



Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Aliah University

(A UGC approved autonomous Institution under the Department of Minority Affairs and
Madrasah Education, Govt. of West of Bengal)

Park Circus Campus, 17, Gorachand Road, Kolkata- 700014

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NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

MEDIA AND MARGINALITY:

SITUATING THE MINORITY IN POPULAR NARRATIVES

DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 30TH, 2017

TIME: 10:00 AM- 5:00 PM

VENUE: UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM,

PARK CIRCUS CAMPUS

CONCEPT NOTE

Six minority communities together comprise of 20 percent of India's population. Among them Muslims are the biggest community and dominate the narrative on minorities. Of all minorities, Muslims (14.2%) and Christians (2.3%) have unique positions as although ancestors of majority of them are native-Indians but their faith are seen as 'foreign' and consequently they become the 'other' in the larger meta narrative of the country.

Although Sikhs too had to face discrimination in the aftermath of the Khalistani movement and anti-Sikh riots, but they, along with Buddhists are generally considered as part of native faiths and are governed under same Hindu civil laws. Parsis are another minority community but their number is too minuscule and they are economically well off and hence face little discrimination.

In the last decade or so the voluminous Justice Sachar report on "Social, Economic and Educational Status of Muslims of India" has become an important reference point in the assessment of socio-economic conditions of Muslims. The 2006 report had concluded the conditions of Indian Muslims as a whole is worse than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes - considered the most backward in social hierarchy of the country - on several parameters. Most of the Muslims are either self-employed or work in the unorganised sector and are hence more vulnerable. Their participation in regular salaried jobs is much less than workers of other faiths, and comprise of only 2.5 per cent of civil servants. Their share in different state and central level security agencies is mere four per cent. At higher level the number goes further down.

Although the government did take some steps, several follow up studies have documented that not much has yet changed. For example, a detailed report on the “Living Reality of Muslims in West Bengal” prepared under the mentorship of Professor Amartya Sen’s trust Pratichi India, released last year, notes that Muslims who comprise 27 per cent of the state population are “disproportionately poorer and more deprived in terms of living conditions”. The Kundu Committee Report (2013) had proposed "paradigm shift in India's approach to equality," stressing on the need to focus on specific areas of education, economic empowerment, health and housing problems.

While the sex ratio among Muslims is marginally better than national average, when it comes to level of literacy, questions of empowerment, etc. conditions of women are worse than their male counterparts. In West Bengal and some other parts of the country Muslim girls do well till secondary and higher secondary education, often outnumbering boys. Yet we do not see proportional ratio of female in formal workforce, or political representation. According to a 2007 study, Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities. However, the same report adds that rural urban literacy differentials are marked for all groups, but the gap is the widest amongst Hindus and lowest among the Muslims. We also need to remember though that in comparison with other countries, India fares poorly in terms of women’s health, economic empowerment and education.

When it comes to women from the minority community their portrayal is even more precarious. While the rate of divorce in India is one of lowest, even among Muslims, you will rarely find a film or a TV series in India where the man in anger does not exercise triple talaq. Muslim women are consequently portrayed as victims of oppressive, medieval and semi-barbaric customs and systems of patriarchal and religious laws.

The portrayal of minority in mainstream media anywhere is in black and white, few positive stories are cherry-picked sporadically in an attempt to balance otherwise much skewed and negative portrayal. You will rarely find heroes of Indian films who are Muslims or Christians, while finding the former as the bad guy is quite normal.

As H. Karim (2000: 10) notes, “Misuse of the terms related to Islam is endemic in the transnational media.” The politics of negative stereotyping and creation of a homogenous outlook has led to a major cultural misunderstanding creating marginalised, consolidated and exclusionary constrained spaces for the minority community. And these exaggerated representations of the community as

inferior to the west defined norm by virtue of their “oriental”, “incomprehensible” differences, hardly paint them in the real light.

If one looks at the examples of minority institutions like Jamia Millia Islamia , Aligarh Muslim University or Aliah University, where media would continently ignore 10 positive events they organise but will not miss single opportunity of any news through which they can be portrayed as unruly and regressive lot.

In most newspaper and television reports consequently minorities are either missing or are presented by disproportionately high number of negative reportage, reiterating the negative image they hold amongst majority.

While representing Muslims as a homogenous entity steeped in pre-modern sensibilities, Indian films too contain Muslims within the dominant narrative of a normative upper-caste Hindu identity. The construction of communalism and nationalism based on the complex representational position of Muslims has dealt with the liminality of the Muslim ‘Other’ in the nation-space by representing Muslims either in stereotypical ways or by appropriating them into the normative Hindu self.

This one day deliberation aims to open a debate in Kolkata on the looking at the minority representation in popular media. This can be the inaugural conference in a series of programmes that the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of Aliah University can hold to help shape the debate over minority in Bengal and India.

The proposed one day conference in Kolkata hopes to deliberate on the socio-economic conditions of Muslims in India, broadly under the following themes, though not just restricted to it:

- a) Socio-economic conditions of Minorities keeping in mind regional, class and caste disparities
- b) Political debates regarding Muslim rights seen through the conflicting prism of Personal Laws and Uniform Civil Code
- c) Media’s role in dealing with Minority questions and rights
- d) Coverage of minority issues in main stream media
- e) Representation issues and stereotypes *vis-à-vis* minorities in media
- f) Dual marginality of Muslims women within the larger marginalized community

Call for Abstracts/Papers:

Soft copies of abstracts not exceeding 300 words on the seminar theme/subthemes should be emailed to on or before April, 15th 2017.

1. hod.mjmc@aliah.ac.in
2. reyaz@aliah.ac.in

Language: English

Papers of around 3000-4000 words are invited from Academicians/Scholars/Researchers on the above mentioned themes

- Abstract and paper should follow English Font-Times New Roman, font Size -12, Spacing - 1.5.
- The abstract should have the title, name of the paper presenter, designation & institutional affiliation & email id.
- The authors will be intimated the acceptance of abstract by e-mail. Full length paper should be submitted (soft copy).

Important Dates:

- **Last Date of submission of abstract: April 15th, 2017**
- **Intimation for acceptance: April 17th, 2017**
- **Last date of submission of full paper: April 25th, 2017**
- **Date of the National Seminar: April 30th, 2017**

Registration Fee:

- **For local participants/without accommodation**
 - **Delegates – Rs 700/-**
 - **Research Scholar 500/-**
- **For outstation participants (with modest accommodation on twin sharing basis in hotels)**
 - **Delegates- Rs 1700**
 - **Research Scholars- Rs 1500**

Participants who seek Accommodation, may kindly intimate by April 18th, 2017

- Details of Registration and payment will be shared with confirmed participants.
- Delegates are requested to meet travel and other incidental expenses from their own resources.

Convenors:

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