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Cutting Through the Noise
The Role of Anti-Muslim Violence in Hindu Nation making under BJP-led India

A Research Paper

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Abstract

This research paper seeks to move away from theorizing the nation making of India through the lenses of a decolonial struggle, thereby problematizing its postcolonial nationalism and toward studying it as a Hindu hegemonic project and the majoritarian Hindu (re)colonization of India through the perspective of Muslims in India. Nation-making in India is often viewed through the lens of an anti-colonial struggle, however, the Indian nation making project since 1947 has been a series of many inclusions and exclusion— thereby, it is a story of many injustices. However, the nation-making under the current regime of the right-wing nationalist party in power, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), follows in the footstep of the right-wing organization, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). RSS, a paramilitary voluntary organization that did not have a leading role in the freedom struggle of India is now shaping the idea of the country under the banner of a Hindu Rashtra, or Hindu State.

As per many scholars the antagonist of the building a Hindu state, and thereby central to the project are— Muslim, Christians, and Communists. Muslims in India, since the coming of the BJP into power in 2014 have come under a great threat, wherein Genocide Watch has declared Muslims in India to be on the brink of a genocide.

The violence against Muslims in India is elaborate and labyrinthine, where one way to look at is to unpack it into different categories— direct, structural, and cultural. Thereby Muslims pay for the 'sin' of their minority status in India not only in blood shed through physical violence, but also poverty, ghettoization, education backwardness, isolation, alienation, harassment, and exclusion. To cognize the 'invisibility' of violence against Muslims in India, the consent for which is manufactured through its hegemonic Hindu majority, it is thus important to extend the theorization of violence beyond the crimes committed by the sovereign state power and recognize that violence is also operationalized through the means of administrative and managerial means. The constant struggle of Muslims against the violent homogenizing nation making has made it important for academia to challenge the narrative around it—since the existing discourse on Indian nation making is shaped through the interaction of Western colonial logics with the upper-caste Hindu majoritarian colonization of the academic spaces.

Relevance to Development Studies

According to the Sachar Committee Report, Muslims are one of the most disadvantaged groups in India. However, historically Muslims have remained subjected to the discourse of security in postcolonial India, and not that of equality or social justice. Therefore, it becomes relevant to Development Studies to study the impoverishment of the largest minority in the world not only to unravel the violence against the community, but to move toward formulating mechanisms for empowerment and inclusion of Muslims as equal citizens of the country.

Keywords: India, Nationalism, Postcolonial Nationalism, Hindutva, Indian Muslims, Violence

Introduction

Mamma, my mother, has lived many lives in a lot of places, but she very decidedly told me, *I want to be buried next to my phupho,* pointing at a small patch of land in a graveyard next to the tombstone that belongs to her aunt in a small town somewhere in North India. She says she wants to be returned to *her soil,* and the discomfort of not knowing what it means to return to *your* soil sits heavily at the back of my throat— If *my* soil is the plot of earth closest to the women in my family, why do I not feel like I belong to it while alive? Why does the territory I was born into so violently reject me, and I, her? Why is belonging tied to a village, a city, a state, a nation? Who am I if I do not know where I want to be buried?

The partial answer to my question comes from Allama Iqbal, also *called sha'ir-e-mashriq* (Poet of the East) and *hakimul ummat* (Philosopher of the Muslim People) who in condemnation of nationalism, wrote a poem titled *Watiniyat,* which roughly translates to Patriotism. Following are excerpts from the piece.

Muslim Ne Bhi Tameer Kiya Apna Haram Aur
Tehzeeb Ke Azar Ne Tarshawaye Sanam Aur
In Taza Khudaon Mein Bara Sub Se Watan Hai
Jo Pairhan Iss Ka Hai, Woh Mazhab Ka Kafan Hai

The Muslim also constructed a different harem of his own
The Azar of civilization made different idols of his own
Country, is the biggest among these new gods!
What is its shirt is the shroud of Deen (Religion)[1]

Iqbal, whose poetry influenced his philosophy, paints modern nation states in the image of an idol and thus sees it as opposed to the values of Islam. He delved into emerging trends in the West, which at the turn of the twentieth century 'hypnotized' the Muslim world and singled out nationalism and imperialism to be the destroyer of humanity, thus pleading Muslims to guard themselves against their curse.

Aqwam-e-Jahan Mein Hai Raqabat To Issi Se
Taskheer Hai Maqsood-e-Tajarat To Issi Se
Khali Hai Sadaqat Se Siasat To Issi Se
Kamzor Ka Ghar Hota Hai Gharat To Issi Se

Politics have become bereft of sincerity by this alone
The destruction of the home of the weak is by this alone
The antagonism among world's nations is created by this alone
Subjugation as the goal of commerce is created by this alone[2]

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[1] The poem and translation retrieved from http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bang-e-dra-102-wataniyat.html
[2] The poem and translation retrieved from http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bang-e-dra-102-wataniyat.html

He moves away from drawing from Islamic imagery and blames nationalism to be the cause of political corruption, oppression, war, and capitalism. In nationalism Iqbal saw the pitfalls of atheistic materialism, which he considered the greatest danger to the modern world.

Ho Qaid-e-Maqami To Nateeja Hai Tabahi
Reh Behar Mein Azad-e-Watan Soorat-e-Mahi
The limitation to country results in destruction
Live like the fish in the ocean free from country[3]

While the use of his poem here is a poetic choice, it is also a highly political one. Iqbal was a man of many great ideas— while he stood in complete defiance of nationalism, he also later became the ideological founder of Pakistan. According to Hamilton A. R. Gibb (1950), one way to look at the journey of Iqbal's philosophy is to see in him the diverse current of ideas that were agitating Muslims in the Indian subcontinent before and during partition, and in many ways to this day. This research similarly builds on the dilemmas of Indian Muslims in the current context, seven decades after the formation of India, when fear and desperation of *Hindutva*— Hindu nationalism, has engulfed the country.

This research problematizes postcolonial nationalism in India through the perspectives of Muslims in the country, who after the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, were rendered a religious minority. Nationalism in India has seen many phases— this research focuses on the Hindu nationalism under the leadership of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), who came into power in 2014 and were re-elected in 2019 through a watershed majority. The research makes use of the knowledge, understanding and first-hand experiences of Indian Muslims to first flesh out their perspectives of a Hindu nation in the making, through the use of violence. The violence against Muslims is studied with the help of Galtung's triangle of violence and a case is made for further research using Foucault's theorization of biopolitics and violence.

The research begins by spelling the research questions and objectives, followed by setting the context of the study. The next chapter focuses on Methodology and Methods, wherein the data analysis serves as the point of departure for the critical interaction of theory with data in the succeeding chapter— Findings. The chapter titled Findings, would become the bulk of the research, wherein it is divided into two chapters, each then divided into three sub-chapters. Building on the findings, the next chapter, *Ikhtitam* presents further discussion. The research is finalized with a conclusion.

Research objectives and question

Previous literature claims that Islam is at the center of the Hindu Nation making project project such that it is seen as an impediment and an enemy to the establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation) (Vanaik, 2017). The proposed research thus strives to center Muslim voices to enter the debates on nation-making in postcolonial states in order to situate Muslims in the making of a Hindu state as well as reimagine the Hindu Hegemony in India as Hindu colonization of postcolonial India. The narrower focus of the research is to understand how violence is equipped in nation-making in India, to which Muslims are not just victims, but witnesses, which then doubles

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[3] The poem and translation retrieved from http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bang-e-dra-102-wataniyat.html

down as a reason to incorporate the Muslim epistemology as the lens for the analysis of the research.

The research serves to answer the following questions:

- How do Muslims perceive the Hindu nation making in India?
- How do Muslims relate anti-Muslim violence to the Hindu nation making in India?
- How has the nature of anti-Muslim violence changed under BJP-led India since 2014?

The primary objective of the research is to counter the Hindu hegemonic postcolonial nationalism in India with an alternative understanding of the nation-making project by Muslims in the country. The research will also serve as documentation of the violent subjugation vigorously being erased by the State in real time.

The research seeks to unpack the multilayered violence that Muslims as a religious minority have suffered from, in order to move beyond the conceptualization of violence in the form of physical brutality. A final motivation for this research is to understand the violence against Muslims in India to then be able to frame resistance against state oppression.

Muslims in India

"India has had a long history of being a multi-religious society, wherein Islam found its way into the Indian subcontinent through traders in the South and conquerors in the North dating all the way back to the 7th century AD (Engineer, 1991). The Indian subcontinent was ruled by the Muslim Mughal empire, before they were overpowered by the British during the colonial era. The British adopted a 'policy of neglect' against Muslims since they saw the Muslim population as a major threat to their rule in the subcontinent (Belkacem, 2007). In the years before the freedom from the British and partition of the Indian subcontinent, the Indian National Congress (INC), led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru played a major role in the anti-British movement. INC was supported by the All-India Muslim League, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Despite being the foremost anti-colonial force against the British, the Muslims were viewed through the lenses of doubt by the INC. Consequently, the Muslim League had its reservations about the course to be taken after independence, as the question of Communalism was central to them since India was a Hindu majority state and rights of Muslims needed to be safeguarded, regardless of whether the partition happened or not (CFR, 2022). The initial hesitation of the Muslim League to remain a part of India, which encapsulated the general anxiety of Muslims right before partition, can be looked at through Jinnah's Fourteen Points that he presented to the Congress part in 1929. The fourteen points, amongst other demands asked that, "The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for protection of Muslim culture and for the protection and promotion of Muslim education, language, religion, personal laws and Muslim charitable institutions and for their due share in the grants-in-aid given by the State and by the local self-governing bodies (Congress and Muslim parties on Communal Question, n.d.)." The failure of the Congress party in agreeing with the Fourteen points added to the skepticism of Muslim leaders regarding the future of Muslims in the country after independence and thereby demands were made for a separate state— Pakistan (Khan, 2022, p. 2)."

While a sense of belonging to specific communities existed in pre-colonial India, the Hindu-Muslim communal identity can be largely attributed to the colonial policy of "divide and rule." As claimed by Zaheer Baber (2000), "divide and rule" did not conjure communal identity from scratch

however the process of institutionalizing specific communities was intimately associated with the administrative imperatives of the colonial state.

With independence from the British in 1947 came the partition of the Indian subcontinent into the Islamic state of Pakistan and the 'secular,' 'democratic' republic of India. While partition saw the biggest mass migration in the history of the world on both sides of the borders, many Muslims decided to *'stay'* in India which they envisioned as their own country, such that today Muslims make up almost 15 percent of the country at around 200 million. While India established itself as a secular, democratic republic, events like Shah Bano case, where a court judgement on the divorce of a Muslim woman led to massive debates about the extent of having different civil codes for Muslim in India and the illegal demolition of the Babri mosque by Hindu activists who claimed that the Hindi God, Ram was born on the exact site that the mosque stood on, have shown otherwise, such that Independent India has seen a rise of militant Hinduism, that began surging in the 1980s (Deshmukh, 2021).

Islamophobia became exacerbated with the attacks on the twin tower on September 11th, 2001 in USA, which pushed the entire world to view Muslims as terrorists and global Islamophobia became well aligned with the indigenous Indian version. Anand (2005) explains that 'The Muslim' is seen as an object of insecurity and a site of fear, fantasy, distrust, anger, and hatred by the Hindu majoritarian society in India. The 'war on terror' post 9/11 reinforced the association of Islam with terrorism in India and used 'terrorism' as an excuse to discriminate and marginalize Muslims (Khalidi, 2003).

Anti-Muslim violence through the Genocide Model

The proof of anti-Muslim violence carried out under the BJP rule can be characterized through the different steps of the genocide model. In a public report, Genocide Watch (2022) announced that India has reached the eighth out of ten stages of genocide against Muslims in the country. According to Gregory Stanton (2016) of Genocide Watch, Genocide develops in a ten-step process, where the stages are predictable but not impossible to prevent. The process is not linear, thereby multiple stages occur simultaneously. The model of genocide established by Stanton provides a clear framework for documenting the spread of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence in India.

For the sake of this research, the Genocide Model only serves to provide the extent of horrifying proof of violence against Muslims in India, however it is beyond the scope of this research to build on the model further analytically.

The table below is adopted from Mohammad Pizuar Hossain's (2021) study of the Rohingya genocide built on Stanton's model and is followed by the manifestation of each of its stages against Muslims in India under the BJP rule since 2014.

Table 1. The Ten Stages of Genocide

Stage	Name	Definition
1	Classification	Classifying a targeted group based on its ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality, from the vantage point of an "us versus them" mindset.
2	Symbolization	Symbolizing members of the targeted group by forcing them to wear attire or emblematic articles or marks; or differentiating them as "Other" based on their physical difference.
3	Discrimination	Denying civil rights or even citizenship of members of the targeted group via customs, arbitrary laws, and political power.
4	Dehumanization	Identifying or treating the members of the group as "non-human" or "sub-human"; comparing them with animals, insects, or diseases.
5	Organization	Planning to kill members of the targeted group; organizing the military, the police, paramilitary forces, and/or popular groups for that purpose.
6	Polarization	Using propaganda to isolate the targeted group from other communities; banning social interactions between groups; eliminating prominent individuals of the targeted group from positions of public respect.
7	Preparation	Employing certain terms such as "ethnic cleansing," "clearance operation," or "counter-terrorism" to justify actions against the targeted group; preparing military, paramilitary, or mob-style organization and weaponry.
8	Persecution	Mobilizing for massacres of the targeted group through creation of death lists, confiscation of property, and detention in concentration camps.
9	Extermination	Committing violence, especially mass killing and mass rape, against the targeted group in a deliberate and systematic manner.
10	Denial	Refusing to acknowledge the commission of crimes; burning bodies, destroying or disguising mass graves; destroying other traces and evidence; threatening witnesses, journalists, and other investigators; blaming the victims for the violence.

The first stage 'Classification,' works on classifying groups on the grounds of ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality based on the framework of "us vs them." In the case of India, 'The Muslim' in the *Hindutva*— Hindu Nationalism discourse is an object of insecurity at the personal, local, national, and international level, wherein 'The Muslim' is constructed as a site of fear, fantasy, distrust, anger, envy, and hatred, thereby formulating emotions of extermination. According to Anand (2005), these feelings are not restricted to *Hindutva* discourses but have seeped into other sections of society in India. Anand (2005) makes a case for how Muslims are viewed through the lens of "us vs them" wherein the Indian society ascribed to the Hindu majority in the country portrays the self as virtuous, civilized, peaceful, accommodating, enlightened, clean, and tolerant, whereas 'the Muslim Other' is seen as morally corrupt, barbaric, violent, rigid, backward, dirty and fanatic. The binary is drawn via stereotypes prevalent in India and elsewhere, including the West. The second stage referred to as 'Symbolization' entails ascribing names or symbols to the group classified as "them" or "the Other." According to Maidul Islam (2007) the identity of a 'Muslim Other' in the Indian public discourse has been shaped by the resurgence of *Hindutva*, where the 'Muslim Other is identified with cultural symbols which often do not even reflect the everyday traits of Muslims in the country but are imposed to curate a stereotypical and mythical image.

Examples of this are bearded men with skull caps or women in burqas and the labelling of Muslims as 'terrorists,' 'anti-national' or 'Pakistani.' According to a study done by The Wire (2022), 34 speeches delivered by the BJP politician and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath showed over 100 instances of *Hindutva* supremacy wherein he implemented an anti-Muslim rhetoric through the use of symbolization. Muslims in his speeches were referred to as 'followers of Jinnah (founder of Pakistan)', 'worshippers of the Taliban,' 'rioter,' 'mafia,' and 'terrorists.' The third stage, 'Discrimination' is marked by denying civil rights and citizenship to the target group via customs, laws, and political power. The BJP in 2019 enacted the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on December 11th, 2019. Under the CAA Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Parsis who had migrated from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan to India before 2014 are to no longer be considered illegal immigrants and can acquire citizenship. However, by leaving out Muslims from being granted these special privileges officially makes CAA a discriminatory policy against Muslims. As claimed by Aakar Patel (2021) in his book the judiciary in India has permitted a de facto *Hindu Rashtra* to emerge through legislation, through laws like the beef ban making cow slaughter punishable, laws criminalizing inter-faith marriage in the midst of the discourse about 'love-jihad' and laws facilitating the segregation and ghettoization of Muslims. Classification coupled with Symbolization facilitates the fourth stage 'Dehumanization.' The fifth stage is called 'Organization,' and is a prerequisite for a genocide such that it is often state backed where militias are used to deny any state responsibility. India has informal organization under the banner of Hindu groups. Jayanth Deshmukh (2021) claims that independent India has seen a rise of militant Hinduism, often termed as "saffron terror" which engages orthodox Hindus in hyper-nationalistic pride. According to a Human Rights Watch report (2019) after the BJP came into power, between May 2015 and December 2018, 44 people (36 Muslims) have reportedly been killed by "cow-protection groups" which are claimed to be affiliated to militant Hindu groups and have ties to BJP. The violence that ensued in the February of 2020 in the capital, Delhi that cost 40 Muslim lives and left over 200 severely injured, were reportedly led and organized by Hindu militant groups (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The sixth stage 'Polarization' is an important prerequisite for the large-scale mobilization and makes use of isolation of targeted groups from other communities. As claimed by Niranjan Sahoo (2020) since the late 19th century, the question of nationhood has been a primary source of political and societal polarization in India, however the landslide electoral victories of BJP in 2014 and 2019 have brought polarization to a very dangerous level. The seventh stage 'Preparation' makes use of terms like "ethnic cleansing," "clearance operation" and "counter-terrorism strategy" to legitimize the use of violence against targeted groups. In India, 'security' is used to mask violence in the name of counter-violence, thereby facilitating killing in the name of protection. The anti-Muslim violence that took place in the state of Gujarat in 2002, under the leadership of Narendra Modi as the Chief Minister of the state by *Hindutva* forces was termed 'inevitable' and 'understandable' to secure Hindu lives. The discourse of security provided Hindutva groups to legitimize violence. (Anand, 2005). The 2020 violence in Delhi was insinuated as a justifiable act by the government under the BJP rule led by Modi as Prime Minster, which was indicated through— instigation of the violence by a BJP leader, Kapil Mishra, "callous" investigation into the violence and the blurring of lines by the State between 'right to protest' and 'terrorist activity' (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Muslims in India are currently undergoing the eighth stage, 'Persecution,' which is marked by victims being identified and separated because of their ethnic or religious identity, and through various means subjected to deprivation and death.

Muslims lives in India are under a very grave threat and this study serves to inform literature of the linkages between rise of Hindu nationalism, which is manifested through the Hindu nation under the BJP banner of 'One Nation, One People, One Country' and anti-Muslim violence which has seen an uptick from 2014.

Nation, Nation-states and Nationalism

Nation-states adhere to the convergence of an institutionalized polity, wherein nationalism refers to allegiance and bounded solidarity to the state. The nation is seen as the legitimate owner of the state, and the sentiment of collective ownership in the form of nationalism is what provides the state its legitimacy (Brubaker, 1996). The collective sentiment of nationalism has often been equated with descent-based ethnicity, such that the resulting nation-states are homogenous political units (Kymlicka, 1995). The foundational issue with this liberal doctrine is the assumption of the prior existence of a self-conscious, homogenous allegiance around which states are built, when in reality this consciousness is evoked by elites through a selective recalling of a certain period in history to construct an image of pre-existing legitimacy, deliberately omitting the instances of past and present internal divisions (Renan, 1996).

Anthony W. Marx (2002) claims that the question of who is excluded from, included into, or partially included into the nation is a crucial issue in the current age when the rights and statuses of groups and individuals are determined by inclusion into nation through citizenship and minority rights.

Nation-states have become the hegemonic fate of organizing all societies in the present times. Irrespective of the form of governments, all states claim to protect and nurture the population with a given territory from 'enemies.' Despite Max Weber's famous conceptualization of the state, according to which, the state is an entity that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory, it still seems improbable that the state would act violently against the people on whose mandate it stands. A close look at the history of the democratic state in postcolonial India shows that most of its nation-making is marked by violence towards its own people— be it the violence of partition at its birth, the offensive against the princely state of Hyderabad, army operations in Punjab in mid-1980s, army and paramilitary operations against indigenous and tribal population in the North-East of the country or the occupation of Kashmir (Khanikar, 2018).

San Juan (2001) claims that violence has been employed by the nation-states to accomplish questionable ends, where its disciplinary apparatus is used for committing unprecedented barbarism. Instances include the annihilation of indigenous peoples in colonized territories by 'civilizing' nations, the 'holocaust' of Jews by the genocidal Nazi regime, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor and exclusion and extermination of ethnic minorities, such as Hazaras in Afghanistan and Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Coloniality of Postcolonial Nationalism

In 1950-60s, nationalism was regarded as the feature of the victorious anti-colonial struggle in Africa and Asia. However, under the garb of 'development' and modernization, nationalism was already being undermined by secret deals, manipulations and pursuit of private interests by the elites of these postcolonial states. By 1970s nationalism had become closely linked to ethnic politics (Chatterjee, 2020).

Born out of an anti-colonial struggle, nation-making in India is often looked at from the vantage points of the end of the British rule and the partition of British India that followed. Adopting the 'liberal' framework at its inception, the modern Indian state put forth the ideals of secularism and religious pluralism, granting the citizens inalienable rights as the minorities cultural rights. However, the engagement with constructing a 'national identity' meant the dominant majority dictated the parameters— the 'Indian nation' came to be appropriated by Hindu majoritarianism and 'national mainstream' became a euphemism for the latter's cultural preferences (Fazal, 2015).

Vivek Chibber (2013) claims that anticolonial nationalism set out with the goal of carving a national identity even before the capture of state power. While this national identity for a nation can be drawn along the lines of— culture, language, religion, or region, but must at its core define itself through the rejection of colonial discourse. However, as per Chibber while nationalism in postcolonial states rejects claims to Western superiority, it accepts the foundation on which their dominance is based.

Postcolonial scholars like Chaterjee (1986) and Pandey (1990), explain how the nationalist thought and nationalism in colonial India made a shift from communal to secular in the late 19th century, however, Indian nationalism remained built upon the prerogatives of the Hindu elites, even though the postcolonial Indian state granted rights to individual and groups within its borders. Thus, while there is a distinction to be made between Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism as will be later discussed, the consent for the building of an Indian nation-state was derived from the Hindu elites of the country.

This research will look at the Hindu (re)colonization of India under the leadership of the right-wing Hindu nationalist party, BJP, focusing narrowly on the role anti-Muslim violence in the making of a Hindu nation.

Nation Making under BJP

The BJP works under the *Hindutva* ideologue, which can be divided into two inextricably linked wings— the political and the ideological. The Hindutva ideology views India as the ancestral lands of Hindus and thereby imagines Muslims through the lens of "foreigner" and "invaders." Thereby, at the crux of the establishment of the Hindu nation state is the extermination of Muslims. Politically, the BJP uses security as a discourse of violence that that masks violence in the name of counter-violence, killing in the name of protection for the citizens—Muslims are viewed as an 'internal-threat' that the Indian population needs to be protected from. Building on the hypothesis of nation making by Charles Tilly (1985), the violence against minority Muslims is facilitated and justified in the name of achieving security for the Hindu Self at individual, community, national as well as international levels (Deshmukh, 2021).

The phenomenon of nation-making and anti-Muslim violence has previously been studied both through the analysis of the hegemonic Hindutva discourse that leads to anti-Muslim violence in the country and viewing anti-Muslim violence through the lens of communal violence (Brass, 1991; Dhattiwala and Biggs, 2012; Deshmukh, 2021). This research seeks to add a layer of complexity to how violence is equipped against Muslims in India through a multifaceted approach— direct, structural and cultural violence, as provided by Galtung, while making a distinction between the violence in nation-making before and after 2014.

Methodology and Methods

Data Collection

The respondents for the interview were selected through purposeful sampling, the logic and power for which lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for in-depth study (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) also classifies different ways of purposeful sampling, one of which is intensity sampling according to which one seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not unusual cases.

Implementing intensity sampling, this research is the story of 6 'usual' people based in Delhi— an activist, a lawyer, a student, a journalist, an entrepreneur, and an NGO worker. While the six respondents lead six very different lives, their experiences are inextricably intertwined with each other by the virtue of being politically engaged and having seen or having been victims of what they call anti-Muslim violence. They become information rich cases because of their collective religious identity— as Muslims.

The research makes use of qualitative interviewing with the 6 respondents, who were interviewed online, instead of in-person in Delhi due to security concerns. While 5 of the interviews were in English, one was done in Urdu and translated to English, all six interviews were then transcribed. Each interview lasted about an hour, on average. As a means of precaution, the names of all the respondents have been anonymized. The transcripts of the interview serve as the primary data, coupled with on-site conversations with activists and journalists at a protest in Delhi and family and friends of those arrested by the police as supplementary data. These conversations were not recorded to maintain the informality of setup in already high-tension environments.

Borrowing from feminist scholars the data collection of this research makes use of biographic narrative, where the narrating 'woman' is placed at the center stage as it allows the narrator to discuss those issues of life that matter most to her without being directed by questions of the researcher. Here, the logic of centering the 'woman' is used to place the Indian Muslim experience and perceptions as the foundational basis of the arguments of the research. It is important to note that making use of biographic narratives in research in non-Western contexts has been problematized by scholars like Ruth Behar (1993) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1993), because they saw it as a mode of representation that would force local ways of narrating to fit the rhetoric of the West, thus altering the original narrative beyond recognition and rendering 'woman' as a homogenous category. The wider notion of biographic narrative does not in itself pave way toward multifaceted identities of women, as claimed by Mohanty:

"*Thus, the existence of Third World women's narratives in itself is not evidence of decentering hegemonic histories and subjectivities. It is the way in which they are read, understood, and located institutionally that is of paramount importance. After all, the point is not just "to record" a person's history or struggle, or consciousness, but how they are recorded: the way we read, receive, and disseminate such imaginative records is immensely significant (Mohanty, 1991, p. 34).*"

To solve this issue, Karin Willemse (2014) turns to the notion of 'against the grain' used famously by critical, post-colonial and subaltern feminist scholars of colour, to place themselves against the dominant positioning within the academic world, where the homogenizing, victimizing approach of women as 'Other' is challenged to emphasize the alternative positions women could construct within those systems.

This research is being conducted in a political and religious context that is rapidly changing, thus there arises a risk of drowning the narratives of the respondents in the dominant discourses in academia, which often look at Indian Muslims as an oppressed monolith. Reading against the grain in the context of this research means decoupling the claims of the respondents from the hegemonic understanding of Muslims as just victims to *Hindutva* violence or viewing them as perpetrators of violence themselves. This is reflected in Sara Motta's (2018) work where she says, *"[W]hen we dare to speak the truth of the violence, when we speak through the vulnerability and pain of our enfleshed experiences, we feel the full force of the Law and the Rational Truth. We are rendered mute as hysteric, liar, or deviant, or in the worst case, perpetrator (p. 31)"*

While the respondent's Muslim identity is important to the research— they are also man, woman, learning, unlearning, privileged, disadvantaged, born in Delhi, from elsewhere in the country, religious, not very pious, old and young. Thus, both, the 'alternative' historical background to nation-making in India and the current situation vis-à-vis violence against Muslims in the country, have been guided by the testimonies of this 'complex' group.

The time frame of the study is 2014 to present day (2022), which is chosen due to the coming of BJP into power, with a landslide victory in 2014 and then subsequent re-election in 2019, coupled with the party's inclination towards the building of a Hindu Nation, as seen through its campaigns, manifestos, endorsements, and statements. The narrower focus on Delhi as the site of research is twofold— it is both the capital city, the seat of power of the BJP and has seen state violence in its different forms.

Moreover, Delhi also has a rich Muslim history, being the throne of the Mughal empire, which is reflected in the lines of Mir Taqi Mir, an Urdu poet of the 18th century Mughal India,

> *Dilli jo ek sheher tha, aalam mein intekhaab*
> *Rehte thay muntakhab hi jahaan rozgaar ke*
> *Us ko falak ne loot ke veeraan kar diya*
> *Hum rehne waale hain usi ujde dayaar ke*
>
> *Delhi, that was a city unique on the globe*
> *Where lived only the chosen of the time*
> *Destiny has looted it and made it deserted*
> *I belong to that very wrecked city.[4]*

Ethical Considerations and Positionality

Knowledge production is a result of the intimate relationship between research and researcher. As theorized by Hervik (1994), the researcher's position has a huge influence on the outcome of the research.

"By virtue of my birth the story of Indian Muslims is also my story, but it is not a story I own. The same privilege that affords me the space and freedom to talk about the horrors of the nation making project while escaping the violent machinery of it, is also what distances me from telling the story with absolute authority. I am an outsider to the pain, sorrow, apprehensions, and fear of

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[4] The poem and translation retrieved from https://www.sabrangindia.in/column/mir-taqi-mir-romancer-delhi

Indian Muslims— I am only an observer. Being an Indian Muslim makes me privy to the internal differences between the opinions put forth by the interviewees, thereby making it easier to explore the perspectives through heterogenous lenses, it also requires me to separate my own views from those of the interviewees. While not explicitly reflexive in the written word, so as to avoid taking up space meant for the respondents, I have tried to internalize the understanding of my position throughout the analysis of the data.

I entered this research with the intention of not only challenging the dominant narratives around nation-making, but also documenting the stories of people that are constantly being erased by and drowned in state propaganda. However, as Tuck and Yang (2014) point out— damage centred research often leaves communities with a narrative that tells them they are broken without any actual reparations. The scholars make a distinction between different kinds of stories— while stories are meant to be passed along, not all of them as social science research. Making this distinction between the stories I heard during the journey of my research was important to practice Refusing. Refusal of research is not easy in this context, because social sciences has an obsession with inviting oppressed communities to speak only of their pain. However, no research is bigger than the people it tells the story about, therefore it is important to remember that at the end of the day the research is conducted for the people and not for the fulfilment of the researcher. Refusal has thus been a true test of my research. (Khan, 2022, p. 4)." What has been refused or omitted is not explicitly mentioned in the research, but I have tried my best to portray the respondents as they were— not broken, not damaged, inherently, rather under the attack of a powerful state.

Data Analysis

The data is analysed using the Grounded Theory approach put forth by Strauss and Corbin (1990) through an inductive approach, as displayed in Table 2 below. The data was coded into sub-themes, attributed to particular narratives. The sub-themes were then clubbed under two major themes— Muslim Perceptions of the Hindu Nation Making and Violence.

The sub-themes will further be built upon in conjunction with a historical analysis and theory, in the next chapter.

Table 2. Analytical Themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Narratives
Muslim Perceptions of the Hindu Nation Making	'We already live in a de-facto Hindu state'	The permanence of the notion of Hindu Rashtra in Indian nation-making; Viewing of Muslims as outsiders; Status of Muslims as second-class citizens in India; Rule of Hindu organizations in India
	Muslim Future in a Hindu State	A strong belief in the impossibility of the establishment of a de-jure Hindu state; Viewing of the Hindu state as casteist, sexist, racist, and anti-human; Possibility of a second 'partition'; Viewing Muslims as very central to the heterogenous makeup of India
	Violence in Hindu Nationalism vs. Indian Nationalism	Tracing of anti-Muslim violence to a pre-2014 era: Hashimpura violence, Baghalpur violence, Gujrat riots, Muzzafarnagar riots, Batla house encounters, Babri Masjid demolition etcetera; Viewing BJP as reaping the seeds of violence and anti-Muslim sentiments sowed by the previous parties; Seeing a change in the way liberal media portrays anti-Muslim violence before and after 2014; Acknowledging the impunity enjoyed by state and non-state actors under the BJP rule.
Violence	Direct Violence	Violence on students by police and paramilitary forces; Arrests and intimidation of scholars, students, activists and journalists; Lynching; State-backed riots.
	'Violence is not always physical'	Economic boycotts; Discrimination in the job market; Denial of legal assistance; Denial of housing; Denial of Muslim leadership at a political level; Psychological violence; Criminalizing Muslim identities; Funding cuts to Muslim majority institutes.
	Cultural/ Psychological Violence	Communal slurs; Isolation at institutions like schools and universities; Constant questioning of loyalty toward India; Singled out as security threats based on appearances and names.

Findings

This chapter will first delve into the Muslim perspectives on the making of a Hindu state in India, followed by a closer look at the use of violence in this process.

Muslim Perceptions of the Hindu Nation Making

At the centre of the Hindu nation making project in India are the 200 million Muslims of India, who while by no means being a homogenous group, have become both the primary witnesses and victims of the project. Their lived realities and knowledge become important in discovering the intriguing nuances of nation making— while most respondents believed that they already live in a de-facto Hindu state, thereby confirming the Hindu colonization of India, they also were in complete rejection of the possibility of the establishment of a de-jure Hindu state, elucidating their claims rooted in international laws, foreign policy implications, diplomacy, heavy resistance from Indian Muslims and the sexist and casteist implications of a Hindu nation. A significant debate that this research seeks to explore is the distinction between Indian nation making versus Hindu nation making— the contention between the two and how they overlap, wherein the respondents claimed that while violence was equipped by the state after the coming of BJP into power in 2014 with complete impunity, the existence of a strong anti-Muslim sentiment was a presence in all stages of Indian nation making, which inherently has been a Hindu Hegemonic project.

'We already live in a de-facto Hindu state'

An uncompromising, strong voice from the Indian Muslim community, Hamza was only an undergraduate student when he went to jail for the first time because of his involvement in the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, and at the age of 21 he was sent back to jail over a speech he made calling for solidarity between marginalized groups in India to fight the spread of right-wing nationalism facilitated by the BJP. His critique of the Indian state is not only rooted in his experiences as a student activist, but also his ghettoized reality as a Muslim— both socially and spatially, where he says, "*So the ghettoization is, is really like, I call it— this part of Delhi is our Delhi and the other part is their Delhi.*" Shedding light on one of the major themes that cuts across the research, Hamza makes a claim for the existence of a de-facto Hindu state, when he says,

"[India] is already a Hindu Nation for all purposes. I disagree with people who are still waiting for it to become a Hindu Nation, like for all technical purposes. You openly give calls for genocide; you openly discriminate against Muslims. The state is just submitting against Muslims, attacking them, witch-hunting them, demolishing their mosques, madrasas, homes, everything is going on, without any resistance from any institution of the state. So, it's strange for me when somebody says that it might become a Hindu Rashtra if we don't act now (Hamza)."

Hamza sets the tone for the rest of the chapter when he uses his exasperation to establish the actuality of a Hindu state for '*all technical purposes.*' This section is thus a practice in unpacking Hamza's quote and will thereby trace the history of how India became a de-facto Hindu state.

Emergence of Nationalism is a modern phenomenon tied to the rise of capitalism. As explained by Vanaik (2017), from its inception to the period of post-1945 decolonization, the formation of nation-states has taken place in four waves. First, as per Benedict Anderson (1983), came the creole or settler nationalism of the New World, where nationhood and nation-state formation were not contingent on language. This was followed by the language-based territorial nationalism of Eastern and Western Europe. Then in the twentieth century there came a tide of anti-colonial nationalism,

whose territorial boundaries of resistance followed the artificial border demarcations prescribed by colonial administrations. In these 'new' nations, nation-state formation was built on the existence of self-conscious national movements tied to a national culture, that was often furthered through the spread of a single indigenous language or ethnic group. The fourth and most recent wave has seen the resurgence of the supposedly resolved 'older' nationalism alongside the resurfacing of post-colonial nationalism whose existential purposes are new and cannot be ascribed to the legacies of colonial rule, such as in South Asia— Bangladesh, national movements in Pakistan, Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, and secessionist movements in north-east India, Punjab and Kashmir.

India was carved out of the subcontinent during the third wave of anti-colonial nationalism. The colonial rule transformed the conceptual map of South Asia along the collective lines of 'religion' and 'nation' which are universal categories rooted in Western modernity (van der Veer, 1999). These 'universal' categories were imposed onto South Asia through what Partha Chatterjee (1991) has termed colonial governmentality, one of the most significant implications of which has been the 'semiticisation' of local indigenous faith and traditions, by colonial power, such that according to van der Veer (1999) eighteenth century European Orientalism converged the different practices and beliefs of people across the Indian subcontinent into an integrated coherent religion called 'Hinduism.' As local communities were mapped through the introduction of a Census, the word 'Hindu' no longer remained historically and regionally specific and rather became the marker of a homogenous and national identity.

According to Shani (2021), the discourse on Hindu Nationalism came into being through the efforts of Hindu communities who organized themselves into Sabhas (assemblies), in the early nineteenth century Punjab to challenge the 'perceived' influence of minority religious groups, particularly Muslims and Sikhs. They promoted the interest of Hindu communities through the framework of loyalty to the British rule. In 1913, the Hindu Sabhas organized the first Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha Conference (All India Hindu Grand Assembly), such that the Hindu Mahasabha became the primary organization in the creation of a Hindu political identity during the colonial rule. In 1915, the Hindu Mahasabha defined its primary aim to be the promotion of Hindu unity and solidarity amongst different sections of the Hindu Community to consolidate them into a whole (Bhatt, 2001).

At the crux of the Hindu nationalist discourse is the concept of *Hindutva* which came into existence through the work of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who led the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1944 and used the word to refer to a Hindu ethnic and religious identity (Shani, 2021). As per Savarkar (1998) the Hindus were an ethnic community who possessed a territory and shared similar racial and cultural attributes— these three characteristics stemmed from the orientalist construction of the Hindu Vedic Golden Age (Jafferlot, 1996). Savarkar (1998) claimed that all Indians, inclusive of those from other religions, were considered to be part of the Hindu *jati* (community), where he asserts,

"Every person is a Hindu who regards [. . .] this land from the Indus to the seas, as his fatherland as well as his holy land – i.e., the land of the origin of his religion, the cradle of his faith (Savarkar, 1998, p. 115)."

However, along religious lines, Muslims and Christians were seen as 'foreigners' since Hindustan was not a land holy to them, wherein Savarkar (1989) claimed that their holylands were elsewhere— in Arabia or Palestine. Indian Muslims were particularly shunned due to their alleged allegiance to Muslims outside India, thereby making a comparison between Indian Muslims and Jewish people in Germany (Savarkar, 1989).

Kabeer, a civil engineer by profession whose PhD at a leading technical institute of India was withheld on account of him being part of the anti-CAA movement as a Muslim man, hopefully said,

"I had to let go my PhD but I will continue it one day InshaAllah (Kabeer)."

While all of Kabeer's closest friends are currently in jail or fighting cases against the state on charges of dissent, he has started a school for the children of victims of anti-Muslim violence in Delhi. He makes a claim about the undeniable links between Hindutva and Islamophobia, by saying

"Islamophobia and the notion of Hindutva and of Hindu Rashtra, they're all of interlinked.

Savarkar wrote a book, it's called 'the six Glorious epochs.' It's I think 1923, when he brought these books, six volumes of it… So, this guy talks about how rape can be used as a tool to oppress Muslims. Then how Muslims should not be subjected to friendship, how, and why they should not be allowed to be a citizen of the country.

So, the notion of Hindutva or the Hindu Rashtra is wedded with Islamophobia. So, you cannot take Islamophobia and say it's another phenomena and you cannot take Hindutva and say it's different phenomena. They're all part of the same plot (Kabeer)"

Kabeer's disclosure can be understood through the work of Babur and Akhtar (2021), according to whom Islamophobia is inherent to Savarkar's construction of the 'self' and 'other' that was later reinforced by his successors, Hedgewar and Gowalkar. The anti-Muslim discourse is constructed through an upper-caste (Brahminical) hegemony which seeks to acquire and sustain power, through the oppression of lower caste Hindus and religious minorities, especially Muslims. Hindutva ideology has always been about political power, moving to a politics of domination after the partition of British India.

Besides the Hindu Mahasbha, according to Kamat and Mathew (2003) the Hindu nation making project in India has its roots in the *Hindutva* movement which can be traced back to 1925 when the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, literally, National Volunteer Corps) was founded for "propagating Hindu culture." RSS was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar who was greatly influenced by Savarkar and his text titled, *Hindutva*. The *Hindutva* movement is organized under the organization called the *Sangh*, wherein RSS is the militant and ideological wing, and BJP, the political wing. The primary objective of the RSS is the transformation of India into a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) through the imposition of upper caste Hindu social and religious practices onto the diverse population of the country. Ideologically the premise of the *Hindu Rashtra* is based on the creation of two groups— insiders and outsiders, those who belong to the Hindu family and those who fall outside the fold of *Hinduness*. After Hedgewar in 1940, the RSS was succeeded by M. S. Golwalkar, who said:

The foreign races in Hindusthan [India] must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, and must loose (sic) their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment ? not even citizen's rights. There is, at least, should be, no other course for them to adopt (Golwalkar, 1939, p. 47-48).

"Foreign races" ironically here do not refer to the British who were the colonizers at the time, but to Muslims in the subcontinent. Thereby, at the crux of the establishment of a Hindu nation-state

is an anti-Muslim sentiment, where Muslims are painted as "invaders" and "outsiders." The political wing of the *Sangh*, the BJP, voted into power in 2014 and then again in 2019 via vast majorities, is currently ruling the country. While Islamophobia has always been rampant in India, it is now state backed.

Laughing both out of frustration and his gendered analysis of the relationship between RSS and BJP, Kabeer says,

"Before RSS was the mistress. RSS has now become a wife. So RSS has always been there a part, a part of the state. But from 2014, it is no longer a mistress of the state. It is the, the legally wedded wife of the state, the RSS. That is the difference. (Kabeer)"

Pralay Kanungo (2019) in his research points toward how the RSS is not 'cultural' anymore, nor does BJP have any pretensions of being autonomous of the RSS, such that RSS leaders are party leaders and ministers for the BJP and RSS bureaucrats run different organisations to determine the agenda of the nation's governance.

In conclusion, the origins of a Hindu state are not as new as the BJP takeover of India in 2014, rather they date back to the British colonial era. The manifestation of a Hindu state thus make explicit the de-facto Hinduness of India, which under the BJP rule, in conjunction with an RSS backed ideology have reached a peak.

Muslim Future in a Hindu State

A general consensus amongst the respondents was about India being a de-facto Hindu state, which has also been discussed in literature. As per Jaffrelot (2019), while the multicultural model for India set forth by its Indian constitution has never been followed, as of 2014, Muslim marginalization has reached its peak with a vanishing Muslim representation from the police, military, administration, and elected assemblies. This is coupled with Muslims being targeted by Hindu nationalist Militias, by reconverting them to the dominant religion, preventing them from praying in the open, criminalizing interfaith marriages and deploying vigilante groups onto people consuming beef, all of which has often resulted in illegal lynching by people that enjoy police protection (Jaffrelot, 2019).

Jaffrelot (2019) ends his work prophetically, by making a comparison between Israel and India, claiming that the second-class citizenship of Palestinians in Israel, might be mimicked by India where an evolution in constitutional amendments, turning Muslims into second-class citizens, may transform a de-facto Hindu Rashtra into a de-jure one. However, a surprising contradiction to the literature as agreed upon by the respondents to this research was the impossibility of the establishment of a legal, de-jure Hindu state in the future. This section will delve into the different strands of rejection of a de jure Hindu state through the perspectives of Indian Muslims.

Focusing on other marginalized groups, alongside Muslims, Kabeer rejects the possibility of a legally established Hindu state on the basis of its legitimacy as viewed through the global discourse on human rights. The legality of a Hindu state based on central scriptures of Hinduism would not hold up internationally by virtue of it being anti-women and anti-Dalit. While *Hindutva*, a modern ideology is anti-Muslim at its core, ancient Hindu scriptures as per Kabeer are anti-women and anti-Dalit, thus dehumanizing. He substantiates his claim by saying,

"I think envisaging Hindu Rashtra is a simple thing. But in history, there has never been a just state that is based on the concepts of Hindutva... Because if you pick the Hindu Rashtra, the core would be the Hindu ideologies and the Hindu rule book... One of these books, Manusmriti, says,

Dhol Ganwar Shudra Pashu Nari Sakal Taadana Ke Adhikari
(The instrument Dholak, the illiterate and the animal, should be subjected to thrashing).

Yeah, so the [Hindu Rashtra] does not allow similar rights and privileges to someone being a lower caste because of their birth. They do not allow someone to enjoy the same privilege based on gender— like women are not allowed the same rights as men. They do not allow even the right of men to marry a woman from other castes, because when you marry someone from the other one, you become untouchable. So, saying this, the core concept of Hindutva or the core concept of Hindu Rashtra is anti-women, is anti-Dalit. Basically it's anti-human (Kabeer)."

Caste in Hinduism, which divides society into four varnas—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, wherein Dalits remain outside of the caste system altogether, is key to understanding the Hindu nation-making project as cis-hetero-patriarchal, Brahminical, and Islamophobic. What Kabeer is saying can be looked a through the work of Dalit feminists like Cynthia Stephen (2009) and Pawar and Moon (2008), according to whom while Hindu nationalism positions itself as opposed to secular nationalism, it is critical to note that what is coded as Hindu nationalism remains Brahminical, thus also alienating 'other Hindus' like lower-castes and Dalits, especially women. This can be seen through the intersection of gender and caste, where caste is upheld through heteropatriarchal endogamy— marrying within the same caste to control women's sexuality, wherein Dalit women are othered through patriarchal and Brahminical values, leading to their invisibilization and structural and domestic violence.

However, an added layer of complexity of Hindu nationalism under the BJP rule has been the operationalization of homonationalism as theorised by Jasbir Puar (2007). Writing in the context of USA, Puar defines homonationalism as one of the logics of US nationalism where white queer bodies are assimilated within the white supremacist imperial settler state, while other queer bodies are excluded through white supremacy, colonialism, Islamophobia, neoliberalism and imperialism. Homohindunationalism similarly paints itself progressive to escape accountability for its sexism, casteism and Islamophobia by co-opting queer movements. For instance, Nishant Upadhyay (2020) claims that events like the 2018 Indian Supreme Court judgement decriminalizing homosexuality are co-opted by the Hindu right-wing in India as "decolonial acts" to then be able to claim homophobia as a colonial inheritance and establish the dominance of Hindutva over other ideologies while processes like, colonialism, Brahminical supremacy and Islamophobia, remain at play.

Fawad, a young Muslim lawyer based in Delhi spends his days tirelessly fighting Human Rights cases, especially those concerning issues of Muslims in the country, such as the case in the state of Assam where BJP banned Madrasa education and the hijab case in Karnataka, where BJP banned girls from entering institutions with their hijab on. Fawad's denial of the establishment of a legal Hindu state is rooted in rejecting defeat against the Hindu hegemony, where he says,

"Hindu Rashtra being created, which I think is a very legitimate possibility at this point in time, but I mean, I really wouldn't want to imagine such a world. I don't really think I can even think of a particular future of mine… I, I, I can't, you know, imagine myself in such a scenario and I wouldn't want to. At this point in time, I think that would be taking a step towards defeat. It would allow the other side per se, to take a step forward towards victory, which I don't think I would want to allow them to have (Fawad)."

Fawad's claim is a testament to two attributes— the evolution of *Hindutva* as becoming hegemonic, and the active role of Muslims in resisting this hegemony. The *Hindutva* discourse in India is becoming hegemonic, where hegemony is defined by Antonio Gramsci as an order where a dominant class exercises political, intellectual, and moral leadership framing it as a common world view (BaegIm, 1991). Suhas Palshikar (2019) in his work argues how besides the electoral dominance of BJP in the country, the political developments point towards the shaping of a new hegemony in India. As has been established *Hindutva* is a century-old project, where under BJP the *Hindutva* idealogue pushes its followers to become Hindu politically and 'religious Hindus' through the public manifestations of religiosity. However, the ideological domination of *Hindutva* in India under the BJP rule comes from the conflation between Indian nationalism and Hindutva, such that people who have no emotional investment in Hindutva would still stand in support of it in the name of patriotism (Palshikar, 2019).

However, this dangerous hegemonic manifestation of nationalism in the form of *Hindutva* is not going unchallenged. Resistance from marginalized groups on the fringes of the nation-making project under BJP rule such as *Dalits* (lower-caste Hindus), *Adivasis* (Tribal) and religious minorities like Muslims are using their epistemic positions to oppose the homogenous idea of India, and Fawad thus declines the triumph of a Hindu Rashtra in remembrance of efforts by these groups.

Originally from a small village in the state of Bihar, Adil, a student of History at Jamia Millia Islamia (National Islamic University) in Delhi, moved to the capital to begin his university education. His dismissal of a legal Hindu Rashtra came from the belief that the formalization of a Hindu state would mean a complete annihilation of Muslims, which he perceived as impossible, given the magnitude of the population. He says,

"In my opinion although, the concept of a Hindu Rashtra will remain a dream in the hearts of the people. It does not however only affect Islam, but also Christianity, where they stop their missionaries, break their schools down, so the effects of a Hindu Rashtra will be felt by everybody. It is true that these are the enemies, but I do not think that the government, even if it is on power for the next 20 years will have the power to fully eliminate 200 Million Muslims. (Adil)"

Therefore, according to Adil, if a Hindu state is to come into existence, it would call for another partition, similar to that of British India into India and Pakistan. He claimed with a smile of exasperation,

"If you are talking of a Hindu state, then it means you are thinking of creating another Pakistan. There will be no Hindu Rashtra, there will be another partition if this continues. (Adil)"

A journalist in training and an entrepreneur by profession, Malak was the only woman respondent to the research. Speaking fearlessly, despite having been recently subjected to extreme harassment from right-wing groups in India, she doubles down on the claim made by Adil by saying,

"Like if at all, this becomes a Hindu Rashtra […] hypothetically we we'll be given a state with a Muslim majority. (Malak)"

Adil and Malak deny the possibility of a Hindu nation-state within the territorial bounds of contemporary India and do not believe in the reality of a genocidal violence against 200 million Muslims. Instead, they situate the Muslim future in a separate state. However, to judge their perspective in context of the BJP rule one needs to look at the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the only Muslim majority state under the Indian rule, which despite its secessionist demands has been

subjected to an increased level of occupation by the Indian state, which points toward a smaller possibility of a separate Muslim state.

Another submission in the favour of the inconceivability of a legal Hindu state was Hamza's perspective, according to whom, Muslims are the one group who have held together the special and ethnic heterogenous makeup of India as a state. He claims,

"And my honest answer is this— Muslims are the only glue that has kept India together. Like you can find Muslims of any caste, any ethnic, any linguistics background, there's no other pan-Indian community that is so diverse. You can find a Muslim who has Brahmin roots and speaks Telugu, you can find a Dalit Muslim who has roots in Meghalaya, you can find Muslims were whose families were Nagas, you can find like Muslims everywhere…It would break [India] if you remove this common glue. It's very difficult to keep India together (Hamza)"

According to Hamza, while Indian Muslims are central to the construction of the idea of a Hindu state, through their portrayal as a threat that the population of India needs to be saved from, they are also very integral to the Indian nation making project in providing legitimacy to the existence of the state due to its incorporation of Muslims who are spread throughout the lengths and breadth of the country.

In conclusion, there is a tangible denial to the establishment of a de-jure, legal Hindu state from within the Indian Muslim community, despite the oppressive status quo.

Violence in Hindu Nationalism vs. Indian Nationalism

Nation making in the modern nation states were structured differently depending on the socio-political and historical contexts (Arısan, 2019). However, Hans Kohn (1956) theorizes that nationalism was a curse rather than a blessing irrespective of being Western or non-Western. Nationalism in postcolonial states was remodeled as a hegemonic tool rather than becoming a means of emancipation from traditional imperial powers. As claimed by Biberman and Castellano (2018), nation making has been an extremely violent process, where the transformation of an imagined community through exclusivity and sovereignty (Anderson, 1983), into a political reality, requires dislocation (Mylonas, 2013) and dispossession (Chaudhry, 1993). As theorized by Mylonas (2013), majorities which then become the backbone of legitimate authority in modern nation-states are constructed through the process of nation making, for which genocidal violence is (Biberman and Castellano, 2018) often used as a strategy.

While Hindu nationalism has been central in creating a national identity in India under the BJP rule, Vanaik (2017) in his book argues that at the time when an anti-colonial identity was being formed was also when the Indian polity was being communalized— for which the Indian National Congress-led National movement cannot escape most of the responsibility. This plays a vital role in making a distinction between Hindu nation making under the BJP rule since 2014 and the 'Indian' nation making that precedes it to then finally understand how violence has been equipped in nation making in India.

Kabeer's claim is important to open the discussion, when he says,

"I think the seeds of Muslim hatred or Islamophobia— they were sown decades before. They were put as seeds some 70 years ago, and now what we are seeing is what's the outcome of it. (Kabeer)"

Saad, who describes himself as somebody who works at "*at the intersection of activism and journalism*" is now dedicating his time to create spaces for Muslims, by Muslims in Muslim localities in Delhi for art, culture, education, and politics. The space, that has taken the shape of a bookstore-café was disrupted due to the government crackdown on Muslims during the anti-CAA movement in 2019. He joins Kabeer in taking the complete blame off of the BJP for the state of Muslims in India and holds other political parties accountable, especially the long incumbent, Indian National Congress (INC), by saying,

"How could a fascist idea nurture in a particular democracy setup? How could it evolve [over] 70 years? How could they sustain for 70 years? (Saad)"

What Saad and Asif are pointing toward is that not just Hindu nationalism, but Indian nationalism itself had a strong component of an anti-Muslim sentiment. The partition of the Indian subcontinent and the earliest days of nation-making in independent India serves as an appropriate vantage point to compare and contrast the secular and *Hindutva* (religious) nationalism in postcolonial India.

Paul Brass (2003) stresses on the partition of colonial India into the Hindu-majority state of India and Muslim-majority state of Pakistan to be the "greatest human convulsions of human history (Brass 2003, p. 75)." Leading the freedom struggle against the British and nation-making in India at the time of independence, the INC, proposed India to be a secular, sovereign republic under the Nehruvian ideals (Khilnani 1998) of Jawaharlal Nehru, who went on to become the first Prime Minister of the country. However, the secular ideals of the Indian Nation Congress were invalidated by their use of Hindu religious symbols to mobilize the masses and compromised the religious violence that spread like fire across India during and after partition (Shani, 2021).

Stressing that *'this is completely based on [his own] reading'* of history, thereby alluding to the importance of his epistemology as a Muslim student of Political Science, Hamza recalls the documentation of a particular episode of partition, by saying,

"The history is in the constituent assembly debates. I think it's in the second volume. The top leaders of Congress are discussing about closing the border between India and Pakistan and migration is still going on. Like people are coming to India from Sindh and Lahore (in Pakistan) and Muslims are leaving Punjab (India). So the migration of Muslims from [India] happened mostly from Punjab only. So what these guys are saying— "Close the borders from Punjab, but let the borders from Southern Pakistan be open." Because from modern Punjab, Muslims were coming back. So you stopped them from coming, but let the Sindhi border be open, because Sindhi Hindus had to come to India. So, yeah, again, for all practical purposes, it was not official, not as bad as it is now, but it had some Hindu element in its foundation since the beginning (Hamza)."

Exposing the role of Indian National Congress in communalizing India from its very inception during partition, Hamza's example is key in contextualizing the inherent anti-Muslim sentiment of the nation making that began a lot before the BJP took center stage in the political ecosystem of the country.

While the anti-colonial nationalism of the Indian National Congress proclaimed India to be a secular nation-state— inclusive to everybody inhabiting the lands within its territories, regardless of religion and ethnicity, it was to all intents and purposes based on an implicitly Hindu political imaginary.

Shani (2005) in his analysis of Nehru's *Discovery of India* makes intelligible that when Nehru talked about India as a civilization characterized by a community in "continuity for five or six thousand

years (Nehru [1945] 2003, p. 50)," he was agreeing with *Hindutva* co-option of the Orientalist perceptions of Hindu civilization.

Additionally, challenging the mainstream Indian historiography which pivots itself on the anti-communal character of Gandhi's role in the Indian National Movement, Achin Vanaik (2017) claims that as is commonly held, Gandhi did not speak the language of the masses but that of the Hindu masses. Speaking of partition again, Kathryn Tidrick's (2006) work on Gandhi points at how despite Gandhi's friendship and alliances with Muslims, he was a 'Hindu' politician, who invoked Hinduism in public to gather support and did not hesitate in blaming Muslims for communal disorders. Similarly, briefly hinting at the Hindu nature of Gandhi, who is often portrayed through the lenses of a unifying nationalist force, Kabeer says,

"Gandhi said I am a patriot that is why I am a Hindu (Kabeer)."

Exploring the relationship between state-making and violence, Charles Tilly (1985) in his seminal text on War Making and State Making as Organized Crime characterizes state-controlled violence into four distinct categories— war making, where the state eliminates or neutralizes rivals outside their territories; state making, which calls for an elimination of rivals within the territory of the state; protection is where state eliminates rivals of its client; and finally, extraction, which alludes to acquiring the means to carry out the war making, state making and protection. In India, state making and nation making have been parallel processes, thereby making Tilly's thesis applicable for analysing Hindu nation making.

While scholars like Oommen (1997) have issued warnings about the dangers of conflating states and nation, modern states have continued to propound themselves as nation states, despite the fact that many nations exist under a state or that one nation can exist across different states (Chaudhuri, 1999). In the case of India, the nation is seen as the legitimate owner of the state (Brubaker, 1996), and the construction of a nation-state has occurred such that political boundaries of the State mirror the cultural boundaries of the Nation, wherein the nation refers to its Hindu majority. In consistency with the claims above, Christophe Jaffrelot (2019) has theorized India as an Ethnic democracy— a product of ethnic nationalism supported by the ideology of a majoritarian group based on cultural characteristics that curate a sense of belonging and superiority that is detrimental to minorities of the state who are perceived as threats to its survival and integrity. Hamza makes an insightful comparison between India and Israel as Ethnic democracies when he says,

"This is something professor Sammy Smooha is also arguing for his Israel in his work, ethnic democracy. It is a democracy for all practical purposes for the outside world, but it is in fact [an] occupying force (Hamza)."

According to Tilly (1985) state making requires the creation of an enemy class by the state from within the state's population which are often "imaginary" threats and then the provision of protection to its population from the enemy class, using the monopoly on violence as theorized by Max Weber. Muslims in India have been created into an enemy class through a discourse of security, thereby justifying anti-Muslim violence in the name of counter-violence and normalizing violence against Muslims in the pursuit of personal, communal, national and international security (Anand, 2005). Speaking in clear support of the claim Saad says,

"They wanted the Muslim discourse to be centered around security (Saad)."

And Hamza reiterates,

"Even in Nehru's era also, since then the consecutive government that came for them, Muslims were always a national security issue. Dalits were an issue of social justice, deprivation, and marginality. For us, it was never about development, equal citizenship, equal membership in Indian society, social justice, or any of those… Muslims were always viewed as national security subjects (Hamza)."

According to Foucault (1988), security is linked to identity politics, such that to define ourselves it becomes important to represent others. Under securitization, the Other gets reduced to being dangerous, thereby becoming an object of surveillance, control, policing and possibly extermination. Violence against Muslims in India has thus been justified through the portrayal of Muslims as the 'Other' and as a threat. However, before looking at this violence under the BJP rule, it is important to also qualify that state-backed violence against Muslims or violence against Muslims with impunity from the state is not only a post 2014 phenomenon. Following are accounts of a few critical cases of anti-Muslim violence in the country that precede 2014.

Without hesitation, Kabeer narrates,

"In most of my conversation with people, they [consider] 2014 as a fulcrum. For some [people], this is a pivot, but that's not true. Like if I recall, the largest anti minority riots in the country, in 1983 [were where] 10,000 Muslims were butchered. In 84, 87, 89— all these years. [In 1989], there was a massive riot in Baghalpur, I think close to 3,000 or 4,000 people were butchered. In [1992] because of the Babri Masjid, Ramjanmabhoomi movement, there was all India violence… Huge violence occurred, thousands of the people lost their lives.

Others would tell us about cow-lynching. My father was into judiciary, [he] retired from the post of a judge. So he talks about how rampant and common cow lynching [were] in 80s. The only difference is the society. I mean, these things were not getting reported. So, if some incident happens at one obscure city, it would not be a headline at the national media… So one thing is without doubt, Islamophobia is not new (Kabeer)."

Saad, who has followed the instances closely, as a Muslim journalist, says,

"I also think that [this] kind of physical violence [has] taken place before 2014 too, you know, be it Malihana, be it Hashimpura, Bhagalpur, Gujrat, there's so many instances. Why do we not talk about them? We should also talk about them when we talk about violence against Muslims (Saad)."

A final echoing of the awareness is reflected in Hamza's statement when he says,

"You see Malihana, Hashimpura, Baghalpur, people who killed Muslims, the officers who killed Muslims in Hashimpura at point blank, harmless Muslims, peaceful Muslims, they, they retired with promotions (Hamza)."
.
The importance of the similarity in sentiment that cuts across these quotes is to highlight the propensity of violence against Muslims in India before 2014. It also brings forth the frustration amongst Muslims in India regarding the underreporting of violence, which under the BJP rule now is being talked about more. The paradoxical role of liberal media in reporting violence under BJP more explicitly than under the rule of other political parties, like Congress, is a subject for further research.

However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the different instances of state-backed brutality at length., namely— Gujarat and Baghalpur, where, as per government's biased data 1,000 Muslims lost their lives, as well as Malihana, Hashimpura, and Babri Masjid.

While there is a case to be made for the idea of India, that came into existence vis-à-vis the birth of Pakistan, to be unsecular and anti-Muslim since its inception, the coming of BJP into power in

2014 has accelerated the Hindu nation making project through the equipment of violence, such that it has been actively adopted by the state, which is reflected in the responses to the research,

when Saad says,

"It has made more people vulnerable to it right now… [Violence] is coming to places like Delhi, where it was at a point of time, not so being a capital (Saad)"

and Hamza says,

"The state has always [acted] like whatever Delhi police is doing right now—it has happened in UP in sixties, seventies and eighties and its very well documented (Hamza)."

While violence, in particular anti-Muslim violence, as discussed here, has played a central role in nation-making in India in all its phases, the research will delve into the violence under BJP rule since 2014, using Delhi as the focus.

To conclude, Malak's statement bridges the end of this section of the research to the next, thereby foregrounding the significance of closely looking at violence under the BJP rule to accomplish its Hindu nation making project, when she says,

"If BJP weren't there and there would be some other party, [but] I think, violence to this extent would not have happened (Malak)."

Violence (under the BJP rule)

The Sachar Committee appointed by the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in 2005, appointed a High-Level Committee to deliver a report on the social, economic, and educational status of Muslim in India. The report empirically determined the socio-economic status of Muslims to be worse than other socio-religious groups in the country, vis-à-vis their access to public and private sector jobs, education, infrastructure, and credit (SCR, 2006). The report as analyzed by Taha Abdul Rauf (2018) provides the long awaited recognition of various forms of social, economic and political violence that Muslims are subjected to in the country. The core of the violence exists within a matrix of identity, equity and security (Basant and Shariff, 2010).

While this multidimensional violence does not exist uniformly across the length and breadth of the country, the coming of BJP into power has increased its generalizability. Using the case of Delhi from 2014 to 2022—the two terms of BJP in power at the center, employment of violence will be studied through Galtung's theory. Galtung (1990) categories violence into three kinds—structural, cultural and direct, and his theory, called Galtung's theory explains the systemic exclusion of a population through the interrelatedness and functions of these three kinds of violence.

The testimonies of the respondents are in dialogue with the theory provided by Galtung, such that the discussion on anti-Muslim violence is divided into three parts— *Direct Violence*, which addresses the use of physical force, *'Violence is not always physical,'* that sheds light on structural violence and finally *Cultural and Psychological violence.*

Direct Violence

Direct violence according to Galtung (1990) is any action that reduces human potential and is carried out by an identifiable actor. As per Galtung (1969), direct violence is physically manifested. To distinguish direct violence in Delhi between 2014 and 2022, under the BJP rule, the CAA protests and the events that followed, as recollected by the respondents, are used as the departure point.

On 11th December, 2019, the BJP government reached one of its most massive anti-Muslim milestones in contemporary India by the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), according to which religion is made the basis for granting citizenship for the first time in the history of India. The act effectively strips Muslim refugees from the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh of their citizenship rights in India, and favours the claims of non-Muslim refugees from these Muslim majority states to acquire citizenship. The CAA coupled with government of India's citizenship verification system— the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) has led to an increased fear amongst the 200 million Muslims of the country who have lived in India for generations and are now at risk of losing their citizenship and becoming disenfranchised (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The introduction of CAA, as per Chhachhi (2020), is a practice in redrawing the boundaries of the nation, using expansion and homogenisation, which is at the core of *Hindutva*.

The introduction of the CAA was (and is still being) resisted through massive protests— led mainly by students and women in Delhi, where the protests at Jamia Millia Islamia University and Shaheen Bagh were the largest protests in the country. Both these sites also faced intense police crackdown.

Only 16 years old at the time, Adil, recollects the incidents that followed the passing of the bill,

"I was fully sure that the Lok Sabha (lower house) had passed the bill (Citizenship Amendment Bill), but the Rajya Sabha (upper house) won't. But then on 12th December, 2019 it was passed and signed by the president of the country. Jamia Teacher's Association in response made a call for a March from Jamia to the Parliament on 13th December (Adil)."

The teacher's association was confident that a protest at the university had very low chances of turning violent, however, later 13th December, the entire campus was barricaded by the Delhi Police. As soon as the march got close to the parts of the university that were taken over by the police, the police brutality began, as Adil recalls,

"Just as I passed the barricade, the lathi charge began. We ran through the back door of the campus then to escape (Adil)."

The students continued in the face of police brutality where, in Adil's own words,

"However, we still had to resist. So even though they were releasing tear gas and stuff, the students put salt in their eyes, to stop them from burning from the tear gas (Adil)."

However, not able to leave the campus on the 13th of December, the Teachers' Association took back their call for the march following the police brutality. Things remained quiet on the 14th, however as Adil says,

"Then on 15th December, the students decided to do a Gandhi Peace March, I remember. The main motive of that was to move through the neighbourhood of Jamia and make people aware of CAA and its implications. The march

moved through the streets with slogans and speeches. It was now 4PM. A lot of people had gathered, so it was decided that we would now march to the Parliament (Adil)."

Unable to follow the march the whole time, Adil went back to his room for a while when he began receiving distress calls from students because having joined Jamia at such a young age he had spent enough time *"walking around and getting to know Jamia,"* thus he knew the campus better than most people and could direct the students in their attempts to escape the police brutality. Adil continued,

"On 15th December, the police was inside the campus and had broken into the library and study areas, destroying it completely. They had beaten up the students badly, you must have seen the photo of the one guy with a bruised eye. Even now when I meet people, and talk to them, our souls are shaken to the core remembering the police brutality of those days. The media also manipulated the situation so much, students who were holding their phones and wallets in their hands instead of pockets were portrayed as stone pelters. The students were so terrified they were hiding in the attic of the building. The place where the violence occurred was almost 150 meters from the entrance of the campus. The mosque for the boys' hostel is 250 meters in, and the police brutality occurred there as well, even the imam and the guard were beaten up (Adil)."

Recalling the violence at Jamia, Malak, who was not personally at the university but had friends and family at the campus said,

"And then a lot of my friends are from Jamia. One of them got hit by [a] rod or something, on their back and stuff…When the police entered the Jamia campus and destroyed the whole library…one of [my] friends, his name [is] Shadab was hurt…And [another] friend, Meeran Haider, he's still in jail."

The protests that began at Jamia, in the South-East of the city, spread across Delhi and so did the violence, as Fawad recalls about the protests in *Purani Dilli* (Old Delhi), often lovingly called the heart of Delhi,

"The CAA protests had taken place, I was just a few months out of law school and then the Jamia violence had taken place. [We started going] to India gate for protests or old Delhi for a protest… and stand outside the Daryaganj police station, requiring the police to let out juveniles who've been hauled up and surprise, surprise— most of them are Muslims. In the night [the Police] are calling out Muslim names and, you know, parents are crying…one would imagine that it's got to do with the social status of a particular Muslim, but I don't really think that's the case (Fawad)"

Here Fawad also points at how the violence was not class-based anymore, all Muslims were under direct attack of the state. Old Delhi by virtue of its Muslim population— diverse in its gender, class, and caste composition, was heavily affected.

The stories of all six respondents meet at Shaheen Bagh in the South of Delhi, they are either residents or were brought to the locality by the protests. Shaheen Bagh which lies at the crossroads of several Muslim majority neighbourhoods of Delhi— Batla House, Zakir Nagar, Ghaffar Manzil, and Noor Nagar was turned into a site of an indefinite sit-in by Muslim women opposing CAA. As Bhatia and Gajjala (2020) examine, the location of Shaheen Bagh is critical to discuss *Hindutva* politics, since the residents of Shaheen Bagh come from varying economic backgrounds— from the labouring class to small and big businessmen to the professors at Jamia Millia Islamia university, additionally, due to its spatial proximity to Jamia university, the Shaheen Bagh protest essentially began as a retaliation to the police brutality on the students on campus.

While the protests at Shaheen Bagh continued, February of 2020 saw massive anti-Muslim violence in the North-East of Delhi, in its Muslim majority neighbourhoods.

"February, 2020, there was a big riot in Delhi. I saw everything unfolded [sic] before my eyes. I saw how enforcement agencies, law agencies, they denied giving security to Muslims. I saw Muslim being butchered on the street. I saw them getting burned alive (Kabeer)."

Kabeer, who alongside his team, was one of the first humanitarian relief respondent to the violence that broke out, talks about the horrors of the days drowning his anger in the coherence of his recollection. The violence led to the death of 53 people, mostly Muslims, caused more than 200 people to be injured and left mosques and Muslim homes looted and burnt. As per the report by The London Story (2020), the violence was led by Hindu fundamentalists and marked by police complicity, alongside a blockade of medical help to the injured, targeting of journalists and cases of sexual assaults. While there is a massive debate on whether the violence was two-sided, wherein the mainstream media as well as the Delhi Police in their charge sheet labelled it as a "planned conspiracy" by Muslim groups, scholars like Irfan Ahmad (2022) have anthropologically studied the violence and labelled it state-mediated pogrom against Muslims.

In conclusion, this section serves as a fragment of an account of direct violence that took place in Delhi between 2014 and 2022— and is not an exhaustive rendition.

Violence is not always physical

The title of this chapter is borrowed from Malak's testimony where struggling to find words to describe the violence she feels personally and witnesses around her, she says, *it is not always physical violence.* Here the theorisation of Structural Violence by Galtung (1969) gives meaning to Malak's frustration that echoes across all respondents, where Structural Violence in contrast with direct violence cannot be traced back to concrete actor(s) and is rather built into the structure and manifests itself through unequal power and unequal life chances. Therefore, structural violence occurs when inequalities are structured into society in a way that accessibility of social resources required for fostering individual and community well-being, such as education, health care, social status, wealth and adequate housing is restricted to some people or groups (Opotow, 2001).

Malak reflecting on her own experience of wanting to start a business, tells the story of insecurity in the markets, where people upon looking at her proposal of naming her company after her father's Muslim name have asked her *"Why a Muslim name? … Indian people will not invest (Malak)."* She also comments on how, *"Women with Muslim names and Muslim identities are not getting jobs (Malak)."* According to a study conducted by LedBy Foundation (2022), there is a net discrimination of almost 50 percent between Indian Muslim women relative to Hindu women in the job market in India, proving a significant hiring bias against Muslim women.

Parellely, Asif makes a similar claim when discussing the opening of his café. He solemnly says,

"The fact that you have to start something, and you think that, you know to be safe, you need to have a Hindu partner with you, have him there as a safety net, is a form of psychological violence, right? … You cannot do things on your own because you are a Muslim, and you have a Muslim name. So, you know, this kind psychological violence has always been there."

While both Malak and Asif point towards structural hostility against Muslims in the form of economic boycotts, that have over the time been stitched into the fabric of India, they inform the reality of the financially stable, middle-class Muslims in India. Most Muslims in the country come from India's most impoverished backgrounds, where less than 8 percent Muslims are employed in the formal sector as compared to the national average of 21 percent (SCR, 2006), and under the

BJP-rule have faced an increased opposition from both the party members and society in the form of calls for the economic boycotts of Muslims. This trend is very evident in the speeches given across the countries by BJP leaders, for instance, at a rally held in Delhi, legislators from BJP gave open calls for violence and economic boycott of the Muslim community, where one leader was heard saying *"Wherever you see them, I say that if you want to set their minds straight … then there is only one remedy, that is complete boycott… Do you agree with this? Raise your hand if you agree (The Indian Express, 2022)."*

As stated in the Centre for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP) report (2022), educational backwardness is the most critical handicap for Muslims, where they have consistently been left behind other social groups across the years. Hamza, who had just joined Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh then, calls to mind the paranoia amongst Muslim parents whose kids were studying in Delhi, after the election of BJP into power in 2014. He remembers,

"A lot of my like friends, elder brothers and my neighbours were getting caught and… there was a sense of fear among Muslims that I like remember very clearly that everybody was calling their sons and daughters who were studying in Delhi or any other Metro city to come back and stay here in Azamgarh… For example, I know somebody who was doing MBBS at AIIMS, one of the most prestigious medical colleges in India. And they called their son back and now he's running a a very small general store in Delhi because they were concerned about the safety of the children in Delhi. (Hamza)"

Hamza here is referring to a police-led 'encounter' in Batla House, a Muslim-majority, overpopulated and dense area in South-East Delhi, where on 19th September 2008, the Indian State launched an attack on what they termed, militant terrorists, as part of an 'anti-terrorism encounter' following bomb blasts in Delhi the week before. Numerous civil-rights movements have questioned the encounter, referring to it as a means to witch-hunt Muslims. The witch-hunt continues to this day and was intensified under the BJP rue, such that aspiring Muslim students were forced to return to their cities from Delhi.

Structural violence is also reproduced in its attacks on institution, where reflecting on the state of Muslim universities, Adil says,

"Even when it comes to institutes, the funding to universities like Jamia have been slashed immensely. AMU and Jamia have both faced cuts in their funding (Adil)."

According to statistics later shared by Adil, as per government figures between the fiscal years 2014-15 and 2021-22, the budget for Muslim majority institutes likes Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia Univesity have dipped by 15 percent, whereas central universities like the Banaras Hindu university have seen a rise in budget from Rs 669.51 crore to Rs 1,303.01 crore (The Wire, 2022).

Despite having been in a constant '*battle*' with the state Hamza is able to derive some sense of security in living as a young, Muslim man in India and attributes it to *"one of the privileges of living in a ghetto."* He says,

"My experiences come from the ghetto…In Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh) I was in a ghetto— like it's Harlem kind of a ghetto like the one Malcolm used to describe, like, you have wealthy people also, you have daily wagers, beggars also, white collar, blue collar, criminals also… Then I went to AMU, which was Muslim majority campus. Then I came to Shaheen Bagh, which is again a ghetto, so that safety factor was [there]."

Nida Kirmani (2008) in her research about ghettoization of Muslims in India, focusing on the Muslim majority neighborhood of Zakir Nagar in South Delhi, begins by pointing at Muslim deprivation evident in the Sachar Committee Report (2006). However, the isolation of Muslims in Delhi in certain pockets of the city is not only a result of the lack of capital but is instead a culmination of "feelings of insecurity based on the heightening animosity towards Muslims in India, the periodic eruptions of religion-based violence in various parts of the country, as well as anxieties caused by migration, urbanization, and development (Kirmani, 2008)."

Hamza further reflects on this reality, when he narrates,

"If you are a Muslim in Delhi, you either live in or near Jama Masjid or in Okhla. So, like Salman Khurshid was the Union Minister of the country, he would live in Okhla. Any Muslim celebrity and any Muslim daily wage workers, all of them are either in Okhla or old Delhi (Hamza)."

Muslims in Delhi are thus mainly concentrated in South-East and the old parts of the city, with little to no opportunity to move beyond these areas. Animosity against Muslims as talked by Kirmani (2008) is reinforced by spatial segregation through ghettoes, which in the minds of the Hindu majority constitute an anonymous mass, popularly called 'Mini-Pakistan.' Perceived as anti-social, criminal underclass, they are excluded from the image of India (Panikkar, 2006; Robinson, 2005). This was also talked about by Fawad when he said,

"Violence in, in the conventional sense of physical violence, as has happened with my friends— it ranges from that to violence in the unconventional sense where, you know, my [Muslim] friends have not really been able to get a decent accommodation because the landowner ultimately gets to know their name (Fawad)."

The *unconventionality* of violence, where no proof of coercion or attack is visible, also reproduces itself in the form of Muslim neighbourhoods in Delhi being more heavily policed than the rest of the city, as is evident in Adil's testimony,

"Just two days ago, my [nephew], who is in sixth grade was here to visit me at Jamia. Jamia has the most policing. We were three boys with the little child, and he really wanted to take a ride on the metro, so I said we can take him for a quick ride to the nearest station. When we got to the metro station, the security guard checked me for a really long time, so my nephew asked me, 'Is this because you're wearing a Kurta Pyjama?' From Jamia to Shaheen Bagh, there is an intense amount of police presence (Adil)."

Here, Adil reflects both on the systemized securitization of Muslims communities and also their vilification based on outward expression of their 'Muslimness' such as through the singling out of himself based on his choice of clothing— Kurta Pyjama, worn primarily by Muslim men in North India.
This spatial, social, and institutional segregation of Muslims thus also makes it easier to carry out pogroms such as the Delhi 2020 violence discussed above, due to clear demarcation of "enemy" territory. The culmination of these factors has led to an over-representation of Muslims in the prison of India, where Muslims account for 14.2% of India's population, but more than 19% of inmates across India's jails (Article 14, 2022). While this over-representation has been studied by Raghavan and Nair (2013) in the context of the state of Maharashtra, it needs to be subjected to further research.

Pointing out discrepancies in the treatment of Muslims in the bigger legal and political systems, Kabeer and Saad comment on the systemic discrimination of Muslims in the country. Kabeer draws from his own experience in the humanitarian field when he says,

"When I started working on the field with the victims, then I heard their stories… their stories are much more troubling… Since we worked with Muslims, every day we receive calls— someone from Madhya Pradesh, someone from Gujrat, saying how they have been denied legal assistance, how they have been denied, basically basic freedom that the constitution guarantees just for being a Muslim (Kabeer)."

Engaging with the debate on political representation, which in the recent past has picked up speed amongst Muslims in India, Saad says,

"Everyone has a political party and, you know, somewhere the secular nationalism and the secular nationalist principle or the larger umbrella under which all these party come together, which is of Congress has accepted it. But it's not willing to accept any political party, which is led by the Muslims and which talks about Muslim identity and raises questions around Muslim (Saad).

Structural violence against Muslims in India is operationalized in all social, political, and economic realms— however, this structural violence, as opposed to direct violence, is often wrongly conflated with unforeseen consequences of individual and free decisions (Tyner and Inwood, 2014), since there is no person or group to hold accountable for the violence.

Therefore, Marxist geographers like Tyner and Inwood (2014) point the scholarship in the direction of looking at structural violence not as unintended consequences of the system but the result of the particular social relations that constitute the production and circulation.

Cultural/ Psychological Violence

According to Galtung's (1990) triangle of violence, when on its leg of direct and structural violence, cultural violence is projected as the legitimiser of both. The symbolic violence built into a culture does not directly affect people by manifesting itself through direct or structural violence but is used to legitimize it via theories of superiority, for instance. Culture here refers to the symbolic sphere of existence— illustrated by religion, ideology, language, art, empirical science, and formal science.

At the intersection of ideology and religion is the legitimiser of anti-Muslim violence in India crystallized in the 'dying Hindu race' syndrome (Rauf, 2018). According to Datta (1993), the British empire to sustain its colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent strained communal relationships, where religion was invoked in both the census and the periodisation of Indian history into Hindu and Muslim rule, as opposed to the categorisation of European history into ancient, medieval, and modern (Pandey, 1989). Introduction of religion as a category in the census in 1872 fostered a geographical and demographic consciousness among religious communities. Over the years the census data gave rise to communal debates, hinting at a decline in the Hindu population, which began being perceived as a political decline and a form of threat from the Muslims.

Hindutva organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS took it upon themselves to create a mythology of the period beginning from Alaudin Khliji, a Muslim emperor of the Khilji dynasty that ruled the Delhi Sultanate in the Indian subcontinent, to present times— a mythology marked by the abduction of Hindu women, pillage, and conversions. Accordingly, since centuries of Muslim and British rule had 'emasculated' Hindus, their virility was to be rejuvenated by defeating the Muslims in the present times (Rauf, 2018). This explains the patriarchal temperament of Hindutva, which both sees Muslim men as ultra-virile male bodies who need to be eliminated to protect Hindu women and makes Muslim women's body as the site of conflict.

Commenting on her gendered experience, as a Hijabi, Muslim woman, Malak recollects her experience in the Indian online space,

"I like personally felt scared sometime [when I] shared my opinions online. Because once I [posted something] and the link was sent to an RSS group... I even had my photograph morphed. I was exhausted. I was vulnerable. I couldn't be myself for a bit. I stopped writing as well because that could trigger a lot of things(Malak)."

Malak's agony needs to be contextualised within the framework of Hindutva Online Subculture, as theorized by Benjamin Mok (2022) according to whom with the coming of BJP into power in 2014, the Hindutva movement has been observed as a monolithic entity, both from within and without. However, recent events in India expose the existence of Hindutva extremists who are unable to operate within the BJP-RSS nexus due to their belief that the BJP is not "right-wing" enough and thus often operate in digital ecosystems. While more extreme and explicit in their hatred, these online spaces have played a key role in encouraging political violence offline in the mainstream Hindutva realms. One such instance at the intersection of extreme Hindutva and gender-based violence was that of Bulli Bai app and Sulli deals— online applications created for mock "auctioning" Muslim women to humiliate them, where a majority of these were women who openly critique the BJP regime (Arya and Khare, 2022).

The negation of diversity within a culture is present due to ideology and not history, where the pretence of a pre-existing essence defines culture (Said, 2003). *Hindutva* undermines the cultural interrelatedness of Muslims with non-Muslims by representing Islam as intolerant. To perpetuate this myth of intolerance large parts of 'pre-Islamic' past, such as the Brahmanical (upper-caste) monopoly on religion and exclusion of lower-caste, 'untouchables,' women and tribal peoples from all social processes is reinvented (Hashmi, 2008). This works both in portraying Hinduism as tolerant and Islam as alien to the nation of India, which is seen best in the depiction of India as Bharat Mata (Mother India) in the image of a goddess, instead of a homeland, thereby excluding Muslims from the Indian cultural fold, since Islam sees idolizing God as unacceptable. This homogenization of culture attempts to remove remnants of Muslim history, culture, and identity from the public consciousness to thus alienate them and justify violence against them. This alienation takes many forms, which is visible in the declaration of the respondents, wherein Malak was disallowed to join the football team at her school on account of being a Hijabi, Kabeer was "subjected to communal slurs" in different educational institutes that he has been a part of, Saad has been questioned about his loyalty toward India and assumed to be pro-Pakistan, Fawad has been the butt of continuous Islamophobic jokes and Adil and Sahrjeel have repeatedly been labelled terrorists, to name just a few.

Galtung's characterisation of violence is very similar to that of Frantz Fanon (1963), where discussing the issue of colonialism he argues that the colonizer makes use of physical, structural, and psychological violence to oppress native populations. Galtung varies from Fanon in his theorisation of cultural violence, where he sees it to be linked to structural violence and vice versa, however Fanon, a trained psychiatrist, takes Galtung's theorisation further and recognizes the ramifications of cultural imperialism on colonised populations, terming it psychological violence. Psychological violence injures the psyche of a person through brainwashing, indoctrination, and threats, used to break the colonized people's will for self-determination, and affect an individual's sense of identity and pride.

Rejecting the possibility of a full-fledged genocide on Muslims in India, Saad explains how violence at smaller scales is used to psychologically torment minorities in the country. He hesitantly says,

"I don't think that, you know, killing of that sort [sic]…that big, which can be categorized as a genocide will happen… They will do small scale violence you know, everywhere in the country to psychologically traumatize the community and psychologically make them believe that they have all the impunity do that. And law cannot protect the minorities too (Saad)."

Here making a link between direct violence and psychological violence, Saad points at how attacks on a few individual Muslims is used a means to instil fear into the minds of the larger community, thus handicapping them. The deployment of 'collective punishment' serves as a good example of how the state makes use of a few Muslims as scapegoats to psychologically intimidate the entire community. One of the many instances of this is the demolition of property owned by Muslims in Khargone district in Madhya Pradesh state, Anand and Sabarkantha districts in Gujarat state, and Jahangirpuri neighborhood in Delhi, in 2022, to hold them responsible for communal violence in the cities, where ironically the clashes occurred due to armed Hindu men passing by Muslim neighborhoods during religious processions while shouting anti-Muslim slogans in front of the mosques of the locality. As per a United Nations Special Rapporteur (2022), the use of such abusive punishments has been deemed a complete violation of the law.

Most houses razed by the state belonged to Muslims from lower-income backgrounds (Human Rights Watch, 2022), however this does not mean that other classes are immune to violence under the BJP rule, as was seen in the demolition of the house of a young Muslim activist, who called it an "act of vendetta" by the state over her family's involvement in protesting against the government (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Commenting on this phenomenon of Muslims being under an attack from the state, despite their class, Saad laughs loud when he says,

"And that is good only I think you know… why should only one section of people be penalized and criminalized? I think it's good that all of a sudden [we] all are in the same state and do not have class divisions in that realm and other divisions in that realm. So all of us are vulnerable right now (Saad)."

In conclusion, the Hindu nation making project, makes use of a multidimensional form of violence to prohibit Muslims from being equal citizens of India, rendering them not only as a numerical, but also social, political, and economic minority.

Ikhtitam

ajab talāsh-e-musalsal kā iḵhtitām huā
husūl-e-rizq huā bhī to zer-e-dām huā
The continuous quest has come to an end
What has been acquired is but a trap

The title for this chapter is borrowed from Urdu poet, Aanis Moin's, use of the word *Ikhtitam* in the above couplet which means 'to close' or 'to end.' A lot has been uncovered throughout the quest that this research is, however, to think of it as final is false.

While Galtung's triangle of violence is very proficient in theorizing the analysis of violence in Hindu nation-making, this section will shift its focus onto Foucault's theorization of Biopower and the Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism.

Placing power at the centre of sovereign nation-states, Foucault theorised power as more than juridical and institutional, thus advocating for understanding its historical changes and forms in modernity. According to him, sovereign power is a form of power that was founded on violence— the right to decide life and death, where imposition of death penalty by the state and waging wars on behalf of the population are clear forms of such power. However, Foucault's (1978) claim is that since the inception of nation-states, power has undergone profound change, where violent sovereign power is being replaced by biopower— a form of power that exerts a positive influence on life, "that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations (Foucault, 1978, p. 23)."

Oksala (2010) in her work on Violence and Biopolitics, argues that the era of biopolitics is distinct in its use of various techniques in order to achieve subjugating bodies and controlling population, through managerial and administrative means, as opposed to the power of a democratically elected sovereign bodies. This obviously does not mean that biopolitical societies are non-violent, on the contrary, violence becomes harder to detect because it has to be hidden in the name of having a positive influence on life.

Chatterji (2004) claims that Hindu Nationalism in postcolonial India has made use of governance functions as a form of power where continuing the legacy of Britain's imperial power, it has inherited and modified its biopolitics. Hindu Nationalism constructs the Hindu state through majoritarianism such that biopolitics is used to homogenization of the population as a resource for state productivity, wherein dominant identities are constructed to maximize human being and resources, while annihilating the 'Other.'

Muslims under Hindu nationalism are pathologized and policed as the 'Other' where biopolitics is established through biological racism— making a distinction between the dominant identity and the Other, such that the Other is not just looked at as the 'enemy' threatening the sovereignty of the nation-state, but also as a biologically inferior group that needs to be eliminated to make life healthier. Biopower has been deployed in India against Muslims since 2014, through administrative and managerial means, through the introduction of laws like the CAA, laws on banning beef, laws policing interfaith marriages and budgetary cuts to Muslim institutions, to name a few.

In conclusion, biopower provides a good lens further study postcolonial states. Firstly, postcolonial states, like India, have adopted colonial administrative means of subjugation, reproducing domination (Pandey et al., 2003), and thus need to be looked at as inherently colonial, and subjected to critique as such. Secondly, the introduction of biopower helps make a difference

between sovereign state violence and the violence of biopower, thus opening the possibility of critiquing sovereignty without calling for its complete eradication, and rather finding ways to resist biopolitical violence through legal protections and democratic means of accountability.

Conclusion

While there are many strands of critique of postcolonial nationalism, this research has problematized it through the perspective of Muslims in India, who under the Hindu nation making project of the BJP have been excluded from the Indian nation state. A de-facto Hindu state, India has academically been prophesized to become a de-jure Hindu state— however this reality has been rejected by Muslims in the country. Some call it hope, some call it denial, some render it a legal impossibility. The research has also contributed to the discussion of the distinction between Indian and Hindu nation making, thus claiming that both overlap based on the equipment of violence against those on the fringes of the idea of India as envisioned by Indian and Hindu nationalisms, However, this does not discount the actuality that the coming of BJP into power in 2014 has accelerated the spread of anti-Muslim sentiment and violence unprecedented in the 75 years of the existence of the postcolonial Indian state.

The violence against Muslims in India is elaborate and labyrinthine, where one way to look at is to unpack it into different categories— direct, structural, and cultural. Thereby Muslims pay for the 'sin' of their minority status in India not only in blood shed through physical violence, but also poverty, ghettoization, education backwardness, isolation, alienation, harassment, and exclusion. To cognize the 'invisibility' of violence against Muslims in India, the consent for which is manufactured through its hegemonic Hindu majority, it is thus important to extend the theorization of violence beyond the crimes committed by the sovereign state power and recognize that violence is also operationalized through the means of administrative and managerial means.

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