

TWO-DAY NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

THE BENGALI MUSLIM EXPERIENCE TODAY:
IDENTITY, CULTURE AND BELONGING

14-15 DECEMBER 2024

Organised by



Bengali Academia for Social Empowerment (BASE),
Kolkata, West Bengal
in collaboration with



Department of English, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar College,
Betai, Nadia, West Bengal
and



Department of English, Nagar College,
Nagar, Murshidabad, West Bengal

VENUE: RABINDRA TIRTHA, NEW TOWN, KOLKATA

CALL FOR PAPERS



During the colonial period in Bengal (late 18th to early 20th century), two disparate socio-cultural and educational paradigms emerged among Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. The Bengal Renaissance, a pivotal cultural, social, intellectual, and artistic movement, primarily benefited the upper-caste Hindus. They leveraged colonial education to achieve social mobility, creating a significant socio-economic gap between them and lower-caste Hindus and Muslims, who were largely left behind in various aspects of life. Meanwhile, Muslims, initially slower to adopt English education, eventually recognised its importance. This awakening sparked a gradual rise of Muslim intellectuals, leading to the emergence of a new, English-educated middle class in the twentieth century.

The Partition of India in 1947 led to a significant demographic shift. Because of this Partition, affluent Muslims migrated to East Pakistan, whereas lower-class Muslims, primarily peasants and labourers, were left behind. This is one of the historical causes of Muslim backwardness in post-partition Bengal. After Independence, the reservation system was introduced to address the backwardness of SCs and STs, but no such effort was made to address the Muslim backwardness. On December 31, 1980, the Mandal Commission report identified the socially or educationally backward classes of India and made an effort to address the backwardness of OBCs. The possibility of reservation for Muslims opened up with this. The West Bengal government was very slow to respond to Mandal Commission report and in 1994 only 5% reservation was given to the OBCs which was later increased up to 7%. Only a few Muslim classes were included as OBCs and it made no difference to Muslim life in Bengal.

The Sachar Committee Report (2006) highlighted the extreme backwardness of Muslims in Bengal, and the then Left Front Government woke up to extend reservation benefits to Muslims. In 2011, the West Bengal Government promised to allocate 17% of OBC reservations for backward population. Despite this promised reservation, there has been no significant change among the OBC Muslim communities. The slow pace of progress underscores the gap between policy decisions and their implementation highlighting the need for more effective measures to address the persistent socio-economic disparities faced by the Bengali Muslims.

At present, Bengali Muslims are facing multiple challenges that encompass educational disparities, empowerment issues, and dwindling political representation. Their struggles for identity, belonging and empowerment are

deeply intertwined, sparking critical questions about the position of Muslims within Bengal's social, cultural, and political fabric. The recent Calcutta High Court's verdict on OBC (on May 22, 2024) has dealt a significant setback to aspirations of OBC Muslims. Systemic marginalisation, fuelled by divisive politics and shrinking political representation, further exacerbates the community's vulnerabilities. Overlooking the diverse cultural heritage and practices, dominant narratives of Muslim life perpetuate a narrow, religion-centric definition of Bengali Muslim identity. This erasure worsens existing barriers to education and empowerment for the Muslim minorities of Bengal. To tackle these complex challenges, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive and holistic strategy, one that situates Bengali Muslim experiences within their distinct historical, cultural, and socio-political frameworks and envisions a brighter future for the community. The objective of this conference is to focus on the marginalised voices of Bengali Muslims, to foster possibilities of inclusive dialogue, and to recognise the intersections of identity, class, gender and caste for a just and equitable society.

Themes:

Academicians, research scholars, faculty members and professionals are invited to submit their original and unpublished research papers in English or Bengali for consideration for presentation. The presentation may be related (but not confined) to the following sub-themes:

SUB-THEMES

- ✓ Bengali Muslims in Historical Perspectives
- ✓ OBC Reservation and Challenges
- ✓ Bengali Muslim Writers in Present time
- ✓ Social Activities of Muslims in Bengal
- ✓ Identity, Politics, and Bengali Muslims
- ✓ Folk Forms, Oral Culture and Bengali Muslims
- ✓ Critical Voices from the Bengali Muslim Community
- ✓ Journals, Magazines, Pamphlets and Bengali Muslims
- ✓ Issues and Concerns of Bengali Muslims in Present time
- ✓ Representation of Bengali Muslims in Cinema, TV serial

REGISTRATION FEES

Student	500 INR
Scholar	700 INR
Faculty	1000 INR

- Rs. 100 less in all categories for BASE paid members of the current financial year.
- The fees cover the conference kit, high tea, and lunch.
- We do not provide TA/DA and accommodation.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

- Abstract: 300 words (with 5 keywords)
- Full Paper: 4000-5000 words
- Font: Times New Roman; Font size: 12; Spacing: Double space; Alignment: left.
- MLA 9th Edition must be followed for citation of the Articles.

REGISTRATION LINK



Scan the QR Code or Click Here to
Submit Your Abstract

PUBLICATION OF THE FULL PAPER

Selected papers in English will be published in an edited volume after a rigorous peer review.

IMPORTANT DATES

25TH NOV, 2024	30TH NOV, 2024	05TH DEC, 2024	10TH DEC, 2024	14TH-15TH DEC, 2024	31ST DEC, 2024
Last Date of Abstract Submission	Acceptance notification	Last Date of Online Registration	Announcement of Final Schedule	Dates of Conference	Full Paper Submission

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We look forward to your participation!