned to their home after the riot found that their properties were taken away and jobs already filled in and government was unable to help.¹²²

The muslims protested against this in numerous occasion – the Muslim MLA in the legislative assembly, the Muslim delegates in west Bengal Muslim Rehabilitation Convention, the newspapers published by them and in many other ways. Nonetheless, each of the incident pushes them away from mainstream and develops a sense of isolation among them.

The Riot of 1964 –

As far as the riot of 1964 was concerned it started with the issue of stolen the sacred hair of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad, which was kept in a box under the strict security in Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir. This incident sparked tension among the Muslims in Kashmir. From hoisting black flag in the houses to calling for a strike, the Muslims take these kind of programs to protest in this matter, what is important in these regard is that, these protests were not directed towards the Hindus, which caused communal violence; in fact according to the reports published in the newspaper ‘Swadhinota’ it was stated that the Sikhs and the Hindus along with the Muslims joined the procession demanding to solve this issue.¹²³ We can say that in Kashmir....

Anger mainly was directed against the carelessness of the government and had no trace of communal colour”¹²⁴. But what is interesting to notice is that, in reaction to this incident massive communal violence started in different places of East Pakistan. The main reason behind this was the extensive anti-Indian propaganda done by the Newspapers and radio on the other side of the border. They projected the news like the Muslims don’t have any kind of security in India , naturally this created a fury among the Muslims over there and they started the violence. According to Anandobazar Patrika on 5th January 1964 it was reported that there were 20 persons dead and approximately 250 persons injured in the riot of 3rd January in Khulna. This issue also mentioned that ‘ Miscreants looted various shops and godowns in Khulna, Daulatpur, Maheswarpasha and senhati, and later on set them ablaze. Hindu Residences and residences of Muslim protectors of Hindus were one of the targets of Pak hooligans”¹²⁵. On 4th January riot spread in the area of Mongla, Sheola, Bania, Kanainagar, Moqadderpur. According to the report of the newspaper ‘Azad’(15th January 1964) a group of rioters in disguise of labourers carried out extensive destruction in different areas of Narayanganj. The rioters in groups extensively raided Godnail, Derma, Dolla, Bhekur, Gangapur and the village Sarulia beside the Adamjee road and carried out rape, killing and arson unopposed. The government imposed curfew in Narayanganj for 20 hours.¹²⁶ The same day it was also published in that paper that on 14 th January the authority also imposed curfew when riot broke out in Nawabpur, ChowkBazar, Sutrapur, Kotwali and other areas of Dhaka.¹²⁷

Apart from these, riot was also spread in other areas of Dhaka also. Nawabpur was one of the worst hit. Several shops of ‘Sadarghat Hawkers Market’ were plundered, the area of potters inhabiting in Royal Bazar near Mohammadpur Colony was in fact completely destroyed. Minority inhabited Palpara of Tejgaon thana was extensively invaded. Intense riot also took place in Rupganj, Narayanganj, area on this day also.¹²⁸

The oppression upon the minority in East Pakistan , created rage among the Hindus in the city. Resentment of Calcutta Hindus had its first violent manifestation in the late hours of 8th January when some Muslim Stalls in Sealdah were pulled down¹²⁹. On 9th January a large procession of the Hindus demanding the punishment of the people who were responsible for the riot and also the safety and security of the

Hindus over there marched towards the Deputy High Commissioner of East Pakistan. In this procession the, effigies of Ayub Khan who was the Pakistan president then also burnt by the processionists¹³⁰. These activities obviously created an atmosphere of communal tension among the masses of both the communities. The main confrontation started when, a procession in the evening consisting mostly of Hindu students, voicing anger at the event in East Bengal were unexpectedly attacked with sodawaters bottles, lathis(sticks)and brickbats at an important crossing in Central Calcutta.[ABP 10th jan 1964]. From this an instant communal animosity followed, it was automatically assumed that the procession had been assailed by Muslims of the locality. The same night a Hindu was stabbed to death.¹³¹

The next day i:e 10th January the Hindu students of Calcutta schools and colleges boycotted their classes, organized rallies and marched towards the office of the deputy high commissioner of Pakistan from various points of the city to express solidarity with their co-religionists in Khulna and Jessore.¹³² Police interception of such processions resulted in clashes with the excited crowd and in Dinabandhu Andrews College at Garia police firing caused the life of Bhudeb Sen, a first year B.A student.

As Suranjan das rightly pointed out “This part of the city had a sizable presence of East Bengali refugees and the news of police action was instantly interpreted by them as a sign of the Bengal government’s lack of sympathy with the Hindu cause of East Pakistan. The ensuring strain resulted in sporadic Hindu-Muslim Clashes during the next two days”.¹³³

On 10th January incidents occurred at Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Entally area, Cristofer Road, Ananda Palit Road, Gariahat and Maheshtala Police Station area Of Calcutta. The situation getting worsened on 11th January, disturbances took place in Entally, Beniapukur, Amherest Street, Belegkata, Karee, Taltola localities in the city.¹³⁴[AnandaBazar Patrika 12th January].

A large pandel erected in Park Circus maidan on the occasion of Vivekananda’s birth centenary was burned to ashes. Riot took place in Rajabajar, Maniktola, and Sealdah areas. Due to riot in different places 20 persons were killed,

and 140 injured persons were admitted to different hospitals. Traffic movement was obstructed on this day. Army was also deployed in certain areas of Calcutta.¹³⁵

Calcutta University was closed down, all governments, and non-governments program was cancelled because of the situation. Vivekannanda's birth centenary procession was also cancelled. More than 150 cases of arson had taken place in two days.¹³⁶

As the situation did not relent on 12th January in the city, responsibility of a few disturbed area of Calcutta was handed over to the military by the government. Curfew had to be imposed in Karea, bow bazaar, Jorasanko, Park Circus, and Maniktola Police station. Curfew continued for 22 hours in Belegkata, Entally, Beniapukur.¹³⁷

Situation of Keshab Sen street, Rajabazar, and Narkeldanga North Road was the worst. Army had to open fire in these areas. Incidents of arson took place in Patwarbagan area, Harrison road, Cristopher Road, Taltola, Phulbagan, Baithakkhana, Wellesly Street, Kalabagan, and other areas. Riot also occurred in Kalutola. Both the communities used firearms in clashes between two groups in Beniapukur and Entally area. Situation came under control due to the intervention of the army.¹³⁸

The report published in Times of India on 11th January 1964 stated that the military has been called out to assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order in Calcutta. It was reported that the situation was taking a turn for worse in the city and so the military would take positions in different parts of the city from early this afternoon. Also the Commissioner of Police Calcutta, has promulgated orders under section 144P.C, banning with immediate effect all processions in the city and the order will remain in force until further notice.

The police opened fire at least six occasions to disperse violent mobs intent on looting and indulging in acts of incendiaries on roadside shops and houses.

In this report it was also stated that ninety people were injured in incidents in the city late last night and of this ten have died, according to the information available from official sources. This brings the total number of casualties so far in the current disturbances in the city and in the suburbs during the past two days to 25 dead and

200 injured. The leftist party leader called upon the chief minister at the secretariat this morning to discuss the situation while demanding an enquiry into yesterday's police firing resulting in the death of a college student at Garia. The leftist leaders also requested the Chief Minister not to allow any student's procession with the body of the deceased student.

The Times of India also added the report by their news service that an order was issued last night by the West Bengal Chief Minister Mr. P.C. Sen with strict measures against miscreants in areas where some cases of arson and looting occurred yesterday. It was also stated that the situation in the border districts of 24pags and Nadia suddenly deteriorated following the crossing over of the members of the minority community from Khulna and Jessore districts from East Pakistan. The Pakistani government's reported action to seal the border was viewed with grave anxiety in West Bengal Government Circles. The incidents were confined to certain pockets in the state and several contingents of armed police were rushed to these areas to deal with the situation and since Thursday more than 500 persons have been detained under the West Bengal Security Act. The Chief Minister said that the government was determined to take strong measures against anti-social elements and an order has been issued to the police to open fire where people are seen in the act of looting or setting fire¹³⁹.

It was also reported in the paper that yesterday morning at Garia in the southern extension of the city, students of a local college were reported to have assaulted some bus passengers, when a flying police squad intervened, the van was badly damaged and two officers were injured, the police fired two rounds and as a result one student was fatally injured.¹⁴⁰

In Calcutta, four cases of knife attack, three assaults and one incident of arson were reported last night, twenty-eight persons were arrested. And some leading opposition and trade union leaders today decided to organize peace squads in the city. They met the chief minister and offered their services to the government. They also demanded that intending migrants from East Pakistan should be allowed to cross the border and the existing rules should be relaxed to facilitate their journey. The Chief Minister was stated to have laid emphasis on the restoration of peace in the disturbed areas and pointed out difficulties in relaxing the migration rules.

There was a reporting in Amrit Bazar patrika on 12th January 1964, where clearly the paper condemns the riot, it was clearly stated in the paper that -what has been happening in Calcutta and in some outlying areas for the last two days is extremely unfortunate. The wave of indignation which has been roused by the cruel barbarities perpetrated on the minorities in Khulna is easily understandable. But that does in no way provide any justification for aping the barbarities in east Pakistan, particularly when as union minister Gulzarilal Nanda has pertinently observed that ‘ does not help our Cause’. When however appeals to good sense alone fails to serve as an adequate restraint, the govt is left with no alternative to deal with the situation with a firm hand. It is with commendable promptness that Chief Minister P.C Sen has taken control of the whole thing apart from the fact that the police have been ordered to open fire whenever people would be seen looting or setting fire to houses, the military has been called into maintain law and order in the city of Calcutta. If anything it indicates the firm determination of the government to take every possible measures, to check the disturbances. Besides the steps initiated by the government, all political parties in the state have deplored, in unmistakable terms, the violent turn the situation has taken and appealed for sanity. This among other things, provides a sharp contrast to the Pakistani way.

It is also stated in the report that it would be really unfortunate if we allow ourselves to be swept by emotion and led into the trap laid by Pakistan. The provocation is undeniably great but our secular ideal will mean nothing if we cannot bear it with calm and restraint, which alone can shame Pakistan in the eyes of the world. It has all along been Pakistan’s favorite game to present a distorted version of India’s secularism. If what has been happening in this state does not stop immediately. Rawalpindi will acquire an additional propaganda weapon to hide her own misdeeds and magnify the incidents here with a view to launching a fresh smear campaign against India. And it was said that they would again appeal for sanity and for upholding India’s secular ideal which is the sheet anchor of the democratic unity of the nation. Any deviation from it will only bring comfort to Pakistan and further damage the cause of minorities there whose cup of misery is already full to the brim.

According to the Times Of India reporting of 12th January It was stated that , there were a number of fresh incidents of arson and looting after midnight in the

central and northern parts of the city, the commissioner of police, of Calcutta has imposed a curfew on the entire police station areas of Beliaghata, Entally, and Beniapukur. According to the report of the newspaper it was shown that while no official reports were immediately available enquiries in authoritative circles showed that a number of bustees and roadside shops were set on fire and looted in the Entally and Beliaghata areas. The police had to open fire on atleast six occasions to disperse miscreants, and in the morning similar incidents were reported from college street, Amherst Street, Gorpar in north Calcutta hitherto free from trouble. It was reported in the paper that , while sporadic incidents of stabbing and assault were reported from various parts of the city, the plagued spots of this morning's fresh flare-up according to the police were entally and Beniapukur. In these areas the hooligans were reporting to looting and arson on a wide scale and the police and the military opened fire on more than 50 occasions since this morning to disperse the miscreants. According to the reliable information sources of the newspaper it came to be known that 60 people including a police officer and two constables have been killed since the disturbances broke out on Thursday. The police was busy rescuing people in distress from isolated pockets.

It was stated in the paper that the Chief minister Mr.P.C. Sen accompanied by the state's inspector general of police and the commissioner of police went round the disturbed areas this morning. According to the report he also visited the control room of the police headquarters at LalBazar, watching the situation which has considerably deteriorated since early morning.

And in view of the disturbed conditions, the director of public instruction has ordered that all government schools and colleges in the city should remain closed tomorrow and the day after.

In the south suburban division of the city – Jadavpur and Behala areas there were several cases of arson and stabbing this morning and the police opened fire on a group of people attempting to set fire to a bustee in Jadavpur. Trams and state buses were withdrawn from the streets of Calcutta and howrah shortly after 6 P.M on Saturday in view of the disturbed situation in certain areas.

Students of schools and colleges in Calcutta and suburbs and some district towns held meetings and paid homage to one of their colleagues who had succumbed to bullet injuries in the disturbances in the garia area of the city.

It was reported in the paper also that the director of fire services, withdrawal of the police from certain areas had made the fire fighters job more difficult. They had to face the unruly mobs in some localities. In one area the mob was so violent , the director added that the fire brigade men had to return without attending a call.¹⁴¹

According to a press note by west Bengal government , it was stated that six muslim leaders of west Bengal issued a statement, condemning the oppression of the minority community in east Pakistan and hoping that the people and the government of east Pakistan would immediately arrange to stop this communal orgy”.¹⁴²

According to the Times of India 14th jan 1964 it was reported that , with the military in full control of the law and order since last night, a fair improvement was reported this morning in the situation in the riot-torn five police station areas of Calcutta. Although it was reported also that stabbing, looting and arson were however reported from certain other localities in the city, hitherto unaffected, where the police opened fire at least half a dozen times to disperse groups of rioters clashing with one another and crowds indulging in arson and looting. The area Khidderpur, watgung, Tollygunge, Dharamtala are not under curfew. According to the report air services operated this morning as per schedule as were the city's bus and tram services in areas not affected by the disturbances but in the affected areas the services continued to remain closed. Long distance and suburban train services functioned normally but all Calcutta markets, including the stock exchange remain closed. It was also stated in the newspaper that Mr. G.L Nanda ,union home minister , went round the worst affected localities for the second time late last night and met some of the victims of riots in Entally. He also assured them that normalcy would be brought soon and that all protection and help would be given to sufferers. He may prolong his stay in the city for another day according to the situation.

According to the report the post master general of west Bengal today announced that all post-offices situated in the riot affected localities in the city would

remain closed until further notice and the vice-chancellor of Calcutta University announced the closure of all colleges affiliated to it until Thursday.

It was also reported in the newspaper that Mr G.L Nanda also discussed the law and order situation and ways and means of restoring law and order in the affected areas with leaders of various political parties, communities, social, and relief organizations. And it was decided that a general body consisting of representatives of each political party and relief organization along with the Mayor and Sheriff should draw up a program to bring peace in affected localities.

Mr. Nada also said that unless the people co-operated with the government , it would be difficult to stamp out of the evil. He said that those attempting to do harm to the country should be punished.¹⁴³

According to Anandabazar Patrika on 13th January 1964 more than 100 incidents of incendiarism occurred on this day up to 10 at night. 10 persons of both the communities were killed and 75 injured persons were admitted to hospitals.¹⁴⁴

About 50,000 persons were evicted from from their houses due to riot of these few days. One phone call per second was received by LalBazar seeking police protection on this day. Chief minister Prafulla Chandra Sen visited different affected areas of East, Central and North Calcutta. West Bengal police arrested More than 2000 people in those areas¹⁴⁵.

On 13th January new areas were affected by the riot, main disturbed areas of this day were Jorasanko, Watgunj, Iqbalpur. Incidents of arson and looting occurred in Patwarbagan, Garden Reach, Muchipara, BaraBazar and DumDum Areas. By this time army took over complete control in Beniapukur, Belegkata, Entally, Taltola, and Karea police stations. Army control room was opened in Lalbazar police headquarters.[ABP14th January 1964].

Life almost came to standstill in Calcutta on this day also. Schools, colleges, post-office, cinema halls, offices, factories remained closed. Trams and buses also didn't ply.¹⁴⁶

Indian army chief of Staff , General Jayanta Nath Chowdhury reached Calcutta with central cabinet secretary, S.M Khera and immediately visited affected areas and Lalbazar control room with G.O.C of Bengal Major General M.G Dewan on this day. Central Home Minister Guljari Lal Nanda and Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen also visited the affected areas. They discussed the situation in a meeting with the high ranking army and police officers.¹⁴⁷

Though riot situation improved to a certain extent in Calcutta and other places on 14 January, southern part of Calcutta i.e. Watgunj, Iqbalpur, and Garden Reach police stations were handed over to the custody of army on the same day. [Abp 15th January].¹⁴⁸

News of riot was received on this day from Maheshtala road, Hemchandra Street Junction of Padmapukur East Lane, Circular Garden Reach, New Tangra Road, Chittaranjan Avenue, Junction of Bowbazar Street, Kossipur, Shil Garden Lane areas. Abp 15th January 1964¹⁴⁹.

The situation started to improve from 15th January onwards, although there are some scattered incidents of violence that occurred in Ananda Palit road, Watgunge Street, Padmapukur East Lane, Bagmari area in the city. But in spite of that it can be said that the situation in the city started to improve, and Government press note of 16th January confirms that the areas of Calcutta and Mofussil were quiet.¹⁵⁰

It's true that some Hindu slums in East Calcutta were also ransacked during the 1964 riot. But the Muslims were much more affected by this riot in the city of Calcutta. The worst to suffer were Muslims slums along the Sealdah –Ballygunge railway line, many of which were razed to the ground and their inhabitants ousted.¹⁵¹ The number of Muslims injured in this riot were 262 where the number of injured Hindus were 117. Although the number of dead were equal.¹⁵²

The Calcutta underworld was also active in this riot. The crowd was armed with guns, rifles, revolvers, bombs, and acid bulbs. Opposition leaders alleged police inaction when registered Hindu goondas looted Muslim houses and shops. Somanath Lahiry of CPI in his assembly speech clearly criticized police inaction in some cases.¹⁵³ Prof Tirthankar Chattopadhyay who worked as a volunteer for the relief for the affected people in the riot told that after two days of riot when he and his friend went

to the College street, they saw that many shops were ruined, and the shops which were pretty much okay, signed as a 'Hindus Shop'. This technique was used widely during the 1946 violence in the city by both the communities, what is important here this trick is done here by the only one community as far as Tirthankar Sir recalled. He also saying that being a volunteer in this work, he has the opportunity to see the damages caused by the riot in the area of Alimuddin Street, Haji Mohammad Mohasin square, adjacent area of Wellesly Square.

The other incident which he told me that the slums between the area of CIT road and the Rail which was earlier known as mini srirampur Road, this area was severely affected, many houses were empty, some were locked. Army was posted there. He recalled that one of his Christian friends, who was a neutral audience then in Professor Chattopadhyay's opinion tell them that, the way he saw the middle class bhadrolok people to take participate in the riot , he never seen before. The same words was echoed by a muslim man who accompanied prof Chattopadhyay's group in the areas behind Ladies Park in the CIT road. Where he stated that the people came from different localities with the material to set fire in the slums over there, they used the terrace of the big houses owned by the bhadrolok as their base to set fire in the slums. Although whether the houses were owned by the Bengali hindu or not , Prof Chattopadhyay does not know about that.¹⁵⁴

The 1964 riot was not only a fall-out of a happening in far-off Kashmir, but a reaction to events across the border. The fact remains that the Calcutta episode was largely a response to communal incidents in East Pakistan. Provocative and misleading reports on the disorder in Calcutta were also published in Pakistani newspapers.¹⁵⁵

Military had been de-ployed to help the civil authorities. The numbers of persons who were arrested on the rioting charges were 6870. The union home minister had to fly down to Calcutta to supervise the restoration of order. The then opposition leader Jyoti Basu criticized the police for its intelligence failure and inept handling of the situation. Appointment of a judicial enquiry commission to probe the rioting was also demanded but the government refused and this governmental rigidity and the failure to publish any official report on the events between 9 and 12 January left a

lurking suspicion on many minds about the government's inability to rise to the occasion.¹⁵⁶

The Government press note of 16th January informed that the areas of Calcutta and mofussil were quiet. Afterwards situation in Calcutta city, suburb and areas under different districts of west Bengal gradually became normal.¹⁵⁷

If we compare the riots in the city before and after partition, we can find some important aspects, the riots which happened before partition, the social and economic perspective was related to them, and then the process of religious identity formation take the centre stage, before the 1946 riot there was no link of organized politics in the domain of communal politics, but after the partition the people's identity rolled around the religious consciousness they had. Whether the east bengalee refugee or the Muslims who stayed here, for everybody religious identity played an important role.

The riot of 1950 and 1964 both started as the reaction against the oppression of the Hindus in East Pakistan, it was indeed becoming a 'vicious circle'. It was the "situationist" position of the people as suggested by Walter Mischel [where he says that human behavior is strongly determined by situational forces, rather than their personality traits, for him the situation is a much more important factor to influence people] which compelled them to take the path of conflict. There were no social and economic issues related with these riots as such, no organized political party was involved directly but still the riot happened. Although it is worth mentioning that in spite of the bitterness of the conflict, many peace loving people and various organizations came forward to restore peace. During the riot of 1950 Nehru, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sarat Chandra Bose all appealed to the people of west Bengal for maintaining communal harmony.¹⁵⁸

An anti riot conference was organized in tollygunge, Central Peace committee was organized for establishment of peace, and this organization played an important role to restore peace. Among the other organizations West Bengal Relief and Rehabilitation Society, Howrah Relief Committee, Vastuhara Kalayan Samiti and many others took important initiative.¹⁵⁹

In the riot of 1964 also the peace loving people of west Bengal came forward to restore peace. On 8th January on behalf of the west Bengal state organizing committee of Indian communist Party, the people were asked to maintain peace and refrain from taking any revengeful step against the minority Muslim Community of India who were not responsible for the incidents in Pakistan.¹⁶⁰

Noted writers, journalists, painters, artists and sportsmen appealed in a joint statement to immediately restore peace and amity in East Pakistan and West Bengal. It stated “ we do not find any expression to condemn the nefarious communal frenzied dance taking place in different places in East Pakistan and West Bengal, we consider that who are involved with these abominable practice have no relation with humanity, religion and patriotism . We think that those who are involved with these abominable practice have no relation with humanity, religion and patriotism. We think that each and every man of sound judgement from both countries can make it possible to desist the handful miscreants soon by active confrontation to this barbarity. We writers, journalists, painters, actors, sports-persons and educationists fervently request the people and leaders of the country that they bring back peace and amity in both the countries and come forward to help the destitute by all means.”¹⁶¹

Among the signatory Annada Shankar Roy , Premendra Mitra, Abu Sayeed Ayub, Abdul Odud, Samar Sen and many others were noteworthy.

The other initiative which is important in this aspect was that a large peace procession traversed different roads of Calcutta under the leadership of Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Sen and other leaders on 16th January . Main objective of the procession was [“we”] do not want riot in Calcutta . [we] want peace .¹⁶²

If we look back about the incidents of riots in the city , we can clearly see that the people were much more interested to talking about the 1946 incident, and rarely sometimes about the 1950,there is a general amentia visible about the riot of post-partition or more specifically about the riot of 1964. We can see this in the light of ‘dominant’ as well as ‘popular’ memory context because as far the dominant theory is concern Michael Boomes and Patrick write argues that ‘ memory has a texture which is both social and historicfinding its basis in conversations, cultural forms, personal relations, the structure and appearance of places and most

fundamentally for this argument , in relation to ideologies which work to establish a consensus view of both the past and the forms of personal experience which are significant and memorable.¹⁶³ , and Popular Memory drives as in the way of thinking where memory directs our attention to the ‘ Past present relation’ and all the activity is a process of historical argument and definition where all our programs involve some construction of the past as well as the future.¹⁶⁴ Probably this is the reason that Most of the people were indifferent about the incidents which occurred among the Muslim Community in the city, as well as in the province. There is a huge gap between this two communities which got bigger day by day.

As we see in the above mention writing that although the politics of Kolkata does not based on the ideology of communalism, but it is like the quicksand here, after partition there were many phases in the socio-political domain of the muslims where in different way they try to convince , appease the government. But their religious identity became a barrier for them in most of the cases. Till now their religious identity posed an an obstacle to mixing with the so-called mainstream.

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- ⁴ Ibid , Chatterji p- 162
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- ⁶ Ibid Chatterji p-165 footnote 14.
- ⁷ Census of India 1951,vol.vi,part.III, Calcutta city p.xv
- ⁸ Ibid Chatterji p- 166
- ⁹ Ibid Chatterji pp168-169
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- ¹² Ibid Census Of India 1951 Vol-vi, part-iii p-xiv Quoted in Chatterjee p-182.
- ¹³ Bose, Nirmal Kumar ,Calcutta 1964: A social survey , Lalvani Publishing House , 1968, Bombay pp39-40
- ¹⁴ Op.cit Chatterji p-185
- ¹⁵ Intelligence Branch Report 1217/87 therefore I.B
- ¹⁶ Kolkata Police Museum File no 6748/09, therefore KPM
- ¹⁷ Op.Cit Chatterji p-189
- ¹⁸ Ibid Chatterji p-193
- ¹⁹ Op.cit bose p- 66
- ²⁰ Op.cit Chatterji p- 195
- ²¹ Ibid KPM file no-6748/09
- ²² Ibid file no -6748/09
- ²³ Ibid file no-6748/09
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- ²⁶ Ibid file no6748/09
- ²⁷ Ibid file no6748/09

28 Ibid File no 6748/09
29 KPM File No 7040/09
30 Ibid File no 7040/09
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59 Ibid file no 7040/09
60 Ibid file no 7040/09
61 Ibid file no 7040/09
62 KPM file no 6856/09
63 Ibid file no6856/09
64 Ibid file no 6856/09
65 Ibid file no 6856/09
66 Syed Badruddoza was one of the important muslim leader in post-partion politics of west Bengal, among the muslims.
67 Ibid file n0 6856/09
68 Ibid file no 6856/09
69 Ibid file no 6856/09
70 Delhi Pact or Nehru- Liaquat ali pact (signed on8th April 1950) was done by the prime-ministers of India and Pakistan both the countries after the riot of 1950, to gain the sense of security, safety and confidence among the minorities of both the countries.
71 Ibid file no 6856/09
72 Ibid file no 6856/09
73 Ibid file no 6856/09
74 Ibid file no 6856/09
75 Ibid file no 6856/09
76 Ibid file no 6856/09
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 94 KPM File no 7064/09
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Chapter – 5

Conclusion

Chapter - 5

Conclusion

I try to locate the story of the Muslims of Kolkata, after the partition along with the description of the pre-partition times. I try to see that, how the social-political, discourse of the Muslims changed in the city, where they once played a major role.

The first feature which is came to notice after the post-partition scenario that the term “Muslim Politics” does not denote any one dimensional political discourse. The Muslim politics in the city after partition was multidimensional, complex and indistinct, just like in the pre-independence era.

Although the problems the Muslims faced, the trend in their political domain, the social sphere they had to face after independence, is completely different from the pre-independence era but it was also very complex in character and multilayered,.

After partition, the Muslims who resides in Kolkata also became the most vulnerable minority community, just like their other fellows in the other provinces, seeing them with suspicion, questioning their loyalty towards India, closely monitoring of their activities by the administration more specifically by the intelligence department, each of the feature was an example of their exclusion, marginalization from the so called mainstream.

The main problems which they faced after partition was about their housing, the displacement they faced due to the changing circumstances, employment issues, the property related issues, riot and above all their feeling of insecurity and endangerment.

The Physical space of the Muslims shrinking up in the city, The locality which is known as a mixed population settlements, they changed their characteristics and known as a ‘Hindu Block’, ‘Muslim Block’. This changing settlements trends not only changes the ‘physical geography’ of the Muslims, but also changes the physical geography of the city.

The political inclination or allegiance of the Muslims in the city does not dependent on a single political party. It’s true that in the first phase after

Independence, the Muslims were dependent on congress, but the situation changes gradually, In the politics of Bengal the leftists gradually began to solidify their grounds. They were able to exert their influence among the Muslims also, the anti-communal ideology of them, to be vocal about the problems of the Muslims- along with the refugee problem, engaging themselves in the social welfare affairs of the Muslims, and most importantly their positive roles during the time of the riots, increased their credibility among a large section of Muslims. As far as Congress was concern, the major reason for the Muslims to support them was their ideology of territorial nationalism and also the assurance of Nehru, but the role of the Bengal Congress government gradually causes frustration among the Muslims in the city as well as in the province. The failure of the government about their displacement problems, evacuee property issues, employment issues. The execution of passport system by the govt officials ,their role during the time of riot, the food crisis in the province which effected all the people irrespective of their religion the arrests of many Muslims on alleged spying for Pakistan , during the time of 1965 India-Pakistan war make Muslims disillusioned about Congress.

As Muslim votes became an important factor in constitutional politics, every political party started to count on them. They thought that the best way to woo the Muslim voter is to select a Muslim candidate in a Muslim majority area. They never thought that political representation in the ‘houses’ does not necessarily mean socio-economic advancement of the community.

The relationship between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims was very complex from the very beginning, the relationship between them before the independence started with the realization of the Bengali Muslims, that the reason for their unity is ‘language’ rather than religion, and this difference took the form of religious nationalism vs linguistic nationalism after partition in east Pakistan. The socio-political situation of East Pakistan became one of the deciding factor in determining the nature of the relationship between Bengali and non- Bengali Muslims in the city. This confrontation between language and religion clearly makes us understands two things, i)the Muslim community is not a homogeneous community and ii) the process by which a person builds his identity by emphasizing a particular trait is not pre-determined, as well as the process of it, is very complex.

The main two riots which affected the city after independence was the riot of 1950 and 1964, the reason behind these two riots were the events in East Pakistan. Although the main issue of the 1964 riot was based in India. 'Religion' played an instrument of politics here also. Where the causes of the first phases of riot in the city lies in the socio-economic factor and subsequently religion, religious identity, religious issues take the centre stage. The 1946 'Partition Riots' is the finest example that how religious identity drives and makes people insane. The earlier riots before partition were a battleground for both the communities to establish their dominance in the power structure, where the post-partition riots were clearly indication of dominance of the majority community over the minority in both the countries.

Persecution of Hindus, Competition for power among the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims, confrontation between them all this made East Pakistan was the centre of political turmoil. In most of the riot after partition in the city, we can see that it was a reaction of the oppression of Hindus in East Pakistan. Although the ideology of communalism is also active here.

We can conclude this by saying that the process of marginalization of the Muslims in the city started with the post-partition scenario, the residential segregation which leads them towards the "Ghetto" they lived right now. The politics after partition based much on their identity, where the political party try to win over them because of the numbers of the vote, none of them really concern about their proper empowerment. As far the Muslims were concern they are not in a position after independence to form any political party, or take any political initiatives. They started to organize themselves under the umbrella of different kind of Social organization. There were Independent Muslim leaders also but they also failed to improve the social and economic condition of the Muslim masses. All this features leading them towards their marginalization.

Each and every communal incident made the two communities moved away from each other. The memory of 1946 riots, the stories of oppression of the Hindu refugees has created an inviolable barrier between this two communities, but nonetheless we must remember what J.L Nehru said that it was the responsibility of the majority to feel the minority safe, and as we professes India as a secular country,

then it must be our responsibility to bring them into the mainstream of the society. The famous urdu poet Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali once said in one of his poem that –

“ If you want your Country’s well being
Don’t look upon any compatriot as a stranger”¹

We must consider the Muslims as our compatriot, it’s true that after 1946 there are no communal bloodbath the city faced, but there were incidents of riot, of communal violence. Till now the Muslims faced lots of difficulties to find a place of their choice for living. Till now they are excluded from the so-called mainstream social and political domain.

My thesis is a very small attempt to locate the root of their ‘exclusion’ and also their position after the partition in a city which although not become a centre of communal violence but not free from communal prejudice.

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