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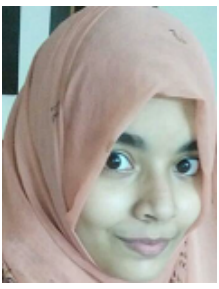
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MARGINALIZATION OF A COMMUNITY

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Marginalization in its text book definition means “treatment of any group, community, people or concept as not important, insignificant or peripheral”. It signifies the grouping of a certain people, community or group as secondary, unimportant or in the worse case classified as second class citizens. What we are seeing today in our country is a classic example of “marginalization” of a community based on their religion, becoming more prominent and prevalent in the past 10 years after the rise of a more right-wing oriented thought process through a systematic campaign of hatred and “othering” carried out by the ruling party with allies in the media channels, social media and everywhere else. What we are seeing is a spin of lies and propaganda of hatred being pumped in the majority with the help of the infamous IT cells spreading hatred and mostly fake narratives built to suit the narrative of creating a divide of “us and them” amongst the general public. This leads to demonizing one particular community-namely Muslims, its cultural and religious practices and creating a “fear” of the “minority taking over” everything. This poison has dangerously entered the minds of people and is visible in the arguments, debates, posts and commentary we see in news rooms everyday and social media encounters. What is worse is that the hate mongering has now entered our personal spaces- office, colleges, campuses and public discussion forums in real life. It is leading to justifications of violence, pogroms, curbing of dissent and all kinds of unconstitutional activities carried out by those in power and the fringe right wing elements and goons by the mainstream as well. What was fringe earlier, has become mainstream and thereby creating a 'New Normal' in the society. People are being conditioned and made to believe that this “Hindu-Muslim” narrative and right wing fundamentalism is more important than any other issue of development, education, healthcare, economic reform. Any form and category of dissent by opposition parties, intellectuals, more aware citizens even in any way such as a social media post is being categorized as sedition and considered as an “anti-national” sentiment. Expecting accountability from the ruling party and asking questions is considered wrong and a grave crime against the nation. The basic ethos of this country which our constitution has given us

in terms of “secularism” are being destroyed and a narrative of hatred and marginalization is being practiced. Destroying the very fabric of India, this article intends to look at this marginalization happening since a long time and having become more prominent with the passing of the controversial citizenship amendment act and the recent Delhi pogrom. It looks at the history of Muslims in India, their current state of affairs and how the recent events have made this specific targeting and marginalization more prominent. **HISTORY OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA** India has always accepted diverse ideas, thoughts, cultures, traditions and languages. Primarily India has been a land of polytheists but different faiths like Islam, Christianity or reformist religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have existed here. Before the advent of Islam in northern India, Arabs had developed strong trade relations with the South Indians and gradually, started settling here. Muhammad bin Qasim in 711 CE conquered Sind and thus the faith was propagated far and wide. It resulted in the establishment of various Muslim ruling dynasties among whom the Mughals were the most powerful. Akbar encouraged a healthy relationship among people of different faiths. He denied taking Jizya Tax (mandatory to be given by all except the Muslims under Islamic rule for protecting them) from the polytheists. He created a new religion, Deen-e-Ilahi which appealed different religions as it was based on the principles extracted from them. The later Mughal emperors continued his legacy. Aurangzeb is wrongly perceived to be a communal ruler, but there are scores of evidences to prove the reality. Although, he reintroduced Jizya but he also ensured the comfortable existence of the non Muslims. In a letter written by him in 1664 to Hindu king of Mewar, Ranaraj Singh he expresses his thoughts for peace and prosperity of people of various dispositions, considering it to be the responsibility of great kings who have to act on the path of God.

(<https://qz.com/india/918425/mughal-emperor-aurangzeb-protected-hindu-temples-more-often-than-he-demolished-them>)

Later British brought their culture and traditions and tried to overpower the Indians, hence changing the scenario. Their aim was to maximize profits by ruling over the region. For this, they found it necessary to divide Hindus and Muslims. The points of differences were highlighted by the British to instigate hatred. The census of 1871 differentiated Muslims and Hindus, separation of Bengal based on religious lines (1905) and introduction of separate electorates led to division. The persistent efforts of the British, lack of political will and the rise of extremist forces led to the partition of the country. Although a lot of Muslims went to Pakistan but a fair share of them decided to remain in their homeland-India, despite brutal communal riots across the country. **AFTER INDEPENDENCE** The Muslims have faced problems due to deterioration in their socio-political, economic and educational status. They lag behind in both public and private sector jobs. Unfortunately, they have less representation in the parliament, with no Muslim PM, only 3 Muslim Presidents and very few Union Cabinet ministers. This tells us that Muslims are actually the Golden zero of the country. Although they are regarded as important forces of changing the government, they aren't powerful and lead a miserable life. They are generally seen as employees in small shops, but very few are capable of leading businesses, running large scale industries. They have been unable to educate themselves and earn a better livelihood. In spite of all this, they have always believed in the government and constitution. Their maximum representation can be seen in prisons, because of them being targeted, forcefully asked to confess uncommitted crimes and the level of poverty in which they survive, compelling them to commit crimes. With no education and jobs it becomes easier for them to indulge in crimes.

The country has faced many violent incidents over the years and governments have proved to be unhelpful in uplifting the Muslims and unwilling to control violence against them. Since independence, religious tensions never escalated to the current level. (<https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/hindu-muslim-communal-riots-india-i-1947-1986.html>) But there is a long list of such incidents like in 1961, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh a Hindu Muslim riot broke out where in 55 people lost their lives (200 unofficial sources). This was followed in Kolkata, Jamshedpur and Rourkela. In 1970, Bhiwandi riots 142 Muslims died in a total of 164 casualties. Minor incidents also took place in Delhi (1974), Hyderabad (1978), Aligarh (1978). In Moradabad in 1980, an eidgah was attacked, according to Muslim organizations the death toll was around 1500. These are some of the riots which we kn

ow, but there maybe many unreported incidents as well. When the Hindutva forces started to gain ground in the country, communal tensions increased, so did problems for the Muslims. With the demand of creating a temple at the Ram Janm Bhoomi, the BJP, VHP and Shiv Sena started a Rath Yatra, led by LK Advani. The karsevaks demolished the Babri Masjid on December 6 1992, leading to violent riots, and killing of approximately 2000 people. This also helped the BJP in gaining recognition as the major opposition party. Later in February 2002, when a train filled with karsevaks was returning from Ayodhya, 52 Hindu pilgrims died due to a fire in the train.

(www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/04/06/world/asia/modi-gujarat-riots-timeline.html/#/time287_8190) Hindus blamed Muslims for this, and started to plunder Gujarati cities. According to reports around 1000/2000 people died most of whom were Muslims, 20000 Muslim homes and trade centers were destroyed, around 360 places of worship were put to ruins, and around 2 lakh people displaced. In 2005, the investigation carried out by the Indian government proved that the train burning was an accident and not undertaken by Muslims. In Muzaffarnagar, in 2013 riots took place between the Muslims and the Jat community.

(<https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi/107-killed-in-riots-this-year-66-muslims-41-hindus/story-uqHMNT093ZqMa0WAsWdIplj.html>)

This displaced approximately 50000 people. According to the Report issued by the Union Home Ministry, out of 62 deaths 42 victims were Muslims and the remaining 20 were Hindus. Similar riots also took place in Maharashtra, Bihar and other parts of Uttar Pradesh. **STATE OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA** After the partition of the country, India had a predominantly Hindu population and Muslims formed to be the biggest religious minority, according to the Census 1951, Hindu were 84.4% of the population Muslims were 9.8% Christians were 2.3% Sikhs were 1.8% followed by Buddhists and Jains. According to the latest census of 2011 Hindus are 79.8% of the population, Muslims are 14.2% Christians are 2.3% and Sikhs are 1.7%. These statistics indicate that the Muslim population in the country has increased suggesting their growth and healthy development. But this is far from reality, the Sachar Committee report 2006 suggests that the Muslims lag behind SC and ST in the growth of literacy rate. It also mentioned that one third of the villages that are pre dominantly Muslim have no access to educational institutions. It revealed the lack of Muslim representation in civil services.(<https://qrius.com/muslims-india-truth-veil/>) The NSSO data 2013 reflected that in urban and rural areas the Muslims are the lowest to attain senior secondary education. The community provides 25% of the beggars in the country today. Muslims according to the India Inc. are only a 2.67% of directors, and senior executives in the

country.(<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/muslims-constitute>) Thus it is evident that Muslims are living under a deplorable state. Even after more than 70 years of independence only 6 Muslims have served as Chief Ministers in 5 states and one Union Territory, that too not for a term more than 3 years barring Jammu and Kashmir. These statistics are enough to demonstrate the deprived state in which Muslims are living in India. Hence it can be gauged that Muslims although chose to be Indians they never got the treatment that they deserved, from the government and the society. The right wing parties clearly project Muslims as enemies of Hindus and thus have been successful in gaining power by appeasing the majority community. Whereas the other parties have posed to be sympathetic towards Muslims but have done nothing for them on ground. For them, Muslims are a vote bank, a source of attaining power.The Muslims are left with no choice, as one group is apparently against them while the other is either reluctant to take sides or silent on pertinent issues. Muslims are dispersed throughout the territory not confined to particular states but have an undauntedly low representation in the parliament; currently they represent 27 seats with just 1 Muslim face from the ruling party. They have a representation of about 4.9%. The political system in the country is responsible for the sorry state of Muslims in India. Muslims have no representation of their own, they are dependent on other parties and organizations. The idea of secularism, belief in the constitution was widely accepted by the Muslims but unfortunately this has adversely affected their growth as a community. After decades of loyalty they are still asked to prove their so called "Indianness" and nationality time and again. **DISSEMINATION OF ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENT IN RECENT TIMES** The rise of right wing groups has created an environment of fear among the minority community. Apart from riots and communal tensions which are officially reported, apprehens

ions towards Muslims have increased. They have been attacked systematically. First the idea of Love Jihad was introduced, which wrongly blamed Muslim men of deceiving Hindu girls and then forcefully converting them. Such propaganda was undertaken by the Bajrang Dal which distributed pamphlets in states like Karnataka which claimed that 3000 Hindu girls are missing. (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bajrang-dal-stirs-love-jihad-pot-in-coastal-districts/articleshow/62374772.cms>)

The Nadiya case in Kerala got popularity, and she proved these extremists wrong in perceiving Muslim men to be having an ostensible purpose to marry them. The right to choose one's life partner and convert to a religion of choice is fundamental in nature, but the efforts of the right wing groups and the media reports have tried to set a different notion in people's minds. These groups also believe that the present day Muslims and Christians in India were Hindu originally, but they changed their faith due to the influence of outsiders. They hope to reconvert them to Hinduism and coined the term "Ghar wapsi". These conversions are boasted around by them as an achievement. They tend to forget that if they continue to do so this land of diversity will have to face its wrath. India has always had an image of respecting its minority and the peaceful coexistence of the society but such unsocial elements have prove to be fatal to the "democratic nature" of the country. With time, the mob lynching which previously never existed in India have become common. This has led to more than 113 killings of innocent people by cow vigilance groups since 2015. Beginning with Akhlaq, the list of innocent victims continues. In most of the cases the inability of the police to investigate the matter properly is observed. The worst part is that those who are accused in such cases are given clean chits by the judiciary, and are also rewarded by the BJP. Thus the government-police-judiciary-right wing forces nexus is working together to create a sense of fear among the Muslims. Once people are killed, their family members, lawyers and their supporters become the target of violent groups. It becomes difficult for families to reside in their age old homes, as they are no more in a state to believe their friends and neighbours from other communities. Later on 19 September 2018 the Indian government declared Triple Talaq to be illegal. This Act experienced both positive and negative responses. Certain sections of society appreciated the move while others thought it to be an intervention of the State in their personal matters. They did not approve of the government to be any authority in the religious affairs of the Muslims. Criticizing the government they believed that the Muslims would have done something about it themselves. They wanted the government to take other steps which would actually lead to the welfare of the Muslim women rather than this as the rate of divorce among Muslim already is really low. The abrogation of Article 370 and 35A from the Indian constitution on August 5 2019 was again seen as an attack by the state on the people of the pre dominantly Muslim territory, which revoked the special status of the state granted by the Indian constitution. The territory experienced heavy military deployment and putting down of internet facilities for months together, the period being longest ever in the world. The Muslims all again split into two sides; some welcoming the government's stand while the majority opposing it. All this has led to a feeling of alienation among Muslims, as they are not being able to assert their own identity in its purest form. They are looked at with suspicion. This has created a division in the society along religious lines. **CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT** The government of India passed the CAA on 11 December 2019, according to which the non Muslim discriminated minority of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh can attain Indian citizenship. This act has been passed in order to provide a safe haven to the non Muslims of these countries in India. But the Act is fundamentally against the principles of the constitution. Citizenship cannot be granted on the basis of one's religion. The question to ask is are the Rohingyaas of Myanmar and Shia's, Ahmediyas in Pakistan not being discriminated. If the government was really interested in helping out people, then why did it choose people of only a particular religion. People all over India have recorded their dissent against this Act, and this is not restricted to Muslims rather people from every religion and ethnicity have come forward. These protests and demonstrations are unique in nature as they are being led by the general public, creating new young leaders and most importantly, the active participation of women have helped in taking things forward. The Shaheen Bagh Movement has spread all over In

dia where sit-ins are being organized by the locals demanding justice from the government. The CAA is the most dangerous for the Muslims if we connect it with the upcoming NRC, according to which every individual will have to prove his/her citizenship and submit the required documents as evidence. If any discrepancy is found in them, the Government of India will not consider them as Indians and send them to detention camps. The non Muslims who will fail to prove their citizenship will have the option to apply for citizenship through CAA but the Muslims have not be given the opportunity purposefully. The government has done this so as to abandon lacks of Muslims from their homeland. These steps can be compared to the German Nuremburg Law of 1935. The state is trying to separate the Muslims from the mainstream. Over the years, the Muslims have been marginalized economically, socially and politically, but the current state of affairs is more alarming than ever before. **DELHI POGROMS** Muslims faced violence against them in Northeast Delhi from 23rd February to 1st March 2020. These cannot be called riots as; here 2 communities did not sort to violence, only the Muslims who were attacked, killed, houses and businesses burnt into ruins. Hence the Delhi pogroms led to the death of 53 people, 80% Muslims and thousands injured. The viral videos of the level of oppression of young Muslim men are running on the social media. They describe the extent of hatred towards Muslims in their minds. The households of hundreds of people have been set to fire, with nothing left. It is interesting to find Muslim owned homes being burnt, while the Hindu homes with Muslim tenants have only been looted. The similar pattern is seen in shops, where in all the equipments have either been looted or burnt in Hindu owned shops run by Muslims and the property owned by Muslims have been burnt completely. In rows of Hindu houses and shops only Muslims have been attacked. This tells us that their aim was to not only destroy their livelihoods, but to also make sure that they stoop down to such a low level financially that they can never get up again. Those affected have now been displaced, and took refuge in Muslim localities nearby which were saved from violence. Their lives have been shattered and both the Delhi and Central government has done very little to provide help to these victims. The violence took place against them not only because of the all India anti CAA protests but also because of the defeat of the BJP in the Delhi state elections. The enmity against Muslims existing in the minds of such people led to the blood bath which continued for days together in an area where maximum population is of lower middle class section and underprivileged. The Muslims fear going back home and in many cases they have been refused by their Hindu landlords accommodation back again. The Muslims also want to live in a safer place among their own community. This will ultimately result in ghetto formation in parts of Delhi, which will make the Muslim community more vulnerable to such pogroms. **STAKEHOLDERS** There are many who are responsible for the current situation of Muslims. It is important to understand the role played by each stake holder in this regard. Primarily the government has time and again proved its Islamophobia, by targeting Madrasa, Mosques and other symbols of Islam. The hate speeches delivered frequently against the Muslims by a number of leaders has been recorded several times but nothing has been done about it. These people have created a sense of fear in the society, which has led to hatred breeding in homes against Muslims. They are promoting the idea of creating a Hindu Rashtra where in Muslims will have no place or will be treated as second class citizens. Next are the anti Muslim extremist groups, who either want to drive Muslims out of the nation or want to subdue them, and exploit them to a level from where they can never get up. The government has supported them, and given them a free. As far as the opposition parties are concerned, they have certainly failed to stop the government, rather many parties have supported the move. The pity is that there are very few examples of somebody speaking for the rights of Muslims being violated constantly by the State; no party wants to separate itself from the Hindutva agenda. Even if they are doing so, they have their own vested interests. The society in general has mixed reactions over the issue. There are only a few who are willing to join hands with the Muslims while the general public supports the Act. Some even condemn the movement that is being led by Muslim or fellow non-Muslims in the country. Media has played a decisive role in changing the mindsets of people. The biased news channels, newspapers and media houses have tried to hide the realities at various instances, whether it is during the police violence in Jamia or the pogroms against Muslims i

n Delhi recently. The media has given space to fake news to spread among the masses, and have projected videos and clippings without any authenticity. They give their biased opinions against Muslims and act as a spokesperson of the government. Instead of questioning those in power, they have blamed the Muslims and projected them as culprits of violence, and have tried to demonize them in every way possible. The police have also failed to stop violence; rather it has allowed it to take place under its supervision. The police have itself admitted that it had shut one of the roads at the Shaheenbagh, not the protestors. The victims of the Delhi pogroms have narrated how the police did not help them when they were being attacked. The police have failed to arrest the criminals whether it be violence in JNU or in other parts of the country during anti CAA protests, but has charged upon peaceful protestors with sticks, tear gas, water cannons and fire. It seems to be totally under the government, and not having their own jurisdiction to act for the people. The judiciary has also not played a very active role in serving justice to the people. Instead of punishing the criminals, it has acquitted many of them under pressure from the government. The UNHCR has taken up the issue but the international community should have also put more pressure on the state to stop the violence. **FEAR AMONG MUSLIMS** Muslims currently live now in a state of terror and fear, trying their best to protest peacefully, demanding the state to hear them out. Some among them have also started to lose faith in the constitution, and are really scared because of the history of brutality of the current government. They are not certain about their future. They fear that if violence against them can take place in the national capital then they have no safe zone left. All this has also frightened the Muslim community about their future in India. After the coming of the NRC they think that they will be pushed into detention camps, and their lives will be more miserable than refugees there. They feel as if they are no more being considered an equal citizen; their contribution in the nation building is being questioned from time to time. The harsh reality is that the Muslims have always been treated as "Others" in the society; it is just that the things have become apparent now. The idea that Muslims are a threat had always existed but due to the constant counsel of extremist groups, the larger public also seems to be influenced by such ideas. People have started to openly appreciate the assassinator of Gandhi and this is not a surprise as these people have been let free to establish more such ideas in the society. Islam post 9/11 was started to be linked with terrorism, and India was also not an exception to it, but the things remained recessive in nature earlier, during the past decade, these thoughts have spread in the liberal circles, general households, government and private institutions. The notion of "Hindu-Muslim Ekta" has taken a back seat in current times. **CONCLUSION** Ideas of democracy, equality, secularism are not mere concepts to be studied and forgotten. It is not enough for us to say that India is a democratic country on paper, if the State is itself failing to implement these principles on ground. If the country is in hands of people who are only interested in promoting intolerance towards minority religions, then it becomes the responsibility of responsible citizens to remind the state of the same. The society should not only correct the government's biased policies but it should also provide surety to its fellow citizens that the country is safe for them as well. But things are different if the opinion of the public seems to change, if they are unwilling to accept the existence of different religious thoughts and respecting them. Human rights violation is bound to take place if the state sponsored violence against minority is also supported by the majority community. As far as the prevailing situation is concerned, we need to understand that Muslims are actually the victims who are being projected wrongly projected as the culprits. The idea of them being outsiders, terrorists, Pakistanis and anti-Hindu is being grown in the subconscious mind of the people which poses a major threat to their survival in the country. The masses need to understand that the nation is again being tried to be divided on religious lines, the government has tactfully suppressed the major issue of economic crisis in the country and has deviated the general public. Instead of undertaking initiative against the deadly Corona virus the government is busy in parting the people. It is said that history repeats itself, the divide and rule policy of the British led to the partition of the country, but will the current divide and rule policy of the BJP government lead to something better or worse, that still remains a q

uestion to be pondered upon.