Emerging Trends in Minority Political Parties and Politics in India: A Quest for Political Space by Muslims in India

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Abstract

Muslims, being the largest minority group have played a crucial role in politics of India ever since India got freedom from the clutches of the British Empire. Ever since the first general elections (1951-52), Muslims largely favouring the Congress party in both parliamentary and state assembly elections. This has proved to be immensely helpful to the Congress and hence, it was in the central government for long five decades. Muslims never get any favour in return and the same proved to be a complete failure on several occasions in securing the rights of Muslim minorities. In 1980s, the Jan Sangh rechristened itself into the BJP and has provided an option before Indian voters to elect a different party, but, due to its ultra nationalist and Hindutva ideology, Muslims keep on voting for the Congress. Subsequently, the Ram Mandir movement got currency in 1990s, and the infamous 'Rath-Yatra' started by L.K. Advani of the BJP, have instigated communal feeling among the two communities. Assurances extended by the organizers of the 'yatra' proved completely wrong when more than 300 riots erupted in every nook and corner of India, in which hundreds of people have lost their lives. However, this movement unknowingly provided a platform for the emergence of many regional parties. Many of them founded on secular credentials and hence, provided a viable option before Muslims to vote for. After, being a subject of vote-bank politics for long, Muslims in India, have started to look for regional parties of secular credentials. The BSP, Samajwadi Party, RastriyaJanta Dal, RastriyaLok Dal, Janta Dal (United), etc. have become parties to get majority Muslims votes. However, with time, these parties too, have failed in bringing any desirable change in the miserable socio-economic and political landscape of Muslims. Additionally, the rise of right wing parties led by the RastriyaSwayamSevakSangh, instills a sense of insecurity among these parties and consequently, they have quickly started to overlook issues related to Muslims. The other minority groups do not

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hesitate in voting for the right wing parties. The representation of Muslims in politics is facing a serious crisis in recent times. At this critical juncture and vast political vacuum, intellectuals and politically aware Muslims have started to ponder over for making political parties to address their issues by themselves. The emergence of AIUDF in Assam and sudden rise in popularity of AIMIM among Muslims across India and influential and consistent performance of IUML in Kerala are some explicit illustrations of a changed political scenario in India. Going through the trend, this paper will further discuss the emerging trends of Minority Political Parties and Politics in India. The nature of the paper is descriptive and based on content analysis.

Keywords : Minority, Politics, Muslim, India, Party.

Introduction

In the present political scenario, Islam and its followers are being seen as a perceived threat to the identity and belief of many others. This situation is breeding dissatisfaction and frustration among them. They are being perceived as unequal citizens and facing double standards from the state machinery in many parts of the world. Through exploring concepts of identity(ies) and their relationship to the political sphere, one can eventually gain an insight into integration, which can be assessed through political participation. Therefore, political participation becomes extremely significant for religious minority groups so that they can demand their rights which is provided by the legal frameworks of that particular nation. Otherwise, unfavourable laws will be enacted and they may infringe on the right to practise one's chosen religion or culture. The political engagement is significant for minority population, because it helps the articulation of needs between the group and political institutions, and caters for the smooth running of the state for its citizens. If certain groups of citizens refuse to take part in the democratic system, long-term consistency and trust in the democratic system could be at stake. (Mustafa, 2015).

Securing political participation by the Muslim minority groups is something every country aspire for. The sizeable population of 1.3 billion of the world's six billion people professing Islam, the outcome of this struggle to reorient Muslim politics, could be one of the defining political events of the twenty-first century (Hefner, 2005). The National Commission of Minorities in India which was established in 2005 has identified six religious group of minorities namely Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Jains. Among them all, Muslims as a minority group constitute approximately 14 percent of the total population of India and hence, makes largest minority group. Therefore, their engagement in political activities becomes extremely significant. The notion of 'Muslim politics' is being discussed frequently in every nook and corner, particularly in Indi and the world politics in general.

However, the term "Muslim Politics" is often come under scrutiny. This word consists of issues like protection of Urdu language and Muslim Personal Law, activities of Muslim organizations/pressure groups, statements of influential Muslim personalities and the voting pattern of Muslim in elections. These factors are often taken as the constituents of "Muslim

politics" in contemporary times. But, the understanding of this 'term' is still inadequate. It is believed that "Muslim politics" as a manifestation of "minority communalism" could either be compared with "secular politics" or completely ignored as a kind of "reaction" to assertive Hindutva. This assumption is often accepted uncritically. As a result, the internal complexities of Muslim politics and the ways in which Muslim political actors function become less important and intellectual energies are devoted to reproducing the existing intellectual and political divide between "secularism" and "communalism" (Ahmed, 2014).

Historical background of Muslim Politics in India: Pre and Post Independent Era

In the aftermath of the rebellion and with the foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885 and its development as a strong nationalist movement. British has revered their preferences from better class of Muslims to educated Hindus. Thus, they have started to gain scores of benefits in many aspects of life. Understanding such deteriorating conditions of Muslims in general, English educated Islamic reformer Syed Ahmad Khan exhorted the Muslim community to get educated and be loyal to the British government as he felt that the Muslim Community will be safer under the governance of British emperors. He was of the view that Muslim leaders should spent their energy to uplift their own community rather spoiling their time in political participation which was dominated by Hindus (Mohammad, 1997). In order to consolidate their sinister grip over India, the British tried every possible attempt to foment communalism among Hindus and Muslims in India. One such attempt was Bengal Partition in 1905. Animosity among Hindus and Muslims was on its peak at the time of 1906, when a political organization called Muslim League incepted. In 1909, separate electorates institutionalized Hindu-Muslim differences in politics, leaving a trail of bitterness. To the Muslim League, however, separate electorates simply recognized the differences that already existed and were a response to genuine Muslim anxieties about getting electorally drowned in a majoritarian Hindu sea. Be that as it may, they began to privilege religious distinctions in electoral politics. It was a victory for the Aligarh ideology of Muslim politics (Varshney, 2002).

The chief aims of such act on one hand, was to weaken Muslim dominated area of East Bengal from the Hindu dominated West Bengal while on the other hand, they keep on encouraging Muslim league, which was founded in 1906. Thus, the growing rivalries between the two major communities and religio-political manipulation by the British had started causing major friction between these communities and the already strained relation was further poisoned by the Morley–Minto reforms of 1909, which allowed separate electorate for Muslims. The Hindu Maha Sabha, founded by Hindu extremists (1916), started to raise issues of Hindu unity and Hindutva. When the Congress extended its support to Khilafat movement (1919-1924), the Hindu Maha Sabha accused the party of Muslim Appeasement and mobilised Hindus under one banner (Habib, 2011; Chandra et al., 2014).

However, realizing the growing animosity between the two communities, the leaders of the Muslim League have started to raise their demand of a separate country for Muslims. The Muslim league was even willing to go by the proposal of Cabinet Missions of March 1945, of united India with three distinct regions, Hindustan, Eastern Pakistan, and Western

Pakistan but Congress's objection to participation of League in the government made Jinnah to denounce the whole scheme and called for Direct Action, which was followed by bloodspattered communal uprisings in Calcutta from August 1946 and other parts of united India. As the large scale communal riots became uncontrollable for the government, the then Prime Minister in British India John Attlee declared that Britain would decide whom the power to be transferred. Both the side was on highest bitterness to each other. Meanwhile, the new viceroy Lord Mountbatten was successful in convincing the Congress for partition as well as the League to accept a diminished version of Pakistan (Shajahan, 2012).

Muslim politics was on its peak, they have obtained what they have fight for, a new country for Muslims. Stalwarts among Muslim Politics were many, but Mohammad Ali Jinnah got the centerstage. India was partitioned and political bitterness between the two communities since then have never come down. However, after the formation of Pakistan, political leadership among Muslims in India got weakened and Muslims since then have started to look for secular parties founded by Hindus (Chandra et al, 2014). The Bahujan Samaj Party, founded by Kashiram and later nurtured and flourished under the leadership of Mayawati, The Samajwadi Party founded by Mulayam Singh in the wake of Babri Masjid Demolition and firing upon Karsevaks by his order, the RastriyaJanta Dal by Lalu Prasad Yadav, The Trinamool Congress of Mamta Banerjee and others have got majority Muslim votes ever since the Jan Sangh led by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, which became the BhartiyaJanta Party has started to raise the issue of Hindutva. Communal riots became a daily news ever since India became an Independent nation on world geography. Strong Muslim leadership was completely absent. Though some, parties have elevated some Muslim faces in their party, but, they were not effective enough to putforth their community's problems before the party, they were represented from.

Politics of Riots and rise of the BJP

As Khuswant Singh wrote that Mahatma Gandhi, saw in his life how, his dream of making India a Ram Rajya (the Indian utopian) destroyed by the extremists of both the sides, i.e., Hindus and Muslims. When India was struggling to get independence from the ruthless British Empire, he witnessed some deadly Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in every almost entire length and breadth of pre-independent India. He was of the firm belief that such communal riots have been designed and instigated by the British and once they were out of Indian soil, both Hindus and Muslim will start to live in harmony with each other. However, a different outlook of such incidents reveals that British, being a third party on Indian soil prevented communal people to go berserk, stopped riots and stopped the police from taking sides. The riots were never allowed to go for long, and the loss of life and property was not escalating. However, the ending years of British Rule witnessed some of the horrific communal clashes in which thousands have lost their lives and belongings (Akbar, 1988). After India got independence on 15 August 1947, animosity between Hindus and Muslims never came down since then. As, India was preparing herself for the very first elections, at the same time, in order to make communal polarization, extremists of different parties, in

large numbers in Delhi, have shouted "*Bharat Mata ki Jai*", a controversial slogan, which always created a rift between Muslims and Hindus (Shajahan, 2012).

When Muslims made any attempt to form any political force, they were frequently told that there was no place for 'communal' demands in post-independence India. The consequence of such an approach by the Congress was that neither were any of the demands of the Muslims met nor were they treated seriously. Yet, the specificity of the politics in the Tamil region gave Muslims some extra political space compared to north India – even after Muslims were stigmatised by the nationalists and the Hindu right following the Partition of the British India. As India, approached 1980s period, it witnessed some of the horrific communal outbreaks throughout its length and breadth. Deadliest communal clashes broke out in various parts of Uttar Pradesh, which is a communally charged state due to the presence of now demolished Babri-Masjid and disputed site of Ram Temple in Ayodhaya. Other cities like Moradabad, Aligarh faced communal riots, and infamous and ghastly images of Hashimpura genocide (1987) in Meerut (Rai, 2016), created a deep communal feeling to either side. The darkest phase of Indian politics came, when lakhs of communally charged Karsevaks led by divisive political outfits like VHP and Bajrang Dal demolished the historic Babri Masjid on the down of December 6, 1992. In the wake of it, communal riots broke out in various parts of India, in which hundreds of people lost their lives and property. Mumbai, the financial capital of India, has witnessed ghastly bomb-blast where more than 250 people died and scores got injured. It is believed, that bomb blast were aimed to take revenge of demolition the Babri-Masjid (Shajahan, 2012; Noorani, 2016). The Indian political scenario has changed ever since then. Muslim politics was passing from its toughest phase and hardly any Muslim came to lead Muslim community from the front.

In the charge of fanning and channelizing the communal feeling among people of India, criminal cases were registered against some political leaders of the BJP. Indian politics, has witnessed unprecedented level of religious polarization, and all this happened in the name of Lord Ram. Such acts were done mostly by the Hindu communal forces, including politicians from the BJP, also by its supporting organizations, such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and its militant youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, which played a key role in the demolition of the Babri Masjid (Kaviraj, 1997). The fate of the Jan Sangh, which later modified as the BJP in 1980 was about to go changed. As Jan Sangh won 16 Lok Sabha seats to its credit in 1980 election but reduced to just two seats when Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. After that shocking incident, the Congress has lost one of its tallest leaders and the party lost its shine and consolidation over its voters. On the contrary, many loyalist of the Gandhi family including V.P. Singh shook hand with the BJP. Thus, the 1989 election have the later a much needed space in power corridors at the centre. The BJP got so much heed and was successful in winning 85 seats in 1989 election in comparison to miniscule just two in the election of 1980 when the Ayodhaya movement was gaining popularity among Hindus. To encash this opportunity, L.K. Advani started his communally designed countrywide Rath-Yatra which was incepted from Somnath in order to reunite all Hindus in the name of Lord Ram. Actually, all such communal provoking

activities were implicitly aimed to displace the Congress from the centre. This 'yatra' was proved to be one of the most bloodiest events in Indian History, where more than 300 communal riots broke out throughout the nook and corner of India. Though, the infamous 'Rath' was stopped in Bihar, but till that time, it has done the damage to other parties vote bank and when election was held in 1991, the BJP secured 120 seats, its highest ever till that time. This journey did not stop here, in the general elections of 1998, the BJP emerged as the single largest party with an impressive 182 seats to its credit and formed its government. It was, though a coalition government under the banner of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (Shajahan, 2012; Engineer, 2014). This number is further swallowed to 282 in the recently concluded election, where Narendra Modi, the three time Chief Minister of Gujarat turned the table in the BJP favour and mobilised voters in India to elect him as the Prime Minster of India. The BJP got 31 percent of the total polled votes and emerges as the single largest party of India (Sardesai, 2015).

The social milieu of whole India at that time of fully charged with bitter feeling for each other among Hindus and Muslims and this hate eventually razed the Babri Masjid. The then Prime Minister of India, Narsimha Rao, did almost nothing to protect the historic mosque and to prevent communal riots took place afterwards. His lackadaisical attitude in controlling the berserk situation cost greatly to his party i.e. the INC. Secular supporters of the Congress and Muslims, who relied upon the leadership of the party got severe jolts. Ever since, the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the Congress has lost all its credibility of protecting and securing rights of the minorities and hence, never come to power in Uttar Pradesh (Kaviraj, 2009).

After more than two decades, since the most socially disturbing event took place, no one has been pushed behind bars to shake the social fabric of India, and those have been charged have only grown in prominence. Some of the prominent figures of the 'Ayodhaya movement' namely L.K. Advani, the then Deputy Prime Minister of India in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti and others, reached new heights in their political careers. Communalism was spreading its tentacles like never before. In this series, one of the scariest genocide of Muslims happened in Godhra, Gujarat 2002, in which two thousand persons-nearly all Muslims have lost their lives. Their property was vandalized. Many insensitive statements came out from political corners, which only assisted rioters to take revenge from Muslims for allegedly killing fifty six Hindu saints who were coming back to their state in Sabarmati Express on 28 February, 2002. The BJP was ruling both in the Centre and the state of Gujarat. Cases, have been filed against many but, only Muslims faced the brunt of the state machinery, when 131 people charged with the Godhra Railway Carnage (Engineer, 2004; Dube, 2015). To protecting the human lives, dignity and freedom of all sections of people without discrimination, is the hallmark of a civilised country and such explanation should not only be written but to be executed by the state machinery both through its constitution and institutions. All this came down on its nadir in the Godhra carnage of 2002, as the state machinery was a complete failure in protecting the lives of its people (Nadkarni, 2003).

After independence, the Congress formula for gaining political mileage was criticized by Jan Sangh and subsequently by Bharatiya Janata Party as policy of appeasement of Muslims. The word "appeasement" gives the impression that some special privileges are being extended towards the Muslims of India. With obvious reasons got attracted towards the Congress ever since, the noises made by Jan Sangh and BJP about appeasement of Muslims. They have got the idea, that Congress will protect their rights and pull them out from extreme poverty and penury and the BJP and other Hindu extremists are stopping the Congress from doing so. Since then, the Congress Party happened to be the first choice by Muslim voters. However, they have paid a heavy price for being under this wrong notion. The pathetic socio-economic condition of Muslim community in large is the result of regular negligence of the Congress and other parties towards to issues of Muslims in general. They have left so much behind in the social development and progress so much so that even Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are placed above them in various socio-economic indicators (Sachar Committee Report, 2004). However, as the United Progressive Alliance came to power again in 2004 under the leadership of the Congress, they made some serious attempts to know the socio-economic strata of Muslims in India and made a steering committee with Justice Sachar as its head, but till the time, Muslims by and large got disheartened and disappointed with the Congress intentions. As a result, they have started to look for other political parties (Jagannathan, 2012). Another attempt was made by the Congress to know problems of Minorities by establishing National Commission for Minorities in 2005. The Commission is aimed to evaluate the progress of the development of minorities and also to monitor the working of the safeguards provided in the Constitution for them (Nariman, 2014). But, all such attempt made Muslims disillusioned and they became serious to address their issues by themselves.

Emergence of Muslim Political Parties

Though, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), a political outfit aimed to secure the rights of Muslims in particular and downtrodden people like Dalits, OBCs and other marginalized communities in general was founded way back in 1927, by NawabMahmood Nawaz Khan Qiledar of Hyderabad State, but it got currency in recent times only. Its present chairperson Barrister AsaduddinOwaisi, a Member of Parliament in third consecutive term has made the party famous nationwide. But, part from AIMIM, there was no structured Muslim political outfit. After the partition and making of Pakistan, as a separate country for Muslims, the leading political outfit behind such happening, the Muslim League, which was repeatedly dubbed as a communal organisation, was dismantled in north India, it found a home in Madras under the leadership of M. Mohammed Ismail. Though Mountbatten advised Ismail in 1948 to dissolve the League, and Nehru, during a visit to Madras, threatened to crush the Muslim League irrespective of whether law gave place for it or not, Ismail nurtured it by employing different strategies. Given the stigma of Partition, the Muslim League could not identify itself with the DravidarKazhagam (which was the new name for the Self-Respect Movement) and the DravidaMunnetraKazhagam (DMK), an off-

shoot of the Dravidian movement. Both of them preached secession from the Indian Union. Given this constraint, the Muslim League collaborated with the Congress throughout the 1950s, the Congress calling the shots. It was Only during the 1960s, when the DMK gave up their secessionism that the Muslim League returned to it. In any case, though the Muslim League kept away from the DMK, a sizeable number of Muslims joined the DMK during the 1950s and became office-bearers of the party (Pandian, 2009).

Ever since 1947, in post-independent India, efforts made by Muslim to form any political outfit faced severe suspicion, condemnation, opposition and resentment from all quarters of society, established political parties and with great surprise also by Muslim Intelligentsia. The Muslim League after unfortunate partition became the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). It was aimed to reach every nook and corner of India and strived to get the recognition of a national party like many others, but it never received any heed. However, the same has survived in the political arena of one of most literate state of Kerala, where IUML not only functioning but securing sizeable number of votes from all sections of society and sending numbers of people's representatives in state Assembly after every election. In this series, many years after, Syed Shahabuddin, the diplomat-turned politician, founded the Insaf Party, but his effort failed miserably, as people did not extended their support to his effort. In reply to this non-cooperation, many Muslim intellectuals were of the view that instead of forming a political outfit at the national level, Muslim should focus to form parties at the regional level, as a viable option. They cited the example of IUML in Kerala, AIMIM in AP and All India United Democratic Front in Assam. Knowing such intentions among Muslims, a regional party namely 'Peace Party' under the leadership of a surgeon Dr.Ayub Ansari came into the light. As, it was expected, the party won four seats in the last Assembly polls in UP. In contrast to others, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), was of the view that there must be a Muslim party at the national level. After pondering over the idea for years, the JIH launched Welfare Party of India in New Delhi. The party has opened its units in six states and also preparing to start its operation in Andra Pradesh too. Sultan MohiuddinMullick, a veteran Telugu writer and journalist has already be chosen as its president. The Party is aimed to work in association with all religious and caste for the empowerment of the marginalized groups such as SCs, STs and BCs (Khan, 2012).

The riots of Gujarat has made many people prominent in national politics as *Ram Mandir* issue did to many others, but on the other side, it also made Muslims conscious about politics in India forthwith. After 2002, many Muslims stood up and took initiatives to found political parties. After 2009 elections, many parties founded by Muslims sprang up in national politics and though not achieved historic wins but at least secured sizeable number of votes and started to represent problems of their constituencies.

Table 01: Political Parties founded by Muslims in India

S. No.	Name of the party	Year of Foundation	Chief Objective	No. of seats
1.	Welfare Party of India	April 2011	Welfare of all marginalised and backward sections, with focus on Muslim issues	-
2.	Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI)	July 29, 2009	Political empowerment of downtrodden and marginalized people in India	14 seats in 4 municipalities/62 seats in local body 2011 Tamil Nadu elections
3.	Peace Party	February 2008	To work for the upliftment of downtrodden people of India	-
4.	QuamiEkta Dal (QED)	2012	Bring justice to the most oppressed classes	-
5.	RashtriyaUlema Council (RUC)	4th October 2008	to provide a protective shield to the natives of eastern Uttar Pradesh specially Azamgarh who were going through severe mental trauma after the Batla House Encounter	-
6.	All India United Democratic Front (AUDF)	2006	Party formed to repeal of IMDT Act by the SC.	13 in 2016 Assembly election, secured 13.0% vote share

Source: (Chowdhary, n.d.)

In addition to that, the Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML), in Kerela is a powerful party. Entirely Muslim supported, it has repeatedly won elections in Calicut and rest of Kerala. It has held important ministries in coalition government sat the state level repeatedly since 1967. As a result of its governmental power, it has been able to provide remarkable material and symbolic benefits tithe Muslim community including state pensions for Muslim clerics, contracts for Muslim businessmen, a state holiday for Prophet Muhammad's birthday, and creation of a Muslim-majority district. The League seeks and gets Muslim votes, but communal polarization and hatred are not consequences of its politics. When they do emerge, the League moderates communal tensions instead of inflaming them. Why have Calicut's politicians not polarized religious communities? One might say that being a partner in government, a political party such as the Muslim League had everything to gain from enjoying fruits of power, maintaining law and order, and checking potential violence. But it remains to be explained why the League was not outflanked by a Muslim group that blamed it for pulling

back exactly when it was necessary to fight for Islamic principles—as when the mosque came down in Ayodhya and when the Tellicherry riots took place north of Calicut in the early 1970s.A radical Islamic group did indeed emerge. When the League argued that the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in December 1992 did not require the League's withdrawal from a Congress-led government in Kerala, the religious purists cried foul. Delhi's Congress government, after all, had miserably failed to protect the mosque. Islamic radicals accused the League of betrayal and of placing power over religious pride. A new group, the Islamic SevakSangh (ISS) was formed, led by a firebrand religious purist. The ISS embarked on a path of confrontation with the government and with Hindu nationalists. Minor communal violence broke out, but even after several years of campaigning, a period when the wounds of Ayodhaya were presumably quite painful, the ISS and its political arm, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), have not been able to register more than a minuscule political presence. Even at a most opportune hour, they have not been able to mount an effective challenge to, much less displace, the League. Similarly, it remains to be explained why the BJP could not or did not polarize religious communities. Why has the BJP been so ineffective in a state and town where the League in government does everything that the national leadership of BJP would decry as "minorityism" such as public pensions for Muslim Priest, government business contracts for Muslims, an official holiday for Prophet Muhammad's birthday, a Muslim-majority district with its attendant benefits, symbolic and materials, state funds for Arabic education, and quotas for Muslims in government jobs. The BJP leadership also accepts that polarization on the name of religion will benefit their party, it will not happen, the party will be remain ineffective in the political battlefield of Kerala. The texture of civic life in Calicut is so strong that Hindu-Muslim civic integration is so deep in Calicut (and, many would argue, in Kerala as a whole) that to think of polarizing people of Kerala along religious lines is to conceive of the virtually impossible (Varshney, 2002).

Performance of Muslim Political Parties in various elections

In two different states namely Assam and Kerala, where Muslims parties were founded for the cause of Muslims in general have performed well. They have also diminished the notion, that Muslim parties are helping the BJP to win elections (Rehman, 2016). Therefore, the notion that the BJP is being implicitly helped by the Muslim political outfits does loosed its credibility and proves to be hypothetical. It has been observed that the Muslim Political parties have performed well even in the absence of any extremist political party. They have registered victories on sizeable number of seats in assembly elections. The AIUDF, IUML and AIMIM are some relevant illustrations. There are mixed issues for the emergence of religion based politics. Some are of the view that Muslim political parties will only strengthen Hindu political parties. However, Hilal Ahmad from Centre for the Study of Developing Societies rejects this hypothesis and points out the political strategy of MIM for its success in Maharashtra Assembly Elections. MIM has got a significant support from non-Muslim voters too. They are giving tickets to non-Muslims and other sections of societies. There were three non-Muslim candidates who contested on MIM's ticket in

Maharashtra elections and so was the case in the Telangana and Andra Pradesh in the recent concluded Parliamentary and Assembly elections. The MIM is raising questions of development from quite a while and therefore, getting people's support from all corners. The rise of MIM is not because of its religious identity but the failure of so-called secular parties in addressing issues of Muslims in general. Therefore, the assumption that Muslim parties will strengthen fanatic groups is not justified (Anwar & Naidu, 2014). The below mentioned table indicating figures of the performance of Muslim political outfits.

Table 02: Results of General Election of Legislative Assembly of 2016

Assam State Assembly Elections 2016		
Party	**Won**	**Vote Share**
Indian National Congress	60	29.50%
Bhartiya Janata Party	26	31.00%
All India United Democratic Front	**13**	**13.00%**
AsomGanaParishad	14	08.10%
Bodoland Peoples Front	12	03.90%
Independent	01	0.60%
Total	126	86.1+13.9*=100

Source: http://eciresults.nic.in/(*others)

Table 03: Kerala State Assembly Election 2016

Kerala State Assembly Elections 2016		
Party	Won	Vote Share
Indian National Congress	22	23.7%
Community Party of India (Marxist)	58	26.5%
Communist Party of India	19	08.1%
Indian Union Muslim League	**18**	**07.4%**
Nationalist Congress Party	02	01.2%
Bhartiya Janata Party	01	10.5%
Janta Dal (Secular)	03	01.4%
Kerala Congress (M)	06	04.0%
Communist Marxist Party Kerala State Committee	01	0.6%
Congress (Secular)	01	0.3%
Kerala Congress (Jacob)	01	0.4%
Kerala Congress (B)	01	0.4%

Source: http://eciresults.nic.in

Politics in Assam, one of the most densely Muslim populated states (30%) after Jammu & Kashmir, has been always comes under scrutiny. The state Muslims are often being blamed as an illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, and face occasional wrath and violence by other Assamese nationalist groups, as well as tribal formations eager to carve areas of autonomous influence for themselves, resulting in severe marginalization of Assamese Muslims. However, in between this gloomy portrayal, a silver lining has been highlighted by the Sachar Committee Report, which reveals that Assamese Muslims have been fairly treated in public employments, and the most significant achievement of them is the formation of AIUDF, which is the only political outfit of Muslims, outside the southern states, that has achieved political success (Hassan, 2013). The below mentioned table will illustrate political participation of some other Muslim political parties that have contested in the General Assembly Election of Uttar Pradesh, and performed well in the presence of other well established parties.

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election Muslim Party Performance 2012					
Name	Contested	Won	Votes	Percentage	Vote % in seat contested
QuamiEkta Dal	43	2	417552	0.55%	5.32
Peace Party	208	4	1784258	2.35%	4.54
Ittehad-E-Millait Council	18	1	190052	0.25%	5.61
RashtriyaUlama Council	64	0	155527	0.21%	1.34
JangipurLoksabha By-election 2012					
Welfare Party of India	1	0	41620	4.90%	4.9
Social Democratic Party of India	1	0	24654	2.91%	2.91
Nanded (Maharashtra) Municipal Corporation 2012, Aurangabad Municipal Corporation Elections 2015 and Maharashtra Assembly Election 2014: Performance of All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen*					
Nanded	30	12			
Aurangabad	54	25			
Assembly 2014	24	02			
Note: 03 candidates secured second and 04 candidates secured third position					

Source: Chaudhari, PPRC, New Delhi

In this series, many efforts are being executed by the Muslim politicians to make an imprint on the political ground in India and therefore, in every passing elections, it is observed that Muslim parties are not only contesting the elections but also leaving their imprints on the minds of people who use their adult franchise more frequently than anywhere else. In relation to it, a consortium of three parties formed and nurtured by Muslims contested in the recently concluded elections in Bihar. They aimed to challenge and defeat the ever growing effects of "communal forces". The parties were Ittehad-e-Millat Council, based in Bareilly, the Social Democratic Party of India, a political wing of Popular Front of India and AIMIM, which has

already been elevated to a state level party. The mentioned political outfits are now aiming to expand their horizons beyond their region and state (Fareed, 2015). The MIM has performed well in Maharashtra elections, not because of high Muslim population but due to strategic planning and raising common man's issues. However, Muslim party's win indicates that the Muslims are no longer in mood to be used in vote bank politics (Gadgil, 2015).

Plights of the Muslim community

It has been observed that the larger the size of minority populations, the greater the socio-economic inequality between majority and minority groups. In the Indian context, it was observed that there is an inverse relationship between the relative size of Muslim and Scheduled Caste (SC) populations and the allocation of public goods and services in rural areas. Therefore, in order to know the level of deprivations and marginalization of Muslims in India, the then Prime Minister's set up a High Level Committee in 2006, under the chairpersonship of Justice RajindarSachar, and hence, it is widely known as the *Sachar Committee Report* (Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, 2006). However, this step many claimed to be as a 'political note'. The Committee noted that districts with a relatively large minority population (Muslims) were marked by lower levels of social development compared to ones having a lower proportion of Muslims.

However, whether the relative size of the Muslim population actually has any bearing on the persistence of overall deprivation remains to be examined in depth. It has been observed that due to complete exclusion of Muslims from planning and implementation of various policies and planning, the funds allocated for their welfare, diverted for others (Alam, 2009; Patel, 2014). The report highlighted some unfathomable deprivations of Muslim in India in all spheres of life including education, employment, public services etc. The Committee also proposed to take some affirmative actions in order to change the melancholic picture of marginalization of Muslims. However, little has been done and the picture is still the same, if figures of the data is to be believed (Hassan, 2014). In relation to it, a social audit of the Prime Minister's 15- Point Program done noted academicians namely Mushirul Hasan and Zoya Hasan divulges that there was an inadequate funds allocated for various social and economic welfare services for minorities and a deep exclusion of Muslims from existing government programmes. It was emphasized that in order to mainstream excluded Muslim community in India, they must also be included in decision-making bodies (Patel, 2014).

Conclusion

Since the 1990s, the central government has essentially been a game of exchange between the two main national parties namely, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with their respective allies. Various events occurred due to which voting pattern of Muslims in general always got affected. In the absence of any viable options, it is the Congress, who got majority Muslim votes and the same played vote bank politics for long. This argument can be substantiated by the fact that the party has never shown any interest in securing the rights of Muslims in general. Many communal riots broke out when the Congress was at the

centre, even the most unfortunate incident of Babri Masjid demolition happened under its rule, though other factors too, were responsible for the same. After, seeing inaction by the Congress Party, the Muslims in general have started to look for other options and therefore, many regional parties got emerged on the national political arena. However, the divisive politics played by the Hindu extremists, mainly RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and the BJP made so called secular parties defensive. They accused other parties to play politics of "Muslim Appeasement" and tried to communalize the whole social milieu. By doing so, the BJP got strength after every election and therefore, they go on with their rhetoric. The ultra-communal way of politics pushed aside all the parties and therefore, no party can take risk to ignore votes of majority population in India. In this melancholic social environment, Muslims have been facing ignorance, discrimination and wrath of ultra-nationalist politicians time and again. Muslim scholars and politicians have realized the importance of having political force led by Muslims to protect their lives and safeguard their interest as well. Many Muslim parties have sprang up in recent times and performing satisfactorily in national and state level politics. All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) of Assam, Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) of Kerala, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) of Hyderabad are some illustrations to this assertion.

Therefore, in order to change their vulnerability and marginalization, Muslims in India must have to take active some concrete political steps. In this regard, formation of Muslim political parties will push other so called secular and Muslim interest concerned parties to take some affirmative action which Muslims in India are needed for long ever since, India got independence. Like, the Bahujan Samaj Party has resurrected and revived the honour and political importance of Dalits and erected them in the form of a strong foothold in political landscapes of India, Muslims are also in need of same kind of efforts to protect their interest in times to come. Through political engagements, any community can come out from deprivation and marginalization.

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