Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the ‘Muslim Question’*

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Abstract
This paper explores the development of multiple conceptions of citizenship in India in an attempt to understand how, despite profound social divisions, India’s nationhood holds together. The paper advances the proposition that the Indian polity incorporated a deeply divided and conflict-ridden population by offering multiple notions of citizenship upon which a sense of membership in the nation, and a share in the enterprise of the state, could be sought. By negotiating and balancing distinct overlapping conceptions for competing membership claims in the nation, diverse social groups could find a viable place in the nation, without entirely resigning their various group identities. The analysis focuses as a lens on the Muslim citizens who are amongst the most excluded members in the whole body of Indian citizenry. It provides perspectives into how even some of the most marginalised members in Indian society found sufficient prospects for a meaningful participation within the nation. Multiple conceptions of citizenship enabled the state to manage its diverse social groups and contain many of their underlying conflicts.

Introduction

Among the main concerns that preoccupied Jawaharlal Nehru after independence was the question of how to safeguard the country’s national unity. In his fortnightly letters to the Union’s Chief Ministers, Nehru repeatedly voiced his fear about what he saw as ‘an inherent

* I am grateful to the participants of ‘A Conference in Honour of Raj Chandavarkar’, where a version of this paper was first presented, for their comments and suggestions. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer, Justin Jones and, particularly, Fredrik Galtung for their thorough engagement with the paper and their extremely helpful comments. Raj, and what he taught me, will always be a living spirit in my work, and I will always be indebted to him.
tendency towards [the] disintegration of India’.\footnote{Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{Letters to Chief Ministers 1947–1964}, Vol. 3, 1952–1954, Government of India, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, 1985, 22 August, 1953, p. 367. Also see letter 16 July, 1953, p. 340; 28 September, 1953, p. 386.} Nehru shared his anxieties with them over the communal, casteist, linguistic, sectarian and regional threats to the nation’s integrity.\footnote{See for example: Nehru, \textit{Letters to Chief Ministers}, Vol. 5, 4 June, 1961, p. 433; 3 July, 1961, p. 460; 23 July, 1961, p. 476; 3 June, 1961.} The new state came into being following the partitioning of the subcontinent into two states, in the context of what was perceived as an intractable religious antagonism. This division could have set the precedent for other splits—something Pakistan would eventually experience. India’s social diversity still persists, yet, since its formation as an independent political entity, it has shown an apparent stability with little tendency to fall apart.

This paper attempts to outline some of the elements which are necessary to understand how, given multifaceted and deep social divisions, India’s nationhood holds together. It will explore the development of the Indian citizenship regime from independence to the present. The paper advances the proposition that the Indian polity incorporated a deeply-divided and conflict-ridden population by offering multiple notions of citizenship upon which a sense of membership in the nation, and a share in the enterprise of the state could be sought. By negotiating and balancing distinct overlapping conceptions for competing membership claims in the nation, diverse social groups could find a viable place in the nation, without entirely compromising their various group identities. In this interplay, the nodes and prominence of the various citizenship conceptions, representing different paradigms for state resource allocation, were shifting. This process stemmed the continual eminence of any one single citizenship conception. In effect, the Indian polity thus provided a mechanism for a long-term accommodation of dynamic social conflicts within the nation, paradoxically safeguarding its resilience.

A common proposition for the endurance of India’s national integrity, of which Nehru was a proponent, suggests that ‘the consolidation of independent India was to occur around the concept of “unity in diversity”’.\footnote{Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, \textit{India After Independence: 1947–2000}, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 84. Also see Sumit Sarkar, ‘Indian Democracy: The Historical Inheritance’, in Atul Kohli (ed.), \textit{The}} In Nehru’s vision, this ‘attempt to find a
synthesis’ that embraces heterogeneity is rooted in ‘a dream of unity [that] has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilisation’.\(^4\) This view informed scholars of various disciplines who attempted to explain the survivability of India’s national unity in the face of myriad social divisions, numerous languages, widespread poverty, and low literacy levels. These factors were long thought to be at odds with the supposedly requisite conditions for successful democratic nationhood.\(^5\) ‘Unity in diversity’ responded to colonial doomsayers who said that ‘there is not, and never was an India...possessing...any sort of unity’.\(^6\) Some postcolonial observers feared for India’s endurance at the cost of a ‘series of authoritarian forms’.\(^7\)

Prophesies of India’s predestined fall are written-off by Ramachandra Guha in his history of modern India.\(^8\) Guha offers an account of the forces, individuals and institutions that held India together against the ‘axes of conflicts’\(^9\) that might have threatened its integrity. He demonstrates how state support for certain forms of pluralism, in response to popular demands, e.g., along linguistic lines, had the effect of bringing some separatist tendencies under control.\(^10\) Guha’s narrative history begins to unpack the cliché of unity in diversity. Srirupa Roy also grapples with the general question posed by this paper. She investigates the success of the concept and image of a diversity-embracing Indian state.\(^11\) Roy examines various state cultural policies and their visual and symbolic effects to show how the

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\(^8\) *Ibid.*, for example, pp. xx–xxi, 746–750.
\(^10\) *Ibid.*, for example, pp. 186–189, 753.
state, especially in the first two decades after independence, produced the naturalisation of India’s cultural diversity and an image of itself as the sole authoritative manager ‘that coalesced this diversity into a unity’. In this analysis, the state set out to produce an image of itself as a successful steward of natural diversity. It succeeded. Unity, then, runs the risk of turning into a self-explanatory telos. But India’s modern history is also an account of repeated contestations and social conflicts. It remains unexplained why diverse social groups found this authoritative image of the unifying state sufficiently persuasive and meaningful. Within a democratic context, the holding together of the nation state largely depends on the degree of legitimacy that its diverse citizens confer upon it. This legitimacy, in turn, is determined by citizens’ broad sense of a stake in the nation; their ability to consent and dissent; and the state’s response to social contestations and grievances. Moreover, the political relevance of diverse social identities is ever-changing. Pluralism in and of itself, empirically or as an idea, cannot provide an explanation for the mechanisms by which the diversity that underlies nationhood in India holds together in practice.

If nation and nationhood are about exacting (Indian) sentiments of solidarity from certain groups in the face of other groups, claims for membership in the nation are done within the field of politics, particularly in relation to the state. This is the form of political organisation in modern times. Citizenship, in turn, is a key institution through which competing demands for membership are made. It is also a mechanism for determining how prospective diverse groups should be delimited and what ‘concrete action should result from such [their] solidarity’. Citizenship is an axis in the terms of engagement between individuals, social groups and the state. It is made up of a bundle of rights and obligations, which form the basis for attaining a full membership, the terms of participation and a sense of belonging in the social body. By extension, it also defines the boundaries of exclusion. Citizenship is a way nationhood is experienced in practice.

12 Ibid., p. 158; also see pp. 7, 15, 19, 21.
14 Ibid., p. 176.
In as diverse a social setting as India, citizenship is a ‘mechanism of incorporation’ for competing membership claims.\(^\text{16}\) The form of incorporation, or citizenship regime, is shaped by the institutional practices and their underpinning ideological conceptions, which define the paradigm for the allocation of political, social, economic, cultural and symbolic resources, privileges and duties.\(^\text{17}\) More than one conception of citizenship may instruct a citizenship paradigm. The political language by which membership concepts are expressed and legitimised, and which condition their substantive content, form a citizenship discourse.\(^\text{18}\) This discourse provides the possibilities of descriptions within which a sentiment of nationhood comes to be imagined. The effectiveness of its language determines the credibility of the membership conception of a citizenship discourse to stimulate social groups and individuals of diverse wants and concerns to become invested in the nation—to exact of themselves a sense of Indianness. In a single polity, multiple citizenship discourses, corresponding to different conceptions of membership claims, may coexist, usually with one or a contesting pair of discourses forming the dominant citizenship regime.\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{17}\) Drawing on the work of Yasemin N. Soysal, Shafir and Peled explain an incorporation regime as ‘a pattern of institutional practices and more or less explicit cultural norms that define the membership of individuals and/or groups in the society and differentially allocate entitlements, obligations and domination’. Shafir and Peled, ‘Citizenship and Stratification’, p. 412. Deborah J. Yashar describes ‘citizenship regime’ as ‘a patterned combination of choices about the three fundamental questions’ of who has access to citizenship; what is the primary principle for interest mediation; and what are the appropriate institutions to mediate between citizens and state? Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 47.


This study explores the development of multiple citizenship discourses in India in an attempt to understand how, despite deep social divisions, India’s democratic nationhood holds together. I will argue that its success lay in the ongoing dialogue and shifting balance between four main notions of citizenship that coexisted and have remained in tension with each other, since independence: the liberal, republican, ethno-nationalist and the non-statist conceptions of citizenship. These conceptions have their roots in the pre-independence era, as contending visions of the India to be. The dynamic interplay between the four conceptions of citizenship resulted in a combination of three key features that enabled an idiom of Indianness to take root. First, the citizenship discourses, and the politics that emanated from them, defined the structure and scope of interests that identity-groups could articulate. Citizenship functioned to delimit and exclude some groups and certain forms of demands. Within a four-fold citizenship regime, groups that were circumscribed by the terms of one citizenship discourse had at least one of three other alternatives for inclusion. Second, a multiple citizenship regime offered alternative strategies for diverse people to make sense of their social predicament, as well as to define demands for remedies or change. It provided social groups various ways of being Indian, without necessarily having to relinquish their other social identities. Third, the multiple citizenship regime provided the state with effective means of (re)positioning its authority and reclaiming legitimacy from its subjects in the context of contestations and dissent.

The analysis focuses as a lens on the Muslim citizens of India. Muslims in India are socially diverse, divided, among others, by caste features, class and sect. According to the Report of the Prime Minister’s High Level Committee on the ‘Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India’ (the Sachar Committee), published in November 2006, Muslims are among the most excluded and alienated members in the body of the Indian citizenry. A study of India’s citizenship regime in relation to Muslims provides a vantage point for understanding how and why even some

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20 I extrapolate, regarding this point, from Stedman Jones’ discussion of Chartism, particularly, Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, p. 96. Also see Chandavarkar’s discussion on the Congress and the working classes before 1947 in, Chandavarkar, Imperial Power and Popular Politics, pp. 273–274.

21 Prime Minister’s High Level Committee, Social Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, (henceforth Sachar Report), Cabinet Secretariat Government of India, November 2006.
of the most marginalised members in the society found sufficient
prospects for a meaningful participation in the nation. The question of
Muslim citizenship also provides perspectives into the Indian state’s
ability to work out its nationhood. The ‘Muslim question’—how to
make Muslims part of the nation—was characterised as one of the
main challenges to India’s integrity after independence. The partition
of the subcontinent in 1947 was the beginning of a long process of
determining, among other things, the citizenship fate of Hindu and
Muslim refugees across the divided areas. Approximately 45 million
Muslims remained in India after partition and became an emblem
of the nation’s rift. India’s citizenship regime developed against that
background.

This paper is divided into three parts: (1) a discussion of the
four conceptions of citizenship and their evolution in India, mainly
exploring the state-led debate on Indian citizenship; (2) a brief
examination of Muslims’ access to state resources precedes an analysis
of the relationships between the state and Muslims, and the interplay
and changing balance between the various discourses of citizenship;
(3) the conclusion attempts to show how, using the Muslim case study,
a multiple-citizenship regime played an integrative role, ensuring the
resilience of India as a nation.

Four Conceptions of Citizenship and their Evolution in India

Discussions on citizenship conventionally focus on tensions between
the civic/liberal and ethno-national principles as a basis for granting
and conceiving of citizenship. Shafir and Peled expanded this to
a three-fold framework, distinguishing between liberal, republican
and ethno-national citizenship discourses. The liberal conception

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23 See, for example, Yashar’s, discussion on *Jus Soli* civic/liberal concept of citizenship and the ethnic biased *Jus Sanguinis*. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship*, pp. 38–40.

24 The model worked by Shafir and Peled is the one I departed from in this study. See: Shafir and Peled, ‘Citizenship and Stratification’; *Being Israeli*. On the basis of a liberal, ethnic, and republican/communitarian conceptualisations of citizenship, Shafir and Peled constructed a more systematic theoretical framework of a multiple
of citizenship views the individual as the bearer of a package of rights, designed to protect her personal liberties. On its face, the liberal concept of citizenship is the most inclusive and universalistic. The tension arises if we do not accept the ontological premise of the liberal notion of the individual as the bearer of natural rights.

A republican concept of citizenship, in turn, contains a notion of a common good that is prior to the individual citizen and her choices. Rights are granted in accordance with the contribution of citizens to the common good. The collectivist nature of the republican discourse engenders and creates the scope for a strong sense of solidarity, a sense of belonging and security, which can contribute to the individual’s self-fulfilment. Consequently, the republican citizenship discourse can divide and stratify the social body as it favours those who are perceived to be important for the common good and discriminates against those who are not ranked highly in terms of their contribution to the common good. It is thus less tolerant towards group grievances.

The ethno-nationalist notion of citizenship anchors membership by a descent group. The nation is founded on blood-ties. This citizenship conception is the most exclusionary. It enables an almost unadulterated sense of belonging in the social body and the state for some groups. This form of incorporation fully satisfies identity claims for the descent group that defines the nation, whilst excluding others.

In this analysis of a three-fold multiple citizenship framework, ‘citizenship’ is defined from the viewpoint of the state. Citizenship becomes an end in the making of the state, and the paradigmatic question becomes the extent to which the state protects the life of individuals, certain collectives in pursuit of a shared good, or a community tied by blood. In India we can distinguish another significant conception of citizenship. As an institution for membership claims within the political organisation of the state, citizenship may also imply a notion of membership of the state in the society, or a desire for a minimal interaction with the state, in order to protect individuals and groups. In India, this notion of the non-statist citizen exists. It has an ideological and institutional basis that can be inferred most prominently from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.
In Gandhi’s vision, the underlying structure of the relationship between the individual, groups and the state is composed of innumerable villages. Every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable for managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.\textsuperscript{25}

The Union state is not dissolved, but ‘true home rule’ lies in a village unit that is ‘economically and politically as autonomous as possible’\textsuperscript{26}. This is the road to sarvodaya, uplift for all. In Gandhi’s view, a coercive institution like the state should not take over the power of the society and its right to be heard.\textsuperscript{27} In the non-statist citizenship conception, a citizen has an ‘inherent right’ to civil disobedience; in some circumstances it is the citizen’s ‘sacred duty’.\textsuperscript{28} This non-statist citizenship discourse has the most elaborated conception of the mixed duties and responsibilities of citizens. Non-statist citizenship is not limited to Gandhian theory or practice, however. Moreover, Gandhi, as we shall see below, also played an influential role in stoking the ethno-national conception.

When India gained independence it was the moment ‘to make Indians’.\textsuperscript{29} Its ‘incorporation regime’ evolved through concurrent interactions and the resulting tensions between these four predominant notions of citizenship. At independence, a tension between an ethno-nationalist and a liberal citizenship discourses was at play. An ethno-nationalist citizenship discourse gained currency in the context of partition. Many people asked: ‘Can a Muslim be an Indian?’\textsuperscript{30} Pakistan was proposed as a Muslim homeland. India, by assertion or default, was for the Hindus. The Muslims who remained in India were asked to demonstrate the sincerity of their choice and

\textsuperscript{25} The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (henceforth CWMG), Vol. 91, p. 325 (Harijan, 28/7/1946).


\textsuperscript{28} CWMG, Vol. 25, p. 391–392, (Young India, 5/1/1922).

\textsuperscript{29} The phrase is borrowed from the Italian nationalist Massima d’Azelo’s observation after the unification of Italy in 1860; quoted in Kenan Malik, The Meaning of Race, London: Macmillan, 1996, p. 138.

to prove their loyalty.\textsuperscript{31} Gyan Pandey argues that the construction of Muslims as a minority took place during this process. In earlier times they were perceived and defined by social categories, such as caste and region. Now they were ‘simply Muslims.’\textsuperscript{32} Against the background of violence, uncertainty around the status of refugees, and the ending of migration across the borders, some Congress party leaders and other politicians spoke in terms of ‘we’/‘our’ as Hindus in contrast to ‘them’, Muslims. ‘I want to tell them [Muslims] frankly’, stated Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in a speech in Lucknow in January 1948, ‘that mere declarations of loyalty to the Indian Union will not help them at this critical juncture. They must give practical proof of their declaration’.\textsuperscript{33} During the final discussions on citizenship (Articles 5 and 6) in the Constituent Assembly in August 1949, some members demanded an ethnic definition of citizenship for India. Dr P.S. Deshmuk, for example, proposed that an Indian citizen, among other things, should be ‘every person who is a Hindu or a Sikh by religion . . . ’.\textsuperscript{34} ‘I think that we are going too far in the business of secularity: does it mean that we must wipe out our own people . . . that we must wipe out Hindus . . . ’\textsuperscript{35}

The introduction of an ethno-nationalist citizenship discourse into the mainstream was unwittingly made from a different angle in 1932 by M.K. Gandhi, long before the demand for the recognition of Muslims in India as a nation was raised by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. At the time, when the proposal was made to grant the Scheduled Castes (SCs) separate electorates and incorporate them on the basis of civic and political rights, Gandhi insisted on incorporating the SCs on the basis of religion, as Hindus.\textsuperscript{36} Their citizenship claims


\textsuperscript{32} Pandey, ‘Can A Muslim Be an Indian’, p. 615.

\textsuperscript{33} For \textit{A United India: Speeches of Sardar Patel 1947–1950}, Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1967, p. 64, speech at a public meeting in Lucknow, January 6, 1948. Also see pp. 140–141.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 354. This position was supported by some other members of the Assembly. See, for example, discussions by Shri Jaspat Roy Kapoor, p. 366; Professor Shiban Lal Saksena, p. 376; Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava, p. 380.

were now bound with the claims of all Hindus. The main internal tension within the ethno-national citizenship discourse lay in this caste aspect: if the group members in this conception of citizenship possess distinct cultural markers, it is unclear to what extent the lower and backward castes can fully attain membership. Moreover, the entwinement of religion and caste in the ethno-nationalist citizenship construction of the nation resulted in a similar tension for Muslims. Muslims are also divided by social categories like caste, but they were homogenised as a religious minority in the ethno-nationalist discourse.

The debates on the ‘Muslim Question’, construed in terms of a ‘majority-minority’ discourse, found a different expression in the liberal conception of citizenship. An individualist liberal citizenship discourse was integral to the enactment of the constitution in January 1950. India was defined as a democratic republic, and its founding legal document assured fundamental rights to all individuals guaranteed by equal protection against state action. This conception of citizenship had its roots in pre-independence and was embedded in the processes of the making of Indian democracy. The Constitution of India Bill 1895 recognized a variety of rights. The fundamental rights of the Motilal Nehru Report of 1928 were a ‘close precursor of the Fundamental Rights of the Constitution’. Both documents generally conceived as a fully-fledged citizen anyone born in India, or whose father is either born or naturalized within its territorial limits and has not been naturalized as a citizen in any other country. India was to become in this liberal discourse the state of all its citizens.

The constitution also guaranteed the protection of religious and cultural rights of its minorities, which a liberal notion of citizenship

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can tolerate within the private sphere. The reservations for the SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were the exception. This differential citizenship introduced a tension in the constitution between a commitment to equality, on the one hand, and the scheduling of special quotas for some groups, on the other. It posited some contradictions for policy makers.\textsuperscript{41} Yet even those differential rights could be read, and have been interpreted by the courts as religious and cultural rights of minorities among Hindus. Thus, for the purpose of reservations, the SCs and STs were conceived as ‘those groups who because of their low ritual status in the traditional Hindu hierarchy and their spatial and cultural isolation were subjected to imposition of disabilities and lack of opportunity’.\textsuperscript{42} The judiciary enforced this designation on the grounds that ‘acceptance of a non-Hindu religion operates as a loss of caste’.\textsuperscript{43}

At the time the constitution established a common citizenship based on individual rights, a republican, collectivist notion of citizenship also evolved. A collectivist citizenship pursuit, and a definition of a common good, seemed essential to overcome the grand task of bringing social cohesion after partition. This was a means of ‘making Indians’ in a state of many uncertainties, and an ethno-nationalist citizenship discourse, which had the potential to further tear India apart. In this language of citizenship development—economic growth within a framework of equity—defined the common good, putting the ‘national interest’ above party politics, or in line with the interests of the state. ‘Political democracy’, Nehru stated, ‘is not enough. It must develop into economic democracy’\textsuperscript{44}. In this vision, massive and active state redistributive mechanisms would keep Indian democracy viable. Development, in the republican discourse, was a condition of unity. Accordingly, the government embarked on central planning.\textsuperscript{45}

By 1954 the parliament passed a resolution adopting ‘a socialistic


\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 315, also pp. 313, 319. Also see Basu, \textit{Shorter Constitution of India}, pp. 1557–1558.

\textsuperscript{44} Nehru, \textit{Letters to Chief Ministers}, Vol. 3, 16 June, 1952, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{45} Already in 1938 the Indian National Congress, in its Haripura session, set up a National Planning Committee, under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru to draft a development construction plan. This committee was the precursor of the National Planning Commission in 1950.
pattern of society’ as the objectives of economic and social policy to ensure ‘that there is equitable distribution of the national wealth’. 46

The triumph of Nehru’s socialist vision of industrialisation stood in contrast to the kind of citizenship Gandhi had envisaged, whereby ordinary Indians living in their villages rule themselves. 47 Gandhi’s vision of a political economy of the self-sufficient village was symbolised, in contrast to industrialisation, by the spinning-wheel. This conception of non-statist citizenship sustained as a practice, as well as a political language that stipulated and legitimised the terms within which membership in the nation was distributed and sought. It has continued to be practiced formally through various schemes in local governance, and also as a method of resistance.

In the two decades after independence various Sarvodaya schemes were inaugurated by Gandhians. 48 A major spirit behind these activities was Gandhi’s close associate, Vinoba Bhave. Sarvodaya schemes were based on a detailed study of the village local conditions and needs of its people. 49 In 1951 Bhave initiated the Bhoodan land gift movement, appealing to individual landowners to grant land to the poor. A year later he introduced the concept of the Gramdan (village-in-gift), with the villagers transferring ownership of their land to the village Gram Sabha (assembly). 50 Both programmes were conducted by sarvodaya workers. The Indian Planning Commission assessed that by the end of the First Five Year Plan (1956), the movement received in gift about four million acres of land. 51 In its view, ‘the Bhoodan

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and Gramdan movements have greatly helped to create a favourable atmosphere for implementing progressive measures towards land reforms'.  

The idea of state-citizen relations that lay behind the sarvodaya efforts was to develop a sense of duty and responsibility towards the welfare of society, and to make social processes as independent of the state as possible. The notion that authority should be exercised by the hands of the people from within, with the government’s power of penal sanctions withering away, found expression in the use of a fresh political vocabulary. The terms *lokniti* (the politics of the people) and *lok shakti* (people’s power), replaced the word *rajiniti* (politics).

In a country like India where there are innumerable differences like those of language, religion, caste, etc., politics will only create further differences. Hence there can be no progress in India without ending politics and establishing *lokniti* politics of the people.

As a political language, the premises of the non-statist conception of citizenship were sometimes utilised to justify resource allocation measures for other citizenship paradigms. In the 1950s and 1960s, leading members of the Planning Commission explained and legitimised central planning, which lay behind republican citizenship discourse, in a language that borrowed from the non-statist Gandhian rhetoric. For example, Shriman Narayan explained that, although ‘centralised economic order based on large-scale production necessarily generates violence’, the Indian one is ‘wedded to the methods of peace . . . and non-violence’. Conversely, Gandhian discourse was employed by some liberals in their critique of the republican discourse towards central planning and the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state. Thus, A.D. Shroff wrote:

Gandhiji was rightly apprehensive of the growing power of the state when he stated: ‘I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest

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52 Government of India Planning Commission, *Third Five Year Plan*, New Delhi, 1961, p. 221. Also see pp. 293, 376.
fear’... In my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state.\textsuperscript{57}

The non-statist citizenship discourse was partly conducted in a language that sought to transcend the ethno-nationalist citizenship discourse. Self-governing village councils, as the basic unit of government, were justified by Gandhi and his successors as a means of overcoming sectarian differences and thus becoming one nation. In the village panchayat, in this view, ‘there is no majority victory over minority, but all must deliberate together until unanimity is possible’.\textsuperscript{58} Faith, majority and minority become irrelevant as a basis for identity claims.

Different citizenship discourses were mobilised in competing ways by the state and its diverse citizenry in the making of the Indian incorporation regime. In this process, governments negotiated legitimate authority over the nation in its efforts to hold it together, while citizens, often on the basis of group identities, sought practicable membership in the nation and access to various state resources. The next section examines this dynamic interplay between the state and its Muslim citizens.

The Indian Incorporation Regime and Muslims

How did Muslims experience the Indian incorporation regime? Reports by two High Level Government Committees were referenced to briefly examine a few basic features of the Muslim access to state resources as a background for the discussion on the relations between the state and its Muslim citizens since independence. The Sachar Committee Report of 2006, and the Committee’s background papers, provide robust data regarding the ‘social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India’, particularly in the last decade. The Report of the High Power Panel on Minorities, SC, ST & Weaker Sections (Gopal Singh Committee), which was appointed in May 1980 ‘to see how far the fiscal policies and programmes of the


\textsuperscript{58} Vinoba Bhave, Quoted in Harrison, \textit{India: The Most Dangerous Decades}, p. 315; Anthony J. Parel (ed.), \textit{Gandhi, Hind Swaraj and Other Writings}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 50.
Government, both in the Central and States sectors, had benefited the minorities' studied, in the main, data for the 1970s and early 1980s.59

Muslims, according to the Sachar Report, are generally at a significant disadvantage in their ‘Mean Years of Schooling’, attendance levels, dropout rates, and completion of matriculations and graduation in relation to their share in the population and when compared with other minority groups, SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).60 Literacy level among Muslims in 2001 was 59.1 per cent, below the national average of 65.1 per cent.61 Despite an expansion of educational access since independence, their rate of progress has been slow. The Gopal Singh Report found that the rate of Muslim school enrolment also fell short of national figures.62

Admission to government jobs, particularly at high levels of bureaucracy, is another measure of Muslim access to state resources. The presence of Muslims between 1971 and 1980 in the elite and highly competitive Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was found by the Gopal Singh Committee to be 2.9 per cent of the total intake, except for two years, when it reached between 6.3 per cent and 7.5 per cent.63 The Sachar Committee found that the presence of Muslims in the IAS in 2006 was 3 per cent, of whom only 2.3 per cent secured their position as direct recruits through competitive examination. The rest were promoted from state services.64

Between 1971 and 1979, Muslims were recruited to the federal Indian Police Service in only five out of those nine years. In 1973, for example, out of a total recruitment of 116 candidates there was only one Muslim. The average recruitment of Muslims over this period amounted to a mere 2 per cent.65 In 2006, according to the Sachar

59 Report of the High Power Panel on Minorities, SC, ST & Weaker Sections (Chairman: Dr Gopal Singh), 14 June, 1983, pp. v, 1 (henceforth Gopal Singh Report). The Gopal Singh Panel relied mainly on sample surveys covering 80 out of 500 districts of the country at the time. The data in this study is limited mainly to the Sachar and Gopal Reports because their findings represent the best available data as it has been collected and analysed on behalf of the state. The data does have its imperfections (see e.g., Steven Wilkinson, ‘A Comment on the Analysis in Sachar Report’, Economic and Political Weekly, 10–16 March, 2007, pp. 832–836).
60 Sachar Report, pp. 54–76, 84–86.
61 Ibid., p. 52. Disaggregated data shows variations by place of residence and gender.
63 Ibid., p. 31. In January 1981 Muslims constituted 3.22 per cent of the total officers in the service. Ibid., p. 33.
64 Sachar Report, pp. 165–166.
65 Gopal Singh Report, p. 31. In January 1981 Muslims constituted 2.64 per cent of the total Indian Police Service. Ibid., p. 33.
Report, the share of Muslims in the Indian Police Service was 4 per cent, of whom only 2.7 per cent were appointed on the basis of direct recruitment through competitive examination.\(^{66}\) The Muslim share in the Armed services is even lower. In the Air Force, only 1.2 per cent of the pilots are Muslim, 1.8 per cent flight controllers, and 1.2 per cent group captains.\(^{67}\) Commanding officers were 2.6 per cent Muslim in the Central Reserve Police Force across India.\(^{68}\) In the ‘Group A’ service level in the Central Reserve Police Muslim males constituted 3 per cent and females 4.2 per cent.\(^{69}\) There are no formal legal impediments to Muslims being enlisted in the armed forces or in the police.

Some Muslim populations in India appear to be systematically disenfranchised. The Sachar Committee identifies a number of reserved assembly constituencies for the SCs that have Muslim majority populations. In UP, for example, there were eight reserved constituencies with a Muslim majority. In three of them, the Muslim population was more than double that of the SCs.\(^{70}\) There were similar cases in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and West Bengal.\(^{71}\)

The discretion of public officials in their interpretation of directives also produced barriers to resource allocation for poor Muslims. In 1978, the Baxi Backward Classes Commission in Gujarat recognised and included in the state list of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) a Muslim Momin group, which it defined as ‘belonging to the caste called “Muslim Julaya”’.\(^{72}\) Certificates of SEBC were issued for them by the District Social Welfare Officer in Ahmedabad between 1981 and 2002. On this basis, members of the group were admitted to universities on reserved seats. This policy changed from 2003 when the Director of Developing Caste of the Welfare Department rejected their certificates when these came up for approval. The Director insisted that the


\(^{67}\) Sachar Committee papers, File no. 32, Armed Forces, Vol. I, p. 34, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

\(^{68}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Sachar Report, pp. 269–270. These findings relate to assembly constituencies before the new delimitation notification came into effect on 19 February, 2008.

\(^{71}\) Sachar Committee papers, File no. 86, Constituencies reserved for SCs/STs, 23 August, 2006, pp. 2–3. Also see Sachar Committee Papers, File 156, Analyzed Figures on Assembly Constituencies, NMML.

\(^{72}\) Sachar Committee Papers, File 59, Gujarat Feedback, Vol. II, ‘Injustice to the “Muslim Julaya” under OBC Category’, NMML.
certificate-holder produce records mentioning the word ‘Julaya’ or ‘caste’ before 1978. The Director must have known that a government Commission only recognised the group as a Julaya caste that year, and that such documents pre-dating 1978 did not therefore exist.

Muslims are also divided by castes. The Sachar Report presented in detail the main features of caste divisions among Muslims in India, for example, Ashrafs, Ajlafs and Arzals, and Gopal Singh recognised this as well.\(^73\) The Sachar Report also defined a category of Muslim OBCs in some of its data. These findings, however, had no bearing on its recommendations. In the ultimate analysis the Report addresses ‘the Muslim community of India’,\(^74\) even though its elaborated evidence contests the attempt to delineate one.\(^75\) Thus, the Sachar Report, produced for the state, perceived Muslims in terms of religion without taking into account the implications of internal heterogeneity among them.

India’s Muslims experienced inadequate access to vital state resources like education and employment. Yet their adversities did not find expression in separatist tendencies, or political radicalism. Since independence, Indian Muslims, despite their large numbers, have not for the most part mobilized politically around a Muslim party; they have largely remained distant from Pakistan’s support of Kashmiri secessionism.\(^76\) Despite imperfections and frequent academic assertions of the exclusion of Muslims from Indian citizenship, Muslims have exerted a qualified power as citizens rather than merely as subjects. They negotiated a place within the nation

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\(^73\) Ashrafs includes convert groups from high castes, as well as Muslims of foreign blood; Ajlafs include converts of low-ranking castes, and Arzals consists of very low castes. Hierarchical ordering, endogamy and hereditary occupations exist among the Muslim social groups within these categories. *Sachar Report*, pp. 192–194. In a speech on the ‘Muslim Problem’, Gopal Singh clarified that ‘It would be wrong to assume that there are no high or low castes among Muslims’. *Gopal Singh Papers*, File 19, 18/12/1980, ‘The Muslim Problem’, p. 6, NMML. Also see Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of A Divided Nation: India’s Muslims Since Independence*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 8.

\(^74\) This is how the Report is entitled.


and leverage with the state by acting on alternating discourses of citizenship. They navigated, in the main, shifts between liberal and republican conceptions of membership. The inner tensions those citizenship discourses entailed lay behind the dynamics of relations between the state and Muslims.

The prevalence of an ethno-nationalist discourse during partition and its immediate aftermath concerned Muslims who were to stay in India, as they considered their future. ‘What should be our attitude . . . towards the government of the country? Have we to change our outlook on life and things like that?’

‘Can we rely upon the Hindu governments to look after the interests of the Muslims?’

An ethno-nationalist language at the time also began permeating into bureaucratic practices and a discourse that constructed Muslims as ‘a problem of governance’ and as a potential fifth column.

Muslims should ‘search their conscience’, suggested Sardar Patel in November 1947, ‘and ascertain if they are really loyal to this country. If they are not let them go to the country of their allegiance’.

The ethno-nationalist conception held fast to the two-nation theory, and seemed compatible with the actual making of India. Within this conception of the nation, Muslims could make sense of their predicament after partition. Yet their proclaimed ‘choice’ soon came to a dead-end. The Pakistani government began curtailing the access of Muslims from India, concerned that the new state could not support more Muslim refugees. By 1 January, 1952, the deadline for acquiring Pakistani citizenship, Indian Muslims officially became foreign to the state.

Many Muslims could find a viable prospect in the liberal conception of citizenship. It provided equal membership in the state to all its citizens. The question of whether Muslims were ‘Indian enough’ became irrelevant within the liberal framework. Indian Muslims, then, could follow Jinnah’s advice before leaving India: to ‘maintain

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77 Questions presented to Jinnah by a Muslim delegate from Coorg in an interview with him after a meeting between a Muslim Delegation from Coorg and Jinnah in Delhi on 25 July, 1947; produced in Ibid., p. 37.
78 A letter from H.S. Suhrawardy to Khaliquzzaman, 10 September, 1947, produced in Ibid., p. 40 (my emphasis).
79 Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, The Long Partition, p. 91. In the Delhi administration lists of Muslim employees were prepared and their loyalty was questioned. For example, Ibid., p. 112.
80 For A United India: Speeches of Sardar Patel, p. 9, speech at a public meeting, Rajkot, 12 November, 1947.
their identity and individuality. At the time, Muslim leaders in India urged their co-religionists to embrace the liberal conception of nationhood. Maulana Azad called on Indian Muslims to dissolve the Muslim League, and to ‘give up politics and confine its future activities to safeguarding the cultural, educational, economic and religious interests of the Muslims of the Indian Union’. Speaking the language of rights, he explained that ‘India is a democratic secular state where every citizen, whether he is a Hindu, a Muslim or Sikh, has equal rights and privileges’.

The discursive structure of liberalism enabled Muslims to devise an alternative political strategy for membership in the nation. A liberal discourse of citizenship allowed them a relatively smooth shift from being a nation to becoming a minority. Since Jinnah’s Lahore resolution of 1940, the Muslims of India were asked to perceive themselves as a nation, rather than as a minority as defined by the colonial state. Ten years later, on 8 April, 1950, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, Nehru and Liaquat, signed an accord committing each state to protect its minorities and to provide them with complete equality of citizenship. Muslims officially became a minority once again. The liberal framework was thus made credible by the state.

In the context of mass violence and displacement that Muslims experienced during the first years after partition, they needed the state to guarantee their safety. By 1949 many Muslims, especially returning refugees, became stateless. Their legal status was not adjudicated until November of that year, when citizenship provisions were introduced ahead of the enactment of the constitution. Under these circumstances the non-statist conception of citizenship had little relevance for most Muslims. Muslim participation in Gandhian Sarvodaya schemes immediately after independence was minimal, in part because the underpinning language and rationalization of Sarvodaya schemes were imbued with Hindu idioms.

82 Noorani, The Muslims of India, p. 36.
83 Ibid., p. 73. Also see pp. 64, 69, 76. In December 1947, the Indian Union Muslim Conference took a decision to abjure communal politics; in February 1948, the Muslim League Party in the Constituent Assembly decided to dissolve itself from 1 March 1948. For a detailed account see Hasan, Legacy of A Divided Nation, pp. 187–194.
84 Ibid, p. 76.
The republican conception of citizenship also provided Muslims with an alternative future within the nation after independence. They could become Indian if they invested themselves in the efforts for its planned economic development; and if they prioritized the ‘needs’ of the nation state over their individualistic or group rights. The republican rhetoric of planning offered a share in the nation for each of its citizens. It required the bringing of all citizens into a ‘mainstream’, glossing over any divisions. The Third Five Year Plan stated that ‘the success of economic planning in India will largely depend upon our capacity to hold together as a nation in the midst of diversity of language, region, caste and religion.’

In the republican conception of citizenship, development was a condition for unity. The republican discourse emphasized central planning as the means of achieving development. The success of planning, in turn, depended on the integration capacity of the society. A circular reasoning lay behind Indian republicanism, wherein unity, both as a condition and as an end, seemed to secure the nation. This meant that the viability of this conception of citizenship hinged on the state’s ability to deliver on development within equity, and its ability to perceive diversity in socio-economic, rather than in religious and cultural terms. The root of tensions in relations between the state and Muslims can in part be traced back to the failure in achieving those ends. For the most part, the state defined Muslims in terms of religion and excluded them from membership in groups that qualified for preferential treatment for social uplift within a framework of development with equity.

Governments in the 1950s and 1960s failed to fulfil their commitment to make Muslims equal citizens of the republic. Little was done to support their economic development. Early governments were aware of the deprived position of Muslims. ‘In looking through Central Government figures, as well as some others’, Nehru wrote in 1953, ‘I am distressed to find that the position is very disadvantageous to [minorities], chiefly to the Muslims and sometimes others also.’

Nehru requested regular updates on the figures of recruitment of minorities in the services. However, by the end of the 1950s, government inquiries into the employment rates of various minorities in the services were discontinued. The reason given was a fear that ‘it might also encourage fissiparous tendencies among different sections

87 Also see Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, p. 323.
of Indians or make them stress their distinctive character in order to secure special rights'.

By relating to Muslims solely in terms of religion rather than in socio-economic or caste categories, the state failed to adequately contain Muslims within the republican discourse of citizenship. Yet a republican discourse dominated the Indian incorporation regime at the time. Consequently, most Muslim organisations veered between the republican and the liberal citizenship discourses in the making of their membership claims. Sometimes they conflated the two discourses while seeking leverage. Thus, for example, the 1961 Muslim Convention was dominated by a republican language. Its convenors explained that Muslims needed to address the urgency of securing their share in government services and national planning schemes. The convention called for an ‘effective role for the minorities towards attainment of national progress’, and pledged in its resolution, among other things, to take the ‘message of national integration to the homes of the people by voluntary social service organisations.’

Other initiatives, like the All-India Muslim Majilis-e-Mushawarat, formed in 1964, sought ‘to enable the Indian Muslims to work unitedly [sic] for promoting their religious, educational, linguistic, cultural and economic interests, and ultimately furthering the cause of the country’. In the run up to the 1967 general elections, the Majilis-e-Mushawarat issued a nine-point People’s Manifesto that demanded progress for Muslims, calling them to support candidates who would endorse this cause, irrespective of their caste, creed or religion.

The demands of Muslim politicians and various Muslim groups in the 1960s for more representation of Muslims, in government services and an improved status for Urdu, were often dismissed as ‘Muslim grievances’, or as a ‘minority cause’. The republican notion of citizenship did not tolerate group grievances along religious lines. Within its incorporation regime groups were rewarded on the basis of their contribution to the common good.

The scope that was left for Muslims within the liberal field was to make, what appeared to be, cultural identity claims over, for example, the restoration of the minority status for Aligarh University, the

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protection of Muslim personal law, and the status of Urdu, leaving untouched the question of economic development. The liberal field limited the scope for socio-economic claims. For some Muslim groups, for example, those in UP and Bihar, the preservation of Urdu, or a minority status to Aligarh University, could have implications for better access to education and employment opportunities.\textsuperscript{94} Some groups employed the political language of liberalism with the hope of having not just better access, but a better share in the public good.

Group-identity claims within a liberal discourse, in turn, perpetuated a growing sense, that came to the fore from the mid-1960s, of the problem of the assimilation of Muslims in the mainstream of the nation. This problem was diagnosed by a government official in the 1960s as ‘an emotional one, and it largely exists because of the unwillingness of Muslims to integrate themselves into the country’.\textsuperscript{95}

In addressing its failings in relation to Muslims, government officials drew on the language of ethno-nationalism. As already mentioned, the problem in their view was that Muslims were standing apart, refusing to integrate and insistent about their minority causes. The ethno-nationalist discourse was an emblem of the partition of the subcontinent and of the making of India. The ethno-nationalist perceptions of the nation remained a part of the political vocabulary implanted with the fear of disunity. This language could be retrieved to silence dissent, or to redefine the terms of a public debate on policy; especially when the state, strained by its own contradictions in its attitude towards Muslims, failed to deliver on its policies. In some circumstances it could also relegate the contribution of Muslims to the republican common good, thereby rationalising their continued disenfranchisement.

From the end of the 1960s through to the early 1970s, some Muslim political organisations devised an alternative course of action within the republican discursive structure to advance their membership in the nation. The ‘All-India Muslim Political Convention’, organised by the Masjilis in December 1970, included the concerns of other backward communities in its agenda. In his presidential address, Badruddin

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p. 276.

\textsuperscript{95} M.C. Chagla, ‘Muslims Stand Apart’, The Times, 26 January, 1962 (Chagla was at the time the Indian High Commissioner in the UK. http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/viewArticle.arc (accessed 12.9.08). Also produced in Noorani, The Muslims of India, p. 25.
Tyabji called for a political forum for Muslims and other backward communities.\textsuperscript{96} This strategy responded to new emphases in central planning. The Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans were the first to state that their main thrust was directed ‘towards ameliorating the conditions of the backward sections of the society’; and ‘spreading the impetus and benefits of economic growth to the weaker sections’, especially ‘tribals, Harijans and backward communities’.\textsuperscript{97} Muslims were not included in the list of beneficiary groups. Various states of the union started reservation policies for their backward castes/classes at that time. The first Backward Classes Commission Report (1955) recognised, that ‘in practice [Muslim] society was more or less caste-ridden’.\textsuperscript{98} In many ways it made more sense to Muslims, especially in the context of the pursuit of development with equity, to claim membership in the nation as part of the majority of India’s ‘weaker sections’, rather than as a religious minority.

By the mid-1970s, however, the republican conception of citizenship was called into question by the non-statist citizenship discourse. This emerged in the context of broad economic and social unrest, largely over the frustrated promises of development, which found expression, for example, in the JP Bihar movement. At its peak, this movement called for a total revolution ‘against a rotten system’, and a ‘control of power by the people’.\textsuperscript{99}

Emergency rule (1975–1977) could be seen as an extreme attempt to restore a republican vision in crisis. It was justified by Indira Gandhi as a means of ‘removing the difficulties which have arisen in achieving the objective of socio-economic revolution, which would end poverty and ignorance’.\textsuperscript{100} Her rationale was that India’s democratic institutions ‘have been subjected to considerable stresses and strains and that vested interests have been trying to promote their selfish ends to

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., pp. 147–148.

\textsuperscript{97} See: http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/welcome.html; 5th Plan, chapter 5,166; 4th Plan, chapter 21 (accessed 19.9.08).


the great detriment of the public good.’\textsuperscript{101} Indira Gandhi employed an ethno-nationalist parlance to defend the republic. She explained that, the right extremist segments of our population who . . . have not accepted the concept of religious equality allied themselves with leftist terrorists who have never avowed any faith in democratic institutions. They have announced a nation-wide campaign [that] would have seriously impaired the integrity and strength of India.\textsuperscript{102}

Indira Gandhi attempted to reinstate the republic, devising a programme for speedy implementation of fundamental social and economic reforms.\textsuperscript{103} The stated aspiration of the emergency was to make up for earlier failures to distribute resources to the poor and improve their livelihoods. Paradoxically, the poor, and among them Muslims in particular, were those who suffered most harshly the injustices inflicted by the emergency.\textsuperscript{104} In a Robespierreian spirit, the emergency was a revolutionary dictatorship that was needed to defend the revolution. In a repetition of historical precedents, it also marked the demise of republicanism.

During the emergency a shift began to take place with a weakening republican discourse and a growing prominence of the ethno-nationalist and liberal citizenship discourses, balanced against each other. This change in balance occurred in the context of growing assertions of the lower and backward castes, disillusioned with their scope for development. In some ways, as long as the republican discourse predominated, the political power of these Hindu marginalised groups would remain limited. Now, the lower and backward castes began to create their own parties and power bases. Political alliances between lower and backward caste groups and Muslims emerged as well. This development carried the possibility of realizing more fully Muslim citizenship and their membership in the nation.

The appointment at that time of the Second National Backward Classes Commission (the Mandal Commission) and the Gopal Singh Committee can be seen, on the one hand, as an effort to review the failure of the republican agenda of development with equity. The

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. Also see Basu, \textit{Shorter Constitution of India}, pp. 1, 4, 333.


Gopal Singh Committee wrote in its Report that ‘there are those who believe that Muslims have been the victims of the discriminatory implementation of the various developmental schemes’. The Committee hoped that its recommendations, for example, on education, would ‘enable [Muslims] to become useful citizens’. On the other hand, what was by the early 1980s termed the ‘Muslim Problem’ marked a resolute shift towards a liberal citizenship discourse: in a debate on minorities in May 1981, Gopal Singh stated that,

three major demands of the Muslim community…namely the minority character of Aligarh Muslim University, recognition of Urdu as a second official language in UP and Bihar and non-interference in Muslim personal law were accepted by the present government and had been implemented.

None of these gains would advance the economic or social wellbeing of the vast majority of Muslims; some might even be detrimental. This discrepancy was identified by numerous Muslim groups. Thus, for example, in 1986 an association of Muslim women in Goa wrote to their Governor asking him to maintain the ‘existing Portuguese Civil Code’ in the state because it afforded far greater safeguards to them. Just as the Gopal Committee was conducting its work, the prospect for redistribution of resources shifted to issues of identity and recognition, within a liberal citizenship discourse.

Processes of economic liberalisation in India from the mid-1980s enhanced that liberal discourse. More crucially, Muslims in India were kept at bay by the ethno-nationalist—Hindu nationalist discourse that began gaining popularity from the mid-1980s. This discourse sought to establish India as a Hindu state, rallied around the claim that the Muslim minority threatened Hindus, and that Muslims were appeased by the state. The making of Islam and Muslims in the 1980s into a viable threat to India and to its Hindu majority, as well as the sudden political success of this notion, had little to do with the changing nature of Islam or of Muslim politics at the time. It was related to the class and status anxieties of the minority of upper castes among Hindus over the growing assertion of the lower and backward caste majority, which threatened to upset the Hindu moral order. It even carried, in the mid-1980s, a potential class clash, as alliances of SCs,
STs, Muslims and OBCs in politics developed. The ethno-nationalist anti-Muslim agenda sought to pre-empt those threats.\textsuperscript{109}

The common conceptualisation of the ‘Muslim Question’ and of Muslim citizenship, construed in terms of a ‘majority-minority’ issue, by state authorities, but often in scholarship as well, does not take into account the complexity of the minority notion within the Indian incorporation regime. The Muslim minority is a member in a large group of Hindu (caste) minorities that together form the \textit{de facto} majority. This is the majority of India’s poor. Indeed, from the viewpoint of emerging state policies, particularly from the 1980s, the minority included not only Muslims, but also the SCs, STs and OBCs, leaving only a small number of upper castes in the ‘majority’. The Indian state, in its citizenship discourses fragmented the majority of the poor, lower and backward castes (among them Muslims), into many minorities. It is this bulk of the Indian citizenry that has formed the real challenge to India’s endurance and integrity.

Of the various deep social conflicts that have challenged India since independence, the ‘Muslim Problem’ was the least threatening to the integrity of the nation. The main issue at the heart of this problem already lost its \textit{raison d’être} with partition, and Nehru recognised this. ‘It is clear’, he wrote in September 1948, ‘that any large scale trouble from the Muslims as such in India is exceedingly unlikely… There is a far greater possibility of communal trouble started by non-Muslims’.\textsuperscript{110} In some ways, Muslims were persistently discriminated against in and through the shifts in balance between the competing notions of citizenship, and the ‘Muslim question’ was retained as an issue of integrity, so as to inhibit other, more critical threats to the integrity of the nation—mainly to restrain the lower and backward castes, or the poor, and to prevent an intensification of class unrest.

\textbf{Conclusion: Muslims, Multiple Citizenship Discourses and the Resilience of Indian Nationhood}

The inclusion of Muslims within the nation required a careful balancing act between different citizenship discourses, each containing barriers to Muslims, preventing them from attaining


\textsuperscript{110} Nehru, \textit{Letters to Chief Ministers}, Vol. 1, 1 September, 1948, p. 199.
full membership in the nation state. In their struggles to chart a path for a share in the nation state, Muslims shifted between these differing citizenship discourses: if their demands, or grievances, were excluded by a specific and temporally-dominant citizenship discourse, they turned to an alternative citizenship paradigm within which some other Muslim identity claims could be contained. Paradoxically, these alternative identity-needs were sometimes created by the contradictions that barred inclusion of Muslims in the first place. For example, within the republican discourse Muslims were fundamentally excluded from development within equity because the state failed to define them in terms of their social and economic needs, reducing them instead to a religious group. Muslim lack of access to state resources also fed a sense that their religious identity was under threat. While the republican citizenship discourse fell short of incorporating Muslims, they were integrated within the liberal discourse that acknowledged their rights as a religious minority. In the shifts between citizenship discourses (1) Muslims experienced some form of dissent from the dominant citizenship discourse, which fostered a sense of agency in their citizenship; (2) the possibility of alternative ways of incorporation provided Muslims with a means of reckoning with their limits, and of defining demands for remedies. In this navigation between alternative citizenship discourses, Muslims cultivated some sense of a stake in the nation.

Muslims, as suggested above, are part of a much larger and deeply diverse group of marginalised members of the Indian citizenry. None of the diverse markers of social difference—caste, communal or linguistic—was ever strong enough to form the sole organizing principle for membership demands. Indian nationhood is built and held together by negotiating and balancing four predominant conceptions of citizenship. In the interplay between the four, each citizenship discourse is explained and justified by drawing on ideas and by utilising the political language of the other citizenship paradigms. Paradoxically, by drawing on each other, the four also become entangled and thus sustain each other. The balance and tension between these citizenship discourses is part of the dynamic whereby India’s incorporation regime was never fully monopolized by any one of the citizenship discourses, at least not for long. If any of these discourses had been predominant for a longer period India, as a unitary state and a democracy, might well have failed.

An extreme republican vision would have required a powerful central state capable of enforcing large-scale redistribution and state
intervention for the attainment of the common good. This could only have been enforced to the detriment of severe tensions with the notion of liberal citizenship and individual rights. This vision materialised for a short time at the cost of suspending a democratic order during emergency rule. Complete economic liberalism and a minimalist state have tended to be viewed as unrealistic by governments in the face of such widespread poverty. The experiment, for example, of Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, with an extreme structural adjustment programme and divestment by the state, worsened the livelihoods of farmers to such an extent that hundreds committed suicide. His government was ousted after one term in office. The slogan of ‘India Shining’ was insufficient to keep the Hindu nationalist BJP in power in the 2004 elections. An ethno-nationalist vision for India, as expressed in Gujarat in the 1990s to 2000s, led to widespread violence, capture of the judiciary and the police, and a suspension of some civil and political rights. An extreme form of non-statism ends with a full withdrawal from the state and the appropriation of the means of violence by society. The biggest and most organised manifestation of this phenomenon in contemporary India is the Maoist Naxalite movement that has an armed presence in circa 160 of India’s 604 administrative districts.

The resort to a single discourse of citizenship has tended to fail in India. Multiple ideological and institutional frameworks for identity claims and membership demands offer, for as diverse a social setting as India, a structure that can encompass this heterogeneity within the nation. A multiple citizenship regime, in turn, offered the state alternative ways of including its diverse social groups within the nation, and therefore of gaining sufficient legitimacy to contain a range of social conflicts with resilience.