

MUSLIM MINORITY IN WEST BENGAL: PARADIGM SHIFT IN POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

EJAZ AHMED

Abstract: At the time of partition of the country in 1947, the state of West Bengal witnessed huge displacements in its populations as a large number of Muslims went over to East Pakistan and a significant number of Hindus crossed borders and made India their new homeland. The partition of the country had a massive impact on the lives of the Muslims that had been left behind in the state of West Bengal in India. Intermittently existing with rioting and violence, there were in existence strong uniting forces politically as well as socially that helped the Muslim minorities in the state to live in peace and harmony. The Paper intends to explain the status of Muslim minority in the state of West Bengal during a particular time-frame. To be more precise, the paper wants to explore the condition of the largest minority population of the state during the period 1977 to the 2011 Assembly Elections (Left Front Government) in the state.

To further examine the changed nature of issues and interests, the paper would briefly examine the role played by the political alternative of the Left Front in the state, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) during the run up to the 2011 elections and for a brief period of one year when the TMC was in power. This period is important because of the fact that during this period (1977-2011) West Bengal was ruled by a single political party, the Left Front with the Communist Party of India (Marxists) being the single largest party in the Left Front coalition. Given the numerical significance that the community enjoys electorally, a study of the various aspects of governmental policy specifically during the Left Front regime would help us understand and identify the nature of minority issues and interests the left prioritized. Very recently, the findings of the Sacchar Committee Report, has revealed the social and economic exclusion that the minority community in the state has been subjected to. The Left which has always maintained that it had impeccable standards when it came to compromising with secular and communal issues was forced on the defensive, albeit to never recover in time, and lost the 2011 Assembly elections (the Muslim community voted as a bloc for the Trinamool Congress of Mamata Bannerjee). The intention behind the paper is to understand the changing nature of Muslim politics from the vantage point of the party position adopted by the Communist government. The shift in prioritizing issues was felt due to the need for a changing political system that was shifting the political discourse throughout the Indian polity.

Keywords: Left Front, Minorities, Political Processes, Sacchar Committee Report.

Introduction: The birth of the Indian state was mired in chaos and confusion as the great nation was partitioned into two relatively unstable dominions, India and Pakistan. The partition was accompanied by the worst forms of communal violence known to man. Muslims were slaughtered in Hindu majority areas across the borders and Hindus were butchered in Muslim dominated territories running between the two countries. The joy of independence was tainted with the disease of communalism. The majority of Muslims reposed their faith in the Indian state and decided not to migrate to Pakistan, likewise the Indian state granted them several Fundamental Rights to freely practice and protect their religious beliefs and convictions. Yet from time to time the state has been continuously plagued by issues of identity and communalism leading to bloodshed in post-partitioned post-independent India.

Several state governments as well as the Central governments have from time to time tried to devise and work out permutations and combinations to

keep the conflicting interests of the different communities at arm's length from each other. Yet, there have been many instances to remind the state that it has more often than not hideously failed to weed out communalism. The right wing forces in the country actively propagate their politics on these very lines and enjoy mass support across a large section of the population. It is no surprise then that the worst forms of communal violence instances have taken place in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra to name a few. The Left in India has always been one force that has tried to vociferously demand for the rights and entitlements of the oppressed; be it the peasants, the industrial workers or the minorities. It came to power in a majority in 1977 in West Bengal following a spate of incidents caused by the Emergency and the chaos and violence that were the logical symptoms associated with the Emergency era that were unleashed by the ruling Congress forces at the time led by the Congress Chief Minister in the state, Siddharth Shankar Ray.

Table 1.1 District wise concentration of Muslim population in West Bengal

Region	Concentration	Districts
High	More than 32.91	Murshidabad (63.67), Malda (49.72), Birbhum (35.08), South 24 Parganas (33.24)
Medium	16.95 to 32.91	Nadia (25.41), Howrah (24.44), Cooch Bihar (24.24), North 24 Parganas (24.22), Dakshin Dinajpur (24.02), Kolkata (20.27), Bardhaman (19.78)
Low	Less than 16.50	Hugli (15.14), Medinipur (11.33), Jalpaiguri (10.83), Bankura (7.51), Purulia (7.12), Darjeeling (5.31)

Source: Nazmul Hussain, Md. Zahir Abbas, Saba Owais, "Muslims in West Bengal: Trends in Population Growth and Educational Status", *Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2012

West Bengal is among the four states in India which has a high percentage of Muslim population. According to 2001 census, a total of 2.31 crore Muslims reside in West Bengal. But already there is a change in that number and the census of 2011 would confirm that. Overall, there is an estimate that one fourth of the entire Bengal population comprises of Muslim minorities. They constitute 96 per cent of the total minority population in the state. In 12 districts of the state, Muslims constitute 25 per cent of the total population. In the three districts – Murshidabad, Malda and North Dinajpur – the Muslims constitute more than 50 per cent of the total population. The majority of these Muslims speak Bengali. The few Urdu-speaking Muslims mainly reside at three places namely Kolkata, Asansol and Islampur. A large section of the Muslim minorities in West Bengal have remained socially, economically and educationally backward. Several steps are necessary to eradicate the backwardness of these sections, namely legal measures, government policy decisions and the flourishing of mass movement. Otherwise, there will be no change in situation. The three decades of the Left Front rule in West Bengal have witnessed various government policies giving economic assistance. The natural allies of the Left are scattered in different parts of the country. Being poor and deprived for long, the majority of the minorities have been the traditional supporters of the Left. However, there has been recently a shift in support base. The Left holds the view that this support has to

be won back through protracted class struggles and by giving special emphasis on the developmental question of the minorities and the other deprived sections of the population.

The Left Front in India led by the Communist Party of India (Marxists) has been one consistent force in the country whose secular credentials have not been questioned. The party has enjoyed the longest stint as a state government in the state of West Bengal for over three decades garnering the support of a majority of the state's population in both assembly elections as well as the Lok Sabha for over thirty years. The Muslim minority population of the state of West Bengal according to the latest Census reports is just over 25%, which means that every one person in four in the state is a Muslim. This is a rather significant figure as the state is only behind Assam and Uttar Pradesh with regard to the strength of its Minority population. The Muslims in the state of West Bengal have witnessed less incidents of communal violence after the Left had come to power as compared to their brethren in other parts of the country. Along with the land reforms measures that had been undertaken by the government in the eighties which had benefitted a section of the Muslim rural poor. The communist ideology and its commitment to the cause of the depressed classes has ensured that the state has remained relatively incident free in relation to different parts of the country.

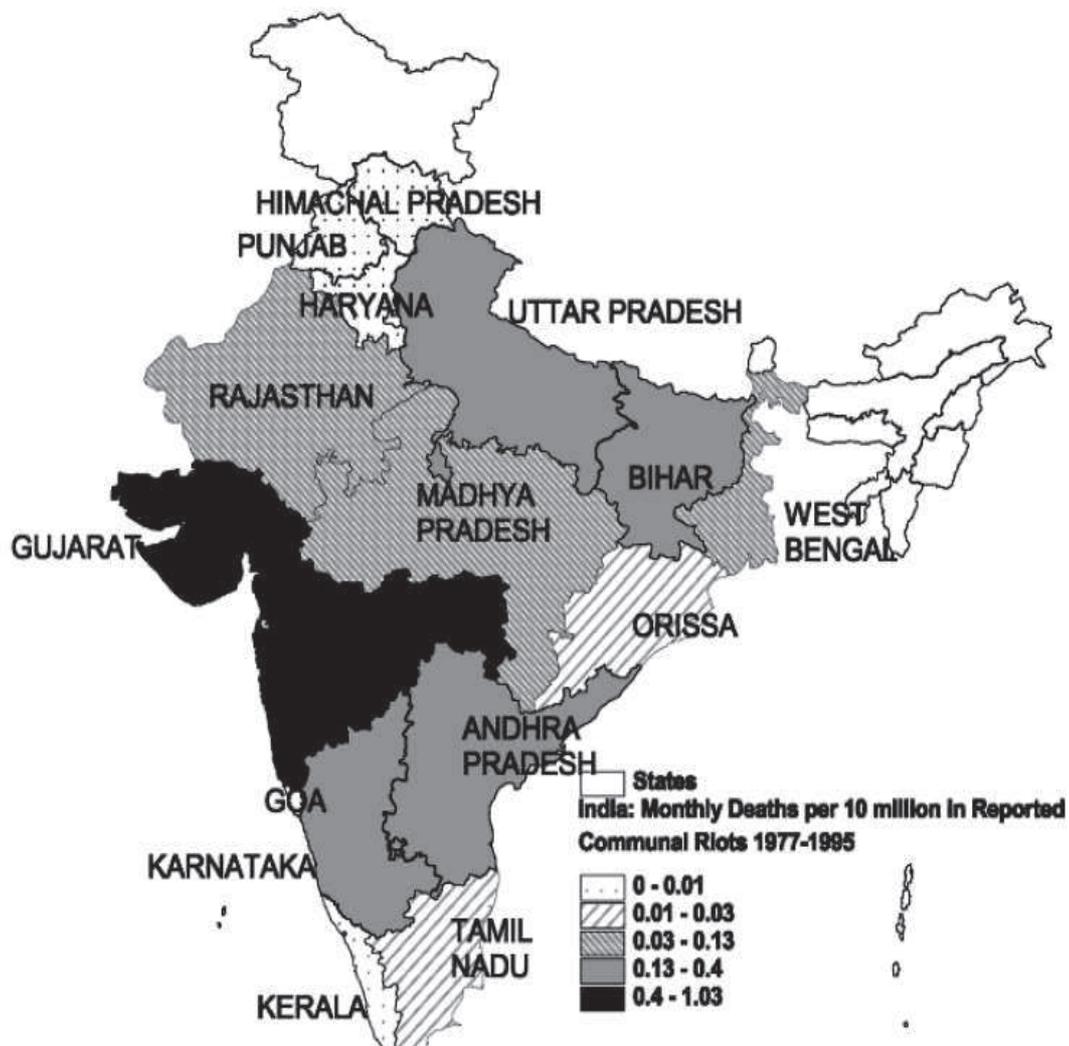
Table 1.2 Incidents of Communal riots between 1950-1991 in Different States of India

States	1991 Total Population	1991 Muslim %	Hindu-Muslim Riots in 1950-1991	Deaths in Riots 1950-1991	Deaths per Million
Andhra Pradesh	66,508,008	8.91	50	323	4.9
Assam	22,414,322	28.43	14	116	5.2
Bihar	86,374,465	14.81	77	904	10.5
Gujarat	41,309,582	8.73	245	1631	39.5
Haryana	16,463,648	4.64	3	4	0.2
Karnataka	44,977,201	11.64	63	250	5.6

Kerala	29,098,518	23.33	19	16	0.5
Madhya Pradesh	66,181,170	4.96	66	362	5.5
Maharashtra	78,937,187	9.67	195	1456	18.4
Orissa	31,659,736	1.83	16	80	2.5
Punjab	20,281,969	1.18	2	0	0.0
Rajasthan	44,005,990	8.01	26	84	1.9
Tamil Nadu	55,858,946	17.33	13	23	0.4
Uttar Pradesh	139,112,287	23.61	200	1322	9.5
West Bengal	68,077,965		89	287	4.2

Source- Steven I. Wilkinson, "Party Fractionalization and Ethnic Violence in India", Paper Delivered at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Washington DC, August 31-September 3, 2000.

Figure 3 State wise distribution of Communal Riots from 1977-1995



Source: Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence; Electoral Competition and Ethnic Violence in India*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 15

There have been studies which suggest that due to the commitment to the cause of secularism, the Communist parties in the states of West Bengal and Kerala have a higher possibility of curtailing the outbreak of communal related issues. Steven

Wilkinson's work on the subject offers crucial insights into the credibility of Communist ruled governments to check flagrant violations indulged in during riots. Since the study takes into account the time period from 1977 onwards it provides us with

important empirical data with regard to the state of West Bengal. He states, "Communist rule is negatively related to the level of riots in a state in all versions of the model, no matter which other variables are included. The predicted effect of moving from a state where the Communists are not in power to one in which they have an overall majority, while holding

other factors constant at their mean, would be to reduce the level of riots by three-quarters, from 0.51 riots per year to 0.12. One can speculate that this strong relationship is the result of two factors: a strong ideology of secularism, and (this would differentiate the party from Congress) a much greater degree of party discipline and ideological coherence over time."

Table 1.3 Minority Representation and Hindu Muslim violence in the States, 1977-1995

States	Percentage of Muslims	Average Riots per Month	Average Killed per Month	Cabinet Over or Under-representation of Muslims	Police Over or Under-representation of Muslims	Combined Under-representation
Andhra Pradesh	9%	0.15	1.27	-4%	1%	-3%
Bihar	14%	0.19	2.86	-5%	-12%	-17%
Gujarat	9%	0.80	3.69	-4%	-3%	-7%
Haryana	4%	0.01	0.02	-1%	-3%	-5%
Himachal Pradesh	2%	0.00	0.00	-2%	-1%	-2%
Karnataka	11%	0.22	0.94	0%	-3%	-3%
Kerala	22%	0.03	0.02	-10%	-13%	-23%
Madhya Pradesh	5%	0.09	0.73	-1%	0%	-2%
Maharashtra	10%	0.54	4.61	-4%	-6%	-10%
Rajasthan	8%	0.07	0.29	-4%	-3%	-7%
Tamil Nadu	5%	0.06	0.13	-1%	0%	-1%
Uttar Pradesh	17%	0.49	4.28	-4%	-10%	-14%
West Bengal	23%	0.09	0.42	-15%	-16%	-32%

Source: Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence; Electoral Competition and Ethnic Violence in India*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 128

From the above table it can be highlighted that the two states that under-represent the Muslims most in government and administration, West Bengal and Kerala, have levels of communal violence considerably lower than states like Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh that have done a better job of providing representation to them in their cabinets and the police forces of the state. The basic question of investigation that needs explanation and clarification is this precise question. Limiting the research to understanding the Muslim dilemma in West Bengal an attempt would be made to point out that though the Left had been successful in curtailing incidents of violence in the state and providing the Muslim minority with security and stability, yet it failed miserably to include the Muslims in the development paradigm of the state leading to widespread social exclusion.

The Muslim minority in the state of West Bengal has been subjected to a series of social exclusionary policies which has resulted in them being kept out of

the development paradigm of the state. Though it can be argued that over the last few decades the state of West Bengal and its population as a whole has been subject to stagnation in terms of employment opportunities, industrial growth etc. yet it has to be taken note of that the Muslim minority in the state has performed worst among all other socio-religious communities when judged according to social and economic parameters. An important aspect of studying social exclusion stems from the fact that it offers an integrated and dynamic perspective of analysing the complex interplay between livelihood, well-being and rights. Further by relating economic well-being to the concept of social status it raises the citizenship question, hence generating a collective moral responsibility for social integration. If we are to concede the fact that the Muslim population in the state of West Bengal has suffered from social exclusion (on the basis of several government reports) then it is pertinent to identify certain markers which are understood to result in social

exclusion. Social exclusion is often seen as the growth of homelessness, the increased presence of urban slums, lack of employment opportunities, and sustained neglect of education. In short, social exclusion is a process which restricts the access of certain social groups to valued resources and entitlements, relegating them to the status of social outsiders. It is a multi-dimensional concept, conceived to capture different forms of social disadvantage- economic, social, political, and cultural- that persist in multiple variants.

We may also look at a dimension of social exclusion that is of central importance in India. This has to do with exclusion on the basis of caste and religion. Caste in some sense is the most potent form of exclusion because this sociological characteristic is fixed at birth and is hence completely inflexible. Similarly, if Muslims as individuals or social groups are excluded from livelihood opportunities or public goods and services either through government actions or actors of governance, questions of citizenship can be raised. Though daunting in themselves, the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and poor access to health care may still be addressed by concerted public action by government as well as non-governmental organizations. Eradication of caste-based or religion based exclusion is, however, a much slower and a yet more daunting task. The process of Muslim exclusion from almost all aspects of the government's development policy needs to be addressed and explained within the above stated framework. The first chapter points out the nature of deprivation that the minority community has been subjected to. It begins by presenting a detailed analysis of the various pro-Muslim policies and actions taken by the Left Front during their three decade long regime and concludes by criticizing the same.

The aim of this paper is to highlight and state the nature of governance between the Left Front regime and the Muslims in the state of West Bengal. The paper is intended to explain the historical nature of Muslim political participation in the elections from the time the Left Front had come to power; the policies undertaken by the Left Front that resulted in the Muslim minority population voting for them consistently over the years as well as to identify issues and areas that has weaned the minority population of the state away from their support base. The chapter then proceeds to identify the core areas of marginalization and deprivation of the Muslim minority in the state and categorize certain issues that had been left outside the ambit of policy perspectives by the erstwhile regime. To demonstrate the extent of deprivation the research uses an extensive baseline survey on socio-economic conditions of religious minorities in West Bengal, an

eastern state in India. West Bengal is one of the most densely populated regions in the country and historically shared a high concentration of religious minorities. We evaluate the conditions of religious minorities of West Bengal in terms of several forms of indicators. For India in general, the Sachar Committee Report (2006) is the first ever report that systematically analyzes the conditions of religious minorities. The committee was set up for analyzing available data on the spatial concentration, occupational patterns, assets, general socio-economic conditions, employment share in public and private sector, access to education and health services, infrastructure and credit, etc. for religious minorities all over India. It reported extremely poor conditions facing religious minorities (specifically, Muslims. Even within the larger disadvantaged communities across religious groups, affirmative action policies in education and jobs for Hindu lower caste and tribal population (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, respectively) has pushed the Muslims at a relatively disadvantaged position.

The type of governance that the Left administered to the minorities can be understood with reference to some of the speeches that had been made by Jyoti Basu, in 1977 after becoming the Chief Minister of the state for the first time: *"You have won back the right to vote in freedom after a long and arduous struggle... We are conscious that the people of West Bengal have shown great political maturity in voting for a left government and they expect a change in the interest of the people and our state. We shall strive to the best of our ability to be worthy of the trust and confidence reposed in us... Problems have accumulated over the years in all spheres --- food, clothing, housing, transport, power, education, health and even with regard to drinking water facilities."*

In short the speech was directed and aimed at the general population of the state and outlined the basic needs and necessities of the population of the state in terms of social and economic parameters. It was not directed at any program of social democratization or to religious minorities per se, the policies were for all. After relinquishing power it was only in 2004 Jyoti Basu in his pre-election speech made a reference to the negative role played by religionists in the country: *"The basis for the threat to India's secular-democratic edifice comes from the communal ideology which is propagated insidiously by the BJP and its mentor - the RSS. Setting India on the path of progress and strengthening national unity requires the rejection of all communal ideologies and the parties and leaders who represent them."*

The above chronological review indicates the purposive exclusion of any reference to specific community development programs, theirs' was a secular ideological commitment and it was adhered

to rigorously. However, the disastrous consequences such a policy of complete ignorance and subsequent absence of specific attention towards the welfare of particular communities was soon highlighted by the Sachar Committee Report. The Muslim volte-face in the 2011 Assembly elections was expected. The community had already shown it was distancing itself away from the Left in the 2009 Lok Sabha election and the Municipal elections. The massive distancing from a previously almost quiescent community however came as a big blow to the left. A theoretical explanation becomes significant here. The left had all along provided 'security' to the minorities. Over time this became an instrumentalist and a pragmatic issue of mutual convenience. The provision of basic security interpreted as 'noninterference' in community affairs along with the Left's commitment to a non-communal environment in West Bengal and significant efforts to stem communal violence was reciprocated with a steady support base from the Muslims. But this question of 'security' was violently cast against deeper questions of livelihood, employment and the daily experience of excruciating poverty after the disastrous effects at industrialization by the government had to be violently aborted and the Sachar Committee published the disparaging report of the left governments record towards the Muslims.

The traditional constituency of the Left Front- the Muslims discarded it in the 2011 Assembly elections. The Left Front-ruled West Bengal was always regarded as the safest citadel of the religious minorities, which provided refuge to a victim of the 2002 anti-Muslim carnage in Gujarat. West Bengal has been known as a state ruled by a Left government which had always prevented the outbreak of communal riots (barring a few instances following the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition). Though in the memory of the Muslims in Bengal it was not forgotten that Mamata Bannerjee was an ally of the BJP and was a minister in during the NDA rule, yet the Muslims in the state voted en masse for her in the election. A closer examination reveals this was the result of a culmination of factors. One of the primary factors was the negligence of the erstwhile regime to look after the basic necessities of the Muslims in the state. It was a gesture of protest against the Left Front's indifference to their basic requirements- a fact substantiated by the Sachar Committee Report. In order to appease the hardliners in the Muslim community the party further employed short-sighted tactics; the CPI (M) leaders had thought that they could woo the Muslim voters by acceding to the demand of their fundamentalist mullahs to ban Taslima Nasreen's book and banish her from West Bengal.

It can be argued that the continued deprivation of the Muslim minorities, particularly vis-à-vis their access to education, jobs and other socio-economic opportunities for advancement, along with specific issues like the role of the police in Rizwanur Rahman's death, have over time caused their alienation. It is undeniable that all this is an outcome of the class orientation of the Left Front government being adversely affected. There had been attempt made by the Left Front in Bengal to rectify some of its acts of omissions and commissions in the CPI (M) West Bengal state Committee Meeting adopting a blue print for correctives in its meeting held on 1-2 August, 2009. Priority was accorded to improving the PDS functioning, and expansion of welfare programs for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, minorities and refugees (whom the Buddhadeb government following in the footsteps of BJP had very conveniently labeled Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrators acting as ISI agents). Further it was decided in the meeting that to win back the minorities back to its fold initiatives would be taken to expedite rural electrification, expand housing projects for the rural and urban poor, especially for the Muslim minorities, ensuring universal access to school education and properly implementing social security measures for workers in the unorganized and informal sector (a workforce comprising of a lot of Muslims as stated by the Sachar Committee Report).

The shift in the Muslim minority vote from the Left Front to the TMC can be attributed to many of the reasons that have been stated above. In an article published in the Milli Gazette on 15th May, 2011 right after the historic elections which resulted in a democratic government being ousted out of power after 34 years the writer interviews several Muslim journalists from the state of West Bengal questioning each and every one of them as to why did the Muslims of the state who were firmly loyal to the Left Front for over three decades shifted their allegiance to Mamata Bannerjee and her Trinamool Congress. Almost all the journalists felt that rather than emotive and cultural issues, the real reason for the shift was the unceremonious neglect of the community on the socio-economic parameters. Most agreed that Muslims in the state had real problems like any other religious denominations and felt that the Left Front government was virtually non-existent when it came to elevating the pathetic standards of the community in the state. Parwez Hafeez, resident editor of *Asian Age*, says, "As Sachar report pointed out, Muslims here have remained backward educationally, economically and socially." Ahmed Hassan Imran, executive editor of *Azad Hind Urdu* daily, echoes Hafeez. "Thanks to Sachar Committee report, nationally and internationally people now

know how Muslims in Bengal have fared in jobs and education. Before that report, the communist rulers of the state would say they were secular and did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims but the Sachar report proved that Muslims were targeted for discrimination. During the Left Front rule, the fortune of the community has further diminished." He further adds in all elections, from local body to Lok Sabha, in the last three years, the Left Front has lost to Trinamool Congress of Mamata Banerjee and Congress thanks to the huge shift of Muslim vote from the Left. Will the shifting continue in the ongoing Assembly poll? "More than 60% of Muslims today are supporting Trinamool-Congress alliance. I think the alliance will form the next government," says Shahidul Islam, senior journalist now working for *Aaj Kal* daily. "I think the Left Front does not have the support of Muslims," he says.

Shortcomings of the Left: According to Sachar Committee (2006), "Caste, religion and regional/linguistic differentials in economic, social and political spheres in India have a historical basis and are deeply influenced by the extant socio-economic relationships, some of which have persisted for centuries. The Indian socio-economic fabric is more complex than ordinarily believed because of various unique layers and segments, into which Indian society is divided and subdivided." The religious divide between Hindus and other much smaller religious groups is equally complex for the post-partition secular India and deeply rooted in its. This paper does not have the scope to discuss how the transition over a couple of centuries has left the majority of Muslims in India in considerable economic disadvantage vis-à-vis other religious groups. Besides, the results are obtained from a survey only one state. Many districts in West Bengal have concentration of Muslims over 20% of the total population and this is higher than the national average. Apart from West Bengal this is also true for many districts in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Sikkim, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, etc. with respect to Muslims, Christians, Sikhs or Buddhists.

The term 'religious minority' is a multi-layered construction. Any one-to-one correlation between a particular religion and level of development may fail to do justice to the complex realities. It touches politically and socially sensitive issues in religious

discrimination and deprivation. As one of the related reports points out: "it is not the absence of physical amenities (only) that are preventing minorities from coming forward, it is also the contextual background." The Sachar Report writes of how this particular community imagine themselves and is imagined by other socio-religious communities (SCR, 11) and observes how "the Muslims complained that they are constantly looked upon with a great degree of suspicion not only by certain sections of society but addresses the issues relating to Muslim minority community. While the Sachar Committee Report agrees that the widespread perception of discrimination among the Muslim community needs to be addressed, nonetheless it admits that there are hardly any empirical studies that establish discrimination (SCR, 239). The term, when associated particularly with the Muslim community, is fraught with negative meanings, imageries, and ideas that may trigger further speculation. It is highly nuanced with multi-layered causalities, and therefore any one to one correlation would make a simplistic argument..

In response to criticism after the submission of the Sachar Committee Report, The West Bengal Government has announced several steps for the upliftment of minorities. However, these steps are hastily conceived, populist measures that are unlikely to have any significant effect on the welfare of minorities. Even the Action Plan for Minorities, announced after about two years of the release of the Sachar Committee was submitted, fails to reveal any understanding of the nature and extent of the deprivation of minorities. Any suggestion that the long Left Front rule had rendered Muslims of West Bengal poorer and deprived than other social groups was taken as an affront to the so-called 'exceptional' record of the Left Front. Figures were trotted out, statistics read out in support of this track record. However, there is a difference between sops, assurances and promises made in an election year and the actual performance of a regime that has ruled a state for more than 30 years. The problems associated with the Left Front regime in the eyes of many commentators were that the government had failed to feel the pulse of the community in the contemporary period. It was able to do so successfully throughout the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Table 1.5 Socio Economic Development of Muslims in 11 Districts in West Bengal

District	Muslim Population (%)	Population Density	Literacy Male (Female) (%)	State HDI Rank	Religion Specific Index of Basic Amenities	Religion Specific Index of Socio Economic Indicators
Coochbehar	23.34	732	66.3 (56.1)	11	10.49	40.2
Uttar Dinajpur	47.36	778	47.89 (37.51)	13	9.2	29.7
Dakshin Dinajpur	24.02	677	63.59 (55.12)	13	11.6	44.9
Malda	49.72	881	50.28 (41.25)	17	16.2	38.2
Murshidabad	63.67	1101	54.30 (47.60)		17.8	35.4
Nadia	25.40	1172.30	66.14 (59.58)	9	24	35.3
North 24 Parganas	24.22	2182	78.06 (71.72)	3	47.2	40.9
South 24 Parganas	33.24	694	69.45 (41.10)	8	21.2	36.6
Howrah	24.20	2912.8	83.20 (70.10)	2	47.4	41.6
Bardhaman	20.36	982	70.17 (60.90)	5	35.52	43.2
Birbhum	35.08	664	61.48 (51.55)	14	16.9	38.7
West Bengal	25.25	903	77.0 (59.61)	-	-	-

Source- Pranab Kumar Das and Saibal Kar, "Religious Minorities and Public Goods Provision: Evidence from Rural Bengal", *Econstar*, Vol. 6154, November 2011

The above table highlights the degree of socio-economic deprivation of Muslim minorities in 11 districts of West Bengal where the population of Muslims is well above the natural average. The districts within West Bengal are selected on the basis of concentration of minority population, religion-specific socio-economic indicators and an indicator constructed from the various types of basic amenities available to the population. The four religion-specific socio-economic indicators are: (i) overall literacy rate, (ii) female literacy rate, (iii) work participation rate, and (iv) female work participation rate. On the other hand, the four basic amenities are: (i) percentage of households with *pucca* (concrete) walls, (ii) percentage of households with safe drinking water, (iii) percentage of households with electricity and (iv) percentage of households with W/C toilets. We restrict our analysis to those districts in West Bengal (henceforth, WB) in which (a) the minority (Muslim) population is more than 20%, and (b) the average of the religion specific socio-economic indicators, and/or (c) the average of the basic amenities indicators, are both lower than the respective national averages.

The districts chosen have Muslim population well above the all-India average. They also report poor performance in terms of either religion specific socio-economic indicators and/ or basic amenities indicators. Both of these can be treated as indicators of backwardness. The districts selected for the study include Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, South 24 Parganas, Bardhaman, Coochbehar, Haora and North 24 Parganas.

According to the Census of India 2001, the literacy rate among the Muslims is 59.1 per cent; which is far below the national average (65.1 per cent). Literacy rate in West Bengal (68.64) is higher than the national average; moreover it has 12th position in literacy rate among states of India. It is interesting to note that, in spite of the fact that 25.25 per cent of the total population of West Bengal is Muslim, only 13.75 per cent accounts for the total literates of the state. Moreover, the literacy rate among Muslim is 57.47 percent which is 11.7 percent point lower than the average literacy rate (68.64) of West Bengal. There is no educational indicator except literacy rate on which

data are available to show the status of Muslims or for any other religious group. This is a serious constraint in planning for the education of Muslims.

Table 1.6 Literacy rate in the state of West Bengal

Religious communities	Persons	Male	Female
All Religions	68.64	77.02	51.61
Hindus	72.44	81.12	63.09
Muslims	57.47	64.61	49.75
Christians	69.72	77.2	62.3
Sikhs	87.19	91.37	81.98
Buddhists	74.73	83.09	66.22
Jains	92.81	96.46	88.87
Others	51.53	68.63	34.24
Religions not disclosed	63.75	71.52	54.82

Source: Dr. Nazeeruddin, "Muslim Minority Exclusion and Development Issues: Need for Inclusive Policy," International Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2012

Female literacy is one of the important indicators of educational development for any society. The table shows that the Muslim female literacy level (49.75 per cent) is lower than the general female literacy (59.61 per cent) by 9.86 percentage points. In case of state average also, Muslim female literacy rate is accounted for only 49.75 per cent which is much less than the Muslim male literacy rate (64.61). It is an interesting feature that the gap between general literacy rate of the district and Muslim literacy rate of the district varies significantly. It is clear from the table 4 that the

gap between Muslim and general level of literacy is highest in Darjelling (21.41), where the general literacy rate is 71.79 percent, wherein only 57.47 percent of Muslims are literate. From the same table it can be inferred that as far as major districts are concerned Muslims are most backward in Darjilling followed by Nadia (16.73), North 24 Parganas (13.02), Uttar Dinajpur (11.85) and Koch Bihar (10.23). The state government needs to pay special attention towards the Muslim education of these districts in particular and in the state in general.

Table 1.7 District wise Literacy Rate of West Bengal; Muslims and General population

Serial number	District Name	General			Muslim		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1	Darjeeling	71.79	80.05	62.94	50.38	60.86	37.92
2	Jalaiguri	62.85	72.83	52.21	55.34	64.98	45.01
3	Coochbehar	66.30	75.93	56.12	56.07	64.59	47.11
4	Uttar Dinajpur	47.89	58.48	36.51	36.04	45.98	25.50
5	Dakshin Dinajpur	63.59	72.43	54.28	67.21	72.81	61.33
6	Malda	50.28	58.80	41.25	45.30	51.56	38.68
7	Murshidabad	54.35	60.71	47.63	48.63	54.21	42.76
8	Birbhum	61.48	70.89	51.55	59.86	68.28	50.97
9	Bardhaman	70.18	78.63	60.95	68.79	75.54	61.39
10	Nadia	66.14	72.31	59.58	49.41	54.52	44.03
11	North 24 Parganas	78.07	83.92	71.72	65.05	71.41	58.13
12	Hugli	75.11	82.59	67.21	73.50	79.43	67.31
13	Bankura	63.44	76.76	49.43	59.91	71.81	49.96

14	Puruliya	55.57	73.72	36.50	53.44	71.32	34.14
15	Medinipur	74.90	83.22	70.11	67.80	74.13	60.78
16	Howrah	77.01	83.22	70.11	67.80	74.13	60.78
17	Kolkata	80.86	83.79	77.30	68.06	71.25	63.61
18	South 24 Parganas	69.45	79.19	59.01	59.83	68.84	50.27

Source: Md. Mainuddin, "Understanding Reality: Population Growth, Distribution and Educational Status of Indian Muslims," *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. II, July-December 2011

The Census of India and the household surveys are dependable sources for such data. Since Census is undertaken once in ten years, the NSSO (GOI) surveys are good source for assessment during the interim period. It is clear from the data below that there has been some improvement in enrollments at the primary and elementary levels but there is stagnation at the levels of matriculation and higher levels in West Bengal. But the startling fact is the discrepancy between various communities continues

to be large, especially so at higher levels. Even in the year 2007-8, Muslims had the lowest enrollment at the primary level at 85 per cent followed by 50 per cent at middle level, which is the least and even lower than the SCs/STs. But the disparity is many folds higher at matriculation and higher levels: at only 15 per cent (note a 3 per cent point increase over the 2001 level of 12 per cent) for Muslims compared with 39 per cent amongst the group other than the Muslims and the SCs/STs.

Table 1.8 Educational Level Differentials in West Bengal, 2001 and 2007-8

	Muslim		SCs/STs		Others	
	2007-08	2001	2007-08	2001	2007-08	2001
Matriculation & above	15	12	17	13	39	38
Middle	50	26	52	30	62	58
Primary	85	50	90	54	93	80

Source: Sanchari Roy Mukherjee, "District Level variation in Literacy rate in West Bengal," *International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, Vol. 1, No. 7, July 2012

The West Bengal state government today gloats over the huge expansion in budgetary allocation for madarsa education – up from Rs 5.6 lakhs in 1976-77 to Rs 574 crores in the current budget. But this is precisely the problem. Madarsa education been the typical response of governments across the board towards Muslim educational needs and reflects the utter refusal of the political mainstream to see beyond madarsas. Note that just about 2 per cent of the school-going Muslim children attend Madarsa educational institutions in West Bengal—the remaining go to government, aided and increasingly unaided schools. There is a suggestion that employment of Muslims in the education sector should include the 20,000 teachers employed in the madarsas. It is ignored however; that the data cited in the Sachar Report was based on the data provided by the state governments—that too after much persuasion; obviously, the West Bengal government did not deem the madarsa teachers as government employees in 2005. Moreover, the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission was established only in 2008, when the Party, smarting from the peasant resistance in Nandigram, —given especially the chief minister's statement in 2002 that madarsas in Bengal were hotbeds of anti-national activities and in 2007

has further went on to say that they are "dens of terrorism". (Following an uproar he claimed that he had only been asking for modernization of madarsas). In a strange coincidence, most of those who were dispossessed in Nandigram were Muslims and Dalits. Furthermore, it was alleged that while seeking to combat avian flu in villages of Birbhum and Murshidabad, CPIM cadres culled seemingly affected birds belonging to Muslim families without adequately compensating them. The total insensitivity displayed by the Kolkata Police while handling the brutal murder of a Muslim Graphics teacher, Rizwanur Rehman, further increased the sense of disillusionment of urban Muslims. Top CPIM functionaries were reported to have influenced the investigation in order to save local industrialists who were on good terms with both the party top brass as well as the Police.

Among its flagship measures, the Left Front government claims to have extended the benefits of reservation to 85 per cent of the Muslims through an expansion in the list of backward classes. The Left Front apologists would prefer to hide behind the recently submitted Ranganath Misra Commission report to explain away the delay, but can they answer why the Left Front failed to implement the Mandal

Commission report since 1990? Apart from Mandal Commission, various state governments instituted their own state backward classes commissions such as the Mungeri Lal Commission (1975) in neighbouring Bihar, the Havanur Commission (1972) in Karnataka or the Ambasankar Commission (1982) in Tamil Nadu – only the Left in Bengal remained unfazed by these currents. Even now, the Left Front's discomfiture with the caste-based OBC reservation is evident by the fact that it still remains shy of exhausting the full quota of 27 per cent despite having now enlisted more than 100 caste groups as OBCs. The quantum of OBC reservation in West Bengal rests at 17 per cent despite the recent enhancement. The seriousness of the exercise also comes to be questioned as after this notification, West Bengal for all intents and purposes, remains the only state in the country where the number of Muslim OBC groups is more than those from the majority community.

The Left has always held that the land reform measures that had been initiated by them are one of their biggest achievements till date in the country. It is truly a remarkable feat that has not yet been implemented by any other government to the scale that it has been carried out in Bengal and Kerala. Yet a closer scrutiny of the above with regard to the Muslims reveals a different picture altogether. However a 2008 study based on NSSO 61st round and prepared for the Department of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, Govt. of West Bengal expose the emptiness of such claims by drawing attention to the fact that the average size of land holdings continues to be the lowest among Muslims when compared with other socio-religious categories such as Hindu upper castes, backward classes and other minorities. The difference is particularly glaring when compared with Hindu upper castes who own and possess nearly 0.4 hectare per capita while for Muslims it is slightly more than 0.2 hectare per capita. For Hindu backward classes the average landholding was close to 0.3 hectare per capita. The yield from agriculture is also registered as least for the Muslims (Rs. 141 per hectare as against Rs. 183 per hectare for Hindu upper castes) thus suggesting inferior quality of land holding. This persisting agrarian inequity seems to have hurt them the most as more than 80 per cent of Bengal's Muslims live in the villages and the state's land acquisition policy too, whether in Rajarhat, Singur or Nandigram, remained insensitive to their felt-needs.

Another major factor in the withdrawal of Muslim support for the Left Front, as with Dalits and poor farmers, was the government's failure to implement the 2006 NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). An interview with villagers which was conducted by researchers working in CSSS,

Kolkata revealed the crux of the problem. The villagers were given work under this centrally sponsored scheme only after the local wing of the CPM approved. Yet, these villagers were deprived of their incomes if they became reluctant to pay the 'necessary taxes' to the party. Government officials appeared to be mute spectators in these types of cases. In fact, the dismal performance of the state government in this regard led the Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samiti (West Bengal Agricultural Labour Association), a non-party registered trade union of agricultural workers, to file a public interest suit in the Kolkata High Court over the non implementation of nearly 100 work guarantee schemes in West Bengal.

There has always been a tendency on our part to judge and understand the deprivation of minorities from the standpoint of only the urban sector. A detailed survey undertaken by the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the Madrasah Commission reveals that the economic conditions of Minority communities, particularly Muslims, in rural West Bengal is concerning. Whether we consider the *level* (percentage of BPL families) or the *intensity* of poverty (how far below the poverty line households are situated), the economic status of Minorities is worse than other Social Religious Communities in West Bengal. The study shows that though 87 percent of the Muslim population resides in rural areas of West Bengal, they are less linked to agriculture than other SRCs. Given the higher absolute returns to agriculture, this may appear rational and expected trend. However, analysis of variations in comparative advantage in shifting to non-agriculture (given by ratio of agricultural returns to non-agricultural earnings) shows that, while it is advantageous for Muslims to make this shift, *the comparative advantage is greater for non-Muslim communities*. This implies that the proportion of non-Muslims should be greater than the proportion of Muslims in non-agriculture. NSSO data reveals that the opposite of this is seen in the state. This would suggest that push factors are operating in agriculture that is possibly more important than the pull exerted by the non-agricultural sector in explaining the inter-sectoral division of the Muslim workforce.

The economic status of the Muslims in the urban sector is important because of two reasons. Firstly, as pointed out in the High Level Committee Report, the condition of Muslims in the urban economy is extremely precarious. Secondly, in the rural economy, factors like access to land, forests and commonly owned resources, and close social networking between inhabitants, does reduce the vulnerability of the poorer sections of the community. In the urban areas, however, similar buffer factors are absent. Only about one out of every five Muslim workers is

employed in the formal sector and earns regular wage/salary. This is lower than that of all other SRCs. About half of the Muslim workers are concentrated in household units, of which about 75 percent are own

account workers. This is higher than in the case of other SRCs. Casual workers also contribute a substantial share of the Muslim workforce.

Table 1.9 Employment Differentials of Muslims in West Bengal

Socio Religious Communities	Regular Salaried/wage employee	Household based employment	Casual laborer	Total
Muslim	22.11	50.57	27.31	100
H_UC	40.05	44.92	15.02	100
H_BC	27.79	44.71	27.5	100
others	46.58	49.85	3.56	100
Urban	34.2	45.72	20.08	100

Source- Zakir Hussain, "Employment and Economic Status of Socio-Religious Communities in West Bengal," A Study Prepared for the Ministry of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, November 2008

The service sector also contains a fairly large proportion of Muslim and Other Minority Workers. Further decomposition reveals that Muslims are engaged in land-based passenger and freight transport. In particular, the concentration of Muslim workers in non-motor vehicle passenger transport (rickshaw, bullock carts, *tongas*, etc) is high. About one out of every five workers in this sector is a Muslim. While Other Minorities also concentrate in the Service sector, they are located in 'better' sectors – scheduled passenger land transport (bus, chartered

bus, sightseeing bus, tram, metro, etc.) and freight transport by motor vehicles. Not only is the average income of Muslims relatively low, but the incidence of poor persons higher than that of other communities. About one in every four Muslims is poor. While this was also observed in rural West Bengal, in urban areas, the intensity of poverty – the percentage of persons who lie significantly below the poverty line – is also higher than that of other communities

Table 1.10 Work Percentage Ratios in select states of Muslims and other Socio-religious communities

States	Muslims	Hindus	Others
All India	55	66	65
West Bengal	56	56	64
Gujarat	61	71	56
Maharashtra	56	70	66

Source- Zakir Hussain, "Employment and Economic Status of Socio-Religious Communities in West Bengal," A Study Prepared for the Ministry of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, November 2008

Table 1.11 Occupational Differentiation in select states

Type	States	Muslims	Hindus	Others
Manufacturing and Organized Sectors	India	21	11	9
	Gujarat	13	16	11
	Maharashtra	25	11	12
	West Bengal	21	16	6
Informal Trade	India	17	8	10
	Gujarat	23	7	27
	Maharashtra	23	8	11
	West Bengal	11	12	7
Self- Employment	India	57	43	41
	Gujarat	54	39	66
	Maharashtra	48	37	28
	West Bengal	53	45	38

Source- Intekhab Hussain, "Muslims of West Bengal: Demographic, Socio-Economic and Educational Situation," Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 2, No. 10, 2012

The representation of workers from Muslim and Other Minorities in some important occupational industrial categories is very important. Representation in the police force is important in providing a community with a sense of security. Despite the Government’s claim that there has been a substantial increase in representation of Muslims within the police force – achieved through recruitment drives – the actual achievement seems to have fallen woefully short of what is desired. Statistics provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs in its annual publication, Crime in India, reveals that less than 9 percent of the police force is Muslims – far short of their population share of over 25 percent. Education is another critical sector. The representation of Muslims is even worse in this sector. Only 3.7 percent of workers in this sector are Muslims, compared to 2.4 percent of workers belonging to Other Minorities. Even here, Muslims

are clustered in the informal sector – their representation is highest (six percent) among those giving private tuitions. Similarly, only 2.9 percent of workers in the health and related sectors are Muslims, while workers from Other Minority constitute 3.3 percent of workers in this category. Only 2.5 percent of workers in Public Administration are Muslims, compared to 1.4 percent of Other Minorities. If we consider the category “General Public Service activities of the State Government”, then the share of Muslims is only 2.8 percent of workers in this sector.

According to the Sachar Committee Report, the levels of deprivation in state government employment are among the worst for the state of West Bengal. Considering that the Muslims constitute more than 25 per cent of the population, their share in employment is a meager 4 per cent of the total state government employment.

Table 1.12 Muslim participation in State Government Employment in Different states

States	Total No. of Employees	Muslim population (%)	Higher Positions	Lower Positions	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Other
West Bengal	134972	25.2	4.7	1.8	6.7	3.9	2.1	2.5	1.4
Kerala	268733	24.7	10.3	10.4	11.8	10.1	11.1	9.1	10.5
Uttar Pradesh	134053	18.5	7.5	4.9	4.6	8.0	4.3	5.4	6.7
Bihar	78114	16.5	7.2	7.6	7.9	7.0	7.3	8.4	5.2
Assam	81261	30.9	10.2	11.4	9.2	10.7	11.5	9.9	10.5
Jharkhand	15374	13.8	3.8	7.2	4.0	3.7	9.0	4.5	-
Karnataka	528401	12.2	4.9	8.9	4.7	5.1	9.3	6.0	-
Delhi	135877	11.7	2.1	3.3	3.5	1.4	3.9	1.1	1.6
Maharashtra	915645	10.6	3.1	4.5	2.3	3.4	4.4	4.6	-
Gujarat	754533	3.4	3.4	5.5	-	-	-	-	-
Tamil Nadu	529597	4.2	4.2	2.9	4.0	4.2	3.1	2.5	-
Sum of States	4452851	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.8	6.1	5.9	5.1	3.3

Source- Sacchar Committee Report; Government Employment and Programs, Chapter 9, page- 168

Table 1.13 Share of Muslim Participation in different State Government departments

States	Muslim Population (%)	Education Department		Home Department		Health Department		Transport Department		Others	
		Higher Positions	Lower Positions	Higher Positions	Lower Positions	Higher Positions	Lower Positions	Higher position	Lower Position	Higher Position	Lower Position
West Bengal	25.2	-	-	14.1	5.1	1.3	0.9	-	-	4.3	2.2
Kerala	24.7	13.0	11.7	10.8	10.7	11.2	10.2	9.4	9.2	8.9	10.5
Uttar Pradesh	18.5	-	-	8.1	9.9	4.3	5.6	1.9	4.9	7.6	4.8

Bihar	16.5	14.8	11.8	5.9	5.3	-	2.6	8.3	10.9	7.5	7.6
Assam	30.9	-	-	9.3	9.3	8.0	11.1	13.9	11.5	12.2	11.4
Jharkhand	13.8	-	-	5.7	5.7	6.0	3.2	-	-	3.7	7.8
Karnataka	12.2	5.0	12.4	3.6	3.6	4.7	5.0	16.8	7.0	5.1	7.3
Delhi	11.7	5.9	7.2	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.8	1.4	1.1	0.3	0.9
Maharashtra	10.6	2.9	4.7	4.2	4.2	2.6	3.3	-	-	2.2	3.9
Gujarat	9.1	1.7	4.5	5.6	5.6	2.2	1.5	9.4	16.3	-	-
Tamil Nadu	5.6	5.8	5.3	0.0	2.6	4.6	3.3	1.0	2.6	2.9	2.1
Sum of states	16.0	5.7	6.2	8.7	5.6	4.4	3.5	1.6	6.9	5.5	5.1

Source- Sacchar Committee Report; Government Employment and Programs, Chapter 9, page- 170

The above illustrations drawn from the report reveal that there has been a systematic neglect when it has come to employment opportunities which are offered by the government to the Muslim minority in the state. While some might argue that the Muslims are not qualified enough to compete at the state level, others may blame the state government and its educational model for the backwardness of the community in terms of educational parameters.

Conclusion: There are a lot of problems that the minorities have faced in different parts of the country. West Bengal is no exception. The Left Front government during its three decade long rule had curtailed out-break of communal violence in the state

to a bare minimum (barring a few sporadic cases in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition). The Minority population of the state did not let this intention of the left go un-noticed and consistently voted for the regime in the succeeding elections. To some commentators the shift in the votes of the Muslim votes in the state is nothing surprising as almost the entire population jumped on the Mamata bandwagon. This is precisely the intent of this paper. It examines as to why a section of this population (Muslims comprise more than 26 per cent, hence a sizeable amount) shifted their loyalty away from a party that gave them life and security for over three decades.

References:

- Mushirul Hasan, "In Search of Integration and Identity: Indian Muslims since Independence", *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 45/47,(1988): 2467-2478
- Mohammad Arif, "Dilemma of Indian Muslims", *Economic and Political Weekly* 51, no. 2,(1998):35-52
- Suneet Chopra, "Problems of the Muslim Minority in India", *Social Scientist* 5, no. 2 (1976): 76
- Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence; Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004): 161
- Jyoti Basu, Thirty Years Ago ,in a message broadcast from the Calcutta Station of All India Radio, on June 22, 1977 <http://jyotibasunet/?q=node/17> accessed on 4th July, 2013
- Jyoti Basu, Election Speech on Door Darshan, *People's Democracy*, Vol XXVIII, No18, 2 May 2004
- Asghar Ali Engineer, "Indian Muslims: Problems and Voting Patterns," *Countercurrents.org* (24 June, 2010)
- <http://www.countercurrents.org/engineer240610.htm>
- Sumanta Bannerjee, "West Bengal's Next Quinquennium, and the Future of the Indian Left", *Economic and Political Weekly* XLVI, no. 23(2011):17
- Prasenjit Bose, "Verdict 2009: An Appraisal of Critiques of the Left", *Economic and Political Weekly* XLIV, no. 40 (2009): 36
- Mumtaz Alam Falahi, Why West Bengal Muslims left the Left? *The Milli Gazette*, 15th May, 2011,
- <http://www.milligazette.com/news/1179-why-wb-muslims-left-the-Left-india>
- Pranab Kumar Das and Saibal Kar, "Religious Minorities and Provision of Public Goods, Evidence From Rural West Bengal", *Econstar* 6154 (2011): 3-34
- Seminar in the Institute of Objective Studies, Kolkata- Minority Relations in the state of West Bengal. (2011)
- Zakir, Hussain, "Employment and Economic Status of Socio-Religious Communities in West Bengal", *Institute of Development Studies*, (Kolkata, 2008)
- Dipankar Basu, "The Left and the 15th Lok Sabha Election," *Economic and Political Weekly* XLIV, no. 42 (2009): 10-15
- "Crime in India", Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi (2008).

18. Government of India, Cabinet Secretariat, Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India, a Report, New Delhi 2006
19. Government of India, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, New Delhi 2007
20. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report, New Delhi 2012-2013
21. Government of India, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Minority Concentration District Projects- Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Nadia, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Bardhaman, Koch Behar, Haorah, West Bengal 2010
22. Government of West Bengal, Ministry of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, Annual Report for 2011-2012, Kolkata 2012
23. Government of West Bengal, Ministry of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, Economic and Employment Status of Minorities in West Bengal: Evidence from NSSO, Coordinator- Zakir Hussain, Kolkata 2008
24. Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, Are Minority Concentrations Deprived of Public Good Provisions? Regional Evidence from Rural India, Kolkata 2011
25. Government of West Bengal, Ministry of Minority Affairs, Multi Sectoral Development Programme, a Report, Kolkata 2012
26. <http://wbminorityaffairs.in/pages/view/57-multi-sectoral-development-programme>
27. Government of West Bengal, West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, Performance Report 2011-2012
28. [http://wbminorityaffairs.in/files/Reports/performance_report_1112\(3\).pdf](http://wbminorityaffairs.in/files/Reports/performance_report_1112(3).pdf)
29. Government of West Bengal, Backward Classes Welfare Department, List of Other Backward Classes Recognized by Government of West Bengal, Kolkata 2012
30. http://www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in/htm/obc_list.html
31. Government of India, Election Commission of India, Statistical Report on General Elections 2006 and 2011 to the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal. New Delhi
32. http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/CurrentElections/eci2011.html
33. Ahmed, Rafiuddin. Bengal Muslims; A Quest for Identity . New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.
34. Ansari, Iqbal. Political Representation of Muslims in India (1952-2004). New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2006.
35. Gayer, Laurent and Jaffrelot Christophe, ed. Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalization. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012.
36. Hasan, Zoya. Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities and Affirmative Action. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
37. Khalidi, Omar. Muslims in Indian Economy. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2006.
38. Mahajan, Gurpreet and Surinder Jodhka, ed. Religion, Community and Development: Changing contours of Politics and Policy in India. New Delhi: Routledge, 2010.
39. Acharya, Promesh. "Education and Communal Polittics In Bengal: A Case Study." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 24, no. 30 (July 1989): 81-90.
40. Ahmed, Imtiaz. "Muslim Educational Backwardness: An Inferential Analysis." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 16, no. 36 (September 1981): 1457-1464.
41. Ahmed, Imtiaz. "Secularism and Communalism." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 4, no. 28/30 (July 1969): 1137-1145.
42. Alam, Anwar. "Democratization of Indian Muslims: Some Reflections." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 38, no. 46 (November 2003): 4881-4885.
43. Alam, Javed. "Indispensability of Secularism." Social Scientist (Social Scientist) 26, no. 7/8 (July 1998): 3-20.
44. Alam, Javed. "The Contemporary Muslim Situation in India: A Long Term Perspective." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 43, no. 2 (January 2008): 45-53.
45. Alam, Mohd. Sanjeer. "Is Relative Size of Minority Polpulation Linked to Under-development." Economic and Politaical Weekly (EPW) XLIV, no. 48 (November 2009): 17-23.
46. Ali, Amir. "Case for Multiculturalism in India." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 35, no. 28/29 (July 2000): 2503-2505.
47. Bannerjee, Sumanta. "Bengali Left: From Pink to Saffron (Commentary)." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), March 2003: 864-865.
48. Bannerjee, Sumanta. West Bengal's Next Quinquennium, and the Future of the Indian Left (EPW) XLVI, no. 23 (June 2011): 14-20.
49. Bannerjee, Sumanta. "Post-Election Blues in West Bengal." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) XLVII, no. 9 (March 2012): 9-14.
50. Basant, Rakesh and Sen, Gitanjali. Who Participates in Higher Education in India. Research Publication, Ahmedabad: Indian Institute of Management, 2009.
51. Basant, Rakesh. "Social, Economic and Educational Condition of Indian Muslims." Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) 42, no. 10 (March 2007): 828-832.

52. Bose, Prasenjit. "Verdict 2009: An Appraisal of Critiques of the Left." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* XLIV, no. 40 (October 2009): 32-37.
53. Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. *Minority Concentration District Project, Cooch Behar*. Government report, Kolkata: Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, 2010.
54. Chakravarty, Bidyut. "The Left Front's 2009 Lok Sabha Poll Debacle in West Bengal." *Asian Survey (University of California Press)* 51, no. 2 (March 2011): 290-310.
55. Das, Paranab Kumar and Kar, Saibal. "Are Minority Concentrations Deprived of Public Goods Provisions." *Economics Working Paper Series (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata)*, Month 2011: 2-32.
56. Dasgupta, Abhijit. "On the Margins; Muslims in West Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* XLIV, no. 16 (April 2009): 91-96.
57. Dubey, Amaresh and Abusaleh Shariff and Sonalde B. and Sen, Mitali and Joshi, Brij Lal. *Human Development In India: Challenges for a Society in Transition*. Development Index, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.
58. Engineer, Ali Asghar. "Remaking Indian Muslim Identity." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 16, no. 16 (April 1991): 1036-1038.
59. Engineer, Irfan. "Religion, State and Secularism." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 30, no. 43 (October 1995): 2726-2728
60. Firdos, Sohel. "Encountering Socio- Spatial Exclusion: The Experiences of Muslims in Kolkata." *CSSS Occasional Working Paper*, 2008: 1-20.
61. Hardy, P. "Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884-1912 by Sufia Ahmed." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain (Cambridge University Press)*, 1978: 95-96.
62. Hasan, Mushirul. "Adjustment and Accommodation: Indian Muslims After Partition." *Social Scientist (Social Scientist)* 18, no. 8/9 (August 1990): 48-65.
63. Hasan, Mushirul. "In Search Of Integration and Identity: Indian Muslims Since Independence." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 23, no. 47/48 (November 1988): 2467-2478.
64. Hasan, Zoya. *Constitutional Equality and the Politics of Representation in India (Diogenes, Sage Publications)* 53:54 (November 2006): 1-16.
65. Hussain, Zakir. *Employment and Economic Status of Socio-Religious Communities in West Bengal: Some Evidence from NSS 61st Round*. Government report, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, Kolkata: Ministry of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education, Government of West Bengal, 2008.
66. Khalidi, Omar. "Muslims in Indian political Process: Group Goals and Alternative Strategies ." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 28, no. 1/2 (January 1993): 43-54.
67. Mayers, James. "Transformation of Oppositional Politics in Bengal: Congress (I), Trinamool and the 1998 Lok Sabha Elections." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 33, no. 33/34 (August 1998): August.
68. Neilsen, Kenneth. "In Search of Development: Muslims and Electoral Politics in an Indian State." *Forum for Development Studies*, 2011: 1-27.
69. Sen, Suhit. "The Left Rout: Patterns and Prospects ." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* XLVI, no. 24 (June 2011): 14-17.
70. Shah, Ghanshyam. "The Condition of Muslims." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 42, no. 10 (March 2007): 836-839.
71. Shariff, Abusaleh. *Inclusive Development Paradigm In India: A Post- Sachar Perspective*. USIPI Occasional Paper 1, Washington: United States India Policy Institute, 2012, 1-31.
72. Wilkinson, Steven. "A Comment on the Analysis of the Sachar Committee Report." *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* 42, no. 10 (March 2007): 832-836.

Ejaz Ahmed/