

SECULAR SECTARIANISM

Limits of Subaltern Politics

Edited by **Ajay Gudavarthy**



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Chapter 6

Resisting Minoritization

Postcolonial Muslim Politics and
Indian Democracy*

Mursed Alam and Seema Ahmed

The 'Muslim question' and the political response of the Muslims to their minoritization in India have been pestering issues for Indian democracy. Although the Indian Constitution has provided the Muslims with various political and religious safeguards, the rise of right-wing forces and the communalization of Indian society and the various organs of the state have often rendered Indian Muslims to the status of sub-citizens/subalterns, which has serious consequences for Muslim identity and political discourse in India. Political theorists have identified two broad frameworks for analysing Muslim political response in India: the Muslim homogeneity perspective and the secular heterogeneity perspective. While the former, a la Iqbal Ansari, Syed Shahabuddin view Muslims as a single political unit and Muslim

* The chapter hugely benefitted from the suggestions and comments by Abdul Matin, PhD scholar at School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. It also owes a lot to Dr Anindya Sekhar Purakayastha and Mosarrap H. Khan. All the shortcomings, however, are due to the authors.

Secularism is a tenet that is fundamental to Indian democracy and enshrined in the Constitution. However, its practice has been severely hampered in recent times largely due to the secular sectarianism pursued by secular, democratic and progressive political formations. This implies the tendency of specific secular political movements to act as if their agendas are exclusively important. Secular sectarianism has gradually polarized communities and advanced a woefully limited political imagination, leading to the proliferation of conflicts between various marginalized groups—Dalits, tribals, OBCs, Muslims, women and the Left. **Secular Sectarianism: Limits of Subaltern Politics** includes several accounts of such conflicts, opening up a new area of study for further conceptualization.

This book emphasizes that citizenship in practice is expressed through the right to speak for others and not just for oneself. Progress can be made only by opening up dialogues with others across political communities. This is essential for India's success as a secular and democratic nation. Progressive politics must move towards affinity and an idea of shared spaces.




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