

FRACTURED IDENTITIES: COMPARING MUSLIM-NESS AND SHIA-NESS IN 20TH
CENTURY INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Aseem Hasnain: Fractured Identities: Comparing Muslim-Ness And Shia-Ness In 20th Century India

(Under the direction of Charles Kurzman)

The key question that this dissertation asks is: how did a prominent Shia collective identity form and was sustained in Lucknow over the twentieth century, while a similar phenomenon failed to take place in Hyderabad, a comparable city in India. The period that I covered starts in 1904 and ends in 1998, spanning almost the whole of the twentieth century. I divided this period into three chapters, each of which focused on a specific repertoire of contention that was used in collective identity formation. The first chapter shows how public rituals, particularly their redefinition, can contextualize the formation or reinvention of collective identities. Chapter two focuses on protest campaigns to show their role in consolidating collective identities, and chapter three analyzes riots as a strategy for sustaining collective identities. However, the common thread that runs across the three chapters is the role of community based elites; elites connected with the state; their interactions and partnerships; and the role of the state, which together emphasized specific collective identities as salient in either city.

My project contributes to scholarship in two broad ways. The first is by bringing together the role of the state and the elites in shaping group identities. I show that claims about new collective identities or revisions of older ones were presented not simply by community based elites or the state acting by themselves, but by the joint efforts of both. The second broad

contribution is towards the scholarship on violence and collective identities. My project makes three specific contributions to this particular scholarship. First, and foremost, my project does not take group identities to be a given like existing scholarship does. My project, in contrast is oriented towards tracing the formation of collective identities- it shows how a general Muslim identity split into Shia and Sunni identities in Lucknow, and how various ethnic identities fused into a Muslim collectivity in Hyderabad. The second contribution is through grounding the analysis in historical explanation, an important approach used in historical sociology. Existing scholarship on inter-group violence focuses on contemporaneous processes—demographic and economic shifts, patterns of civic relations, and electoral contests—to explain patterns of intergroup violence. My project shows that historical processes are more salient, and that contemporaneous factors are often a continuation of historical patterns. The third contribution is about violence. While existing research sees riots as outcomes of competition, lack of collaboration, or perceptions of threat between already existing and established groups, my project takes an opposite view. My findings show that riots—communal in Hyderabad, and sectarian in Lucknow-- are strategic tools, instead, that are utilized in the larger projects of creating and sustaining distinct collective identities that are purported to be antagonistic to each other.

For Ashti Irom Mithlesh & Ime Rosa Nishat, for ensuring that I understand peace and
patience!

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Beginnings

I was born in Lucknow, India, at about the same time when widespread sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni Muslims resulted in the Government of the state of Uttar Pradesh banning all processions related with Muharram, an annual set of religious events observed by Muslims. I have, however, had many occasions for participating in Shia Muharram rituals and processions after the ban was lifted twenty years later, in 1998. I have also been aware of the contrasting ways in which Shia and Sunni communities in Lucknow observe the same festival. The most striking differences being the opposite directions in which their respective processions move, and how one half of the day reserved for Shia and the other half for the Sunni. Along with the religious and performative aspects of Muharram, I also accepted, unquestioningly, the occurrence of tensions, tiffs, and riots between the sects, and the heavy presence of riot police during several days of the Muharram period as a normal phenomenon. The 68 day long period of Muharram would convert the old city into a war zone with police barricades, temporary check points, sandbag bunkers and rooftop observation posts. These positions would be manned by personnel of the regular police and paramilitary forces on specific days when major processions took to the streets. On other days in the period, a much smaller contingent of regular police personnel would keep watch from a few of these posts, but the barricades, bunkers and checkpoints would stay in place. Thus Lucknow resembled a ‘city under siege’ for over two months every year. It was not just people in the old city who would observe this, residents of the new city would also snake through the maze of barricades and diversions as they visited

unavoidable places such as the City Medical College or wholesale markets in the old city. In good years, Muharram would include incidents such as stone pelting or minor fisticuffs between sectarian groups during days of a particular procession. In bad years, there would be stabbing spree, rioting, and arson. Thus people in Lucknow, including myself, became accustomed to some levels of disturbances during Muharram. These sectarian disturbances between Shia and Sunni Muslims, however, were minor in comparison to instances of communal riots between Muslims and Hindus around Lucknow. On the communal riot front, Lucknow was a haven in comparison with several north Indian towns and cities where violence between Hindus and Muslims was more widespread, severe and frequent. (This dissertation adopts the English terminology used in India: “sectarian” refers to Shia-Sunni sects within Islam, and “communal” refers to Hindu and Muslim communities).

A chance visit to Hyderabad in 2006 made me question many things that I had accepted, uncritically, as business as usual. I saw Hyderabad’s Muharram being observed in an entirely different manner. In Hyderabad, the hereditary keepers and managers of most of the major Shia shrines, which were either origins or destinations for the numerous processions, were Sunni individuals. I also saw that both Shia and Sunni individuals participated in the main Muharram procession on Ashra, without many distinctions. While there were some differences among the Shia and Sunni participants in dress and actual rituals, there was no hint of sectarian tensions. Finally, while I saw heavy police presence, including cavalry, in the old city, its function was entirely different. Apart from facilitating the procession and traffic, the main role of the police is providing cavalymen at the head and rear of the procession. On inquiry, I found that the police cavalry in the procession was a tradition dating from the time of the Nizam when state patronage was a defining characteristic of the Muharram procession. I also found ample hubris about the

absence of Shia-Sunni sectarian tensions in Hyderabad. However, almost everyone I spoke with emphasized the Hindu-Muslim communal tensions that have plagued Hyderabad during the last several decades.

My informal reading about the history of Muharram in both cities drew me towards understanding the contrasting ways in which sectarian relations have existed there. In particular, I became curious why the Shia community in Lucknow asserted its distinct identity in contrast with the Sunni community, while the same community did not feel the need to do so in Hyderabad. The mutually antagonistic rituals of Tabarra (a Shia ritual offensive to Sunnis), and Madh e Sahaba (a Sunni ritual offensive to Shia), staple fare in Lucknow, were almost unknown in Hyderabad. Several Sunni and Shia individuals attested that Tabarra was a rare occurrence in the history of Hyderabad, and Madh e Sahaba was virtually unheard of. This contrast became more acute as I gradually found that the Shias in Lucknow and Hyderabad were not strangers to each other, instead were intimately connected. These connections are either through Shia clerics who travel from Lucknow to Hyderabad for speaking at Muharram congregations (*majalis*) organized by individuals in Hyderabad, or through individuals and families from Lucknow that visit Hyderabad for pilgrimages. Lucknow has been a larger center for clerical training for the Shias than Hyderabad, and often clerics trained in Lucknow are in demand in various parts of India during Muharram where the Shia population has a critical mass. Hyderabad in contrast, houses more sites of religious importance than Lucknow, as several shrines in Hyderabad claim to hold important relics associated with the sacred history of the Shia community. The movement of clerics and pilgrims from Hyderabad to Lucknow is not as high, but a third factor that connects the Shia community of the two cities more symmetrically is marriage alliances, which are few in numbers, but present nevertheless. I also gathered over time that the clerics who go

from Lucknow to Hyderabad for Muharram speaking tours were provocative in their speeches in Lucknow and were infamous for using divisive rhetoric in their sermons. Obviously, Shias in Lucknow and Hyderabad are aware of each other, and the styles in which Muharram is observed in either city. But, they have largely continued to observe Muharram in their own local traditions. My interactions with people, observations about Muharram, and sense of sectarianism in both cities made me ask myself why two very similar sets of people in two similar cities have so many differences in the way they identify.

This dissertation is a formal continuation of such curiosities. The key phenomenon that I am interested in is the Shia sectarian collective identity that gained salience and emerged as distinct from the larger Muslim identity in Lucknow, at various moments in the twentieth century. At other times, this sectarian salience fades away. In Hyderabad, the shadow case in my dissertation, Muslim emerged and has remained the salient collective identity over the twentieth century, not sectarian Shia and Sunni identities, despite the presence of a Shia population. The question that I ask is how did Shia emerge and sustain as the salient collective identity in Lucknow, but not in Hyderabad, a comparable city in India. This study attempts to identify the factors and circumstances that contributed to these contrasting outcomes.

This study is spread across five chapters. The main body of the dissertation investigates how a sectarian chasm came to surface within Muslims in Lucknow but not in Hyderabad over the 20th century, and traces the role played by sectarian elites, competitions between them, the role of state based elites, and the state itself in the process of collective identity formation of the Shia community. Chapter two covers the period between 1900-1919, and focuses on innovations that emerged around public rituals associated with Muharram. Chapter three covers the period between 1920 and 1948, and focuses on protest as a repertoire that is used to shape the collective

identity of not only protestors and organizations involved in the protest, but the larger community that protestors claim to represent. Chapter four, covers the last period of this dissertation, 1949-1998, and focuses on riots that are important for emphasizing specific collective identities in outcome oriented moments such as elections, as well as critical to sustaining these identities in periods of abeyance. The fifth chapter is a brief conclusion where I summarize my findings.

Literature Review: Collective Identity

The discipline of sociology has long been interested in collective identities. In fact, collective identity is argued to be the most important type of identity for the discipline.¹ Early work on collective identities was largely essentialist, as it was perceived to be monolithic, and homogeneous.² Later works by social constructionists and postmodernists consider the role of social interactions, power, and discourse in the making of identities.³ It is also an important theme in the subfield of social movements,⁴ as scholars argue that identities are not antecedents

¹ Eder K. 2009. "A theory of collective identity: making sense of the debate on a 'European identity.'" *European Journal of Social Theory*. 12 (4): 427-447.

² Ignatieff, Michael. 1993. *Blood and Belonging*. London: Noonday Press; Hastings, Adrian. 1997. *The Construction of Nationhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Shuster; Moynihan, Daniel P. 1993. *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press; Rabushka, Alvin and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1972. *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus, OH: Merrill; Smith, Anthony. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

³ Cerulo, Karen A. 1997. "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 23: 385-409; Cerulo, Karen A. 1995. *Identity designs: the sights and sounds of a nation*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

⁴ Owens, T.J., D.T. Robinson, and L. Smith-Lovin. 2011. "Three Faces of Identity." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 36: 477-500; Cerulo, Karen A. 1997. "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 23: 385-409.

to social movements, but are created in the course of social movement activity.⁵ Yet we know little about how “individuals sort out and combine different sources of identity” in their quests for collective identity, or how individuals reconcile the calculus between their self-interests and their identities.⁶ The layered and shifting nature of collective identities also makes it harder to grasp as a concept.⁷

Other disciplines have also been engaged in understanding the formation of collective identities. Historians of colonialism have argued that various forms of colonial knowledge, including the census, were central to the creation of collective identities, and that fixed census categories contrasted with the pre-colonial past when the units of social identity had been multiple, highly contextual, and shifting.⁸ Recent feminist scholarship applies intersectionality to claim that collective identities form after the internalization of gender, sexual orientation, race, class and ethnicity.⁹ This multiplicity translates into coexistence of, and tensions between, a plurality of elements within each collective identity.¹⁰

While collective identity is an attractive concept, we know little about its emergence, and sustenance. Although we have a sense of the complex relationships between structural factors,

⁵ Taylor V, Whittier N. E. 1999. “Collective identity in social movement communities: lesbian feminist mobilization,” in *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties*, ed. J Freeman, V Johnson, pp. 169–94. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

⁶ Polletta, Francesca, and James M. Jasper. 2001. “Collective Identity and Social Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. 27: 283-305, p. 299.

⁷ Okamoto D. G. 2003. “Toward a theory of panethnicity: explaining Asian American collective action.” *American Sociological Review* 68:811–42.

⁸ Cohn, Bernard S. 1996. *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of mind: colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹ Meyers, Diana T. 2004. *Being yourself: essays on identity, action, and social life. Feminist constructions*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁰ Todd, Jennifer. 2005. “Social transformation, collective categories, and identity change.” *Theory and Society*. 34 (4): 429-463.

cultural processes and collective identities, we don't know how these relationships work.¹¹ In particular, we know almost nothing about how particular collective identities become prominent at certain moments. An influential paper by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argues that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity softens the term so much that its essentialist aspects are removed. But this softening, complemented by its fluid, multiple, and shifting attributes eventually "leaves us without a rationale for talking about identities at all and ill-equipped to examine the 'hard' dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics." The paper also asks, "If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identification? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for- and sometimes realized- by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups?"¹² I share this discomfort with the postmodernist view of identities where the concept itself becomes so diffuse that observing, analyzing, and discussing it becomes a challenge. I respond to this situation by identifying certain moments in twentieth century India when Shia and Muslim appear as singular, and hardened collective identity claims in the cities of Lucknow and Hyderabad respectively. Thus my dissertation contributes to this literature by taking a step back from the postmodernist turn and focusing on moments that help understand how collective identities emerge, get established, and are sustained over time, and which factors play a role in the process.

In particular, I engage with three strands of scholarship that deal with the theme of

¹¹ Robnett, Belinda. 2002. "External political change, collective identities, and participation in Social Movement Organizations" in *Social movements: identity, culture, and the state* edited by David Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Todd, 2005 (op.cit.).

¹² Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 2000. "Beyond 'identity'". *Theory and Society : Renewal and Critique in Social Theory*. 29 (1): 1-47.

collective identity. These include: literatures that focus on the role of the state in defining collective identities; literatures that emphasize the role of emergent elites in changing socio-economic conditions, and how they help project collective identity claims; and literatures that discuss the effects of intergroup competition and threat perceptions on collective identity. My work builds on the first two literatures, and diverges from the third.

Collective Identity: State, elites and competition

Scholars have long discussed the role of the state in shaping the collective identities of its inhabitants. The state has been shown to be one of the most powerful political institutions that puts formal labels on groups and shapes group identities through its control over resources; and by channeling political access through such identifications.¹³ We also know that the state's racial and ethnic policies are influential in popular mobilization along specific group identities.¹⁴ The State's shaping of collective identities can also be seen in the debates over: affirmative action policies; composition of policy-making bodies and judicial panels; and in the enforcement of laws that regulate discrimination of minority groups.¹⁵ Additionally, the Census has also been identified as a key mechanism through which group identities are described, sorted, and imposed on populations to create racial, ethnic, and religious collective identities.¹⁶ The colonial Indian

¹³Nagel, Joane 1986 "The political construction of ethnicity." In *Competitive Ethnic Relations*, eds. S. Olzak and J. Nagel, 93-112. New York: Academic Press

¹⁴Roosens, Eugene E. 1989 *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

¹⁵Gamson, William, and Andre Modigliani 1987 "The changing culture of affirmative action." In *Research in Political Sociology*, ed. R.G. Braungart. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

¹⁶Harris, D. R., and J. J. Sim. 2002. "Who Is Multiracial? Assessing the Complexity of Lived Race". *AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW*. 67: 614-627; Harris, M., J. Gomes Consorte, J. Lang, and B. Byrne. 1993. "Who Are the Whites?: Imposed Census Categories and the Racial Demography of Brazil". *SOCIAL FORCES*. 72 (2): 451; Hirsch, Francine. 1997. "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses". *Slavic Review*. 56 (2): 251-278; Robinson, F. 1998. "The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia". *TRANSACTIONS- ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY*. 8 (Sers 6): 271-290; Kertzer, David I., and Dominique Arel. 2001. *Census and identity the politics of race, ethnicity, and language in national census*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

census was critical to the emergence of caste based collective identities as it juxtaposed its own version of fixed group categories with actual categories of social identity that were much more ambiguous, flexible and contextual.¹⁷ This literature is top heavy as the state and its mechanisms seem to have an overbearing, vertically downward, effect over collective identities. While some historically informed works on movements, rebellions and revolutions have discussed how broader identities such as the 'nation form',¹⁸ 'national citizenship',¹⁹ or the more abstract notion of 'the people' and 'sovereignty' have been shaped from below,²⁰ but these works do not consider the formation of more specific group identities within nations. My research focuses on the formation of specific, sub-national collective identities and how these formations were affected by the state, and by collective action that aimed to engage with the state.

Another set of literatures emphasizes the role of elites in how they imagine, construct, project, and demand acceptance of collective identities. While Benedict Anderson uses a similar argument for the construction of a larger collective identity, the nation²¹ Paul Brass's work on elite symbol manipulation shows how elites can alter the purported 'givens' of group identities, and emphasize specific differences, over many similarities, to establish distinct group identities,

¹⁷ Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of mind: colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

¹⁸ Morrison, Michael A., and Melinda S. Zook. 2004. *Revolutionary currents: nation building in the transatlantic world*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁹ Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. New York: ACLS History E-Book Project;

²⁰ Sewell, William H. 1980. *Work and revolution in France: the language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Sewell, William H. 1994. *A rhetoric of bourgeois revolution: the Abbé Sieyès and What is the Third Estate?* Durham: Duke University Press.

²¹ Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1991. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

in their quest for power.²² Collective identity claims of both ethnicity and nation have remained the staple of elites across societies.²³ Elites are also shown to interact with civil society organizations in ways that help sustain sectarian identities, as a study shows in post civil war Lebanon,²⁴ and they also utilize print media, newspapers, and texts as directed communication for creating new collective identities.²⁵ Religious, political and intellectual elites have also been seen using multiple repertoires such as leadership, representation and performance, in projecting particular collective identities such as ‘British Muslim’ in contemporary UK.²⁶ In a more specific context, the nineteenth and twentieth century are replete with instances where new elites among Muslims, religious as well as lay, have emerged as representatives of the community and have made claims on behalf of the community as well as to the community. Earlier scholarship framed these instances as anti-progressive, and a return to medieval values because the assumption remained that that these religious elites were opposed to modernity and modern values.²⁷ Another strand in scholarship frames these interactions within the rubric of ‘Modernist Islam’ on the basis of modernist tendencies, ideas and technologies that many Muslim authors and activists embraced. These elites “sought to reconcile Islamic faith with modern values,” where modern

²² Brass, Paul R. 1974. *Language, religion and politics in North India*. London: Cambridge University Press.

²³ Calhoun, Craig. 1993. "Nationalism and Ethnicity". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 19: 211-239.

²⁴ Clark, Janine A., and Bassel F. Salloukh. 2013. "ELITE STRATEGIES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SECTARIAN IDENTITIES IN POSTWAR LEBANON". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 45 (04): 731-749.

²⁵ Wei, Zhang. 2015. "Making Chinese Australia Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892-1912". *Journal of Australian Studies*. 39 (1): 114-116.

²⁶ Ahmad W.I.U., and Evergeti V. 2010. "The making and representation of muslim identity in Britain: Conversations with British muslim 'elites'". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 33 (10): 1697-1717.

²⁷ Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Fethi Mansouri. 2007. *Islam and political violence Muslim diaspora and radicalism in the west*. London: Tauris Academic Studies; Hunter, Shireen T. 2005. *Modernization, democracy, and Islam*. Westport, Conn [u.a.]: Praeger; Gole, Nilufer. 1999. "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: the making of elites and counter-elites". *Peace Research Abstracts*. 36 (4).

values included constitutionalism, nationalism, scientific inquiry, modern education and women's rights.²⁸ The scholarship on Muslim elites includes a variety of definitions of the elites. Traditional religious elites among the Muslims have often been the *ulama*, traditionally educated religious scholars, who have been the focus of several studies. In her historical study of Islamic revival in British India, Barbara Metcalf has shown how the *ulama* played a central role in anchoring the Muslim community. The *ulama* reemphasized the need to understand facets of Islamic traditions while simultaneously adopting modern print technology to respond to colonial rule.²⁹ In recent work on *ulama* and their religious and political projects in British India and modern Pakistan, Qasim Zaman has also focused on *ulama*, traditionally educated at religious institutions. Zaman shows how the *ulama* have been at the center of religious mobilization, and how low ranking *ulama* have contributed to the refashioning of religious identities with the support of the middle class.³⁰ On the other hand, other scholars have also focused on 'new' religious intellectuals, separate from the traditionally educated clerics, and how they have impacted Muslim politics in various parts of the world.³¹ This literature, however, is elite centric as it focuses mainly on the efforts of elites aimed at the state, vertically upwards, and does not discuss in detail the relationship between the state and elites. My research builds on this literature

²⁸ Kurzman, Charles. 2010. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: a sourcebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁹ Metcalf, Barbara Daly. 1982. *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

³⁰ Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2007. *The Ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

³¹ Eickelman, Dale F., and James P. Piscatori. 1996. *Muslim politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Eickelman, Dale F., and Jon W. Anderson. 2003. *New media in the Muslim world: the emerging public sphere*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Kramer, Gudrun, and Sabine Schmidtke. 2006. *Speaking for Islam religious authorities in Muslim societies*. Leiden: Brill; Kurzman, 2010 (op. cit.).

by also bringing the interactions, and relationships between community based elites, state based elites, and the state.

A third set of literatures discusses the role of competition, and perceived threats in the emergence of conflicts along collective identities. An older perspective in this scholarship is that segregation between groups caused inequalities and this eventually gave way to conflict along lines of segregation.³² But this claim has been contested by a number of scholars who do not see segregation to cause conflict.³³ In fact, Wilson's work on racial relations in the USA shows that integration across racial lines was the reason that triggered intergroup violence.³⁴ Olzak's comparative and historical analysis of ethnic conflict in America over the twentieth century shows that it is the processes of competition that account for patterns of conflicts and protests involving diverse ethnic targets. She focuses on four related contexts—immigration and migration, economic contraction, increases in ethnic-group resources, and political challenges to ethnic dominance—within which these competitions take place and where perceptions of threat, are constructed.³⁵ This subfield has motivated a number of studies of riots.³⁶ However, most of

³² Hechter, Michael. 1975. *Internal colonialism: the Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

³³ Banton, Michael. 1983. *Racial and ethnic competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ragin, Charles. 1977. "Class, Status, and "Reactive Ethnic Cleavages": The Social Bases of Political Regionalism". *American Sociological Review*. 42 (3): 438-450; See, K. O., and W. J. Wilson. 1988. "Race and Ethnicity." Pp. 223-43 in N. J. Smelser (ed.) *Handbook of Sociology*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.

³⁴ Wilson, William J. 1978. *The declining significance of race: Blacks and changing American institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³⁵ Olzak, Susan. 1993. *The dynamics of ethnic competition and conflict*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, p.1.

³⁶ Tambiah S.J. 1996. *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press ; Horowitz D.L. 2001. *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press; Brass, Paul R. 2011. *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Wilkinson, Steven. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

the sociological and political science research on riots has focused on “(a) identifying the ‘real’ underlying economic or political causes of riots and (b) testing the main theories of riots through massive data-collection projects and statistical analyses.”³⁷ One of the explanations behind riots based on collective identities uses intergroup and intragroup civic engagement as predictors of violence.³⁸ In this study, several peaceful and riot-prone cities in India are compared on formal and quotidian civic engagements between groups. Formal civic engagements are measured through the presence, density, and membership of formal civil society organizations that have members from both Hindu and Muslim community. These organizations are seen as interethnic bridging mechanisms that can regulate communal conflict. This type of engagement is claimed to dissipate communal tensions before it transforms into communal violence. By quotidian civic engagements, the author alludes to everyday, informal interactions between groups. However, he argues that formal engagements are more robust than quotidian ones in managing conflict. He shows that when both formal and quotidian interethnic relations are strong, communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims are likely to be dissipated before they transform into riots. In contrast, the lack of both types of engagements, or the weakness of even formal intercommunity civic associations make it more likely for Hindu-Muslim riots to occur. This line of thought, especially the reliance on civic engagement, is contested, as there are counter arguments that extant civic engagements are not enough to prevent or dissipate communal riots. Instead, patterns of violence show that communal tensions can transform existing intergroup civic organizations into partisan bodies that can also become a party in communal riots.³⁹

³⁷ Wilkinson, 2009, p.338. Ibid

³⁸ Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

³⁹ Brass, Paul R. 2006. *Forms of collective violence: riots, pogroms, & genocide in modern India*. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective.

Another set of studies focus on the link between riots, elections, and the religious identity of the voters. Paul Brass argues that India has had a long history of Hindu-Muslim riots and that no single explanation of these riots is sufficient. He claims that an institutionalized riot system has existed in independent India and that riots are deliberate events that are organized around closely contested elections. Brass emphasizes the mechanisms that deliberately provoke endemic communal tensions and transform them into riots before a closely fought election where communal polarization can help alter the electoral outcome. He argues that riots are one of the weapons used by local leaders for personal and electoral advantages. Though Brass sees riots as creating solidarity within groups, his discussion is limited to solidarity for electoral advantages alone.⁴⁰ Wilkinson's analysis of connections between elections and riots similarly considers the effects of riots over groups, but again his focus is limited to electoral behavior of groups alone. He claims that: "town-level electoral incentives account for where Hindu-Muslim violence breaks out and that state-level electoral incentives account for where and when state governments use their police forces to prevent riots."⁴¹

My project contributes to these literatures in two specific ways. One, I build on the first two literatures—about the role of the state and elites in shaping collective identities—by emphasizing how interactions between them were critical to collective identities. My focus is on the joint efforts, sometimes unintended, of community based elites and elites located within the structures of the state in shaping collective identities. This focus allows me to show how claims about new collective identities or revisions of older ones were presented not simply by community based elites or the state acting by themselves, but by the joint efforts of both. I argue

⁴⁰ Brass, 2011. Ibid.

⁴¹ Wilkinson, Steven Ian. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press, p.4

that community based elites perceived openings provided by the state for specific collective identities, and made corresponding claims. However, these claims gained legitimacy only when the state, through elites either based within the structures of the state or those whom the state gave patronage, aligned with such claims.

My second contribution pertains to the literature on intergroup conflicts and perceived threats based on competition. This literature, specifically Susan Olzak's work, generally argues that competitions arose when segregation between groups declined and integration increased, giving rise to inter-group conflicts. My cases, both Hyderabad and Lucknow, show that competitions arose without any major shift in segregation or integration between groups. Shia and Sunni Muslims lived in the old city with a few Hindus, and intergroup conflicts between Hindus and Muslims arose in Hyderabad without any shift in the levels of segregation or integration. In Lucknow, Shia-Sunni conflicts evolved without any shift in integration or segregation. In fact, in both my cases conflicts preceded segregation and migration. This literature has another limitation that I attempt to address. This literature is primarily oriented towards explaining conflict, and in attempting to do so, takes group identities and inter-group distinctions as givens. Olzak treats distinct ethnic and racial groups as already existing, as do Varshney, Wilkinson and Brass with religious groups. I differ in approach as I attempt to explore the making of intergroup distinctions, and analyze conflict as a process in the rise of these distinctions. I show that sectarian differences in my case were too indistinct to begin with. Instead, my data shows that conflict and violence were repertoires used in the process of making intergroup distinctions.

Finally, this project also aims to contribute to the literature on Muslim identity in South Asia. For more than a generation, scholars have documented how British colonial authorities,

and later the postcolonial state, carved out ‘Muslim’ and ‘Hindu’ categories in India despite the lack of such crystal clear categories on the ground.⁴² The overarching ‘Muslim’ identity fits unevenly with actual Muslim identities, which have varied by class, community, and region.⁴³ (Gilmartin 1988; Ghosh 2008). My project extends this scholarly literature by examining sectarianism among Muslims in India, in particular among the Shia community. Sectarianism among South Asian Muslims has not been studied systematically barring a handful of historical works.⁴⁴ Focusing on sectarianism also helps because only “by studying both the intercommunity and the intracommunity conflicts, can we study the multiple truth-claims” that are related with community identities.⁴⁵ My project also contributes to this regional literature by looking beyond the Hindu/Muslim division that has occupied much of the scholarship on collective identities in South Asia.

Shia-Sunni Differences: A Brief History

Muslim communities across the globe differ from each other based on ethnicity, language, culture and religious jurisprudence.⁴⁶ However, one of the most widely recognized

⁴² Hardy, Peter. 1972. *The Muslims of British India*. London: Cambridge University Press.
Harkness, Margaret Elise. 1914. *Modern Hyderabad (Deccan)*. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co; Hasan, Mushirul. 1979. *Nationalism and communal politics in India, 1916-1928*. New Delhi: Manohar; Masselos, Jim. 2007. *The city in action: Bombay struggles for power*. New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press; Pandey, Gyanendra. 1990. *The construction of communalism in colonial north India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴³ Gilmartin, David. 1988. *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the making of Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Ghosh, Papiya. 2008. *Community and Nation: Essays on Identity and Politics in Eastern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁴ Hasan, Mushirul. 1996. “Traditional Rites and Contested Meanings: Sectarian Strife in Colonial Lucknow.” *Economic and Political Weekly*. 31 (9): 543-550; Ilahi, S. 2007. “Sectarian Violence and the British Raj: The Muharram Riots of Lucknow.” *India Review -London- Taylor and Francis*. 6 (3): 184-208; Jones, Justin. 2011. *Shi’a Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵ Pandey, Gyanendra. 1990. *The construction of communalism in colonial north India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. xi.

⁴⁶ Cornell, Vincent J. 2007. *Voices of change*. Westport, Conn. [u.a.]: Praeger Publishers;
<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-executive-summary>

differences about the global Muslim community is based on sect. The Sunni sect constitutes the vast majority among Muslims at approximately 80-90%, and the rest are Shia. These sects are distributed all over the world but only Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and Azerbaijan are Shia majority countries. Considerable Shia populations exist in Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and South Asia.⁴⁷ This sectarian division is traced to disputes over Muhammad's succession after his death in 632 AD. The prophet of Islam was succeeded by four caliphs who led the community for several years each until their deaths. While the first three caliphs were Muhammad's early associates, the fourth, Ali, was his cousin and son in law. Partisans of Ali maintained that he was Muhammad's closest male relative and his special protégé, and that the first three caliphs usurped Ali's right to leadership of the community. Ali's partisans constituted the early Shia community. While the Sunni revere all four caliphs—Abu Bakar, Umar, Usman, and Ali—the Shia do not accept the first three caliphs as their leaders. Instead, they treat Ali as their first Imam (leader). Ali was the first in a line of twelve Imams who held hereditary authority. While the period of the first eleven Imams are well documented, the Shia believe that the twelfth Imam went into occultation and will reappear as the savior on judgment day. After a few decades of Muhammad's death, the second son of Ali, Husain, who was also the third Imam of the Shia, was killed by the army of the contemporary caliph at the city of Karbala, in Iraq. Husain and his seventy-two associates were massacred fighting a much larger army in 680 AD. This event at Karbala was the defining moment in the sectarian rivalries between the Shia and the Sunni in the seventh century.⁴⁸ While this sectarian division is grounded in a historic dispute, both sects have

⁴⁷ <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/>; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>; Blanchard, Christopher M. 2006. *Islam Sunnis and Shiites*. [Washington, D.C.]: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS21745.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbas. 1986. *A socio-intellectual history of the Isnā 'Asharī Shī'īs in India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers; Hollister, John Norman. 1953. *The Shi'a of India*. London: Luzac.

lived along each other throughout history as various communities have coexisted in different parts of the world. However, in times of conflicts between the two sects anywhere in the world, this historic dispute becomes an easy recourse for popular mobilization. Although the local and temporal contexts play an important role in contemporary Shia-Sunni conflicts, symbolic historic issues and their memorialization has remained salient over time.⁴⁹

The Relevance of Muharram

Muharram is the name of the first month in the Islamic calendar. However, this marker of a new year does not induce celebrations among Muslims. Instead, it denotes a period of mourning for the community in general and highly ritualized and performative mourning among the Shia sect of Islam. Mourning is observed in commemoration of the 680 AD massacre of the Prophet's grandson Husain, men in his family and others among his warrior supporters. This massacre took place on *ashra*, the 10th day, of Muharram during a battle at Karbala, Iraq where Husain's band of seventy-two fought with a much larger army of Yazid, the second caliph in the Umayyad Caliphate.⁵⁰ In South Asia, especially in British India and later in independent India and Pakistan, Muharram denotes not just the specific month but also an entire period and a gamut of significant days, rituals, and observances. While early descriptions from India include mourning rituals during the first ten days of the month, mourning practices expanded to specific days in the two succeeding months after Muharram. Safar, the second month, and the first 8 days of the third month, Rabi I, also mark mourning rituals. In total, the term Muharram in modern India includes mourning rituals, both private and public, beginning on the eve of the 1st

⁴⁹ Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2007. *The Ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. pp. 112-113.

⁵⁰ Martin, Richard C. 2004. *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA; Ṭabaṭabai, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. 1975. *Shi'ite Islam*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

day of Muharram and until the 8th day of Rabi I, adding up to approximately 67 days. However, there are three key days that stand out as special during this period. The most important day is the 10th day of Muharram, *ashra*, marking Husain's death. The second is 20th of *safar*, which is the 40th day after Husain's death, popularly known as *chehlum* in India, which is the traditional day when mourning for the departed culminates among South Asian Muslims. The third is also the last day of the mourning period, that falls on the 8th of Rabi I. This day marks the death of the eleventh Imam, Hasan Askari, in a much later year. Another legend for this last day of mourning is that the fourth Imam, Husain's son, is believed to have smiled for the first time after the battle of Karbala on the 9th of Rabi I.⁵¹ This sixty seven day period, loosely referred to as Muharram, is marked by mourning rituals, fasting, consumption of simple meals, wearing black clothing, and a general abstinence from sex and all other acts that proxy for happiness, especially among the Shia. The Islamic calendar is lunar, so dates move ahead by 11 days every year. Therefore Muharram falls in different seasons every year, and intersects with different Hindu festivals that follow the solar calendar. The period of Muharram is centered on collective mourning rituals that are together called *Azadari*. This perso-arabic term means 'conduct of mourning.' *Azadari* in South Asia is constituted roughly of four collective elements-- *Majlis*, *Maatam*, *Juloos*, and *Ziayarat*.

Majlis, a Persian term, is a religious congregation where a cleric or lay orator uses a highly dramatized and authoritative style of story telling to narrate the battle of Karbala, the courage of Husain, the devotion of his associates, and the suffering of his family at the hands of the caliph's army. While the story telling is homologous, the audience expresses adulation over instances of courage, and there is ritualized weeping over tragic episodes. The narration is

⁵¹ For detailed descriptions see Schubel, 1993 (op. cit.); Hollister, 1953 (op. cit.); Martin, 2004 (op. cit.).

bookended by elegies and Maatam. A Majlis is usually hosted and attended by Shia Muslims, though there are sometimes Sunni participants too. Sunni Muslims hold parallel congregations usually known as *mehfil* in Husain's memory especially to eulogize his character, courage and martyrdom.⁵²

Maatam, literally mourning, refers to a set of Muharram rituals centered on the act of self-inflicted bodily injuries in the memory of Husain. The injury may range from symbolic patting and beating of the chest to cuts inflicted over the chest, back and head. Maatam accompanies elegies sung by men's guilds that practice for weeks before Muharram. This collective performance, often in public, reflects one's devotion to Husain and is used to signal one's zeal among fellow believers and other audiences. Maatam commemorates the death of Husain and his associates.⁵³

Juloos, an Arabic word for procession, pertains to the main processions on the days of *ashra* and *chehlum*. The *Juloos*, in both Lucknow and Hyderabad, have common key elements though some local variations also exist. In the past when royal patronage was the driving element, these processions started from major buildings that symbolized a connect between the memory of Husain and the authority of the sovereign, usually buildings built by the sovereigns in memory of Husain. The processions were led by bands of the sovereign's army, cavalry, service animals from the royal stable and these contingents were followed by devotees from myriad communities. Participants included not only Muslims but also Hindus and other ambivalent groups such as indigenous tribes and performing communities such as jugglers and fire throwers. Public participation in the Muharram procession as well at the shrines and Karbala, among non-

⁵² Rizvi, 1986 (op.cit.); Cole, 1989 (op.cit.)

⁵³ Pinault, 1992 (op.cit.); Schubel, 1993 (op.cit.)

Muslims, was driven by two key motivations. First was the tendency to follow practices supported by the sovereign, especially among elites, and the second was devotion to Husain who is revered as one of the many saints in popular South Asian imagination. Husain is revered by non-Muslims in South Asia within the polytheistic traditions of Hinduism that is uniquely accommodative of religious beliefs.⁵⁴ The Muharram processions were huge gatherings of individual devotees, animals, standards, flags, *maatami anjumans* (groups of men performing self-flagellation synchronized by elegies commemorating the Karbala battle of 681 AD), jugglers, martial artists etc moving in a chaotic order on the main thoroughfare of the city towards a traditionally designated destination. The martial artists displayed stick wielding, and swordsmanship to the beats of war drums that others played along. All these performances, sometimes opposed to the aesthetic sense of one group or another, were symbolic of the ways in which various groups and communities commemorated Husain, his character, and his death in their own ways unhindered. While the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Lucknow weakened over time and ceased to exist, these processions continue to exist although with changes in the content, participants, performances and routes. In both cities, like many other cities in India, the Muharram procession is one of the largest religious events that include massive administrative preparedness and police arrangements.⁵⁵

Ziyarat pertains to visitation to a pilgrimage site and circumambulation of the central shrine or relic within its sacred built environment. During Muharram processions, participants

⁵⁴ See commentary by Maloney, 1974 (op. cit.) p. 158; Cole, 1989 (op. cit.) p.117; Hollister, 1953 (op. cit.) p. 168, 177.

⁵⁵ Sharar, 1976 (op. cit.); Pinault, 1992 (op. cit.); Meer Osman Ali, 1973 (op. cit.); Shah, 2005 (op. cit.); Hollister, 1953 (op. cit.); Freitag, Sandra B. 1989. *Collective action and community: public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

reach the final destination, either a local Karbala in Lucknow, or an Ashoorkhana in Hyderabad, where the objects held by people in the procession are paraded in a circle around the shrine.⁵⁶ In addition to these practices, there are symbols, objects, and places that are also pivotal to the observance of Muharram in South Asia. Husain died, or martyred as in the emic perspective, during the battle at Karbala, a city in present day Iraq. Muslim communities in India often denote a local piece of land as Karbala, which also doubles as a burial ground. Often, these Karbala in India have a life size replica of Husain's mausoleum, originally built in Iraq, complete with Husain's grave under the central dome of the shrine. These Karbala replicas function as cemeteries for the Shia, as the culmination point for ritual Muharram processions, and sites where the Taziya are buried on the day of Ashra.

Apart from the local Karbala, there is one more built environment that is critical to Shias in India in general, and to Muharram devotional practices in particular. This is a shrine complex known as Ashurkhana in Hyderabad, and Imambara in Lucknow. These are similar in function though there are some differences owing to the varying contexts through which these shrines have evolved over time. These shrine complexes usually include a domed structure surrounded by verandahs and a courtyard enclosed by a boundary wall. Located at important sites in the city landscape, these shrines always house a grand, and several smaller, Alam, a replica of Husain's battle standard. These shrines also house various other commemorative objects that are provided by either the patrons who build these shrines, or devotees who worship here. The everyday function of these shrines includes visitations by devotees who come for spiritual guidance and favor from Husain. However, during Muharram these shrines also function as the starting point

⁵⁶ Martin, 2004 (op. cit.) p. 141.

for processions, as well as the final destination of people returning home after the processions culminate at the Karbala.⁵⁷

Alam is an imagined replica of Husain's battle standard carried by Abbas, his half brother, in Karbala. It is usually a tall bamboo pole wrapped in black and green cloth and adorned with a banner with Husain's name. The top has a large metal hand denoting the five figures especially revered by Muslim communities- Muhammad, Fatima, Ali, Hasan, and Husain, all members of Muhammad's immediate family. The Alam is also decorated with flowers, and sometimes with a sheepskin water bag that was in vogue during the battle of Karbala. Alams are carried by leading individuals in groups that constitute the Muharram procession and they are lowered for devotees to enable them to touch and kiss it on its way to the local Karbala.⁵⁸

Taziya, literally meaning condolence in Persian, pertains to a peculiar object used in Lucknow and North India during Muharram. It is a miniature replica of Husain's tomb in Karbala, Iraq, and is central to devotional life during Muharram in India. The Taziya, varying in size from a few inches to several meters, are kept in special places in Muslim homes for the first nine days of Muharram. Made of myriad materials, but mostly of bamboo and paper, these structures are carried by people in public processions on Ashra, the tenth day of Muharram, to the local Karbala, where they are ceremoniously buried in special graves. Their burial mimics the last rites of a person, and takes place as the culminating event on Ashra after which people return to their homes for the day. The Taziya, in India, are material objects used to create tangible connections between the faithful and the memory of Husain. The Juloos, or Muharram

⁵⁷ Saksena and Roy Burman, 1961 (op. cit.)

⁵⁸ Ibid

procession, is constituted of small groups organized around a particular Taziya. These constituent groups may be either formed of family members in cases where the Taziya is maintained by a particular family, or it could be friends or neighbors who maintain the Taziya together. Individual Taziyas mark the smallest unit of people who make up the large Muharram processions.⁵⁹ Moreover, the orders in which Taziya are paraded within a neighborhood, or the exact place that a particular Taziya occupies within large city processions, are governed by local patterns of status, power, and influence. Taziyas have been central to many controversies within and between communities, as well as between Taziya keepers and local administration because of its inherent association with such local patterns of authority.⁶⁰

Sunni Participation in Muharram

While most Muslims across the world observe Muharram as a solemn period, it is only in South Asia where a considerable proportion of Sunni Muslims participate in public rituals with a zeal that is comparable to that of the Shia.⁶¹ The legacy of Persian, Turkish and other central asian cultural traditions associated with Muharram may have a role to play in this phenomena. However, some Sunni rituals differ from those of the Shia. Participants in Muharram processions, other than Shia, often follow a wider set of rituals in addition to Maatam. These include swordsmanship, fencing, stick fighting, and fire breathing. Instead of focusing on mourning alone, these rituals reflect a celebration of martial skills among Husain's band of warriors in the battle of Karbala. Further, other community groups such as the *nat*, a hybrid

⁵⁹ Cole 1989, (op. cit.); Pinault, 1992 (op. cit.)

⁶⁰ Masselos, Jim. 2007. *The city in action: Bombay struggles for power*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.; Freitag, 1989 (op. cit.)

⁶¹ Hollister, 1953 (op. cit.) p. 177; Freitag, 1989 (op. cit.) p. 249-79; Cole, 1988 (op. cit.) p. 229.

community that performs gymnastics as its traditional occupation, also display jugglery and rope walking as part of their devotion to Husain's memory.⁶²

Muharram rituals including Maatam and martial arts are also tied to class status among participants. While the mild forms of Maatam, such as patting/beating the chest, is a widely followed custom among upper class Muslims, more physical forms such as self inflicted cuts are followed generally by lower class groups both among Shia and Sunni Muslims. The Shia usually perceive displays of martial arts and jugglery, performed mainly by non Shia communities, with disdain. On the other hand, many among the Sunni perceive the bloody forms of Maatam as reprehensible and un-Islamic.⁶³

Methods

This comparative historical project investigates the complex processes through which collective identities form. I use varied evidence including data on riots, elections, archival material, and in-depth interviews of key individuals in Lucknow and Hyderabad cities. Data collected for this project is in English, Hindi and Urdu languages and I am fluent in reading, writing and speaking across these three languages, with the latter two being my first languages.

My explanations are based on inferences that I draw from 'structured, focused comparison of similar parameters' across my data and materials.⁶⁴ This project looks at various factors that affect collective identity and this will involve dealing with 'multiple causality' that

⁶² Schubel, 1993 (op. cit.); Cole, 1989 (op. cit.); Meer Osman Ali, 1973 (op. cit.); Sharar, 1976 (op. cit.); Zaman, 2007 (op. cit.)

⁶³ Cole, 1989 (op. cit.); Meer Hasan Ali, and William Crooke. 1974. *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*. Karachi: Oxford University Press; Jones, Justin. 2012. *Shi'a Islam in colonial India: religion, community and sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁴ George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press;

requires careful data analysis.⁶⁵ In addition to in-depth interviews, data on riots and elections, and archival material, my project is dependent on existing historical works related with my cases. I will summarize, and simplify relevant historic detail to extract systematic features for analysis, with a focus on key outcomes that this project is studying.

Case Selection

Contemporary politics and conflicts in the Middle East are often framed by sectarianism within the Muslim community, especially through the tensions between Shia and Sunni Muslims.⁶⁶ While scholarship abounds on the historical analysis of religious, cultural, and political factors that have contributed to this conflict, the study of sectarianism in the Middle East is inadvertently linked to large scale violence, and international geostrategic competitions related to oil politics. My project extricates the sectarian divide among Muslims, from this context and instead focuses on modern India where the two sects have historically interacted in a relatively more local context, and have been somewhat distant from the intrigues of international relations and oil politics. This allows me to study Shia-Sunni sectarianism by focusing on local politics and culture.

I compare Lucknow with Hyderabad since both are prominent centers of Shia community and cultural life in modern India.⁶⁷ Both are Hindu majority cities that have had a substantial and

⁶⁵ King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁶⁶ Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. 2006. *The Shia revival: how conflicts within Islam will shape the future*. New York: Norton; Pelham, Nicolas. 2008. *A new Muslim order: the Shia and the Middle East sectarian crisis*. London: I.B. Tauris; Machlis, Elisheva. 2014. *Shi'i sectarianism in the Middle East: modernisation and quest for Islamic universalism*. London: I. B. Tauris; Ahmed, Khaled. 2011. *Sectarian war: Pakistan's Sunni-Shia violence and its links to the Middle East*. Karachi: Oxford University Press; Louër, Laurence. 2008. *Transnational Shia politics: religious and political networks in the Gulf*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁶⁷ Hyder, Syed Akbar. 2008. *Reliving Karbala: martyrdom in South Asian memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.; Pinault, David. 1992. *The Shiites: ritual and popular piety in a Muslim community*. New York: St. Martin's Press.; Hasnain, Nadeem, and Sheikh Abrar Husain. 1988. *Shias and Shia Islam in India: a study in society and culture*. New Delhi: Harnam Publications.

historically influential Muslim population, as well as comparable Shia population (8-15%)⁶⁸ within Muslims. These cities have been compared in the past too.⁶⁹ At both sites, Muslims (including the Shia) are concentrated in the old city where they live with Hindu neighbors⁷⁰. In the past, both cities were parts of kingdoms founded by Shia clans from Iran and connections between each city and Iran have persisted over time.⁷¹ Hyderabad traces its heritage to the Shia Bahmani kingdom that was established in the 14th century. It was established by Hasan Gangu, a noble of Iranian descent.⁷² The Bahmani kingdom disintegrated in early 16th century, about the same time as the Safawid empire in Iran, and one of the successor state and set up the Qutb Shahi dynasty in the Deccan region in 1518. They made Hyderabad their capital in 1589 and continued to rule until 1687 when Mughals took over the Kingdom and handed it over to the Nizam, the Sunni provincial governor within the Mughal Empire. Consecutive Nizams operated as defacto rulers of Hyderabad since 1724 but they publicly maintained a symbolic reverence to the nominal Mughal emperor until the end of the empire. In the aftermath of the Mughal obliteration, a British resident was established in Hyderabad since 1798 who emerged as an alternative

⁶⁸ The Shia were enumerated separately only in a few of the census reports, thus only estimates of Shia population are available. For details see Khalidi, Omar. 2006. *Muslims in the Deccan: a historical survey*. New Delhi: Global Media Publications; Moinuddin, Khaja, V. Venugopal Rao, and T. Vedantam. 1977. *A monograph on Muharram in Hyderabad City*. Delhi: Controller of Publications; Saksena, P. N., Roy Burman, B. K., 1965. *Moharram in two cities (Lucknow and Delhi)*. Census of India, Monograph Series. Delhi: Controller of Publications. For population estimates see Rafiq Zakaria, *The Struggle Within Islam* (London:Penguin Books, 1989), p. 396; Momen, Moojan. 1985. *An introduction to Shi'i Islam: the history and doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*. New Haven: Yale University Press., p. 277; Hasnain and Husain, 1988 (op. cit.), p. 225.

⁶⁹ Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and muslims in India*. New Delhi [etc.]: Oxford University Press.

⁷⁰ Moinuddin et al, 1977 (op. cit.); Saksena and Roy Burman, 1965 (op. cit.).

⁷¹ Cole, Juan Ricardo. 1989. *Roots of north indian shī'ism in Iran and Iraq: religion and state in Awadh, 1722-1859*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.; Pinault (op. cit.).

⁷² Hollister, John Norman. 1953. *The Shi'a of India*. London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., p. 103.

authority in political affairs.⁷³

In parallel history, the kingdom of Awadh was established under Mughal sovereignty by Shia nobles from Nishapour in Iran, who carried the title of *nawab*. These provincial governors, were defacto independent rulers beginning with the weakening of the Mughal Empire in mid eighteenth century, and moved the capital to Lucknow in late eighteenth century. In sum, both kingdoms came into being in early 18th century and gradually became independent from the weakening Mughal Empire.⁷⁴ Starting in the 1770s both kingdoms had the presence of British resident officers who channeled British ideas about society and politics into local modes of governance. Persian predated Urdu as the language of the court in Lucknow and Hyderabad. Both kingdoms had social mechanisms of cultivating syncretism between Hindu and Muslim communities. This was done through patronage to religious places, and festivals, Muharram being one of such festivals. Further, Lucknow and Hyderabad have been historically connected through the mutual flow of people—soldiers, scholars, poets, and clerics. The state patronized Muharram celebrations in both cities and constructed syncretic practices around it to integrate its subjects resulting in both Muslim and non-Muslim participation in public rituals related with Muharram.⁷⁵ Yet the two cities have exhibited contrasting social cleavages in the twentieth century: Hyderabad is notorious for Hindu-Muslim riots, and Lucknow is known for persistent

⁷³ For a political history of Hyderabad see Khalidi, 2006 (op. cit.); Pinault, 1992 (op. cit.); Fisher, Michael H. 1984. "Indirect Rule in the British Empire: The Foundations of the Residency System in India (1764-1858)". *Modern Asian Studies*. 18 (3): 393-428.

⁷⁴ See Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. 1985. *A fatal friendship: the Nawabs, the British, and the city of Lucknow*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; Graff, Violette. 1997. *Lucknow: memories of a city*. Delhi: Oxford University Press;

⁷⁵ Moinuddin et al, 1977 (op. cit.); Saksena and Roy Burman, 1965 (op. cit.); Hjortshoj, Keith. 1979. *Urban structures and transformations in Lucknow, India*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Program on International Studies in Planning, in conjunction with the Program in Urban and Regional Studies, Cornell University; Pinault, 1992 (op. cit.); Hyder, 2008 (op. cit.); Shah, Alison Mackenzie. 2005. *Constructing a capital on the edge of empire: urban patronage and politics in the Nizams' Hyderabad*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Pennsylvania, 2005.

Shia-Sunni clashes.⁷⁶ While Lucknow is important for studying the historical development of a prominent Shia identity, Hyderabad is a shadow case where everything is comparable and yet a prominent Shia identity has remained relatively weak.

The period of my research begins around 1905 when two important events take place: first was the founding of the All India Muslim League in 1906, claiming a homogeneous identity for all Muslims, and second was the infamous rupture of Shia-Sunni relations in Lucknow, during 1904-1908, when both sects observed Muharram separately for the first time. Interestingly, the United Provinces, and its capital Lucknow, was home to several founding members of the Indian Muslim League. The period of interest ends in 1998 when Muharram processions are permitted after a ban that lasted twenty years.

Fieldwork

I spent close to eighteen months in the field collecting data in India. I used this time to conduct my in-depth interviews, and also did archival research at the National Archives in New Delhi, and state archives in Lucknow and Hyderabad. I also reviewed materials at several libraries.

In-depth interviews of key individuals in both cities is an important source of information for my project, especially for the third chapter. I have used these interviews to gain not only factual data, but also more importantly, insights into historic events that are critical to my story in the two cities but are not well documented. Interviews of key informants have also helped me make sense of many observations. While I started with an interview schedule, once field work began, I found that the sequence of questions as well as the actual questions in my schedule became less useful than I had imagined them to be. I found that there is variety of strengths and

⁷⁶ Varshney, 2005 (op. cit).

expertise among key informants and any single schedule of questions would not be suitable for any two people. Therefore, I extracted some key topics from my schedule and listed them in no order of preference. I used these topics to guide my interviews with key informants in Lucknow and Hyderabad. I also found that several of my interviews spontaneously transformed into group discussions as spectators joined the interview and started participating. This would happen in some of the interviews, which I conducted in public places. I have still been able to conduct many interviews in a more traditional private setting. By the end of my research, I was able to conduct 51 in-depth interviews and 16 group discussions in Lucknow and Hyderabad. My key informants included members from the general public, party members, local community and political leaders, clerics, journalists, and police personnel.

I was born and brought up in Lucknow and this gave me the advantage of reaching out to my interviewees. I also had connections in Hyderabad, which allowed me to identify and interview my key informants. Almost all interviews took place in Urdu/Hindi, with one senior police officer from Hyderabad choosing to talk in English.

Working in the archives was a mixed experience as I collected some very important materials but it was also a time intensive process that was full of unproductive periods when anticipated documents were either missing or were temporarily unavailable. Archival research in Hyderabad was specially challenging as the State Archives in Hyderabad are in a state of severe disrepair. The main problem in this archive was the limited nature of the catalogues that have been made available for researchers. A national digitization project was underway at the state archive in Hyderabad and this meant that several catalogues and documents had been engaged in the digitization process. While the Hyderabad archive is a treasure trove for my research, the available catalogues had only limited documents of interest between the periods of 1900 and

1930. The bulk of the material that I could gather here, hence, is from 1930 onwards. This asymmetric availability of information reflects in chapter two where my analysis is largely based on primary material from Lucknow and only secondary material on Hyderabad.

I have included all citations in footnotes including secondary works, and archival sources. For archival sources, I use a format such as: “document title and date, archive name/department/year/number(s) of file/page number if available,” as far as available information permits. My sources are from three archives- National Archives of India (NAI), Andhra Pradesh State Archives (APSA), and Uttar Pradesh State Archives (UPSA).

Chapter 2- Purifying Muharram, Purifying Identities: 1900-1919

Introduction

During the brief period of seven years between 1905-1912, the famed syncretism of Lucknow's Muharram, and the pride of Lucknow's Shia community, suddenly split into two separate sets of rituals. One was the puritan Shia version focused on sober mourning for Husain, the 7th century martyr in Islam, and the other evolved into a set of rituals oriented towards the remembrance of the first three caliphs of Islam. Shias and Sunnis parted ways with much public acrimony. Public tensions and violent rioting resulted in much attention by the colonial state that eventually solved the problem by formalizing the separation through inquiries, administrative orders and police arrangements. This separation of Muslims into antagonistic Shia and Sunni sects has remained a key feature of Lucknow, an Indian city uniquely infamous for persistent Shia Sunni conflicts over the 20th century.

While Shia Sunni skirmishes in Hyderabad were not unknown, they were not frequent either. Disputes over mosques, endowments and shrines sometimes resulted in litigations, while at other times became the cause of petitioning, but rarely caused violence. The period between 1888 and 1901 witnessed a number of such sectarian disputes. However, available records from 1901 to 1920 show an almost absence of Shia-Sunni frictions. In contrast, by the end of 1920, Hyderabad witnessed the emergence of grievances among Hindu communities, a precursor for communal tensions in the future.

Why did this sectarian chasm come to surface in Lucknow but not in Hyderabad? What was the role of sectarian elites and competitions in this separation? And how did the state contribute to this situation? This chapter attempts to answer these questions through an analysis of primary materials collected from archives in India, as well as through discussion of secondary material. This chapter discusses the two distinct paths inherent in the construction of a prominent Shia collective identity in colonial Lucknow. The first path involves the rise of new types of elites and organizations that engaged in identity politics through redefinition of popular public rituals, and revised identities that were juxtaposed with the perceived 'other.' The second path pertains to the role played by elites inside the structures of the purportedly secular state. The state acted both as an arena where rival collective identity claims were juxtaposed, as well as an active player that helped establish a prominent Shia identity through its multiple motivations and characteristics. Accordingly, this chapter makes a two-part argument. The first is that new or revised collective identities are projected as a result of changes in the patterns of traditional structures of authority. This involves contestations between traditional and new types of elites and organizations, as they struggle to redefine rituals, at the center of community life. The second part of the argument is that these community-based elites get access to the state through friendly elites who are located inside the state, and thus are able to present their demands. Eventually, the state, depending on its agenda and mandate, approves or disapproves these identity claims. In other words, identity based claims of distinction are projected and channeled through the partnership of community based and state based elites, and are eventually shaped through the state which may approve or disapprove them.

As a result of both these processes, a purified/revised Shia collective identity was presented by the disjoint efforts of Shia elites and organizations, and this identity was established

as unique, and distinct from the Sunnis, by the colonial government. It was the interaction between both these processes that eventually standardized sectarian identities in Lucknow. However, in Hyderabad, the shadow case for comparison, both these processes were different and hence failed to create sectarian identities. Instead, the interaction between elites and the state created Hindu and Muslim as the salient collective identities by suppressing intra-religious tensions in Hyderabad.

The Nizams of Hyderabad inherited numerous shrines, imbued with Shia symbolism, which historically commanded wide following among both Muslims and Hindus. The following was both at the level of popular piety, and later became integrated into Hyderabad's elite mechanisms of showing indirect devotion to the sovereign. These shrines transformed into centers of ritual practice during the annual Muharram period, and many of these were maintained through the state's department of religious endowments.⁷⁷ The state patronization of public Muharram rituals in Hyderabad predates Lucknow. While Muharram became a state sponsored festival in Lucknow in the 18th century, in Hyderabad successive rulers patronized Muharram since the 13th century, even if unevenly. However, in both cities Muharram played the same function at least until early 20th century. This function was two fold. The first was publicizing state power by parading symbols of the sovereign and his military might in public space. The second was the construction of a shared public ritual through which the sovereign and the subjects connected with each other, in ways that reflected a common commitment to a set of ethics.⁷⁸ The ambiguous nature of Muharram rituals kept it accessible for multiple communities,

⁷⁷ Shah, 2005 (op. cit.).

⁷⁸ Pinault, 1992 (op. cit.).

and in fact the public nature of Muharram allowed diverse religious, spiritual and cultural ideas to converge.⁷⁹

Muharram in Lucknow: A brief history

Until 1856 AD the United Provinces (UP), earlier known as Oudh with its capital Lucknow, was ruled by Nawabs of Persian Shia origins who were appointed as provincial governors in the Mughal empire. They declared defacto independence in 1724 AD when the Mughals were in decline. The Nawabs patronized Muharram into a grand public ritual in an attempt to display their piety and commitment to universally held values of justice, truth and martyrdom. The locally rooted and partly secularized version of Muharram resonated with not only Shias and Sunnis but also with the Hindu masses as its attendant public rituals drew extensively upon symbols and performance from popular Hindu festivals. Traditionally, Muharram was observed as a set of syncretic rituals through which the Nawab, aristocracy, and ordinary subjects transacted authority and legitimacy. Muharram customs of Lucknow included processions comprising of royal military bands, small family groups as well as men's religious guilds, which brought paper and bamboo Tazias to the Talkatora Karbala. The processions included Shia, Sunni, Hindu and other groups who would follow their own specific rites within a widely acceptable repertoire of practices. While Shias of most classes participated in public rituals, it was only the lower status groups within Hindus and Sunnis who would join the processional activities on the street. Upper class Sunnis commemorated Husain's martyrdom within the confines of their households.⁸⁰ The Tazias were paraded across customary routes in

⁷⁹ Maloney, Clarence. *Peoples of South Asia* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974); Schubel, Vernon James. 1993. *Religious performance in contemporary Islam: Shi'i devotional rituals in South Asia*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press.

⁸⁰ Cole, 1989 (op.cit.), p. 115.

the city before being brought to Talkatora, where they were finally buried in symbolic graves. Patronization by the Nawabs came with regulations to ensure that the festival remained free of sectarian or religious controversies. However, Oudh was annexed by the British in 1856 and the Nawabs were exiled to Calcutta. This traumatic event coupled with the suppression of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, resulted in the virtual evaporation of landed elites and feudal families from Oudh. As a result, the patronage for Muharram weakened considerably.⁸¹ Local histories suggest that Muharram public rituals correspondingly weakened over the second half of the 19th century. Eventually, in 1905-1906, Muharram suddenly transformed from a syncretic festival into a divisive one.

Lucknow: Sectarianism Inaugurated

23rd March 1908 was a day full of surprises in the city of Lucknow, India. On this day, a religious procession, which had been part of the city's memory forever, failed to make its appearance. There were no participants, no rituals, and no crowding along its route. While Shia Muslims, the key participants of the procession were sulking indoors their Sunni and Hindu fellow folk were flabbergasted at the turn of events. But it was the colonial administration that was in the most uncomfortable position. For them this was a crisis of legitimacy. Shia Muslims had told the provincial Lieutenant Governor a day before, of their decision to not take out the Chehlum Juloos, the procession marking the 40th day after Ashra. They claimed to be threatened of violence from Sunni Muslims if the procession were to be carried out. The Shia perception of threat was linked to their opposition of certain religious innovations that Sunni Muslims had been performing since 1906, and which the Shia considered offensive on religious grounds.

⁸¹ For detailed descriptions see: Sharar, 1976 (op. cit.); Oldenburg, Veena Talwar. 1984. *The making of colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Llewellyn-Jones, 1985 (op. cit.); Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. 2007. *The great uprising in India, 1857-58: untold stories, Indian and British*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

However, the Shia refusal to carry out the procession was framed as the failure of the state in protecting the religious rights of a particular class of its subjects, a charge that the British were very sensitive about. Let us quickly go back a few years to understand the problem.

Earlier, in an unprecedented move, on the 6th of March 1906, masses of Sunni Muslims in Lucknow assembled at a place they chose to call Phoolkatora Karbala, and recited *Charyari*. Literally meaning friendship of four, it pertained to organized public singing of verses in praise of the four rightly guided caliphs of Islam. It was the day of Ashra. This innovation took observers by surprise especially colonial administrators and the city police that had been in charge of making arrangements over several decades. This historic day was customarily reserved for the exclusive public mourning for Husain at the famous Talkatora Karbala, the most important Karbala in Lucknow. The choice of location at Phoolkatora, a piece of wasteland with no previous sacred value, was also surprising as the origin, route, and destinations for usual Tazia processions were otherwise strictly regulated within established notions of sacred space. This surprising set of events caused both shock and offense to elites and the masses among Shias of Lucknow who had prided themselves as the custodians of the famed Muharram of Lucknow. The Sunni decision to choose a new location for their Tazia procession, Phoolkatora Karbala, hit hard at the strength of participation at the Talkatora Karbala, the traditionally Shia managed replica of Husain's mausoleum in Iraq. Shia leaders had not foreseen the abandonment of Talkatora by such a large proportion of the participants. Further, *Charyari* was a direct affront to both the exclusivity of Husain's mourning during Muharram, and to Shia beliefs that the first three caliphs were usurpers and hence worthy of only condemnation.

Throughout 1907, Lucknow witnessed sustained tensions between the two sects that often triggered minor scuffles on days of religious importance. On 13th February 1908, the day of

Ashra, violent rioting of an unprecedented scale began on the streets of Lucknow. Several people were stabbed to death and dozens were injured. Hundreds of people were arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced after the riots. The latent tension between the two sects had become too big and violent to be handled by ordinary law. The local administration and police requested the provincial Lieutenant Governor (LG henceforth) to deal with the problem with a more suitable method.⁸² The LG responded by setting up an inquiry committee to look into the affair and suggest ways in which the sectarian problem in Lucknow could be dealt with. What caused this state of affairs in Lucknow? To answer this question, let's look at a brief history of Muharram in Lucknow, as well as critical events and processes over the last few years.

The Ashra of 1905 was no different from the ones in the last few decades. Shia Tazias came in numerous processions, lamenting Husain and others in his military band, dressed in green or dark clothes, often bare headed and without footwear, beating their breasts and heads in a display of ritual mourning. Along the same route came Sunni Tazias with participants often dressed in bright new festive clothing, each group was led by men who demonstrated martial arts such as fencing and swordsmanship, on the beats of war drums. Various other Tazias of lower caste Hindus, transsexuals, prostitutes and acrobats who followed uncertain hybrid religious beliefs, also came to Talkatore Karbala. The route of the processions was peppered with kiosks and booths selling refreshments, tobacco and the likes. The Ashra remained uneventful apart from the usual and expected rituals established by custom over the last several decades.⁸³ However, just thirty nine days later, the Chehlum of 1905 was an extraordinary one that was to ignite the sectarian cauldron in Lucknow. On this day, the 26th of April, an association of the

⁸² Deputy Commissioner to Commissioner, Lucknow division, 19th April, 1906. UPSA/GAD/591/1908. Pp. 1-8.

⁸³ Confidential memorandum, superintendent of police, Lucknow, 18th March 1905. UPSA/Police/54/1905

Shias, Anjuman Imamia, took upon itself the purification of rituals that it perceived to have become corrupted over years of Shia neglect and the free hand given to non-Shia participants. Anjuman Imamia, a recently established association of lay intellectuals and some clerics decided to implement what Lucknow's leading Shia mujtahids preachers had highlighted as degeneration of rituals. This perceived degeneration included the festive atmosphere created by the shops and booths on the route of processions, the display of acrobatics and martial arts by Sunni participants, and the participation of prostitutes who were alleged to be soliciting customers during the rituals. The Anjuman, comprising of men of repute and status, used their connections with the local administration to convince the deputy commissioner of Lucknow, a British officer, to issue general orders for maintaining decorum during the solemn festival. This decorum included a ban on the presence of prostitutes, censoring of festive activities such as acrobatics and display of martial arts, and a prohibition on tobacco usage inside the Karbala complex. The Anjuman then went ahead and took upon itself the enforcement of these orders. It is notable that Chehlum in Lucknow had historically been a smaller and largely Shia festival where non-Shia participants and festivities were anyways negligible. All that the Anjuman had to do was to convince landowners on the route of the processions to deny traders from setting up booths for food items and tobacco, a comparatively unremarkable change. However, it was more a matter of pushing in a thin wedge in the regulation of sacred space than the removal of some petty shops. The absence of Sunnis and Hindus from the Chehlum meant that no one was affected and none objected to the orders for decorum. This important but uneventful Chehlum was followed by the Anjuman organizing public meetings to offer gratitude to the government for helping Shias reform Muharram, and simultaneously publicize their freshly acquired, though stealthily,

jurisdiction over the regulation of conduct and maintenance of decorum. Enforcing these orders over Ashra the next year, was the larger game plan of the Anjuman.

On 6th of March, 1906, the next Ashra, Anjuman Imamia used the logic of precedence, the life blood of administrative decision making in the colonial state, to obtain fresh orders for the maintenance of decorum during Muharram celebrations. A day before Ashra, the orders were translated into vernacular and announced publicly by drumbeat by several volunteers of the Anjuman. However, the substantive meaning had changed between the government order and the public announcement. The announcement transmitted the message that most of the prohibitions were aimed at enforcing upon the Sunni participants, ways of the Shias such as entering the Karbala bare headed and bare feet, dressed in black and sprayed with hay as a mark of grief. The declarations also included prohibition of obvious Sunni methods such as display of martial arts and acrobatics that were central to Sunni Muharram customs.

However, Sunni leaders and a number of Maulvi (a common term for a religious scholar) countered this game plan and executed their own coup on the eve of Ashra. These leaders took several Sunni Maulvis into confidence who lent their influence over local Sunni masses, and Munshi Ehtisham Ali, an influential Sunni trader, offered his plot of land just outside the city as a brand new, and exclusive, Sunni Karbala. This place was named Phoolkatora, in the same rhyme as Talkatora, the Karbala that the Shia prided. Ehtisham Ali and other Sunni leaders met the deputy commissioner of Lucknow, Mr. Saunders, and apprised him of the simmering agitation among Sunni masses at the proclamation announced by the Shias. He suggested a way out of the impending conflict by having Saunders sign a permission that those Sunnis and Hindus who wished to take their Tazia processions to an alternative site could go to Phoolkatora if they so chose. The possibility of violent rioting just a night away was reason enough for the deputy

commissioner to oblige. The permission was issued. However, just as the Shias had manipulated the public announcement of the proclamation, this one was translated and announced to communicate that all Sunni and Hindu Tazias ‘must’ go to Phoolkatora.⁸⁴ These Sunni leaders also mobilized Sunni guilds and associations overnight and next morning; the Sunni processions went to Phoolkatora instead of Talkatora. The assembly at Phoolkatora did not simply observe the older customs such as acrobatics, display of martial skills and symbolic burial of Tazias. Instead, the men’s guilds came prepared with new symbols such as flags honoring the four caliphs, and the Tazias were redesigned so that each minaret on the replica had the name of one of the caliphs, and verses in the praise of the four caliphs. Acrobatics and martial displays were complemented with the core innovation, rhymed verses sung in chorus, in the praise of the caliphs.

Colonial intervention: The Piggott Committee of Inquiry

Charyari, the public praise of the Caliphs by the Sunni, was singularly offensive to Shias, who submitted a series of well crafted petitions and complaints to the government calling for the prohibition of this innovation. These petitions centered on objections about the innovative rituals that Sunnis in Lucknow had started, and that were seen as an insult to the religious beliefs of the Shia community. Out in the streets, Shia and Sunni groups had minor clashes throughout 1906 to 1908 but the state used existing provisions of law and order to manage the periodic frictions. However, 1908 was especially violent with large scale rioting breaking out between the two groups resulting in considerable deaths and injuries. More than 500 persons were detained, fined and imprisoned. There were also reports that the ordinary rioters were insignificant individuals often controlled by about fifty odd ‘wire-pullers’ from both sects who needed to be tackled.

⁸⁴ Confidential memorandum, T. C. Piggott. 19th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908. p. 28

There were indications that the rioting was initiated by the Shias to have the government treat the matter seriously. At the same time intelligence reports suggested that the Sunni leaders had no option but to continue supporting the street fights as they knew they “were riding the tiger ever since they had mobilized the Qasai community (Sunni butcher community).” They feared losing legitimacy among the masses if they stepped back from the increasingly publicized conflict.⁸⁵ Moreover, the government found that the deterrent value of fines and imprisonment of convicts was neutralized by subscriptions raised by both sects to support individuals convicted for rioting and their families.⁸⁶ The problem could no more be solved under the rubric of law and order. The police also requested the state to resolve the problem on a permanent basis. Finally, on the 3rd of October 1908, the provincial government of United Provinces (UP henceforth) set up the Piggott Committee.

The committee formed to resolve the problem in Lucknow was named after the British officer who chaired it, Theodore Caro Piggott. Mr. Piggott was inducted in the Indian Civil Services in 1886 and served in India 1888 onwards on several administrative positions in Bengal, NW provinces and Oudh, and later in the renamed United Provinces. He served as assistant commissioner, assistant magistrate and collector during his service. He was also vice chancellor of the Allahabad University in his later career before finally serving as judge in the high court of UP between 1914 and 1925.⁸⁷ Mr. Piggott was identified as an administrator well versed with

⁸⁵ Confidential memorandum, Theodore Caro Piggot. 19th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908. p. 29

⁸⁶ H. H. Sharpe, Police HQ, Lucknow, to R. H. Brereton, commissioner’s office Lucknow, 20th June, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908/p. 8

⁸⁷ For details on Mr. Piggott see Great Britain. 1886. *India Office and Burma Office list: containing an account of all officers in the Indian Service*. London: H.M.S.O. p. 353; Great Britain. 1898. *The India Office list*. London: Harrison, p. 14; Ealand, C. A., 1920. *Athena: A Yearbook of the Learned World The English-speaking Races*. London: A & C Black, p. 7; *House of Commons: And the Judicial Bench*. 1916. Reprint. London: Forgotten Books, 2013. 479-80. p. 479; Ilahi, Shereen. 2007. "Sectarian Violence and the British Raj: The Muharram Riots of Lucknow". *India Review*. 6 (3): 184-208.; <http://www.allahabadhighcourt.in/Judges/ex-judge1900-1990.html>.

legal controversies. This committee was mandated to inquire into the strained relations between the Shia and Sunni communities of Lucknow with a special reference to the practices and methods of celebration of Muharram. The committee met fifteen times between 13th November and 7th December to discuss evidence, record testimonies and consider material and arguments from both sides. The following sections detail the reasons behind the sectarian dispute in Lucknow on the basis of secondary literature, as well as the proceedings of the Piggot Committee, and other archival records.

The Rise of New Shia Elites and Organizations

One of the key factors that caused projections of an exclusive and prominent Shia identity in Lucknow was rooted in the actions of new Shia elites, both clerical and lay, their ideas, and their actions. The nineteenth and twentieth century are replete with instances where new elites among Muslims, religious as well as lay, have emerged as representatives of the community and have made claims on behalf of the community as well as to the community. Earlier scholarship framed these instances as anti-progressive, and a return to medieval values because the assumption remained that that these religious elites were.⁸⁸ Another strand in scholarship frames these interactions within the rubric of ‘Modernist Islam’ on the basis of modernist tendencies, ideas and technologies that many Muslim authors and activists embraced. These elites “sought to reconcile Islamic faith with modern values,” where modern values included constitutionalism, nationalism, scientific inquiry, modern education and women’s rights.⁸⁹ The scholarship on Muslim elites includes a variety of definitions of the elites. Traditional religious elites among the

⁸⁸ Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Fethi Mansouri. 2007. *Islam and political violence Muslim diaspora and radicalism in the west*. London: Tauris Academic Studies; Hunter, Shireen T. 2005. *Modernization, democracy, and Islam*. Westport, Conn [u.a.]: Praeger; Gole, Nilufer. 1999. "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: the making of elites and counter-elites". *Peace Research Abstracts*. 36 (4).

⁸⁹ Kurzman, Charles. 2010. *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: a sourcebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Muslims have often been the ulama, traditionally educated religious scholars, who have been the focus of several studies. In her historical study of Islamic revival in British India, Barbara Metcalf has shown how the ulama played a central role in anchoring the Muslim community. The ulama reemphasized the need to understand facets of Islamic traditions while simultaneously adopting modern print technology to respond to colonial rule.⁹⁰ In recent work on ulama and their religious and political projects in British India and modern Pakistan, Qasim Zaman has also focused on ulama, traditionally educated at religious institutions. Zaman shows how the ulama have been at the center of religious mobilization, and how low ranking ulama have contributed to the refashioning of religious identities with the support of the middle class.⁹¹ On the other hand, other scholars have also focused on ‘new’ religious intellectuals, separate from the traditionally educated clerics, and how they have impacted Muslim politics in various parts of the world.⁹²

The events in Lucknow during early twentieth century are tied to two types of elites. The first type was constituted of a new generation of mujtahids, Shia clergymen trained and permitted for reinterpreting religious ideas, that came from traditional clerical families entrenched within the past ruling networks of the Nawabs of Lucknow. While these were not entirely new elites, this new generation of individuals functioned as new types of elites because of a new style of conducting them in public. They defined a new mandate for themselves; played an unprecedented public role, and adopted new popular styles of reaching out to the community

⁹⁰ Metcalf, Barbara Daly. 1982. *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹¹ Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2007. *The Ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹² Eickelman, Dale F., and James P. Piscatori. 1996. *Muslim politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Eickelman, Dale F., and Jon W. Anderson. 2003. *New media in the Muslim world: the emerging public sphere*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Kramer, Gudrun, and Sabine Schmidtke. 2006. *Speaking for Islam religious authorities in Muslim societies*. Leiden: Brill; Kurzman, 2010 (op. cit.).

at large. The second type of elites included men coming from the periphery, both clerical and lay intellectuals, similar to how Zaman and Eickelman & Piscatori have discussed.⁹³ These elites came from the educated middle class and included charismatic orators, travelling preachers, lawyers and activists who acted as community leaders and opinion makers.

The new generation of clerics followed the relative silence brought about by the traumatic events of 1856 and beyond. The kingdom of Oudh was annexed by the British in 1856 on questionable charges of mismanagement and administrative inefficiencies. The last Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah, was exiled to Calcutta with his personal entourage, but the majority of nobility and *ulama* who were tied to Lucknow through land ownership, grants and endowments stayed behind. Many of these landed elites took part in the Mutiny of 1857 against the British. However the mutiny was ruthlessly suppressed and a majority of the mutinous elites were eliminated. The rest were more or less pauperized, even if they managed to secure minimal resources for their personal upkeep. These events transformed the lifeworld of dozens of aristocratic families and their retainers. The Ulama of Oudh, Shia and Sunni, as well as the elites lost patronage, resources, and prestige that they had enjoyed for generations.⁹⁴

The Nawabs of Lucknow had cultivated Shia Ulama as royal advisors and patronized them through a thick network of land grants, trusteeship of royal endowments and various other positions of power.⁹⁵ Thus the key changes brought about among the Shia of Lucknow during the 1856-58 period, was a general weakening of the position of the Ulama, discontinuation of

⁹³ Zaman, 2007 (op.cit.); Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996 (op.cit.).

⁹⁴ Aziz Ahmad. 1967. *Islamic modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*. London: Oxford University Press; Robinson, Francis. 2000. *Islam and Muslim history in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; Metcalf, 1982 (op. cit.); Hardy, Peter. 1972. *The Muslims of British India*. London: Cambridge University Press; Lelyveld, David. 1978. *Aligarh's first generation: Muslim solidarity in British India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹⁵ Cole, 1988 (op. cit.).

scholarly travel between Lucknow and Iraq, reduction in the numbers and activities of Shia organizations, a general decentering of Shia public life, and dwindling Muharram practices that had occupied prominent public space in Lucknow.⁹⁶ It was not only the structures of patronage that shifted in Lucknow but the chain of authority and hierarchy of status among the Shia Ulama also became unstable.

Apart from the few established clerical families, a plethora of new clerics and Mujtahids also appeared on the scene, several of whom had questionable credentials. There were rumors about the qualifications and training of many Mujtahids active in Lucknow in late 19th century. By 1885, the Mujtahids of Lucknow had started to recover from the shock of losing their patrons, and began operating seminaries of varying size and strength. The students prepared from these local seminaries spread out across North India and filled the vacuum created after 1856. During the same period, a new generation of Shia Ulama from the traditional clerical families started attempts to regain relevance in the changed times. Often these attempts would include-- setting up *madrassa* (school), starting public campaigns in the interest of Lucknow's Shia community, and acting as a representative for Shias in dealing with colonial administrators.⁹⁷

Among other clerics active in the first decade of the 20th century, the five *mujtahids* who were central to mobilizing Shia public opinion on a variety of local issues, and attained prominence were Nasir Husain (trained in Lucknow) founder of several Shia interest organizations, his son Naseer Husain, who was both a cleric and politician, Aqa Hasan (trained in Najaf, Iraq) who was the *peshnamaz* of Lucknow, and the two principals of Lucknow's main

⁹⁶ Jones, Justin. 2012. *Shi'a Islam in colonial India: religion, community and sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁷ Jones, 2012 (op. cit.)

Shia madrasa, Najm-ul-Hasan, and Muhammad Baqir Rizvi.⁹⁸ However, it was not just these key *mujtahids* that attracted the attention of Shia masses. The numerous seminaries and madrasas active in late 19th century had created many more small time ulama who were either waiting for, or creating opportunities for themselves. In addition, travelling preachers, and self-trained *zakirs* (religious orators) were in great supply, always available for presiding religious functions for ordinary people. The heterogeneity of styles, voices and content of religious themes available during this period was largely uncoordinated, diverse, and often oriented to divergent goals. While the Mujtahids from older families took very conservative positions within the Shia textual tradition, the traveling preachers and Zakirs were more prone to using populist tactics such as cheap polemics, taunts and ridicule towards rivals within the Shias as well as among Sunnis.⁹⁹

The sectarian dispute between both sects was partly fueled by these intra-Shia competitions for gaining following among a Shia population that was increasingly oriented towards populist styles of oratory and rhetoric. During Muharram congregations and meetings, one Zakir would often tend to outdo his rival in populist style, often choosing to throw insults or jokes on figures revered by the Sunnis.¹⁰⁰ The beginning of public Tabarra in Lucknow, a singularly offensive ritual at the heart of the sectarian conflict in South Asia, is attributed to one such Zakir, Haji Maqbool Ahmad Dehlavi.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Interview, L23/local Shia historian; Jones, Justin. 2012. *Shi'a Islam in colonial India: religion, community and sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Confidential memorandum, T. C. Piggott, 19th December 1908, p. 28. UPSA/GAD/591/1908

Tabarra, literally disassociation in Arabic language, pertains to the Shia belief in dissociating oneself from the enemies of the Prophet and his family.¹⁰² In practice, among the Shia of South Asia, *Tabarra* is a collective ritual that involves cursing the first three Caliphs revered by Sunni Muslims through prose, poetry or sloganeering. Traced to Safawid Iran, this practice came to South Asia with Iranian immigrants after the decline of the Safawid empire.¹⁰³ However, *Tabarra* had remained a private ritual performed within some Shia households and exclusive Shia Majlis (ritualized story telling sessions) during the mourning for Husain. In fact, administrative papers from as early as 1885 show that the British acknowledged *Tabarra* as an utterance that was “said indoors or with bated breath.”¹⁰⁴ In recent work on Hyderabad too, the historically private nature of *Tabarra*, when it is practiced, has been emphasized.¹⁰⁵

Maqbool Ahmad was a Sunni orphan who grew up in Delhi and converted to Shia belief during his youth. He was probably educated at a Shia religious school, and was later employed at a similar school patronized by the Nawab of Rampur, a small Shia principality in Western UP. Apart from working as a religious scholar, Maqbool Ahmad was also a *zakir*, known for his populist oratory on themes related with Muharram and Husain’s martyrdom. However, his populist oratory and choice of vernacular for sermons and speech were seen by traditional Shia ulama with contempt. Unfazed by this contempt, Maqbool Ahmad claimed popularity because of his accessible speeches especially among the masses.¹⁰⁶ In 1903-1904, Maqbool Ahmad was traveling in Lucknow during Muharram, addressing religious meetings as he went from one

¹⁰² Cole, 1988 (op. cit.), p. 108.

¹⁰³ Stanfield-Johnson, Rosemary. 2004. "The *tabarra'iyan* and the early Safavids". *Iranian Studies*. 37 (1): 47-71.

¹⁰⁴ Deputy commissioner of Barabanki to Chief Secretary of UP, 26th May, 1885. UPSA/GAD-Block/507/1885, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Hyder, 2006, (op.cit.).

¹⁰⁶ Jones, 2012 (op.cit.)

place to another. The religious marketplace in Lucknow was dense with orators and each zakir was under pressure to compete for following. It was in this year that Maqbool Ahmad chose to recite Tabarra publicly in several *majalis*, that he presided, both as proof of his Shia beliefs, and as a tactic for attracting the Shia masses of Lucknow.¹⁰⁷ This innovation had profound effects over *azadari* in Lucknow. The essence of the Majlis transformed from this point onwards from a purely tragic narrative to a polemical one where the cursing and ridicule of the first three caliphs became a frequent theme.¹⁰⁸ Maqbool Ahmad gained immense popularity due to his aggressive style, and other zakirs in Lucknow gradually followed in his footsteps. The zeal that this new Shia elite demonstrated towards Muharram rituals in early 20th century can thus be traced to the internal competitions, rivalries and differences within Shia religious leaders.

Apart from individual zakirs, and ulama, Shia interest groups also played a role in sectarianism. The first modern association founded by the resurgent Shia clerics in Lucknow was the Anjuman-i-Sadr-ul-Sadoor (organization of the chief jurists). Established in July 1901, its inauguration took place in the grounds of *Imambara Gufran-i-Maab* the complex owned by the pioneering *mujtahid* family of Lucknow, *khandan-i-ijtehad*, giving it the weight of the family's legitimacy and linking it to the legacy of Nawabi patronage. The founding members of the Anjuman were Aqa Hasan, Najm ul-Hasan and Nasir Husain, the three most influential mujtahids of Lucknow. This Anjuman had lofty goals and it quickly set up a school in Lucknow along with a press to print and disseminate religious texts.¹⁰⁹ The formation of this organization, a purported Shia interest group, was not supported by all influential Shias as some of them saw it

¹⁰⁷ Petition from the Sunni community of Lucknow, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, Pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; Imamiya Mission, *Khatīb-i-āl-i-Muhammad*, pp.11-2

¹⁰⁹ Jones, 2012 (op.cit.), p. 49.

as a betrayal of the beleaguered Muslim community in India.¹¹⁰ While the Anjuman-Sadr-i-Sadoor, did not last long, it broke up in the aftermath of the Muharram controversy of 1905, it catalyzed the revival of the *anjuman* culture among Shias of Lucknow. Although a series of such *anjumans* had existed in the past but the enthusiasm with which the new associations functioned, and galvanized the Shia community of Lucknow, was a new phenomenon. Several Anjumans, headed by various clerics, lay elite and sometimes ordinary Shia folk were established in the first decade of the 20th century. Although not all of these new organizations were antagonistic towards other religious or sectarian communities, the mushrooming of Shia interest organizations portrayed a sense that the Shia community in Lucknow was arriving on its own, and in the process challenging the colonial narrative of a homogeneous Muslim community in India. The message that the network of these new associations transmitted was that Shias were an autonomous community,¹¹¹ a claim that was critical to gaining colonial attention for affirmative action and special representation in education and employment.

Anjuman-i-Sadr-al-Sadoor fragmented due to the tensions between members having varying goals and positions. The clerics who founded the anjuman were, broadly speaking, conservatives interested in religious revival. However, the other members and patrons were men of more secular backgrounds and were oriented towards making progress for the community in worldly matters such as modern education, community service, setting up of welfare organizations and pushing political interests. The tensions between these two groups, as well as within such factions peaked during the Muharram controversy of 1905 when *mujtahid* Aqa Hasan, one of the founders of the anjuman gave the call for purifying Muharram rituals and the

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 52.

¹¹¹ Jones, 2012, (op. cit.) p.155.

anjuman published a detailed pamphlet proclaiming the reforms and prohibitions. Sunni clerics and masses took offense and as a result, the prestige of Lucknow's Muharram fell prey to an ugly dispute. The anjuman broke up, but members of the anjuman especially the landed gentry, lay elite, lawyers and other educated leading Shias joined hands to set up a new organization to replace the old. This new organization was visualized as one that would balance religious and worldly issues, and was cast in the contemporary fashion of being an all India body. This new organization, All India Shia Conference (AISC henceforth), with a membership of 450 was established in Lucknow in October 1907. While most members were from UP, there was representation from Punjab, Bihar and Hyderabad by 1910, when AISC boasted 5000 members.¹¹² While it stood on the ashes of the failed anjuman founded by clerics, the AISC was able to get on board the support of Lucknow's leading clerics.¹¹³

The AISC evolved into a largely modern progressive organization that often confronted traditional oligarchies within the community that had built around endowments and trusts, and often went into litigation for freeing up resources for community welfare. These activities often created tensions between Shia factions such as the traditional aristocrats and the new educated elites.¹¹⁴ Just three years after its founding, the AISC petitioned the central government for revising the census schedule to enable Shia's getting enumerated as a separate community.¹¹⁵ Soon after, in 1914, AISC again mobilized Lucknow's leading Shia clerics and leaders and

¹¹² Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. London: Cambridge University Press; Brunner, Rainer, and Werner Ende. 2001. *The Twelver Shia in modern times: religious culture & political history*. Leiden: Brill.

¹¹³ List of Shia leaders who met the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of the AISC, NAI/Foreign/General/July/1-13/Part-A/1914/Pp.1-7.

¹¹⁴ For details see NA/Home/Judl/Part B/Deposit/Proceedings/234/1925.

¹¹⁵ Resolution 2 of AISC meeting, 3rd December, 1909, Lucknow, NAI/Home/Census/Proceedings/april/1910/72-73/part-a/p. 5.

demanding that the government induct an AISC member on the board of the Oudh Bequest (an endowment of the Lucknow Nawabs that supported Shia pilgrims in Karbala, Najaf etc) so that this representative body of the Shia's would have an active role to play in administering the legacy of Lucknow's erstwhile rulers.¹¹⁶

This period also witnessed critical changes within the larger Shia community. Post mutiny Shia society was comprised of poverty stricken aristocrats struggling to maintain their habitus, patron-less *mujtahids* from traditional clerical families moving towards new networks of patronage and followers, a small class of educated men trained in law and government, and ordinary folk with an extraordinary and unprecedented appetite for popular printed materials that addressed issues related with religion, morality and society. Apart from these individuals, guilds, associations, and clubs of varying sorts also existed in Lucknow.¹¹⁷ Within this dense space of ideas, objectives and activities the quintessential 'other,' ever crucial for identity projects, was a shifting concept. For one actor it was the Sunni zealot obsessed with his Caliphs, for another it was an ignorant Shia who took Muharram too casually, for someone else it was the fossilized Shia aristocrat who still lived in the past, for some it was the westernized Shia individual who was more interested in English education than religious reform, and for another it was the corrupt cleric who siphoned off trusts and endowments for personal profit.¹¹⁸

Growth of the print industry also played a large role in connecting the Shia middle class with religious ideas and histories, and allowed for a new type of reflection with religion. The mushrooming of printing presses translated into more opportunities for budding authors who

¹¹⁶ Resolution on the Oudh Bequest, 8th October, 1913, Jaunpur. NAI/ FOREIGN GENERAL 1914, JULY, 1-13, PART A/p. 18

¹¹⁷ Joshi, Sanjay. 2001. *Fractured modernity: making of a middle class in colonial North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹¹⁸ Jones, 2012 (op. cit.) p. 156

were often from this lay middle class with no strict religious training. The texts created during this process were therefore often conversational in style and much more accessible than the more technical treatise produced by traditional clerics. These texts often included handy booklets that were provocative in style, polemical in content and low priced, making them hugely popular.¹¹⁹ One of the joint effects of the rise of new clerical authority, lay elites, and print culture was the increasing popularity of the term ‘*qaum*’ among Shias when they described themselves collectively. Petitions, memorials and pamphlets from this period attest to the growing popularity of this term.¹²⁰ *Qaum* has been used in varying ways in colonial India by community leaders to denote caste, class, religion and a number of other such aggregations. However, within the political semantics of 20th century colonial India, *qaum* signaled ‘nation’ and reflected nationalist aspirations. A recent study rightly argues that the Shia in Lucknow were asserting themselves not just as a separate community, but also a separate religion and nation.¹²¹

Polemics around Public Rituals

Scholars of South Asia have documented that beginning with late 19th century, north India witnessed the rise of a new public culture. This involved the emergence of religious rituals performed in processions over public spaces such as streets, plazas and places of local importance to mark one’s presence, demonstrate power and claim ownership of space by various groups.¹²² One of the causes for this public culture was the relative shutdown of the formal

¹¹⁹ Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. London: Cambridge University Press.

¹²⁰ Shia-Sunni dispute in Lucknow, UPSA/GAD/591/1908; History of the sushi problem in Lko subsequent to the 7th of January 1909 , UPSA/GAD/366/1911.

¹²¹ Jones, 2012. (op. cit.)

¹²² Freitag, Sandria B. 1989. *Collective action and community: public arenas and the emergence of communalism in north India*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Masselos, Jim. 2007. *The city in action: Bombay struggles for power*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

political sphere that was heavily guarded by the colonial state.¹²³ Lucknow also witnessed the rise of this public culture, primarily through Holi (the spring festival of colors) procession among Hindus and Muharram among Muslims. Although, the Muharram processions of Lucknow were from a much older tradition, but rival public rituals of other groups, as well as innovative Shia rituals started emerging in this specially charged period. The emergence of competing public rituals was complemented by the arrival of a religious marketplace in Lucknow, as in other places. An uncoordinated plethora of religious professionals among both Shias and Sunnis often created unsavory situations both within and between the two sects. I have mentioned elsewhere the diversity of religious voices within Shias, a similar process was evident within Sunnis, where clerics emerged from within the laity; peripheral clerics pushed against formal clerical networks; and one-upmanship became the norm in the competition for gaining patronage.¹²⁴ Earlier scholarship on sectarian disputes in colonial North India often points to revivalism, and reform spearheaded by established clerics and their followers as part of a coordinated plan.¹²⁵ But recent scholarship suggests that the emergent religious marketplace in colonial North India had an inherently messy nature.¹²⁶

Archival evidence from Lucknow attests to this, and details the process through which uncoordinated actions contributed to sectarian rivalries. While the Piggott Committee was being set up in 1908, the original Sunni members identified by the administration resigned citing various personal reasons. The administration was aware of grapevine that no Sunni of repute

¹²³ Freitag, 1989 (op. cit); Devji, 1991 (op. cit).

¹²⁴ Robinson, 1974 (op.cit.); Metcalf, 1982 (op. cit); Aziz, 1967 (op. cit)

¹²⁵ Hasan, Mushirul. 1991. *Nationalism and communal politics in India, 1885-1930*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.; Metcalf, 1982 (op. cit)

¹²⁶ Jones, 2012 (op. cit)

wanted to be on the committee as they foresaw the inquiry ruling against the Sunnis.¹²⁷ This indicates the shaky grounds on which the Sunni innovations of 1906 stood. Two alternative Sunni members were recruited, one of them, Maulvi Syed Nabiullah, stopped coming for the committee meetings. The only Sunni member, who participated fully, was Maulvi Abdush Shakoor.¹²⁸ A fresh migrant from Kakori, a town near Lucknow, Abdush Shakoor was a cleric and proprietor of the newspaper *Al Najm*.¹²⁹ New to Lucknow, and restricted in the shadow of influential Sunni clerics from the Firangi Mahal family, he jumped at the Charyari controversy as a means to bolster his own role on Lucknow's sectarian politics.

Most of the Sunni clerics with any reputation and following in Lucknow belonged to the Firangi Mahal establishment, a network of scholars and religious seminaries established by the Mughals and later patronized by the Nawabs of Oudh.¹³⁰ Traditionally, these clerics remained aloof from popular controversies and conducted themselves according to their class status. Their absence from the inquiry process was in line with their background. Their legitimacy can be understood by the fact that the Sunni member of the committee, Abdush Shakoor used portions of a fatwa from Maulvi Abdul Hai of Firangi Mahal, which supported praising of the Caliphs. However, Shia members used another portion of the same fatwa to counter-argue that neither the organized praising, nor lamenting any revered figure was encouraged in Sunni Islam and hence for the Sunni, Charyari was an indefensible practice.¹³¹

¹²⁷ S/P. O'Donnell to A. L. Saunders, Allahabad, 23rd October, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 21-22.

¹²⁸ T. C. Piggot to J. W. Hose, Lucknow, 6th November, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, pp. 24-25.

¹²⁹ UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 31.

¹³⁰ Robinson, Francis. 2001. *The 'ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic culture in South Asia*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

¹³¹ Testimonies of Mujtahid Nasir Husain and Shehenshah Husain, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 119.

Shia-Sunni polemics since late 19th century had caused several tiffs between the religious establishment and elites of both sects all over north India. In Lucknow in particular, rivalries between Shia and Sunni clerics were contextualized by three trends. The first trend was the general decline in the status of Shia clerics caused by the evaporation of patronage given by the state and aristocrats. The second trend was the rise of a Sunni middle class that benefited from trades and business, providing patronage for burgeoning Sunni clerics. The third trend was a symmetric struggle within both sects as traditional clerics were being displaced by a new generation that had newer imaginations and aspirations for community leadership and politics. It was within this context that the Shia project at purifying Muharram became an opportunity for emerging Sunni elite, at projecting their own differences through contested religious beliefs, public rituals, and sacred space. *Charyari*, new flags and redesigned Tazias, along with the new burial place at Phoolkatora Karbala symbolized these differences that Sunni elites performed 1906 onwards.¹³² Even the inquiry committee underlined the purposive innovations of the flags and Charyari,¹³³ and commented that the Sunni member seemed very interested in a permanent separation of the two sects. They stated that if Maulvi Abdush Shakoor's suggestion was to be adopted it would "tend to perpetuate indefinitely the existing tension of feelings between the two sects in Lucknow with every probability of the Sunni processions continually accentuating their character as *charyari* demonstrations."¹³⁴

The motivations of new elites within the Sunni community, both lay and clerical, were also reflected through their arguments during the inquiry. Abdush Shakoor dissented with the

¹³² Final report of the Piggott Committee, January 1909, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, pp. 99-100.

¹³³ Resolution no. 14/111-591 of the General administration department, 7th January, 1909. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p.139.

¹³⁴ Resolution no. 14/111-591 of the General administration department, 7th January, 1909. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p.143.

final report of the inquiry and argued that the state should not only accept the differences between the Shia and Sunni sects but should help establish them by putting these differences on record. He castigated the committee on not emphasizing the sectarian difference as much as he thought was essential.¹³⁵ Commentary by British administrators who were intimately aware of internal debates among the emerging Sunni elite attests to these motivations. Mr. Radice, acting commissioner of Lucknow in 1909 writes about the city's educated Sunni elite, "this class is enlightened and reasonable, holds aloof from what they consider corruptions of a pure religion and have always discountenanced the Muharram celebrations." These Sunni leaders were invested in the idea of gradually weaning away the Sunni masses from Muharram celebrations of any kind, let alone the Shia version. But having no influence of their own, they mobilized Maulvis from the Firangi Mahal establishment to proclaim a complete end to Muharram mourning processions.¹³⁶

In fact, the Shias were shell shocked at the Sunni abandonment of the Phoolkatora Karbala following the sobering proclamation that the Shias had manipulated out of the deputy commissioner. They had not foreseen it and by and large it seemed they had not intended to drive out the Sunni masses from the common ritual. Their plan was to purify Muharram practices by pruning some of the rituals followed by the Sunni masses, and universalize other rituals that they themselves followed so as to signal a position of power. While the PC met, Shia representatives argued that the verbal proclamation made on the eve of Ashra in 1906 (that all who didn't follow the preferred conduct would be thrown out of the Talkatora Karbala by force) was actually made

¹³⁵ Note of dissent by Maulvi Abdush Shakoor, Sunni member (Urdu), 15th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, Pp.129-130.

¹³⁶ Remarks by Mr. Radice, ex commissioner of Luknow, on the Shia-Sunni controversy, undated, 1911. UPSA/GAD/366/1911/p. 2.

by some Sunni youth on the behest of their leaders in order to instigate Sunni masses and prevent them from joining Shias during Muharram. Police records, especially the opinion of the chief police officer of Lucknow, supports this theory.¹³⁷

Shia members who appeared during the inquiry defended their efforts at purifying Muharram as a legitimate one since they claimed to have the support of not only Shia but also Hindu and Sunni individuals who owned open land on the route of the Tazia processions, and who were also against the ‘drunken revelries and debauchery’ that took place during Muharram.¹³⁸

Asymmetric class structures between Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow figures frequently in the bickering recorded during the dispute. Sunni members of the Piggott committee as well as petitioners often argued that the Shias were more affluent, influential, educated and resourceful than the Sunnis and hence they had access to better means for representing their case and mobilizing government opinion on various issue including religious rights.¹³⁹ The Shias of Lucknow were comprised of a network of elites, erstwhile aristocracy, in gradual decline and a prominent educated middle class with many lawyers, magistrates and government officers. Sunni petitions also argued that the they themselves were comprised of poor and illiterate masses and a miniscule middle class that had recently come into existence through local trade and business activities. Correspondence within the provincial government also supports these arguments. Mr. Radice, the commissioner of Lucknow during 1909, had the following to say about the Sunnis, “the only prominent men among them, with possibly a few exceptions, are coarse low class men

¹³⁷ Note of dissent, Syed Shehenshah Husain Rizvi, Shia member, 15th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908/pp. 110-111.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 112-113

¹³⁹ UPSA/GAD/591/1908; Humble petition from the Sunni Muhammadans of Lucknow, to Sir John Prescott Hewett, Lieutenant Governor of UP, 6th February, 1913. UPSA/GAD/366/1911, p. 14

who have made money in trade or business. Even their maulvis are of the people and in strong contrast to the polished Shia prelate.” He claimed that outside the maulvis and a few rich traders almost no one has real influence over the masses and that even, “the educated men with whom alone one comes into contact have no hold over the masses themselves, they can only work on the mob through *maulvis* and influential* individuals.”¹⁴⁰

Abdush Shakoor played upon this perception to argue that the poor Sunni masses are so engaged in their everyday struggle for livelihoods that they rarely have time for religious activities. At the same time, he argued, Shias in Lucknow were free of such small struggles for survival and had all the time to think about religious innovations and mischief. He further argued that since 1905, the Shias had infused a new life and spirit in their religious affairs and this was the main cause for their aggressive purification drive around Muharram. He also claimed that the Shia Sunni dispute arises only where the Shia are powerful, such as in Lucknow and a few towns in Oudh. He further used the example of Iran where he claimed that the Shah had issued a royal decree prohibiting the insulting of the Caliphs by any of its subjects.¹⁴¹

Sunni members and witnesses examined through the inquiry claimed that the Ashra and Chehlum days during the Muharram period in Lucknow were neither purely religious events nor under the monopolistic control of the Shia community. They were claimed to be local fairs that evolved over time and were linked to the livelihood of petty Sunni traders. The suppression of the fair and festivities, that the Sunni participants had enjoyed indulging in, could have played a role in their exodus from Talkatora as much as the call of the Sunni clerics.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Remarks by Mr. Radice, ex commissioner of Lucknow, on the Shia-Sunni controversy, undated, 1911. UPSA/GAD/366/1911, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴¹ Note of dissent by Maulvi Abdush Shakoor, Sunni member, 15th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, pp.123-124.

¹⁴² Note of dissent by Maulvi Abdush Shakoor, Sunni member, 15th December, 1908. UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p.126.

While Piggott committee made its final recommendation in early 1909 and despite the dissent of its Shia and Sunni members, the government accepted these recommendations. On the basis of these recommendations fresh orders were issued that curtailed Shia attempt to completely purify Muharram rituals around their beliefs, and also prohibited Sunnis from performing *charyari* during the critical days in Muharram. But these new rules did not manage to contain the increasing rift between the two sects. While Shia leaders maintained a low profile in their perceived victory over the ban on Charyari during Muharram, Sunni leaders continued to petition the government for revoking the orders throughout 1909. The government refused to budge from its position causing embarrassment to the Sunni leaders among the Sunni masses.¹⁴³ 1909 was a critical year for Shia Sunni relations. While the Shia leaders quietly celebrated their victory in getting charyari prohibited from Muharram, Sunni leaders remained at the receiving end. The Governor's formal speech of 3rd April 1909 in the state legislature, attributed the sectarian tensions on irresponsible Sunni leaders in Lucknow, blamed them for organized defiance of government orders, and declared that the government position on Charyari was inflexible and would be maintained by force.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the government privately communicated with all Shia leaders asking them to keep their victory celebrations private. The Shia cooperated with ease, having won the more substantive of the battles.¹⁴⁵

After the Muharram rioting of 1908, Ashra remained peaceful in 1909. While some Sunni Tazia processions joined Shias at Talkatora Karbala, there were almost no processions that went to the new Karbala at Phoolkatora. This was both a reflection of the weak traction that Charyari

¹⁴³ Secret abstract, Allahabad, 14th January, 1911. UPSA/GAD/366/1911 p. 3,

¹⁴⁴ Extracts from Sir John Prescosst Hewett's speech made at the UP council meeting, 3rd April, 1909. UPSA/GAD/366/1911, pp. 4-7.

¹⁴⁵ Remarks by Mr. Radice, ex commissioner of Lucknow, on the Shia-Sunni controversy, undated, 1911. UPSA/GAD/366/1911, p.2

had gained among Sunni masses, as well as an embarrassment for Sunni leaders who failed to repeat the popular sentiments of 1908.¹⁴⁶ Sunni enthusiasm for Muharram processions ebbed and flowed over the next few years. In 1911, several Sunni processions went to the new Karbala at Phoolkatora. However, due to conflicting signals coming from two sets of clerics, most Sunni *tazia* were carried concealed either within clothing or under wraps.¹⁴⁷ The Muharram of 1912 was peaceful. The Ashra this year was the biggest in comparison to several years in the past. The number of Tazia processions doubled over last year, and although most Sunni processions went to the new Karbala, a large number of Sunni Tazia also joined Shia processions and went to the old Karbala at Talkatora.¹⁴⁸ In 1913, both the Ashra and the Chehlum grew in size substantially in comparison to the past. Chehlum, of importance to mainly Shias, became a big affair among the Sunni for the first time. While the number of Shia Tazia doubled over last year, most Sunni Tazia did not join them and rather went to the new Karbala.

This prompted Sunni leaders to devise a new technique for attracting Sunni masses away from the Shia style Muharram. Maulvi Abdush Shakoor organized A few peripheral ulama of Firangi Mahal, Maulvi Abdul Mughni being one of them, as well as several *maulvis* from outside Lucknow were recruited for giving out *Fatwa* in support of *charyari* during Muharram. These *Fatwa* were compiled into handy booklets and hundreds of copies were printed from presses owned by Sunni proprietors in Lucknow. These booklets were then distributed against small donations among the masses. These Fatwa prepared the ground for Sunni masses coming together for Charyari in defiance of government orders through 1910. Maulvi Abdush Shakoor,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ UPSA/GAD/366/1911, p.5

¹⁴⁸ UPSA/GAD/366/1911, newspaper cuttings (unnumbered page).

the key Sunni member of the Piggott committee of 1908 was again the lynchpin of this new phase of conflict.¹⁴⁹ These Fatwa broadly converged on the point that Sunni Muslims should not observe Muharram rituals imitating the *Rafizis* (a derogatory term used by extremist Sunni ulama for Shias), but must have unique ways that set them apart. The logic that ulama used behind this goal was that most among the Sunni masses were ignorant of the three caliphs and there was a fair chance that participating in Muharram along with the Shias would give them to greater adulation for Husain than the Caliphs. This would allow the Shias to have a larger number of people who agreed with their religious beliefs.¹⁵⁰

The events of 1909 demonstrated a lack of public support for the sectarian divide, at least around the legacy of Muharram. Shia and Sunni leaders, especially the lay elite, took upon this opportunity to control the damage caused by their purification drive of 1905-1906. Saiyid Shehenshah Husain, a leading Shia lawyer teamed up with Muhammad Nasim, an influential Sunni individual, to form the Anjuman Ittihad. The anjuman organized a *milad* (celebratory meeting in honor of Muhammad, a type of ritual important among Sunni Muslims) for Sunnis on 17th April, and a *Majlis* (a type of religious meeting popular among Shias) on 18th April 1910. These attempts failed because very few Sunnis came to the *milad*.¹⁵¹ One of the reasons of the failure was the choice of location, the great hall of the Asafi Imambara, a 18th century spiritually invested complex built for public Muharram rituals, but which was under the monopoly of Shia clerics and associations. The second reason for the failure of this reconciliatory event was the fact that all Sunni ulama of repute refused to preside over the milad. The ulama of Firangi Mahal

¹⁴⁹ UPSA/GAD366/1911, p.2

¹⁵⁰ UPSA/GAD/366/1911, pp. 5-7.

¹⁵¹ UPSA/GAD/366/1911, (unnumbered page).

remained aloof, as they did from all controversies, and the emerging Sunni ulama refused to bury the hatchet, as they were opposed to the reconciliation. Instead, Sunni ulama on Abdush Shakoor's side took further steps to reignite the sectarian cauldron. They organized a debate between Maulvi Abdush Shakoor, and a little known Shia cleric- Muhammad Sajjad- under the arbitration of a Hindu individual. The proceedings of the debate, along with quotes from religious texts and commentaries by ulama were compiled in a booklet titled, 'Karwai Mubahisa Shia wa Sunni' (proceedings of the debate between Shia and Sunni), and published. This provocative booklet documented that the Shia cleric had lost the debate and it was found that the Shia have changed the Koran, and have innovated public rituals in ways that disqualifies them from the religion of Islam. Thus the booklet, widely circulated in Lucknow, claimed that the Shias were infidels and should be thus treated by the Sunni. This booklet was a source of tensions and excitement in the city for several weeks before the government stepped in to confiscate it and charge the publishers.¹⁵²

The above descriptions emphasize two key aspects of the sectarian conflict in Lucknow. The first was the emergence of new Shia elite and the newer version of the older religious elite who used new styles of communication and conduct to attract following among the Shia masses. These elites attempted to purify Muharram rituals to cast them in an exclusively Shia style. The second aspect was a parallel rise of Sunni elites from unconventional backgrounds that reacted to this purification drive taken up by Shia leaders. These Sunni clerics and lay leaders used several strategies to pull the Sunni masses away from participating in Shia style Muharram.

¹⁵² UPSA/GAD/366/1911, p. 3.

Role of the state

The prolonged tensions between Shias and Sunnis in Lucknow between 1905 and 1908, and the violence of 1908 had forced the colonial government to establish the Piggot Committee of Inquiry. Its proceedings, decisions, and the logic behind the decisions need to be contextualized within the scholarship on the colonial state in India and its role in the religious sphere. While the early colonial state in India openly supported Christian missionaries in their proselytization activities, the post Mutiny imperial state declared a neutral stand. After the suppression of the great Mutiny of 1857, the British crown declared its intention to never interfere in the religious affairs of its colonial subjects, rather Queen Victoria committed the empire to a role of protection that the British would play towards the ‘ancient rights and customs’ of the Indian people.¹⁵³

One of the basic assumptions about the religiously neutral, or secular state is that religion and the state function in two different domains of human activity and that, ideally, religion is both subordinate to, and separate from the state.¹⁵⁴ Some scholars see secularization as a project of the state, while religious politics is seen as a project led by political elites.¹⁵⁵ While this view acquits the state of driving religious projects, a second perspective is that the British empire usually projected three conflicting, and simultaneous, self images-- neutrality towards religions when they were merely traders; as protector of religious rights of Indian subjects when they replaced local rulers; and as patron of the Church of England as the employer of a believing

¹⁵³ Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of mind: colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p. 149.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, Donald Eugene. 1963. *India as a secular state*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

¹⁵⁵ Hibbard, Scott W. 2010. *Religious politics and secular states: Egypt, India and the United States*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

British population in India.¹⁵⁶ Another scholarly position treats the state as actively involved in religious affairs, as Carl Schmitt has argued, “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts”.¹⁵⁷ Within this perspective, a number of scholars have asserted that the colonial state interfered with every aspect of Indian religion and society, even if this was done behind claims of religious neutrality. Colonial policies have been shown as rooted in Christianity and utilitarian morality. Scholarship also emphasizes how the colonial state claimed neutrality as an argument for its perpetuation, while it increasingly became party to religious conflicts.¹⁵⁸ The sectarian dispute in colonial Lucknow and Nizam’s Hyderabad demonstrates how the state became a party to the dispute, in contrasting ways, arbitrating between the Shias and Sunnis, and defined the proper and the acceptable vis a vis religion.

The Shia Sunni dispute of Lucknow was full of intricacies at both the textual level as well as at the level of customary practices in Lucknow. It was a confusing case for the provincial government to begin with. The Sunni petition played upon these intricacies to claim that by way of religious beliefs the Sunnis can not insult any Shia figures while Shias can insult figures whom the Sunni revered. They also supported this argument by claiming that no Sunni had ever been tried in a court of law for insulting the beliefs of the Sunnis while several Shias had been tried and convicted for similar offences.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Smith, 1963 (op.cit).

¹⁵⁷ Schmitt, Carl. 1985. *Political theology: four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

¹⁵⁸ Pandey, Gyanendra. 2002. “The secular state and the limits of dialogue,” in *The crisis of secularism in India*. Eds. Needham, Anuradha Dingwaney, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. Durham: Duke University Press; Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press; Van der Veer, Peter. 1999. *Nation and Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

¹⁵⁹ UPSA/GAD/591/1908 pp.123-124

Scholars of colonialism have shown that the British considered India as a society that could be perfectly known as a series of facts. These facts were central to its efficient administration, regulation and control. Bernard Cohn describes several types of investigative modalities caused by the colonial imperatives of knowing, categorizing, regulating and controlling. Investigative modalities are defined as a set of concepts- the definitions of information that were to be collected, procedures for collecting it, classifying and ordering collected information, and its transformation into usable forms such as reports and proceedings.¹⁶⁰ One of these investigative modalities, historiographic modality, is instructive for understanding the case in Lucknow. History, in general, was of immense importance to the British,¹⁶¹ and the historiographical modality in particular was the most pervasive and powerful of all modalities because it provided the intellectual means and ends for British rule in India. British codification of ruling practices from India's past was central to this modality and it motivated collecting "customs and local histories" in as much detail as it was possible.¹⁶² The documentation of customs also fed into imperial visions where the Indian polity, torn by intergroup conflicts, could only be controlled by strong hand tactics of British administrators.¹⁶³

Within this background, the Piggot Committee (PC hereafter) began by having a background note prepared for the perusal of the members so as to have a basic understanding of Muharram and the grounds of dispute between the two sects. This was prepared by the government pleader, Munshi Ghulam Mujtaba, a Sunni officer who confessed to having some

¹⁶⁰Cohn, Bernard S. 1996. *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: the British in India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

¹⁶¹ Dirks, 2001 (op. cit.) p.81.

¹⁶² Cohn, 1996 (op. cit.), p.5

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.65; Dirks, 2001 (op. cit.) p.81.

diffidence in describing Muharram in detail, especially Shia practices. Mujtaba, nevertheless wrote an impressive note describing the brief historical roots of Muharram, as well as the various practices and rituals that were followed by Shias and Sunnis. Without debating the authenticity of details in this note, one can identify two important points that this note made. The first was that Muharram rituals of UP were divided into two categories- purely religious, and customary. Here purely religious meant those rituals, which could be traced back to theological texts, and the customary ones meant those that emerged and evolved through local cultural dynamics. The second point that this note made was that while both Shias and Sunnis took part in customary rituals, it was only the Shias who observed the religious ones, also suggesting that either Sunnis had no religious permission for observing Muharram, or they did not follow religious rituals.¹⁶⁴ This note references several texts from which help was taken, key among them were two English works written by British orientalist. The use of orientalist texts for this background note sedimented the terms of inquiry into an established template of colonial knowledge, which was often over generalized. One of the texts, Muharram in India, by Sir Lewis Pelly, forms the foundation for this note.¹⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that Sir Lewis Pelly was never posted in Oudh and his work would be an account of Muharram in other parts of India, and a generalization at best. Further, the note created an artificial distinction between religious and customary practices despite the absence of any such actual distinction. Most participants observed rituals primarily due to their customary nature, although most rituals were local innovations that drew upon certain broad textual ideas. Finally, by claiming Sunni participation in Muharram as unsupported by religious texts, this note betrays the reformist biases of the writer, who was certain to be from

¹⁶⁴ UPSA/GAD/591/1908 pp. 13-20.

¹⁶⁵ UPSA/GAD/591/1908. p. 18.

an upper class educated background given his job profile within the colonial administration. This note also asserted that custom seemed the most important factor behind most conflicts as it was precedence of one Tazia over the other, or one route over the other that was usually at the root of frequent conflicts related to Muharram rituals. There were also several contentious issues and distortions that this background note introduced. The note mentions that the *Majlis* (mourning meetings presided by Shia speakers) was a religious ritual among the Shia in which Sunnis never participated. Other historic accounts of Muharram suggest the opposite. While it is true that the *Majlis* were organized by Shias, and Sunni meetings for Muharram were called *mehfil* instead, in Lucknow and other parts of Oudh it was commonplace to see Sunnis, especially the elites, attend *Majlis*. This was because most Shia and Sunni elites were either linked through structures of state patronage, or had common interests as landowners.¹⁶⁶ Further, *Majlis* were often held in neighborhood locations and inhabitants in the neighborhood participated as a courtesy. Finally, the note stated that the Shia *mujtahids* and Sunni *maulvis* would in all probability condemn the street rituals followed by their respective communities if they were to share their private opinion. But whenever there was friction between the sects these religious leaders postured in the favor of their own followers, and would go as far as supporting rituals that they condemned privately. However, these same religious leaders also stood together to support Muharram practices whenever any conflict had Hindus as one of the parties. In such cases supporting Muharram was seen as protecting the dignity of Islam.¹⁶⁷ This shows that Muharram, both its overarching meanings and its specific rituals had been perceived and treated in shifting ways over time and through changing contexts.

¹⁶⁶ Sharar, 1976 (op. cit.); Meer Hasan Ali, 1973 (op. cit.)

¹⁶⁷ UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 19.

Initially the PC was enthusiastic about considering religious texts in Arabic if it was presented by either side as evidence in support of their claims. The committee even recruited the cooperation of a fellow British officer reputed to have command over the language.¹⁶⁸ However, as material was presented by both parties members realized that both parties had the capacity of digging up and presenting endlessly confusing arcane sources to support their argument or oppose their rival's. The committee finally chose to stop considering religious texts in Arabic. However, the logic that magistrate Piggott used was that the state did not wish to interfere in religious affairs of any class of its subjects, and hence the religious sources were immaterial to the inquiry. This dithering on part of the committee reflects the transition that took place within the British methods of understanding India. Early British attempts to know India were based on orientalism, especially in how they processed its dense cultural, religious and political diversity to produce, and establish stereotypes.¹⁶⁹ Gradually, especially mid nineteenth century onwards, orientalism gave way to an "anthropological cast of mind" where the colonial state commissioned numerous systematic ethnographic studies, producing an unprecedented numbers of gazetteers, monographs, and manuals. However, this new phase still involved the use of ancient texts and religious scholars (Brahmins, in the case of studies about purported Hindu communities) who would help administrators make distinctions between religion and custom as well as in codifying local practices.¹⁷⁰ These codifications assumed homogeneity within

¹⁶⁸ UPSA/GAD/591/1908, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶⁹ Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

¹⁷⁰ Dirks, 2001 (op. cit.) p. 150

communities, despite variations by time and place.¹⁷¹ In this light, the case in Lucknow is instructive.

As discussed earlier, the post 1856 British government in India claimed to be neutral and benevolent towards all its subjects irrespective of class or creed. In setting up the Piggott committee, the government made sure that it was fairly representative. It consisted of two members each from the Shia and Sunni communities, two Hindu members of repute, and a counsel each for the Shia and Sunni. It was assisted by a ‘neutral,’ Hindu, clerk for record keeping, a British officer qualified to translate Arabic religious texts, and all headed by a British judge Mr. T C Piggott.¹⁷² The original Sunni members resigned from the committee owing to time conflicts, and the government worked hard to bring in two replacements nominated by Sunnis, all for the sake of fairness. The guiding principles for the committee were undergirded by the state’s expression of tolerating all creeds impartially, maintaining lawful liberties for all,¹⁷³ and an intention to not interfere in religious practices of the subjects,¹⁷⁴ as long as all the King’s subjects could enjoy the rights given to them by his Majesty.¹⁷⁵

The role of protector of rites and customs of natives, was also a tricky role to play. In April 1908, the Lt. Governor of UP received a petition from the Shia, one day before the Ashra procession, informing him that the Shia procession might not be taken out, as they felt threatened by Sunnis. The LG was sharp enough to respond that the decision was entirely up to the Shia,

¹⁷¹ Cohn, 1996 (op. cit.) p.67, 71.

¹⁷² Proceedings of the first meeting of the Piggott Committee, 13th November, 1908, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 59-60.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 117.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 138.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 143.

however he noted with discomfort that the absence of the procession would be an admission that the neutral government was unable to protect the customary rights of its subjects: “they considered the protection of the law inadequate to enable them to perform unhindered their religious ceremonies.”¹⁷⁶ Thus this role ensured that when a local community was unable to follow a customary practice, the state could appear as have failed in its duties.

The initial meetings of the PC discussed the scope of the inquiry. While the Shia had made their case clear through carefully prepared petitions objecting to the innovations around Muharram, the Sunnis argued that the conflict in Lucknow had several Shia events outside Muharram, that were intended to hurt the religious feelings of the Sunnis.¹⁷⁷ Among several Shia practices that the Sunni opposed, two stand out. The first was an innovation brought about in the Shia *azaan*, the call to prayer. Shias included a term, *bilafasl*, in their call to prayer, which literally meant without separation, and is a key signifier of the Shia faith. It means that there is no separation between Muhammad and Ali, and is a declaration of the Shia belief that Ali was Muhammad’s direct successor for leadership of the Muslim community. In the context of India, this term was added to the *azaan*, the call to prayer publicly transmitted from mosques, by the Shia as an act of invented tradition sometime around 1880.¹⁷⁸ The time of the public transmission of *azaan* is almost common between Shia and Sunni mosques, and this means that five times, everyday, there is a public declaration of a clause that in effect negates the beliefs of another sect. But the committee was inclined to keep the scope limited and focused on public rituals alone as the Sunni complaint involved private Shia practices which the state perceived as outside

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 26(2).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 59-60.

¹⁷⁸ Sharar, 1976 (op. cit.) p. 213; Jones, 2012 (op. cit.) pp. 74-79

its purview. However, the state could not keep itself totally aloof from even these private affairs as long as they were framed in ways that offended another class of the state's subjects. The view of the state was to deal with such infractions in two ways, the first was to let the existing ordinary laws to take their own course through the police, and the other was to involve community leaders in controlling troublemakers within each community.¹⁷⁹

The setting up of the Piggott committee, its agenda setting, as well as its functioning also allows one to see how bureaucracy gets a life of its own, and can transform from being an arbiter to a party. During one of the first meetings of the committee on 13th November 1908, Muslim members of the committee pointed out that the two communities were attempting to reconcile their differences on their own and perhaps the committee could be suspended in anticipation. However, other members of the committee argued and voted to follow procedure. Procedure indicated that once a committee was formed and its task was set, it would be best to go ahead with the inquiry and get to the findings.¹⁸⁰ Obviously, the committee once born had gained a life of its own. Further, the final report acknowledges that the committee's inquiry was an experiment at facilitating a compromise "through the people themselves interested in the matter."¹⁸¹ Thus the PC was not simply solving a local problem, but was establishing, testing, and standardizing a model for solving similar conflicts.

PC's gaining a life of its own is also attested by how its members defended themselves even after realizing that several of their decisions were taken erroneously. Over the course of the inquiry, the PC realized that both Shia and Sunni leaders had utilized sympathetic administrators

¹⁷⁹ Proceedings of the Piggott Committee, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 103.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 59-60.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, Resolution, p. 25.

into signing unprecedented orders and then distorting those orders further to create separate spaces and routes for Shia and Sunni Muharram processions. The PC also realized that this had created a permanent rift between the two sects, however the logic of administration, shielding itself from the blame of getting carried away by the petitioners, also stopped the PC from recommending the revocation of orders that created this permanent separation.¹⁸² It defended its arguably pro-Shia orders of 1905 as a sincere and neutral effort in line with the intention of the Shias in reforming their religious practices. At that time the deputy commissioner had also failed to record any objections from other parties such as the Sunni before issuing these orders.¹⁸³ The circumstances under which the first orders of 1905 were passed by the government suggest that often the individual decision maker could act in ways that diverged from the government's official style of functioning. Despite having a precedence of any such prohibitory orders, the deputy commissioner of Lucknow had passed the requested orders because he got swayed by the influence of the petitioning Shia gentlemen, with many of whom he had prior acquaintance as all these individuals intermingled in clubs, official meetings, and government business.

The state's hesitation in taking blame for creating a permanent rift, and confessing to passing faulty orders was resolved by a refusal to accept that the orders were so problematic that they should be revoked.¹⁸⁴ This can be gauged while the committee made its final recommendation about keeping the two types of processions separated by regulating public space and claimed that it had followed the "principle of limiting the interference of executive authority with an individual's performance of his own religious observances." The guilt and the repeated

¹⁸² Proceedings of the Piggott Committee, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 104.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Pp. 96-97.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 139.

attempts at defending the state from any potential blame for giving permanence to the sectarian dispute indicates how the state was involved not just as an arbiter but also an independent player in the game that it refused to lose. The PC finally recommended that it was too inconvenient to reverse the separation,¹⁸⁵ and agreed with the threat of Sunni members, a bit too conveniently, that revocation of the new Karbala would leave to great violence in the city thus dropping the possibility of reconciliation. However, it also wanted to protect the state from being labeled as the agent that created or established the sectarian divide. The via media was found again in the nuances of administrative language. The PC recommended that all records that identified Tazia processions as Shia or Sunni were to be expunged from police and administrative records and that the state policy would be to regulate processions moving to either location, Talkatora or Phoolkatora, with the freedom available to each Tazia to choose their destination on their own. The mandate for the police was to ‘simply’ ensure that the routes for both destinations did not clash and produce violence.¹⁸⁶ The committee also recommended that all tazia processions that did not wish to pass through the *chowk* area were free to start whenever they wished as long as they took recognized routes. However, the committee found it expedient “to state clearly that the magistrates must, if they find it necessary in order to preserve the public peace, prescribe routes and times.”¹⁸⁷ The committee acknowledged that making police arrangements for managing two Karbala grounds instead of one was also an inconvenient and costly issue. However, it took a

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 140.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 140.

high moral ground in claiming that, ‘this, however, is a matter which in the interests of the public the local authorities must be expected to undertake.’¹⁸⁸

The sectarian dispute in Lucknow also brings out in clear relief the interests of the colonial state in controlling public space. From the very beginning, colonial administrators expressed concerns about maintaining law and order and protecting public space. This sensitivity was linked to pressures from the church and the public back in Britain, who often criticized ‘barbaric’ public rituals followed by natives in the colonies as morally corrupting events that continued with imperial approval. However, these pressures were also juxtaposed with the imperial duty to protect the customary and religious rights of the native subjects. Colonial administrators believed that conflicts, and a threat to the public, emerged when competing groups claimed the same space.¹⁸⁹

During the same time, scholars have observed, public rituals emerged as the prime repertoire of popular politics in colonial India, and became the first choice for community claims. The British separated state focused activities from the popular ones that took place in the public arena, and this opportunity was utilized in projects of constructing community identities.¹⁹⁰ Public space became contentious not only between emerging communities, but also between the state and its subjects.¹⁹¹ Studies also show how the British attempted political ascendancy through the control of public space and contested public rituals within the rubric of law and order.¹⁹² The sectarian dispute in Lucknow and Hyderabad speaks well to this literature.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 139.

¹⁸⁹ Dirks, 2001 (op. cit.) p. 153

¹⁹⁰ Freitag, 1989 (op. cit.).

¹⁹¹ Devji, 1991 (op. cit.).

¹⁹² Masselos, 2007 (op. cit.).

Although Muharram processions culminated inside private religious places, they also traveled through city streets giving them a public character. The PC decided to continue having two destinations for the Shia and Sunni processions and also gave a detailed route plan and schedule so that competing processions were separated as far as possible, and did not use the same route at the same time.¹⁹³ Although this was a dilemma for the committee since “having different destinations was akin to extending the feud” but this was the only way to guarantee public safety,¹⁹⁴ hence the “situation forces us to break Muharram into two antagonistic parties.”¹⁹⁵ The committee mentions routes and maps in details on the basis of which the local administration could make further plans in regulating the Muharram processions in the future. This spatial intervention transformed the shared space in the heart of Lucknow, especially in the chowk area, into a Shia and Sunni space on the north-south axis. It was decided that the Tazias going towards Talkatora, the old Karbala would pass chowk from south to north before mid day, and those that were going to Phoolkatora, the new Karbala, would pass chowk from north to south after midday.¹⁹⁶ This effectively meant that the streets of Chowk would belong to Shia processions in the first half of the day, while the second half would assign the same space to Sunni processions. The PC also found that charyari, especially in organized form on specific days, was an innovation that began in 1906. Members of the committee also agreed that the principal of charyari was on the same ground as that of the Shia proclamation of *bilafasl* hence it was acceptable as a justified religious belief. But the PC still wanted to find out if it had a history in

¹⁹³ Proceedings of the Piggott Committee, UPSA/GAD/591/1908, p. 104, 140.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 139.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 140.

Lucknow as a public ritual.¹⁹⁷ This urge is tied to the state's twin interests in maintaining customary practices of its subjects for gaining legitimacy, and actively policing public space against innovations so as to establish its role as regulator.

The handling of the Lucknow dispute also shows how the state was directly involved in redefining religious beliefs and rituals. Proceedings of the PC show members sharing their general sympathies towards puritan ideas of reforming religious practices by shunning corruptions that evolve over time. The PC asserted that for all devout Shias Muharram was an event for solemn mourning under which their devotion was similar to “that with which the Christian Church follows the footsteps of the Savior from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. On the same analogy, the 10th of Muharram, the Ashra day, is their ‘Good Friday.’” The used this comparison to justify the Shia attempts to purge Muharram of corruptions that were perceived to have evolved over time, “It is not surprising therefore that anything of the nature of a religious revival among the Shias should have produced as one of its consequences a desire to renew and accentuate from such abuses as have been described.”¹⁹⁸ In responding to the Sunni petition that Shias used their proclamation of bilafasl to offend Sunnis, the committee noted that bilafasl could not be an offense as it was akin to a Christian preaching the theory of holy trinity.¹⁹⁹ The PC eventually decided that the Tazia processions for Muharram could include only those symbols that were appropriate. These included the customary *Alam* (standard) and excluded any flags from being carried. All verses in honor of anyone except Husain and Abbas, were also prohibited from being sung in either a Tazia procession or near a Tazia procession, or near its

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 101-103.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 96

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 103

route, or at any public place during the three critical days- Ashra, Chehlum, and 21st of Ramzan.²⁰⁰ However, *charyari* verses were found to resemble similar praises of the caliphs in the past and hence were accepted as justified religious beliefs that could be practiced during other parts of the year within the purview of existing law. This meant that *charyari* could be practiced as a religious belief just like *bilafasl* but would have to remain disassociated from the malicious intent of hurting religious sensibilities of others, as outlined in the Indian law.²⁰¹

The PC stated that the Shia reforms for Muharram went overboard in their attempt to enforce their beliefs upon all participants at the Talkatora Karbala, and revised the government issued orders. However this revised order maintained the prohibition over acrobatics and display of martial arts in tazia processions that chose to go to Talkatora Karbala. This was in effect a ban over all non-Shia tazia processions from going to the Talkatora Karbala. Under these orders, only those Sunni Tazia processions could go towards the Talkatora Karbala who would abandon their customary show of acrobatics and martial skills.²⁰² The final orders of the PC also included the explicit recommendation that the Anjuman Imamia, the Shia association at the center of the dispute in Lucknow, would have no future role in the arrangements of Muharram at Talkatora, and instead such matters would be “taken under the direct management of the authorities,” thus putting the state in the direct monitoring, and control of rituals during Muharram.²⁰³

The state also redefined religion at a more fundamental level during the management of this dispute. The framing of the process, through which dispute resolution between the two sects

²⁰⁰ The 21st of the Islamic month of Islam marks the death of Ali, the fourth caliph of the Sunnis, and the first Imam of the Shias. Shia communities mourn Ali martyrdom on this day.

²⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 106-108.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 140

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 141

was to be obtained, was done so as to give primary importance to custom and tradition rather than religious justification. The Sunni member of the inquiry committee dissented and noted the rejection of religious texts in Arabic as valid evidence, as one of his points of dissent. The committee defended its decision of not considering religious texts as it chose to focus not on the broader question of “what should be the religious beliefs of a Musalman, be he Sunni or Shia? But what are the old customs and ceremonies and what are the innovations?”²⁰⁴ This was a practical, and yet a potentially problematic way, of evaluating public events and practices that had, of course, evolved within the contours of local culture, but were intrinsically linked to religious beliefs that transcended time and place. The rubric of custom as the evaluator of appropriateness of religious rituals posed insurmountable problems as both parties to the dispute claimed religious justification in much older texts and traditions, but the state insisted on much recent dates and practices for arbitrating the dispute. In effect, custom became the gold standard for accepting a ritual or practice as legitimate. Further, the arbitrariness of base years, as recent as 1905 in this case, was often unacceptable to either party but being a year that was convenient to the government, records for which could be conveniently located, it was established as the reference for solving the dispute. Hence the arbitration of the sectarian dispute became a state centric process in multiple ways.

Another issue that the handling of the sectarian dispute brought out in relief was the increase in legitimacy that religious leaders from both sects received, courtesy of the state. In the case of the Sunni, the instrument of advice known as *fatwa* has historically been an unstable status. Technically, the *fatwa* is issued as an answer to a specific question that an individual poses to a cleric who has the qualification to issue a *fatwa*. Socially, a *fatwa* has a limited value

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 142

as it is neither binding over the person who asked the question nor over others. The use of *fatwa* during the Shia Sunni dispute was an innovation where compilations were printed and mass distributed. In its efforts to control the situation, the colonial state took the tactical decision to engage with maulvis who issued these fatwa, thus acceding to them, unwittingly, state legitimacy for the first time. Local administrators identified the authors of the pro-*charyari* fatwa and brought pressure on them to write an opposite set of fatwa proclaiming that defying government issued orders was to be avoided at all costs.²⁰⁵ These fatwa were then distributed by the government through strategically chosen individuals in order to suppress defiance. Similarly the government asked Shia Mujtahids to issue advice to Shias masses in 1909 so that lay Shia crowds would desist from “exuberant expressions of their victory” in the decision of the Piggot committee.²⁰⁶

Role of Elites within the State

Another aspect of the sectarian conflict in Lucknow pertains to the presence of individual British officers within the colonial government who were either friendly with Shia leaders or held a high opinion of the community relative to the Sunni. This created asymmetric opportunities for the two communities within the administration. These state based elites facilitated better access for Shia leaders within the state, and gave them advantages that the Sunni community of Lucknow could not boast. Such British administrators were prone to granting undue favors to Shia leaders and organizations, and effectively supported the sectarian fissure. Archival records attest to these biases. I have mentioned instances of the colonial state engaging directly with Sunni clerics during the peak of the Shia Sunni dispute, and how in

²⁰⁵ United Provinces secret abstract, 14th January 1911, UPSA/GAD/366/1911, pp. 3-4

²⁰⁶ Mr. Radice’s Remarks, date not legible, UPSA/GAD/355/1911, p. 1.

getting their support to control riotous Sunni masses the state provided these lesser known maulvis immense legitimacy. While this was incidental to maintaining law and order in Lucknow, British officers had a longer and more systematic history of friendly relations with Shia clerics and leaders. Records from the 1880s up to the first two decades of the twentieth century show a high volume of communication between Shias and the British administrators such as the Commissioner of Lucknow and the Lt. Governor of UP. These exchanges would also include the highest offices in Delhi in several cases. The topics of discussion in these series of meetings and correspondence were varied including management of Shia trusts, religious schools and maintenance of religious buildings. Since the annexation of Lucknow in 1856, the British had also been key arbiters of disputes within the Shia clergy. This relationship developed over two separate paths. The first path was rooted in the fact that with the annexation of Oudh in 1856, the colonial government became the defacto regulator of Muslim endowments in Oudh, most of which were Shia trusts. This pulled the British governor and his staff deep within everyday intrigues of succession, custody and distribution of welfare services for the Shia public. Archival material from across the 19th and 20th century attests to innumerable cases where British administrators served on the board of Shia trusts, shaped decisions, and actively arbitrated disputes. A sampling of such instances include the dispute over the appointment of the chief mujtahid at the Asafi Mosque, the center of Shia authority in Lucknow²⁰⁷; the dispute over the Malka Jahan endowment and Shia Jama Masjid²⁰⁸; and the management of the royal Oudh bequest distributed to Shias in Iraq and Arabia.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ UPSA/POL/95/1906; UPSA/POL/254/1926

²⁰⁸ UPSA/POL/277/1908

²⁰⁹ NAI/Foreign/1914/1-13; NA/Foreign/1919/Pp. 21-22

The second path through which officers of the colonial administration developed a special affinity for the Shia community was its understanding, that the Shia usually dissociated from broader Muslim political projects. Instances of such public, and often acrimonious, dissociations included statements made by Shia clerics during the Turko-Egyptian war in the first decade of the 20th century, and during tensions at the eve of the first world war,²¹⁰ as well as during the critical years of the Khilafat movement in India.²¹¹ British affairs in Persia, also brought about a closeness between the colonial state and several Shia Mujtahids of India, especially Sayyid Ahmad Hindi who spent time between Lucknow and Iraq. This set of clerics convinced the British that Indian Shia ulama, most of whom were from Lucknow, could help build a bulwark against the calls of Jihad that the Ottoman Sultan and Arab pan Islamists were raising against Britain.²¹² Within Indian political processes, Shias again appeared to be a potential wedge that the colonial state could use to delegitimize claims of pan Indian Muslim associations such as the Indian Muslim League and the increasingly belligerent leaders of the Aligarh movement. In effect, the drive for strengthening its own legitimacy as rulers, made the colonial state appropriate Shia-Sunni disputes as a strategy.²¹³ Additionally, Shia politicians in UP as well as in the imperial council in Delhi raised sustained debates on creating special laws governing matters of marriage, divorce, succession, and adoption for Shia Muslims. These debates required British law makers and administrators to refer to books of religious law that pertained to sect specific doctrines, thus establishing Shias as a distinct sect of Muslims, separate

²¹⁰ Muhammadan Feelings in India vis a vis Turko-Egyptian Frontier, NAI/FOREIGN/SECRET-E/ MAY/764-796/1095/1907

²¹¹ Recorded Speeches and political meetings during the Khilafat Movement, UPSA/Police/16/16/1920; Khilafat Day Resolutions, UPSA/GAD/189/1920.

²¹² Jones, 2012 (op.cit.) p. 146.

²¹³ Jones, 2012 (op. cit.).

from the Sunnis, within the decision making mechanisms of the administrative and political circles of the provincial government.

A third, comparatively informal, but effective reason that worked in the favor of British-Shia affinities was the class-based biases that brought the British and Shia closer. In comparison to the Sunni, the Shias of Lucknow had a higher social status by way of their aristocratic backgrounds, and better state of higher education. To some degree, leading men among the Shia and colonial officers had an intersecting habitus. Colonial appreciation of such attributes was evident in commentaries that administrators made in official files. Mr. Radice, the commissioner of Lucknow during 1909, made insightful comments on the differing class structures between the two sects in Lucknow. He described the Shia as a community that was under strict control of their Mujtahids, “the word of the Mujtahid is law and their lay leaders are men of assured position, old fashioned, and to a large extent poverty stricken but still ‘de vieille roche’ and generally looked up to.” Mr. Radice’s observation of the Sunnis was equally sharp, “the only prominent men among them, with possibly a few exceptions, are coarse low class men who have made money in trade or business. Even their maulvis are of the people and in strong contrast to the polished Shia prelate.”²¹⁴ Thus the Shia leaders, and through them the community, was often seen by the British administrators in more positive light than the Sunnis.

This section described two important factors, external to the Shia community, which contributed to the Shia identity becoming salient in Lucknow. The first factor was the colonial state that played an active role in defining and approving/disapproving customs, religious beliefs and rituals, despite its stated position of non-intervention in religious matters. These contradictions took place because of varying interests that the state had. It was invested in

²¹⁴ Mr. Radice’s remarks, UPSA/GAD/366/1911, p. 1.

control over public space; was an avowed protector of religious rights and customs of its subjects; imagined itself as a neutral arbiter between communities; and yet suffered from a legacy of oriental biases and notions. This colonial state provided spaces through which sectarian leaders could pull levers. The second factor described in this section pertains to the systematic affinities, individual friendships, and class-based biases that colonial administrators had for the Shia elite in Lucknow. These biases gave Shia elites advantages over Sunnis, which they used to push their interests. The informal partnership between Shia leaders, and friendly administrators within an enabling arena of the state facilitated the establishment of Shia as a salient collective identity.

The Hyderabad Case

State patronage to Muharram in Lucknow came to a sudden end in 1856 as the Nawab was exiled to Calcutta, but in Hyderabad this patronage continued until 1920. Its discontinuation in Hyderabad is instructive to understanding the nature of the state in Hyderabad vis a vis management of religious disputes. Hyderabad, like Oudh (Lucknow), was a Mughal successor state that continued to pursue the Mughal policy of *sulah-i-kul* ('peace with all,' a moral position where the state maintained equal affinity for all religious groups and doctrines). Oral history²¹⁵ and secondary sources suggest that both Shia and Sunni ulama petitioned the Nizam making divergent demands related with Muharram. While the Shia clerics complained to the Nizam that the Muharram procession involved too much revelry for a solemn event, Sunni clerics argued that the sovereign, being a Hanafi Sunni, should not patronize Shia rituals during Muharram, such as self-flagellation. In 1920, the Nizam discontinued the *Langar* Parade, the famous military contingent that had been part of the Ashra procession in Hyderabad since several

²¹⁵ Interview, H6/Khanqahi Sunni

hundred years, thus radically curtailing state patronage to Muharram. While this seemed a capitulation to Sunni demands, the Nizam assuaged Shia feelings by continuing his personal participation in Muharram rituals through important symbolic gestures.²¹⁶ At the same time, *Tabarra*, a private practice among some Shias in Hyderabad was also banned in 1921, and its enforcement was done through intensive police patrolling in troubled areas in the city.²¹⁷ In effect, Muharram was regulated in ways to maintain its appeal for both the sects and it was purged of features that could offend either the Shias or Sunnis. In a similar move the Nizam maintained a prohibition over the public utterance of the Shia Azan (that has reference to Ali as the direct successor of Muhammad), so as to keep all religious tensions among Muslims at bay.²¹⁸

While there were reported incidences of Shia Sunni conflicts in Hyderabad prior to 1901²¹⁹, there seem to be none that made it to contemporary newspapers after 1901. However, archival sources pertaining to the police department show close monitoring of potential conflicts in the 1920s. At the same time, Hyderabad had stringent rules for regulating the establishment and functioning of newspapers. Often newspapers were deregistered, prohibited or fined for printing news against the regulations. These regulations included avoiding printing items that could disturb peace in the kingdom.²²⁰ A possible inference is that while low-grade Shia Sunni

²¹⁶ Shah, 2005 (op. cit.); Interview H21

²¹⁷ Moinuddin et al, 1977 (op. cit.).

²¹⁸ Farooqui, Salma Ahmed. 2008. Multicultural dimensions of medieval Deccan. New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan.

²¹⁹ Moinuddin et al, 1977 (op. cit.).

²²⁰ For expulsion orders of newspaper editors, and prohibition orders of newspapers and magazines see APSA/Home/Confidential/39/1911; APSA/Home/Confidential/12/1912; APSA/Home/Confidential/47/1913; APSA/Home/Confidential/50/1927 \

conflicts existed in Hyderabad through the 1920s, they were both suppressed through the police, as well as kept out of press reporting.

The Nizams of Hyderabad also continued the practice of integrating various constituencies from its subjects within state structures by co-opting high status individuals from each community.²²¹ As part of this arrangement, the prime minister of Hyderabad was often a Shia noble. Shias were also represented liberally across other positions of power and land ownership. Scholars have speculated on the absence of major Shia-Sunni conflicts in Hyderabad to the fact that, “Afaqi (Shia immigrants) and the Deccani (Sunni ‘natives’) were in a balance of power and none was able to take over power completely.”²²² In addition to the cooption of the nobility, the state also kept clerics, preachers, and religious scholars under its control by financing their activities, granting land endowments for shrines and madrasas and jobs as religious advisors.²²³ Beyond this benevolent side, the state also had comprehensive repressive mechanisms such as the policy of deporting troublemakers. Archival records from the police and home departments document the deportation of dozens of preachers, clerics, and religious orators who were monitored, warned and deported from the state for provocative speech and actions. Often, known troublemakers visiting Hyderabad for personal work were kept under house arrest or under guard for the entire length of their stays, as I discuss in detail in chapter two. Close monitoring, cooptation, incarceration, and deportation within the autocratic state structure of Hyderabad was effective in keeping elite politics stable and predictable.

²²¹ Shah, 2005 (op. cit.).

²²² Khalidi, 2006 (op. cit.).

²²³ Leonard, Karen. 1971. "The Hyderabad political system and its participants". *The Journal of Asian Studies*; Patel, Alka, and Karen Isaksen Leonard. 2012. *Indo-Muslim cultures in transition*. Leiden: Brill;

Allison Shah's research on the historic use and transformation of built environment and space in Hyderabad is instructive in understanding the cultural aspects of Hyderabad. She shows that although the Nizams of Hyderabad came into being through their service to the Mughal empire based in Delhi, but over time especially after the decline of the Mughals in mid eighteenth century, the Nizams recrafted their identity to align with the Qutb Shahi dynasty that had been Hyderabad's original rulers from 1518 to 1687 AD. This re-crafting was rooted in a desire to appear local, and hence claim authenticity among subjects. This project translated into an urban reorientation that brought monuments and streets constructed by the Qutb Shahi kings into the center of Hyderabad's public life. These monuments were mostly shrines heavily imbued with Shia symbols and ritual practices, thus mainstreaming Shia sensibilities and ideas, broadly defined, into Hyderabad's public culture²²⁴. It is also notable that the *ashurkhana* (shrines dedicated for Muharram related mourning) in Hyderabad make claims of greater authenticity to Shia beliefs than the comparable shrines in Lucknow (Imambara). This is so because Hyderabad has several shrines that hold personal relics of figures central to Shia belief.²²⁵

On a personal front, the last two Nizams (1869-1911 and 1911-1948) were integrated within local Shia lore by way of family ties. The 6th Nizam's wife, who was also the mother of the 7th Nizam, was Shia. She was particularly devout and her religious beliefs were publicly known. The sixth and seventh Nizam were rumored to have been heavily influenced by Shia beliefs and their reigns, especially of the last Nizam, were seen by many as the rule of a defacto Shia ruler. While this was always within the realm of speculation, it's seriousness can be gauged by the fact that the last Nizam formally declared himself to be a Hanafi Sunni by way of a royal

²²⁴ Shah, 2005 (op. cit.).

²²⁵ *ibid.*

proclamation in 1928, as I discuss in detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the last Nizam made significant endowments to existing Shia shrines in Hyderabad, as well as erected one of the largest modern Shia mourning house in Hyderabad from his personal funds.

Finally, the Nizam of Hyderabad and his administration was acutely aware of their status as a minority ruling community. This was especially so since early 20th century when conservative Hindu politicians in North India increasingly started using mobilizational rhetoric for a Hindu India. While Hyderabad was an independent state with tight controls over news reporting and political activities, it was not uncommon for traveling subjects to bring back political ideas from other parts of India. The neighboring province of Bombay was a major source of news and political activists who traveled to Hyderabad. The census reports of Hyderabad often betray this anxiety as the census struggled to categorize communities in ways so that the Hindu and Muslim categories did not appear as too large and too small respectively. In doing so, often many communities that were traditionally enumerated within the Hindu category were recorded independently. On the other hand, Muslim became a well protected category that had no space for sectarian divisions.²²⁶ In effect, social and political structures in Hyderabad gave negligible opportunity for either communalism or sectarianism. As discussed earlier, community based elite were also coopted through patrimonial policies, thus undermining identity politics.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the role of community based elite, elites located within the state and the informal partnerships between the two, that played an important role in sectarian politics

²²⁶ For details see Census of India, Hyderabad State, HEH Nizam's Dominion, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 etc, Chapter on Religion; Also see HEH Nizam's Dominions, Administrative Reports of 1901-1921. Both available at Reading room of the Andhra Pradesh State Archives (APSA).

in Lucknow. This chapter shows that while intra Shia dynamics provided the context for purifying Muharram rituals, the latent tensions between the sects ensured that Sunni elites launched a symmetric identity project around the same Muharram rituals. Peripheral Sunni clerics and emergent elites among the Sunnis used the conflict to wean away Sunni masses from popular Shia public rituals. This transformation was driven by the overall, but mostly uncoordinated, actions of a new set of clerics and non-clerical elites among Shias and Sunnis in Lucknow. While a faction of lay Shia leaders realized the consequences of losing Sunni participants from traditional Muharram sites and practices, and tried to control the damage, the entry of the colonial state first as arbiter, and then as an active party to the dispute, resulted in the hardening of the divide. Data also shows the role played by the multiple, often divergent, motivations of the colonial state that claimed its position of religious neutrality, and non interference in the religious sphere on one hand, and of protector of religious rights, and of public peace on the other hand. Also, the modern state's penchant for regulation and control meant that any dispute over public space meant that it became a player in the contest. In arbitrating the Shia Sunni dispute, the colonial state in Lucknow, provided the contours of appropriate and inappropriate rituals, as well as strengthened the sectarian divide by accepting it and by providing spatial and administrative strengthening of the difference. I also show that the provincial government in Lucknow had British administrators who had more affinities for the Shia elite than for the Sunni. Within this asymmetric situation, Shia elites were able to present themselves as an important and distinct group within Muslims, and reactions of rival Sunni elites contributed to these Shia claims. Thus, the informal partnerships between Shia leaders, and friendly administrators within an enabling state facilitated the establishment of Shia as a salient collective identity in Lucknow.

Hyderabad, the shadow case for this chapter, did not see the rise of either communalism or sectarianism in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is explained by the lack of all three of these factors that were present in Lucknow. Hyderabad, a princely kingdom, was an authoritarian state for all practical purposes, and had minimal openings for sectarian or communal politics. Community based elites, and their aspirations were regulated by laws that were much more constraining than those in Lucknow, thus keeping them out of the political sphere. Finally, patrimonial mechanisms ensured that all significant communities were coopted by the state through their representative elites.

Chapter 3- Protests and Collective Identities: 1920-1948

Introduction

The period from 1919 to 1924 in India was marked by a political protest campaign, the Khilafat movement (KM hereafter), launched in defense of the beleaguered Ottoman Sultan, who was also seen as the Caliph of Sunni Muslims. The impending dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after WWI, and the danger to the Caliphate system were the main grouses for activists in this Indian movement. The British were part of the European alliance that was opposed to the Ottoman Caliph, thus making them a target for this movement. Despite its overtly pan-Islamic aims, the KM was able to gain widespread support in India even from non-Muslims. Gandhi and the Congress party (INC hereafter) merged their anti colonial civil disobedience campaign with the KM for strategic purposes, particularly for drawing in, otherwise aloof, Muslim masses into anti colonial mobilization.²²⁷ However, the KM had contrasting social and political effects in Lucknow and Hyderabad.

In Hyderabad, the Nizam's support of a foreign, Sunni-Muslim emperor could have made him a polarizing figure for both his Shia and Hindu subjects. This overtly partisan act had the potential to jeopardize precarious sectarian balances that successive rulers in Hyderabad had cultivated through patrimonialism. While expected Shia grievances failed to erupt in Hyderabad, Hindus and Muslims surprisingly came together to support the movement, initially. They

²²⁷ Minault, Gail. 1982. *The Khilafat movement: religious symbolism and political mobilization in India*. New York: Columbia University Press; Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. 1972. *The Indian khilafat movement, 1915-1933; a documentary record*. Karachi: Pak Publishers; Hasan, Mushirul, and Margrit Pernau. 2005. *Regionalizing pan-islamism: documents on the Khilafat Movement*. New Delhi: Manohar.

eventually drifted apart after the Nizam botched this brief engagement with the Ottoman Caliph's affairs. In Lucknow, the KM forged a strong Hindu-Muslim unity and it also brought the Shia on board, even if temporarily. Over the next few years, the tide turned and by the mid 1930s, Hyderabad became a hot bed of Hindu-Muslim tensions, and Lucknow became the site of the worst phase of Shia-Sunni relations. These contrasting fissures, communal in Hyderabad and sectarian in Lucknow, deepened over the years. This deepening of differences was marked by grievances, petitions, and complaints filed with the government. The rifts peaked between 1934 and 1941 when various sustained protests erupted in both cities. This chapter tells us this story and helps understand how a particular set of political opportunities available through the structures of the state was identified and utilized by non-state elites in partnership with elites in the state, in either city and how specific kinds of protests were enabled, while other types were constrained.

Collective Identity

Traditional scholarship that engages with collective identities, often discusses ethnic groups, nationalism, war, and inter-group processes.²²⁸ The older strand within this tradition considered collective identities in an essentialist manner, as timeless and fixed.²²⁹ Later strands are modernist and treat collective identities as constructionist in principal and yet treat it as a

²²⁸ Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic groups in conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Brass, Paul R. 1991. *Ethnicity and nationalism: theory and comparison*. New Delhi: Sage Publications; Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel?: New Data and Analysis". *World Politics : a Quarterly Journal of International Relations*. 62 (1): 87-119; Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press;

²²⁹ Ignatieff, Michael. 1993. *Blood and Belonging*. London: Noontday Press; Hastings, Adrian. 1997. *The Construction of Nationhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Shuster; Moynihan, Daniel P. 1993. *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press; Rabushka, Alvin and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1972. *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus, OH: Merrill; Smith, Anthony. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

given during analysis, while explaining phenomenon such as violence, war, voting patterns and political behavior.²³⁰ There has been substantive criticism to this line of thinking, and sophisticated studies have shown that the mere presence of rival collective identities and groups does not cause violence or civil war.²³¹

Recent work is more constructionist and treats collective identities as processual concepts that are shaped by cultural, political and economic dynamics. This scholarship, especially about social movements, focuses on collective identities either to explain movement dynamics, or considers collective identities to be one of the cultural outcomes of movements. For about two decades now, social movement scholars have focused on collective identity, signaling its importance to the field, and giving it a central role in movement emergence, shaping activist commitment and participation, strategic and tactical choices, organizational form, and movement outcomes.²³² Yet, many key questions remain unanswered including, “to what extent are collective identities constructed in and through protest rather than preceding it?”²³³ However, when social movement scholars do study collective identity, they only study the collective identity of the movement, and its direct participants,²³⁴ asking how social and political contexts

²³⁰ Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso; Deutsch, Karl W. 1953. *Nationalism and social communication; an inquiry into the foundations of nationality*. [Cambridge]: Published jointly by the Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Wiley, New York; Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Wilkinson, Steven Ian. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press.

²³¹ Olzak, Susan. 1992. *The dynamics of ethnic competition and conflict*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press; Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2009. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War". *Ethnic Conflict*. 2: 77-104.

²³² Polletta, Francesca, and James M. Jasper. 2001. "Collective Identity and Social Movements". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 27: 283; Shriver, T.E., and A.E. Adams. 2013. "Collective Identity and the Subjective Terrain of Political Opportunities: Movement Dissension over Participation in Party Politics". *Mobilization*. 18 (1): 65-82.

²³³ Poletta and Jasper, 2001. Ibid.

²³⁴ Van Dyke, Nella, and Ronda Cress. 2006. "Political Opportunities and Collective Identity in Ohio's Gay and Lesbian Movement, 1970 to 2000". *Sociological Perspectives*. 49 (4): 503-526; Shriver, T.E., and A.E. Adams.

influence a social movement's collective identity.²³⁵ Another shortcoming in the focus on collective identity has been the tendency to convert it into a residual category used simply in, "describing what happens outside structures, outside the state, outside rational action."²³⁶

I build on this later strand of constructivist research and take it one step further. I focus on the effects of protests on the collective identity of the larger community. There is some research in this direction where protest movements, both regular and revolutionary, have shaped broader identities such as the 'nation form',²³⁷ 'national citizenship',²³⁸ or the more abstract notion of 'the people' and 'sovereignty'.²³⁹ However, my research focuses specifically on the role of protests on the collective identity of local communities whom the protesters claim to represent.

This chapter also responds to Polletta and Jasper's (2001) suggestion in their influential review of collective identity and social movements, "more attention to historical and non-Western movements would expose us to different understandings of the relationship between self and other, and to different dynamics of collective identity formation and contestation. Not least, they should help us move beyond simply asserting the constructedness of identities by showing

2013. "Collective Identity and the Subjective Terrain of Political Opportunities: Movement Dissension over Participation in Party Politics". *Mobilization*. 18 (1): 65-82.

²³⁵ Van Dyke, Nella, and Ronda Cress. 2006. "Political Opportunities and Collective Identity in Ohio's Gay and Lesbian Movement, 1970 to 2000". *Sociological Perspectives*. 49 (4): 503-526.

²³⁶ Polletta and Jasper 2001, p. 285.

²³⁷ Morrison, Michael A., and Melinda S. Zook. 2004. *Revolutionary currents: nation building in the transatlantic world*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

²³⁸ Brubaker, Rogers. 2005. *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. New York: ACLS History E-Book Project;

²³⁹ Sewell, William H. 1980. *Work and revolution in France: the language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Sewell, William H. 1994. *A rhetoric of bourgeois revolution: the Abbé Sieyès and What is the Third Estate?* Durham: Duke University Press.

the variety of forms that identities take and the very different behaviors they require.”²⁴⁰

However, this chapter attempts to change the focus of study away from movements and towards collective identity. In contrast with their key question, “How does collective identity matter to social movements?”²⁴¹ I attempt to answer - How do movements matter for collective identity? I discuss Lucknow and Hyderabad around three concepts: political opportunities, protests, and collective identity. The focus is on how community elites in either city identified particular types of opportunities for mobilization, and how they partnered with elites within the state to utilize these moments for launching protests that shaped the collective identity of specific groups. I argue that protest movements shape the collective identity of the larger community whom movement participants claim to represent.

Lucknow and Hyderabad, both had particular socio-political contexts and political opportunities as perceived by local elites. I consider several protest movements in the 1920-48 period, which contributed to the emergence of a salient Muslim or Shia collective identity. These movements include the Khilafat Movement at both sites, Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, Majlis Anjuman Tabligh-e-Islam, and Majlis-Ittehad-e-Muslimeen activities/protests in Hyderabad, and Tabarra and Madhe Sahaba protests in Lucknow. Khilafat Movement was a pan Islamic campaign launched in India between 1919 and 1924 in support of the Ottoman Sultan, that gradually gained mass support, even by non Muslims, due to its endorsement by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha, the former a Hindu reform movement and the latter a Hindu interest group and political party, mobilized religiously and politically minded Hindu groups in Hyderabad to protest the perceived discrimination and

²⁴⁰ Poletta and Jasper 2001, p. 300.

²⁴¹ Poletta and Jasper 2001, p. 298.

neglect of the Hindu community at the hands of the Nizam's government. In a mirror image, Majlis Anjuman Tabligh-e-Islam and Majlis-Ittehad-e-Muslimeen, the former an Islamic proselytization organization and the latter a Muslim interest group founded by Hyderabad's Muslim elites, mobilized supporters around a unified Muslim identity and countered the activities and claims of the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha. In Lucknow, Tabarra & Madh-e-Sahaba agitations were counter protests promoted by Shia, and Sunni groups respectively. This chapter will discuss these movements to identify opportunities that were perceived and utilized by elites to launch protest movements, which in turn shaped specific collective identities.

The Khilafat Movement 1919-1924

By August 1914, it had become clear that the British would have a full-fledged confrontation with the Ottoman Sultan in Europe. At the same time, Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of India responded to the anxieties of Muslim Indians by declaring that the Sultan, who was also the Caliph of Sunni Muslims, would retain his sovereignty and the shrines at Mecca and Medina would remain under Muslim control. However, as European politics progressed it became clear that these promises could not be kept, and this knowledge made the British anxious about negative opinion amongst Indian Muslims. As this situation developed, petitions from Indian Muslims didn't shy away from communicating threats to the British, "Although we are not afraid at present of any untoward consequence, we are convinced that the perpetuation of the existing bitterness among our Muslim fellow subjects in India would seriously retard the peaceful progress and development of the country."²⁴² Apart from organizations that focused exclusively on the Khilafat issue, the Muslim League also passed

²⁴² Memorial to the Prime Minister of England on behalf of his Majesty's Musli subjects, 12th December, 1919. Reproduced in Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. 1972. *The Indian khilafat movement, 1915-1933; a documentary record*. Karachi: Pak Publishers, p. 54.

resolutions and made similar demands in support of the Ottoman Caliph's sovereignty. Their rhetoric was more militant, "Under the circumstances Muslims would be fully justified to carry on all possible methods of constitutional agitation open to them, including a boycott of the British Army, if it is likely to be used outside India for Imperial and anti-Islam purposes."²⁴³ The rise of such opinions triggered government efforts to proactively manage Muslim opinion in India, in public life, in politics, as well as among Muslim soldiers in the Imperial army.²⁴⁴ Adverse Muslim opinion was an especially grave matter in places such as Hyderabad, Lucknow, Bengal and Madras, given the important position that the Muslim communities had maintained there.²⁴⁵ The government was very anxious about the possibilities of some extremist minded groups to wage Jihad against the British,²⁴⁶ and there were grave concerns at episodes where Muslims had been aroused and included into organized resistance against the British.²⁴⁷

The Khilafat Movement (KM hereafter) began after the end of hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies of WW-I, particularly after the Armistice of Mudros in 1918, and Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which weakened the position of the Caliph. The leaders of the protest campaign found Britain to have renegaded on their earlier promise made to Indian Muslims, of protecting the Ottoman Empire, of maintaining the Sultan's sovereignty over Mecca and Medina, and of protecting the position of the Caliph. KM became very powerful in India as the Congress party provided it strategic support. The congress used the KM to bring about a

²⁴³ Muslim League resolution number 2, Amritsar, December, 1919. Reproduced in Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. 1972. *The Indian khilafat movement, 1915-1933; a documentary record*. Karachi: Pak Publishers, p. 61.

²⁴⁴ Siw William Marris, Secretary to Government of India to all local governments, Secret No. 869, 3rd May 1919. p. 1 FOREIGN/1920/EXTERNAL-B/ SECRET/DECEMBER/361-401/PART-B/SECRET/NAI/1594

²⁴⁵ Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State, p. 1, 18th May 1919. Ibid/1599

²⁴⁶ Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State, p. 2, 18th May 1919. Ibid/1600

²⁴⁷ Secretary to Government of Indo to all local governments, secret note no. 382, 10th February 1920. Ibid/1603

successful convergence of Hindus and Muslims in British India within the nationalist movement against British rule.²⁴⁸ KM activists explained Congress and Hindu support for the movement through Gandhi's logic that, "we are out to have Indian national unity. If it is the case that so many crores of Indian Mohammadans feel that this is a matter of life and death to them, then the Hindus, consistent with the idea of national unity, cannot stand aside."²⁴⁹ In fact, the success of this amalgamation was such that often the key protests and speeches made during the KM involved prominent Hindu leaders taking the center stage.

Hyderabad: Khilafat and the Beginnings of the Hindu-Muslim Chasm

Hyderabad, like other princely states, where British residents ruled indirectly, was not expected to engage with the Khilafat issue. However, evolving relations between the Nizam and other power holders in the state eventually led in that direction. Since late 18th century political power in the state of Hyderabad was dispersed between the Nizam, the British resident, and the prime minister who was appointed by the mutual, if contested, will of the first two. Roughly until 1900, the British influence over Hyderabad was indirect with most power play happening behind the door, and being carefully wrapped in customs, ceremonies and royal niceties. However, starting at the turn of the century, successive British residents started dropping these niceties and their influence gradually started becoming less indirect. British interventions in the political matters of princely states were usually framed within the narrative of misrule that the British claimed to rectify. Mir Osman Ali Khan, who acceded to the throne in 1911 as the seventh Nizam, was much more ambitious than his predecessors. 1913 onwards the Nizam undertook a

²⁴⁸ Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar.

²⁴⁹ Syed Hossain to Mr. Fisher (Representative of Mr. Montague, Secretary of State for India), Proceedings of Indian Khilafat Deputation, 2nd March 1919, p. 3. Ibid./1545

series of steps to consolidate his power in Hyderabad. He restructured his cabinet; replaced many nobles and ministers who were prone to side with the British; reorganized administrative powers in such a way that everyone remained weak but himself, and started resisting the interference of the resident. By 1914, he had successfully weakened the hold of Hyderabad's aristocratic families. To counter the influence of the British resident, the Nizam also aimed at raising his stature outside Hyderabad. In 1918 he undertook an extensive tour of British India to make contact with influential leaders of the Muslim nationalist movements, and offered to push their concerns with the British. He also made charitable donations to North Indian Muslim organizations and campaigns in his bid to project himself as a pan Indian leader of the Muslim community.²⁵⁰

His efforts at increasing his stature got an unexpected boost due to the British-Ottoman conflict in Europe, the effects of which, upon Indian Muslims, the British wanted to ameliorate. The British chose to project the Nizam as a pan-Indian Muslim leader, whose public support for the British role in Europe they were confident of mobilizing.²⁵¹ The Nizam's promotion to the title of His Exalted Highness (HEH) and new role as leader of Muslims in India brought him many praises from North Indian Muslims. He was more confident than ever before, and became far more assertive towards the British. However, in return of this promotion, the British extracted from him a declaration that the military actions of Britain against the Ottomans were "both right and just,"²⁵² and that the Ottoman affair should not be seen as a British aggression on Islam.

While the Nizam was anxious at the deposing of the Ottoman Sultan in general, and feared a

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar.

²⁵² cited in Pernau, 2000 (op. cit.), p. 97

similar fate for himself, he remained supportive of the British War efforts in Europe throughout. The Nizam chose to walk this tightrope. He issued a *firman* (royal edict) and a manifesto in support of the British.²⁵³

This was recent history getting repeated in Hyderabad. In the past, Hyderabad's Muslim elite had maintained a strong opinion in favor of the Turkish Sultan and they had publicly celebrated German victories over Britain during the Balkan wars in 1912. They had also established a Red Crescent Society and raised substantive donations in favor of the Turks. While the Nizam had tolerated these anti-British activities, his government was clearly not amused. In 1914, the Nizam's call to justify British hostilities against the Sultan in Turkey had already introduced him as a player in Indian politics, and thus exposed Hyderabad, an isolated place so far, to British Indian politics.

However, this time, in 1919, in direct control of his administration, and also having garnered support among Muslims in British India, the Nizam also took a position in favor of the Caliph. He wrote a confidential letter to the Viceroy of India explaining that he, "was a Muslim first and foremost and a sovereign later," and demanded that the British government treat the matter of Turkey with the "utmost delicacy," and to ensure that the Islamic Caliph be kept independent despite the consequences of the war.²⁵⁴ Thus The Nizam stepped into the arena of the KM, even if in circumspect ways, without comprehending fully its potential consequences. He was navigating a precarious path between being a leader of Indian Muslims, and remaining a faithful ally of the British. This change in the stand of the Nizam, in favor of the KM, and in

²⁵³ Qureshi, M. Naeem. 1999. *Pan-Islam in British Indian politics: a study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924*. Leiden: Brill; Margrit Pernau-Reifeld. 1999. "Reaping the Whirlwind: Nizam and the Khilafat Movement". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 34 (38): 2745-2751.

²⁵⁴ Nizam to Viceroy, 2nd September 1919, NAI/Foreign/Ext-B/Secret/Dec/361-401/Part-B/1920/p.8

tension with the British was perceived as an opening in the structures of state, especially for activities and protests that could be launched in favor of the KM.

The KM became a powerful force 1919 onwards, and also put the Nizam in an increasingly difficult position as he saddled both leadership of Indian Muslims, and an alliance with the British. The support from the Congress Party had transformed the KM into an explicitly anti-British movement, and similar to British India, galvanized both Muslim and Hindu elites to oppose the British in Hyderabad. The fact that both the Congress party and the Nizam of Hyderabad were supporting the KM, and were opposed to British plans vis a vis the Caliph, signaled to local pro-Congress and other political leaders an opportunity for mobilizing against the British. Members of the Hyderabad Educational Conference, Hyderabad Social Service League, and various other pro-INC organizations joined hands in support of the KM. A number of joint meetings, and protests took place in Hyderabad city, and local Hindu leaders frequently addressed Muslim crowds during Friday prayers at Mosques. A series of meetings took place at the prestigious Vivek Vardhini school, reputed to be a hot bed of congress sympathizers, where several thousand people participated.²⁵⁵ While the INC had stayed aloof from Hyderabad state, like it had in other princely states, there were a plethora of activists and organizations that harbored sympathies for it, and that were eager to import the INC and the nationalist movement into Hyderabad's political arena. These political activities overtly in support of the Ottoman Caliph, thus also had a strong nationalist, and pro-Congress undertone.

A brief history of INC and other political tendencies in Hyderabad helps understand such dynamics in Hyderabad. A patrimonial clientelist state structure, geographic and political isolation from British India, a static economy, and consistently repressive policies had

²⁵⁵ Mirzā, Sayyid Humāyūn. 1934. [*Merī kahānī merī zabānī*. [Ḥaidarābād, Dakan]: [Sayyid Humāyūn Mirzā].

historically undermined political mobilization of all kinds in Hyderabad until early twentieth century. Freedom of speech and association were regulated by arbitrary rules and actions taken by the police and intelligence departments, and these rights were severely curtailed for all practical purposes.²⁵⁶ The formation of the Indian National Congress back in 1885 had mixed, but not a very significant response in Hyderabad. While the top echelon of the Nizam's government was critical of the congress, a number of educated Hyderabadis, including Muslim activists, reformers and some government officers supported the congress and its espousal of anti British feelings. On its part, the INC had always abstained from interfering in princely states such as Hyderabad, and had merely provided moral support to the All India State's People's conference (a proxy congress organization in the princely states) for promoting responsible government under the sovereign's rule. Therefore, Congress's Swadeshi Movement (boycott of British made goods) also had no major effect in Hyderabad but it had several sympathizers, especially among the Hindu elite who had connections with Hyderabad's neighboring regions.²⁵⁷ However, the Nizam's railways connecting the state with the Bombay presidency in early twentieth century provided fresh impetus to the flow of people and political ideas, especially pro-congress, and anti British sentiments in Hyderabad. But this increased political consciousness could not be matched by overt political organizing because of the Nizams tight hold over political activities. Hence the elite in Hyderabad had to make do with a variety of proxy organizations such as study groups, libraries, clubs, associations and religious organizations that were fronts for their political work. The Humanitarian League founded in 1913, Hyderabad

²⁵⁶ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman.

²⁵⁷ Hyderabad (India : State). 1956. *The freedom struggle in Hyderabad: a connected account*. [Hyderabad]: Hyderabad State Committee appointed for the Compilation of a History of the Freedom Movement in Hyderabad. vol 3

Social Service League, and Hyderabad Educational Conference, both founded in 1915 were such organizations. While the first two made demands for social reforms in the educational sector especially for low caste Hindu groups, the latter mobilized for demanding state patronage for the nobility in higher education.²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Nizam ordered and enforced heavy surveillance of such organizations, their activities, and their fund raising activities, often closing down organizations that were found to be siding with the nationalist movement against the British. From within this curtailed political atmosphere leaders such as Keshav Rao and Waman Naik emerged who would network with other elites in the state around politically 'safe' demands such as social and educational reforms in Hyderabad. The tone of their demands and organizational work was such that the Nizam's government permitted their work and even encouraged it. However, by 1918 their work started taking political overtones, both of them became part of the Arya Samaj movement, as well as started taking a keen interest in INC politics.²⁵⁹

In this background of a repressive state, and presence of local elites with narrow fields of activity, the arrival of the KM in Hyderabad, and the Nizam's aligning with it, created an electric atmosphere where public opinion could be mobilized on a political issue for the first time. There were wide ranging sympathies for the Ottoman Caliph, and the British resident in Hyderabad reported to the Viceroy in Delhi about the ground situation, "it is possible to arouse local interest in the fate of Turkey and in view of the fanatical feelings aroused by Muharram observances in the crowds that assemble for them." Government of India, took the resident's advice in consideration and ensured that the peace treaty with Turkey was made public only after the

²⁵⁸ Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar. p. 233.

²⁵⁹ Hyderabad (India : State). 1956. *The freedom struggle in Hyderabad: a connected account*. [Hyderabad]: Hyderabad State Committee appointed for the Compilation of a History of the Freedom Movement in Hyderabad. vol 3

Muharram of 1919 was over.²⁶⁰ However, the resident was also confident that the Nizam would generally cooperate with the British in managing Muslim opinion in and outside Hyderabad. This was found to be true as the Nizam quickly extricated himself from the KM and issued a *firman* on 22nd May 1920 prohibiting all activities related with the KM within Hyderabad without prior permission.²⁶¹ This prohibition came from the fact that the Nizam had developed cold feet after witnessing how his stand in favor of the Turkish Sultan had triggered political mobilization in Hyderabad, and how it had quickly taken a pro Congress and anti British position, a situation which could also turn against the Nizam's authoritarian rule.²⁶² This *firman* caused a lot of bad press and negative public opinion against him for a while. But by then, this Islamic movement had become a dangerous preposition for the Nizam, who could, in practice be framed as an autocratic Muslim ruler of a Hindu majority state.

The Nizam's government acted swiftly to prevent the spread of anti British sentiments and politically emancipative ideas in Hyderabad through bans on publications, exiling and prohibiting the entry of political activists, fines, and incarceration. Native organizations and leaders were put under heavy surveillance and intelligence officers recorded their meetings and other activities. This surveillance was conducted to prevent any political activity, and in preparation of arrangements if native leaders were to be exiled from the state.²⁶³ Local elites frequently packaged their political meetings as religious in nature and government permission

²⁶⁰ Correspondence between Stuart Fraser, resident at Hyderabad, and the Viceroy's office, Simla, September 1919, pp. 14-42. Ibid

²⁶¹ Morning Post, London, 25th May 1920. Reproduced in Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. 1972. *The Indian khilafat movement, 1915-1933; a documentary record*. Karachi: Pak Publishers, p. 132

²⁶² Margrit Pernau-Reifeld. 1999. "Reaping the Whirlwind: Nizam and the Khilafat Movement". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 34 (38): 2745-2751.

²⁶³ Inspector, Criminal Investigation Department, to Home Member, 15th August, 1921. APSA/Home/Police/3/Part 3/1331F/p. unnumbered.

was taken on this ground. However, once the meetings started they soon approached matters of a political nature. For example Hindu and Muslim leaders called a series of religious meetings in 1921, permissions for which were easier to get, but these meetings ended up discussing Gandhi's ideas about self rule, the use of *Khadi* (handspun cotton that was symbolically used against British rule), and the need for Hindu-Muslim unity against the British.²⁶⁴ The Government also clamped down on all political activities including the KM, and as a result even the non political work of many social reform organizations were also curtailed.²⁶⁵

In a strong message to participants of the KM, Maulana Abdul Bari, an influential Sunni scholar from Lucknow and a nationally respected leader of the KM, was made person non grata in Hyderabad 1921 onwards. He was sent a notice saying so and asked to refrain from entering Hyderabad. However, he visited Hyderabad to participate in Khilafat meetings, and was taken into custody. He was eventually deported from Hyderabad.²⁶⁶ In a similar message to local sympathizers of the Indian Muslim League, Mohammad Ali Jinnah was also barred from entering Hyderabad for several years. Jinnah came to Hyderabad in 1919 as an advocate for a court case. However, he delivered a fiery speech in favor of nationalism that went against the British, in one of his public meetings. The Nizam took note of this event and in 1920 prohibited Jinnah's future entry in his dominions.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Confidential Note by Shahnawaz Khan, Superintendant, CID, Hyderabad Deccan, 13th October 1921. APSA/Home/Confidential/Police/3/1331F/Part 5, pp. 1-6.

²⁶⁵ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman.

²⁶⁶ Inspector of Police, CID, to secretary Judicial Police and General Department, Hyderabad Deccan, 10th December 1921. APSA/Home/Confidential/706/1331F/p. unnumbered.

²⁶⁷ Margrit Pernau-Reifeld. 1999. "Reaping the Whirlwind: Nizam and the Khilafat Movement". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 34 (38): 2745-2751.

While the Nizam had curtailed KM in his state and despised mass politics around it, he had always remained personally sympathetic to the Caliph. Towards the end of the Khilafat agitation, he asked the government of India to allow him to issue the ex-Caliph a monthly pension, “as he was penniless and on the verge of starvation, and it was his duty as a Muslim to assist him.”²⁶⁸ This move was another attempt by the Nizam to regain respectability among Muslims of Hyderabad and British India, which he had somewhat lost by siding with the British against the KM. Some also speculated that the Nizam also harbored aspirations to project himself as the next Caliph of the global Muslim community.²⁶⁹ This speculation gained strength several years later when the Nizam had his sons marry the daughters of the Caliph, a match facilitated by Shaukat Ali, one of the main leaders of the KM.

There is a complete absence of evidence about Shia grievances in Hyderabad vis a vis the Nizam’s espousal of the Khilafat issue. It is plausible that the Shias in Hyderabad never aired such grievances owing to the structures of state patronage. Shia-Sunni relations in Hyderabad had been better than Lucknow because of the cooption of the Shia elite within the conduits of state power. Hyderabad had historically had Shia prime ministers, senior bureaucrats, administrators, and feudal lords, and Shia clerics were recipients of land grants and annual financing from the state.

However, KM had undermined the semblance of Hindu-Muslim harmony that had been carefully cultivated in Hyderabad over time. Hyderabad, like similar autocratic states, was patrimonial in nature where narrowly defined communities were organized vertically, with little

²⁶⁸ Telegram, Resident at Hyderabad to Government of India, 15th May 1924, NAI/F&P/Secret/Ext/34-X/1924/ p.70

²⁶⁹ There were various British speculations as well as allegations from the Hindu Maha Sabha and Arya Samaj, that the Nizam was planning to have the Ottoman Sultan’s body exhumed and reburied in Hyderabad, thus bolstering the Nizam’s hopes to claim the Caliphate.

chance of horizontal convergence, thus allowing no threat to the sovereign. These communities were defined by parameters such as ethnicity, caste, religion, sect and so on.²⁷⁰ Among the Muslims, the elites were divided most prominently along place of origin such as local (*mulki*) and foreigner (*ghair-mulki*) and ethnicity such as Arab, Turk, Pathan and so on. Among Hindus, caste divisions existed but the key division was based on linguistics. Hyderabad's Hindus were divided across Telugu, Marathi and Kannada speakers, and these divisions gradually evolved into political divisions. With each of these groups having their own educated elite, Hindus in Hyderabad ended up having three, often uncoordinated, elite groups. Each linguistic group also founded its own cultural organizations that independently wanted to transform into the state congress party. In the past, linguistic parochialism and rivalries never allowed these elites to unite effectively.²⁷¹ However, the KM changed this trend.

In contrast to British India, where the KM had brought about Hindu-Muslim Unity, the same movement polarized the two communities in Hyderabad. The Nizam was invariably seen as a partisan of the Turkish Caliph whom Hyderabad's Hindus had supported only on the call of the INC. However, the Nizam's later repression of the KM, when it became an anti British nationalist campaign, disillusioned Hyderabad's Hindu leaders and opinion makers. In effect, the Nizam's efforts to create Muslim solidarity in his favor also created, unintentionally, a Hindu solidarity opposed to him.²⁷²

While the KM did not leave a lasting effect in Hyderabad, its brief life allowed local associations and organizations to learn political strategies and tactics such as organizing,

²⁷⁰ NAI/F&P/Secret/Ext/34-X/1924

²⁷¹ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman.

²⁷² Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar.

petitioning, and other forms of political action. Thus, by 1924 Hyderabad was left with an increasingly politicized network of Hindu interest groups in whose opinion the Nizam had emerged as a partisan ruler with an unfair bias against his Hindu subjects.

Lucknow: Khilafat and the Ambivalence among the Shia

Unlike Hyderabad, KM in other parts of India faced less repression from the state. Political repression in other parts of British India, particularly in UP and Lucknow, its capital, was much milder. This was not entirely because of weaknesses in the British government, but because of the strategic benefits that the British saw in openness. Replying to the Nizam of Hyderabad's complaints that the British did little to control the KM in British India, Lord Chelmsford, the viceroy of India replied, "It is I think the general experience that while repression brings bitterness in its train, license in the long run begets its own corrective and signs have not been wanting during the last few weeks that the present violence of speech is defeating itself. The failure of the Hijrat movement, the detachment of several prominent Mussalmans from the non-cooperation movement and the dissension even among the ranks of Khilafat workers themselves all point in that direction. I am not without hope that the agitation will exhaust itself."²⁷³

Despite the presence of laws against seditious speeches in British India, the provincial government therefore kept a lenient attitude towards the activities of the Khilafat Movement, calculating that repression might be counter productive. With this strategy in mind, the CID, and its personnel in plainclothes would regularly infiltrate any meetings called by the KM activists, and memorize the names of persons involved, and the proceedings. However, correspondence between the Government of India and the provincial government in UP shows that government

²⁷³ Lord Chelmsford to Nizam Hyderabad, Reply from Simla, 22nd June, 1920. Cited in Hyderabad's Freedom Struggle (op. cit.) Vol 4, p. 35.

employees receive formal warnings and threats of dismissal if they were found to be participating in the Khilafat agitation.²⁷⁴ But by and large, the meetings were allowed to take place as far as they took place in private space such as someone's house, or a mosque or club etc. While the first steps of the KM were taken in Bombay, soon Lucknow emerged as the heart of the movement. The prime reason was the enthusiastic participation of Maulana Abdul Bari of the Firangi Mahal family, the most influential pan islamist cleric in British India of the twentieth century.²⁷⁵ Bari had long been a Turkish sympathizer, especially since 1910 when his Turkish visit had exposed him to visions of Muslim grandeur (Minault 34). In 1913, after meeting the Ali Brothers, he partnered with them and founded the key organization, Anjuman e Khuddam e Kaba (organization of the servants of Kaaba) with branches all over including in Lucknow and Hyderabad (Minault 36). Abdul Bari travelled across India for mobilizing support, wrote to the Government, and published frequent opinion pieces on the Caliphate issue.²⁷⁶ Lucknow's centrality to the KM can also be gauged by the fact that the Indian Muslim Conference, the event that launched the Khilafat Movement across India was held here in September 1919. The conference invited Muslims of all shades, including Shias, from across the provinces.²⁷⁷

Congress support for the KM was also forged in Lucknow with the active role of Abdul Bari. Gandhi had approached Abdul Bari in 1919 to mobilize Muslim support for his civil disobedience movement, from which Muslim masses had remained largely aloof. Abdul Bari negotiated a quid pro quo in having the Congress support the Khilafat movement. In turn Gandhi

²⁷⁴ Reply to chief secretary, United Provinces from political department, Government of India, 11th May, 1921, UP5A/GAD/658/1921/ pp. 12-34.

²⁷⁵ Qureshi, op. cit. p. 92

²⁷⁶ Abdul Bari's open letter to Viceroy of India, published in Akhuwat, 12th March, 1919. Ibid. p. 196.

²⁷⁷ Minault, 2000 (op. cit.).

asked Bari to wean Muslims away from the practice of cow sacrifice, a persistent thorn in H-M unity (Qureshi 103). With Congress volunteers pitching in, the first Khilafat day, on 17 Oct 1919, witnessed an impressive show of unity between Hindus and Muslims across India. Most major cities and towns observed a strike, markets remained closed, and the day was filled with political programs and speeches. Lucknow, and Hyderabad were among these cities.²⁷⁸

But Lucknow posed difficulties in projecting a unified Muslim community standing behind the KM. This was due to the presence of a sizeable, and autonomous Shia community. The Shia traditionally rejected the office of the Caliph on religious grounds, and would not acknowledge him as their spiritual or temporal leader. In the past too, Shias had disassociated from the Khilafat issue since the events of pre-WW-I in the middle east. While the Turko-Italian war of 1911-12 induced petitions from Sunni Muslims from several provinces, the Russian bombing of Meshad (Persia) had produced a string of Shia protests in Lucknow. In fact the Shia protests of May 1912 had created a real “danger of serious trouble in Lucknow.” These protests involved a series of public meetings and protests in the heart of Lucknow organized by Shia leaders- Advocate Yusuf Husain, and Mujtahid Nasir Husain- who planned to burn Russian flags and incite Shia mobs, in an attempt to pressure Britain to reign in Russia. The Governor of UP, Sir John Hewett, was so alarmed at these events that he instituted a secret inquiry across the province to gauge public sentiment on the issue.²⁷⁹ But petitions and government intelligence reports of that period underline an important distinction. While leaders of the newly formed AIML and influential Sunni clerics from Lucknow made speeches and representations opposing the war on Turkey as well as the bombing of the Imam Reza shrine in Meshad (Persia,), Shia

²⁷⁸ Khilafat Day, Bombay Chronicle, 18th October, 1919, NAI/Native Newspapers/1919

²⁷⁹ Memo/NAI/Home-Political/1913/March/45-55/Part A

leaders, especially from Lucknow protested selectively, demanding action only against the Russian bombing of Meshad (1174, 1190). In government correspondence on the issue in late 1912 and early 1913, British administrators from UP report that the hue and cry raised by Muslims of North India, especially UP was an entirely Sunni project and was actively opposed by the Shias. Lucknow's Shia even took elaborate steps to formally dissociate themselves from the Sunni protests and general Muslim opinion about the war in Turkey. Shia leaders from Lucknow and neighboring Kanpur resolved and communicated to the British, among other issues, "that we Shias have nothing to do with the Turkish government as the Porte himself is a Sunni ruler; we Shias do not and will not join the Sunni Muhammadans in their attempt for boycotting European and English goods; we have nothing to do with the All India Muslim League and the Majlis Moyadul Islam (a Muslim organization) of Lucknow etc since they are Sunni political and religious bodies; our loyalty to the British government remains undisturbed even after the disturbances in Persia, the only Shia kingdom in the world; and we pray to God for the prosperity of the British empire as the freedom of religion and safety of our souls and property is only ensured under the aegis of the British crown" (1186).²⁸⁰

This history of disassociation from the Turkish affairs continued into the KM that began in earnest in 1919. In the midst of all the protests and petitioning that the Khilafat leaders were organizing, a Shia cleric based in Lucknow, disputed the general Muslim opinion about the issue, "All this is the work of educated Sunnis from Lahore and Aligarh and the Shias have got nothing to do with it, as their religion does not recognize any worldly king as their religious leader. The Shias are loyal subjects of the British government and are highly thankful to the government for their manifold blessings.....They hold that according to the Quran and their religious books

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Jihad is not admissible.....the government may be pleased to regard these messages solely from Sunni Muhammadans.” The descendants of the royal family of Awadh, symbolic leaders of the Shia community of Lucknow, also were prompt in disassociating from the Khilafat Movement, “Though we have sorrow for the Turkish King his being our coreligionist, we emphasize that we have nothing to do with the Khilafat agitation.” They clarified that, “ the King of Turkey or the Shah of Iran is not a leader of the Muslims, and we don’t accept them as the Caliph.” Instead they argued that, “In our understanding it is in the best interest of Indian Muslims to remain loyal and faithful to the British crown. We ourselves take this opportunity to reiterate our loyalty to the crown.”²⁸¹ Representations like these were meant to press upon the government the distinction that Shias assumed and cultivated about themselves in official circles.²⁸²

Gaining Shia purchase into the KM was very important as the absence of support from Muslim minorities would have undermine the claim that the Khilafat issue had Pan Indian support. At the same time, it was a formidable challenge. Thus Shia dissociations notwithstanding, proponents of the KM persistently courted them. The Ali brothers made constant efforts at recruiting Shias for the movement. In a public speech in Banaras, Muhammad Ali exhorted the Shia to support the Khilafat movement both as true Muslims, and also as Shias because the Shia were being “harassed by the British in Karbala, Najaf, Kufa, and Baghdad, from where several mujtahids have been expelled, insulted and martyred.”²⁸³ The Ali brothers also used frequent rhetoric to project that the Khilafat movement had support from both Sunni and Shia Muslims in India. In one of their meetings during the Khilafat deputation to England,

²⁸¹ Khilafat Day Resolutions. UPSA/GAD/189/1920/p. 5

²⁸² Memo/NAI/Home-Political/1913/March/45-55/Part A

²⁸³ Muhammad Ali, transcript of public speech delivered at Town Hall, Banaras, 16th Novemeber 1920, NAI/Home/Political/11/1921/p. 6.

Mohamad Ali responded to British arguments that the Ottomans could not be defended because of the Armenian massacre, using narratives that signaled their preference for Shia legends, “We have the tradition of Husain who had only 72 followers when he opposed the large forces of Yezid, and died on the fields of Karbala because no true Muslim could owe allegiance to such a tyrant. If the Turk is a bigger tyrant than Yezid, how can we owe allegiance to that bigger tyrant. If that is proved to the satisfaction of the Mussalmans, the whole question of the Khilafat will have to go into the melting pot.”²⁸⁴ The deputation also made demands that included Shia religious interests, “There is another religious injunction (for muslims) that the three holy shrines of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem should be under the custody and wardenship of the caliph and no one else could satisfy the conscience of Mohammedans, and the shrines of Najaf, Karbala, Kazmain, Sammarah, and Baghdad shall also remain under his wardenship.”²⁸⁵ The last five shrines were central to the Shia faith.

However, alert British administrators asserted that they knew about sectarian differences, and also that the Shias were not as enthusiastically involved in the agitation, “the principal holy places in Mesopotamia are only places of pilgrimage for the Shias who do not recognize the Caliph.”²⁸⁶ Other British documents on the Khilafat issue also made frequent references indicating their awareness that the KM was not supported by Shias in general and Indian Shias in particular.²⁸⁷ Both the central and provincial government commissioned reports and analysis of the Caliphate system and its relevance for Indian Muslims. These reports explained the

²⁸⁴ Mohammad Ali to Prime Minister of Britain, 19th March 1920, Proceedings of the Khilafat deputation, NAI/Foreign/External-B/Secret/December/361-401/1920/p. 6

²⁸⁵ Mohammad Ali to Mr. Fisher (Representative of Mr. Montague, Secretary of State for India), Proceedings of Indian Khilafat Deputation, 2nd March 1919, Ibid/ p. 2.

²⁸⁶ Sir William Duke, Proceedings of Indian Khilafat Deputation, 2nd March 1919, Ibid/p. 4.

²⁸⁷ Miscellaneous representations in the Khilafat issue. Ibid/Pp.1-11.

institution of the Caliph, and also discussed how the Ottoman Caliph had little traction among the Shias, Afghans, and various other sects and ethnic groups in the Indian subcontinent.²⁸⁸

Excerpts from such reports were also published in newspapers popular among Muslims, often at the behest of British administrators. In one such instance, the government of India encouraged the government of UP to explore if, “some non controversial articles on the Caliphate issue could be published in vernacular papers of repute, as this will help temper public opinion at this critical time.”²⁸⁹

Despite the rhetoric of disassociation, the position of the Shias vis a vis the KM was never straightforward. While it was true that some Shia clerics and religious minded Shia leaders had either dissociated from the KM or abstained from it, several secular Shia leaders in Lucknow had been part of the KM because of its anti-colonial nature. This included Hasan Imam, and Mumtaz Husain (both influential Shia leaders). Even Saiyed Aqa Hasan, Lucknow’s leading Shia Mujtahid provided support early on (Qureshi 277). It is also noteworthy that secular Shia leaders, such as Raja of Mahmudabad, who had not joined the KM did so more due to political disagreements than due to their Shia backgrounds.²⁹⁰ In fact some Shia leaders such as Saiyed Reza Ali even challenged the Mujtahid’s position by claiming that the status of the sites of pilgrimage in Arabia were as dear to the Shia as they were to the Sunnis, thus making participation in the protest equally important. However, when the INC threw in its weight in 1919, KM became inextricably linked with Gandhi and his civil disobedience movement. This transformed the meaning of the KM as well as opened up new motivations for the Shias who

²⁸⁸ Expert Opinion: Caliphate system and the Indian Muslims, UPSC/GAD/189/1920/Pp. 35-45

²⁸⁹ Home Secretary, Government of India to Chief Secretary, Government of United Provinces, 31st December, 1919. UPSC/GAD/189/1920/p. 57

²⁹⁰ Raja of Mahmudabad to Shaikat Ali, Delhi, March 18, 1920. Tribune, March 21, 1920. NAI/Native Newspapers/1920;

could now choose to view it not just an antagonistic movement but one where intersections could be perceived and justified.²⁹¹

Nevertheless, some tensions remained. In June 1919, when a memorial was being drafted for the British Prime Minister in England, Ameer Ali, the convenor of the IML in England and an early proponent of Shia Sunni unity insisted on defining the Caliphate in ways that were not acceptable to the Sunnis. (Qureshi 114). Yet, the differences were glossed over, the draft was signed by all, and the delegation that went to England included Shia members (Qureshi 276). The Khilafat Conference of January 1920, which saw participation of about 400 Muslims from various provinces, had participants from diverse backgrounds, included leading Shia figures from Lucknow. Mumtaz Husain, the famous lawyer, Raja of Mahmudabad, the influential aristocrat and politician, and even Aqa Hasan, one of the main Shia Mujtahid in Lucknow, signed the resolutions passed in the conference in favor of the Ottoman Caliph.²⁹² Following up on the successful inclusion of secular Shia leadership, KM activists pushed further and used the logic of religious freedom to draw in other Shia Mujtahids who had so far disassociated from the movement.

Further, in 1921, Abdul Bari started playing upon rumors of British bombing of Shia shrine in Najaf, Iraq. The rumors were disconcerting, and the Shias of Lucknow sent a deputation to meet the provincial governor, Harcourt Butler, who assured them that the Najaf bombing scare was just a rumor.²⁹³ However, doubts remained and later a Lucknow based Mujtahid, Saiyed Yusuf Hussain, issued a fatwa in favor of the noncooperation movement tied to the KM. The

²⁹¹ Qureshi (op.cit.)

²⁹² Khilafat Conference address to the Viceroy, Delhi, 19 January, 1920. Reproduced in Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. 1972. *The Indian khilafat movement, 1915-1933; a documentary record*. Karachi: Pak Publishers, p. 70.

²⁹³ Proceedings, NAI/Home-Political/B/May/1921/pp. 482-90; Minault, 2000, p.130.

Muharram of 1921 in Lucknow saw fervent Shia support for the noncooperation movement, though specifically framed as a protest for the bombing of Shia shrines in Najaf. Later in April 1921, Shia organizations in Lucknow passed resolutions supporting the protection of the sacred sites in Arabia. This was a concession to the KM activist's plea that the Shias must protest against the possible transfer of the sacred sites to non Muslim control.

By now a combination of factors had pushed the Shias of Lucknow to rethink their position on the KM. These factors included the rumors about the bombing of Shia shrines in Iran and Iraq, the general Sunni propaganda that the Shia disassociation was rooted in their lack of faith in the fundamentals of Islam, and the suggestions that the Shia did not support the nationalist struggle because of their vested interests in being loyal to the British. On 6th March, 1921, the All India Shia Conference (AISC) of Lucknow organized a public discussion on the KM, and their role in it. While most speakers in this program were influential Shia individuals of Lucknow, some non-Shias were also present. The meeting took place at the Imambara Gufran-ma'ab, the center of Shia opinion making in Lucknow. Syed Agha Hasan, a local lawyer reminded the audience of the Shia's religious position, "We don't believe in Kings, we only have our Imams," and yet he set the tone for sectarian unity, "But we also need to protect the Islamic egg. Let me explain this concept. Shias are the yolk of the egg while other Muslims form its white and shell. If this egg is shaken, the yolk will also be under threat. For the sake of our future let us protect the whole Islamic egg." He continued, "The honor of Turkey is the honor of all Muslims, and we must unite to protect its interests." Others also made similar pitches, "The Shia community is part of Islam, and we will not remain safe if Islam is harmed."²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Syed Ali Ashufti, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.129.

Speakers also condemned the British both for not protecting the Shia shrines in Iran and Iraq from Russian bombing, and for keeping the Shias in the dark about it.²⁹⁵ The incident of the alleged bombing of Shia shrines remained a persistent issue in most of the dozen speeches of the day. It was framed as an insult to the community, “Our complaint stands in both cases. If Imam Ali’s shrine was bombed, why did the British not prevent it? If the bombing is just a rumor, why did the British clarify the situation? Obviously, the government does not respect Shia feelings.”²⁹⁶ Another speaker blamed the Government to be thankless towards the Shias, “My bretheren, tell me what did we get for our unwavering loyalty to the British? This wound in our hearts, and nothing else.”²⁹⁷

Several speakers also favored supporting the movement to counter the general feelings of distrust among Muslims towards the Shias, “our bretheren have spread the false news that Shias are not concerned with the Khilafat movement. Though we don’t believe in the khalifa, we re with our Muslim brothers in the defense of Islam and of the sacred places- in Jazirul-Arab.”²⁹⁸ Another speaker went ahead and asserted, “all Muslims should have faith in us, we are with you because the union between Shias and Sunnis is more natural than between Shias and Hindus.”²⁹⁹

Another motivation lay in challenging popular notions that the Shia community was too small to be a significant player in politics. A speaker reminded the audience, “Of the seven crore Muslims in India, two crore are Shias. And yet this large community is being ignored while

²⁹⁵ Saiyed Agha Haider, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/pp. 125-127.

²⁹⁶ Syed Ali Ashufti, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.131.

²⁹⁷ Syed Dilawar Husain, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.135.

²⁹⁸ Hyder Mehdi, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.149.

²⁹⁹ Unknown speaker, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.157.

miniscule groups such as the Sikhs are pushing ahead their political goals.”³⁰⁰ Another speaker added, “ We are one of the most important communities of the world, and although we are a minority our courage is not wanting. It is now time when we can use the machine gun of non cooperation and show the government our courage.”³⁰¹ Meanwhile, KM activists kept pushing for Shia support, and found AISC to be sympathetic to the cause at least on political grounds. In another Khilafat event organized by the AISC, on 1st May 1921 at Lucknow, Muhammad Ali, the main KM activist spoke among others. He focused on gaining Shia support for the KM, “Many people have doubt if our Shia bretheren will support the Khilafat movement. But let me tell you what I have understood on the basis of my interactions with many Shia scholars. The Shia and Sunni can unite for the Khilafat Movement because it is a fight against a common enemy who does not even believe in our prophet.” He also used idioms that he knew would appeal to the Shia audience, “Let us follow the example of our beloved Imam Husain. When he could fight th enemy with seventy two people, we can surely fight with thirty three crore people behind us.”³⁰² Thus KM leaders kept up the pressure, and the hopes, to get and maintain consistent Shia support for the movement.

Despite Khilafat activists getting success in bringing the Shias on board, it did not automatically mean a bridging of the differences with the Sunni that had emerged in Lucknow during 1905-1912. During the same time that the KM was being supported, some among the Shia partisans of Lucknow kept making claims of distinction in the state and national legislature. Legislation that governed religious trusts, and personal law were targeted to ensure that the

³⁰⁰ Syed Dilawar Husain, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.137.

³⁰¹ Syed Dilawar Husain, Noncooperation speeches, UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.137.

³⁰² Translation of Speech by Mr. Muhammad Ali, delivered at Aminabad Park on 8th August, 1921. UPSA/GAD/16/16/1920/p.351.

sectarian distinction were recorded and established formally. The AISC, the same organization that had helped forge Shia support for the KM, petitioned both the government of India and the provincial government in UP to ensure that Shia trusts, both public and private, were brought under the Mussalman Waqf Act of 1923, though with the caveat that Shia trusts were to be governed in accordance to the specific religious principles of the sect.³⁰³ Also, questions and discussions inside the legislative bodies, initiated by Shia or Shia sympathetic members, ensured that the various acts formed for governing Muslim trusts discussed the sectarian differences and made provisions to allocate separate mechanisms for governing Sunni and Shia trusts, eventually creating a distinct body for Shia trusts.³⁰⁴ Similarly, issues related with religious personal laws governing marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance were contested through petitioning, representations, and debates within the legislative bodies to establish Shias as an important community distinct from Sunni Muslims.³⁰⁵

By 1924, the KM had run its course, its energy having dissipated by the government of Turkey's decision to abolish Caliphate on their own. The British acknowledged that educated Indian Muslims were, "genuinely grieved at the abolition of Khilafat," but nothing more was expected in terms of local trouble.³⁰⁶ 1924 also marks the point where Hindu-Muslim unity forged during the KM started to melt away, and communal organizations that had been swept away, started regaining strength. Similarly, the platform on which Shia and Sunni leaders had been pulled together also vanished. It was also this period when the IML, which had been

³⁰³ Resolution passed by AISC, NAI/Home-Judicial/1925/Part B/Deposit/Proceedings/234/p.2

³⁰⁴ Constitution of second Shia Central Board of *Waqf*, UPSA/Legislative/117/1927; Also see UPSA/Legislative/82/1925 and UPSA/Legislative/227/1936

³⁰⁵ Draft Bill to enable Asna Ashari Khoja Muslims to apply Shia law unto themselves, NAI/Home-Jud/1925/56

³⁰⁶ Extracts from telegrams, Abolition of Khilafat at Angora, and ascension of King Hussein, and effect on Moslem opinion in India, NAI/Foreign and Political/secret/external/34-X/1924/p.3

marginalized by the INC's endorsement of the KM, started regaining its lost ground. In essence, the end of the KM opened up new opportunities for communal and sectarian politics that could contribute to a new round of creating distances between communities.³⁰⁷

Communal Politics in Hyderabad: 1920-1941

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Hyderabad had neither witnessed tensions between Hindus and Muslims nor public grievances among its Hindu subjects until 1920. This can be attributed to two factors- one, the lack of horizontal ties between various Hindu communities, and two, because of the patrimonial nature of the state. Communities that could be labeled as Hindu in Hyderabad, were historically divided into three vertical clusters based on languages- Telugu, Marathi, and Kannada. The lack of bonding between the elites and organizations from these clusters meant that there was no overarching 'Hindu' consciousness in Hyderabad. On the other hand, Successive Nizam's of Hyderabad had nurtured harmony between Hindus and Muslims through its patrimonial clientelist policies, as well as through the patronization of syncretic ceremonies and rituals, which signaled their openness and respect for the religion of their diverse subjects. Moreover, The Nizam's government had also historically regulated the public dimensions of religion by controlling religious processions and their routes, by keeping a tab on the construction of new places of worship, and most importantly by punishing troublesome preachers by incarceration or exile. Further, an absence of direct colonial governance, and a lack of representative democratic institutions could have also contributed to the lack of competition between communities. However, this harmony began to crumble by 1920.

³⁰⁷ Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. London: Cambridge University Press; Hasan, Mushirul. 1981. "Religion and Politics: The Ulama and Khilafat Movement". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 16 (20): 903-912.

Various tour reports of government officers from 1920 give a glimpse of social issues from the kingdom. Officers of the department of education, and police officers often reported the emergence of grievances about declining opportunities for Hindu students in government schools, and Hindu men in state employment. A tour report stressed, “Hindu students are increasingly moving to Pune and Bombay for their education as the state madrasa prefer education in Urdu that is liked by Muslims. Those who can not relocate to Pune, dropout of school and take to religious activities and physical training in local gymnasiums.”³⁰⁸ Another report made reference to local discussions about newspaper reporting on harassment of the Hindu community, “Local newspapers give fodder for discussions in tea houses about how Muslim proselytizers such as Siddiq Deendar are molesting Hindu women at their whims. People think that the Nizam’s government allows this to happen by looking the other way.”³⁰⁹ Reports of such grievances among the Hindu community made administrators anxious, and eager to find ways of dealing with the situation. One of the touring administrators commented, “Newspaper articles about discrimination of Hindus is creating communal feelings in the state. The fact that the government gives financial support to Muslims for the Hajj pilgrimage, and no aid to Hindus for their pilgrimages is attracting a lot of attention. These articles suggest that the government is biased in favor of Muslims. In order to counter this situation, Hindu pilgrimages should also be supported.”³¹⁰

While the Nizam had nipped the Khilafat Movement in the bud, it had given valuable practice to Hyderabad’s many interest-based groups for future political work. Their leaders had

³⁰⁸ Tour report, name not legible, 11th August 1920, APSA/Home /Unnumbered File/1930F/1920/p.2.

³⁰⁹ Tour report, Muhammad Ishaq, 19th August 1920, APSA/Home /Unnumbered File/1930F/1920/p.17

³¹⁰ Tour report, Ali Yar Jung, 5th October 1920, APSA/Home /Unnumbered File/1930F/1920/unnumbered page

learnt how to create, identify and utilize opportunities for mobilization. In the years following the KM, the Hyderabad State Reforms Association (HSRA), founded and prohibited in 1918, gained second wind in 1924 and made fresh demands for fundamental rights as well as for freedom of expression and association for all of Hyderabad's subjects. However, its functioning was severely curtailed through restrictive policies. Various apparatuses of the state kept tabs, sometimes in duplication of each other, on people who were considered politically or socially active and who aired opinions publicly or had the capabilities of mobilizing people. Often, any criticism of the state and its policies alerted agencies such as the police, and even the department of public affairs who spied on such individuals. In many cases, such vocal individuals were alleged to be "creating trouble among Muslims in the state," or "seem to be indulging in anti state activities." Their names, addresses, and places of association were listed and regularly sent to the departmental administrator.³¹¹ Despite the HSRA leader's efforts, its activities were constrained by state repression. However, leaders of a similar organization- Hyderabad Political Conference (HPC)- figured out a way of working around state repression because of legal loopholes. They chose to hold their annual meetings outside Hyderabad's restrictive locations and met in neighboring regions of British India, for their political work. This strategy had mixed results. The fact that annual meetings could be held ensured that public opinion for political reforms could be articulated without fear. However, operating outside the state meant that these public opinions could not be transmitted and shared as widely in the state. Further, as part of its policy, the Congress party had kept itself officially aloof from such regional efforts, thus limiting the effectiveness of such local organizations.³¹²

³¹¹ Memo, Inspector to Superintendant, 11th June 1923, APSA/Hyderabad Deccan/Public affairs/30/12/1/1333F/1923

³¹² Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar. Pp. 234-235.

Another issue about such political reform organizations also undermined their popularity. Their closeness to the Congress Party, which was described by Muslim elites in the state as a Hindu party, and links with unambiguous Hindu interest groups such as the Hindu Mahasabha, had resulted in a gradually diminishing Muslim participation in such organizations, and such organizations gradually started to align with the right wing. For example, by 1926, devoid of any Muslim leaders, the HPC had framed its objectives, aims, and demands like any other Hindu interest group. It, “emphasized the solid Hindu bedrock of Hyderabad State, lamented the lot of the Hindus and their culture and called upon Hindus and Muslims jointly to resist this systematic and well planned effacement of all that is Hindu.” The 1926 HPC also blamed the Nizam directly, for the first time, for all this. In 1928, the HPC completed its transformation to being a Hindu interest group by choosing as its president N. C. Kelkar, a vocal leader of the Hindu Maha Sabha.

During this phase when local elites were attempting to organize despite state repressions, grievances among Hindu communities were also building up. The Nizam’s administrative and political restructuring between 1919 and 1924 had created an unprecedented retrenchment of Hindu officers, ministers and nobles, a process that fuelled backroom discussions about the Nizam’s unjust preference for the Muslim minority. The british resident also observed this shift, “The Hindus are alarmed at indications that the present ruler is departing from the even-handed policy of his father and means to give Hindus ever fewer appointments than before.” In fact, in a confirmation of these rumors, the Nizam also confessed to his preferences for Muslims in the services, “certain principal posts of the state must be held by the members of the community to which the ruler belongs.”³¹³ Another event that contributed to Hindu grievances was the

³¹³ Pernau, 2000. Ibid. p. 151.

functioning of the Osmania University (OU). Established in 1918, soon Urdu was made the medium of instruction at OU, and knowledge of Persian and Arabic were unduly favored for gaining access to scholarships. While Urdu was the first language for Hyderabad's Muslim minority, only a miniscule Hindu elite used it. Government scholarships for higher education were also mediated by the knowledge of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, thus discriminating against most non-Muslims in Hyderabad.³¹⁴ The government had also strategically acted on the unpopular literalist traditions of orthodox Hindu scholars to justify its restriction of study abroad opportunities for Hindu pupils.³¹⁵ However, by the end of the second decade times had changed and the new generation of educated Hindus were not averse to traveling abroad anymore. Renewed discrimination after the establishment of the Osmania University was keenly opposed by several sections of the Hindu elite who claimed to represent the masses.³¹⁶ This grievance also prepared the foundation upon which local elites could operate when they decided to. Among the Hindu communities, the feeling of being discriminated became further acute by the Nizam's handling of the Khilafat agitation. The Nizam had entered the Khilafat Movement championing Muslim interests across India. But his abandoning of the movement happened in circumstances that were perceived as a snub to Hindu interests and well being in Hyderabad. This atmosphere was a boon for right wing Hindu groups such as the Arya Samaj (AS), and the Hindu Mahasabha (HMS), who projected themselves as the protectors of Hindu interests. These organizations gained a wide audience of sympathizers and supporters in the midst of Hindu

³¹⁴ Pernau, 2000. Ibid.

³¹⁵ Hyderabad (India : State). 1956. *The freedom struggle in Hyderabad: a connected account*. [Hyderabad]: Hyderabad State Committee appointed for the Compilation of a History of the Freedom Movement in Hyderabad. vol 3

³¹⁶ Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar.

grievances. Arya Samaj, literally- Society of Aryans, was a Hindu reformist movement with roots in Punjab. It was aimed at reforming Hindu society by dismantling the caste system, opposing idol worship, and reducing rituals to a bare minimum. HMS was another Hindu interest group that favored traditional Hindu beliefs, and claimed to represent and protect the Hindu community.

Rising Hindu grievances and the arrival of Hindu interest groups in Hyderabad was further complemented by cabinet restructuring taken up by the Nizam in 1924, in which no Hindu ministers were appointed. This was a new low for the self confidence of the Hindu elite in the state, and this event was highlighted by the newly active communal organizations such as the Arya Samaj (AS) and the Hindu Maha Sabha (HMS). 1924 also coincides with the AS taking up a massive reconversion campaign that targeted neo-Muslims, who were from erstwhile low caste Hindu groups, and indigenous communities. In some cases, AS volunteers also attempted to convert other Muslims, which often created conflicts.³¹⁷ It was this particular focus on reconversion, and anti Islam propaganda, that the AS maintained in Hyderabad, that helped it gain notoriety and prominence like nowhere else.³¹⁸ Despite the offensive nature of these reconversion campaigns, the AS could operate in Hyderabad because they claimed to be a religious organization pursuing religious activities, a claim towards which the state was more open than it was for political campaigns.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Bandyopādhyāya, Śekhara. 2004. *From Plassey to partition: a history of modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman; Llewellyn, J. E. 1993. *The Arya samaj as a fundamentalist movement: a study in comparative fundamentalism*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors; Bapu, Prabhu. 2013. *Hindu Mahasabha in colonial North India, 1915-1930: constructing nation and history*. London: Routledge.

³¹⁸ Hyderabad (India : State). 1956. *The freedom struggle in Hyderabad: a connected account*. [Hyderabad]: Hyderabad State Committee appointed for the Compilation of a History of the Freedom Movement in Hyderabad. Vol 4

³¹⁹ Bawa, Basant K. 1992. *The last Nizam: the life and times of Mir Osman Ali Khan*. New Delhi, India: Viking.

The religiously framed activities of the AS and the HMS were matched by rival Muslim organizations that mirrored their goals and objectives. Majlis Anjuman Tabligh-e-Islam (MATI), founded by Bahadur Yar Jung in 1927, took up sustained and aggressive proselytizing campaigns aimed at marginalized communities within Hindus and indigenous groups. Similarly, in 1926, politically minded Muslims of Hyderabad founded the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (Association for Muslim unity, MIM hereafter) as a counter force to organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha. The MIM aimed to unite all Muslim sects in Hyderabad under its banner and to protect their interests in the social, commercial, and educational spheres. It also aimed to present a coherent front for the community that was increasingly under siege from various Hindu organizations. While the MIM remained a paper organization for several years to come, it continued to counter Hindu Mahasabha rhetoric with its own, on and off and functioned as a Muslim watchdog in Hyderabad.³²⁰ Both the MIM, and the MATI could operate freely in Hyderabad because of the same logic that had helped the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, religious work.

Bahadur Yar Jung (BYJ hereafter), the founder of MATI, was a key personality in Hyderabad who affected its social and political dynamics profoundly. From a noble courtly family of Afghan lineage, BYJ was a passionate orator with a great command over the Urdu language. His speeches were considered so impressive that adversaries joked about getting convinced despite fundamental disagreements.³²¹ Almost all of Hyderabad's Islamic movements until his death in 1944 were attributed to his charisma, leadership, and organizational acumen.

³²⁰ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman; Pernau, 2000. Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.; Bawa, Basant K. 1992. *The last Nizam: the life and times of Mir Osman Ali Khan*. New Delhi, India: Viking.

One of Hyderabad's key Muslim leader, opinion maker, and political organizer, he indulged in two parallel tracks of mobilization work. Politically, BYJ wanted to organize Hyderabad's Muslims into a coherent and homogeneous community whom he could represent. On the religious side, he undertook active proselytization. Both these tracks often converged during events where he was the main player. He had begun proselytization activities under the aegis of his organization, MATI, and would tour Hyderabad state extensively and speak at public events where Muslims were exhorted to reform themselves through personal piety, and non-Muslims were invited to join the fold of Islam. He would also speak against sectarianism and favored a united Muslim community that transcended regional and ethnic differences such as Afghan, Arab and Yemeni heritage that had historically organized Hyderabad's Muslims. BYJ was an officer in the Nizam's Army as well as an awardee of a land grant, thus was a minor vassal in the Nizam's network. Initially reverent and completely subservient towards the Nizam, BYJ was able to operate on both tracks of his campaign with tacit approval of the state.

MATI, his missionary organization claimed to have brought over 20000 individuals to the fold of Islam. BYJ was also the chief of the Hyderabad branch of the Khaksar Movement, a Punjab based paramilitary organization of radical Muslims. Later, BYJ took over the command of the already existing MIM and transformed it into Hyderabad's most powerful political organization in 1938.³²² Under his short-lived but impressive stewardship, the MIM gained 5000 active members, and it developed into a strong mass movement. BYJ's framing of the MIM's goals within the narrative of religious duty made the MIM appear as a non-political organization, thus creating opportunities for the MIM and its leaders to operate in Hyderabad unhindered.³²³

³²² Pernau, 2000. Ibid. Pp. 251-255

³²³ Pernau, 2000. Ibid. p. 265

While he toured year round for his evangelist activities, Milad Un Nabi (Prophet Muhammad's birthday) remained one of the main events around which he gave public speeches. Given his good relations with the Nizam, BYJ's activities were usually organized without asking for state permission, as he routinely packaged his organizing work as a religious one. Administrators in the Nizam's government often took issues with Jung's style of action. After one such event, where Jung, "led a procession of three to four thousand people from one religious place to the city's main mosque, accompanied with red flags, and amidst aggressive slogan shouting. He held a Quran in hand and made a public speech in favor of Muslim unity, and exhorted Muslims to become better in their faith."³²⁴ The fact that Jung never asked for permission antagonized officers in the Home department and the police administration. It was recommended that, "Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung must be tried strictly against the violation of rules so that he gets the message for the future."³²⁵ However, these objections coming from middle level officers of the state went in vain in regulating the activities of BYJ, MATI, or MIM.

Both Arya Samaj and the MIM had their headquarters in Hyderabad city and multiple branches in districts and rural areas. This organizational structure meant that isolated controversies, between these rival organizations, even in distant locations in the state would be transported to Hyderabad city and would add to its existing political and social anxieties. When Arya Samaj initiatives at establishing temples in any location faced resistance from the local MIM unit, the controversy was transferred to their respective headquarters in Hyderabad, where office bearers would take up the case with the government or courts of law. This would translate

³²⁴ Report of the Secret Police, 23rd June 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/713/47F/1937/pp.4-6

³²⁵ Memo, Secretary, Home department, 3rd September, 1937, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/713/47F/1937/p.2

into petitioning, litigation, circulation of newspaper editorials and protests. These disputes being packaged as religious were able to command space in public communication.

Muslim interest organizations in Hyderabad could act freely because of three reasons- the Nizam's favorable opinion, connections with elites who were part of some state apparatus, or the state's stated openness for purely religious organizations. Hindu religious organizations, on the other hand could operate because of two reasons- one was the same stated openness for purely religious organizations, and two because many of these organizations had their headquarters, sources of funds and volunteers based outside the regulatory arena of Hyderabad. For example, both Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha had headquarters outside Hyderabad, in British India. Their funding, their access to published propaganda material, volunteers, and means of mass communication were not under control by the Nizam's government. These resources remained stable despite the Nizam's government gradually becoming weary of their activities, and even after it prohibited specific activities of the Arya Samaj such as construction of new temples.

The Nizam's government was also partisan in matters of religious disputes. For example, it received several complaints from Hindu organizations against the conversion campaigns of MATI but to no avail. In fact the administrative report of the Nizam's Dominion, in 1921-22, shows a decline in the percentage of both Hindus and Muslims, and an increase in that of Animists and Christians. This report asserts that Animists have increased due to better enumeration, and the Christians had risen due to proselytization.³²⁶ This report makes no mention of conversion by Muslim missionary organizations despite reports to the contrary. It is notable that the enumeration of Animists was a controversial process as the Hindu Maha Sabha

³²⁶ Annual Administration Report, HEH Nizam's Dominion, Oct 1921-Oct 1922. Pp. 35-37. APSA/AAR/1921-1922

continued to argue their enumeration as Hindus, and the Nizam's government argued them to be non Hindus. Proselytization activities of these organizations continued to intensify over the next few years and focused on both respective coreligionists who were exhorted to improve their faith and conduct, as well as targeted other communities which could be won over.³²⁷

These rival organizations and their antagonistic activities, within the fast deteriorating communal atmosphere of Hyderabad, triggered the first major communal riot between Hindus and Muslims in 1924. Communal riots steadily increased in numbers and scope and by 1935 reached even rural areas of Hyderabad state. 1923 onwards, Arya Samaj became more aggressive in its approach towards protecting Hindus. It started publishing and circulating provocative booklets in Hyderabad that underlined the plight of the Hindus. Additionally, In 1932 the Hindu Mahasabha also resolved to launch an inquiry into the condition of Hindus in Hyderabad. These organizations, based on the ideology of Hindu supremacy, were rumored to be getting support from disgruntled nobles in the Nizam's court in Hyderabad.³²⁸ Between 1923 and 1938, such booklets were in heavy circulation in Hyderabad. Published usually by front organizations based in Delhi, these booklets were presented as reports of inquiry committees. Among the aims of one of these organization were, "To enquire into the grievances and disabilities of Hindus in the Indian States; To render adequate and effective assistance for the removal of disabilities and redressing of grievances; and to disseminate among the Hindu subjects of the states the acknowledgement regarding their respective rights and duties towards their community in the state."³²⁹ Claimed to be based on research and interviews of 100 Hindu witnesses in Hyderabad,

³²⁷ Pernau, 2000. Ibid.

³²⁸ Pernau, 2000. Ibid. p. 263

³²⁹ The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/back cover.

this particular booklet presented a narrative of discrimination, and suppression of the Hindu community in all spheres of life. The government's annual civil list was cited to emphasize the near absence of Hindu officers in various departments and policy-making bodies, as was the fact that there were very few Hindu landlords among the top category.³³⁰ Grievances included the exclusion of Hindu students from an increasingly Urdu oriented education system;³³¹ unprecedented restrictions over Hindu festivals and customary practices;³³² and state bias in subsidizing Islamic pilgrimages while ignoring the financial needs of Hindu pilgrims.³³³ There were also allegations that the police turned a blind eye towards communal riots especially when the perpetrators were Muslim individuals, and let them off completely while Hindu actors were targeted and harassed.³³⁴ The authors, three Arya Samaj leaders from delhi and Punjab, compared the condition of Hindus in Hyderabad between 1885 and 1923, and noted that anti Hindu sentiments in the Nizam's government have gained prominence since 1920 and have deteriorated ever since .³³⁵ This was the same year when the Nizam had taken direct control of administration in Hyderabad.

³³⁰ The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/pp. 6-8

³³¹ The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p. 11

³³²The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.15

³³³The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.14

³³⁴The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.16

³³⁵The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.9

This publication also claimed that the Nizam was against political reforms, and “the legislative council is a fraud and a toy placed in the hands of people to play with. People enjoy no political or municipal franchise. Royal *firman*s prohibit the holding of any meeting whether political, social or religious without the permission of the authorities which if asked is rarely granted. Hindu leaders like Madan Mohan Malviya are forbidden to enter the state while Maulana Hasrat Nizami and his likes are given a free hand. Social movements such as the uplift of the depressed classes are opposed both by Muslims and the government. In short, the Hindus have never lived in such a miserable condition in any age and in any state as they do now under the Nizam in this twentieth century.”³³⁶ The booklet referenced political reforms that had taken place in British India and other princely states such as Rampur where the sovereigns had provided political representation and freedoms to their subjects. The authors demanded that, “freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of press, and freedom of religion be given to all the subjects of the state and a declaration to that effect be issued by the government as was done by the Nawab of Rampur,” and “all circulars and orders issued by the government putting limitations on freedom of the subjects should immediately be withdrawn. This government should confer more and more rights on the subjects at least on the lines of British India, keeping in view Responsible Government as the ultimate goal. The legislative council needs to be reformed and steps should be taken to get subjects full representation in the council.”³³⁷

Various orders passed by the Nizam’s government, especially by the department of ecclesiastical affairs became controversial as they were perceived to be unfairly biased against

³³⁶The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.5

³³⁷The grievances and disabilities of the Hindus in Nizam Hyderabad state, report of the enquiry committee, 1923. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.30

the Hindu community and its religious observances. One of these circulars stated that, “no old temples should be repaired or extended in the city of Hyderabad or any place in the districts where the population of Mohammadans is large.”³³⁸ Other orders that prohibited music of any sort in religious processions of the Hindus near mosques at all times, and the severe curtailment of Hindu festivals when they overlapped with Muslim festivals such as Ramzan and Muharram³³⁹ were also a source of irritation that Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha leaders leveraged for mobilizing Hindu public opinion. Such restrictions when read in the backdrop of other documents that stated, “In view of the fact that Hyderabad state is an Islamic State, HEH the Nizam’s government allows special sympathy for the construction of religious buildings”³⁴⁰ created anxieties among non Muslim subjects. These anxieties were amply utilized in the construction of a beleaguered Hindu community that was forced to live as second class subjects despite being the numerical majority in Hyderabad.

The culture of circulating booklets became such that even local Hindu leaders joined this trend. In one such booklet, the economic disparities between Hindus and Muslims were presented by K. S. Vaidya, a lawyer and local leader in Hyderabad. This text presents very impressive analysis of data on the comparative wealth and economic situation disaggregated by religion. For example, the author counters the government logic that there are more Hindu landlords than Muslims by showing that the majority of Hindu landlords have very little land

³³⁸ Circular No. 5, cited in Religious Disabilities of Hindus in Hyderabad State, Published by L.B. Phatak, 26th December 1931. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.3

³³⁹ Circular No. 3, cited in Religious Disabilities of Hindus in Hyderabad State, Published by L.B. Phatak, 26th December 1931. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.5, 8

³⁴⁰ Circular No. 6, reproduced in Religious Disabilities of Hindus in Hyderabad State, Published by L.B. Phatak, 26th December 1931. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.3

holding while the Muslim landholding is disproportionately large.³⁴¹ Similarly, the author shows how the government statement of gross number of Hindu and Muslim employees of the state is hollow since most Hindu employees were in low salary positions while most Muslim employees were in the higher Salary jobs.³⁴² Similar analysis shows how the state discriminated between communities in the Military, and peasantry. Such publications were based on careful analysis of government data and came out as very articulate and convincing documents that buttressed the narrative that the Nizam's government was biased against the Hindu community in all spheres of life. Publishing and circulating propaganda material was clearly a political activity that included criticism of the Nizam and his policies. Yet this type of activity was possible because it remained under the radar of the state until the materials became heavily circulated and popular among the literate masses. Printing technology had also become such that clandestine presses could function without raising a red flag. Thus, such leaders perceived opportunities for circulating propaganda material as a safer tactic without indulging in comparatively more public acts of politics.

These publications brought the Nizam on the defensive, and in a gazette notification of 1928, the Nizam's government reiterated its policy, "that every person is entitled to complete religious freedom so far as the maintenance of public peace and order permits." This notification added that the term religious performance was to include, "all meetings, processions and ceremonies of a public and religious nature" and that formal permission was to be sought from the Commissioner of Police for any such event at least 7 days in advance. The rules further raise a red flag about 'new' performances and how they will need to be studied in detail before being

³⁴¹ Economic condition of Hindus in Hyderabad State, published by K.S. Vaidya. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.1

³⁴² Economic condition of Hindus in Hyderabad State, published by K.S. Vaidya. NAI/Foreign and Political/Secret/207-P/1932/p.2

permitted. These rules stated that, “a performance that has been observed for years may be termed as new by the introduction of features that substantially alter its character or by altered circumstances such as the construction of a new place of worship on the existing route of the procession, if any involved.”³⁴³ Internal debates within the Police department veered towards prohibiting all performances, of any purported purpose, planned by “extremely communal organizations such as the Arya Samaj.”³⁴⁴ As penalty, Rs. 100 as fine and/or simple imprisonment of one month for violators was added to these rules later.³⁴⁵ This notification achieved two important goals that went a long way in regulating political activity, the first being a redefinition of religious performances to include any event that was public in nature. This would allow the government to control almost all kinds of events planned in the city. The second aim was to allow unlimited discretion to the Police Commissioner for treating any planned event as new or innovative. This was probably in response to the tactics of local leaders of transforming religious events into political ones by inserting the pictures of nationalist leaders like Gandhi, during the conduct of religious performances.

Apart from these booklets, newspapers were also used by activists of the AS and HMS. Newspapers printed from Bombay, and other neighboring provinces that were circulated in Hyderabad, such as Kesari, The Mahratta, & Samsthan Samrajya, frequently published editorials and opinion pieces criticizing the Nizam and his policies vis a vis welfare of the Hindu community. Stopping the inflow of these newspapers into the state was not possible due to practical purposes. Some of these pieces were designed to rouse Hindu public opinion against the

³⁴³ Rules governing religious performances in Hyderabad city and its suburbs, Undated, APSA/Hyderabad Deccan/Home/Police/Confidential/162/1340F/1928/Pp. 278-281.

³⁴⁴ Confidential note by member revenue & police, undated, Ibid/p. 389.

³⁴⁵ Memo, Judicial, Police and General secretariat, Ibid/p. 321.

sovereign, “While the Hindu ruler of Kashmir is terrorized by his Muslim majority subjects, the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad is terrorizing his Hindu majority subjects.” Attacking the Nizam personally, one of the pieces stated, “Osman Ali Khan seems to be the new Aurangzeb....It is evident that his policy is to make his state full of Muslims. His secret attempts at compelling converted Hindus to pray at mosques cannot be quietly successful.” The article lamented the neglect of Hindus, “He has completely boycotted the recruitment of Hindus in the administration and in those departments where policies are shaped. Throughout the Dominion there not a single Hindu Subedar or Taluqedar.....The plight of Hyderabad Hindus is like sheep who are put inside an enclosure and four jackals are placed at each side to guard them. These jackals eat one sheep everyday until the day that all the sheep vanish. Such is the religious policy of the Nizam.”³⁴⁶

The state preference for Urdu language in higher education was vehemently opposed, “Hyderabad’s new Aurangzeb Osman Ali has been trying indirectly to convert Hindus to his faith.” Targeting the appointment of Muslim officers who had been educated at Aligarh, England, and America one of the editorials alleged, “The education department has undertaken the task of ruining the Marathi, Kanara and Telugu vernacular by giving education to Hindu students not through their mother tongue but through Urdu thereby making them forget their own culture and religion.”³⁴⁷ The editorial continued, “The educational policy of the Nizam is such that Hindus are tied down to a pole to detain them while the Muslims are given horses to ride. Hence whatever educational progress is seen in the state is of Muslims only and not of Hindus.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Look at Shreenagar and look at Bhagnagar, Editorial, 16th February 1932, Kesari, Poona, APSA/Hyderabad Deccan/Judicial/ Police and General Department/182/1341F/1932/Pp. 3-8.

³⁴⁷ Hyderabad Aurangzeb’s Happy Dreams, 19th Feb 1932, Kesari, Poona, Ibid/p.1.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 3

Newspaper articles also opposed the Nizam's purported preference to religious observances of Muslims above those of his Hindu subjects. An article claimed that the Nizam hopes to destroy Hinduism, and one of his methods was to, "belittle the importance of their festivities, fairs and holy places," detailing how the Nizam's policies had curtailed the observance of the dushehra festivals among Hindus, "the present Nizam has issued a firman to the effect that if dasarah festival occurs in the month of Ramzan, its worship should be performed without any music and accompaniments expressing joy....as if burying a deadbody." The article further further complained that the Nizam's religious policies forced Hindus to behave as if they were actually Muslims.³⁴⁹ The complaints also include the allegation that new mosques are patronized by the state while the Hindus are not even allowed to repair their temples, and that, Preachers of islam are not only helped by government officials but are also supported by government funds for propaganda, whereas those of Hinduism are not only not given such help but are denied even legitimate freedom."³⁵⁰

Contributors to newspapers criticized the lack of freedom of speech in Hyderabad, "As the people in British India have freedom of speech and freedom of the press they can at least raise a protest till they are hoarse, write till they are tired of it, and shed tears over their lot as much as they like. But the Hyderabad Hindus are debarred even from such freedom."³⁵¹ Editorial pieces kept criticizing the Nizam regarding his sympathies for the Ottoman emperor, long after the Khilafat agitation was dead for practical purposes, "the whole of the dominions, in the course of time, wuld be full of Muslims only. The ambition of the present Nizam Osman Ali

³⁴⁹ Ibid,p.4.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p.5

³⁵¹ Ibid, p.6.

is the cause of all this. He has not only become Aurangzeb by harassing Hindus but he also wants to revive the Khilafat movement in India which has been buried in Turkey by Kamal Pasha and then become himself the Khalifa. He is spending lakhs of rupees a year with a view to spread his fame that he is the only supporting prop of Islam throughout the whole world.”³⁵² Out of state activists, however, advised Hyderabad’s Hindus against open revolt, “They should resort to only constitutional methods which must be brought in force to make them effective.”³⁵³

Several newspapers published from Bombay and, circulating in Hyderabad, emphasized antagonisms between Hindus and Muslims in and outside Hyderabad. Such articles published news stories based on anecdotes and often with sketchy details, and presented a scenario of great enmity between the communities, along with a generalized narrative that Muslims harassed Hindus. One such article claimed, “Whenever a dispute between Hindus and Muslims crops up, it is an usual experience that the latter cannot but get the upper hand over the former. In Indian states, be they under Muslim or Hindu rulers, the rights and privileges of Hindus are being overridden at each and every step.”³⁵⁴ Another article mentions, “The Ganpati procession in the Nizam’s state has been prohibited for the last many years on account of the Muslim’s puffed up attitude.”³⁵⁵ Another article claimed that, “the claims of Hindus are being openly trampled upon in Muslim states. But as Muslim rowdys cannot get opportunities for doing such mischief openly in Hindu states, they enter the Hindu fold in the garb of sheeps skin and get their objects fulfilled by underhand methods.” This article concludes, “The Hindu community and their honor and their religion are being openly and secretly constantly attacked on all sides from within and

³⁵² Ibid, p.6.

³⁵³ Ibid, p.7.

³⁵⁴ The Kesari, Poona, editorial, 6th October, APSA/Home/142/1341F/p. 35

³⁵⁵ A wail from Hyderabad, The Maharatta, Poona, 17th December 1933, APSA/Home/142/1341F/ p. 34.

without. Under such circumstances Hindus cannot hope to survive unless they keep themselves wide awake and vigilant even in petty matters.”³⁵⁶

Again under pressure from this negative opinion about the Nizam’s suppression of religious freedom for the Hindus, the Nizam reiterated his commitment to the ideals of equality of religions and justice. One such firman (royal edict) was issued in March 1932, another in October 1933. These edicts aimed at addressing the communal situation in the state. The latter stated that, “it is the duty of every government that they should protect the life, property and the sacred places of their subjects of divergent religions, This has been my policy as has been that of my ancestors, and I have tried to follow it in as much as possible. The ruler of the country had never shown partiality towards any religion, whatever be his personal religion.”³⁵⁷

But Hindu public opinion on the Nizam’s stated policy of religious tolerance had suffered considerably by the 1930s and can be gauged by a variety of editorial and opinion pieces that were published in newspapers that were in formal or informal circulation in Hyderabad. One author wrote, “ it is surprising to see HEH the Nizam issue one firman after the other with a view to tom-tom before the world that he is quiet impartial and generous in religious matters when persons like Mr. Tuljapurkar are trying to have the ban on Hindu festivals lifted.” After listing several acts of discrimination against Hindus, the author continued, “we would like to ask HEH the Nizam why he would unnecessarily scratch the sore by issuing such firmans when the hindu subjects in the state have been bearing only restrictions of the kind mentioned above,” and then

³⁵⁶ The Kesari, Poona, 5th November, 1933. APSA/Home/182/41F/ p. 23.

³⁵⁷ Kesari, 7th Novemeber 1933. APSA/Hyderabad Deccan/Home/Unnumbered/1933/p. 11.

warned, “gone are the days of holding the sight of the public under fascination and deception by the magic wand of such firmans.”³⁵⁸

Grievances among his Hindu subjects refused to die down. In one such compilation prepared and circulated by a body called, ‘standing committee of Hindu subjects of Hyderabad,’ the authors presented carefully prepared statistics. This booklet contains tabulated data on expenses made by the Nizam’s government on various religious matters of various communities, including land grants, repairs and maintenance of places of worship, pilgrimage subsidies and travel assistance, salaries to religious preachers, etc. These tables show a clear discrimination against the Hindu community.³⁵⁹ Actually, it was not just Hindu festivals and religious affairs that were being regulated by the state, the Nizam’s government, especially the department of ecclesiastical affairs attempted to closely monitor and control the proceedings inside mosques. It had become a common instance to use mosques for secular purposes, “where resolutions are passed and seconded as if they were halls for public meetings.”³⁶⁰ The Nizam issued specific orders in October and November of 1934 for preventing the political use of mosques and places of worship of all other communities, and to specifically regulate the content of sermons in mosques. These orders were meant to ensure that no preacher would deviate from a topic of purely religious purport, or to utter anything that could irritate members of another sect or religion and to cause a breach of peace. Administrators were, though, clear about the ambiguities involved in implementing these rules, “it is a short step from religion to social reform and a shorter still from social reform to politics. The boundary line is not always clear. We all know

³⁵⁸ Maharashtra Swarajya, 13th Oct 1933, APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/File unnumbered/1933/p. 19

³⁵⁹ Kesari, 7th November 1933. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/File unnumbered/1933/p. 22

³⁶⁰ Advice, 3rd November 1934, APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/File unnumbered/1933/p 21

how easy I is to give a religious cloak to a sermon the sense and purpose of which is far removed from religion.”³⁶¹ However, public perceptions were shaped by the disproportionate reporting of cases where the regulation of Hindu places of worship was done.

It also seems that the methods for regulating potentially political activities inside mosques involved a softer approach than those used against non-Muslim places of worship. In official advice from the Nizam’s office, a memo said, “To prevent such misuse of mosques no restrictive rules or regulations are necessary as the officers responsible for the maintenance of law and order should by their tact and Hikmat-e-Amli (capacity to apply) be able to prevent such an unpleasant situation arising.”³⁶² And this advice to use pure discretion, in lieu of clear-cut rules was a source of anxiety to the police chief who foresaw many practical problems in this method.³⁶³

In cases where a preacher or speaker deviated from a religious sermon in a mosque or used a mosque for non religious purposes, the department of ecclesiastical affairs would penalize the trustee or custodian of the mosque or place of worship. Penalties included transfers, monetary fines, and termination from state employment. These rules applied to places of worship of all communities.³⁶⁴ The government drafted detailed rules regarding the conduct of religious programs of all communities. This included a general stoppage of speeches, sermons, and

³⁶¹ Member, Revenue & Police, to Secretary, Home Department, 28th November 1934, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1933/ Pp. 1-3.

³⁶² Advice, 3rd November 1934, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1933/p. 6.

³⁶³ Member, revenue & Police, to Secretary, Home Department, 18th March 1935. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1935/p. 7.

³⁶⁴ Memo, member, revenue and police, 29th November 1934. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1933/p. 21

performances by outsiders unless they had a formal permission.³⁶⁵ In addition, all preachers coming from outside Hyderabad were warned upon their entry and prosecuted if they violated the conditions set upon them.³⁶⁶

By mid 1930s, Arya Samaj in Hyderabad had evolved into a provocative movement that was opposed by the MIM as well as by Muslims in general. Arya Samaj volunteers made speeches that were often found to be offensive by Muslims, and they also circulated published materials that questioned and ridiculed Islam and the rituals that Muslims followed. Several such publications were routinely banned, confiscated and destroyed and the authors and publishers prosecuted if they could be arrested. In one of many such cases, two booklets published by the Arya Samaj were proscribed. Titled *Islami Qutub ki Haqeeqat* (The truth about Islam), and *Bahisht ki Haqeeqat* (Truth about Islamic paradise), these publications were distributed in the city and caused, “excitement in all corners of the city.”³⁶⁷ In another case where Arya Samaj preachers criticized Ulama and labeled Muharram ceremonies as irrational, formal complaints were filed, “No one should be allowed to ridicule ulama as they are central to the religion of Islam. We request warnings to be issued so that no one criticizes Muslim programs and meetings. We also request that Arya Samaj officials be warned so they stop insulting the memory of Imam Husain. Government should kindly take steps to ensure that Muslim sentiments are not hurt by the activities of Arya Samaj.”³⁶⁸ Another example was an Arya Samaj book titled *Islami Dayani* (??), published from Lahore and circulated in Hyderabad that was, “so provocative that it

³⁶⁵ General Circular, Home Secretary, undated, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1933/p. 14

³⁶⁶ Minutes of the meeting, executive council, 11th August 1937, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/File number unknown/1937/p. 17.

³⁶⁷ Report to Muhtasib, Umoor e Ammah, 9th March, 1935. APSA/Home/B2/F1451/1347F/1937/p.1

³⁶⁸ Petition, Muhammad Osman to Director General Department, 29th Meher e San, 1937. APSA/Home/B1/F1628/1347F/1937/ pp. 1-2

heightened emotions among the faithful in Hyderabad.” Apart from criticizing Islamic principals and practices, this publication included, “ unfounded and false claims about forced conversion of Hindus to Islam, and forcible burial of Hindu corpses under the protection of the state.”³⁶⁹ Such booklets were routinely confiscated, banned, and preachers were exiled. However, the fact that the source of the preachers and the material was outside Hyderabad meant that both could be supplied continuously in a clandestine fashion.

At the same time, members of the Majlis (MIM) were also actively campaigning in and around Hyderabad city countering organizations such as the Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, and Hindu Civil Liberties Union. MIM leaders held frequent public events to warn people, “about the mischievous intentions of outsiders who had come to Hyderabad for creating trouble for the Nizam and the state’s Muslim subjects.” They exhorted Muslims, “to present a unity that will fear terror in the hearts of Hyderabad’s enemies”³⁷⁰ and also demanded the government to control outsiders, and regulate their activities so that, “no discords could be created among Muslims.”³⁷¹ MIM leaders were very sensitive to sectarian tensions within Hyderabad’s Muslim community, it being one of the key challenges that the MIM was established to address. Additionally, their close alliance with the IML meant that they were also committed to constructing, maintaining and projecting a uniform Muslim community that was free of sectarian fractures. In a large public event at the Kulsumpura Mosque in Hyderabad, Maulvi Khwaja Bahauddin used the pretext of discussing the virtues of the Prophet, to warn Hyderabad’s Muslims, “The Koran shows that all the sects within Islam that fought with each other were

³⁶⁹ Report to Muhtasim, Ghulam Muhammad Jung Bahadur, 13th June, 1935. APSA/Home/B2/F1354/1345F/1935/pp.1-3

³⁷⁰ Report, Secret Police, 27th June, 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B3/F1729/47F/1937/p.1

³⁷¹ Report, Secret Police, 27th June, 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B3/F1729/47F/1937/p.2

exterminated. Just look at your self, where is the Muslim community in Hyderabad? There are Shias, there are Sunnis, there are Arabs, there are Pathans, and so on. But where are the Muslims?” he continued, “leave aside this sectarianism, and pledge to unite as one single Muslim community. Unite or get decimated in this new era where everyone is fighting for freedom. The MIM was established to end sectarianism, and we have decided to include all sects among Muslims in our organization. We plan to expand MIM in each and every neighborhood of Hyderabad, and each such branch will have members from every Muslim sect. Come join us. I promise to you that we will live together, and we will die together.”³⁷² MIM leaders had fewer restrictions, as they had ample sympathizers within the state police and administration. By the mid 1930s, the communal atmosphere in Hyderabad had become irreparable. *Ganpati*, the increasingly popular Hindu festival dedicated to the elephant god, had become a regular occasion when communal competitions were contested. Rivaling Muharram, in its public zeal and processional nature, Ganpati would often be associated with innovative rituals, new procession routes, and contestation over its timing. Several communal riots in 1935 coincided with Ganpati, not only in Hyderabad city, but also in other districts.³⁷³ Holi, the Hindu festival of colors, also became an occasion for tiffs between Hindus and Muslims. Even minor festivals would become occasions for conflict. Reports of communal tiffs became common even during neighborhood level festivals.³⁷⁴ These festivals were used as opportunities for creating conflict by communal organizations on both sides. The usual triggers were routes of processions that were perpetually contested. While the police attempted to restrict festivals on routes that were customary,

³⁷² Report, Secret Police, 3rd September, 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B2/F1706/47F/1937/p.1

³⁷³ Riots during Ganpati. Police reports. APSA/Home-Police/345/1935

³⁷⁴ Report, Secret Police, date not legible, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B1/F169/1347F/1937/p.26

increasingly assertive Hindu communal groups claimed expanded routes and protested when they were stopped. At the same time, Muslim communal organizations such as the MIM organized counter protests, and proposed diversions away from Mosques and other shrines.³⁷⁵ While this was already a pattern by the late 1930s, what was striking 1937 onwards is the increase in stature of the MIM. Its leaders would write to the police with an unprecedented amount of self-importance. These complaints and suggestions would often have an authoritative tone that belied their influence with the police and administration. In one such case, the letter from the City chief of MIM to the police commissioner commanded, “your department needs to take urgent action to control the situation. Our volunteers have been barely restrained from launching protests against Ganpati organizers,” and ended with, “I hope to be informed of the action taken as soon as possible. If I do not hear from your office by the end of the week, I will contact the government directly in this matter.”³⁷⁶

1937 was a special year in the political landscape of Hyderabad because Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had by then established himself as the ‘sole spokesman’ of Muslims in British India, made a prominent visit. His visit reflected the success of Bahadur Yar Jung’s political efforts in Hyderabad. Jung had long been a sympathizer of the IML and a hardcore supporter of Jinnah’s politics. He had convinced Jinnah to offer patronage, even if symbolic, to Muslim organizations in the princely states wherever Muslim leaders had chosen to organize the community on religious and political grounds. During Jinnah’s brief visit, Jung organized a string of public events that added to his own stature in Hyderabad politics. Throughout the visit, Jung would introduce Jinnah to the audience and would praise him for his work for the Muslims. Jinnah,

³⁷⁵ Report, Kotwal to Member, Home, Hindu-Muslim Riot during Holi procession, 3rd April, 1941, APSA/Home/31R&C/Processions/51F/1941/p.9.

³⁷⁶ City Chief, MIM, Hyderabad to Commissioner Police, 19th November, 1937. APSA/Home/Police/239-P/p. 12.

under conditions set by the Nizam's government to refrain from any overt political speech, repeatedly mentioned, "I am not here for any political purpose, I have come here as a friend, and a fellow Muslim in solidarity." Jinnah offered solidarity to Hyderabad and told them that, "I promise the Muslims of Hyderabad the support of not only the IML but also want you to know that the entire Muslim community of British India is with you."³⁷⁷ During the several speeches where Jinnah chose to speak in a mix of English and a Bombay dialect of Urdu, BYJ became his interpreter for the audience, thus in a way becoming the symbolic medium through which Jinnah reached out to Hyderabad's Muslims. At the end of one of the speeches, Jung took upon himself to speak for Jinnah, "Mr. Jinnah wants all of you to organize better and maintain your enthusiasm for serving your community."³⁷⁸ While Jinnah didn't make this comment, Jung's attribution of this operative part to Jinnah was designed to suggest that the Muslim community in Hyderabad would do good to join hands with Jung's organization. It also joined the aims of both MIM and the IML together, that of cultivating a uniform Muslim community in Hyderabad. The MIM and its charismatic leader BYJ were often seen as parties in the communal competition in the state, and yet it was public knowledge that the Nizam often gave a private audience to BYJ. This strengthened popular perceptions about Nizam's partisan stand on the issue of communalism in Hyderabad. It was also observed keenly by political activists that prohibitions on political and religious events were often not implemented when the MIM and Jung were involved, thus establishing a public sentiment that the Nizam's government was partisan. Indeed,

³⁷⁷ True copy of speeches during Mr. Jinnah's visit to Hyderabad, Secret Police, 10th March, 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B9/F1668/47F/1937/p.9

³⁷⁸ True copy of speeches during Mr. Jinnah's visit to Hyderabad, Secret Police, 10th March, 1937. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home-Police/B9/F1668/47F/1937/p.11

organizations such as the AS, HMS, MATI, and MIM had contributed to an atmosphere where people were very conscious of their belonging to either the Hindu or Muslim community. Meanwhile, the GoI Act of 1935 that had come into force in British India, injected ideas of representative governance and elections into popular psyche. Hyderabad was not immune to these colossal political changes that were sweeping India. By 1937, various Hindu organizations and activists in Hyderabad had also started clamoring for ‘responsible government,’ a concept that the Nizam had reluctantly agreed to but had successfully kept on the backburner since 1918.³⁷⁹ But owing to popular pressure and opinion created through hostile newspapers, the Nizam’s government declared the setting up of a reforms commission on 22nd September, 1937. During the same year, the INC won the first major elections that the British allowed in various provinces. Following this electoral victory in British India, the INC broke from precedence and allowed Congress sympathizers to participate in politics in princely states, including Hyderabad, but without formally using the party’s name. This brought about an explosion of activity for political reforms in Hyderabad, as well as in other princely states. The Hyderabad State Congress (HSC hereafter) was thus formed in 1938 and started pressurizing the Nizam for constitutional reforms. At the same time, the AS, and the HMS also started full-fledged agitations in Hyderabad demanding civil and religious liberties for the Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha launched the *Satyagraha* (non violent protest) in Hyderabad on 21st October 1938, followed by the Arya Samaj and the HSC soon joined in. But the nature of this protest was too muddy. The key figures of these organizations had so many overlapping interests and memberships that it became impossible to separate the communal organizations from the constitutional reform groups, and nationalists. The Congress party soon became uncomfortable in being seen as

³⁷⁹ Pernau, 2000 (op. cit.).

supporting two communal organizations against a Muslim sovereign in Hyderabad, and did not support the agitation as much as the HMS and the AS had expected it to.³⁸⁰ Eventually, the INC decided to withdraw from this joint protest on 24th December 1938 as it did not formally endorse the ideological position of the other two organizations. The Nizam's government declared a new set of constitutional reforms on the 17th of July, 1939 thus bringing an end to the Satyagraha.³⁸¹ These events demonstrated how the state had opened up for political reforms based on both popular pressures and due to the opinions transmitted through newspapers. Local elites who had held forte despite state repressions and surveillance, as well as leaders of the AS and HMS also stood victorious at these reforms.

All this while, the MIM was in vehement opposition to the *Satyagraha*, and it also took a position against the Nizam's government which it claimed to have cowed down under the pressure of Hindu communal forces. MIM on its part demanded that the Nizam's government declare Hyderabad as an Islamic State, and must formalize the permanent dominance of Muslims within an expanded legislative assembly where they would be represented in majority.³⁸² After these turmoils of 1938-39, Hyderabad's government came out with a white paper through which it laid bare its position on the Arya Samaj. This white paper declared the Arya Samaj as a troublesome organization, with activities that, "have gone far beyond any legitimate sphere of religious and social reform and developed violent political and communal tendencies. Local preachers have made it a practice of referring to unsubstantiated attacks made by Muslim men on Hindu women, and of appealing to the audience to unite and arm themselves in order to save the

³⁸⁰ Benichou, 2000 (op. cit.).

³⁸¹ Pernau, 2000 (op. cit.), p. 271

³⁸² Pernau, 2000 (op. cit.).

honor of their women from such molestation.”³⁸³ The charge that these agitations were more communal than political was attested by several national newspapers, including the Times of India. In an analytical article after the end of the Satyagraha, a staff reporter stated, “the Arya Defense League and Hindu Civil Liberties Union are professedly communal organizations fighting communal issues. The third, Hyderabad State Congress, is professedly a political organization but judging from its activities it is also communal in outlook.”³⁸⁴ The Arya Samaj kept disparaging the Nizam and his government through publications that were smuggled into Hyderabad even in the 1940s. While they were often proscribed, they were able to mobilize Hindu public opinion within the communal narrative that was being woven. This included a Hindi book titled, ‘History of Religious War in the Nizam’s Dominion.’ Published by the Indian Arya League, this book makes various incendiary comments against the Nizam and his policies that were shown to be anti Hindu. The book was proscribed not only in Delhi, but its proscription was also sought by the British in Delhi.³⁸⁵

Muslim Sectarianism in Hyderabad

While the 1920-1941 period in Hyderabad witnessed mainly the buildup of Hindu Muslim antagonism through protests, it was not that Shia-Sunni sectarianism was completely absent. However, Shia-Sunni issues were of a much milder nature by comparison. Sectarianism among Muslims in Hyderabad had remained suppressed due to multiple factors. One reason was the patrimonial policies of the Nizam that ensured that the elites of all sects, religions, and ethnicities were coopted by the state and were strictly regulated so as not to make trouble. The

³⁸³ The Arya Samaj: Hyderabad Government’s statement. Times of India, Bombay, 3rd January, 1939.

³⁸⁴ Causes and motives of agitation in Hyderabad state. Times of India, Bombay, 3rd January, 1939.

³⁸⁵ History of Religious War in the Nizam’s Dominion. Published by India Arya League, Delhi. NAI/Political/Secret/22(16)-P(S)/40/1940

other reason was that Muslims in Hyderabad, for all practical considerations, were organized along either ethnic heritage or their position as local or foreigner. So Pathan, Arab, or foreigner, were more salient categories than simply Shia or Sunni.³⁸⁶ While records from late 19th century do show a number of tiffs between Shias and Sunnis in Hyderabad, such conflicts remained absent or undocumented for most of the time in the twentieth century. However, sectarian undercurrents remained.

The Nizam's policies towards Muharram, though, gave an ambiguous signal to both the Shias and Sunnis of Hyderabad. The first such decision was taken in 1919 when the Nizam abruptly discontinued the *Langar* Parade, the grand Military procession that accompanied Muharram relics and symbols in Hyderabad city. This was a big blow for Shias as it had marked the historic patronage that the state had given to Shia style Muharram mourning in Hyderabad. On the other hand, this discontinuation was in line with demands by conservative Sunni Ulama who had demanded that the Nizam stop patronizing Muharram observances in the state. However, the Nizam ensured that the decision to discontinue the Military parade was not seen as a complete end to patronage. The same year that the parade was discontinued, he took a larger personal role in participation in the Muharram procession by walking a small distance barefoot along with the procession. In a way, the Nizam killed two birds with one stone.

A few years later, in 1927, in another decision regarding Muharram, the Nizam issued a royal edict prohibiting self-flagellation at all public places in Hyderabad. The *firman* observed that, "Muslims of the Shia sect publicly beat their breasts and flagellate themselves with various kinds of instruments wounding themselves in such a manner that their bodies are covered with blood. This unseemly practice makes bad impression on non-Muslims and is apt to bring Islamic

³⁸⁶ Pernau, 2000 (op. cit.).

religion into contempt. His Exalted Highness on consulting the priests of the Shia sect was informed that these practices are not sanctioned by any religious authority or rule, and no one except illiterate people consider it proper. His Exalted Highness is pleased to command that arrangement be made to make it unlawful and prohibit such practices during Moharrum in the whole of Hyderabad State.” The firman also went ahead to clarify that it was committed to non interference in religious matters of any community as long as their practices were supported by their religious authorities.³⁸⁷ This prohibition was a direct assault on traditional practices followed by both Shia and Sunni masses, especially among the non-elite sections.

Despite these curbs on Muharram that the Nizam ordered, there were often backroom rumors that the Nizam privately followed the Shia faith. However, the legal position in Hyderabad made it essential that the Nizam should be a Sunni Muslim, and must follow the *Hanafi* school of jurisprudence.³⁸⁸ These rumors were fuelled by several factors. The first was that the mother of the seventh Nizam was a Shia, and the Nizam was known to have been under her influence especially in matters of his private faith.³⁸⁹ Secondly, the Nizam prayed in his private mosque away from the eyes of his subjects and there was a mystery whether he followed the Shia or Sunni style of prayer. The other factor was his open participation in the Muharram processions on Ashra day, and his patronage of several *Ashurkhana* (Shia shrines dedicated to Muharram). Finally, in many poems and couplets that the Nizam penned, he seemed to have a great admiration for figures that were part of Shia devotional practices. These rumors became so serious that in 1934, the Nizam had to take recourse to a royal edict in which he declared that,

³⁸⁷ Self-Flagellation in Hyderabad: The prohibition order, 25th June, 1927. Times of India

³⁸⁸ Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar.

³⁸⁹ Bawa, Basant K. 1992. *The last Nizam: the life and times of Mir Osman Ali Khan*. New Delhi, India: Viking.

“these rumors were without foundation, and he was still a staunch Sunni of the *Hanafi* persuasion like his forefathers.” He explained that his poems, “were based on the Koran and the Prophet’s sayings and in no way violated the essentials of the Islamic faith.” Addressing allegations that the Nizam disproportionately praised the Prophet’s grandsons (key figures in Shia faith), he asserted that, “the Koran allows each man to follow his conscience in religious matters and his love for the Prophet’s grandsons could never come to conflict with his Sunni faith.”³⁹⁰ Quelling this rumor was so important that the prime minister of Hyderabad also published a notice to the same effect in the government gazette.³⁹¹ This event emphasizes the nature of general attitudes that Hyderabad’s Sunnis held for Shias.

Despite the Nizam’s efforts to establish his Sunni identity and quell rumors about his alleged Shia leanings, the matter did not come to rest easily. After a year of the *firman* in which the Nizam declared himself a Sunni, a Sunni organization from Lucknow published a pamphlet addressed to the Nizam, sent it to him, and also circulated its copies among Muslims in Hyderabad. This organization, Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Millat, and its patron Maulana Ahmad Abdul Haleem had a history of anti Shia propaganda and publishing in Lucknow. This pamphlet included an open address to the Nizam in the form of questions, backed up by commentary on the Shia faith and Shia practices that were aimed at establishing Shias as a dangerous and unreliable community that should be shunned by the larger Muslim community. The author communicates to the Nizam that, “it has deeply grieved and afflicted the seven crores of Indian Sunnis to hear that their most highly esteemed brother and greatest benefactor had withdrawn his support and sympathy for them and has taken to patronizing the Shias. The Sunnis are anxious to

³⁹⁰ Nizam a Staunch Sunni: Firman contradicts Rumours, Times of India, 15th September 1934 (Proquest Online Database)

³⁹¹ Ibid.

know what salient points were noted by HEH the Nizam in the Shia creed in comparison with the Sunni creed.”³⁹² The pamphlet was full of interpretations of various aspects of Shia faith and derogatory comments on them by the author. This open address was meant to both appeal the Nizam to discontinue whatever Shia sympathies he had, as well as an open affront to any that he might have had. The author also requested the Nizam to organize and preside over a public debate between Shia and Sunni scholars, “in the end the view that stands the test of reason may be proclaimed publicly. If this humble request of mine is accepted HEH the Nizam will thereby be doing a memorable deed worthy of being written in letters of gold, and posterity will look upon it with a thankful eye.”³⁹³ While the Nizam never responded to this open letter, it reflected the spread of Sunni anxieties about the Nizam’s personal faith.

1932 onwards, Hyderabad witnessed a spike in sectarianism within Muslims. Many religious events and congregations reflected the sectarian ill-will that was flowing in from Lucknow. The Darul Shifa mosque, a Sunni establishment in the center of Hyderabad’s Shia enclave, started hosting an event in memory of Imam Husain since 1932. This innovative event was organized by Anjuman-e-Afghan, a group of Sunni Pathans, who would recruit a notable Sunni individual to preside the function, and a Sunni preacher as the key speaker. The Police was alarmed at this “somewhat mischievous” function that was traditionally considered a Shia event and was usually held at private venues.³⁹⁴ While this event was prohibited before trouble could begun, other such events did take place. In a public event in Noor Khan Baazar, a Shia enclave, a

³⁹² Maulana Ahmed Abdul Haleem to Nizam of Hyderabad, Tuhfa-i-Khusravi, Majlis-iTahaffuz-iMillat, Lucknow, Undated. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/HOME/B3/F1558/1345F/1935/p.1

³⁹³ Maulana Ahmed Abdul Haleem to Nizam of Hyderabad, Tuhfa-i-Khusravi, Majlis-iTahaffuz-iMillat, Lucknow, Undated. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/HOME/B3/F1558/1345F/1935/p.7

³⁹⁴ Commissioner of Police to Secretary, Home Department, 3rd May 1935. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/1241/1933/p. 21.

Sunni mosque organized the commemoration of Abu Bakar the first Caliph, in a direct affront to the Shia neighbors. The speaker, Maulvi Hisamuddin compared the first Caliph with Ali, the person par excellence among the Shia, and stated, “Abu bakr is worthy of more respect than Ali because our prophet always thanked him for offering his daughter as a wife of the prophet. I also ask you, if Abu Bakar was so hated by the family of the prophet then why would Hasan and Hussain name their children as Abu Bakr?”³⁹⁵ The speaker then raised the pitch of his contempt for the Shias by making fun of their prayer rituals, “I do not want to speak about those sects that offer namaz with their feet wide open just like the prophet once did to accommodate his toddler grandsons who were playing on his prayer mat.”³⁹⁶

In another event organized in the praise of the Caliphs, in the Kotla Alijah area, another Shia majority area in Hyderabad, the speaker criticized the Nizam for prohibiting the speaker originally scheduled to speak. The prohibited speaker was known to be a trouble monger and hence was under house arrest. Owing to government pressure, the substitute speaker desisted from making sectarian remarks, but criticized the government for the restrictions, “We know why our esteemed speaker was not allowed to speak here. Is it fair for a Sunni King to take sides of other sects when the religious principles of his own sect are under siege?”³⁹⁷

The Shias were not to be left behind in provoking the Sunnis. *Majaalis* (mourning congregations) during Muharram would often include passages where the Caliphs and other figures dear to the Sunnis, such as Muawiya, were made fun of, even if through indirect word

³⁹⁵ Religious programs in Hyderabad, proceedings of the waaz at Noor Khan Bazar, speech of Maulana Hisamuddin, 30th Awan 1343F, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/916/1933/p. 19

³⁹⁶ Religious programs in Hyderabad, Proceedings of the waaz at Noor Khan Bazar, speech of Maulana Hisamuddin, 30th Awan 1343F APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/916/1933/p. 24

³⁹⁷ Religious programs in Hyderabad, proceedings of the waaz at Kotla Aali Jah, speech of unknown cleric from Dar ul Uloom, 10th Azar, 1334F, 1934, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/72/1934/p. 71

play. However, the presence of secret police officers meant that such proceedings were documented, and perpetrators were warned. In one such event in 1935, the host and speaker were warned, “no such insults and ridicule towards figures respected by other sects will be tolerated. Failure to cooperate on such sensitive matters will attract strict action in the future.”³⁹⁸ Shia tracts of provocative nature were also in circulation in Hyderabad, though most of them were imported from outside the state. Often controversial tracts were censored, confiscated, and destroyed. One such booklet published from Lahore and imported by a Shia organization in Hyderabad was censored because it was full of, “criticism of the Caliphs and Ayesha.”³⁹⁹ Another was proscribed because it treated, “as Muhammad’s enemies, several people who are revered by the Sunni community.”⁴⁰⁰ Such books were banned because the department of religious affairs suspected that, “they will become a hit among the Shias, and there will be grave danger to the peace of our Islamic kingdom.”⁴⁰¹

The government was very attentive to such sectarian triggers, and would often take preventive action. At a number of religious functions organized by the Sunni community of the Noor Khan Bazar, and Kotla Alijah areas of Hyderabad, historically Shia enclaves within the city, the scheduled speakers had to be changed at the last moment as the department of religious affairs had censored him due to his prior ‘mischievous’ activities. He had been charged in the past with making inflammatory speeches that could hurt sectarian peace in Hyderabad. He was

³⁹⁸ APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/72/1935/p. 24

³⁹⁹ APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/72/1935/p. 41

⁴⁰⁰ APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/72/1935/p. 62

⁴⁰¹ APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan /Home/Police/72/1935/unnumbered page

prohibited from speaking at “any public function, religious or otherwise until allowed to do so.”⁴⁰²

News of sectarian troubles from Lucknow reached Hyderabad both through newspapers, and personal networks, and often created a flutter. While overt conflicts between Shias and Sunnis were suppressed, and kept under wraps when they emerged, the events of Lucknow in the mid 1930s, combined with the government’s preventive restrictions on public spaces triggered Shia grievances. An intelligence memo of 1934 reported that, “owing to the restriction imposed this year, Shias in the city are in a very excited state. The warning given to Agha Jafar (a Shia community leader in Hyderabad) has produced a lot of resentment among the community. There is a general feeling that the government is becoming increasingly repressive for the Shias of the city. There is also information that the Shias plan to conduct public self-flagellation of the extreme sort this year. They have been planning to organize such events everyday throughout the month of Muharram.”⁴⁰³ Since self-flagellation had been prohibited since 1927, this plan was intended to defy the Nizam’s orders.

Later during the Muharram of 1938, when the Tabarra and Madhe Sahaba agitations were in sway in Lucknow, Shias in Hyderabad started mobilizing support for Shias in Lucknow. It was reported that the Shia communities in the neighborhoods of Noor Khan Bazar, Darul shifa, and Hussaini Mohalla brought about an unprecedented change in the way the *majalis* (mourning meetings) were conducted. It was found that instead of, “ distributing food after the majalis, Shias collected the funds allocated for the purpose and set up a purse to be sent to Lucknow in aid of the suffers of madh e sahaba. Hakim Muhammad Abbas and syed ali took much interest in

⁴⁰² Report of the superintendant, 10th of Azar, 1934, APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan / Department of Religious Affairs (Umoor e Ghayaba)/355/1934/page unnumbered

⁴⁰³ APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan / Department of Religious Affairs (Umoor e Ghayaba)/359/1934/p. 14

the collection of money and sent a large amount to Lucknow.” The report also mentions that the original recipients of the cash in Lucknow, Anjuman Tanzeem ul Momineen, being under watch, the money has been sent to the address of individuals connected with that organization.⁴⁰⁴ The government also gathered that a recruitment drive was being carried out for taking a group of men to Lucknow in solidarity with their coreligionists. The government was alarmed at this news and ordered that, “any tendency of people in Hyderabad to proceed to Lucknow to take part in the madhe sahaba agitation should be immediately brought to the notice of the government and that arrangements should be made to convey a personal and tactful warning to anyone who harbours such an intention.” The orders also mentioned the suppression of such news, “The commissioner of police should take steps to see that the local press does not work up local interest in the movement.”⁴⁰⁵ The solidarity being constructed in Hyderabad was pivoted around individuals with connections to Lucknow. The police reported that, “Hakim Muhammad Abbas of Darulshifa is keenly interested in madhe sahaba at Lucknow. Some of his relatives have been arrested in Lucknow in connection with this agitation.”⁴⁰⁶

During the same time, sectarian entrepreneurs within Sunnis were also attempting to foment trouble. In August 1938, the secret police reported to the city commissioner of police, “A waaz (sermon) in the praise of the Sahaba (companions of the prophet) has been planned and publicized to take place at the house of Seth Akram in the Mangal Haat area. The speaker is one Abdus Salaam, a preacher from outside Hyderabad. Posters about this event have been put up at

⁴⁰⁴ Notes and orders, deputy superintendent of police, Hyderabad. 5th September 1938. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home-Police/470/1348F/1938/p. 2

⁴⁰⁵ Strictly confidential note, Police Member to Home secretary, 22nd March 1938. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home-Police/5/6/1348F/1938/p. 7.

⁴⁰⁶ Notes and orders, DSP, Hyderabad. 5th September 1938. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home-Police/470/1348F/1938/p. 3

several places in the city.”⁴⁰⁷ This event in the praise of the caliphs was planned without permission from the government, and the report emphasized the’ “suspicion that this program is likely the beginning of organized madhe sahaba in Hyderabad. There is information that the speaker will be asking participants to follow the Sunnis of Lucknow. This program if allowed to take place is likely to disturb the peace in Hyderabad.”⁴⁰⁸ This event, too, was prohibited by the government and actual trouble was averted.

The Tabarra and Madhe Sahaba agitations of Lucknow had serious resonance in Hyderabad. It affected not only just public opinion among the Shias, but also became a matter for grave concern for the government. As the problem in Lucknow appeared to be unresolvable and growing, the Nizam wrote to the Viceroy drawing his attention to the, “great agitation that is going on in Lucknow nowadays between the two Moslem sects which I am afraid if not taken in hand quickly may lead to many complications and also it is possible that it will not be limited to one place only but may become an All-India question later on.”⁴⁰⁹ This message was followed by a proposal in which the Nizam suggested to the Viceroy that, “the best course of deciding the issue will be to refer the matter to a commission appointed by your excellency, whose president should of course be a European judge of the high court, while the other two members should represent their own communities respectively.” The proposal ends with a sense of urgency, “I am

⁴⁰⁷ Intelligence report, confidential, to Kotwal, 10th August, 1938. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home-Police/470/1348F/1938/p. 5

⁴⁰⁸ Intelligence report, confidential, to Kotwal, 10th August, 1938. APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home-Police/470/1348F/1938/p. 6

⁴⁰⁹ Telegram, Nizam of Hyderabad to Viceroy of India, 25th April, 1939. NAI/Political/Political-Branch/29(34)-P/1939/p. 2

afraid things are getting from bad to worse day by day unless something is done in time to avoid serious consequences which threaten to ensue at any time.”⁴¹⁰

Internal correspondence within British administrators also attested to the uncontrollable nature of the Lucknow affair. Henry Haig, the governor of UP reported that, “the majority of reasonable Sunni would have been very glad to reach a settlement, but the Sunni masses were really out of control of any leaders. No one could answer for them.” The governor also commented upon the helplessness of the IML in dealing with the issue, “the league were so nervous about their own organization being disrupted by this controversy that they would take no line at all, and I was told that Jinnah had threatened ex-communication to any Muslim Leaguer who should try to intervene.” In fact, the British again considered the Nizam of Hyderabad as a potential arbitrator for the sectarian deadlock in Lucknow, “perhaps it would not be unfair to ask him if he would propound a solution, which owing his great authority in the Islamic world might be expected to win acceptance.” And yet, they suspected that the Nizam, like Jinnah wouldn’t have the courage to directly intervene.⁴¹¹

Sectarian feelings, though suppressed, motivated trouble makers in Hyderabad well into the 1940s. In 1944, a major Sunni mosque was plastered with anti Shia posters. These posters asked Sunni Muslims of Hyderabad to, “stop attending any events of our enemies during Muharram if you have love for the caliphs in your hearts.”⁴¹² This created tensions in the old city, but quick action by the government saved any escalation of the situation. The mosque was whitewashed overnight, and orders were given to, “watch for the perpetrators, arrest them

⁴¹⁰ Telegram, Nizam of Hyderabad to Viceroy of India, 13th May, 1939. NAI/Political/Political-Branch/29(34)-P/1939/p. 5

⁴¹¹ Henry Haig, Governor of UP to H.E. the Viceroy of India, Secret letter no. UP257, 9th May, 1939. NAI/Political/Political-Branch/29(34)-P/1939/p. 7

⁴¹² APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1944/p. 21

silently, and make sure no public emotions are raised whatsoever.”⁴¹³ Similarly, on another occasion several arrests were made in the Basheerabad area of Hyderabad in 1944 where a group of men were found, “attempting to trigger a Shia-Sunni riot on the day of Ashra, but were apprehended before they could succeed.”⁴¹⁴ Indeed, the Nizam’s government was very quick and severe in dealing with Shia-Sunni sectarianism in Hyderabad. As we have seen, possibilities of conflict were managed through preventive methods, and in cases when untoward events did take place, corrective and penal actions were swiftly executed. The state had the clear intent, political will, and coercive means to suppress Shia-Sunni conflicts and it did so.

However, even at the earlier peak of the tensions in Lucknow, the general atmosphere between Shias and Sunnis in Hyderabad, including during Muharram, was not as acrimonious as it was in Lucknow. This was because apart from groups and individuals who created provocation between the sects, there were also many other events in the city, which were conciliatory in nature. In 1934, a public event at Madrasa e Nizamiya, a major Sunni seminary in Hyderabad, had a Sunni cleric speak about the tragedy of Muharram, the character of the Caliphs and the Imams, and the special role of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, to which the Nizam belonged, in treating both Shias and Sunnis with respect.⁴¹⁵ The commemoration of Ali’s birth in 1934 at a Sunni mosque in a prominent Shia enclave, was so full of praise for Ali that it could be easily mistaken for a Shia program.⁴¹⁶ Another Sunni event on the prophet’s birthday in 1934 was also conciliatory in nature. The speaker exhorted Muslims to, “maintain brotherhood across sects

⁴¹³ APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1944/p. 4

⁴¹⁴ APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1944/page unnumbered

⁴¹⁵ Maulana Abdul Rahim’s address, Madrasa Nizamiya, 10th AsSanah, 1934. APSA/Hyderabad-Deccan/Home/B1/F1148/1344F/1934/p. 3

⁴¹⁶ APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1934/p. 8

because all sects are Islamic at the core. There are some differences in some matters of faith and rituals but all sects belong to the same Muslim community.⁴¹⁷ Another Sunni event of 1939 that had a speaker from Lucknow, and influential participants from Hyderabad, focused on the, “need to become good Muslims. There are many sects within Islam, and each differs from the other but what is most important for all is a basic unity within the Muslim community.”⁴¹⁸

Thus, Muslim sectarianism, though present, was kept well under control in Hyderabad. Control involved coercive practices, and preventive action vis a vis potential troublemakers. By contrast, communal relations between Hindus and Muslims were not so well controlled. A biased government that was lenient towards Muslim organizations, and the fact that the Hindu organizations tapped resources from outside Hyderabad undermined the government’s efforts at regulating communalism. Thus the state acted unambiguously repressive for Intra-Muslim sectarianism, actively regulate the power of sectarian leaders, and prevented Shia-Sunni conflicts. However, in the case of communal conflicts in Hyderabad, the state failed to do the same. Nizam’s government had ample elites who partnered with non state Muslim elites such as the leaders of the MIM, Bahadur Yar Jung, Siddiq Deendar, etc and gave them a free hand to execute their agenda. On the other hand, the state was incapable of repressing Hindu elites and organizations for various purposes. It avoided repressing local organizations that were religious, even though they often indulged in political activities, for fears of triggering large scale resistance by its Hindu majority subjects. The State could also not regulate polemical organizations such as Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha effectively as they were based outside Hyderabad. This allowed for rival Hindu and Muslim elites to act with impunity, who

⁴¹⁷ APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1934

⁴¹⁸ APSA/Hyd-Deccan/Home/file number unknown/1939

launched sustained protests and contentious activities against each other. Thus Hindu and Muslim evolved as the key rival categories in Hyderabad, but Shia and Sunni did not.

Muslim Sectarianism in Lucknow

Like Hyderabad, Lucknow also witnessed both communal and sectarian politics. However, in contrast, sectarianism became more salient than communalism in Lucknow. Shia leaders, with advantages of higher education and experience in state administration, knew how to work the procedural system of bureaucracy. They were able to perceive the openings in the structures of the state through which elites within the state could be addressed, and influenced. Shia partisans kept up efforts to establish and maintain the importance of Muharram, and through it, that of Shia claims of distinction and imminence. One of these methods was to have the entire first ten days of Muharram declared a state holiday. The UP government had declared a three day holiday for Muharram for the collector's office. However, pressures built by Shia members in the legislative council made it a mandatory holiday for all state offices. Shia members also argued that, "Muharram is observed by all Muhammadans alike."⁴¹⁹ The AISC passed its own resolutions for increasing the number of Muharram holidays to ten days throughout the province such that all government offices and institutions would remain closed, and petitioned several legislators to get it approved through the provincial legislature. While the ten day demand was not completely met, the holidays were extended to five days.⁴²⁰ This was a big win as no other religious festival in the province was associated with such a long period of consecutive holidays. These holidays meant that not just the Shia community, but everyone who had anything to do

⁴¹⁹ Answer to question raised in legislative council by member Nawabzada Muhammad Yusuf, 25th Oct, 1922. UPSA/GAD/285/1922/p. 4

⁴²⁰ Under secretary to secretary, Proceedings of UP Legislative Council, undated. UPSA/GAD/432/1922/p. 11.

with government offices, employees and visitors, would become aware of Muharram and the Shia clout in Lucknow.

The AISC, the premier interest group of the Shias in Lucknow, adept at petitioning, and drafting memorandums also knew how to make various Shia causes visible in the eyes of the administration. They would keep regular communication with the governments not only in the province but also with the center in Delhi, so as to maintain their own identity as a relevant interest group. In one such communication, the AISC wrote to the GoI sharing their anxieties on the rumors that the government of Turkey had banned the observance of Muharram in the country. The letter referenced a news report to this effect and expressed how, “ the Indian Shias are very concerned at this turn of events. It is also requested that the attached letter be sent to the Turkish foreign minister. I hope the government will treat this matter as urgent because it is very important for an important section of His Britannic majesty’s Muslim subjects. Please clarify if any regulation of Muharram has actually been done in Turkey.”⁴²¹ Such communications did not go in vain as the procedures governing bureaucracy ensured that such communication was recorded, routed through several offices and eventually replied to. While this process of routing, recording, and replying often did not result in substantive decisions or policies, it definitely ensured that officials and official documents recorded that the Shias were a separate sect with divergent interests from other Muslims. Thus, Shia leaders made strategic use of procedural and administrative mechanisms in the executive and legislature to ensure that their unique identity was publicized, and their claims of distinction were sedimented into institutional memory. However, Shia-Sunni rivalries at the street level remained marginal for several more years, primarily because of the Piggot Committee’s rulings. The rules and prohibitions set forth by the

⁴²¹ MIRZA ABID HUSAIN, HONorary general secretary AISC Lucknow, to Secretary, Foreign department, GoI, 25th August 1927. NAI/Foreign and Political/Near East Branch/846-N/1927/p. 93

Piggot Committee in 1909 were in place and generally respected by both Shias and Sunnis in Lucknow for 25 years. These regulations prohibited the Sunnis from reciting madh e sahaba in public or in processions on the three days of Ashra, Chehlum, and 21st Ramzan. Muharram processions of both sects carried on through separate paths and ended up at separate destinations (Karbala). During these 25 years, Shia and Sunni leaders had been around, and were active in their spheres of influence, but sectarianism had remained low profile. Several factors were responsible for this peace. The convergence of a section of leaders from both sects, during the Khilafat Movement, had dissipated some sectarian tensions. New routines of Muharram rituals set by the strict enforcement of Piggot Committee's recommendations had established new norms of sectarian interactions. Also, there were no major errors in discretion made by British administrators sympathetic to either sect, as had happened in 1908-12 when certain British officers had erred under influence of Shia and Sunni persuasions. Finally, the conclusion of the Khilafat Movement had so happened that the IML had become defunct for all practical purposes, and the Congress remained the only national political organization on the scene. Therefore sectarian leaders in Lucknow, during 1924 and 1934, did not have recourse to many national level Muslim leaders. Thus the key reason for this sectarian peace was that sectarian leaders did not have national level Muslim elites to bank upon, there was little chance to perceive openings in the state that could be used for promoting sectarian competitions, and there was little availability of elites within the state with whom sectarian leaders could partner for sectarian politics.

Sectarian peace was finally broken after a local Sunni leader gave a public speech on 24th May, 1935, at Chowk, a neighborhood in the old city that has been the epicenter of the Shia-Sunni conflict. The speaker exhorted the Sunni community to violate these prohibitions by way

of civil disobedience. Next year, two Sunni individuals were arrested for violating the prohibition on 3rd April, the day of Ashra, in 1936. Again on 13th May, 1936, Chehlum day, 14 Sunnis were arrested for reciting madh e sahaba in public in violation of the orders. On 3rd June, 1936 Sunni groups proposed to take out a procession for madh e sahaba. The deputy commissioner of Lucknow prohibited the procession on the grounds that it was an innovation, and he also enforced orders against unlawful assembly in Lucknow. However, from that day onwards, Sunni groups started reciting madh e sahaba regularly outside the Tila Mosque, the most important mosque of the Sunnis in Lucknow. This mosque was located in the vicinity of the Grand Imambara, the most important Shia shrine, thus making the Sunni protests a potentially dangerous affair. This violation became a weekly affair, as each Friday a group of Sunni Muslims would assemble on the road outside the mosque, recite the verses, and have themselves arrested, exactly in the fashion of civil disobedience, that Gandhi had used against the British. To follow-up on this protest, a meeting of Sunni Ulama from various parts of UP and outside was planned in Lucknow on the 17th of September 1936. This meeting would discuss the situation, and evolve a strategy for the protection of religious rights of the Sunni community. The Friday recitations and arrests went on for more than three months after which the Sunni community suspended their agitation because of government promises of finding a solution to the problem.⁴²²

The reemergence of the Shia-Sunni issue in Lucknow needs contextualization within the larger politics of that time. This fresh round of sectarianism was catalyzed by the Government of India Act, 1935 which introduced electoral politics at the provincial level for the first time. This was a watershed moment in most British provinces, and especially in the United Provinces which

⁴²² Note, District Information Bureau, Lucknow, to Home Department, Delhi 4th May, 1939. NAI/Home/Political/1939/5/6/39. p. 2

was the center of both Hindu and Muslim politics. The Act was a British strategy at curtailing the power of the pro-freedom Congress so that it could never gain monopoly power and this was done by setting up separate electoral quotas for as many minority groups as possible. Thus, it helped minority groups imagine unprecedented political incentives. The government of India act of 1935, made provisions for the first full-fledged provincial elections, which were to be held in 1937. This declaration activated multiple processes of identity politics across communities. Elections were tied to the one-person one-vote concept where winning depended on numbers. Further, the provision of separate electorates was also a controversial clause, a boon for some minorities such as Sikhs and Muslims, but a bane for minorities within minorities, such as the Shia. The GoI Act, thus changed the political atmosphere of Lucknow in drastic ways. Incentives for politically mobilized minorities and disincentives for the quiescent were created, and these potential incentives acted as catalysts for perceiving new opportunities for reigniting sectarian mobilization. In anticipation of the Act of 1935, the IML was also revived by Jinnah who wanted to create and represent a united Muslim community. Thus, between the rival Congress and IML leaders, sectarian leaders could again bank upon national elites.

The emergence of a new round of Shia-Sunni conflicts in the mid 1930s may be attributed to the specter of elections where Muslims per se were promised separate electorate but communities within Muslims had not been. Suggesting this, a sympathetic Sunni member of the UP legislative council wrote to the Home department about the Madh e sahaba movement that it, “is likely to widen the gulf between the Sunnis and Shias not only in Lucknow but the whole province. It is still more unfortunate that this block should have come in the way of Shia Sunni relations on the eve of the elections and give a handle to the mischief mongers to give sectarian color to their election propaganda. As a matter of fact, I have been told that this agitation is being

encouraged and fanned owing to the proximity of the elections.”⁴²³ Claiming himself to be speaking for the interests of the Shias, this member further explained the possible motivations behind the madh e sahaba agitation, “The Shias are a small minority in the province as well as the nation, and if their relations with the Sunnis are permanently strained it would be the Shias who would suffer more than the Sunnis.” He mentioned the recent electoral defeats of the two key Shia politicians from Lucknow as an indicator of this scenario. He continued to share his theory that, “there is a politically minded section amongst the Sunnis which, in order to gain its political supremacy, wants to keep a Shia section down, and it is this Sunni section which is fomenting the Madh e sahaba agitation from behind the screen.”⁴²⁴ The member also commented on the extreme demands of the Shia’s to have the madh e sahaba banned completely from all types of processions completely, even outside the period of Muharram observances. However, he concluded that due to the need of the hour Sunnis should, “meet the wishes and respect the feelings of our Shia bretheren, howsoever unreasonable and unjustified it may be.”⁴²⁵ ‘The need of the hour’ here was the urgency of elections. In Lucknow, Muslim support was perceived to be divided among the Congress and the IML, with both parties hoping to get majority support. At the same time, there was some speculation that Lucknow being one of the main centers of IML support, the congress might benefit if the Muslim voters could be split. The IML, on the other hand wanted to have the Muslim community remain rock solid, and united behind it.

⁴²³ Muammad Yaqub, member legislative council, to Kunvar Maharaj Singh, member Home department, 6th October 1936. NAI/Home-Political/23/44/1936/p. 30

⁴²⁴ Muammad Yaqub, member legislative council, to Kunvar Maharaj Singh, member Home department, 6th October 1936. NAI/Home-Political/23/44/1936/p. 31

⁴²⁵ Muammad Yaqub, member legislative council, to Kunvar Maharaj Singh, member Home department, 6th October 1936. NAI/Home-Political/23/44/1936/p. 32

Congress wanted to split the possibilities of a comprehensive Muslim votebank for the IML, and was able to revive the controversy because of its access to Sunni clerics in the Jamiat-Ulama-e-Hind, and politicians in the Ahrar party, an anti IML party of Sunni Muslims. On the other hand, IML's vision of organizing both Shias and Sunnis behind it meant that their leaders could not play a role where anyone could perceive it to have a bias towards any of the two sects. This created a situation where Shia and Sunni sectarian leaders could have a field day in reviving the controversy with the tacit support of the congress. This is actually what happened.

Electoral politics, as a driver for the Shia-Sunni controversy in Lucknow, is attested by a confidential note prepared by the political department of the Government of India. This note summarizes the history of the controversy, before bringing in the political angle. This report asserts that, "there is no doubt that the trouble, to begin with at any rate, was in fact encouraged by the congress in order to split the Muslims. It must be remembered that the Congress Muslims are mainly Sunnis and that this agitation had been adopted vigorously by the Ahrars who are under the influence of the Congress."⁴²⁶ The report also emphasized the connection between the Congress, and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani, a leading Sunni figure in the agitation, who was, "in the pay of the congress, and it is difficult to believe that they could not control him, if they wished to."⁴²⁷ However, it seemed that the congress harmed itself by using the double edged sword of the controversy. It is obvious that the INC wanted to split the Muslim vote that could have gone en masse to the IML. It encouraged Sunni disobedience so as to revive the problem, which it knew the AIML could not become a party to. And then the INC would have benefitted from resolving the problem thus claiming to be a friend to both the sects. Only half the plan

⁴²⁶ Lucknow Shia-Sunni Controversy, Confidential Note, 4th May 1939. NAI/Home-Political/5/6/1939/p. 4

⁴²⁷ Lucknow Shia-Sunni Controversy, Confidential Note, 4th May 1939. NAI/Home-Political/5/6/1939/p. 5

seems to have gone as anticipated. The revival of the controversy put the AIML in a dilemma as it could not take sides between the sects. The Shias also came close to the Congress in the process. However, the way the problem was eventually resolved ended up antagonizing the Shias. The resolution included the permission to the Sunnis to recite the Madh E Sahaba on the day of *Barawafat* (birthday of the Prophet, on the date preferred by the Sunni) in a procession on a predefined route. While this placated the Sunnis, the Shia became enraged at this concession. They felt betrayed as they already had the decision of the Piggot Committee of 1908 and the Allsop committee of 1938, in their favor.

By early 1939, matters came to such a state that the Tahaffuz-e-Millat (TEM), an aggressive Sunni organization spearheading the Madhe Sahaba campaign in Lucknow, planned to take out several small processions in the city. The purpose of these processions was to “travel through each Sunni neighborhood and persuade Sunni inhabitant of Lucknow to refrain from *taziadari* (Muharram rituals of mourning) which they claimed to be *haraam* (prohibited) according to the Sunni faith.” On the other hand, Tanzim-ul-Momineen (TUM), a similarly aggressive Shia organization had petitioned the government for permission to take out a procession on 17th February, 1939 which was to culminate at the Aminabad park, where a public meeting was to be held. The express purpose of the event was to create awareness about the religious validity of *taziadari*, but intelligence reports suggested that the “Shias had chosen the date to coincide with the 644 AD assassination of Umar (second Caliph of Sunni Muslims), and had plans to use the event for public celebrations at Aminabad Park.” These counter events with the potential of fomenting trouble in Lucknow had clear Congress support as Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, leader of the pro-Congress Sunni clerical organization- Jamiat-ulema-e-Hind, had “publicly given his blessings to the Sunni leaders of Lucknow. He had even promised to

offer his own arrest if the demands of the Sunnis about freedom to recite the Madh-e-Sahaba was not met by the government.”⁴²⁸ Maulana Abdul Shakoor, the Sunni leader finally issued a notice declaring his intent to publicly recite Madh-e-Sahaba on February 22, the news of which “excited the Shias” to such an extent that protests and counter protests were being planned all over the city.⁴²⁹

The period between 1936 and 1939, thus, became the biggest year for Shia and Sunni counter protests in Lucknow. In the middle of these protests, the first provincial elections took place in UP, and the Congress surprisingly won a majority to form the government. The IML was reduced to a very few seats. This brought about Congress leaders becoming ministers in the state government, thus providing sectarian leaders potential allies inside the state. With new state elites available as patrons and partners, Sunni protests in favor of the Madh e sahaba grew in numbers and frequency between 1936 and 1938, until the government revoked the ban from the public recital of Madh E sahaba in 1938. At this point, counter protests by the Shias started in Lucknow. Shias felt slighted from the government’s capitulation to Sunni demands, and grew exponentially through 1939. These protests took place at sites of local importance to the two sects. Sunni protests would usually take place at the Tila Mosque, and the Shia protests would take place at the Grand Imambara, both sites being at a stone’s throw from each other. These protests usually concluded in the arrest of the protestors by the police who was posted to prevent any violation of rules. A large number of protests and arrests were made in this period, and this unprecedented number meant that the district jails in Lucknow came under tremendous pressure.

⁴²⁸ Deputy Commissioner to Commissioner, Lucknow, confidential letter, 10th February, 1939. UPSA/GAD/65/1939/Pp. 1-3.

⁴²⁹ Deputy Commissioner to Commissioner, Lucknow, confidential letter, 22nd February, 1939. UPSA/GAD/65/1939/p. 31.

In fact, several jails in and around Lucknow had to send their inmates to distant facilities to accommodate Shia and Sunni arrestees from Lucknow.⁴³⁰

In addition to Anjuman Tahaffuz-e-Millat (TEM), a Sunni organization established to fight for rights to recite the Madhe Sahaba, another Sunni organization was founded in late 1938 in Lucknow. This was the Anti Tabarra Association (ATA), that included many Sunni members of repute from various spheres of life. Business men, doctors, lawyers and the like were members of this association. ATA argued against the Shia objections to the Madh-e-Sahaba, and used both religious and secular arguments to establish that madh-e-sahab was a valid ritual. ATA also complained about the relentless nonviolent protests carried out by Sunni volunteers, and pressed for the release of hundreds of arrested Sunni volunteers. It quotes about 2100 Sunni individuals who were arrested by Lucknow Police during the year and a half worth of protests.⁴³¹ Tanzeem-Ul-Momineen (TUM), a Shia organization founded in 1938 “to repulse the attacks on taziadari and religious feelings of the Shias,” quotes the hundreds of Shias arrested during protests in the first half of 1939.⁴³² TUM compiled a booklet on the issue of the protests and the alleged repression of the Shia protestors and community, and framed each of their allegations in reference to the comprehensive list of resolutions that the Congress had passed in its annual meeting of 1931. These resolutions promised all citizens of India the basic fundamental rights, and equal treatment. TUM published data on protests, arrests, and the charges filed against arrested Shias, under each of the rights promised by the Congress, thus embarrassing the party by

⁴³⁰ Deputy commissioner to Commissioner, Lucknow, 13th March, 1939. UPSA/GAD/65/1939/p. 30.

⁴³¹ Anti-Tabarra Association. 1939. *Exposition of the Madhe Sahaba-Tabarra question: manifesto*. Lucknow: The Association. p. 31.

⁴³² Tanzīm al-Mūminīn Anjuman (LUCKNOW). 1939. *Why 14,000 Shias went to Jail? U.P. Congress Government and justice. "Fundamental rights of people overthrown." Severe repression of the Shia minority. Compiled by Mirza Sajjad Ali Khan.* p. 3.

showing how it failed to act on its resolutions. For example, one of the resolutions passed by the Congress in 1931, was the ‘Freedom of the Press,’ and TUM published the number of Shia newspapers and periodicals that were warned, fined, penalized, or bonded by the Congress government in UP.⁴³³ TUM continued the same style of mirroring Congress resolutions passed against the British, to pass resolutions of its own against the Congress government in the UP.⁴³⁴ This unique style embarrassed the congress to no end. Between April and July of 1939, Shias protested at the Grand Imambara on an everyday basis, and a contingent of volunteers were arrested daily, who were sent to the district jail. Over this period, between 9000 and 14000 Shias volunteers were arrested.⁴³⁵ This was a very large number, and brought prominence to the movement through intensive newspaper reporting, and word of mouth publicity. Shia protestors also included children and women, which increased the public impact of the protests. The number of total Shia protestors over this period, only a proportion of whom were arrested, was considerable and this meant that Shia men and youth from every neighborhood in the city had some connection with the protests. L7, a retired college teacher and local history enthusiast narrated stories that he had heard from his father and uncles over time, “The Tabarra protests were huge. Everyone was involved, even the *mujtahids* who usually stay aloof from street politics were either taking part or were preparing to take part in the protests at the Asafi Imambara. Here in the Shia neighborhoods, every individual knew more than one person who had been arrested. It was an electrifying atmosphere. My uncles told me that the whole period of

⁴³³ Ibid. p. 4

⁴³⁴ Ibid. p. 7

⁴³⁵ See Ibid; UPSA/GAD/65/1939.

protests just took over the everyday life of the Shia community here.⁴³⁶ L11, a lawyer with family connections with the active members of the TEM told me how, “community kitchens were run in my family home, from where food for the jailed protestors was sent to the district jail. The men were protesting and getting arrested, while women were organizing their food, and youth were carrying messages. Even kids would skip school, and stay at home to watch all the excitement. Older men and women who couldn’t actively participate, discussed all that was happening around them.” Reports of the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow, from 1938-1940, attest to these stories of mass involvement of the Shia community at the peak of the protests.⁴³⁷ This palpable connection between most of Lucknow’s Shia community, organizations such as the Tanzim ul Momineen, and clerics transformed the sense of belonging of the entire community. The protests did not just contribute to a heightened sense of identity for the organized protestors, but even for those who did not directly participate in the protests. The stalemate between the two sects around Tabarra and Madhe Sahaba was a thorn in the eyes of groups that thrived on the idea that Muslims in India formed a homogenous community that could be represented through a narrow and uniform set of demands. The IML, was one such organization. But it was not the only one. The Khaksaar were another such group. Inspired by Nazi youth organizations, and following a similar salute and uniform, this organization was headquartered in Punjab but had branches in several provinces.⁴³⁸ This paramilitary Muslim organization decided to send 2000 volunteers to Lucknow in 1938, and threatened to take,

⁴³⁶ Interview/Lucknow/L7

⁴³⁷ UPSA/GAD/65/1939

⁴³⁸ The Khaksar Movement, The Leader, 14th June, 1940. UPSA/Private Archives/ACC1501/p. 5

“drastic actions if the agitation did not come to an end by 30th June.”⁴³⁹ The continuation of the conflict again attracted Khaksar attention in 1940. The Khaksar volunteers clashed violently with Sunni groups reciting the Madh E Sahaba. Further, their leader, Allama Mashriqui, ordered the Shias to stop reciting the Tabarra, failing which he threatened to murder three leaders each from among the Shias and Sunnis.⁴⁴⁰

While the IML maintained a deliberate absence from the public scenes of Shia-Sunni conflict and negotiations, it desired a swift end to the problem so that its wish for a unified Muslim base for its politics could be reclaimed. There were back channel talks that Jinnah had warned all IML leaders to stay mum on the issue to prevent being seen as leaning towards any side and losing the support of the other. However, fringe leaders and sympathizers of the IML were vocal in criticizing the Shia-Sunni dispute. In one such public event, Muhammad Khalil Ahmad launched a diatribe against the dispute while addressing a Muslim audience, “Look at these Asses in Lucknow fighting over Tabarra and Madh e sahaba. It is high time for you to understand that they need to be united behind the IML. Don’t get swayed by the Congress or the Ahrar party. They want Muslims divided among Shias and Sunnis. If you keep fighting like this the day is not far when you will all be forcibly converted to Hinduism and your dead will be burned instead of being buried.”⁴⁴¹

Thus, Sunni and Shia community leaders organized sustained protests and counter protests with help from elites within the state and in the congress party, while other elites, from the IML, who could have undermined sectarian tensions remained unavailable. Several sectarian

⁴³⁹ Khaksar Ultimatum, The Leader, 22nd June, 1938. UPSA/Private Archives/ACC1479/p. 13

⁴⁴⁰ Khaksar activities in Lucknow, The Leader, 28th September, 1940. UPSA/Private Archives/ACC1501/p. 34

⁴⁴¹ Transcribed speech of Muhammad Khalil Ahmad, Objectionable speeches, undated, 1940. UPSA/Political/135/1940/p. 15.

organizations took part in these protests, and were able to mobilize a large number of supporters. Data on participation and arrests show that once the Shia protests started after March 1938, organizers were able to mobilize many more shia individuals than what the Sunni organizers had been able to mobilize from within their community. During the peak of these protests, everyone, especially among the Shias of Lucknow, was connected to the protest in direct or indirect ways. This created a heightened sense of identity in the larger Shia community of Lucknow, and not just among the organized protestors who were members of interest groups.

Communal Politics in Lucknow

The Hindu Mahasabha (HMS), at the center of communal politics in Hyderabad, was active in the United Provinces too. However, its zone of influence was outside Lucknow. Communal politics engulfed UP with a scattering of Hindu-Muslim riots in most regions but Lucknow stayed calm barring a single riot of 1924. However, the HMS petitioned the government of UP on various occasions and reiterated its narrative of the state being unjust to the Hindus, and its policies of appeasing the Muslims. In a letter from its general secretary, the HMS alleged that in UP, “the havoc of Muslim aggression has become an everyday incident. Everywhere the law abiding Hindus disarmed by promise of government protection fell unhappy victims of unscrupulous Muslim goondaism. When stung with remorse for being betrayed by their faith in government protection they prepare for retaliation, the government stood in their way for protecting the minority.” Their espousal of violent politics lay in demands such as, “I parry you be regardless of Hindu interests but please do not stand in their way of self defence by adopting a dog in the manger policy.”⁴⁴²

⁴⁴² Padmaraj Jain, Hony. Gen. Secy, All India Hindu Mahasabha, Calcutta, to Premier, Government of UP, Lucknow, 3rd April 1939. UPSA/GAD/72/1939/p.1

HMS would frequently circulate pamphlets and booklets that were provocative in nature and made allegations against the state and Muslims as the key cause of Hindu suffering. Such publications were especially circulated around festivals such as Holi and Muharram when public processions were expected, and violence could be easily orchestrated. The government was especially wary of such tactics, “inflammatory speeches are made, or inflammatory articles are published on the eve of festivals that negate all our efforts at settlement.”⁴⁴³ The government also made efforts to counter it by warning newspaper editors, press owners, and by confiscating “pamphlets and unauthorized newssheets,” and prosecuting its authors and publishers under various laws.⁴⁴⁴

HMS also made its presence felt through protests while opposing the IML and the activities of other similar communal Muslim organizations. In 1939, while the IML was celebrating the downfall of the Congress government in UP, elected in 1937, the HMS held public protests, and its leaders made several speeches condemning the Muslim League. During these protests, HMS leaders blamed IML as, “the root cause for communal problems in India,” and asserted that, “Hindus and Muslims can not unite as long as the IML exists.”⁴⁴⁵ This protest, like similar others, were also used to attack Muslims in general by reiterating the HMS position that Muslims were perpetually oppressing Hindus in whatever way that suited them, and deliberately hurt religious feelings of the Hindus by insisting on cow sacrifice during Id-ul-Zuha.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Chief Secretary, UP to all District Magistrates, 22nd February 1939. UPSA/GAD/72/1939/p. 43

⁴⁴⁴ Chief Secretary, UP to all District Magistrates, 22nd February 1939. UPSA/GAD/72/1939/p. 45

⁴⁴⁵ Excerpts from Hindu Maha Sabha speeches, Aminabad Park, Lucknow, 22nd December 1939. UPSA/GAD/85(2)/1939. p. 22.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

Arya Samaj (AS), the Hindu reformist movement that contributed to communal politics in Hyderabad, was also active in Lucknow. It played an active role in the only Hindu-Muslim riot of colonial Lucknow, that took place in 1924, immediately after the collapse of the KM. This riot arose from the clash of the evening prayer time of the Hindus and Muslims around the Aminabad park, an important venue for political meetings that everyone wanted to claim. The rioters were concentrated in the neighborhoods of Ganeshganj, the Arya Samaj headquarters, as well as in Maulviganj that had a heavy proportion of Muslim butchers, and there were reports that the riot was driven by these two factions.⁴⁴⁷ In addition to neighborhood meetings and public speeches, AS's key tactic was publication and circulation of tracts that attacked Islam, the Quran, and the everyday practices of Muslims. In one such book, *Chaman Islam ki Sair* (A Walk through the Islamic Garden), that was published by the Arya Samaj branch in Lucknow, the author, Pandit Shiv Sharma, made several insinuations against the Prophet, most of which were expressly designed to irritate and provoke reactions from the Muslims. Shiv Sharma was the head preacher of the Arya Samaj in the province, and his conduct was followed by his subordinate preachers all over the province. Some comments from this book include: "The prophet considered the urine of all animals, that could be eaten, as clean"; "one who has carnal intercourse with animals deserves no punishment"; "some person came to the prophet and embraced Islam, upon which the prophet asked him to drink a camel's urine. The person retracted his new faith and then the prophet had his hands and feet cut and his eyes gouged with hot iron bars"; "Virgin Mary would be the Prophet's wife in paradise," and so on.⁴⁴⁸ The intention and possible outcome of such materials is reflected in the comments of the District

⁴⁴⁷ Deputy commissioner to commissioner Lucknow, 13th November, 1924. Lucknow riot affair, UPSA/GAD/479/1924/p. 93

⁴⁴⁸ Excerpts from *Chaman Islam Ki Sair*, Lucknow, 1939, by Pandit Shiv Sharma. UPSA/Political/156/1939/p. 67

Magistrate of Lucknow, “the whole book is full of dirty and offensive literature which must wound the religious feelings of Muhammadans and is also likely to embitter the relations between the Hindus and Muhammadans. It is in addition calculated to promote enmity between the Shias and Sunnis as the three caliphs of the Sunnis are overly criticized and efforts at authentication have been made by reference to Sunni books.”⁴⁴⁹

Like other such publications, this publication too was proscribed, its copies confiscated and destroyed. The author was also tried under laws that prohibit the encouragement of enmity between different classes of subjects, and the author and publisher were given rigorous imprisonment for one year.⁴⁵⁰ The government, though tried to keep such cases hushed up lest they provoke retaliation from Muslim communalist organizations. The secretary of the police department suggested, “Is there a way such news is kept away from undue publicity, especially the objectionable passages from the filthy book? We definitely don’t need more excitement than we already have.”⁴⁵¹

However, communalism in general and communal conflicts in particular never took root in Lucknow. There are several reasons behind communal peace in Lucknow. Being the capital of the Shia Nawabs until 1856, Lucknow had the legacy of an extremely strong syncretic culture. This syncretism was built on hybrid religious beliefs and shared rituals. Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab who was deposed in 1856 was the lynchpin of this syncretism as he invented popular festivals and public rituals drawing from both Shia, and Hindu beliefs. He took an active part in several such public rituals and patronized such practices, ensuring that Hindus and Muslims had

⁴⁴⁹ District Magistrate, Lucknow to Chief Secretary, UP, Police department, 14th August, 1939. UPSA/Political/156/1939/p. 65

⁴⁵⁰ Criminal Appeal No. 6&7 of 1941, Honorable CJ of UP. UPSA/Political/156/1939/p. 37

⁴⁵¹ Memo, Secretary, police department, 1939. UPSA/Political/156/1939/p. 73

a shared system of beliefs.⁴⁵² The fact that the British took over control of Lucknow from Wajid Ali Shah, meant that to gain legitimacy as new rulers they would continue to preserve social relations as they were, especially the most salient ones, which in this case were Hindu and Muslim. The Nawabs being Shia, the Sunni population had remained uncrystallized and on the margins of political life. The third reason for communal peace came from Lucknow being the capital of a prominent province that was saturated with senior British administrators. This meant that communal conflicts in Lucknow city would cast direct aspersions on British capacity to rule. Finally, the fact that mass support in Lucknow and UP was coveted by the Congress meant that party leaders had to ensure communal harmony lest polarization pushed Muslim support towards the IML in later years of the colonial period.⁴⁵³ These factors contributed to a situation where the police and administration regulated communal tensions through preventive actions, and undermined communalism effectively.

Hyderabad: Annexation and the wounded psyche

The last few years of princely Hyderabad, from 1944 until annexation in 1948, were especially painful for all who lived there. In 1940, the IML had passed the Lahore Resolution, the formal demand for Pakistan based on the division of Muslim majority parts of the country. Bahadur Yar Jung, the charismatic leader of the MIM in Hyderabad, also a prominent leader of the IML in Muslim ruled princely states, took this turn of events to raise the pitch of his political vision for Hyderabad. Until now, BYJ had been arguing for the maintenance of Muslim rule in

⁴⁵² Oldenburg, Veena Talwar. 1984. *The making of colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. 2014. *The last king in India: Wajid 'Ali Shah, 1822-1887*; Hyder, Syed Akbar. 2011. *Reliving Karbala: martyrdom in South Asian memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Sharar, Abdul Halim, E.S. Harcourt, and Fakhir Hussain. 1975. *Lucknow: the last phase of an oriental culture*. London: Elek.

⁴⁵³ Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. London: Cambridge University Press; Misra, Salil. 2001. *A narrative of communal politics: Uttar Pradesh, 1937-39*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; Pandey, Gyanendra. 1990. *The construction of communalism in colonial north India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press

Hyderabad on the basis of assertions that Muslims in Hyderabad had the historically exclusive right to being the ruling class. However, with the launch of the Pakistan project by Jinnah and the IML, BYJ crafted a bigger demand in Hyderabad- the state was to become either an independent country or part of Pakistan whenever the British would free India. While this possibility attracted the attention of Muslim elites in Hyderabad, BYJ's presiding over the future of Hyderabad was seen by the Nizam as a transgression on his role as ruler. The MIM, and the BYJ, had however evolved as major players within Hyderabad often competing with the Nizam and his government for authority. They enjoyed immense public support among the Muslim subjects, and their aggressive championing of the Muslim right to rule, symbolically embodied in the Nizam, had pushed the Nizam as a person into a weak position. BYJ supported the Nizam's right to rule in Hyderabad, not as a freestanding sovereign, but as the embodiment of Hyderabad's Muslim community. Owing to this unique argument, the Nizam and BYJ shared a tense relationship. The Nizam despised BYJ for taking away his monopoly as the ruler, but needed his mass based support to negotiate a better deal for himself with the British. BYJ's close links with the IML leadership, especially with Jinnah, had also contributed to the Nizam's grudging tolerance of BYJ and other leaders of the MIM.⁴⁵⁴

However, BYJ died unexpectedly in 1944, creating a temporary vacuum in Hyderabad's politics, that was filled by Qasim Razvi who took over leadership of the MIM. Razvi was born in the Nizam's dominion, educated at the Aligarh Muslim University in North India, and was a small time lawyer based in Hyderabad. Razvi, built on BYJ's vision of either an independent

⁴⁵⁴ Bawa, Basant K. 1992. *The last Nizam: the life and times of Mir Osman Ali Khan*. New Delhi, India: Viking; Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman; Pernau, Margrit. 2000. *The passing of patrimonialism: politics and political culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948*. New Delhi: Manohar; Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. 2013. *The destruction of Hyderabad*.

Hyderabad in the best case scenario, or its union with Pakistan at the worst. Hyderabad's status in the future was a major source of anxiety for the Nizam, as well as the MIM. Their hopes of an independent Hyderabad had considerably diminished after the British Parliament passed a resolution voiding all treaties between the British Crown and princely states in India. Thus princely states in India, including the Nizam's Hyderabad, were practically left at the mercy of the Indian Union, with no British mediation.⁴⁵⁵

Moreover, since mid 1946, India's imminent independence and partition into Pakistan had set alarm bells ringing in Hyderabad. Razvi, MIM's new leader had shared these anxieties and had a militant plan to deal with a possible situation where Hyderabad could be annexed into India by force. He had established an armed militia to support the MIM's plan, named this organization as the *Rizakar*, and had recruited thousands of volunteers. Rizakars were given combat training, were armed, even if poorly, and were developed as a shadow army that was supposed to fight the Indian Army if it tried to invade Hyderabad during the imminent exit of the British. The Rizakars were also visualized to get absorbed into the regular army of a future independent nation of Hyderabad.⁴⁵⁶

The Rizakar militia rose in prominence 1946 onwards, with most districts in the state boasting a local unit constituted of volunteers who had pledged to defend Hyderabad from any invasion. During the same period, congress supporters in the state as well as Arya Samaj followers, mostly Hindu individuals, were also expressing their demands for Hyderabad's union

⁴⁵⁵ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman; Munshi, Kanaiyalal Maneklal. 1957. *The end of an era; Hyderabad memories*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. 2014. *The destruction of Hyderabad*.

⁴⁵⁶ Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. 2014. *The destruction of Hyderabad*; Guha, Ramachandra. 2007. *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*. New York: Ecco; Sherman, T.C. 2007. "The integration of the princely state of Hyderabad and the making of the postcolonial state in India, 1948-56". *INDIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW -NEW DELHI-*. 44 (4): 489-516.

with independent India. This brought the pro-Indian and MIM/Rizakar sympathizers in direct conflict with each other across the Hindu-Muslim axis. Muslim supporters of a union with India were too few in numbers and were marginalized by the MIM. Further, the Nizam's tactical tolerance of Qasim Razvi and his followers meant that the MIM and the Rizakar volunteers could harass pro-India elements in Hyderabad and go scot-free. In addition to what the MIM and Rizakars said and did in Hyderabad, IML leaders from other provinces also added to the tensions in Hyderabad. Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, an IML leader from the British Khyber-Pakhtun province near Afghanistan claimed that Hyderabad was the Pakistan of South India, and exhorted that all Muslims in South India who could not migrate to Pakistan when the country was to be established, could go to Hyderabad instead. This rhetoric was further developed by MIM leaders who wrote to Muslim interest organizations in Southern provinces of British India inviting them to move en-mass to Hyderabad to ensure that the demographics of Hyderabad could be transformed favorably.⁴⁵⁷ The MIM also celebrated 23rd March, 1947 as Pakistan Day, when the decision to create Pakistan was formalized in Delhi. Razvi and other MIM leaders organized public meetings all over the state to demand a similar status for Hyderabad.⁴⁵⁸ The Nizam's and MIM's inclination to join Pakistan were further cemented by the regular travel of MIM leaders and Nizam's advisors to meet Jinnah and other leaders in the IML. Similarly, prominent IML leaders such as Chowdhury Khaliq Uz Zaman were treated as state guests in Hyderabad when they visited the Nizam.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Fortnightly report of 15th January, 1947. Resident of Hyderabad to Ministry of States, Government of India NAI/Ministry of States/1947/5(7)-P(S)/47/p. 7.

⁴⁵⁸ Fortnightly report of 15 April, 1947. Resident of Hyderabad to Ministry of states, Government of India NAI/Ministry of States/1947/5(7)-P(S)/47/p. 28

⁴⁵⁹ Fortnightly report of 15 May, 1947. Resident of Hyderabad to Ministry of states, Government of India NAI/Ministry of States/1947/5(7)-P(S)/47/p. 33

Such events created unprecedented communal tensions in Hyderabad, and “Hindu and Muslim communities stood greatly polarized all over the state” during this period.⁴⁶⁰ The British resident in Hyderabad had ‘strong reasons to suspect’ that the buildup of communal tensions in Hyderabad was such that “on the eve of India’s independence in 1947, massive communal riots would break out in Hyderabad in which the Rizakar and members of militant Hindu groups would participate violently.”⁴⁶¹

The actual annexation of Hyderabad started on 13th September, 1948, and concluded with a quick surrender of the Nizam’s army by 18th September. Annexation was executed by the regular Indian Army headed by General Chaudhari, and was codenamed Operation Polo. However, in all publicly available official correspondence, and media reports, annexation has been described euphemistically as ‘Police Action.’ Until the actual annexation, Qasim Razvi reiterated his threats of a ‘bloodbath in Hyderabad’ in the case of an Indian invasion but eventually, the Rizakars surrendered without any major altercation with the Indian Army. While the almost non-violent annexation of Hyderabad shocked Hyderabad’s Muslims at the loss of privileges, it was the violent aftermath of annexation that was more traumatic. The violent retribution against Muslims after annexation is often linked to Rizakar excesses against Hindus before annexation. 1947 had been a violent year in Hyderabad especially because the Indian and the Nizam’s governments had been negotiating the future of Hyderabad. Indian nationalist leaders were pressing for Hyderabad’s union with independent India, while MIM leaders and several among the Nizam’s advisors favored either an independent status for Hyderabad or a

⁴⁶⁰ Fortnightly report of 30 April, 1947. Resident of Hyderabad to Ministry of states, Government of India NAI/Ministry of States/1947/5(7)-P(S)/47/p. 31.

⁴⁶¹ Fortnightly report of 31 May, 1947. Resident of Hyderabad to Ministry of states, Government of India NAI/Ministry of States/1947/5(7)-P(S)/47/p. 35.

union with Pakistan. The Nizam himself was ambivalent and very few could say with confidence which way he would lean. This confusion also stemmed from the fact that several of the Nizam's advisors, such as Saiyed Ali Imam and Sir Akbar Hydari, were perceived to have sided with the nationalist leaders of independent India. The prolonged negotiations created a situation of uncertainty and confusion in Hyderabad which Qasim Razvi used to build pressure on the Nizam as well as to terrorize those who favored siding with India, usually Hindus of Hyderabad. In fact, Rizakar excesses against Hindus, just before annexation, became a popular narrative and produced identical complaints where only the locality's name was changed by writers,⁴⁶² sometimes exaggerated by right wing groups such as the Arya Samaj, and the Hindu Mahasabha. One such document, alleged to be an internal document of the MIM, was sent to the Ministry of States in Delhi. The document had detailed plans about MIM and Rizakar activists burning government offices and Hindu businesses in various parts of the city. However, the secretary of the Ministry's note on the complaint was telling, "This is likely a mischievous document sent by trouble makers in Hyderabad, so no action is necessary."⁴⁶³ K S Vaidya, a local lawyer and Congress leader with links to the Hindu Mahasabha sent an alarming telegram to the Ministry of States, "Hindu Massacre possible in Hyderabad. MIM has taken over defacto power. MIM thinks a massacre of Hindus will help them negotiate their status better."⁴⁶⁴ These groups also had sympathizers in the congress party such as Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a minister in the central

⁴⁶² Rizakar disturbances, complaints and petitions from inhabitants of Hyderabad and neighboring towns. NAI/Hyderabad Residency/Political/141(10)-P/1948

⁴⁶³ Menon's note on MIM's direct action plan, 4th December, 1947. NAI/Ministry of States/2(5)-PR/47/Part-II/p. 96.

⁴⁶⁴ K S Vaidya to V P Menon, 20th November, 1947. NAI/Ministry of States/2(5)-PR/47/Part-II/p. 81.

cabinet, and K M Munshi, the agent general of India in Hyderabad.⁴⁶⁵ Munshi's regular reports to the government of India often described detailed accounts of Rizakar excesses against congress sympathizers, and Hindus in general.⁴⁶⁶ In another such report, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, Minister of Industries in India, with no role to play in Hyderabad, wrote a letter to the Home Minister of India, attaching a ground report prepared by his lawyer friend who had visited Hyderabad. Mookherjee's letter and the attached report described the state of affairs, especially the activities of Qasim Razvi, MIM and the Rizakars. He emphasized the perception that Hyderabad was under the control of fanatic elements such as Qasim Razvi and his likes who had delusions about defeating the Indian Army if it comes to that. The report also mentioned the huge number of arms that had been smuggled into Hyderabad to arm the Rizakars.⁴⁶⁷ Such reports were aimed at informing the government of India about the nature of armed resistance that the Rizkars and MIM volunteers could launch against annexation, as well as establish the impression that the Hindu population of Hyderabad was being massacred and needed to be rescued by the Indian government, a ploy used by right wing Hindu groups. While incidences of Rizakar excesses against Hindus occurred, their scale and scope was much smaller than reported. Allegations of exaggeration had echoes in far away places. The British press strongly criticized the Indian state and media houses for exaggerating the Rizakar menace in Hyderabad, to justify their aggressive takeover of Hyderabad,⁴⁶⁸ a fact that motivated the government of India to

⁴⁶⁵ Noorani, Abdul Gafoor Abdul Majeed. 2014. *The destruction of Hyderabad*; Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1996. *The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics: 1925 to the 1990s : strategies of identity-building, implantation and mobilisation (with special reference to Central India)*. London: Hurst.

⁴⁶⁶ K M Munshi to Government of India, confidential report, 6th November 1947. NAI/Hyderabad Residency/Political/846-P/1948.

⁴⁶⁷ Mookherjee to Patel, 11th December, 1947. NAI/Ministry of States/2(5)-PR/47/Part-II/Pp. 196-200.

⁴⁶⁸ Indian Ambassador in Paris to Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3rd October, 1948. NAI/Ministry of States/1948/340-H/48/p. 63.

organize positive comments from public Muslim figures in Hyderabad.⁴⁶⁹ Despite being exaggerated, these reports had sown the seeds of a future retribution when Hyderabad would become part of India.

Annexation was a key moment in the history of Hyderabad, and in the memory of its inhabitants, especially among its Muslim population whom it traumatized for the next several decades. The scars of this event continue to exist not only among those who witnessed the event, but also among the next several generations of Hyderabad's Muslims who heard about it from others. H8, a local researcher and writer told me about the continued salience of its memories, "Police action remains fresh in the minds of Hyderabad's Muslims even now. If you leave aside today's teenagers and kids, most Muslims in the city remember it. It has been remembered pretty much like the Shias remember the battle of Karbala from fourteen centuries ago." I asked him how this memory and history has been kept alive for such a long time, especially in current day Hyderabad which has become synonymous with the IT industry in India. H8 explained, "Every neighborhood has a few households where an elder was either part of the Police force, or the army, or some government department in Nizam's Hyderabad. Annexation suddenly uprooted these government employees from their secure jobs. Many such people were suspended or fired, and they were treated with distrust. Post annexation, the atmosphere of discrimination became so painful that a whole generation of Muslims went into psychological depression. Muslims could not get government jobs, student were shut out of scholarships, and there were mass murder of Muslims in the surrounding districts. These stories have been narrated within families, repeated in neighborhoods, at the many teahouses where Hyderabad's people assemble late into the

⁴⁶⁹ Statements from prominent Muslims of Hyderabad to Government of India regarding the Rizakar menace, and the need to control the situation, NAI/Ministry of States/1948/89-H/48

night.”⁴⁷⁰ H13, an octogenarian retired bureaucrat who had served the Nizam’s government, attested to this oral tradition. He added another angle to the process that has kept the memory of annexation alive in Hyderabad, “You don’t hear it often now, but until a decade ago MIM leaders always harped upon annexation as the lowest point in the history of the Muslim community here. Sultan Owaisi would always play upon Police Action in his speeches, and remind his audience how the dignity and status of Hyderabad was snatched away, and how the Muslim community lost what was theirs. Their politics is based on recovering this loss, so they make sure everyone remembers that history.”⁴⁷¹

These memories are connected to the indiscriminate killing of Muslims at the hands of right wing Hindu organizations who had the tacit support of security forces in post annexation Hyderabad. While this pogrom has conveniently been kept out of the academic and popular narrative of Hyderabad’s union with India, a few writers have written about it. One of them described the “untold miseries that were inflicted on the ordinary Muslim people” in this period.⁴⁷² (pages 88-89). Another account mentions, “*Thousands upon thousands were slaughtered; many hundreds of thousands uprooted* . The instrument of their disaster was, of course, vengeance. Particularly in the Marathwara section of the state, and to a less but still terrible extent in most other areas, the story of the days after 'police action' is grim.”⁴⁷³ The Sundarlal Report, which the government of India eventually commissioned to enquire into the pogrom remained classified for some decades, and was then marked as misplaced for the next

⁴⁷⁰ Interview/Hyderabad/H8

⁴⁷¹ Interview/Hyderabad/H13

⁴⁷² Sundarayya, Puccalapalli, and Harindranath Chattopadhyay. 1972. *Telangana people's struggle and its lessons*. [Calcutta]: [Communist Party of India (Marxist)], Pp. 88-89.

⁴⁷³ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1950. "Hyderabad: Muslim Tragedy". *Middle East Journal*. 4 (1): 27-51.

few decades, after declassification, until it was finally released to the public recently. Various estimates, made by responsible individuals, of the number of Muslims massacred in Hyderabad after annexation range between 50,000 and 200,000.⁴⁷⁴

Archival materials attest to these instances of violence. Reports of mass killings of Muslims in districts in the state abound. Additionally, incidents such as Muslim youth being beaten up, lynched, set on fire were also reported.⁴⁷⁵ Arya Samaj, and Hindu Mahasabha leaders from Bombay and Hyderabad also became active after police action and made provocative anti-Muslim speeches in Hyderabad unabated.⁴⁷⁶ Anti-Muslim violence in Hyderabad came to such a state, that Nehru, the prime minister of India, wrote to the Ministry of States, ordering them to inquire the situation, identify the perpetrators, and put an immediate stop to the violence. Nehru was also upset at the allegations that the Indian Army and other security forces were alleged to have been playing a tacit supportive role in the Muslim massacre.⁴⁷⁷ While violence against Muslims in Hyderabad came to an end by the end of 1949, their harassment in districts outside the city continued. This included a series of Mosque demolitions undertaken by right wing Hindu organizations who had the support of the local police.⁴⁷⁸

While the scope of the massacre is debated, its effect on the Muslims of Hyderabad has been unambiguous. The loss of life, property, and dignity not simply through violence, but

⁴⁷⁴ <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1805/18051130.htm>

⁴⁷⁵ Intelligence reports from Hyderabad, November-December, 1948. NAI/Ministry of States/1949/11(9)-H/49/Pp. 1-3.

⁴⁷⁶ Intelligence report from Hyderabad, 13th January, 1949. NAI/Ministry of States/1949/11(9)-H/49/p. 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Nehru to Patel, 14th November, 1948. NAI/Ministry of States/1948/112-H/48/Volume II/Pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷⁸ President, Jamiat Ulema to Chief Minister of Hyderabad, 8th January, 1951. Representation from Jamiat Ulema and others regarding grievances of Hyderabad Muslims in the Hyderabad State. NAI/Ministry of States/1951/1(7)-H/51/Pp. 1-11.

through organized violence under the watch of the Indian state became a defining moment for Hyderabad's Muslim residents. It shaped their perceptions about the Indian government, and of their own position in the new political setup that was the province of Hyderabad within India. These unfortunate events at the end of this phase reemphasized the salience of Muslim identities for Hyderabad.

Lucknow: Complicating the Two-Nation Theory

Finally, on the eve of partition of India, and at the cusp of IML's victory on the basis of the two nation theory, Shia organizations and leaders again disrupted the narrative of a homogeneous Muslim community by arguing that Shias were an important, substantively numbered, and distinct community separate from Sunni Muslims. Such arguments include the All Parties Shia conference's (APSC) petitions that opposed the designs and plans of the IML, which they alleged to be a purely Sunni political organization. The collection of petitions and legislative council debates from this period make the following arguments: "The IML's vision of Pakistan involved a religious state governed by Hanafi religious law which was opposed to the Jafari law governing the Shias; The proposed constitution of Pakistan did not intend to treat the Shias as a minority thus endangering their rights in future Pakistan; IML does not acknowledge the Shias as an important community and refuses to negotiate with its leaders and organizations; Shia organizations from across India would oppose the IML plan inside the legislative councils, and outside during provincial elections so as to defeat IML candidates in UP and other provinces."⁴⁷⁹

Similarly, the AISC, another Shia organization involving influential leaders from Lucknow and Bombay, petitioned the government of India, British members of Parliament, and

⁴⁷⁹ Resolutions passed by the All Parties Shia Conference, 25th December 1945. NAI/Home-Public/289/1946/p. 17.

Congress leaders to claim political positions distinct from the IML. These petitions include arguments such as: “Shias are a minority within Muslims just as scheduled castes were among the Hindus and protestants were in Ireland, and hence required special protection for their political and cultural rights; Shias are absolutely different from Sunnis as they have separate mosques, religious teachings, and culture, and in fact there is little or no common life between them. Shias and Sunnis treat each other as heretics and there has been a long sequence of communal riots and violence between them; Sunni Ulama preach against Shia practices and are always attempting to establish that we are not Muslims; The Shia Population in British India is 25 million that adds up to one third of the Muslim population. Also, Shias are advanced in education, trade and charity, and have contributed to the nation through their services in various fields thus making them an important and large minority; The census systematically discounts our numbers by under-counting us across provinces. It refuses to count mendicants and Sufi Muslims, who claim a Shia identity, on technical issues and deliberately enumerates us as a small community. We need to be counted separately on the census to deal with this problem; Even the few Shia members in the IML are opposed to the *sharia* clause for Pakistan, but their opinions are marginalized and ignored; The separate electorate scheme has systematically submerged the demands of the Shias as the IML only allows Sunnis to contest provincial elections and use terror tactics to dissuade Shia voters in all constituencies; About 800 Shia organizations from across India have been meeting regularly at Lucknow and will be actively protesting our marginalization at the hands of the IML.”⁴⁸⁰ These claims of distinction, and demands for safeguards reiterated the relevance of the Tabarra and Madhe Sahaba controversy in Lucknow for the entire Shia Community, “Sunnis consider our Muharram rituals as *Bidat*

⁴⁸⁰ Representations from the APSC, February 1946. NAI/Reforms/41/3/46-R/1946/Pp. 4-24.

(innovation against Islamic tenets), and always try to restrict Shias from the practice of Tabarra, which is a key tenet of our faith. The well known controversy from Lucknow is proof of how the Sunni majority has always tried to marginalize us.”⁴⁸¹

These petitions and demands repeated inflated population estimates of the Shias, and these estimates gradually entered official correspondence within the Indian government communications, as well got quoted in letters that were sent out by ministers and government officials. In one such letter, Vallabh Bhai Patel, an important congress leader and the Home member of the Government of India, wrote to the president of the All Party Shia Conference, acknowledging that the 30 million Shia Muslims in India were indeed marginalized by Sunni Muslims and deserved representation in the government and in jobs. He also shared his views on the Shia demand for a quota in the separate electorate system of elections, “While I am not sure about the relevance of the separate electorate system of elections in future India, if it were to continue, we have to ensure that such a large community should get its due share.”⁴⁸²

Thus, by the end of 1947-1948, both Lucknow and Hyderabad had reached a point where distinct collective identities had become salient. In Hyderabad, annexation by India, and attendant violence at the hands of state and non-state actors had traumatized the Muslim community to such a degree that their perceptions of belonging to a dispossessed minority became greatly heightened. This perception was so salient that the local divisions within Muslims- based on sect, ethnicity, and nationality- became insignificant. On the other hand, Lucknow, where the two-nation theory and the demand for Pakistan was best articulated by Muslim politicians, and where a salient Muslim identity would be best expected, did not end up with Muslim and Hindu as the

⁴⁸¹ General Secretary’s Statement, APSC, 11th January, 1946. NAI/Reforms/1946/41/3/46-R/Pp. 11-16.

⁴⁸² Telegram, Patel to Hooseinbhoy, 12th February, 1946, APSC Resolutions. NAI/Reforms/1946/41/3/46-R/p. 3

main ends of polarization. Instead, continued sectarian rhetoric and petitions from Shia organizations and interest groups ensured that the purported Muslim community was fragmented into Shia and Sunni, which remained the key rival groups.

Conclusion

The period between 1920 and 1948 in colonial India was truly a period of protest campaigns, especially in the two cities of Lucknow and Hyderabad. This period started with the Khilafat Movement, and a series of national Civil Disobedience Movements, and included protest campaigns led by Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, and MIM in Hyderabad, and the sectarian Tabarra and Madh-e-Sahaba protests in Lucknow. This chapter focuses on protests to explain their role in the making of collective identities. It demonstrates two phenomenon. The first is how protests contribute to collective identities, of not just movement organizations or activists, as literature suggests, but also of entire communities whom the protestors claim to represent. The second is how partnerships between community and state based elites, constrain or enable specific types of protest campaigns.

In Hyderabad, two phases of protests existed. The first involved the Khilafat Movement which brought Hindu and Muslim communities briefly together before its jettisoning by the Nizam drove a wedge between the two communities. This wedge opened the door for communally oriented protests that were led by Hindu and Muslim interest groups. Sustained protests based on the leveraging of latent Hindu-Muslim antagonisms produced an atmosphere where vertically organized but horizontally unattached Muslim communities started to come together under an overarching sense of Muslim belonging. Community based Muslim elites were able to identify and utilize friendly elites connected with the state, and this allowed them to launch unhindered protests against rival Hindu interest groups on both religious and political

grounds. I also show how local Hindu elites perceived opportunities in the state for articulating demands and complaints on the grounds of religious discrimination, which the princely state was committed to address. However, there was no space for Hindu elites making openly political complaints and demands. Certain Hindu interest groups, such as the Arya Samaj, and the Hindu Mahasabha were able to operate on even political grounds in Hyderabad because their resources were not dependent on opportunities within the state in Hyderabad, instead they were headquartered in British India. This sense of belonging to a unified collective identity was further strengthened by the last phase of this period when Muslims were massacred by state and non-state actors after Hyderabad's annexation by India. The trauma of this event further crystallized Muslim as the most salient collective identity. In contrast, the state in Hyderabad was so structured that sectarian elites- such as the Shia- were fully coopted or regulated through patronage, and there were no sectarian elites available for partnering with the few un-coopted Shia community leaders in Hyderabad. This ensured that protests along the Shia-Sunni axis were constrained.

In Lucknow also two main phases of protests were witnessed. The first included Khilafat agitation that had broad support among Hindus and Muslims, and around which even the Shia and Sunni communities converged, even if some frictions remained. The second round of protests started in Lucknow in the mid 1930's when the Shia-Sunni conflict was revived by sectarian leaders at the behest of elites initially from within the Congress party, and later by the tacit support of elected representatives from within the provincial government who were Congress members. The first ever provincial elections in UP were the main context of this revival. These protests, especially those led by Shia organizations became so intense that almost the entire Shia community in the city was connected with the protests either directly or

indirectly. These protests thus helped strengthen the larger collective identity of the Shia community. In contrast, communal conflicts and protests were prevented due to two reasons- one a lack of state based elites whom the community based elitees could partner with, and two, little openness in the state for tolerating any possibilities of communal frictions. Thus, this chapter shows that protest campaigns, that could take place at either site, played a big role in shaping the collective identities of the larger community whom the protestors claimed to represent. We also saw how the protests were led by community based elites and organizations who were able to perceive and utilize the availability of elites located within the structures of the state.

Chapter 4- Violence and Collective Identities: 1949-1998

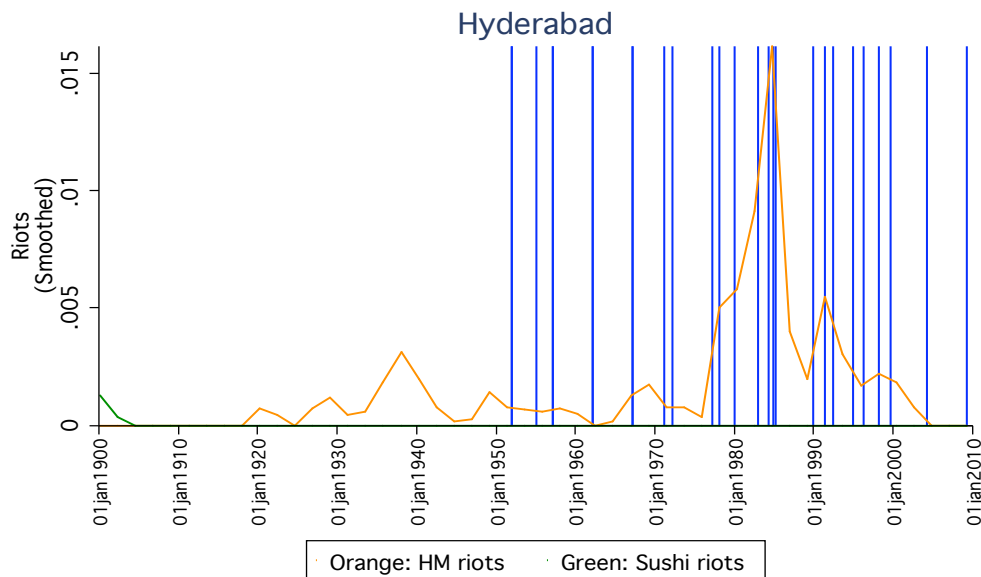
Introduction

In India's postcolonial setup, starting with independence in 1947, the cities of Hyderabad and Lucknow became infamous for violent rioting based on collective identities. However, the axes on which these riots take place were different. While in Hyderabad violence took place exclusively between Hindu and Muslim communities, in Lucknow it was limited to the Shia - Sunni axis within Muslims. This happened despite the fact that both cities had comparable religious demographics, and latent tensions existed even across Hindu-Muslim categories in Lucknow, and Shia-Sunni groups in Hyderabad. However, these latent tensions never evolved into violence. Why do Hindus and Muslims not indulge in violence in Lucknow? And why have Shias and Sunnis of Hyderabad never engaged in violence against each other. This chapter tells us how the specific combination of factors in each city has encouraged one type of violence but suppressed the other. It also traces the emergence of violence as a key repertoire in identity politics that peaked during the seventies and eighties, and eventually declined in the nineties.

Riots in the twentieth century

The following two graphics give a general picture of all violent events in the two cities across the twentieth century:

Figure 1: Riots in Hyderabad, 1900-2010



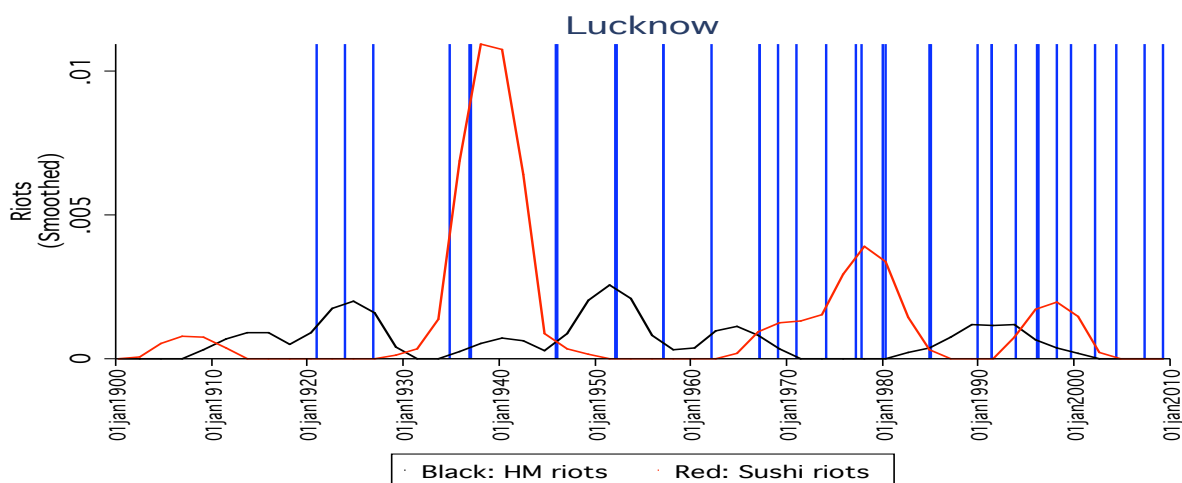
Hyderabad has only one recorded Shia-Sunni riot in the 20th century, back in 1900, but Hindu-Muslim riots have been much more frequent and contemporary. They occurred in 1935, 1938, 1939, 1949, 1950, 1954, 1958, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, and 1999. Out of these riot years, Hyderabad had either a state or central election in 1952, 1955, 1957, 1962, 1967, 1971, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1996, 1998, and 1999.

If we focus only on the post 1948 period, riots and elections have occurred in the same year ten times. Out of these ten times, riots followed elections six times, and preceded elections four times. This is consistent with scholarship on elections and riots in India.⁴⁸³ There are also ten election years with no riots, seven of which were before 1978. This is again in line with

⁴⁸³ Wilkinson, Steven Ian. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press; Brass, Paul R. 2011. *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

trends across India especially the absence of communal violence after the large-scale violence during partition and mass migration between India and Pakistan.⁴⁸⁴ However, there are also several instances of riots when no elections were in the near vicinity, there are fourteen such episodes between 1948 and 1999. These riots, without elections, complicate our understanding of the riot-election relationship in postcolonial India. These riots suggest that elections are not the only outcome or motivation that drive such violence.

Figure 2- Riots in Lucknow, 1900-2010



Lucknow, in comparison to Hyderabad has stayed almost free of Hindu-Muslim riots although minor tiffs have been recorded in 1912, and 1913, and an isolated riot occurred in 1924. In the post independence period, after 1947, tensions and minor scuffles were documented in 1950, 1965, and 1992 but these were largely conflicts between one community and the police.

⁴⁸⁴ Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 15 July 2013, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,736>, ISSN 1961-9898

None of these events, except in 1924, were significant enough to be recorded as a communal riot. In fact, relative to other locations in North India, Lucknow stands out like an island of tranquility.

At the same time, Lucknow has witnessed serious sectarian rioting, between Shia and Sunni communities, across the 20th century. In the pre independence period, major riots took place in 1907-08, and 1939. In the post independence period, riots between the two Muslim sects took place in 1969, 1974, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1997, and 1999. Elections took place in four of these years, 1969, 1974, and 1980 preceding the riots. In 1977, riots immediately preceded elections. However, in 1978, 1979, 1997, and 1999 there were no elections and yet riots persisted. Similar to the case of Hyderabad, violence between the Shia and Sunni communities in not explained by electoral competitions alone. The fact that Shia and Sunni candidates have rarely been serious rivals in electoral contests further drives one to think about other reasons that could underlie this violence.

This contrasting situation in the two cities is a continuation of the earlier phase where Hindu & Muslim collective identities emerged as the opposing poles in Hyderabad, and the nested Shia & Sunni categories dominated the axis of polarization in Lucknow. However, what is new in the 1949-98 period is the use of full-fledged violence as one of the main tools in identity politics. We also notice that all elections are not associated with riots, i.e. in several election years no riots took place. The same stands true for Muharram, it is an annual affair that precipitates Shia-Sunni distancing, and often tensions, but sectarian riots in Lucknow do not take place every year. Thus, neither elections, nor Muharram are sole drivers for rioting. Instead, as this chapter will describe, it is the changing context and the particular role played by political

opportunities that help us understand violent rioting as a tool used in the larger identity politics in both cities.

Intergroup Violence

Early scholarship on violence and group identity claimed that the real reason behind intergroup violence was rooted in mobilization around collective identities such as ethnicity.⁴⁸⁵ Such collective or group identities were defined through two broad approaches, the earlier perennialists, including the essentialists, and the later modernists, including constructivists. Perennialists define collective identities on the basis of long standing cultural traits that are set deep in history, thus assuming them to be stable and fixed.⁴⁸⁶ However, the notion of treating group identities as fixed is now a thing of the past. Constructivists look at collective identities as historically emergent, malleable, shifting, and even mutable under certain circumstances. Such positions are now so well established that contemporary scholars who research group or collective identities “are all constructivists now.”⁴⁸⁷

A disproportionate number of such studies focus on war, civil unrest and similar armed conflicts.⁴⁸⁸ A smaller number of studies move away from full-scale violence, and instead study

⁴⁸⁵ Connor, Walker. 1994. *Ethnonationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Deutsch, Karl W. 1953. *Nationalism and Social Communication*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press; Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso; Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

⁴⁸⁶ Ignatieff, Michael. 1993. *Blood and Belonging*. London: Noontday Press; Hastings, Adrian. 1997. *The Construction of Nationhood*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Shuster; Moynihan, Daniel P. 1993. *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press; Rabushka, Alvin and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 1972. *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus, OH: Merrill; Smith, Anthony. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

⁴⁸⁷ Brubaker, Rogers. 2009. "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 35: 21, p.28.

⁴⁸⁸ Brubaker R, Laitin DD. 1998. Ethnic and nationalist violence. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 24:423–52

riots.⁴⁸⁹ Riots have been defined through law in a variety of ways depending on the number of rioters involved, actions of the rioters, and the effect of their actions. But these definitions are state centric and do not converge with how social scientists understand riots.⁴⁹⁰ One of the definitions used in the social sciences conceptualize a riot as “an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership.”⁴⁹¹ However, most of the sociological and political science research on riots has focused on “(a) identifying the ‘real’ underlying economic or political causes of riots and (b) testing the main theories of riots through massive data-collection projects and statistical analyses.”⁴⁹² One of the explanations behind riots based on collective identities uses intergroup and intragroup civic engagement as predictors of intergroup riots. Varshney (2005) compares several peaceful and riot-prone cities in India and focuses on formal and quotidian civic engagements between groups. Formal civic engagements are measured through the presence, density, and membership of formal civil society organizations that have members from both Hindu and Muslim community. These organizations are seen as interethnic bridging mechanisms that can regulate communal conflict. This type of engagement is claimed to dissipate communal tensions before it transforms into communal violence. By quotidian civic engagements, Varshney alludes to

⁴⁸⁹ Tambiah SJ. 1996. *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press ; Horowitz D L. 2001. *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press; Brass, Paul R. 2011. *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Wilkinson, Steven. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹⁰ Wilkinson, S.I. 2009. "Riots". *Annual Review of Political Science*. 12: 329-344.

⁴⁹¹ Horowitz, 2001, Ibid.

⁴⁹² Wilkinson, 2009, p.338. Ibid

everyday, informal interactions between groups. However, he argues that formal engagements are more robust than quotidian ones in managing conflict. He shows that when both formal and quotidian interethnic relations are strong, communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims are likely to be dissipated before they transform into riots. In contrast, the lack of both types of engagements, or the weakness of even formal intercommunity civic associations make it more likely for Hindu-Muslim riots to occur.

One of the paired cities in this study includes Lucknow and Hyderabad. Varshney argues that in Hyderabad, Hindu and Muslim communities have had a history of civic engagement only at the level of elites, but not at the level of the masses. He also argues that mass politics that emerged here in the 1930s was superimposed on the Hindu-Muslim axis, thus obviating Shia-Sunni tensions. Similarly, he argues that in Lucknow the preexistence of Shia-Sunni animosities, before the growth of nationalist politics, and the fact that Hindu and Muslims were connected at both mass and elite levels undermined the likelihood of Hindu-Muslim riots.⁴⁹³ This line of thought, especially the reliance on civic engagement, is contested, as there are counter arguments that extant civic engagements are not enough to prevent or dissipate communal riots. Instead, patterns of riots show that communal tensions can transform existing intergroup civic organizations into partisan bodies that can also become a party in communal riots.⁴⁹⁴

Apart from this counterargument, Varshney's work also suffers from several problematic premises. The first is that it accepts Hindu and Muslim, as well as Shia and Sunni as given categories, that exist as naturally antagonistic rivals, uncritically. This assumption, and the lack

⁴⁹³ Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁹⁴ Brass, Paul R. 2006. *Forms of collective violence: riots, pogroms, & genocide in modern India*. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective.

of historical analysis are problematic as they help reproduce scholarship that borders essentialism. Varshney's focus, on civic engagement alone, also fails to address the role of the state, which is known to be central to the emergence, maintenance, and regulation of intergroup riots in India.⁴⁹⁵ Varshney's analysis of Lucknow and Hyderabad also suffers from being based on narratives made salient through repetition, rather than being based on historical research. For example, Varshney's opinion on Hindu-Muslim relations is based on his characterization of the *Chikan*⁴⁹⁶ handicraft industry of Lucknow as made of Hindu bosses and Sunni workers. This is inaccurate, as the *Chikan* industry has historically included both Shia and Sunni workers. In fact, the remittance inflow from migrant workers in the Persian Gulf, since the 1970s, has resulted in the rise of many Shia and Sunni bosses who increasingly depend on Muslim workers. Similarly, there has been a steep rise in the number of Hindu embroidery workers in and around Lucknow who work for Hindu bosses. The economic interdependency between Hindus, Shias, and Sunnis is much more complex than described by Varshney.⁴⁹⁷ The *Chikan* industry in Lucknow has increasingly become more intragroup with the rise of Hindu workers who work for Hindu bosses, and Muslim bosses who employ Muslim workers over the last few decades. However, this shift in the structure of economic relationships does not correlate with any change in the patterns of violence in Lucknow. Hindu-Muslim violence has remained absent, while Shia-Sunni

⁴⁹⁵ Pandey, Gyanendra. 1990. *The construction of communalism in colonial north India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.; Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. 1996. *Leveling crowds: ethnonationalist conflicts and collective violence in South India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁴⁹⁶ Chikan is a style of embroidery on apparel, specific to Lucknow. Cultivated by the Nawabs, it is Lucknow's claim to fame.

⁴⁹⁷ Interview/Lucknow/L11 (Chikan workshop manager); Interview/Lucknow/L18 (Hindu Chikan entrepreneur and exporter); Interview/Lucknow/L16 (Shia youth Chikan exporter); Interview/Lucknow/L21 (Sunni youth Chikan entrepreneur); Also see Wilkinson-Weber, Clare M. 1999. *Embroidering lives: women's work and skill in the Lucknow embroidery industry*. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press; Contractual Employment in Indian Labour Market: Emergence and Expansion

riots have continued to occur. This demonstrates the limited role of formal civic engagements in the likelihood of riots.

Another set of studies focus on the link between riots, elections, and the religious identity of the voters. Paul Brass argues that India has had a long history of Hindu-Muslim riots and that no single explanation of these riots is sufficient. He claims that an institutionalized riot system has existed in independent India and that riots are deliberate events that are organized around closely contested elections. Brass emphasizes the mechanisms that deliberately provoke endemic communal tensions and transform them into riots before a closely fought election where communal polarization can help alter the electoral outcome. He argues that riots are one of the weapons used by local leaders for personal and electoral advantages. Though Brass sees riots as creating solidarity within groups, his discussion is limited to solidarity for electoral advantages alone.⁴⁹⁸ Wilkinson's analysis of connections between elections and riots similarly considers the effects of riots over groups, but again his focus is limited to electoral behavior of groups alone. claims that, "town-level electoral incentives account for where Hindu-Muslim violence breaks out and that state-level electoral incentives account for where and when state governments use their police forces to prevent riots."⁴⁹⁹

These literatures provide opportunities for pushing research in three directions. The first is related to the treatment of collective identities as an independent variable, which leaves it as an un-interrogated concept. The second arises from the fact that these studies focus exclusively on Hindu-Muslim violence, and leave fascinating questions about other types of violence in India unanswered. The third direction relates to the treatment of riots as an independent variable. It is

⁴⁹⁸ Brass, 2011. Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Wilkinson, Steven Ian. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press, p.4

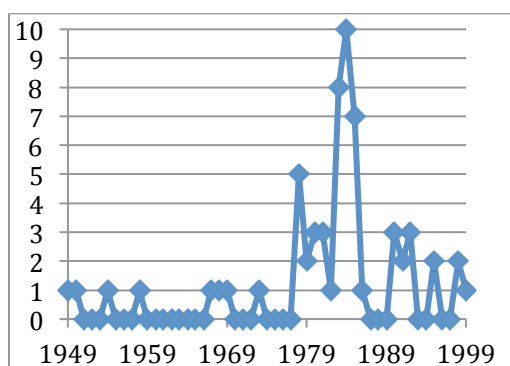
worthwhile to use riots as an independent variable, especially for studying, “ethnic- identity changes that result from riots,” a process that we know very little about.⁵⁰⁰ This chapter exploits all three of these openings. It studies the role of violence in the formation of collective identities, by looking at both Hindu-Muslim and Shia-Sunni riots. Building on scholarship that connects violence and collective identity, this chapter shows that in contradistinction to notions that it is mainly existing or emerging collective identities that lead to violence, it is violence that is used as a strategy for construction, maintenance, expression, and consolidation of collective identities. I also explore the role of community based elites, state based elites and the perceived openings in the state that allowed for one type of violence to be organized, but another type to be constrained at either site of interest. Findings show that in the given period, 1949 to 1998, elites in Hyderabad were able to organize violence between Hindu and Muslim collectivities, but suppressed violence between Shia and Sunni groups. In a reverse scenario, Lucknow had a combination of interested elite and state structures that permitted Shia-Sunni violence but not Hindu-Muslim violence. Thus, the targeted rival identities in Hyderabad were Hindu and Muslim, while they were Shia and Sunni in Lucknow, between whom riots were permissible at either site. This chapter also shows that collective identities, made salient through violence, affect electoral contests in varying ways. In Hyderabad, the salience of a Muslim collective identity is critical to electoral results because of a high proportion of Muslims in the total voting population. However, in Lucknow, the salience of a Shia collective identity has comparatively less effect on electoral competitions because of their small numbers.

⁵⁰⁰ Wilkinson, Steven I. 2009. "Riots". *Annual Review of Political Science*. 12: 329-343. p. 341.

I use four types of data for this chapter. The first is my dataset on riots in Lucknow and Hyderabad. This is based on the Varshney-Wilkinson dataset⁵⁰¹ that I have updated with Shia-Sunni riots. I identified Shia-Sunni riots from multiple sources such as online newspaper archives, records from the state archives of Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow) and Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), and the national archives at New Delhi. I used this dataset to plot riots, in relation to other events of interest. Data on elections includes dates of elections, results, party affiliation, voting percentages and margins of victory. Most of these details come from the official post-election reports of the Election Commission of India. I use this data to describe electoral outcomes during the period of interest and their overlap with riots. Third, I use news reports on elections and riots, as well as material sources from the offices and websites of political parties. Finally, I use in-depth interviews that I conducted with key informants, which speak to communal and sectarian dynamics of the period under study in this chapter.

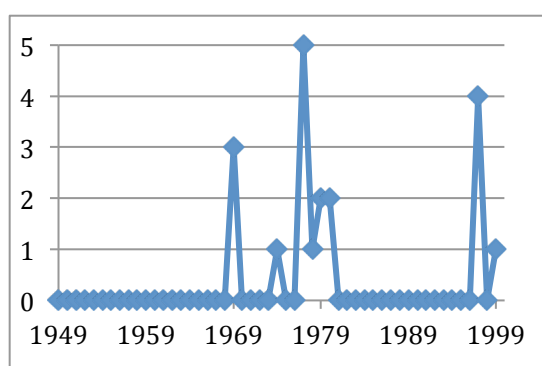
Riots in Independent India: 1949-1999

Figure-3



No. of riots in Hyderabad

Figure-4



No. of riots in Lucknow

⁵⁰¹ Varshney, Ashutosh, and Steven Wilkinson. Varshney-Wilkinson Dataset on Hindu-Muslim Violence in India, 1950-1995, Version 2. ICPSR04342-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-02-17. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04342.v1>

In the period immediately following annexation, in 1948, Hyderabad witnessed no Shia-Sunni riots, as in the past, but witnessed retributive violence against Muslims at the hands of right wing Hindu groups, allegedly with the connivance of the state. This period of violence has not been documented under communal riots, and is not included in analysis for this chapter. However, once the situation normalized by 1949, recorded communal riots between Hindus and Muslims remained low for a number of years before rising in later years. Also, the distribution of these riots is asymmetric, with several years having no riots and others having several. There were multiple riots per year between 1978 and 1998, with the period between 1983 and 1985 being the worst phase of all. One of the key points about Hindu Muslim riots in Hyderabad is that several of these riots take place in close vicinity of the Muharram period, within a fortnight of a major procession. In this sense, Muharram in Hyderabad is more related with Muslimness than with a sectarian identity as in Lucknow.

In Lucknow, 1950 saw a small communal tiff, but no Hindu-Muslim riots occurred. Instead, Lucknow witnessed sectarian riots between Shia and Sunni communities. These riots are also distributed asymmetrically with most years having no riots at all, and in some years there were multiple riots. The incidence of rioting in both cities shows three distinct phases. The first phase, with no or minimal violence starts immediately after India's independence in 1947, and persists until the seventies. The second phase, seventies until mid nineties, is extraordinarily violent, and the third phase, mid nineties onwards shows a decline in violence. While this chronology is not perfect, as its logic is broken by a few exceptions, analysis in this chapter follows this approximate chronology. The exceptions are, in fact, markers of change in the local dynamics, as discussion in the following section will show. The specific phases that are

discussed in this chapter are- 1949-1976: Emergent violence; 1977-1993: Peak Violence; and 1994-1999: Decline in Violence. The following sections discuss these phases for each city.

Hyderabad: 1949-1999

Phase 1: Emergent Violence- 1949-1976

Out of these 28 years, Hyderabad had only one riot per year in 8 years and the rest of the 20 years were riot free, hence the city was reasonably peaceful relative to national trends.⁵⁰² This relative peace is contextualized by the larger sociopolitical dynamics within which this phase began. Hyderabad, a princely state until August 1948, was annexed by the Indian Union through a military operation in September 1948. This was a year after the British left. This annexation immediately followed a four-year period of heightened communal emotions and violence. Between 1944 and 1948, the Majlis-e-Ittehad-e-Muslimeen (literally-association for unity among Muslims, MIM in short), Hyderabad's premier Muslim interest group, had emerged as an extremely powerful political organization. In fact it had become the third power center after the Nizam and the British Resident. MIM's meteoric rise during these brief four years took place within a general sense of ambiguity and uncertainty as to the future of the Hyderabad state. The nationalist movement had peaked, the British were reconciled with leaving India, and Pakistan was a distinct possibility. The princely states, including Hyderabad, were unsure of their future position vis a vis the British and an imminent independent Indian nation. During this tumultuous time, Bhadur Yar Jung, the charismatic leader, had nurtured the MIM into a popular

⁵⁰² Engineer, Asghar Ali. 1989. *Communalism and communal violence in India: an analytical approach to Hindu-Muslim conflict*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications (India); Engineer, Asghar Ali. 1984. *Communal riots in post-independence India*. Hyderabad [India]: Sangam Books; Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 15 July 2013, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,736>, ISSN 1961-9898; Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 20 August 2013, accessed 11 October 2015, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,738>, ISSN 1961-9898

organization. His sudden death in 1944 resulted in the succession of Qasim Razvi, a lawyer with extremist political ideas. He transformed the MIM into an aggressive organization that embraced violence as a legitimate tool in politics. Under Razvi's leadership the MIM raised a Muslim militia, the Rizakars, as its paramilitary wing that was envisaged to take over the Hyderabad army, fight out a possible annexation attempt by India, and help establish Hyderabad as an independent Islamic nation. While scholars attest to both the delusional plans of Razvi, and their impracticality,⁵⁰³ the MIM and the Rizakar indeed emerged as a force to reckon with between 1944 and 1948. The Rizakars unleashed violence upon individuals and groups in Hyderabad state who were active in pro India politics and had demanded the state's union with India post 1947. Most of this violence was against non-Muslims. Instances of Rizakar violence were used by right wing Hindu political organizations to build an exaggerated case for a violent suppression of the Rizakars. Hyderabad's annexation, known as Police Action in Indian historiography, involved a quick takeover of the government that was followed by widespread violence at the hand of state and non state actors targeting Muslims who were allegedly linked with the Rizakar or MIM. Overtly in the name of suppressing Rizakar resistance, Muslims were looted and killed by right wing Hindu groups with either the tacit support, or helplessness of the Indian army and the new administration. Though officially contested, these allegations are supported by a string of reports and internal correspondence that emanated between the prime ministers office, home ministry and others in the Government of India.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman; Muralidharan, S. 2014. "Alternate Histories: Hyderabad 1948 Compels a Fresh Evaluation of the Theology of India's Independence and Partition". *History and Sociology of South Asia*. 8 (2): 119-138.

⁵⁰⁴ Letter, Nehru to Ministry of States, Delhi, 14th November, 1948, communal situation in Hyderabad state, NAI/Ministry Of States /1948/112-H/48 VOL II, pp. 1-2; Resident, Hyderabad, to Government of India, HYDerabad Residency/Political/435-P/1948.

The way in which Hyderabad was annexed, and the speed with which its social and political structures underwent an overnight transformation created deep scars in the minds of elite and middle class Muslims. The Rizakar organization was vanquished, and banned. Though the MIM, its parent organization, was spared a formal prohibition it became an organization non grata. For all practical purposes, the MIM remained defunct 1949 onwards. Hyderabad's annexation was also followed by a massive outmigration by a large number of Muslim elites who left for either Europe, or Pakistan.⁵⁰⁵

AIMIM, the current version of the MIM, describes those tumultuous times on its website in these words: "There was a widespread sense of fear and despair among the Muslims of Hyderabad who had just witnessed the massacres and lootings of the Police Action. Their economic and social base was crushed through a policy of retrenchment, forcible retirements, illegal occupation of mosques & awqaf properties, introduction of land ceilings, etc. The Muslim community at that time had no credible leadership to call of their own and their representation in the legislatures was next to nil."⁵⁰⁶ It is in this backdrop that Hyderabad became part of the Indian Union. This sudden turn of events was shocking for the larger Hyderabad society, and it created an atmosphere of relative silence and peace for the next several years.

⁵⁰⁵ Benichou, Lucien D. 2000. *From autocracy to integration: political developments in Hyderabad State, 1938-1948*. Chennai: Orient Longman; Khalidi, Omar. 1988. *Hyderabad, after the fall*. Wichita, Kan., U.S.A.: Hyderabad Historical Society.

⁵⁰⁶ <http://www.aimim.in/about-the-party/history>

Parliamentary elections in Hyderabad

TABLE 1: Parliamentary Elections in Hyderabad, 1952-1971

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
Winner	INC	INC	INC	INC	TPS
Runner-up	PDF	IND	MIM	IND	IND
Margin %	11	49	25	18	21
MIM %	NA	NA	31	27%	NA
BJS/BJP %	NA	NA	4	NA	NA
BJS=Bhartiya Jan Sangh; BJP=Bhartiya Janta Party	PDF=People's Democratic Front (proxy communist party)	INC= Indian National Congress	IND=Independent	TPS=Telangana Praja Samiti	NA=Not applicable

Hyderabad was annexed into India in 1948 by force, hence the first general elections of India in Hyderabad city were unusual. The city only saw elections to the parliament, and state elections did not include constituencies from the city. The first few parliamentary elections in Hyderabad city throw light on the gradual shift in electoral preferences of the voters.

The first election in 1952 had the Indian National Congress (INC hereafter) candidate defeat the communist party (PDF- Peoples Democratic Front) candidate by 11%. What is noteworthy in this election is that both the top two vote getting candidates were Muslims, who cornered, together, 84% of the votes in the city, where only 45% of the population was Muslim. This is striking because it shows that despite the recent memory of Rizakar violence on Hindus

and the retributive violence against Muslims, communities were not polarized across Hindu-Muslim identities, as one would expect. In 1957, there was no Muslim candidate in the fray and yet the INC candidate cornered 66% of the votes. This included a majority of Muslim votes polled, again an indication of the lack of communal polarization in Hyderabad.

1957 also marks the year when the MIM was revived after being defunct for about a decade. While the MIM of the 1930s, was an established Muslim organization during the Nizam's rule, its influence over Hyderabad's Muslims had ruptured after the annexation in 1948. Its leadership had dissipated, the influential ones having migrated to Pakistan, and the low rung leaders and members had disassociated from it to protect themselves. In 1957, Qasim Razvi transferred the leadership of the organization to a young lawyer in Hyderabad, A W Owaisi. Under Owaisi's leadership MIM, the erstwhile Muslim interest group with overt Islamist leanings, transformed into a 'secular' political party committed to the Indian constitution. With this revival, MIM became AIMIM, with the 'All India' prefix added for effect, though its appeal remained limited to Hyderabad city.⁵⁰⁷

The revised constitution of AIMIM had 12 objectives grouped into religious, economic and political subheads. These were: 1. To propagate the message of the Quran among Indian Muslims, 2. To promote shariat in everyday conduct of Muslims especially in matters of sorrow and gaiety, 3. To use constitutional mean for promoting religious education in schools, 4. To collect and distribute Zakat and manage waqf properties for the wefare of Muslims, 5. To improve the moral standards of non-Muslim compatriots in order to make them better citizens, 6. To protect and perpetuate Muslim interests, 7. To improve the economic status of Muslims and facilitate employment, 8. To distribute Zakat to deserving Muslims. The next four objectives

⁵⁰⁷ Khan, Rasheeduddin. 1971. "Muslim Leadership and Electoral Politics in Hyderabad: A Pattern of Minority Articulation-I". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 6 (15): 783-794.

were expressly political, these were: 9. To procure and protect constitutional rights for Indian Muslims, 10. To promote friendly relations between Muslims and non Muslims within the purview of shariat, 11. To field Muslim and non-Muslim candidates in elections while ensuring that Muslim candidates abided both the Indian constitution and shariat, and 12. To unite the Muslims religiously, socially, economically, and in matters of common concerns irrespective of their sectional and denominational beliefs.⁵⁰⁸

These objectives show how the MIM had changed its characteristics minimally, just enough to satisfy the constitutional demands of a secular democracy while sticking to its older image of being a Muslim interest group. Further, the first objective itself was a clear indication of the conservative line that the AIMIM wished to take. Regulating private cultural matters such as sorrow and gaity would not have gone well with many Muslim groups that were invested in particular rituals of passion, such as the Shias who observed Muharram in the most passionate and public ways. However, the MIM never publicly opposed the Shia practices of Muharram. Their patrimonial design of absorbing all Muslim communities includes the use of strategic silence on many contentious issues, including Muharram. In fact, key MIM leaders, especially from the Owaisi family, take part in select Muharram events that are hosted by local Shias but which do not involve public performance of sorrow. These are usually the *majlis*, semi-private mourning congregations where the story of Husain's martyrdom is narrated. But otherwise most of the MIM leaders, barring the occasional Shia leaders, stay away from the public processions and rituals.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Reproduced in Khan, Rasheeduddin. 1971. Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Based on several of my Interviews in Hyderabad, as well as from a review of old photographs that many respondents showed me while talking about Muharram.

MIM's revival, so soon after its misadventures against the Indian nation, is shrouded in mystery and conspiracy theories. The most popular of these theories claim that it was the INC's tactic to undermine the growing popularity of the communist party in the Hyderabad region after their impressive show in the 1952 elections. This was a common thread in several of my interviews with key informants that I conducted in 2012-2013. H1, a social activist and local historian, who was in her twenties in 1957, told me, "the specter of communism rising in Hyderabad was too much to handle for the Congress party. They were already worried by competition that communists had given them in West Bengal in 1952. The masses in Hyderabad state were in a similar situation of poverty, hunger and despair. The communist party had a great future in Hyderabad, and the congress could not handle this fact. Congressmen in Hyderabad were all from the elite class, and they could hardly claim to represent the poor in the state."⁵¹⁰ This reasoning fits the facts of the 1952 parliamentary elections in Hyderabad. They took place immediately after communist guerrillas in Hyderabad discontinued their armed struggle in favor of electoral politics. Bypassing a ban on the party, its candidates contested the election under the aegis of the People's Democratic Front (PDF). It won 42 legislature seats, half of what the congress won, and gained 25% of the vote share in the state. In one particular district, the PDF shocked all others by winning all the seats.⁵¹¹

A shaken congress government in Delhi then, allegedly, decided to revive the MIM, and made a deal with its imprisoned president, Qasim Razvi, who was in jail after being convicted of violent crimes committed during the 1944-1948 period. This story has strong local support in

⁵¹⁰ Interview/Hyderabad/H1

⁵¹¹ ECI, AP, 1952; Ramakrishna Reddy, V. (1987). *Economic History of Hyderabad State: Warangal Suba, 1911-1950*. Gian Pub. House, Delhi.; Mathew, George (1984). *Shift in Indian Politics: 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka*. Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore.

present day Hyderabad: “The congress gave him a deal where he had to revive the MIM, pass it on to some local Muslim leaders who could mobilize Muslims for the congress party, and then immediately leave for Pakistan where the Indian government had negotiated political asylum for him. There is no doubt about this story. How else can you explain the sudden release of India’s public enemy number one; organizing the leaders of the defunct MIM at such a short notice; and such a smooth departure to Pakistan?”⁵¹² Hard evidence of this theory is lacking but the logic behind the theory fits well with the congress headed government’s deliberate decision in 1948 not to formally ban the MIM, and the congress party’s well-known proclivities to embrace communal interest groups within its fold for electoral benefits.⁵¹³

In 1957, along with its revival, MIM became AIMIM, with the All India prefix added for effect, and its constitution was revised to accommodate the legal requirements of the new secular democracy that India had recently become. While its goals and objectives remained conservative, communal, and reformist, electoral results in later years attest to the fact that the MIM emerged as the most preferred party among Muslims.

The next parliamentary election in 1962 was the first political contest in Hyderabad after MIM’s revival. Its new president A W Owaisi contested and got 31% of the polled votes in this parliamentary debut, but he lost by a margin of 25%. Given the religious identity of the MIM, it is unlikely that Hindu voters would have voted for MIM. Also, getting 31% votes out of the roughly 45% Muslim votes was an impressive task. Another 6% of the vote was hacked away by another Muslim contestant who stood as an independent candidate.

⁵¹² Interview/Hyderabad/H29 (Retired Professor of History, Sunni, Long time Hyderabad resident).

⁵¹³ Hasan, Mushirul. 1980. "Communal and Revivalist Trends in Congress". *Social Scientist*. 8 (7): 52-66; Brown, Cynthia G., and Farhad Karim. 1995. *Playing the "communal card": communal violence and human rights*. New York: Human Rights Watch;

While MIM's revival meant that Hyderabad's politics would never be the same again, success did not come easily to the MIM. Not all Muslims supported it because of its tainted legacy from the 1944-1948 fiasco, and Shia organizations such as the All India Shia Conference (AISC) did not support it because of its conservative Sunni centric identity. Several other Muslim interest groups were also openly antagonistic of the MIM because of their ideological differences, and rivalry in claiming leadership of the Muslim community in Hyderabad. These included the All India Muslim Majlis e Mushawarat (AIMMM), Tamir-i-Millat (TIM), Jamaat e Islami (JEI), and Tableegh i Jamat (TIJ). The AIMMM, an umbrella like national consultative body of Muslim community leaders focused on protecting Muslim interests⁵¹⁴ opposed the MIM because of its close ties with the Congress, whom the AIMMM blamed as the reason behind the plight of Muslims.⁵¹⁵ The TIM, was a social reform organization that came up in Hyderabad in 1949 and quickly became very popular among Muslims still reeling from the alienation caused by annexation. TIM, was an avowedly non political organization that instituted several scholarship and financial aid programs for Muslims struggling for educational and employment opportunities. By 1957, when MIM was revived, it had a large following in the community which the MIM wanted to leverage for their electoral designs. This caused several instances of bitterness between both organizations as they diverged on electoral politics as an appropriate method for the community's progress. The JEI, and the TIJ, were both Muslim religious organizations with no direct association with the electoral process, and they refused to come out

⁵¹⁴ As depicted on official stationary of the organization, www.mushawarat.com.

⁵¹⁵ Quraishi, Zaheer Masood. 1971. "Emergence and Eclipse of Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 6 (25): 1229-1234.

in open support of the MIM.⁵¹⁶ Despite this lack of support from Muslim community organizations, the MIM succeeded in getting about 50% of the Muslim votes in Hyderabad behind it by 1962. This happened because of several reasons. The first being the fact that despite the presence of several Muslim interest groups in Hyderabad that were vying for following in the community, MIM was the only organization that engaged in electoral politics. The other organizations named above were either welfare organizations, reformist groups, or consultative bodies engaged in advocacy for Muslim rights. The MIM, in contrast emerged as an aggressive group that promised a direct fight on the ground on behalf of Muslims whom it portrayed as wronged by the Indian state. Its leaders and volunteers took up cudgels on behalf of individuals facing mundane problems with the bureaucracy, and police, thus winning their trust and support. Its leaders also used rhetoric to promise improvements in the status of Muslims through elected positions in the government. The MIM leadership was acutely aware of the anxieties, fears, and aspirations of Muslim masses in the city, and it successfully played upon the painful memories of police action, the official term for Hyderabad's forced annexation by India.

The AIMIM aspired for constructing a unified Muslim community, which would back its political ambitions on the electoral field. One of the objectives in the revived organization was, "to unite the Muslims religiously, socially, economically, and in matters of common concerns irrespective of their sectional and denominational beliefs." This was not just a paper aim because winning elections in Hyderabad, while keeping a parochial-communal identity, would be difficult without getting a large chunk of the Muslim votes. Therefore, AIMIM's organizational strategy was patrimonial in nature. AIMIM worked hard to absorb leaders from all possible

⁵¹⁶ Engineer, Asghar Ali. 1984. *Communal riots in post-independence India*. Hyderabad [India]: Sangam Books; Jairath, Vinod K. 2011. *Frontiers of embedded Muslim communities in India*. New Delhi: Routledge; Naidu, Ratna. 1990. *Old cities, new predicaments: a study of Hyderabad*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Muslim groups in Hyderabad, and nominated candidates from each of these in elections. While candidates from the local Sunni, Mehdavi Pathan, and Arab descent were represented in the party since the elections of 1962, Shia leaders were yet to be absorbed.

During the next election in 1967, A W Owaisi declined to contest, and his son, Sultan Owaisi, the future heir to the party, chose to focus on state elections instead. MIM's A Hussain contested the parliamentary seat and got 27% of the polled votes, 4% less than what A W Owaisi had got in the last elections. The seat was won by INC, and the MIM candidate missed being the runner up by a mere 0.06% votes, being pushed into third spot by an independent Hindu candidate. However, beginning with 1967, the presence of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS), RSS's political wing before it was reorganized into BJP, became a key tool in MIM's hand to convince Muslim voters about the dangers of not supporting MIM. In fact, MIM's electoral success was parallel to the communal polarization of Hyderabad, a process that is clearly visible since 1967.

The last parliamentary elections in this phase took place in 1971, and coincided with the peak of the Telangana Movement. This movement demanded a separate state of Telangana (parts of Andhra Pradesh around Hyderabad city) with Hyderabad as its capital. Public mood was strongly in the movement's favor and the candidates of the newly formed Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) swept the elections. Even the congress supported TPS candidates to deflect people's ire, and persuaded MIM to refrain from contesting the seat.⁵¹⁷ The seat was eventually won by TPS but this event emphasized the strategic relationship that was growing between the congress and the MIM.

⁵¹⁷ APSA/Collection of Local Newspapers/1971/Siasat Daily; ECI, AP 1971 Election Report.

State Legislature Elections in Hyderabad

The electoral trajectory of the MIM in state elections also gives a sense of the evolving sociopolitical context of the city. In the 1957-1999 period, Hyderabad city was divided varying between 6 and 9 constituencies. Some of these constituencies were redrawn a number of times, but two comparatively stable constituencies mark the contours of communal polarization in the old city. These are Charminar, and Yakutpura. Let us look at these two constituencies in phase one.

Charminar

TABLE 2: State Elections in Charminar, 1957-1972

Year	1957	1962	1967	1972
Winner	INC	MIM	MIM	MIM
Runner-up	PDF	INC	BJS	STS
Margin	3	19	21	27
MIM%	NA	49	50.3	43
BJS%	NA	NA	29	NA

Earlier known as the *Pathergatti*, this constituency was won in 1957 by a Shia candidate of the INC. The Charminar constituency is the heart of Muslim Hyderabad both numerically, and symbolically. This area also encompasses a large chunk of the Shia voters in the city. MIM started contesting this seat in 1962, and won it continuously, with a consistently rising margin of victory.

MIM did not contest the first state elections in 1957 but in the next election in 1962 Sultan Owaisi, the son of the party's president and heir apparent, was pitted against a Shia candidate of the Congress party (INC), a situation in which the MIM could not bank upon polarization across the Hindu-Muslim axis. However, MIM got 49% of the polled votes and won with a margin of 19%. No Shia candidate would win in state elections for many years to come. The first major polarization across Hindu and Muslim lines in Hyderabad became evident in the 1967 election when voting patterns aligned neatly with communal identities. MIM gathered 50.3 % votes, slightly higher than the last elections, and defeated the debut candidate of the RSS sponsored Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS). The campaign for this election was bitterly communal,⁵¹⁸ and MIM's margin of victory increased to 21%. Ward wise votes show more MIM votes where more Muslims lived, similarly the BJS had more votes where more Hindus lived.⁵¹⁹ This election saw 86% of the Muslim votes in Charminar aligning with the MIM.⁵²⁰ The third position went to a Muslim candidate who contested from the INC and took away 19% of the total votes that could potentially have gone to the MIM. In the 1972 elections, the MIM candidate got 43% votes and defeated the nearest rival from a regional party with a winning margin of 27%. Voteshare over time in this phase reflects a solid presence of the MIM in the Charminar constituency. At the same time, the BJS was absent during most elections in this phase.

⁵¹⁸ Interview/Hyderabad/H13 (Retired Sunni bureaucrat, who has served both in the Nizam's government as well as the AP government post annexation).

⁵¹⁹ Khan, Rasheeduddin. 1971. "Muslim Leadership and Electoral Politics in Hyderabad: A Pattern of Minority Articulation-I". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 6 (15): 783-794; Khan, Rasheeduddin. 1971. "Muslim Leadership and Electoral Politics in Hyderabad: A Pattern of Minority Articulation-II". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 6 (16): 833-840.

⁵²⁰ Khan, 1971. Ibid.

Yakutpura

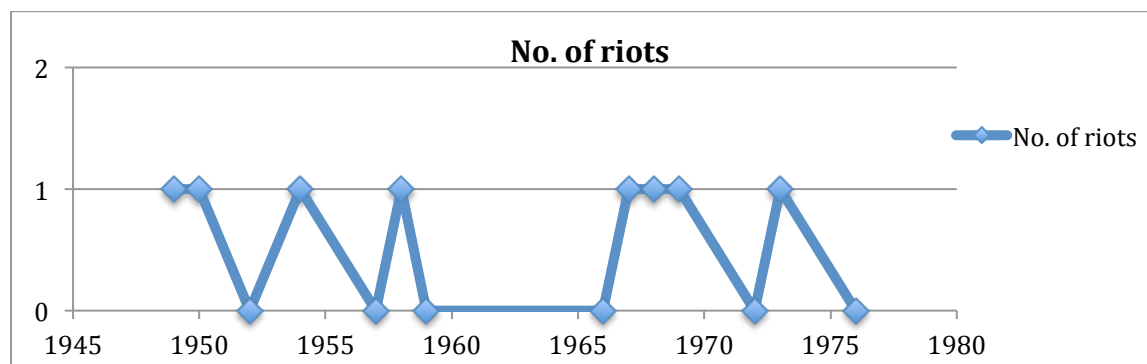
TABLE 3: State Elections in Yakutpura, 1957-1972

Year	1957	1962	1967	1972
Winner	INC	INC	MIM	MIM
Runner up	PDF	IND	BJS	BJS
Margin	36	11	31	35
MIM %	NA	35	54	56
BJS/BJP %	NA	NA	24	21

Yakutpura constituency is only second in importance to *Charminar*, being in its close proximity and containing most of the sites of religious importance to the Sunni and Shia Muslims. It has several major mosques, and most of Hyderabad's main *Ashurkhana* (shrines used during Muharram). *Yakutpura* is also a Muslim majority constituency and includes the majority of Shia voters in the city. MIM contested this seat first in 1962 and lost by 11% votes to INC. Like Charminar, here too, the BJS entered the fray in 1967, giving a boost to the MIM's fortunes through its communal rhetoric, and remained the runner up during 1967 and 1972. During this phase, MIM shows a consistent rise in its vote share, while the BJS fared not so well. However, the contest remained between the MIM and the BJS, as other parties including the congress remained on the margins.

Riots

Figure 5: Riots in Hyderabad, 1949-1976



The first phase, 1949-76, was relatively peaceful as only eight out of these twenty-eight years witnessed rioting. The number of riots per year also remained low, there was never more than one incident in any of the eight riot years. This peace corresponds to all India trends as communal riots in India declined substantially after the great violence of partition during 1947-1948.⁵²¹ Thus Hyderabad followed broad national trends in communal peace, but it was not entirely free of communal riots. However, the eight riots in this phase do not seem to be connected directly with elections, barring 1967, because there were no elections and riots in close vicinity of each other in any year. Riots without elections suggest the salience of either communal cleavages or grievances that had persisted from the communalized atmosphere of the last decade. The 1949 riots took place around refugee camps in the city that were set up for Muslims who had migrated to escape violence in the adjoining districts. Descriptions of this riot suggest that violence was triggered by already existing grievances among displaced refugees, and was directed at the police.⁵²² The next major rioting took place in 1954, not just in

⁵²¹ Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India I (1947-1986), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 15 July 2013, accessed 11 October 2015, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in-736>, ISSN 1961-9898.

⁵²² *The Times of India*, Feb 1, 1949. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

Hyderabad city, but also in several adjoining districts simultaneously. This series of riots was carefully orchestrated as was evident by the common trigger across the riot-affected sites.

Unknown persons had hoisted Pakistan's flag at the venues designated for the official celebration of Indian independence. Since Pakistan and MIM leaders had tacitly opposed Hyderabad's union with India, this act rubbed old wounds, and violence quickly followed. Rival right wing Hindu groups retaliated by taking out aggressive protest marches that ended up in the burning of houses and businesses owned by Muslims, inducing further counter actions by Muslim mobs. A total of seven deaths, 140 injured, and 150 arrests followed. This riot indeed looked like a well-planned attempt at creating communal polarization.⁵²³ Though newspaper reports didn't exactly name the actors, they indeed made veiled suggestions. The MIM was implicated by making references to the Rizakars, "For the first time since Hyderabad was freed from the domination of the Rizakars, virulent communalism has again raised its head." News reports also hinted the role of RSS affiliated rightwing Hindu groups while discussing the retaliatory actions taken by non-Muslims, "these are not unrelated acts but the work of an all India communal organization or organizations." There were also insinuations that foreign powers, clearly meaning Pakistan, were behind these efforts to, "make the minorities believe that they were being oppressed in Hyderabad."⁵²⁴ However, the role of the MIM or the underground supporters of the Rizakar organization in these riots would have been unlikely. This is so because literature strongly suggests the total demoralization of such elements after annexation both due to mass

⁵²³ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 7, 1954; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 9;

⁵²⁴ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 3, 1954; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 10

incarceration, and the massacre and terror that the Indian Army, Police and, in their wake, the right wing Hindu groups had created in Hyderabad.⁵²⁵

Several of my key informants, including two senior ones who were present during annexation, attested to this. One of them, H28, a retired IAS officer, from a Sunni background, whose father was a senior police officer in the Nizam's government, told me: "After police action, Hyderabad's Muslim went into a prolonged period of shock and terror. They lost everything. Power, influence, status, dignity. No one could even imagine organizing such mischief. Not just Rizakar members, but even male members from their friend circles and extended family were picked up. Some were put in prison, many just vanished, killed and disposed of by the armed Hindu groups which came from Maharashtra. Muslims in Hyderabad were too dejected to resist."⁵²⁶ H13, another very senior key informant, who was in the city administration in 1948, shared what he had observed, "MIM and Rizakar leaders, as well as their sympathizers, all were either in jail, dead, or in exile in other parts of India. Who would have planned all this? It was not the MIM, but the RSS that had organized this mischief so that fertile grounds for their communal politics could be prepared in Hyderabad."⁵²⁷ His argument fits well into the well known modus operandi of the RSS and their affiliates who create and/or use such occasions to build a communally charged atmosphere where Muslims are presented as people living in India, but loyal to Pakistan. This atmosphere is used for two express purposes, the first being electoral, and the second being a general emphasis on an overarching Hindu collective

⁵²⁵ Khalidi, Omar. 1988. *Hyderabad, after the fall*. Wichita, Kan., U.S.A.: Hyderabad Historical Society; <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1805/18051140.htm>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24159594>; <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/131129/news-current-affairs/article/exclusive-sundarlal-report-police-action?page=show>

⁵²⁶ Interview/Hyderabad/H28

⁵²⁷ Interview/Hyderabad/H13

identity. Around elections, the attempt is to funnel disparate interests of diverse Hindu communities into a coherent set of Hindu voters. In non-electoral scenarios, such a communally charged atmosphere is used to draw lines between purportedly contrasting Hindu and Muslim communities, as well as to delete the social divisions between the multiple caste groups within Hindu society.⁵²⁸

The next riot in 1958 attests to this process perfectly. It involved the police and right wing Hindu groups who had mobilized to demand a ban on cow slaughter in Hyderabad. While the demand was addressed to the government, the actual target were Muslim communities by way of assumption that all cows were being slaughtered and consumed by Muslims in Hyderabad. The issue of cow protection has been one of the core tactics that the RSS and its affiliates have used historically. This tactic involves the allegation that Muslims slaughter cows, sacred to Hindus, expressly to insult Hindu sensibilities. The cow protection movement also reflects RSS's larger claim that India is a Hindu nation where minorities can exist only if they abide by certain rules including abstinence from consuming cow meat. This riot closely followed the revival of the MIM in 1957, an event that would be perceived as a great opportunity for the RSS and BJS, its electoral arm, for mobilizing a coherent Hindu identity in Hyderabad against the threat of a Muslim party.

The next riot occurred in 1967. This was election year, and both parliamentary and state elections took place in mid February. About a month before that, on 9th January, Hyderabad witnessed a communal riot where ten persons were injured and six arrested. The riot was

⁵²⁸ Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1996. *The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics: 1925 to the 1990s : strategies of identity-building, implantation and mobilisation (with special reference to Central India)*. London: Hurst; Andersen, Walter K., and Shridhar D. Damle. 1987. *The brotherhood in saffron: the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu revivalism*. Boulder: Westview Press; Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2005. *The Sangh Parivar: a reader*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; Basu, Tapan. 1993. *Khaki shorts and saffron flags: a critique of the Hindu right*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

triggered by a personal tiff and was contained in a specific neighborhood. During this election, MIM's Sultan Owaisi polled roughly the same votes that he had polled in 1962. But one actor that seems to have gained substantive votes after these riots was the BJS, RSS's political wing, it became the runner up in two constituencies that were affected by the riots- Charminar and Yakutpura. The BJS was earlier not even a serious contender for either of these seats. 1967 was followed by a riot each in 1968 and 1969. In early June of 1968, a stabbing incident in the old city led to rioting between Hindu and Muslim mobs, and a few days later the police arrested leaders of both the MIM and the BJS. These leaders were taken into preventive custody as the police suspected them to be the main drivers of violence. Next year, in 1969, another riot took place in the Charminar area on 30th August when a large Muslim mob protesting the bombing of a Jerusalem Mosque attacked a shop whose owner had not heeded to the MIM's call for a general strike and citywide shutdown. The attack attracted retaliation from the Hindu neighborhood around the shop and the situation soon escalated into arson and looting.⁵²⁹ These last three riots in phase one strongly suggest an active role played by the BJS and the MIM, both of whom embodied rival elites competing for power in the city. The BJS, being an all India party backed by the RSS, had deep support in various spheres of society- businesses, caste based interest groups, administration, and elsewhere. The MIM was a local party but as discussed earlier, had the tacit support of the congress party, and along with it the strategic support of the congress led government in the state and the center. MIM had also established an optimal support of various Muslim groups and communities in the city. The presence of comparably strong rival elites was indeed a boon for violent competition in the city.

⁵²⁹ Varshney, Ashutosh, and Steven Wilkinson. Varshney-Wilkinson Dataset on Hindu-Muslim Violence in India, 1950-1995, Version 2. ICPSR04342-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-02-17. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04342.v1>

In phase one, communal violence until 1958 usually took place without immediate electoral connections. This violence spilled from the memories of Rizakar excesses against Hindus during the last four years of Hyderabad's existence as a princely state (1944-48), and from retributive violence against Muslims immediately after annexation in 1948. The riots until 1958 were also geared more towards creating and sustaining Hindu and Muslim collective identities than for affecting electoral outcomes. Hyderabad was a princely state immediately before this phase with no space for electoral politics. Thus communal violence as a strategy in electoral contests was new to Hyderabad.

Data suggests that even after the beginning of elections in 1952, violence was not used as a strategy during elections until 1967 when it was used for the first time. The BJS, which had no electoral history in Hyderabad contested its first elections in 1967, immediately after the riots, and gained an impressive vote share, 29% in Charminar and 24% in Yakutpura, and displaced the congress party from its runner-up position. BJS benefitted from violence that took place just before elections and emerged as a serious contender in both these constituencies where Muslims formed the majority within a mixed neighborhood. By the end of this phase, communal violence had entered Hyderabad and was going to stay for the next several decades.

Phase 2: Peak Violence- 1977-1993

This phase was particularly violent all over India, especially on the communal aspect. Hindu-Muslim violence was widespread⁵³⁰, and riots in Hyderabad fit well into this phase. This phase also saw the establishment of communal riots as a regular tool used for electoral advantages.

⁵³⁰ Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 20 August 2013, accessed 11 October 2015, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,738>, ISSN 1961-9898.

Parliamentary Elections in Hyderabad

TABLE 4: Parliamentary Elections in Hyderabad, 1977-1991

Year	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
W	INC	INC	MIM	MIM	MIM
RU	MIM	JP	TDP	TDP	BJP
%	19	7.42	0.6	15	4
MIM %	27	26	38	46	46
BJS/BJP %	NA	32	NA	NA	42
	JP=Janta Party	TDP=Telugu Desam Party			

The beginning of the second phase marks the first parliamentary election when the MIM began serious efforts for winning the Hyderabad parliamentary seat. By then, it had contested and won seats in municipal and state elections, and had established itself as a serious contender in city politics. Sultan Owaisi, party president since his father's death in 1975, contested the parliamentary seat with all his might while he was still a state legislator. He lost the seat to the congress party by a margin of 19%. The INC candidate, a local Hindu, got 46% of the polled votes. On the other hand, Owaisi and another independent Muslim candidate polled 26% each. This elections shows that at that point the MIM was yet to become the first choice of Muslim voters in Hyderabad. Also, the MIM was yet to establish its grip fully on Muslim electoral rivals in the city whom it could manipulate.

In the next election in 1980, Sultan Owaisi remained a state legislator but had his second in command, Amanullah Khan, contest the Hyderabad parliamentary seat. As in the last election, MIM again got the same 26% votes, while the main contest took pace between the INC and the

Janta party (JP- a temporary multi party alliance opposed to the INC, was formed and successfully contested nation wide elections in the aftermath of the unpopular national emergency declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975). INC defeated the JP in Hyderabad but it is noteworthy that the runner up JP candidate was actually a BJS member, as BJS had merged into the JP in 1977.

Finally, in 1984, Sultan Owaisi of the MIM won the Hyderabad Parliamentary seat for the first time, even if by a razor thin margin of 0.6%. MIM won with 38% of the polled votes, and was helped by the split of non-MIM votes between the incumbent INC and the rising new regional party, TDP. This win was also contingent on the absence of any rival Muslim candidate of note who could have split MIM's vote bank. Absence of any rival Muslim candidate was not pure coincidence. This was about the same time when the MIM had become powerful enough to employ coercive tactics. These tactics were aimed at ensuring that the MIM candidates in old city constituencies got no challengers. Challengers were threatened, roughed up, hounded out, or coopted, or paid off whichever was best suited to the situation. MIM's coercive tactics have been an open secret among members of the local community, police officers, and journalists. H9, a retired journalist whom I interviewed, and who was considered closed to the MIM leadership in the past, told me how the MIM had evolved to have an impressive degree of control over politics in the city. "MIM had regained strength by the end of the nineteen seventies. The first two decades after its revival (1958-1978) were very challenging because the party had no mass following and limited access to financial resources. But after Sultan Owaisi took over the mantle (in 1975), the picture started changing. He was very sharp. He knew how to make the right connections in the right networks of power. He persevered and got the Darussalam building formally transferred to the party, raised funds, created a reputation among Muslims of

Hyderabad, and simultaneously cultivated a group of strong-arm henchmen. By the beginning of the 1980's he had every trick up his sleeve, and used whichever was most effective. His men would push away any potential rival Muslim candidate from constituencies that were on the MIM list. Those who could be coopted were brought into the party, and some were paid off. But most of the potential rivals were managed through coercion and threats.”⁵³¹ H12, a local Shia politician in Yakutpura, told me his experience with the coercive tactics of the MIM, “back in 1981, I had filed papers for contesting for the Municipal elections from my ward. MIM had the sitting corporator from this ward but he was so corrupt and inefficient that people were in the mood for change. I got a lot of encouragement from local voters and decided to contest. But MIM leaders started pressuring me to withdraw my candidature. I persisted because of the trust local people had put in me. First some unknown people damaged my shop, and then someone stabbed my younger brother during the night. My family was so scared that I finally withdrew my name. Once this news became known, I got three phone calls from MIM men telling me I had done the correct thing. They also invited me to join the party. But I joined the TDP instead. Who would join these thugs?”⁵³²

The elections of 1984 were also the first after the BJS was reorganized into a new party, Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). The BJS became BJP in 1980 in an attempt to start afresh without the historical baggage and day-to-day inertia that had been bogging down the BJS.⁵³³ The next election in 1989 saw Sultan Owaisi of MIM retain the seat by defeating the TDP candidate by a 15% margin. BJP, still struggling for a foot hold, was not in the fray for this seat but MIM

⁵³¹ Interview/Hyderabad/H9

⁵³² Interview/Hyderabad/H12

⁵³³ Bhambhri, Chandra Prakash. 2001. *Bharatiya Janata Party: periphery to centre*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

gathered 46% of the polled votes, the highest proportion so far. There were only two other Muslim candidates, one of whom was way too insignificant to have gathered any votes. The other Muslim candidate was H18, a local Shia youth who was attempting to build his own stature and leadership among the Shia community in the city. He came from a strong-arm family in the old city with a dubious reputation steeped in petty crime and real estate deals.⁵³⁴ He was also a rising star in the Muharram public rituals in the city especially because of his singing acumen (publicly sung eulogies for martyrs being a popular Muharram ritual among Shias). The MIM attempted to eject Y1 from the elections through coercion but he held ground. H18 and his brother were attacked by MIM members, resulting in serious injuries and hospitalization. Though the MIM won the seat with a convincing margin, H18's stubbornness punched a hole in the semblance of MIM's complete control over Shia politicians in the city. While H18 got only 0.44% of the polled votes, all of which probably came from his personal contacts, he had demonstrated through a prolonged campaign in the city that the MIM could not control everyone. It is noteworthy that H18's electoral adventure occurred while Baqar Agha, the influential Shia cleric cum politician was already with the MIM. While Baqar Agha, a cleric from an established family of religious scholars, represented the traditional Shia elite in Hyderabad, H18 represented the new type of elite comprised of younger community leaders who were steeped in piety and performance connected with the public rituals of Muharram. In other words H18 represented the new elite among the Shia who have recently started competing with the older traditional elites for following among the Shia public.

The next elections, in 1991, took place within the communally charged atmosphere created by BJP's Ram Temple agitation. This agitation, between 1989 and 1992, included a

⁵³⁴ Based on interviews with multiple individuals who know him, as well as police records in the local police station that I was able to see.

renewed phase of mobilization and fresh demands made by affiliates of the RSS regarding the construction of a temple at the site of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, near Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. This agitation created unprecedented polarization between Hindus and Muslims across India. Within this atmosphere, the MIM won again with a 46% vote share but with a small 4% margin over the BJP runner up who got 42% of the votes. While the BJP had mobilized its voters in this election, the MIM vote share had remained the same, as it was saturated at roughly the same population proportion of Muslim voters in Hyderabad. However, this election had two more Muslim candidates who took away about 1.5% votes, insignificant in terms of proportion but symbolically important. Since these other three Muslim candidates were not part of any major political party, there were conspiracy theories of them being ‘Muslim vote splitters’ planted by the BJP. H8, a community organizer and researcher with a local non-profit, shared what he knew through his friends in MIM and the congress party, “In several elections right upto 1991, the BJP would identify some small time Muslim individuals with political aspirations, and encourage them to contest in old city constituencies as independent candidates. This has been a very well thought out tactic. The aim was to prop Muslim candidates who could use their position within the community to hack away at the MIM vote share. However, they would also have to ensure that the candidate was not good enough to win. He should just be good enough to be a spoiler.”⁵³⁵ This BJP tactic was mentioned by several of my key informants from across the board. One of them, H5, a local journalist and member of the regional party-TDP- also attested to this pattern, “RSS people put up their own candidate to compete with the MIM, and then they put up one or two shadow candidates to cut into the MIM voteshare. This is their double game. The shadow candidates get money to contest elections. They know they cant win, but the cash

⁵³⁵ Interview/Hyderabad/H8

they get is enough to lure them.” I asked this gentleman about how the Muslim community perceives these vote splitters, to which he answered, “ they get no respect for sure, but it is impossible to nail them as RSS agents conclusively. The deals are covert, and there are only rumors and circumstantial evidence. They make sure that the arrangements are kept under a tight wrap, and they succeed most of the time. People come to know about the truth behind such candidates only after the elections, but by then the damage is done.”⁵³⁶

However, this practice seems to have been discontinued in Hyderabad after 1991. The MIM and the BJP are alleged to have arrived at a covert arrangement with each other since then. This arrangement ensures that the Muslim and Hindu communities in and around Hyderabad are so polarized that MIM remains the main contender for the Hyderabad parliamentary seat while the BJP remains a key player in the neighboring Secunderabad parliamentary constituency. This secret arrangement between these purported rivals has also been one of the main causes behind the split of the MIM party in 1993. In 1992, the Ram Temple agitation of the RSS/BJP resulted in the demolition of the Babri Mosque in North India at the culmination of a massive buildup of RSS volunteers in North India. This event triggered massive rioting and communal tensions across India. It also caused a split in the MIM in 1993 as Amanuallah Khan, a senior leader and confidant of the President Sultan Owaisi, claimed that, “Owaisi, as the president of the Babri Masjid Action Committee, had 'conspired' with the Sangh parivar (RSS), leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992.”⁵³⁷ This allegation was attested by a large number of non-MIM member individuals whom I interviewed in Hyderabad. These key

⁵³⁶ Interview/Hyderabad/H5

⁵³⁷ http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra_pradesh/article465193.ece;
<http://www.thehindu.com/2001/12/31/stories/2001123103090300.htm>;
<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/2002/11/11/stories/2002111104620400.htm>

informants included H9, a former MIM supporter and retired journalist, “There is credence to the rumor that Sultan Owaisi cut a deal with the RSS and RSS sympathizers in the congress party in 1992. He benefitted personally from the arrangement because his medical college swiftly got recognition by the government, in return for his silence. Everyone expected the MIM to raise a hue and cry after the demolition, but Owaisi turned mute. People were not able to comprehend their silence. There was a widespread belief that the MIM had sold out on its claim to protect Muslim interests.”⁵³⁸ H18, a local Shia politician told me, “Owaisi’s right hand man Amanullah Khan broke away from him because of this secret deal. Amanullah Khan could not digest this arrangement. He split away from MIM and formed the MBT which remained MIM’s main rival for many years.”⁵³⁹ Post 1991, the RSS/BJP did not launch shadow candidates against the MIM because of this arrangement.

State legislature elections in Hyderabad

Charminar

TABLE 5: State Elections in Charminar, 1978-1989

Year	1978	1983	1985	1989
Winner	MIM	MIM	MIM	MIM
Runner-up	JP	BJS	IND	INC
Margin	34	41	50	60
MIM%	52	64	69	75
BJS/BJP%	18	23	NA	NA

⁵³⁸ Interview/Hyderabad/H9

⁵³⁹ Interview/Hyderabad/H18

MIM retained this seat throughout this phase, with party president Sultan Owaisi winning in 1978 and 1983, before he moved to the parliamentary seat in Hyderabad in 1984. The winning margin in this seat also consistently increased suggesting an increase in the number of voters who sided with the party, even after Sultan Owaisi left to contest the parliamentary seat. The vote shares of MIM and BJS/BJP in this period are instructive.

In 1978, the main rival to MIM was the JP, the short lived anti congress alliance, that fielded a Muslim candidate. In the next election, a freshly founded BJP fielded its candidate who was second with 23% votes. However, 1985 onwards, the BJP discontinued fielding candidates in Charminar. Increasingly, the runner up candidates ceased to be from the BJP/BJS and they belonged to either INC, MBT (MIM breakaway faction), or TDP (a regional party). On the other hand, MIM consolidated Muslim votes in this area to a formidable 75%, effectively making Charminar its strongest fort in the city.

Yakutpura

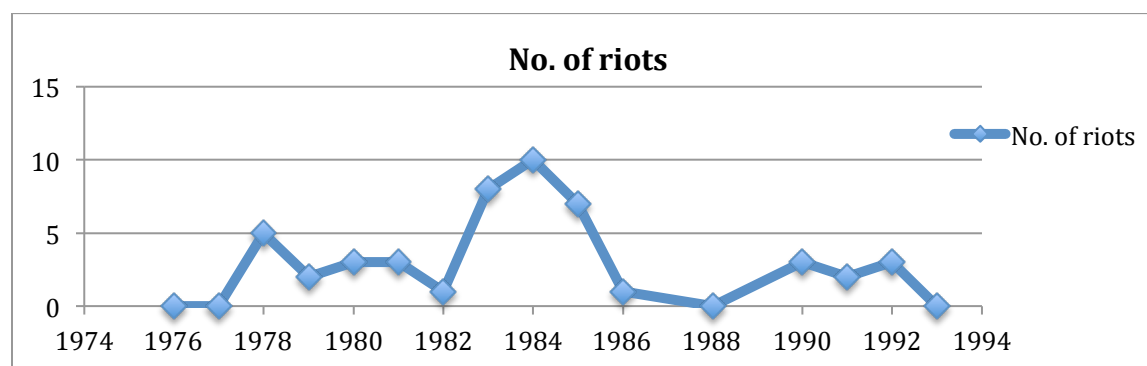
TABLE 6: State Elections in Yakutpura, 1978-1989

Year	1978	1983	1985	1989
Winner	MIM	MIM	MIM	MIM
Runner-up	JP	IND	TDP	INC
Margin	24	64	63	57
MIM %	49	74	79	73
BJS/BJP %	NA	5	NA	NA

This seat also repeated the Charminar story. MIM continuously won this seat with an increasing margin until 1985, after which its margin dropped by 6%. 1989 was an unusual election because the Congress nominated another Shia leader, Ali Raza, from this seat. Ali Raza got about 9% of the polled votes, not enough to win, but enough to be seen as a serious potential challenger. Like Charminar, here too, the BJS was the runner up during the three elections between 1967 and 1978, but were eventually pushed out of the race in 1983 due to Muslim consolidation behind the MIM. In 1983 the BJP did the unthinkable by fielding a Muslim candidate, and yet this candidate got a mere 5% of the polled votes. The BJP eventually discontinued fielding candidates in Yakutpura 1985 onwards. Like Charminar, between 1983 and 1999, the runner up in Yakutpura was from either the MBT or TDP.

Riots

Figure 6: Riots in Hyderabad, 1977-1993



The second phase of violence began after a relatively calm period of eight years, when severe rioting again broke out in Hyderabad in 1978. This year saw five riots, two in March-April, and three during September-October. In the first wave the trigger was the series of protests that MIM and other groups had launched against the rape of a Muslim woman by a police constable. Mobs clashed with the police in this wave. During the second wave of riots, the

violence was directly between Hindu and Muslim mobs, the alleged triggers included temple discretion, and music played near a mosque. Over these five riots, fourteen people were killed, one hundred and fifty seven were injured, and about a thousand people were arrested.

The first two riots closely followed state elections. In these elections, in February 1978, the MIM had increased its winning margin by 7% in Charminar, and had managed to defeat the Muslim candidate of the JP in Yakutpura. The win over JP (the anti congress alliance) was special because JP candidates in many parts of India usually won elections in and immediately after 1977. JP's appeal, in the light of anti-emergency / anti congress sentiments, was overcome in Hyderabad on the strength of two factors-- communal polarization induced Muslim consolidation behind the MIM, and the relationship between the MIM and the INC. The fact that the MIM was not part of the multi party anti-Congress JP, is telling of the relations between the MIM and the INC. This hinted at the covert understanding that the MIM and the INC had since MIM's revival in 1957.

The later three riots took place in September-October 1978, about six months after state elections. Two of these riots were linked to religious disturbance, allegations of theft of temple idols in one case, and the trespass of a mosque by a Hindu religious procession in the second. However, a ground report from a journalist shows their deliberate nature, "It was a clean job, was preplanned, and probably the work of well trained goondas (hooligans)." This reporter also commented on the mutual allegations that Hindu and Muslim victims made against BJS and MIM workers and their hired mercenaries. There were also reports that the contest for space in the local markets, and business competitions provided additional background to these riots.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 17, 1978; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 11

However, the key reasons were rooted in local electoral dynamics, as I will discuss at the end of this section.

Rioting again erupted next year in 1979. MIM and the INC had come to an electoral arrangement just before the 1978 elections, but MIM later became upset at the Congress going back on the arrangement at the last moment. The 1979 riots were MIM's way of showing everyone that they were the ultimate bosses in the old city. These riots were organized both to show its might to the congress, and to prepare ground for the next elections in the likely situation where it would have to contest against both the BJP and the Congress candidates. H17, an ex-grassroots political worker of the MIM, shared what he had heard from other leaders in the party, "There was an arrangement that the congress would field weak candidates in some constituencies that our party president had identified. But in the 1978 elections, they changed two candidates at the last moment and it upset everyone's calculations. *Salaar Sahab* (popular title of S Owaisi, then party chief)" became very angry. He showed the congress his power in the city next year."⁵⁴¹ Sultan Owaisi utilized the Friday prayers at the city mosque in late November, to make provocative speeches, and called for a city shutdown. Rioting began after some shopkeepers, many of them Hindu traders, resisted the sudden call for strike. MIM enforced a shutdown, leading to riots. These riots went on for four days during which 1350 people were arrested.⁵⁴² The MIM was squarely blamed by other political parties and newspapers.⁵⁴³ This phase of rioting was a precursor to the parliamentary elections approaching in the next two months, winning which was contingent on either MIM getting Congress support or, if it failed to reign in the

⁵⁴¹ Interview/Hyderabad/H17

⁵⁴² *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Nov 26, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

⁵⁴³ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Dec 14, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 15

congress, through polarization on religious lines. These riots were followed by sustained communal tensions in the city,⁵⁴⁴ and more rioting erupted three days just before the elections in January 1980. These riots involved clashes between MIM and JP workers, the latter being BJS workers who were working for the JP in the wake of BJS's merger into the JP. Police prohibited election meetings in the city to control the violence, but violence spiraled out of control after a worker of the BJS/JP was fatally stabbed, allegedly by MIM workers. There were direct allegations made by the press and the JP/BJS that the MIM was behind the riots. Rioting started on 3rd January, and continued until the parliamentary elections on 6th January, despite a curfew. The riots left seven dead, sixty injured and close to 1300 people arrested.⁵⁴⁵ Congress eventually won the election, with the JP candidate coming second, and the MIM candidate stood at third position with 26% of the votes. MIM and JP leaders were finally arrested on 7th January 1980, and violence was brought under control.⁵⁴⁶

The next year, 1981, again saw riots in July. These were overtly caused by disputes during a Hindu public festival, but news reports and my interviews suggest that these riots were also connected with the BJP-MIM rivalry. Over a period of seven days, 25 people died, 200 were injured and more than 1200 were arrested. The arrested included two BJP leaders and three MIM leaders including Baqar Agha, its only Shia leader.⁵⁴⁷ 1982 was a relatively peaceful year with just a minor riot.

⁵⁴⁴ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jan 4, 1980; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

⁵⁴⁵ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jan 5, 1980; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) p.1

⁵⁴⁶ (TOI, 01/04/80), [TOI, 01/08/80].

⁵⁴⁷ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jul 24, 1981; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 8; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jul 15, 1981; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

The three-year period between 1983 and 1985 was probably the bloodiest period of violence in Hyderabad. There were state level elections in Hyderabad in January 1983, in which MIM won in all five constituencies in the old city, defeating the BJP in three out of them. The riots took place in two rounds, one in the end of May, and another throughout September. The May riots saw eight deaths, but the September riots were much more vicious. Spread over eighteen days, these riots started with the clash of Ganesh festival (a Hindu processional festival innovated and backed by the BJS/BJP/RSS) with Id ul Zuha (A Muslim festival), and left 45 dead, 150 injured, and 400 arrested.⁵⁴⁸ Leaders of the BJP and the MIM were arrested again, underlining the active role played by them in the violence.

The next year, 1984, was more violent with about ten riots spread over May, July, September, and October. The October riot took place a day before Ashra during Muharram. Also, the same year had parliamentary elections in Hyderabad. This was a special year as the MIM finally won the Hyderabad seat for the first time. Sultan Owaisi, its president defeated the candidate of a new regional party, TDP, by a mere 0.6% votes. Surprisingly, the BJP did not contest this seat this year. The riots saw 43 dead, 243 injured and 2000 arrested, making this the most violent year ever for Hyderabad. The elections took place in this tense atmosphere with the MIM getting 38.13% of voteshare.⁵⁴⁹ 1985 was a slightly better year with fewer riots. This year saw the state elections that took place in early March. MIM retained four of the five seats in the

⁵⁴⁸ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 10, 1983; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 18, 1983; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 19, 1983; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 9; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 21, 1983; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

⁵⁴⁹ Varshney, Ashutosh, and Steven Wilkinson. Varshney-Wilkinson Dataset on Hindu-Muslim Violence in India, 1950-1995, Version 2. ICPSR04342-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-02-17. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04342.v1>; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 24, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 23, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 25, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 8

city, as it lost one, Karwan, to the BJP. This was a setback from MIM's perspective, and BJP's loss of constituencies outside the old city was also a problem to them. Two weeks later Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Hyderabad with 2 deaths and 10 injured victims.⁵⁵⁰

This period had established a strong connection between elections and communal riots in Hyderabad. However, the next election year in 1989 surprisingly saw no riots. This was again a surprising year as the BJP did not contest the parliamentary election in Hyderabad, a fact that gave wind to rumors that the MIM and the BJP had arrived at a secret pact. MIM won the seat with 46% votes, and a 15% margin over the TDP candidate. The same year also had state elections and the MIM retained four out of five seats in the city.

1990 again saw riots in Hyderabad owing to the tensions that spread from BJP's communally provocative national campaign for the Ram Temple in faraway Ayodhya, north India. BJP had been spearheading the Ram Temple agitation since 1989 in UP, and its echoes could be heard in several places including Hyderabad.⁵⁵¹ MIM, was particularly vocal in opposing the BJP's Ram Temple agitation that aimed to replace the Babri mosque with a grand temple for Ram, an important Hindu God. These riots speak more about the communal image that MIM cultivated for itself than its political image.

1991 saw parliamentary elections but no riots around it. The BJP came back into the fray in Hyderabad and was a close second, with the MIM winning by a mere 4% of the votes. There was one riot later in the year a day after Barawafat, when a Sunni procession went out. 1992 witnessed a by-election to the state assembly but no riots immediately around the elections.

⁵⁵⁰ Varshney, Ashutosh, and Steven Wilkinson. Varshney-Wilkinson Dataset on Hindu-Muslim Violence in India, 1950-1995, Version 2. ICPSR04342-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-02-17. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04342.v1>

⁵⁵¹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Nov 2, 1990; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Dec 8, 1990; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

However, in December the BJP, RSS and their affiliates mobilized a big crowd and demolished the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, UP triggering riots in Hyderabad, among other places. Nine days of rioting in December 1992 left 24 dead and 8 injured.⁵⁵² The period after 1992, saw fewer riots, and when they occurred they were often not in the immediate vicinity of elections. Despite no apparently direct connections, riots were indeed connected to local political competitions.

Communal tensions in Hyderabad city were perceived to be beneficial to both the MIM and the BJS/BJP. This was common knowledge across the board, and several of my key informants and interviewees attested to this logic. H2, a Shia ironsmith in the old city told me, “MIM keeps finding issues on which it can rally Muslim anxieties and fears. They are always on the lookout for issues that can be blown out of proportion easily. If they don’t do fear mongering all the time, they will start losing their voters. There are so many parties coming up now, and people sometimes want to test them too.”⁵⁵³ H10, a Hindu green grocer in the old city, added another layer to the politics of fear mongering, “Both BJP and MIM have the same style. They find the slightest reasons and create tensions, and then the fear of each other makes people look up to these parties as protectors. Scared Muslims keep voting for the MIM and scared Hindus keep voting for BJP.”⁵⁵⁴

However, riots and fear mongering around communal tensions have benefitted the MIM and BJP in asymmetric ways. For the MIM, riots or the possibility of communal violence has proved to be a boon for their electoral fortunes in several old city constituencies in Hyderabad. On the other hand, BJS/BJP has often leveraged riots and tensions in the old city for benefits in

⁵⁵² Varshney, Ashutosh, and Steven Wilkinson. Varshney-Wilkinson Dataset on Hindu-Muslim Violence in India, 1950-1995, Version 2. ICPSR04342-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-02-17. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04342.v1>

⁵⁵³ Interview/Hyderebad/H2

⁵⁵⁴ Interview/Hyderebad/H10

constituencies outside the old city, as well as in the neighboring constituency of Secundarabad. H11, a retired Sunni government employee and a keen observer of city politics, shared his insights about riots and their connection with elections: “RSS and BJP are fully aware that they can never win in the old city because of the majority Muslim vote share. But they keep the embers burning here so that they can scare Hindus in other parts of Hyderabad. Their main target are the Hindu traders who have businesses in the old city but who live in either new parts of the city or in neighboring Secundarabad.” On further prodding he gave me more details about how RSS/BJP extracted funding from the Hindu traders in Hyderabad, “Marwaris (a community of Hindu traders) make regular payments to BJP leaders for protection, and they also give out bigger funds during elections. Its an open secret!”⁵⁵⁵

The role of the state government, especially the party in power, has also played a strong role in the incidence of riots. The state of Andhra Pradesh, of which Hyderabad is the capital, has had a congress government from the first elections in 1952 to 1983. I have discussed how the MIM has always received liberal patronage from the congress, especially the free hand that it gets in the constituencies of the old city and several wards of the Municipal corporation. The Congress allowed the MIM to treat the old city as its private fiefdom,⁵⁵⁶ and MIM used riots and communal rhetoric for emphasizing the Muslim collective identity as a mobilizational tool whenever it wanted. In essence, the MIM and the BJP were the key players in the institutional riot system in Hyderabad. However, state patronage to MIM was disrupted in 1983 when the TDP, a local party founded by a popular movie star, rose to sudden prominence. The TDP appealed to the latent sense of insult that the Telugu speaking majority in the state felt at being

⁵⁵⁵ Interview/Hyderabad/H11

⁵⁵⁶ Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

short shrifted by Hindi speaking congress leaders based in Delhi. The TDP stormed the state elections in Andhra Pradesh in 1983 and formed a majority government. This government stayed in power until 1989, before the congress again came back to power in the state. The three-year period, 1983-1985, within TDPs rule saw the most violent communal riots in Hyderabad city. This spurt in riots correlates with two processes. One was the rise of the BJP on the back of the nationally divisive Ram Temple movement which the RSS and its affiliates had initiated since 1981.⁵⁵⁷ This movement became ammunition in the hands of communal parties such as the MIM, which would mobilize the Muslim community against the perceived threats from Hindu communal organizations such as the RSS and the BJP.

The second process was more specific to Hyderabad's local politics. The rise of the TDP, and a possible loss of the congress party in the upcoming state elections of 1983 had created a situation where the MIM foresaw losing its patrons and monopoly over politics in the old city. "This new situation required a new strategy by the MIM. Sultan Owaisi knew that NTR (founder of the TDP) would not give the MIM the same leeway that the congress had given it. NTR was against not only the congress party in Andhra Pradesh, but also the congress culture that cultivated problematic allies such as the MIM. With a future state government of the TDP in mind, the MIM wanted to both show its strength as the boss in Hyderabad city, as well as mobilize a united Muslim vote bank. What better way to do that than start riots?"⁵⁵⁸ NTR, the leader of the TDP, was also an easy target for the MIM to vilify as a communal Hindu leader. NTR's charisma was based on his past fame as a Telugu movie superstar, a persona that he

⁵⁵⁷ Malik, Yogendra K., and V. B. Singh. 1992. "Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?" *Asian Survey*. 32 (4): 318-336; Jaffrelot, Christophe. 1999. *The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics: 1925 to the 1990s ; strategies of identity-building, implantation and mobilisation (with special reference to Central India)*. New Delhi [u.a.]: Penguin Books.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview/Hyderabad/H9 (retired Sunni journalist, MIM insider)

modified for the masses by adopting an overly religious style and markers of Hindu piety.⁵⁵⁹

Indeed, the first three years of TDP rule in Hyderabad saw unprecedented riots, with the MIM and the BJP playing key roles. While the congress patronage was no more available to MIM, the fact that the TDP government remained shaky from 1983 to 1984, owing to NTR's lack of experience in government as well as political factionalism and congress sponsored mass defections, allowed the MIM to have its way. However, with the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, the TDP government in the state became stable, and it suppressed communal riots in Hyderabad effectively. This effect can be seen in the decline of riots between 1985 and 1989.⁵⁶⁰

The TDP government in the state was replaced by the congress again in the 1989 elections. This time, the congress chief minister, M Channa Reddy, was a communal Hindu leader with covert sympathies for the RSS and the BJP. He was personally involved in the earlier support given to RSS plans for upgrading the scale and scope of the public Ganesh Festival. His entry as the congress chief minister, led to unprecedented communal riots that continued on and off over three months in 1990. These riots were allegedly caused by a partnership of the MIM and a faction within the congress party that was opposed to Chenna Reddy.⁵⁶¹ However, these riots were triggered on the pretext of BJP's Ram Temple campaign that was being conducted nationally at the same time. Both Congress factionalism, as well as the older patterns of patronage that Congress gave to MIM played into these riots. The MIM, on its part, used these riots to again strengthen the Muslim vote bank, a process that had been disrupted by the TDP

⁵⁵⁹ Easwara Reddi, Agarala, and D. Sundar Ram. 1994. *State politics in India: reflections on Andhra Pradesh*. New Delhi: M.D. Publications.

⁵⁶⁰ Mitra, Subrata Kumar, Mike Enskat, and Clemens Spiess. 2004. *Political parties in South Asia*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

⁵⁶¹ Based on my interviews in Hyderabad, especially with H17 (current journalist with national newspaper), and H6 (local Sunni elite businessman and amateur historian).

government since 1986.⁵⁶² These riots of 1990, thus brought back the MIM to the game that it had mastered.

MIM's electoral fortune during this second phase is contextualized by its rise as the sole representative of all Muslims in Hyderabad, including the Shia sect. Until the 1960s the lack of Shia support was actually insignificant at least numerically. In 1961, the Shia population of Hyderabad was roughly 25000, with about 10000 adult voters.⁵⁶³ This population was concentrated in Municipal ward number 23 that was part of the Yakutpura constituency, the rest being in the Charminar constituency. Even without these votes, the AIMIM could, and did win. However, reigning in the Shias was more of a symbolic goal that would buttress MIM's claim of uniting, and representing the unified Muslim community in Hyderabad. Among the several Shia clerics of Hyderabad, Baqar Agha was the most popular owing to his populist oratory in both religious and social contexts. He was also the vice president of the All India Shia Conference (AISC), a Shia interest group headquartered in Lucknow. While the AISC in independent India was just a pale shadow of its former self, affiliation with it signaled a leader's symbolic stature in the community. H31, a Sunni gentleman, former editor of one of Hyderabad's popular newspapers, described his popularity in Hyderabad, "Baqar Agha returned in the early seventies after spending several years in the seminaries of Iran and Iraq. He was very well read and was a brilliant orator. He reminded people of Allama Rashid Turrabi (a Shia cleric affiliated with the earlier version of MIM and who had migrated to Pakistan after annexation). I remember that as young men we would all wait hours at venues just to listen to Baqar Agha's speeches. He was

⁵⁶² Easwara Reddi, Agarala, and D. Sundar Ram. 1994. *State politics in India: reflections on Andhra Pradesh*. New Delhi: M.D. Publications

⁵⁶³ Khan, Rasheeduddin. 1971. "Muslim Leadership and Electoral Politics in Hyderabad: A Pattern of Minority Articulation". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 6 (15): 783-794.

extraordinarily popular because he spoke both to the Shia audience during Muharram, as well as to larger Muslim audience on matters of social reform and community development. He had fire in his speech. You won't believe it but even his amplifier-transmitted speeches would drown in the applause of people cheering him. He was the best orator I have seen in many years.”⁵⁶⁴

Sultan Owaisi, president of the MIM made all out efforts to bring Baqar Agha into the party fold. This was attested to by several Shia and Sunni key informants who have been observers of Hyderabad's politics. H14, a retired Shia government employee living in the Shia quarters, gave me intimate details of how the MIM wooed Baqar Agha, “His house is one street down from my house, and I knew him well enough even before he went to Iran. He became a star speaker on his return, and everyone in the city noticed his leadership potential. Sultan Owaisi also noticed him and wanted him to join the party. Sultan was a great judge of people, he saw the potential for politics in Baqar. He would often come to meet him here. A MIM car was often made available to Baqar for even his private errands. Sultan Owaisi gave him the respect that a cleric of Baqar Agha's stature demanded. Later Baqar joined MIM, and he became very close to Sultan Owaisi. He would speak to the entire Muslim community under the MIM's banner. Imagine, someone making speeches on MIM's behalf in the presence of Sultan Owaisi!”⁵⁶⁵ This last comment is critical because since its revival in 1957, the MIM has always remained a personal fiefdom of the Owaisi family. It is unimaginable for any of its leaders to give any substantial speech or even a press statement. All public communication from the MIM is strictly limited to members of the Owaisi family and two exceptional leaders, one of whom was Baqar Agha.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview/Hyderabad/H31

⁵⁶⁵ Interview/Hyderabad/H14

Baqar Agha's value within the MIM was confirmed by H4, a middle aged Sunni gentleman who was a ward level leader in the MIM, "He was our star campaigner. He would electrify the audience in just five minutes. When he spoke, our neighborhood level meetings spilled over on the streets and private terraces. Everyone wanted to be there to hear him speak."⁵⁶⁶ Baqar Agha joined the MIM and was its candidate in the state elections from 1978 until 1994 when he died. His sudden death after the elections of 1994 took away MIM's most influential Shia leader. In 1978, Baqar Agha contested from Yakutpura and defeated the Janata Party candidate by 24%. This was a doubly impressive win because in 1977-1978, the Janta Party was riding an extraordinary wave of popular support in retaliation to Indira Gandhi's declaration of emergence in the preceding years. The second reason was that he had defeated a Muslim candidate. This was made possible because Yakutpura had a majority of Muslim votes, and the Shia votes were also concentrated in this constituency. In the next elections in 1983, Baqar Agha was fielded in Karwan, a newly carved constituency equally split among Hindu and Muslim voters. He defeated the BJP candidate convincingly, by 14%. In 1985, Baqar Agha was replaced by a new Sunni entrant in the MIM, Virasat Rasool Khan, who lost to the BJP candidate. Baqar Agha was brought back into the Karwan seat during the next state election in 1989 but he also lost to the BJP though by a narrow margin of 2%. During the next elections in 1994, Baqar Agha was again fielded in Yakutpura but he was defeated by the MBT, a party that had split away from MIM recently. This was the last election contested by Baqar Agha as he died before the next elections. With Baqar Agha gone from the electoral field, the MIM did not have any major Shia leader for several years to come. However, the MIM maintained a close relationship with Raza Agha his younger brother, also a cleric and his successor in the

⁵⁶⁶ Interview/Hyderabad/H4

Hyderabad branch of the All India Shia Conference. However, Raza Agha had limited success both as a cleric and as a leader of the Shia community in Hyderabad.

Phase 3: Decline in Violence- 1994-1999

This phase saw a general decline in the frequency and scale of riots in Hyderabad. There were a total of five riots spread over three years, much lower in comparison with the violence of the second phase.

Parliamentary elections in Hyderabad

TABLE 7: Parliamentary Elections in Hyderabad, 1994-1999

Year	1996	1998	1999
Winner	MIM	MIM	MIM
Runner-up	BJP	BJP	BJP
% Margin	8	6.6	5.6
MIM %	35	45	41
BJS/BJP %	27	38	36

The three elections in this phase saw MIM retaining the Hyderabad parliamentary seat though with a reducing margin. This period saw the strengthening of the BJP in the contest. The BJS/BJP had discontinued contesting this seat since 1977 when the BJS had merged into the Janta Party (JP). While its absence from the contest for Hyderabad's parliamentary election could have been strategic, there were often rumors that this was due to a secret pact between the MIM and BJP leadership by way of which MIM was assured of winning the Hyderabad parliamentary seat while the BJP got to keep the neighboring Secunderabad parliamentary seat. BJP came back in the Hyderabad arena in 1991 riding the wave of popular support after its

communally charged nationwide campaign for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, and gained 41% of the vote share, a large chunk of the 55% Hindu voteshare in Hyderabad.

However, next year onwards, BJP's voteshare dropped to 27% and never crossed 38%. Despite losing its voteshare, BJP remained the runner up close on the heels of the MIM.

The 1996 election saw the INC getting 11% votes and the MBT (MIM's breakaway faction) chip away 8.3% votes that could have gone to the MIM. This election also saw eleven other Muslim candidates, all contesting as independents, but none of whom had the stature to damage MIM's chances. MIM got only 34% votes down from 46% in the last election, and most of it can be attributed to the 8% that MBT received. MBT's votes were drawn because of its popular candidate Amanullah Khan who chose to contest the parliamentary election against MIM. Amanullah Khan's popularity lay in his breaking away from the MIM on charges that the MIM had cut a secret deal with the BJP after which MIM had chosen not to oppose BJP's Ram Temple movement, or protest the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992. While this allegation is hard to prove in the absence of hard evidence, several key informants that I spoke with vouched for this theory. H5, a retired journalist with access to several political parties in Hyderabad shared his take on the MBT-MIM issue: "Amanullah Khan was very close to the MIM party president, and was considered personally loyal to him ever since he joined the party. He was considered Salahuddin Owaisi's right hand man. Moreover, he was also an upright individual who had steered clear of corruption and resisted getting personal benefits from politics as far as possible. His breaking ranks with the MIM, was seen by the majority of Hyderabad's citizens as an act driven by principals and ethics, instead of opportunism. That is why people supported his party, even when they opposed the official MIM candidates."⁵⁶⁷ The next election

⁵⁶⁷ Interview/Hyderabad/H5

in 1998 saw MIM racking up its vote share by 7% to 45% closer to its earlier successful years. It defeated the BJP by 6.6%, the margin of victory having dropped down from the earlier 8%. This was a good year for the MIM as it had ensured that there was not even one other Muslim candidate in the fray.

Owing to a failed alliance at the center, the next elections took place after just one year, in 1999. This election saw a repeat of the position in 1998, without much change. MIM defeated BJP by 5.6% votes, and the MIM maintained a slightly lower voteshare of 41%. No major Muslim candidate was in the fray, and the two who were got a mere 1% votes each. However, one of them was a Shia individual who was a long time neighborhood level politician. He received an impressive 11328 votes amounting to just 1% of the polled votes, but demonstrated that Baqar Agha's absence from the MIM had caused some Shia votes towards an independent Shia candidate. The emergence of a serious non-MIM Shia candidate again emphasized the loose grip that MIM had over the Shia community since it lost its premier Shia leader Baqar Agha in 1994.

State Legislature Elections in Hyderabad

State elections, especially in the old city, were different from the parliamentary elections as the BJP did not fare well in the Muslim majority constituencies. Intrad there were new players in the arena challenging the MIM.

Charminar

TABLE 8: State Elections in Charminar, 1994-1999

Year	1994	1999
Winner	MIM	MIM
Runner-up	MBT	TDP
Margin %	32	49
MIM%	49	66
BJS%	10	NA

This phase witnessed two state elections, 1994 and 1999. The 1994 elections saw the debut of Asaduddin Owaisi, the elder son of party president Sultan Owaisi. This election also saw a strong showing by the MBT, MIM's breakaway group, which polled 17% of the votes cast, eating into MIM's voteshare. MIM's voteshare reduced to 49 % from the earlier 75%, but it still won with a 32% margin. BJP made a come back in this election but could get only 10% of the polled votes, a dismal performance in comparison to the parliamentary seat which had a lower proportion of Muslim voters. The next elections in 1999 saw Asaduddin Owaisi take up his voteshare to 66%, and the BJP again mysteriously did not contest the elections. BJP's absence is debated by local observers across the two theories that I have already discussed- one based on a secret pact with the MIM, and second based on their disincentive to contest in the face of certain defeat, given the high proportion of Muslim voters.

Yakutpura

TABLE 9: State Elections in Yakutpura, 1994-1999

Year	1994	1999
Winner	MBT	MIM
Runner-up	MIM	MBT
Margin	10	23
MIM %	34	48
BJP %	7	19

The election of 1994 saw the breakaway faction (MBT) become the challenger against the MIM, and it managed to defeat the MIM candidate by a 10% margin. This was a crucial loss because the MIM candidate was Baqar Agha, its Shia leader, and the constituency had almost all of the Shia voters in the city. While Shias] voters were not more than 20% of the total votes in this constituency, most of these votes would have gone to Baqar Agha.⁵⁶⁸ MIM lost more than half of its voteshare in comparison to the last election. This election also saw five Muslim candidates who cornered about 16% votes, which could have come MIM's way. However, there was no Shia candidate, owing to the influence of Baqar Agha. The BJP, having lost miserably in this constituency in the past again fielded a Muslim candidate but gathered less than 7% votes. This was the first MIM defeat in this constituency since 1967.

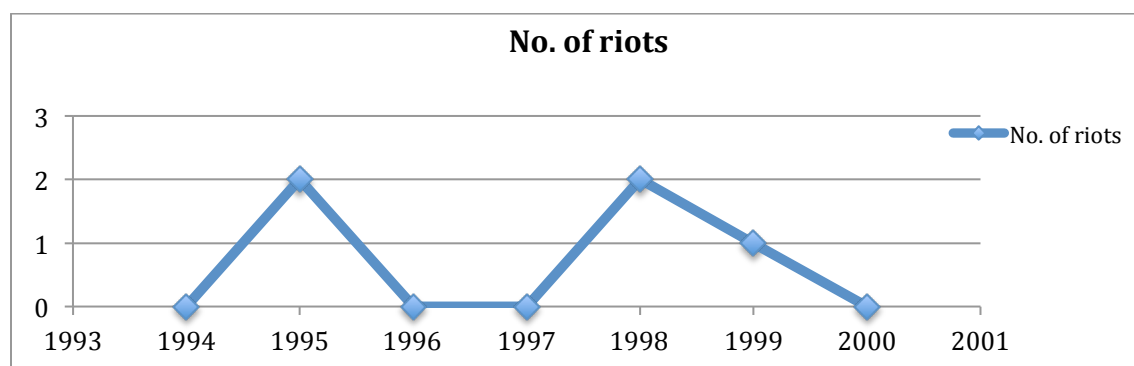
The last election of this phase was in 1999, which the MIM won. MIM inducted Mumtaz Khan, the incumbent winner from the MBT, into its fold and nominated him as MIM's official candidate for this constituency. MIM raked up its voteshare to 48%, and the BJP also made

⁵⁶⁸ Interview/Hyderabad/H12

gains, its voteshare having more than doubled to 19% but it remained at third position. In Baqar Agha's absence, he died in 1994, this election also witnessed three Shia candidates who eventually got negligible votes. But the participation of three Shia voters emphasize the hopes of Shia candidates at attracting Shia voters away from the MIM.

Riots

Figure 7: Riots in Hyderabad, 1994-1999



The period after 1992, the same year when RSS affiliates demolished the Baburi Mosque in north India, saw fewer riots, often timed away from election dates. Thus Hyderabad saw only intermittent riots in this phase. The two years after the demolition, 1993 and 1994 saw no riots, and only in 1995 did Hyderabad witness two riots in early September during the Ganesh procession, a mass Hindu public ritual popularized by the BJP and its affiliates. Rioting included stabbing, use of crude bombs, arson and resulted in twenty persons who were gravely injured, and two deaths. Rioting subsided after the police resorted to firing live ammunition at violent mobs.⁵⁶⁹ In 1998, early June saw heavy rioting in the city that extended beyond three days. Allegedly triggered by a controversial pamphlet, "lampooning the religious sentiments of

⁵⁶⁹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 10, 1995; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 24; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 11, 1995; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

Muslims,”⁵⁷⁰ these riots saw 40 injured and eight dead after a spate of stabbing and stone throwing. Newspapers reported that the state intelligence agencies had prior information about the possibilities of rioting but it chose not to use the police for preventing the violence.⁵⁷¹

While most of these riots had, *prima facie*, no direct links with electoral competitions, the actual causes were indeed linked to political competition. The riots around Ganesh procession, for example, are such. H17, a local journalist, explained the relevance of the riots linked with Ganesh procession, “This grand Ganesh festival that you see in Hyderabad now, has only one purpose. It is to create trouble between Hindus and Muslims every year, so that everyone is constantly reminded of the community they belong to. Tell me why this festival suddenly became so big here in 1980? It is part of the larger plan to divide the residents of Hyderabad by religion. Without it, communal parties become weak.”⁵⁷² Here the reference to timing of the expansion of the Ganesh procession is the same time when the RSS and its affiliates were reorganizing their electoral branches in India. In 1980, the Jan Sangh, RSS’s earlier political wing, reconvened as the BJP, a party that grew by leaps and bounds over the next several years.

H19, a retired police officer who had served in old-city police stations for more than three decades, had extensive experience in policing, intelligence gathering, and dealing with riots and rioters. He gave me an insider perspective about the growth of the Ganesh procession, “It is a completely political festival. It used to be a very small festival until the 1970s, not many people joined the public festivities, and there was no major procession. In 1979, the RSS and Chenna Reddy (a congress party leader based in Hyderabad with well known sympathies for the RSS)

⁵⁷⁰ http://www.nagarikmancha.org/images/1242-Documents-Communal_Riots_in_India.pdf, p. 27.

⁵⁷¹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jun 8, 1998; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jun 7, 1998; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7

⁵⁷² Interview/Hyderabad/H17

made a deliberate plan to expand the festival to counter the Muharram procession. RSS leaders were unhappy with the fact that only Muslims had a public festival here. They were also upset because the Muharram in Hyderabad was also observed by a large number of Hindus. They asked Chenna Reddy for help and he happily obliged. RSS did all the groundwork and Chenna Reddy signaled his support to a grand Ganesh procession.”⁵⁷³ Ganesh procession, despite its overtly religious nature, is a classic example of a public ritual that is invented to compete with an existing public ritual perceived as a rival one. Thus, riots that are often officially documented to be caused by religious trespasses are actually linked to political competitions and rivalries that play behind the scenes.

Discussion

While the revived AIMIM was now formally a secular political party, its focus remained on unifying the Muslim community in Hyderabad, for whom it claimed to be the sole representative, and to whom it promised security, dignity and material improvement. Over the years, the AIMIM attempted to hold an iron grip over electoral politics in the old city, but their grip has varied over time. This was done through a combination of coercion, persuasion, and alliances. MIM’s electoral history includes its inaugural contest when it won two seats in a municipal by election in Hyderabad in 1959. In 1960, a mere three years after its revival, the MIM won 19 out of 63 seats in the municipal elections of Hyderabad. This victory was doubly rewarding also because out of the 19 wins, 17 were against Muslim nominees of the congress party. MIM had garnered not only Muslim votes but also defeated other Muslim candidates. This local election truly re-established the MIM as the first political choice of Hyderabad’s Muslims after the events of 1948. Following this win in 1960, the MIM fell prey to internal bickering and

⁵⁷³ Interview/Hyderabad/H19

the state legislature elections of 1962 saw several MIM members break out and contest the official MIM nominees as independents. While the MIM had by then garnered enough support to defeat these defectors convincingly, its influence was limited in the Muslim dominated constituencies of the old city.

In 1962, Sultan Owaisi, son of the president, contested and won a seat in the state legislature. Since then, AIMIM has consistently increased its stature, and influence in Hyderabad. Sultan Owaisi was reelected to the state legislature from various constituencies in the old city until 1984 when he moved onto win one of the two Parliamentary seats in Hyderabad. Sultan Owaisi held onto the parliamentary seat from Hyderabad until 2004 when his elder son Asaduddin Owaisi took over and who remains the MP from Hyderabad till date. On the parliamentary front, AIMIM has never improved its tally, sticking to a single seat. However, this need not be read as a simple story of stagnation. The story of MIM's electoral successes in state elections in Hyderabad city are a better reflection of AIMIMs success both in electoral politics, and in their project of keeping their Muslim constituency unfragmented.

In the earlier sections of this chapter I described riots and their timing vis a vis elections. But riots and elections in Hyderabad do not fit into a consistent pattern. Early elections between 1952 and 1977 seem to have little connections with riots. In this stage riots did occur but were seemingly triggered by tensions left over from the infamous Rizakar period. Between 1978 and 1985, riots in Hyderabad were closely connected to both elections and their underlying political competitions, especially between the MIM and the BJS/BJP. This is also the same period that coincides with the revival of the MIM, 1967 to 1992, and the rise of the BJP, 1980 to 1992. In the last phase, 1994 to 1999, Hyderabad saw fewer riots, coinciding with two facts- one the

settling down of the MIM as a party that was often part of ruling alliances in the state, and two- a similar establishment of BJP as a ruling party in several states and even in the center.

The relationship between communal riots and elections in Hyderabad is not straightforward. Some election years have been free of riots, and some riots took place even when there were no elections in their vicinity. This complicates the understanding that scholarship on riots and elections promotes.⁵⁷⁴ While data supports the argument that closely fought elections and riots have a correlation, riots without immediate elections and elections without riots are not explained. I suggest that riots play a larger role than that which scholarship considers, and this broader role helps unravel this complication. Unlike approaches where riots and elections are seen as immediate causes for each other, I suggest an approach where riots should be seen as events, and mechanisms that are used in the long term to create and/or strengthen collective identities of a group and its binary other. The long term utility of riots helps communal or sectarian entrepreneurs in winning elections in the short term, but also helps them in mobilizing support for non electoral purposes such as protests, or a show of strength in public, or in making claims over the state and its benefits. Thus the riots that occur in Hyderabad, especially those which are not immediately around elections are serving the purpose of maintaining the Muslim identity outside the electoral arena, in abeyance. Collective identities thus maintained, can be easily mobilized when required. Another issue about riots in Hyderabad is that the well documented riots are limited to Hindu-Muslim events. This gives an indication of complete harmony between Shia and Sunni sects. This indication is deceptive, as several of my key informants told me about minor tiffs between the sects that took place between 1992 and 1998. H7, the trustee of a major Shia Shrine, the trustee here has traditionally been Sunni, told

⁵⁷⁴ Brass (op.cit.); Wilkinson (op. cit.).

me about the series of small tiffs that took place in five out of eight years in this period. “This small graveyard in the street belongs to the Shias, and Sunni corpses can’t be buried there. So no Sunni has any reason to visit this graveyard. Shias in this neighborhood started burning the effigies of the three caliphs in the graveyard during Muharram. This was a new ritual for Hyderabad, and it was started by migrant Shia families who arrived here in the late 1980s from Delhi and Lucknow. This ritual went on unhindered for the first three years because we simply didn’t know what was happening inside. Eventually, we came to know. Then a group of Sunni youth decided to bring this to a stop. In this city we have never had sectarian riots, and these Shia families were moving in that direction. In 1995, there was a small fight between youth of both sects for the first time. Sunni boys went inside the graveyard when the Shias were burning the effigies, and a fistfight ensued. Then someone informed the police and the local MIM leader. Everyone came to the scene. But the MIM leaders turned back the police from there. They had a senior MIM leader call the police commissioner and he ordered the police to retreat from the spot.” I asked H10 why the police went back and why such riots never make it to news reports. “The MIM runs the old city on its own terms. They can’t be bypassed even by the Police. MIM wants to keep all intra-Muslim feuds in the city out of the limelight. It helps their politics.”⁵⁷⁵

I cross-checked this story with several key informants and they attested to this version. Later, when I was interviewing police officers in the old city, a Muslim officer told me, “There are no Shia-Sunni tensions here. This is not like your Lucknow, Muslims live like one community.”⁵⁷⁶ I could sense a pro MIM feeling in this officer based on my earlier informal discussions with him about local politics. However, H21, a non-Muslim police officer in the

⁵⁷⁵ Interview/Hyderabad/H7

⁵⁷⁶ Interview/Hyderabad/H20

same police station, who had witnessed this interview, told me something contrary, “There are often minor fights between Shias and Sunnis during Muharram here. Dabeerpura and Noor Khan Bazar are the main trouble spots, and the reasons is usually the burning of the Caliph’s effigies. Shia families have been burning small effigies during Muharram on their terraces where no one can see what is burning, for many years. We have constables posted there through Muharram, and they report this burning event every year. However, sometimes there is unusual excitement and a small group of Shias will choose to burn the effigies in the open. Trouble starts when that happens. But in most such cases, the MIM leaders reach the spot before us. We don’t take the initiative to go and resolve Shia Sunni fights. Why should we intervene and create more paperwork for us when the MIM can handle it better?”⁵⁷⁷ H17, a senior correspondent of a national newspaper in Hyderabad confirmed the fact that MIM actively muffles news reporting on sectarian tiffs when they happen, “small Shia-Sunni conflicts have been around for a while now. Every Muharram, we see a few incidents. The main rivals in these situations are Shia individuals who moved here from North India, and Sunni youth oriented towards *wahabbism*. The conflicts are small in comparison to Hindu Muslim rioting, but you will rarely read about them in a newspaper. No one reports it.” I asked him the reasons why sectarian conflicts were not reported. “Big newspapers don’t find these events big enough to use print space for. Smaller newspapers can’t publish because MIM asks them not to, and then there are some newspapers who are themselves invested in maintaining the semblance of sectarian harmony in Hyderabad.”⁵⁷⁸ Sectarian conflicts have existed in Hyderabad at least since the early 90s, usually during Muharram, but they are dissipated by neighborhood level MIM workers as soon as they

⁵⁷⁷ Interview/Hyderabad/H21

⁵⁷⁸ Interview/Hyderabad/H17

begin. Even when a small riot breaks out, the news is not reported. MIM also ensures that the police does not get involved and a record of such events is not created. It can do all this because of the free hand that successive state governments have given to MIM in the old city.

Lucknow: Riots, elections and identity politics- 1949-1999

Phase 1: Emergent Violence- 1949-1976

During this phase Lucknow was much more peaceful than Hyderabad with no riot at all between 1949 and 1968. Lucknow's peace was interrupted in 1969 by extraordinary violence between the Shias and the Sunnis. Again, between 1970 and 1976, there was just one other sectarian riot in 1974. This period of relative peace is rooted in events of the immediate history of Lucknow. Lucknow's entry into the post colonial period was in 1947, a year that marked the twin events of partition and independence. India became an independent nation while at the same time a large chunk from its eastern and western regions were carved out to form Pakistan. Histories of Partition are full of mass murder, relocation, exile, and a general loss of life that people were subjected to. This is true for both the Hindu and Muslim communities who had to cross the borders between the two new nation states. Partition was an extremely emotional and violent event of colossal magnitude, and it jolted the psyche of the whole society. Lucknow was a major center of the Pakistan Movement, and 1947 caused mass outmigration from here, leaving the city devoid of many high profile individuals and organizations that had been at the forefront of everyday politics. The period immediately following partition is characterized by shock and silence on the political and social fronts, across North India, and especially in Lucknow. While Partition related violence continued to fester beyond 1947, it was Gandhi's assassination by a RSS sympathizer in early 1948 that suddenly brought all communal violence to an abrupt end.

Parliamentary Elections in Lucknow

Electoral politics in Lucknow was marked by an important factor from the first elections in 1951 and that has remained constant till date. This is the absence of any Muslim political party such as the MIM. While Lucknow was one of the major centers of IML politics before independence, and an exodus of Muslims took place from here to Pakistan after 1947,⁵⁷⁹ the city has never had any Muslim party of note. A couple of times when such nascent parties did enter the fray, voting patterns showed a complete disregard for them by Muslims of the city. Election data shows that from the first elections in 1952 until 1984, Congress retained this seat, and a couple of times when it did not, it was the runner up. It is also noteworthy, that during this long and successful period the congress candidate won with a comfortable margin without ever fielding a Muslim candidate. Muslim support for the congress is ascertained by the fact that Muslim candidates for this seat never got a significant vote share in this period. Both electoral reports, and scholarship show that Muslims in Lucknow, in fact, have always preferred to vote for secular parties, even when Muslim candidates have been in the fray.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ Robinson, Francis. 1974. *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*. London: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁸⁰ Gayer, Laurent, and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2012. *Muslims in Indian cities: trajectories of marginalisation*. New York (N.Y.): Columbia University Press; Also see election reports of the Election commission of India, <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>.

TABLE 10: Parliamentary elections in Lucknow, 1949-1976

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
Winner	INC	INC	INC	IND	INC
Runner-up	BJS	BJS	BJS	INC	BJS
Margin %	46	7	13	8	50
INC %	69	41	50	28	72
BJS %	24	33	37	24	22
BJS=Bhartiya Jan Sangh	INC=Indian National Congress	IND= Independent			

The Parliamentary election in Lucknow remained firmly in favor of the congress party in the initial years, similar to other places in the country. However, even beyond the first elections, the congress emerged as the leading choice of Muslim voters in North India owing to the lack of other alternatives but also due to the fact that the Congress presented itself as the only moderate party that that was secular and that could counter the threat of anti Muslim groups such as the RSS and its political wing, Bhartiya Jan Sangh.⁵⁸¹ At the beginning of elections in 1951, BJPs earlier version the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS), was the runner up in the Lucknow parliamentary elections for three straight times. In fact, in the second general elections of 1957, the BJS lost to the INC by only a 7% margin of polled votes. BJS remained a serious contender in Lucknow through all parliamentary elections until 1971, becoming the second or third highest vote getter.

⁵⁸¹ Riaz, Ali. 2010. *Religion and politics in South Asia*. London: Routledge; Gurr, Ted Robert. 2002. *Peoples versus states: minorities at risk in the new century*. Washington (D.C.): United States Institute of Peace.

The voteshare of the BJS was a clear indicator of substantial, if not majority, support that the RSS and its affiliates enjoyed in Lucknow from the very beginning.

Parliamentary elections in the first phase saw no serious Muslim candidate, at best there being one or two who fared very poorly. Thus, there was no polarization around elections based on religious identity. The only exception when a Muslim candidate got more than 10% votes was in 1957 when he was a communist party candidate. This was the same period when the communist parties in various parts of India had some traction and were faring decently in elections. The 1962 election saw the first Shia candidate who contested as an independent, but got a mere 0.8% of the polled votes. These results signal that there was neither Muslim polarization nor Shia polarization during elections. Instead, voting patterns were congruent with the larger political climate in the region.

State Legislature Elections in Lucknow

The parliamentary elections in Lucknow show important trends in electoral politics. However, since the whole of Lucknow city is covered under a single parliamentary seat, these results often crease over local dynamics. State elections give some more details because of their comparatively micro nature. Over the years, Lucknow has been divided between four and six state legislature constituencies, two out of which, Lucknow Central and Lucknow West, include most of the old city. Muslims have constituted between 35 and 40 % of Lucknow's population since 1947. 25 to 30% of the Muslim population has been Shia, while the rest is Sunni. Lucknow Central and Lucknow West have the majority of Muslim voters, and Lucknow West also has a higher proportion of Shia voters within the Muslim voting public. Lucknow Central is similar,

but the proportion of Shia voters has been lower than in Lucknow Central.⁵⁸² Thus, an analysis of results of these constituencies will give us a good sense of electoral dynamics at a closer level.

Lucknow City Central

TABLE 11: State Elections, Lucknow City Central, 1949-1976

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969	1974
Winner	INC	INC	INC	BJS	BKD	INC
Runner-up	BJS	BJS	BJS	IND	INC	BJS
Margin %	23	22	28	21	0.76	12
BJS/BJP %	31	27	34	41	25	29
INC %	53	49	62	19	30	41
Sunni %	3	19.4	3.2	9.2	0.9	11.2
Shia%	NA	NA	NA	20.4	NA	0.6

While the congress candidate was the winner in the first three elections, the BJS remained a strong rival from the beginning, before it defeated the congress in 1967. The BJS/BJP has remained a powerful force in this constituency in almost every election, either as winner or as a runner up. Only in 1969 do we see that the BJS was third with a voteshare of 25%. In fact, data shows that the BJS/BJP has maintained a vote share between 25% and 59% all through. Two exceptional years are 1977 when post emergency anti-congress sentiments were high, and 1985 which saw a vote surge for INC following Indira Gandhi's assassination.

Individual elections also throw further light on local dynamics. Sunni candidates have been in the fray in all elections from this constituency, most of them having contested as

⁵⁸² Gayer, Laurent, and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2012. *Muslims in Indian cities: trajectories of marginalisation*. New York (N.Y.): Columbia University Press.

independents, and have received only a paltry voteshare with some exceptions. A similar pattern is true for Shia candidates. The pattern is such that when Muslim candidates contest as independent candidates they usually receive only a small voteshare. And when Muslim candidates contest from a party, they receive a higher vote share that is based on the voteshare of the party. In the first election in 1952, Syed Ali Zaheer, an influential Shia leader affiliated with the INC, won this constituency with 53.3% vote share and defeated the BJS with a 23% margin. In the next two elections, INC kept defeating the BJS convincingly, but the election of 1967 was interesting as the BJS won, but the runner up was not INC but an independent Shia candidate who cornered a big chunk of 20.4% votes. This was a substantive share, and the INC was pushed to third place. During this election, another independent Sunni candidate took away 9% votes, thus ensuring a BJS win. The next election in 1969 was also unusual as an independent Sunni candidate won, displacing both INC and BJS. This election also saw a Shia candidate getting 11% of the polled votes. Thus, the two elections in 1967 and 1969 saw the emergence of open Shia-Sunni rivalry within the electoral arena of Lucknow. This was the same period when frictions between the two sects were again revived, and also resulted in riots.

Lucknow West

TABLE 12: State Elections, Lucknow West, 1949-1976

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969	1974
Winner	INC	INC	INC	BJS	BKD	INC
Runner-up	BJS	BJS	BJS	INC	INC	BJS
Margin %	39	23	2	17	19	6
BJS/BJP %	19	28	39	43	17	36
INC %	58	52	42	26	24	42
Sunni%	0.37	NA	NA	22.6	0.5	0.55
Shia%	1.44	NA	NA	NA	15.2	1.27

Lucknow West saw a straight contest between INC and BJS/BJP in five out of six elections in this phase, except in 1969, when a new party, BKD, defeated the INC. If we look at the vote share of Sunni and Shia candidates, not associated with any major political party, we see that there is almost no mobilization based on identity in five of these six elections. In only 1967 did an independent Sunni candidate get a vote share in double digits. This was the same election when congress party's Syed Ali Zaheer, an influential Shia politician, suffered a defeat, allegedly due to a sectarian conspiracy. Similarly, the pattern of Shia vote share in this constituency shows identity based mobilization only in 1969, the election after Syed Ali Zaheer lost.

Syed Ali Zaheer's political career in Lucknow is instructive for understanding sectarian dynamics in Lucknow. Coming from a family of lawyers and congress leaders, he won on a congress ticket from Lucknow West in 1957 and 1962. He managed to get votes from across the board, including the Hindu and Sunni community. However, in 1967, Zaheer lost the election.

This defeat was much discussed in local circles, and became a sore point between Shias and Sunnis for many years to come. Backstage stories about this election, attested by several key informants that I interviewed, suggest that a group of Sunni clerics and political leaders came together to ensure that Sunni masses were mobilized away from the Congress supported Shia candidate Syed Ali Zaheer. Instead, they propped up and supported an independent Sunni candidate who eventually took away 10% of the votes. This election also saw the entry of the short lived but successful Swatantra party, a secular party that opposed Congress's socialist platform, which hacked away another 12% of the votes. Congress vote share plummeted from the earlier 42% to a mere 26%. Eventually, the BJS won the election with a 17% margin, even when its own vote share barely increased from the past.

Sunni leaders in the city had been campaigning to end Zaheer's monopoly from Lucknow politics because his nomination was seen as an injustice to the numerically larger Sunni community. L2, member of an influential Sunni business family of Lucknow, narrated the story to me: "I was about twenty years old when Syed Ali Zaheer was at the peak of his political career. He was a fine gentleman and an able administrator, but many among the Sunni community believed that he favored the Shia whenever a controversial issue arose between the sects. Two of my uncles and some clerics from the *Firangi Mahal* (a famous family of Sunni religious scholars and politicians in Lucknow) had also been asking the Congress party to nominate a Sunni candidate from Lucknow West because most of the voters there were Sunni. Firangi Mahal clerics were also upset because they had always been congress supporters and had been hoping to have a member from their clan represent the party in local elections. But Zaheer had such a strong hold over the party leadership that all these demands were ignored. So this group of clerics and business men then hatched a clandestine plan to defeat Zaheer. They found a

small time local Sunni leader, and campaigned for him in the Sunni neighborhoods in the constituency. Handwritten appeals with signatures of Sunni clerics were circulated. Friday sermons from local mosques were organized to communicate the plan. They also ran a month long door to door contact campaign.”⁵⁸³ While the independent Sunni candidate did not win the election, his surprising voteshare of 10% contributed in Zaheer’s and INC’s loss in that election. L6, a Congress politician and a Shia community leader, also shared his perspective on Syed Ali Zaheer’s loss in the 1967 election: “It was a big blow not only for Shias in the city but also for the congress party which had assumed that its Sunni support base was rock solid in Lucknow. Mr. Zaheer was considered invincible until then because he appealed to every group in the city. So that loss also meant that the pandora’s box of sectarianism in Lucknow would be reopened.”⁵⁸⁴

INC eventually bowed to Sunni demands and gave the party ticket to Raza Ansari of the Firangi Mahal in the next election in 1969. But this time, Shia voters played spoilsport. Shia voters in Lucknow had zealously supported the Congress because of Syed Ali Zaheer, the last of the successful Shia player in electoral politics. They took offence at his defeat, and this event created new tensions between the two sects. In the next elections, in 1969, the Sunni candidate of the INC was also defeated, unexpectedly, and it was theorized that Shia voters had exacted revenge. A contested theory was that the Shias had voted for the BJS in retaliation, to ensure that Raza Ansari lost.⁵⁸⁵ This theory was only partly correct. Data shows that the BJS voteshare had actually dropped from the past election, thus undermining the allegation that Shias had sided

⁵⁸³ Interview/Lucknow/L2

⁵⁸⁴ Interview/Lucknow/L6

⁵⁸⁵ Based on interviews in Lucknow with L2 (Sunni businessman) and L6 (Shia congress party leader).

with BJS. However, election results do show that a Shia candidate from a short lived and unknown party, mazdoor parishad, received 14% of the polled votes, suggesting that Shias could have voted against the congress candidate. This was a substantive share of votes that could have let the INC win easily had they not been split. BKD, another short lived but successful party, actually won this election.

During the next elections in 1974, the INC doubled its vote share and again won this seat defeating the BJS. It seems a compromise had been worked out. L6, a local Shia politician, gave me the inside story from that election, “Congress leadership listened to Shia grievances in Lucknow and agreed to drop Raza Ansari as the candidate. But they persuaded the Shias to accept another Sunni candidate who had no connections with conspirators who were behind Zaheer’s defeat. This was acceptable to everyone and the congress regained its position in Lucknow West.”⁵⁸⁶ Congress got 42% votes and defeated the BJS by 6%. Two independent Shia candidates who contested this election got less than 1.5% votes, showing the success of the congress in bringing back Shia support for itself.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview/Lucknow/L6

Lucknow Central

TABLE 13: State Elections, Lucknow Central, 1949-1976

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969	1974
Winner	INC	INC	INC	BJS	BKD	INC
Runner-up	BJS	BJS	BJS	IND	INC	BJS
Margin %	23	22	28	21	0.76	12
BJS/BJP %	31	27	34	41	25	29
INC %	53	49	62	19	30	41
Sunni %	3	19.4	3.2	9.2	0.9	11.2
Shia %	NA	NA	NA	20.4	NA	0.6

Similar to Lucknow West, BJS/BJP has remained an important player in the Lucknow Central constituency all through the six state elections between 1952 and 1974. The only exception was 1969 when a congress breakaway party displaced normal players from the electoral scene.

Syed Ali Zaheer of the INC started contesting state elections in independent India from this constituency in 1952 before he moved to the neighboring constituency of Lucknow West in 1957. His voteshare of 53% in 1952 reflects the broad based support he had from this constituency. The second election in 1957 saw the INC win over BJS, but an independent Muslim candidate was also able to corner 19.4% votes. In the next election in 1962, the same Muslim candidate contested the elections as a member of the socialist party and polled only 3.2 %. After the first three defeats, the BJS eventually won this seat in 1967. However, it was not the INC whom it defeated, it was an independent Shia candidate who had become the runner up

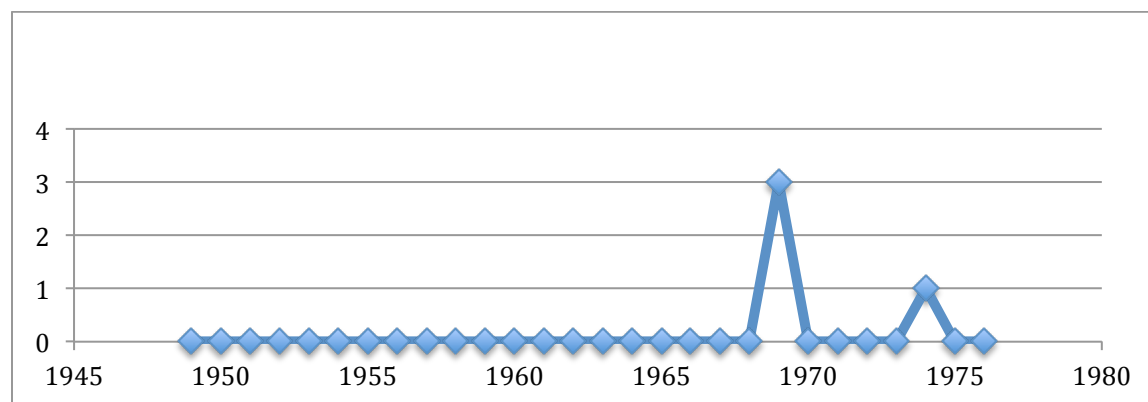
displacing INC to third place. G Zainul Abdin, the independent Shia candidate polled 20.4% votes. Another independent Sunni candidate polled 9.2% votes. Throughout the elections in 1957, 62 and 67, the INC did not nominate a Muslim candidate from this high Muslim proportion constituency. In the elections that followed, independent Muslim candidates rarely garnered a vote share in double digits. The same stands true for Shia candidates. The table above shows the vote share of Shia and Sunni independent candidates who were unaffiliated with any major party, thus proxying for voter mobilization based on sectarian identity. These figures suggest no strong polarization of either Sunni, or Shia votes in most elections. Similar to Lucknow West, the BJS/BJP has maintained a high vote share throughout in Lucknow Central

Riots

Hindu-Muslim riots in Lucknow have not been as common as they have been in other parts of the country. In fact, besides a riot in 1924, Lucknow has reported no communal riot. However, there have been minor incidences where communal tensions approached boiling point, but actual riots did not take place. In the period studied in this chapter, three such incidences of communal tension took place. The first case was in January 1950 involving a minor quarrel between boys from the two communities. The quarrel soon blew into a situation involving adults from both communities indulging in stone pelting and arson but quick police action contained the tiff. In two separate incidents in 1950 and 1954, communal tensions again built up on rumors that some Muslims had slaughtered cows during a festival. Again, arrests and aggressive patrolling by the police diffused the tensions and prevented actual riots. However, Lucknow has not been completely free of violent rioting. In the context of Shia-Sunni antagonisms, the city has witnessed several waves of rioting in the twentieth century. In fact, Lucknow has the dubious

distinction of being India's only city where sectarian tensions and violence within Muslims has existed all through the twentieth century.

Figure 8: Riots in Lucknow, 1949-1976



Shia-Sunni Riots

During the period 1949-1976, Shia-Sunni riots in Lucknow took place in 1969, and 1974. Let us look at these individual riots and their timing and context. The 1969 riot was the first in Lucknow since independence in 1947. In fact, the trauma of partition, and especially Gandhi's assassination in 1948 had brought a sudden end of communal riots in India. It was only in 1961 that communal riots started again in various parts of India.⁵⁸⁷ Lucknow, though generally free of Hindu-Muslim riots, witnessed its first postcolonial violent moment in the form of a Shia-Sunni riot. Occurring over three days in late May, this riot left 3 dead, 100 injured, and 277 people were arrested.⁵⁸⁸ Sunni groups petitioned the government about their grievances due to a Shia poster put up at several places in the city that they claimed had insulted their faith. This particular riot is remembered for several firsts. It was the first riot where large scale stabbing was

⁵⁸⁷ Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, *Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II* (1986-2011), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 20 August 2013, accessed 16 November 2015, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,738>, ISSN 1961-9898

⁵⁸⁸ *The Times of India* (1861-current); May 27, 1969; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

witnessed. This was also the first time when arson was used as a weapon. Several businesses and shops were burnt to the ground, and in several cases, people were thrown into raging fires. About a 100 houses were burnt to ashes. Earlier riots from the first half of the twentieth century had involved much milder violence that was often limited to an exchange of brickbats, and an occasional stabbing. 1969 was much different. The political context just before 1969 is helpful in interpreting social dynamics that was taking place in Lucknow.

The elections of 1967 in Lucknow were unusual. The parliamentary election saw an independent candidate displace the INC from the winner to the runner up, and the BJS to third place. State elections also took place concurrently in 1967, and in Lucknow West Saiyed Ali Zaheer, the Shia candidate consistently representing the INC, lost his elections to the BJS by a margin of 17%. The BJS vote share had increased only marginally but results show that there was about a 10% vote share that went away from Zaheer towards an independent Sunni candidate. This shortfall can be attributed to real politicking in Lucknow whereby Sunni leaders were attempting to displace the Shia representative from the constituency, as I have detailed earlier in this section.

In the other constituency, Lucknow Central, another surprising event took place in 1967. An independent Shia candidate, G Zainul Abideen, shored up about 20% of the polled votes, and became the runner up while the BJS candidate profited from the splitting of Muslim votes, and won the seat. This demonstrated two things. The first was that even independent Shia candidates had the potential to derail plans for other Muslim candidates even if they could not record a straight win due to their small number. The second was that divergence of Shia and Sunni votes could benefit communal parties such as the BJS/BJP. Thus, at least two years before the riots of 1969, electoral tensions were at work between the Shia and Sunni communities in Lucknow.

1969 also witnessed state elections in February in which a new party, BKD had defeated the INC, displacing the BJS to third position in both the constituencies- Lucknow Central and Lucknow West. BJS also saw a huge drop in its vote share from 41% to 25% in Lucknow Central, and from 43% to 17% in Lucknow West, owing to the popular support that the BKD had garnered for itself. This election also saw Saiyed Ali Zaheer of the INC being replaced by Muhammad Raza Ansari, a Sunni candidate. The elections in 1969 had no independent Shia candidate in the fray, but a shia candidate in each of the two state level constituencies got upwards of 10% vote share. These factors, especially the comparatively higher share of votes gathered by independent Shia candidates, signal the growing rift between the two sects. Elections took place in February of 1969, and the riots happened in two rounds, the first in Late May just two days before Barawafat, when Sunnis had planned to take out a Madhe Sahaba procession. Another riot took place in late August, way beyond the shadow of Muharram or elections, showing the persistent nature of sectarian tensions in Lucknow. What is note worthy is that these riots took place after elections, unlike cases of Hindu-Muslim riots in India, which usually took place before elections. It is also notable that the city leaders of the BJS, were quiet active in the post riot period, attempting to establish good rapport with the Shia community, in the garb of brokering peace in the city.⁵⁸⁹

The next sectarian riots of this phase took place in mid-March of 1974, on the day of Chehlum (A Shia mourning day during Muharram). A Shia procession was attacked in the *Patanala* area, a citadel of the Madhe Sahaba sponsors among the Sunni community. The Shias

⁵⁸⁹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; May 28, 1969; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

retaliated by burning down shops owned by Sunni Muslims.⁵⁹⁰ This riot also closely followed state elections in Lucknow that took place a fortnight earlier. In these elections, Lucknow Central saw the BJS candidate getting defeated at the hands of the INC. There were four Sunni and one Shia candidate in this election. The Sunni candidates gathered 11% votes and the sole Shia candidate got 0.6% votes. What was unprecedented in this election was the presence of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a revived faction of the erstwhile All India Muslim League headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. IUML stood third in the election with an impressive 10% voteshare. Prior to this either no Muslim party had contested, or even if such a party contested it gained almost no voteshare in Lucknow. However, the IUML in independent India had very little traction outside the southern state of Kerala where it was often part of the ruling alliance. Eventually, the IUML disintegrated after 1974 with its leaders defecting to either the congress or other parties. In Lucknow West, INC defeated BJS by 6%, despite the fact that the BJS voteshare had jumped to 36%. The electoral results of 1974 do not suggest any major Shia-Sunni competition in Lucknow, and the riot was closer to the ritually important day of Chehlum when the Shia and Sunni communities took out their separate, antagonistic processions.

Phase 2: Peak Violence- 1977-1993

In this phase sectarian riots in Lucknow were more frequent in comparison to the earlier phase though their scale was not as high as communal riots in other parts of the country. There was a spate in Shia-Sunni riots at the beginning of this phase, and multiple riots per year occurred until 1980. After which the riots gave way to only an annual protest during the Muharram period, when Shia and Sunni communities clashed with the police.

⁵⁹⁰ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Mar 16, 1974; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

Parliamentary Elections in Lucknow

TABLE 14: Parliamentary Elections in Lucknow, 1977-1991

Year	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
Winner	BLD	INC	INC	JD	BJP
Runner-up	INC	JP	LKD	INC	INC
Margin %	50	12	40	5	31
INC %	23	48	56	29	20
BJS %	NA	36	12	NA	51

1977, the first election after the national emergency was lifted, saw a resounding defeat for the congress, as had happened in other parts of India. It was won by BLD, a new party that fielded a very popular candidate. The congress made a comeback in the next elections in 1980 and the election was uneventful. None of these elections saw any Shia or Sunni independent candidate of note. In 1984, for the first time in parliamentary elections of Lucknow, a total of seven Muslim candidates was in the fray, including three Shia contestants, most of them being independent candidates. One of the Sunni candidates, who became the runner up in the election, gained 15% votes, but all of the rest together polled only 1.32% of the votes. These included three Shia candidates who polled under 0.3% of votes each. This was also the first Lucknow election for the recently formed BJP, reorganized from its earlier version of BJS. Its candidate, Lalji Tandon, received 12% votes and stood third in the contest. This was also the first time that the BJP/BJS had contested in Lucknow after 1971, therefore 12% of the voteshare was a significant achievement. These results show neither a Sunni nor Shia polarization behind any candidate. Instead, voting patterns were congruent with the larger political climate in the region.

In the 1989 elections, BJP did not contest from Lucknow strategically to ensure INC's defeat. This election also saw a high number, seven, of independent Muslim candidates in the fray but none gathered more than 0.7% votes. Starting with 1991, the Lucknow parliamentary seat was held by the BJP. In 1991, BJP got 51% of polled votes and defeated the INC by a margin of 31%. This election saw two Sunni candidates who fared poorly as usual, their vote share being less than 0.25% added together.

State Legislature Elections in Lucknow

Lucknow City Central

TABLE 15: State Elections, Lucknow City Central, 1977-1991

Year	1977	1980	1985	1989	1991
Winner	JP	INCI	INC	BJP	BJP
Runner-up	INC	BJP	BJP	JD	JP
Margin %	34	19	47	5	32
BJS/BJP %	62	30	14	35	56
INC %	28	49	61	22	14
Sunni %	4.1	8.8	9.4	1.8	2.4
Shia %	NA	NA	NA	0.5	1.9

Election data from this constituency shows that the BJS/BJP has maintained a vote share above 30% all through the second phase. Two exceptional years were 1977 when post emergency anti-congress sentiments were high, and 1985 that saw a vote surge for INC following Indira Gandhi's assassination. Except these two years, BJS/BJP had a solid vote base in the constituency that has consistently grown since 1980, the same year when the BJS was

reorganizes into BJP. The state elections in 1980 were different as the newly reorganized BJP contested these elections for the first time. In Lucknow Central, BJP was defeated by the INC by a 19% margin. Three other Sunni candidates garnered about 9% of the votes, but there was no Shia candidate. BJP had nevertheless cornered an impressive 30% voteshare in Lucknow Central.

BJP's vote share jumped beyond 50% in 1991, following the Ram Temple agitation and remained very high over the next few elections. Throughout this phase, Muslim candidates fared well only when mainstream parties fielded them, and never when they contested as independent candidates. This suggests that neither Shia nor Sunni votes were polarized by religious identities in this phase in this constituency.

Lucknow West

TABLE 16: State Elections, Lucknow West, 1977-1991

Year	1977	1980	1985	1989	1991
Winner	JP	INCI	INC	BJP	BJP
Runner-up	INC	JP	BJP	JD	JP
Margin %	36	17	32	6.5	17
BJS/BJP %	62	20	20	33	48
INC %	27	38	52	26	10
Sunni%	NA	4.4	3.14	9	3.4
Shia%	8	NA	0.3	NA	0.35

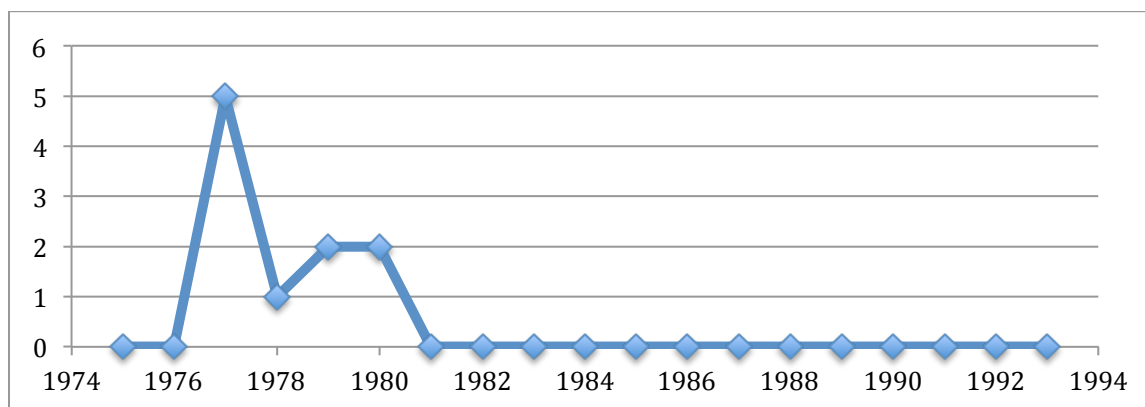
This phase began with the first elections that took place after emergency, which INC lost to the JP, an alliance of anti congress parties that included the BJS. In 1980, a freshly

reorganized BJP surprisingly nominated a Muslim candidate from Lucknow West, who got 20% votes. This was much less than what the BJS had got in past elections. Four other independent Sunni candidates together got less than 4.5% votes, suggesting a lack of identity based mobilization in elections. The next elections, in 1985, involved a sympathy wave for INC because of Indira Gandhi's assassination. BJP got a low 20% of votes, while the INC, that nominated a Shia candidate, got a huge 52.2% of the polled votes, and it won by a 32% margin. Another Shia contesting as independent got 0.3% votes, while five independent Sunni candidates received less than 4%.

If we look at the BJS/BJP voteshare over years, we see a dip in 1980 when BJS was reorganized into BJP, and low voteshare in 1985 when a national wave in favor of INC existed. However, BJP won this seat during the last two elections in this phase with its vote share eventually crossing 50% in the last two elections. On the other hand, if we look at the vote share of independent Sunni and Shia candidates, not contesting from major political parties, we see that there is almost no mobilization based on identity in most elections, except in 1977 when Nawab Agha, a local Shia leader, again mobilized 8% votes, a small number but impressive given the limited votes that the Shia community had in Lucknow West. 1977 was special as Shia-Sunni rioting had continued almost to the day of elections, and must have affected voting behavior.

Riots

Figure 9: Shia-Sunni Riots in Lucknow, 1974-1993



There was a respite in sectarian violence during 1975 and 1976 coinciding with the generally repressive period of national emergency proclaimed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. But Shia-Sunni riots returned in 1977, soon after emergency was removed. 1977 also saw both state level elections as well as national parliamentary elections following the lifting of national emergency. Emergency had galvanized almost the whole opposition against INC and they contested elections as members of the Janta Party (JP). All elections in 1977, thus, are very tricky to analyze for vote share of various parties even though the political backgrounds of individual candidates were known to all. Voters supported the JP or breakaway factions of the INC in many places notwithstanding the actual candidate's reputation and background.

Parliamentary elections took place on 16th March 1977 in which INC lost heavily. However, Shia-Sunni riots broke out in Lucknow five months later, in September. These riots were triggered after Sunni partisans attacked a Shia procession that was being taken out to commemorate the death anniversary of Imam Ali. The attack disrupted the procession before it could reach its destination, and the government decided to cancel it. This sudden suspension, of

what the Shias claimed to be their religious right, resulted in 200 Shia individuals courting arrest in protest. The tensions from the procession day lingered and sporadic stabbings, arson and brick-batting between rival groups continued. The first round of rioting took place in early September, the second round in late September, and the third round of riots took place over three days in early October, immediately before the state elections. A total of 10 people died, 30 were injured and 250 were arrested, and another 200 offered themselves to the police for arrest as a protest. These clashes took place outside the period of Muharram, signaling the general deterioration in the state of relations between the two communities. These riots were immediately followed by state elections in which the congress was defeated by the JP in both Lucknow West and Lucknow Central. However, Lucknow West, home to most of the Shia voters in Lucknow, witnessed Shia vote polarization. An independent Shia candidate got about 8% of the polled votes in Lucknow West, an impressive share in comparison to the past where independent Shia voters had usually fared very poorly.⁵⁹¹ The ferocity of these riots and its intermittent spread over a month resulted in the state government permanently banning all processions related with Muharram for both the Shia and Sunni communities. This ban was strongly opposed by Shia clerics, men's guilds, and youth groups who had been at the center of Muharram performances.

The next two years had no elections in Lucknow, but sectarian riots took place in both years. In 1978 riots took place on 10th December, a day before Ashra. This riot was triggered by Shias attempting to defy the ban on their processions imposed since 1977. The key role was

⁵⁹¹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 7, 1977; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1 ; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 30, 1977; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1 ; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Oct 6, 1977; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 9 ; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 9, 1977; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 11 ; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Sep 29, 1977; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1.

played by Saiyed Ali Zaheer, the Shia politician from the Congress party who exhorted people in the name of Ayotollah Khomeini, the Iranian cleric exiled in Paris, and whom Zaheer claimed to have commanded Lucknow's Shia to take out their processions. About 770 Shia men were arrested by the police during this procession.⁵⁹²

In 1979, a riot took place on 19th January, the day of Chehlum, when Shia groups openly defied the ban on processions and attempted to take out one. Preventive arrest of 200 people the night before did not prevent this defiance, and another 150 Shia individuals, including 80 children were arrested by the police on procession day. The attempted procession was stopped by the police among tensions created by protesting Sunnis on one side and defiant Shias on the other. Another riot took place on 9th of February, a day before Barawafat (Prophet Muhammad's birthday), around rumors that the Sunni community was planning to take out their Madh-e Sahaba procession on this day. These riots took place without any electoral background and were generally related with the usual sectarian rivalries. Two deaths and 150 arrests resulted from this riot.⁵⁹³

1980 saw a protest and a riot during the Muharram period, one just after Ashra in mid November, and another a fortnight before Chehlum in mid December. The Ashra incidence involved Shia protestors who courted arrest while attempting to defy the ban on their processions. This defiance escalated into an altercation with the police and resulted in 1300

⁵⁹² *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Dec 12, 1978; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

⁵⁹³ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Feb 10, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 11; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jan 21, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Jan 18, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 5

arrests.⁵⁹⁴ However, the December riots were violent and engaged Shia and Sunni groups. This riot started after members of the Ali Congress, a Shia organization that claimed Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran as its patron, took out a protest march against the ban on processions. The march was huge by local standards with several important Shia leaders and clerics taking part in it, Shia businesses in the city closed down as did the Shia College with its students joining the protest. Protestors demanded that the government resolve the issue as it had promised, and allow Shia processions to continue as in the past. Local Sunni groups opposed this protest march, especially the newly formed Sunni Federation, which attacked Shia protestors and set several Shia business establishments on fire. Crude bombs were freely used along with stabbings and arson. Riots resulted in a two-day curfew over large parts of the city.⁵⁹⁵ Earlier in 1980, Lucknow had witnessed both parliamentary and state elections, though they were far removed from the riots, and there seem to be no connections between these elections and riots. There was a complete absence of violence between Shia and Sunni groups in Lucknow 1981 onwards.

Phase 3: Declining Violence- 1994-1999

This last phase covered in this chapter continued to be peaceful. However, there was a spurt of sectarian riots in Lucknow around 1998 when the banned Muharram processions were revived.

⁵⁹⁴ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Nov 20, 1980; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

⁵⁹⁵ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Dec 14, 1980; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1

Parliamentary Elections in Lucknow

TABLE 17: Parliamentary Elections in Lucknow, 1992-1999

Year	1996	1998	1999
Winner	BJP	BJP	BJP
Runner-up	SP	SP	INC
Margin %	16	29	16
INC %	2.5	5	32
BJS %	52	58	48

Starting with 1991, the Lucknow parliamentary seat was held by the BJP until 1999. This seat was won by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, BJP's tallest leader in party history. Vajpayee, who eventually became India's Prime Minister, cultivated himself as a statesman who enjoyed broad based acceptance from various sections of society. He was also deeply entrenched in the culture of Lucknow, and had personal equations with Muslim elites in Lucknow, especially with Shia clerics and leaders. In 1991, BJP got 51% of polled votes and defeated the INC by a margin of 31%. This election saw two independent Sunni candidates who fared poorly as usual, their vote share being less than 0.25% added together.

In 1996, BJP's vote share moved up to 52%, and it defeated the Samajwadi Party (SP), a new party, by a margin of 16%. However, the SP had garnered 37% votes, against the 20% votes that the runners-up, INC, had got in the last election. The SP had emerged since 1989 after the disintegration of the Janta Dal (a socialist party active in North India). SP championed the political interests of the Yadav community, a backward caste Hindu group, and Muslims. SP succeeded in future elections on the basis of its integration of these two communities .

Six independent Sunni candidates had also contested this election with the highest vote-share getter at a paltry 0.08%. The next elections in 1998 saw the BJP notch up its voteshare to 58%, and its winning margin increased to 29%. SP, the runners up party had a voteshare of 29%, 8% lower than the last election. The 1998 elections were the first time when a major political party had fielded a Shia candidate, Muzaffar Ali. Ali, a famous filmmaker and fashion designer, was a political novice and disconnected from political issues, and yet the SP platform allowed him to get 29% of the polled votes. However, Ali was presented in the campaign as not a Shia candidate but a progressive secular candidate who could represent various types of constituents. On the contrary, Vajpayee, the BJP candidate was often caricatured as one of those BJP leaders who was sensitive towards, and acceptable to even the minorities.

The last elections of this period took place prematurely, just after a year in 1999. The BJP held fort, with Vajpayee cornering 48% votes, 10% less than 1998. The INC replaced SP as the runner up probably because of a stalwart that they nominated as their candidate. BSP, another major regional party, nominated a Muslim candidate and took away 6% votes while another six independent Muslim candidates could together get less than 2%. The lone Shia candidate in this election got just a handful of votes again showing the negligible pull that Shia candidates had for Shia votes.

BJP's hold over the Lucknow parliamentary seat started in 1991 and went all through this period. This was supported by three factors. The first was the communal polarization that the BJP had created around the Temple-Mosque dispute, which earned it an increased proportion of Hindu upper caste votes. The second factor was the choice of Vajpayee as a candidate from Lucknow, a factor that I have already discussed earlier. The third factor was the hobnobbing between BJP and Shia leaders in Lucknow, which I discuss in the following section.

The temple-Mosque dispute pertains to a site in Ayodhya, a town near Lucknow, where a Mughal era mosque was, popularly believed to have been, constructed over a demolished temple of Rama, the Hindu God, sometime in the 16th century. While archaeological and historical evidence undermine this theory, the BJP and other front organizations of the RSS have transformed this issue into a major controversy since 1949 and especially since 1980. In September 1990, the BJP launched a nationwide campaign tour that was supposed to culminate in Ayodhya. This tour was led by its senior leader L K Advani, who used tour stops to give provocative speeches. Tour speeches coupled with grass root organizing by RSS/BJP resulted in the worst phase of communal polarization between Hindus and Muslims in post-colonial India. The elections that followed this phase gave a boost to BJP's electoral achievements.⁵⁹⁶

State Legislature Elections in Lucknow

Lucknow City Central

TABLE 18: State Elections, Lucknow City Central, 1992-1999

Year	1993	1996
Winner	BJP	BJP
Runner-up	SP	SP
Margin %	19	30
BJS/BJP %	54	59
INC %	7	NA
Sunni %	1.9	NA
Shia %	0.32	0.11

⁵⁹⁶ Veer, Peter van der. 2003. *Religious nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Berkeley, Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press; Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2009. *Hindu nationalism: a reader*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Violette Graff and Juliette Galonnier, Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011), Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, [online], published on 20 August 2013, accessed 16 November 2015, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Hindu-Muslim-Communal-Riots-in,738>, ISSN 1961-9898

The last two elections in the third phase witnessed the iron grip that the BJP had established over the Lucknow City central constituency. Riding the general wave of support that the BJP's Ram Temple movement had triggered, as well as benefitting from the popularity of Vajpayee in the parliamentary constituency, BJP's vote share jumped to 54% and 59% in this constituency in 1993 and 1996 respectively. The congress was gradually marginalized with its vote share plummeting to a historical low of 7%, and resulted in the party choosing to not even contesting the election in 1996. Instead, SP, a regional party rose to become the runner up in this constituency in both elections. One Shia, and four Sunni independent candidates also contested but received negligible votes in 1993. In 1996, no independent Sunni candidates were contesting and a lone Shia independent candidate, with a reputation for contesting elections as a hobby, received 0.11% of the polled votes.

Lucknow West

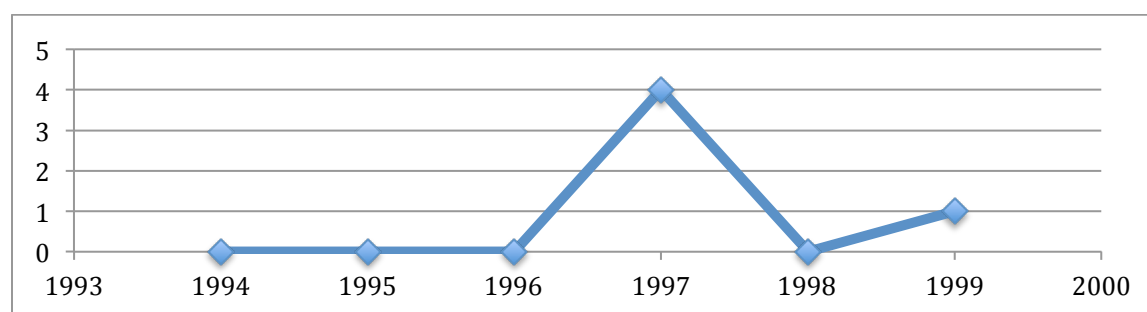
TABLE 19: State Elections, Lucknow West, 1992-1999

Year	1993	1996
Winner	BJP	BJP
Runner-up	SP	SP
Margin %	8.3	21
BJS/BJP %	50	55
INC %	6	8.5
Sunni%	0.49	0.11
Shia%	0.02	NA

Like the other constituency, this one also saw impressive performance of the BJP, and a similar abysmal performance by the congress party. By 1996, BJP's voteshare touched 55% and the Congress's dropped to below 9%. SP, the new regional party, became the Runner-up here too. Following the established pattern, independent Shia and Sunni candidates got negligible proportions of the polled votes in Lucknow West also. Thus, showing polarization of either Sunni, or Shia voters in any year.

Riots

Figure 10: Shia-Sunni Riots in Lucknow, 1994-1999



After a lull of fifteen years, sectarian riots returned with a vengeance in 1997. This year saw four riots, two in June around Chehlum, and two in July a few days before Barawafat. While the day of Ashra passed off peacefully, prominent Shia leaders gave a call to defy the ban on processions and exhorted the community to take out the Chehlum procession. Kalbe Jawwad, a young Shia cleric from an influential family of clerics in Lucknow, was the main leader of this agitation, and this was his first opportunity of presenting himself as the leader of the community. L4, a Sunni businessman cum politician from the old city, shared his version of the story “Kalbe Jawwad was waiting for the signal from BJP and SP leaders before he started the protests. He had also been looking for such opportunities for a long time so that he could emerge as a community leader. When Lalji Tandon and Rajnath Singh (both prominent BJP leaders based in

Lucknow) told him about their willingness to lift the ban if BJP formed the government in the center, Kalbe Jawwad triggered his protest campaign. His supporters went berserk in anticipation. Three boys committed suicide in public. When the ban was lifted next year, Kalbe Jawwad got all the credit. They have a mutually beneficial relationship.”⁵⁹⁷ He was arrested in June, sparking violent protest from his supporters. Clashes ensued between Shias and the police. Curfew was clamped down in the city in anticipation of tensions as both Shia and Sunni groups declared their intent to defy the ban on processions. This rioting was complicated by the fact that the dates for which Shias gave the call of defiance was the same when the BJP’s Ram Temple Agitation tour was passing through Lucknow. In fact, this was likely a deliberate decision as the BJP leaders had been wooing Lucknow’s Shias with the promise that if they won in the parliamentary elections, they would lift the ban on Muharram processions in Lucknow.⁵⁹⁸

Shia protests were unusually strong in 1997, and they indeed came as a surprise after several years of peace. Around 150 Shia youth were arrested in this round of rioting that was mainly between the Shias and the police, with sporadic instances of Shia-Sunni violence.⁵⁹⁹ This round of rioting and protests also involved the fatal self-immolation by three Shia youth in Lucknow, an unprecedented and shocking tactic. The story of Kalbe Jawwad’s violent

⁵⁹⁷ Interview/Lucknow/L4

⁵⁹⁸ Based on interviews with L4 (Sunni), L2 (Sunni) and L6 (Shia).

⁵⁹⁹ *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jul 5, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1 ; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jun 30, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jun 24, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 8 ; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jul 8, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jun 28, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jun 27, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1 ; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jul 13, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 9 ; *The Times of India* (1861-current); Jun 26, 1997; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7

demonstrations is likely true as several printed sources attest this theory.⁶⁰⁰ In 1997, the central government in Delhi was a multi party alliance that included the SP, but excluded the BSP and BJP, the former two being regional parties based in UP. During the same period, the state government in UP was an alliance of the BJP and BSP. Backend stories suggest that SP politicians promised Shia clerics. Especially Kalbe Jawwad, that if they were able to launch a strong wave of violent protests and demonstrations in Lucknow, they would pull the right levers in Delhi to lift the ban on Muharram processions in Lucknow. SP's interest in provoking these protests was to embarrass the state government in UP which was run by BJP and BSP, both being SP's rival parties. Thus, for Shia leaders in Lucknow, two sets of elites were available for partnership- one from the BJP, and the other from the SP. BJP was also a member of the state government in UP and this meant that Shia demonstrators could perceive help from BJP leaders who were part of the state government at that time. Thus the partnership between Shia leaders and state based elites was critical to this round of violence in Lucknow.

Eventually, in 1998, the new BJP government that came to power in New Delhi, in consultation with the BJP-BSP coalition government in Uttar Pradesh lifted the ban over Muharram processions in Lucknow, a fact much celebrated by the Shia community in the city. The Ashra procession in 1998, allowed after twenty years, included more than 60,000 participants and about 200 anjumans (men's guilds reciting ritual eulogies). The procession was heavily guarded by the police.⁶⁰¹ The last riot in this period took place in 1999, starting on Ashra

⁶⁰⁰ Sharat Pradhan's 1997 newsreport, <http://www.rediff.com/news/jun/25up.htm>; Bose, Ajoy. 2008. *Behenji: a political biography of Mayawati*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India; http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2006/20060525_muslim_india_politics.htm

⁶⁰¹ *The Times of India (1861-current)*; May 9, 1998; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 11

day and spilling over the next two days. Two deaths followed the riots and the city eventually calmed down after curfew was clamped by the police.⁶⁰²

Discussion

The period between 1996 and 1999 was especially volatile in North India vis a vis electoral politics. Owing to the repeated failure of multi-party alliance governments at the center, there were premature parliamentary elections in 1996, 1998, and 1999. In the 1996 parliamentary elections in Lucknow, BJP defeated SP, a regional party that often appeals to parochial Muslim interests, by a margin of 16%. But this election was almost one sided with the BJP getting more than 52% votes. While the BJP's national campaign was communal as usual, electoral promises made in Lucknow had a twist. Local BJP leaders proposed that if they won they would work towards resolving the Shia-Sunni dispute, and promised to lift the ban on Muharram processions. Since most of the banned processions belonged to the Shias, the lifting of the ban would benefit Shias disproportionately. The parliamentary candidate, A B Vajpayee, had always maintained good rapport among Lucknow's Muslims in general, and with Shia clerics in particular. Also, second rung BJP leaders from Lucknow had a long history of hobnobbing with Shia clerics and leaders especially around electoral dynamics. The relationship between the Shias and BJP in Lucknow has been at the center of Shia-Sunni discord in recent years, especially since the 1980s. In fact, several of my key informants alleged that the Shias supported BJP despite their anti Muslim politics. L8, a lawyer and Sunni community leader involved in the Babri Mosque-Ram Temple litigation in Ayodhya, asserted, "Shia leadership in Lucknow has never supported us in times of need. It is an open secret that they support the BJP despite all that BJP does against

⁶⁰² *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Apr 29, 1999; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 1 ; *The Times of India (1861-current)*; Apr 30, 1999; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India (1838-2002) pg. 7

Muslims. BJP candidates get votes from Shia voters, even at the cost of other Muslim candidates. Now tell me how the Sunni community can have normal relations with them?”⁶⁰³ While most Shia leaders whom I interviewed maintained that this was untrue and a fabricated allegation, I spoke with several Shia youth who were more candid. L16, a young Shia entrepreneur with a successful export business, represented a position held by several young Shia men I had spoken with. When I asked him if it was true that the Shia community supported BJP in elections, he posed a counter question to me, “Who else should the Shia community support? Can you pinpoint any political party or leader who has ever stood by us? All political parties bow to Sunni demands because they are the majority. For them, Muslim means Sunni. Shias can be ignored, neglected, just like that. Everyone knows we can’t get a candidate elected in any constituency, but Sunni votes can.”⁶⁰⁴ L34, a young Shia college student who proudly showed me pictures from his Muharram album as a mark of his devotion and piety, shared the logic that he used in elections. “We should vote for the party that has done something for the community. Only the BJP has helped us get the Muharram procession ban lifted. All others just did what the Sunni and Wahabbi leaders demanded. The Wahabbis wanted Lucknow’s Muharram to become a thing of the past, and the Congress, SP and all other parties helped them in this plan. Only Atalji (BJP leader A B Vajpayee) promised to lift the ban, and he did it. Why will I support other parties?” I asked him if he didn’t feel bad about supporting a party that organized the demolition of the Babri Mosque, and he quipped, “It was a Sunni mosque, why should I worry?”⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ Interview/Lucknow/L8

⁶⁰⁴ Interview/Lucknow/L16

⁶⁰⁵ Interview/Lucknow/L34

The election in 1998 saw BJP's vote share reach an all time high of 58% despite the fact that the nearest rival from the SP was a Shia individual. 1998 was also the same year when the BJP government in UP and Delhi lifted the ban over Muharram. During both these elections, there were open allegations that the Shias had voted for the BJP despite its anti Muslim positions. While these allegations are hard to prove, the elections of 1998 lend credence to this theory. BJP won with the largest voteshare, and the nearest rival party lost its vote share despite bringing in a Shia candidate. Interviews suggest that a large chunk of the Shia community had indeed voted for the BJP.

Riots in Lucknow also sit uneasy with scholarship on violence and elections. This scholarship does not consider riots that do not take place between Hindus and Muslims. In this light, sectarian riots in Lucknow have rarely been discussed in reference with elections. Further, the small number of Shia voters in Lucknow also limits their ability to ensure political representation for themselves. At best, Shia voters, if they vote en mass, can add or take away the margin of victory or defeat in any given election. Nevertheless, Shia-Sunni riots fulfill the function for constructing and maintaining collective identities, as I have discussed earlier for Hindu-Muslim riots in Hyderabad. I suggest that riots should be seen as events, and mechanisms that are used in the long term to create and/or strengthen collective identities of a group and its binary other. The long term utility of riots helps communal or sectarian entrepreneurs in impacting elections in the short term, but also helps them in mobilizing support for non electoral purposes such as protests, or a show of strength in public, or in making claims over the state and its benefits, in the long term. Thus the riots that occur in Lucknow serve the purpose of maintaining the Shia identity outside the electoral arena, in abeyance. Collective identities thus maintained, can be easily mobilized when required.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on two aspects of violence. The first builds on scholarship that connects violence and collective identity, and shows that in contradistinction to notions that existing collective identities lead to violence; it is actually violence that is used as a strategy for construction, maintenance, expression, and consolidation of collective identities. The second aspect focuses on the conditions within which certain types of riots are enabled or constrained. I show how community based elites saw and utilized opportunities that elites situated within the state seemed to provide at both sites, Lucknow and Hyderabad. This helped them to use specific types of riots for collective identity formation.

Findings show that elites in Hyderabad were able to organize violence between Hindu and Muslim collectivities, but suppressed violence between Shia and Sunni groups. This happened because in Hyderabad the BJP and MIM emerged as the rival Hindu and Muslim political parties respectively. The Muslim political party in Hyderabad, MIM, has also been able to successfully suppress latent tensions between the Shia and Sunni sects through cooptation and coercion. This has meant that sectarian frictions are dissipated before they can transform into violence. On the other hand, the presence of belligerent rivals claiming to represent the Hindu and Muslim communities, coupled with opportunistic politics played by successive state governments has allowed several Hindu-Muslim riots to occur in Hyderabad. These riots have reinvented communal collective identities for the Muslim community in Hyderabad.

In a reverse scenario, post-colonial Lucknow never had any significant Muslim political party or interest group that was electorally oriented. This has created a situation where the Hindu communal party, BJP, exists without a rival Muslim political party, thus undermining the potential for conflict around elections. Also, the popular legacy of Lucknow's communal

harmony has meant that successive state governments have ensured that no communal rioting ever took place in the capital. The absence of state based elites who could have partnered with communal elites based in the community, has also undermined the possibilities of communal violence in Lucknow. In contrast, rival elites and organizations among the Shia and Sunni have continued to exist in Lucknow. The absence of an inclusive Muslim party or interest group with legitimacy in both sects has meant that these sectarian elites face no constraints in organizing sectarian violence. Both Muslim sects in Lucknow also have access to state based elites from rival camps, thus their divisive sectarian politics gets support from above. Politicians of the Congress party, Samajwadi Party, and the BSP have aligned with the Sunni community elite because of the fact that the Sunni community constitutes the bulk of the Muslim voters in the city. Shia community elite, on the other hand receive active support from BJP politicians, who have no chance of Sunni support, and who instead have historically aligned with the Shia community in Lucknow. The BJP and other parties have been rivals in UP, hence their support to Shia and Sunni elites, respectively, has contributed to sectarian frictions that has often transformed into violent rioting.

This chapter analyzes riots in both cities in the context of election timing and results. Findings support literature that argues Hindu Muslim riots to be related with closely fought elections. However, Hindu Muslim riots in Hyderabad that take place with no connection with elections remain unexplained by existing scholarship. I use interviews to suggest that non-electoral rioting is used by communal interest groups as a strategy for maintaining and consolidating the salience of the Muslim collective identity for future use. The same argument is especially true for Shia-Sunni violence. Shia-Sunni rivalries in Lucknow do not have the potential to substantially affect electoral outcomes in Lucknow apart from a few dents that it can

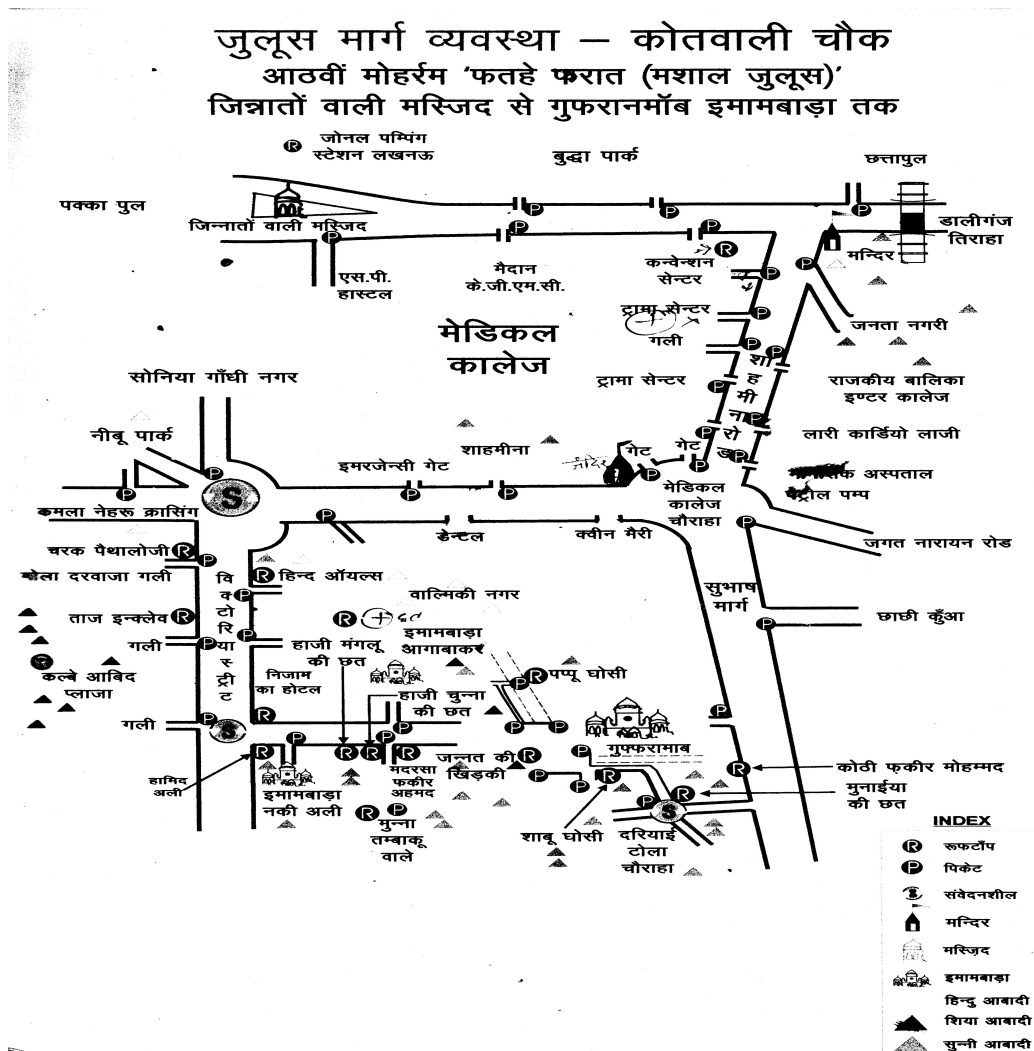
make in two constituencies. Thus, sectarian violence can not be explained simply by electoral competition. Instead, I argue that sectarian violence in Lucknow is also a strategy used by both Shia and Sunni sectarian leaders and organizations to maintain and consolidate their collective identities that can be used in future projects.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

Mapping Space, Managing Communities

The following map is from the Chowk police station in Lucknow, the historic epicenter of Shia-Sunni rivalries and conflicts in Lucknow.

Figure 11: Police Map of Chowk, Lucknow



Neighborhoods by type of community, and 'trouble spots.'

L25, the officer in charge of a police station in Lucknow (The main police station in the old city, at the epicenter of Shia-Sunni rivalries), was proud of his office walls plastered with glossy maps of his jurisdiction. He explained these color coded maps with detailed legends about ‘trouble spots,’ ‘tactical points,’ and ‘strategic locations’ that were marked onto the streets and neighborhoods of the old city. The maps neatly divide the area into Shia majority, Sunni majority, and mixed locations with Hindu neighborhoods marked out in a different color. “These maps took us three months to complete. We had dozens of older maps, mostly in tatters, and made by draftsmen over the last few decades. When I came to this police station, I put a constable, a draftsman, and a computer wizard on this task. I gave them the instructions, and they made a master map of both the riot prone areas, as well as the locations where we deploy our police force.” I asked him if these maps made a difference to riot control? He smiled and told me, “If there are orders from above about managing riots, then yes these maps are very helpful. But if not, then no maps can help!”⁶⁰⁶

L26, the constable who researched the older maps and made the current computer generated map firmly refused my request to access the historical police maps, “the old maps are in the secret police archive. You can not see them because they are only available to police personnel who have received permission from the Director General’s office.” However, she was proud of the new one, which is on public view in her boss’s office, “It took us a long time to get this one completed. I have put all the information on this master map. There is no need to waste time on the maps in the archive any more. This one has everything that the old ones had, as well as new information from our station riot management reports. No matter how new our police

⁶⁰⁶ Interview/Lucknow/L25

officers are to this station, one look at this map, and they will know where the riots take place, and how to manage them.”⁶⁰⁷

L22, an inspector with three decades of experience regulating Shia-Sunni violence in Lucknow also shared his wisdom about the riots and their treatment. “There is no dearth of trouble makers in Lucknow. Both sects have the rotten apples, the unemployed, the wannabe leaders, and the fanatics. But common people are now fed up of violence. People also know that if administrators have the will, these riots don’t take place. Mayawati’s government (a government led by the regional Bahujan Samaj Party-BSP- which has used a heavy hand against all types of riots in Uttar Pradesh in the past) has shown how riots can be controlled, even avoided if there is such an intention among the political leaders.” But he had mixed views about the maps. “If you actually know this area as I do, the maps are very general. They are not accurate because a lot of mixed areas, where the trouble actually starts are too complex to be mapped. There are several areas that are not clearly Shia majority or Sunni majority, but the map shows them to be so. That’s inaccurate. Then there are so many bylanes and alleys that don’t exist on maps, but they are important to know about. The maps are good only for new constables and officers who don’t have experience in the area.”⁶⁰⁸

The story in Hyderabad is similar, though the salient division of the old city is along communal lines. Officers in the three police stations that I covered for my interviews and data collection, told me about ‘danger zones,’ and ‘safe zones’ where Hindu-Muslim riots begin, and where there is relative peace respectively. I saw maps similar to the ones in Lucknow in the police stations of Hyderabad where neighborhoods and streets were marked by triangles and

⁶⁰⁷ Interview/Lucknow/L26

⁶⁰⁸ Interview/Lucknow/L22

circles, each symbol marking one of the two communities. However, police officers refused to give me copies. “These are sensitive maps, and rioters can misuse our maps by identifying locations that we don’t cover well. I know you won’t pass these maps to the wrong people, but I can not take the risk. Hindu-Muslim riots in Hyderabad are a serious business. It is just recently, that the riots have become less frequent, and I don’t want them to come back.”⁶⁰⁹ H24, a senior police officer from one of the police stations in the old city was more candid about the inner workings of riots in Hyderabad. “Hindu-Muslim riots don’t happen. They are made to happen. I have been around for two decades now, and I have seen how they do it. If I have complete authority, I can end a riot in three hours at maximum. In fact, any police officer with freedom to take action and access to police force can do it. Riots continue because some powerful people want them to go on. It helps their politics, business, and elections. Fortunately, those days seem to be going away. Whenever TDP formed the government, they showed that Hyderabad could remain riot free. They focused on good governance, and riots were minimal. Let’s see how long Hyderabad remains peaceful this time.”⁶¹⁰

These maps have been around for a long time now, in all police stations, and they have evolved over time, becoming more detailed. While riots have taken place despite the presence of these maps, it is clear that maps don’t stop violence on their own. However, the maps serve three functions very well. The first is the labeling of neighborhoods by its affinity with a community, thus making them Shia, Sunni, Hindu, Muslim, or mixed, which are generalizations based on assumptions of homogeneity at best. The second function is that these maps mark various areas in the two cities as trouble spots, and sensitive zones, places which become stigmatized with a

⁶⁰⁹ Interview/Hyderabad/H21

⁶¹⁰ Interview/Hyderabad/H24

legacy of violence, no matter how often violence ever broke out in that particular area. My key respondents told me that even one violent incident marks a place as troubled permanently. The third function that the maps serve is to facilitate the swift deployment of police and paramilitary forces at specific locations when trouble is expected or after it occurs. Thus for all practical purposes, these maps are police centric documents, that configure the city and neighborhoods by the priorities of the state and its drive to regulate communities.

Both Lucknow and Hyderabad have a checkered history steeped in violence. Yet, both cities are redeeming themselves from this violence. Riots have become less frequent, and ordinary people demand peace and prosperity. There is also a general understanding that riots are not spontaneous events, they are instead instruments in the hands of politicians and parties, both increasingly seen with cynicism. How have both these cities reached this point. Why have Lucknow and Hyderabad developed as sites infamous for sectarian and communal violence respectively?

This dissertation engages with these general questions. However, the specific question at the heart of this research is: How did the Shia collective identity become salient in Lucknow through the 20th century, and which factors played a role in this process. In asking this question, I have used Hyderabad as a shadow case, a city similar to Lucknow on several counts, where Shia did not become the salient collective identity. Instead, Muslim became one of the two poles across which communities got strained. This research covers the period from 1904 to 1998, which has been divided across three chapters. The first chapter covers 1904 to 1920, and focuses more on Lucknow. Archival data relevant to my research on Hyderabad during this period is scarce, hence I have detailed the case of Lucknow more than Hyderabad. The second chapter

looks at the period between 1921 to 1948, and the third chapter covers 1949 to 1998, where this dissertation ends.

Chapter one discussed the two distinct paths inherent in the construction of a prominent Shia collective identity in colonial Lucknow. The first path involves the rise of new types of elites and organizations that engaged in identity politics through redefinition of popular public rituals. These elites and organizations projected a revised and more exclusive Shia collective identity based on a purified Muharram that was freed of corruptions and revelries, thus claiming that the Shias were a unique community that could be seen as distinct from the Sunni. The second path pertains to the role of friendly British elites located within the structures of the colonial state that facilitated the demands of the Shia elites. The informal partnership between the community based and state based elites resulted in the strengthening of identity claims first from Shia leaders, and second from Sunni leaders. Once this sectarianism crossed a threshold, the colonial state intervened to resolve the matter, first as arbiter, and then as an active party to the dispute, resulted in the hardening of the divide. Data shows the role played by the multiple, often divergent, motivations of the colonial state that claimed its position of religious neutrality, and non interference in the religious sphere on one hand, and of protector of religious rights, and of public peace on the other hand. Also, the modern state's penchant for regulation and control meant that any dispute over public space meant that it became a player in the contest. In arbitrating the Shia Sunni dispute, the colonial state in Lucknow, provided the contours of appropriate and inappropriate rituals, as well as strengthened the sectarian divide by accepting it and by providing it spatial and administrative codification that strengthened the difference between the sects. Hyderabad, the shadow case for this chapter, did not see the rise of either communalism or sectarianism in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is explained

by the lack of all three of these factors that were present in Lucknow. Hyderabad, a princely kingdom, was an authoritarian state for all practical purposes, and had minimal openings for sectarian or communal politics. Community based elites, and their aspirations were regulated by laws that were much more constraining than those in Lucknow, thus keeping them out of the political sphere. Finally, patrimonial mechanisms ensured that all significant communities were coopted by the state through their representative elites.

Chapter two focuses on protests to explain their role in the making of collective identities, and emphasizes two aspects of protests. The first is how protests shape collective identities, of not just movement organizations or activists, as literature suggests, but also of entire communities whom the protestors claim to represent. The second is how the partnerships between community and state based elites, constrain or enable specific types of protest campaigns.

During the 1920 to 1948 period in Hyderabad, two phases of protests existed. The first involved the Khilafat Movement which brought Hindu and Muslim communities together briefly before it's jettisoning by the Nizam drove a wedge between the two communities. This wedge opened the door for communally oriented protests that were led by Hindu and Muslim interest groups. Sustained protests based on the leveraging of latent Hindu-Muslim antagonisms produced an atmosphere where vertically organized but horizontally unattached Muslim communities started to come together under an overarching Muslim collective identity. Community based Muslim elites were able to identify and utilize friendly elites connected with the state, and this allowed them to launch unhindered protests against rival Hindu interest groups on both religious and political grounds. I also show how local Hindu elites perceived opportunities in the state for articulating demands and complaints on the grounds of religious

discrimination, which the princely state was committed to address. However, there was no space for local Hindu elites making openly political complaints and demands. Certain Hindu interest groups, such as the Arya Samaj, and the Hindu Mahasabha were able to operate on even political grounds in Hyderabad because their resources were not dependent on opportunities within the state in Hyderabad, instead they were headquartered in British India. This sense of belonging to unified rival collective identities- Muslim and Hindu- was further strengthened by the last phase of this period when Muslims were massacred by state and non-state actors after Hyderabad's annexation into India. The trauma of this event further crystallized Muslim as the most salient collective identity in Hyderabad. In contrast, the state in Hyderabad was so structured that sectarian elites- such as the Shia- were fully coopted or regulated through patronage, and there were no sectarian elites available for partnering with the few un-coopted Shia community leaders in Hyderabad. This ensured that protests along the Shia-Sunni axis were constrained.

During the same period, Lucknow also witnessed two phases of protests. The first included the Khilafat Movement that had broad support among Hindus and Muslims, and around which even the Shia and Sunni communities converged, even if some frictions remained. The second round of protests started in Lucknow in the mid 1930's when the Shia-Sunni conflict was revived by sectarian leaders at the behest of elites initially from within the Congress party, and later by the tacit support of elected representatives from within the provincial government, who were Congress members. The first ever provincial elections in UP were the main context of this revival. These protests, especially those led by Shia organizations became so intense that almost the entire Shia community in the city was connected with the protests either directly or indirectly. These protests thus helped strengthen the larger collective identity of the Shia community. In contrast, communal conflicts and protests were prevented due to two reasons- one

a lack of state based elites whom the community based elites could partner with, and two, little openness in the state for tolerating any possibilities of communal frictions.

Thus, this chapter shows that protest campaigns, that could take place at either site, played a big role in shaping the collective identities of the larger community whom the protestors claimed to represent. We also saw how the protests were led by community based elites and organizations who were able to perceive and utilize the availability of elites located within the structures of the state.

Chapter three studies the role of violence in the formation of collective identities, by looking at both Hindu-Muslim and Shia-Sunni riots between 1949 and 1998. This chapter focuses on two aspects of violence. The first builds on scholarship that connects violence and collective identity, and shows that in contradistinction to notions that existing collective identities lead to violence; it is actually violence that is used as a strategy for construction, maintenance, expression, and consolidation of collective identities. The second aspect focuses on the conditions within which certain types of riots are enabled or constrained. I show how community based elites saw and utilized opportunities that elites situated within the state seemed to provide at both sites, Lucknow and Hyderabad. This helped them to use specific types of riots for collective identity formation.

Findings show that elites in Hyderabad were able to organize violence between Hindu and Muslim collectivities, but suppressed violence between Shia and Sunni groups. This happened because in Hyderabad the BJP and MIM emerged as the rival Hindu and Muslim political parties respectively. The Muslim political party in Hyderabad, MIM, has also been able to successfully suppress latent tensions between the Shia and Sunni sects through cooptation and coercion. This has meant that sectarian frictions are dissipated before they can transform into

violence. On the other hand, the presence of belligerent rivals claiming to represent the Hindu and Muslim communities, coupled with opportunistic politics played by successive state governments has allowed several Hindu-Muslim riots to occur in Hyderabad. These riots have reinvented communal collective identities for the Muslim community in Hyderabad.

In a reverse scenario, post-colonial Lucknow never had any significant Muslim political party or interest group that was electorally oriented. This has created a situation where the Hindu communal party, BJP, exists without a rival Muslim political party, thus undermining the potential for conflict around elections. Also, the popular legacy of Lucknow's communal harmony has meant that successive state governments have ensured that no communal rioting ever took place in the capital. The absence of state based elites who could have partnered with communal elites based in the community, has also undermined the possibilities of communal violence in Lucknow. In contrast, rival elites and organizations among the Shia and Sunni have continued to exist in Lucknow. The absence of an inclusive Muslim party or interest group with legitimacy in both sects has meant that these sectarian elites face no constraints in organizing sectarian violence. Both Muslim sects in Lucknow also have access to state based elites from rival camps, thus their divisive sectarian politics gets support from above. Politicians of the Congress party, Samajwadi Party, and the BSP have aligned with the Sunni community elite because of the fact tht the Sunni community constitute the bulk of the Muslim voters in the city. Shia community elite, on the other hand receive active support from BJP politicians, who have no chance of Sunni support, and who instead have historically aligned with the Shia community in Lucknow. The BJP and other parties have been rivals in UP, hence their support to Shia and Sunni elites, respectively, has contributed to sectarian frictions that has often transformed into violent rioting.

This chapter analyzes riots in both cities in the context of election timing and results. Findings support literature that argues Hindu Muslim riots to be related with closely fought elections. However, Hindu Muslim riots in Hyderabad that take place with no connection with elections remain unexplained by existing scholarship. I use interviews to suggest that non-electoral rioting is used by communal interest groups as a strategy for maintaining and consolidating the salience of the Muslim collective identity for future use. The same argument is especially true for Shia-Sunni violence. Shia-Sunni rivalries in Lucknow do not have the potential to substantially affect electoral outcomes in Lucknow apart from a few dents that it can make in two constituencies. Thus, sectarian violence can not be explained simply by electoral competition. Instead, I argue that sectarian violence in Lucknow is also a strategy used by both Shia and Sunni sectarian leaders and organizations to maintain and consolidate their collective identities that can be used in future projects.

Overall Findings

The key question that this dissertation asked was: how did a prominent Shia collective identity form and was sustained in Lucknow over the twentieth century, while a similar phenomenon failed to take place in Hyderabad, a comparable city in India. The period that I covered starts in 1904 and ends in 1998, spanning almost the whole of the twentieth century. I divided this period into three chapters, each of which focused on a specific repertoire of contention that was used in collective identity formation.

The first chapter shows how public rituals, particularly their redefinition, can contextualize the formation or reinvention of collective identities. Chapter two focuses on protest campaigns to show their role in consolidating collective identities, and chapter three analyzes riots as a strategy for sustaining collective identities. However, the common thread that runs

across the three chapters is the role of community based elites; elites connected with the state; their interactions and partnerships; and the role of the state, which together emphasized specific collective identities as salient in either city. In Hyderabad, first a patrimonial princely state, and later a powerful Muslim party shaped the interactions between community and state based elites, and also suppressed sectarianism. However, communal entrepreneurs were able to identify and utilize opportunities for contention and this resulted in 'Muslim' emerging as the salient collective identity. In Lucknow, first community based and state based elites allowed sectarianism to develop, and then once it crossed the threshold of public peace, the colonial state intervened to formalize the sectarian divide. In later years, rival Shia and Sunni elites consolidated and maintained sectarian identities through protests (1921-1948), and violence (1949-1998) with the help of either state based elites, or elites from mainstream political parties. However, a legacy of communal harmony, and the absence of rival Hindu and Muslim elites undermined the development of a communal collective identity in Lucknow. In other words, the informal affinities between community based and state based elites, prepared the grounds for particular types of identity politics. Community based elites identified and utilized these opportunities to project collective identity claims through contentious activities. Finally, driven by its own particular motives, the provincial governments reacted to these contentious activities, in ways that enabled particular collective identities to be accepted and strengthened while it refused the same status to other identities.

This project engages with three specific literatures. The role of the state in shaping group identities; the role of elites in the formation of collective identities; and the connections between group identities and violence. My project contributes to these literatures in two main ways. The first is by bringing together the role of the state and the elites in shaping group identities. I show

that claims about new collective identities or revisions of older ones were presented not simply by community based elites or the state acting by themselves, but by the joint efforts of both. In this case community based elites perceived openings provided by the state for specific collective identities, and made corresponding claims. However, these claims gained legitimacy only when the state, through elites either based within the structures of the state or those whom the state gave patronage, aligned with such claims.

The second contribution this project makes is towards the scholarship on violence and collective identities. This scholarship is based on studies of intergroup relations, economic competition, civic collaborations, electoral contestations and riots. My project makes three important contributions to this particular scholarship. First, and foremost, my project does not take group identities to be preexisting like exiting scholarship does. Susan Olzak's study of ethnic competition and conflict,⁶¹¹ Ashutosh Varshney's study of civic relations and riots,⁶¹² and Paul Brass and Steve Wilkinson's study of elections and violence,⁶¹³ take group identities as preexisting and coherent modes of belonging. My project, in contrast is oriented towards tracing the formation of collective identities- it shows how a general Muslim identity split into Shia and Sunni identities in Lucknow, and how various ethnic identities fused into a Muslim collectivity in Hyderabad. The second contribution that my project makes is through grounding the analysis in historical explanation, an important approach used in historical sociology.⁶¹⁴ Existing

⁶¹¹ Olzak, Susan. 1993. *The dynamics of ethnic competition and conflict*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press

⁶¹² Varshney, Ashutosh. 2005. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

⁶¹³ Brass, Paul R. 2011. *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Wilkinson, Steven Ian. 2006. *Votes and violence: electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press

⁶¹⁴ Mahoney, James. 2000. "Path dependence in historical sociology". *Theory and Society*, 29 (4): 507-548; Mahoney, James, Erin Kimball, and Kendra Koivu. 2009. "The Logic of Historical Explanation in the Social

scholarship on inter-group violence focuses on contemporaneous processes—demographic and economic shifts in Olzak’s work, patterns of civic relations in Varshney’s study, and electoral contests in Wilkinson’s and Brass’s analyses—to explain patterns of intergroup violence. My project shows that historical processes are more salient, and that contemporaneous factors are often a continuation of historical patterns. In both cities, the joint effect of community elites and state based elites inaugurated different types of social cleavages in early twentieth century. These cleavages aligned with specific types of intergroup competitions and conflicts, reinforcing each other over time. These cleavages and attendant conflicts gained momentum over the decades as the key players continued to reproduce actions that further reinforced group identities and conflicts. In Lucknow, a freeze in communal conflict and frictions in sectarian relationships were inaugurated through the combination of state structures and communal elites. In Hyderabad, an opposite freeze in sectarian conflict and frictions in communal relationships were inaugurated through similar factors. These patterns continued over time as the combination of communal elites and incentives of state governments continued to support these patterns. Thus, the collective cleavages inaugurated in early twentieth century continued to remain salient over the entire twentieth century despite shifts in contemporaneous contexts. The third contribution that this project makes is about violence, riots to be more specific. While existing research sees riots as outcomes of competition, lack of collaboration, or perceptions of threat between already existing and established groups,⁶¹⁵ my project takes an opposite view. My findings show that riots—communal in Hyderabad, and sectarian in Lucknow-- are strategic tools, instead, that are

Sciences". *Comparative Political Studies*. 42 (1): 114-146; Tilly, Charles. "Why and How History Matters." *Oxford Handbooks Online*. 21 Jan. 2016.
<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199270439-e-022>.

⁶¹⁵ Brass 2011, Ibid; Olzak 1993, Ibid; Varshney 2005, Ibid; Wilkinson 2006, Ibid.

utilized in the larger projects of creating and sustaining distinct collective identities that are purported to be antagonistic to each other. So violence is instead used as a strategy, pretty much in the same way as James Jasper argues,⁶¹⁶ in establishing and maintaining group distinctions for desired outcomes such as winning competitions, as well as for keeping exclusive group identities prominent.

Future Research

While my research answers the main questions I started with, several fascinating questions are yet to be articulated. I collected a large amount of data for this project, some of which I have not been able to use for this dissertation. The unused data includes piles of archival material from Lucknow and Hyderabad, copies of documents from private collections, photographs that I took of Muharram rituals in both cities, as well as of places and built environments where communities congregate during Muharram. I made extensive videos of the Muharram processions in both Lucknow and Hyderabad over several days during the period. This includes the largest Sunni procession in Lucknow, both on its route and at the destination- a Sunni Karbala in Lucknow. I also interviewed dozens of people in both cities, but have used only a small number of these interviews for this dissertation, mainly for chapter three and two. I plan to use this unused material to continue my research beyond this dissertation. I will be augmenting this dissertation with this material for the book that I plan to start next year. Another project that I want to focus upon is the rise of a new type of young community leader who cultivates an overly pious persona in their public life, is upwardly mobile in the economic sphere, and who does not shy away from violence in his aspiration to project himself as the best leader of the Sunni or Shia community.

⁶¹⁶ Jasper, James M. 2006. *Getting your way: strategic dilemmas in the real world*.

Finally, when I proposed this dissertation, I planned to use visual culture as an approach for discussing my data. However, I did not do so as I quickly realized that I had the motivation to do so but not enough training. In my future work, I plan to get training in using visual material for sociological analysis, and use materials that I collected to talk about the role of built environments and space in identity claims.

APPENDIX: 1 SCHEDULE OF IN-DEPTH, OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

This checklist of possible questions will be followed informally in a way that keeps the interview conversational and open-ended. The order of the questions, beyond the beginning, may not be followed strictly. Questions listed here are for the purpose of reminding the interviewer (P.I.) about issues to be included in the interview session. This checklist will NOT be administered as such to consenting respondents

1. Beginning

- Appropriate greetings.
- Explain topic of interview and research interest of the PI, Briefly explain the purpose of dissertation research.
- Remind respondent about:
 - Researcher's commitment to confidentiality,
 - Respondent may skip any question(s) that they are uncomfortable in answering
 - Respondent may discontinue interview whenever they so feel
- Ask permission to record the interview using an audio device.

2. Questions about participation in Muharram rituals

- Do you participate in Muharram rituals?
- Please describe your participation in detail, starting with the latest period
- What does Muharram mean to you, what is its significance/importance to you?

3. Questions about electoral politics

- Do you consider yourself politically interested/active
- What do you think about the latest elections
- What are the key factors that influence your voting preferences

4. Questions about Religion, Politics, and riots

- What is your opinion about communalism (Hindu-Muslim tensions and conflicts) in India?
- Have you ever experienced a communal riot? Could you describe your feelings?
- In your opinion why does communalism and communal riots persist, what reasons do you identify
- How would you describe the state's role in communalism and communal riots
- Have you ever experienced sectarian riots? Describe the experience
- What is your opinion about sectarianism among Indian Muslims (Shia-Sunni relations)?
- What possible factors define Shia-Sunni relations, especially conflicts
- How would you describe the state's role in communalism and communal riots
- How does communalism affect politics and elections
- How does sectarianism affect politics and elections
- Are there connections between riots and Muharram
- Are there connections between riots and elections
- What is your opinion on the mixing of religion and politics
- How does your religious or sectarian identity play a role in your political preferences
- What factors influence your electoral preferences

5. Questions about community identity

- In your opinion how are Hindus and Muslims similar and different
- In your opinion what are the similarities and differences between the two sects in India
- How would you describe your community identity?
- How do others (Shia, Sunni or Hindu) see you as belonging to a religious community
- How do politicians, political parties, and the government view your community identity
- How would you describe your belonging to two types of communities?
- Does your primary community identity change with context? How?
- In your opinion, is there adequate political representation of the Shia community.

6. Questions about cultural symbols

- What places do you regularly visit to fulfill your religious obligations, and how are they significant for you and your family
- Which artifacts do you bring back from pilgrimages and local religious visits, and what is their significance
- Which audio-visual products do you use for religious purposes (recordings of religious speeches, performances, congregations etc)
- Which processions, rituals and places are important to you for observing Muharram
- Please describe the significance and purpose of religious symbols, posters, and other artifacts that you display in your homes

7. Questions about revered religious leaders, clerics and religious organizations

- Which particular clerics have you historically followed, and why
- What qualities or characteristics make you prefer one cleric over the other
- Which religious organizations are you members of, why?

8. Questions about the state and its policies

- What role do you expect the state/government to play for minorities, especially Muslims and Shia-Muslims
- How do you evaluate the role played by the state in this regard
- Does the state and its policies have an effect over your status as a minority, how?
- What is your opinion about the state's policies for minority welfare
- What is your opinion about the census
- In your opinion, what particular issues need improvement vis a vis the state and its policies

9. The separation of Shia and Sunni Muharram (to be asked in Lucknow only)

- What is your opinion on the separation between Shia and Sunni communities during Muharram
- What reasons do you think drive tensions between the two sects during Muharram
- What is your opinion about divisive rituals such as *Tabarra* and *Madh-e-sahaba*
- What reasons do you see for the performance of such divisive rituals
- What role do clerics, politicians, and the state play in all this

10. Muharram practices among Shia and Sunni communities (to be asked in Hyderabad only)

- Please describe how Muharram is observed in Hyderabad, who participates and why?
- What is your opinion about divisive rituals such as *Tabarra* and *Madh-e-sahaba*
- What role do clerics, politicians, and the state play in all this

11. Questions about historical events. The following questions are to be asked about the historical events listed under the following questions (All questions may not be asked for specific events).

- What significance does this event hold for you and your sense of identifying with your community
- How does this event affect other's perception about you and your community identity
- In your opinion how did this event affect communalism/sectarianism in India
- What reasons and factors do you see behind this event
- What role has the state played vis a vis this event

Events:

- India's independence, partition, and creation of Pakistan (1947).
- Formation of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (1972).
- Establishment and rise of the Muslim political party AIMIM, 1950 onwards (only for respondents in Hyderabad).
- The Shah Bano case (1984-1985).
- Ram temple movement (1985 onwards).

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