

Abstract

Title: - Secularism and Indian Politics: A Study of Political Attitudes and Participation of Muslims in the District of Murshidabad (1978-2012)

The present research deals in studying political attitudes and participation of Muslims in the district of Murshidabad. The researcher chooses the district of Murshidabad as one of the district with majority of Muslim population. It was once the political capital of Bengal and also its commercial hub. After partition Murshidabad was expected to go to Pakistan, if the two nation theory was applied when determining its position. However, the Radcliff Award gave Murshidabad, with its Muslim majority of 56% somewhat unexpectedly for the inhabitants of the districts to India. So the Muslims of Murshidabad had to stay back and adjust their lives with the emerging new nation. Hence staying in India and adjusting their life with their Hindu compatriots or crossing the border, both the cases pointed out the intentions of the Muslim – whether the community possesses anti-national feelings or a pro-secular character. Due to lack of written sources the intentions of the ordinary people cannot be inferred. It is a serious handicap to discovering what Muslim expectations were at the time of partition.

As a section of the Muslims like Kazem Ali Mirza, Farhad Murtuza Reza Chowdhury, Imajuddin Biswas, Abdul Hamid, Shawakat Hossain all were in favour of partition and the supporters of Muslim League and demanded Pakistan, the loyalty of the Muslims as a whole was questioned. In this context the question becomes more important what is their attitude towards Indian state and secularism. Thus the research problem lies in finding the dilemma of the Muslims in the district of Murshidabad. The Muslim political leaders like Kazem Ali Mirza, Abdul Bari, Khuda Baksh, Lutfal Hoque (who was once the supporter of Muslim League), in post partition era raised their voice in Bengal Assembly in various debates is an excellent example of political participation from the district. They demanded an overall development of the district to ensure economic betterment of the district people irrespective of any community. This encouraged the researcher to study the political participation and attitudes of the Muslims in the context of Indian secularism and when successful democratic institutions can only work with the active participation of its citizens.

Here attempt has been made to study the political participation and attitude of the Bengali Muslims in Murshidabad district. Here the researcher used both theoretical and empirical method in conducting this research work. Here the two gram panchayats Aurangabad 2 and Umrapur is selected by the researcher from Suti 2 block to find out the responses of the Muslims towards political participation and their attitude towards Indian state and secularism. In the empirical analysis of the two gram panchayat Aurangabad 2 and Umrapur it is observed that political participation is high among the respondents. They cast vote because as a democratic citizen they feel that some level of political participation that delivering vote is admirable and acceptable.

Political participation gives opportunity to every citizen to express their political beliefs so that they might influence others. The Muslims cast vote because participation is not committed to any social goals but is a technique for setting goals, choosing priorities and deciding the process of the goal attainment. The Muslims voted to consolidate themselves politically and for influencing the political process directly. The participatory attitude of the Bengali Muslims of Murshidabad proved that they are well accomplished with the norms of democracy. To them participation is not a social goal but is a technique for setting goals. They believe in political participation as it is the way to express the needs and desires of the citizen to the government or as the means of receiving the benefits of the community. Through voting they want to ensure a stable and secure government in order to secure their rights in the society. Participatory acts of this district prove that the electoral system is a pillar of Indian democracy and the community's participation in the election proves that they believe in Indian democracy and they have enough confidence in the election system. Through voting they want to ensure a stable and secure government in order to secure their rights in the society. Due to the social differentiation between the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims and an alienation from the Muslim community, the Bengali Muslims try to obtain a secure and stable position in the domain of Indian politics.

The researcher tried to access the attitude of the Muslims of the district of Murshidabad towards Indian state and secularism. In the empirical study in the two respective gram panchayats in Suti 2 block, Aurangabad 2 and Umrapur Gram Panchayat in Murshidabad district, it is found that Bengali Muslims of the district possess an integrative attitude towards Indian state. In both the GP the respondents believe that none other but the government can ensure the betterment of the community. Indian state does not discriminate within the community people. There is no communal feeling exist within the community members and they participate in each other's festival. The respondents prefer education for the Muslim women though they prefer Islamic dress code for them. The respondents do not possess any hostile attitude towards state but they want reservation in governmental jobs and educational institutions for the Muslims. The Muslim respondents show their faith in state administration and felt that true development was impossible unless government ensures development and welfare of the community. Muslim community in Murshidabad district follows Islamic tenets, believes in Islamic teaching, maintains communal solidarity not for political purpose or personal ends, that in order to be a true Muslim he must have friendly relations with his neighbor and live in peace and amity with him. The respondents believe that it is not Islam but a sense of discrimination which creates a sense of dis-unity within the community members. But in case of Muslims of Murshidabad, it is the feeling of insecurity, alienation from the community, sense of minority feeling which the Muslim community bears for a long time lead to integration with national culture and secular principles.