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THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE ON THE INDIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Upon taking the reins of power in the South Asian Sub-continent, the East India Company officials, being aware of how sensitive Indians were of their socio-cultural traditions, adopted a policy of "non-interference" and kept aloof from all matters related to the socio-cultural and religious affairs of the local inhabitants. Instead, they busied themselves with the economic exploitation of the country, the objective for which they had come to the region.

Nevertheless, following a vociferous clamour and pressure from the Christian missionaries who regarded the Indian people as "primitive" and "benighted", and who felt duty bound to "civilize" them, the British Government in London forced the East India Company in 1813 to forsake its, hitherto privileged, "no-interference policy" and give the evangelical movement unrestricted access to the country as an essential precondition for the renewal of the charter.

Thus, upon setting foot in the Sub-continent, the missionaries, and even some British reform-minded officials, embarked on the process of reforming, as well as westernizing, the Indian society. Although some of the reforms being introduced were, when looked at objectively, positive, they were always despised by the native Indians. Indeed, this brought about a widespread *malaise* among the natives who interpreted the Company's actions as part of a scheme to forcefully convert them to Christianity. Thus, the task of this paper is to set out this socio-cultural *malaise*.

The presence of the first Muslims on the Indian Subcontinent can be traced back to the early Arab merchants from the Arabian Peninsula, who conducted trade with Indians on the south-western coast of the Subcontinent, particularly on the Malabar Coast. That occurred during the seventh century, namely, almost

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a century after the death of the Prophet Mohammed back in 632 A.D.[19] As a result of this contact, some Muslim trading communities were established, and these communities were to play a significant role in peacefully converting many native people, who were overwhelmingly of Hindu faith, to Islam later on.[20]

The first Muslim military action aimed at conquering the Indian Subcontinent took place around the eighth century, when Muhammed Bin Qasim (695-715), a young Arab general, entered the Subcontinent through the sands of Sind for the sake of proselytization and expansion of the Damascus-based Ommayid Empire.[21]Although his incursion was short-lived, Bin Qasim paved the way for successive Muslim incursions to occur later on.[22] Probably the most significant raids on the Indian Subcontinent were those conducted by the Turkish Dynasty, which took place between the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Spear 1990:221). However, despite their being successful in military terms, these irruptions did not last long as their primary aim was plunder rather than conquest (Calkins & Alam 2001). Nevertheless, the first Muslim empire in the Indian Subcontinent, called the Slave Dynasty, was established only till the end of the twelfth century, and that was by Qutb-ud-Din Aybak.[23] Thenceforward, several Muslim dynasties successively ruled the Subcontinent (Aziz 1967:17). The last to come was the Mughal Empire.

The Mughals were a Muslim dynasty that lasted for more than two hundred years. They were originally nomad warriors from central Asia, descendants of the Turks and Mongols.[24] Many historians agree on the fact that the Mughal Empire was one of the greatest and the most brilliant empires that history has ever recorded (Aziz 1967:17).

The Indian Subcontinent proved to be a very difficult land to rule because of the overwhelming Hindu culture of the local population, which contrasted sharply with the faith of the Mughals, namely Islam. Moreover, India was a country where the people of a village spoke a language or a dialect that was

[19] P. Spear. *A History of India: From the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1990:221.

[20] P. B. Calkins and M. Alam. "India: The Early Muslim Period," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

[21] A. Zahoor. "Muslims in India: An Overview." *History of Muslim India*, at http://www.indianmuslims.info/?q=node/2

[22] K. K. Aziz. *The Making of Pakistan: A Study in Nationalism*. London: Chattos & Windus, 1967: 17.

[23] Qutb-ud-Din Aybak (?-1210) was the first founder of Muslim rule in the Indian Subcontinent. He was a former slave who turned into a military commander. *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

[24] A. Read and D. Fisher, *The Proudest Day: India's Long Road to Independence,* London: Pimlico, 1998:11.

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different from that spoken in another village that was only a couple of miles away. Traditions also differed from one village to another. Be that as it may, the Mughal emperors managed to rule with fairness and with as little misunderstanding as possible.

Hence, since the founding of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century, Muslims and Hindus have lived, though not in harmony due to their socio-cultural and religious divergences, peacefully and an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding reigned. Few instances were known of conflicts between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects. According to B. Prasad, this Muslim-Hindu peaceful co-existence had at its origin the military strength of the Mughal army as well as the religious toleration of the Mughal emperors.[25] Illustrating the latter statement, the same historian, speaking about Akbar,[26] stated that "religious toleration was the keynote of the Akbar's policy, and so long as his successors gave the appearance of impartiality in the matter of faith, the willing submission to the Mughal Emperor was a recognised fact" (Prasad 1981:1).

I. THE FALL OF MUSLIM HEGEMONY AND THE COMING OF THE BRITISH

With the death of Aurangzeb[27] *Alagmir* (meaning World Conqueror) in 1707, the process of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire was set in motion.[28] This was an inevitable outcome resulting from Aurangzeb's policies. In fact, being a fanatic Sunnite Muslim, known for his abhorrence and intolerance of other religions, he ruled with an iron-fist policy and proceeded with anti-non-Muslim policies that alienated most of his subjects, who were overwhelmingly of Hindu faith (Read & Fisher 1998:15). In this respect, P. Spear stated that Aurangzeb's fanaticism led him to the extent of removing the

[25] B. Prasad. *Bondage and Freedom: A History of Modern India (1707-1947): Volume I: Bondage, 1707-1858.* New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, 1981:1.

[26] Akbar's full name was Abu-ul-Fath Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad (1542-1605). He was the second ruler in the Mughal dynasty. He assumed power in 1556 until his death in 1605. Akbar is claimed by many historians as being the greatest ruler of the Mughal Empire, because of the fact that under his rule, the Empire was expanded significantly to cover almost the whole Indian Subcontinent and the latter became united and prosperous. Spear 1990:30-39.

[27] Aurangzeb's full name was Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad (1618-1707). He was the fifth Mughal emperor. He succeeded to the throne in 1658 and his rule lasted until his death in 1707. P. Spear. "Aurangzeb." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Volume II, England, 1973:372-373.

[28] C. C. Hazewell. "British India." *The Atlantic Monthly* 1:1 (Nov. 1857): 88.

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Muslim confession of faith from all coins for fear of being defiled by non-believers. Also, courtiers were forbidden to salute in the Hindu fashion, and Hindu idols, temples and shrines were often destroyed (Spear 1973:373).

Besides, Aurangzeb is regarded by many historians as being a war-like emperor. It was under his rule that the Mughal Empire reached its widest extent. This was carried out by on-going and off-going wars, which culminated in the exhaustion of the imperial treasury, as L. James put it:

> Aurangzeb overstepped himself by undertaking a series of campaigns to extend and consolidate his rule … They became a war of attrition which stretched imperial resources beyond their breaking point, and by 1707, after nearly twenty years of intermittent fighting, the empire was exhausted.[29]

As a result, in order to compensate for this financial shortage, Aurangzeb resorted to the extortion of money by imposing heavy taxes on his subjects, mainly non-Muslims. In fact, according to A. Read and D. Fisher, Hindu merchants were charged more than double the excise duty paid by their Muslim counterparts on the same goods (Read & Fisher 1998:15). Furthermore, Aurangzeb went so far as to reintroduce the *Jizya*, or poll tax, on non-Muslims, after it had already been abolished by the former Mughal Emperor, Akbar, by the end of the sixteenth century (Spear 1990:34-35).

Aurangzeb's harsh and discriminatory attitudes and policies towards his Hindu subjects had detrimental repercussions on the continuity of the Mughal Empire. In fact, Aurangzeb's misbehaviour only incurred hatred from his Hindu subjects, and in such circumstances, could he expect loyalty any further from the governed? Aurangzeb's blunders and iron-fist policy were going to pay off only after his death.

It is historically admitted that the post-Aurangzeb era proved to be the beginning of the end for the Muslim hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent. Actually, the year 1707, when Aurangzeb passed away, the Mughal Empire plunged into a state of chaos. Besides the conflict among his 17 sons and daughters about the inheritance of the Empire, others, mainly those who had been mistreated by the late Emperor (i.e. Aurangzeb), hence bore a grudge against the Mughal Court, found that time was ripe to fulfil their plans. In fact, within the far-flung Empire, local chiefs and kings, mostly Hindus, began carving out their little kingdoms without even caring about Delhi's[30] reaction, as

[29] L. James. *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*. London: Little, Brown and Company, 1997:6.

[30] "Delhi" became the capital of the Mughal Empire in 1658. Before that, "Agra" used to be the capital. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. UK, 2001, CD-ROM Edition.

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P. H. Plumb put it: "These chiefs and kings paid only lip-service to the titular Emperor at Delhi."[31]

It was in such circumstances that the British, hitherto a group of merchants conducting trade, got involved politically in the Indian Subcontinent. In fact, it is noteworthy to mention that the English East India Company had so far been carrying out trade under the protection of the Mughal Court.[32] Thus, the demise of the latter would naturally bring about the demise of the former. The state of anarchy and lawlessness that prevailed in the region on the heels of Aurangzeb's death cast the British in an atmosphere of vulnerability and insecurity and made them rethink their position there. This *status quo* was the driving force behind the change of mission that the East India Company was going to undergo in the eighteenth century, namely from a trading one to a ruling one.

In a little more than a half century, the British, by means of stratagems and complicity with local princes, managed to gradually fill the gap left by the Muslim rulers by imposing their hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent.[33]

II. THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE ON MUSLIMS

The coming of the British and their civilization that was at that time prevalent in the Western World had different repercussions among the various communities that made up the Indian Subcontinent, notably, Hindus and Muslims. In fact, following the Battle of Plassey[34] (1757), which marked the beginning of the process of the British conquest of the Subcontinent, the imposition of British rule took place piecemeal. The first to come under it were

[31] P. H. Plumb. *The Pelican History of England: England in the Eighteenth Century.* Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1990:172.

[32] J. H. Parry. *Europe and a Wider World, 1415-1715.* London: Hutchinson University Press, 1966: 92.

[33] According to J. Keay, as part of its plan to conquer the Indian Subcontinent, the English Company often bribed local chiefs. J. Keay. *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993:9.

[34] Plassey is a small town near Calcutta. It was in this place that the British under Clive (an outstanding soldier) defeated forces of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, nawab of Bengal. This decisive battle resulted in the establishment of British rule in India. J. Gardiner. *The Penguin Dictionary of British History*. London: Penguin Books, 2000:538.

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the coastal areas, where three major port cities were set up, namely Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.[35]

The British impact was initially felt in such coastal areas, and it happened that the people inhabiting those areas were mostly Hindus. The latter proved to be very receptive to foreign cultures. In fact, for Hindus, it did not matter whoever ruled them, and the advent of the British did not make any difference. They had already been used to being ruled by foreigners. The coming of the British was only "one imperialist sitting in the seat of another."[36] Moreover, the Hindus took advantage of the education and liberal ideas brought by the British. According to S. Hay, the Hindus responded to the British presence on their soil with an eagerness to learn from them whatever would contribute to their advancement.[37]

This attitude on the part of the Hindus towards the British and their civilization brought them many advantages. The Hindus were, indeed, the main, if not the only, beneficiaries of British rule. They availed themselves of the many opportunities that the British offered in all spheres of life. By embracing western education and culture, they became trusted subjects in the eyes of the new rulers, and by learning the English language, they were offered services in the Government (Hay 1992:84-85).

Furthermore, it was thanks to Western education brought by the British that a group of Hindu intellectual class was born. The latter became imbibed with the main principles of liberalism and democratic ideas that were then prevalent in Western Europe and North America. They read about modernism and free-thinking in Western Europe and learnt about Nationalism. That helped them develop political consciousness among their community by organizing revivalist and reform movements.[38] As a matter of fact, the nineteenth century witnessed a significant wave of socio-religious reform movements that spread among the Hindus. Probably the best example illustrating this is the emergence, as early as 1828, of *Brahmo Samaj*[39] under the leadership of Rajaram Mohan

[35] Before the British conquest, these port cities used to be called "presidencies", because they used to be the Company's principal trading centres, or "factories." This was due to the fact that their Chief Factors were designated "Presidents" (Keay 1993: 111).

[36] Aziz 1967:18. To sum it up, K. K. Aziz wrote: "The Hindus had been a subject race for centuries. They were trained in the art of honouring the rulers. When a Muslim sat on the throne of Delhi they learned Persian and cultivated the graces of a Mughal court life. When a British Viceroy governed the country they learned English with Equal diligence and entered Government service with alacrity" (76-77).

[37] S. Hay ed. *Sources of Indian Tradition, Volume II: Modern India and Pakistan*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1992:173.

[38] O. K. Ghosh. *How India Won Freedom*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989:21-25.

[39] *Brahmo Samaj* means literally "Sacred Society." Read & Fisher 1998:32.

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Roy.[40] Having benefited from modern education provided by Westerners, Mohan Roy sought to reform and modernize his society, that is, his Hindu community. He launched a crusade against polytheistic aspects of medieval Hinduism which sanctioned superstitions and meaningless religious rites that kept his co-religionists at a degraded level. This move on the part of Mohan Roy helped enlighten many western-educated Hindus who were to follow his footsteps in improving the status of the Hindu community.[41]

All this was in favour of the Hindu community, which made great strides forward towards nationalism, unlike their Muslim counterparts in the Subcontinent, as will be discussed below. Corroborating this statement, the Indian sociologist A. R. Desai stated that "the pioneers of nationalism in all countries were always the modern intelligentsia …" and in the case of India "it was predominantly from the Hindu community that the first sections of the Indian intelligentsia … sprang," hence the latter became the "pioneers of Indian nationalism" (Desai 1959:276-277).

On the other hand, the advent of the British on the Indian Subcontinent ushered in a new era, or rather a dark era, for Muslims. Whereas for Hindus it meant only a change of masters, for Muslims it meant the loss of power, position, wealth and dignity. Indeed, with the consolidation of British hegemony over the Indian Subcontinent, many profound transformations were effected, which disrupted the old order established by the former rulers, the Mughals, centuries back. Indians, and particularly Muslims, were to suffer the most, politically, economically, as well as psychologically. Depicting Muslims' predicament, J. Masselos wrote:

> It was argued that psychologically they (Muslims) had not recovered from their loss of power when they were supplanted as rulers of the subcontinent by the British and that they lived in the past, in a nostalgic world of former glories.[42]

Muslims were, indeed, reduced to poverty and destitution as a result of British rule. As the East India Company took control over the Subcontinent, it approached Hindus for co-operation, and the latter proved to be, from the very start, staunch supporters and reliable partners of the new rulers.[43] In S. R.

[40] Rajaram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) is usually described as the Father of Modern India. Hay 1992: 15-17.

[41] A. R. Desai. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism.* Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1959:264-265.

[42] J. Masselos. *Indian Nationalism: An History*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1996: 119.

[43] S. R. Wasti. "Muslims in Bengal: An Historical Study up to 1905." *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India*, Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1993:60. According to S. R. Wasti, the

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Wasti's opinion, by opting for Hindu partners and collaborators, the British were aiming to oppress Muslims as well as create an unbridgeable gap between both communities, namely Hindus and Muslims (Wasti 1993:61).

For instance, to help with revenue-collection, the Company passed the Permanent Land Settlement Act (1793)[44] whereby it created a new class of Hindu collaborators, called *gomashtas,* or *zamindars*.[45] The latter, backed up and encouraged by the British, overcharged Muslim peasants, even during hard times, such as famines (Wasti 1993:58-59). In this respect, S. R. Wasti stated:

> The British gave their gomashtas Hindu full protection. So much so that Clive had to admit that the Company's servants "commited actions which make the name of the English stink in the nostrils" (Wasti 1993:59).

To justify the passage of the Permanent Land Settlement Act the Company officials said that they found it easier and more practical to collect land revenue from a few thousands of loyal landlords than from hundreds of thousands of small peasant proprietors.[46] Yet, these few thousands of landlords were the *gomashtas*, or *zamindars,* namely Hindu revenue-collectors, who turned overnight into landowners. It is noteworthy to mention that the fact that the Permanent Land Settlement Act imposed the system of individual proprietorship, whereby land could be purchased and sold, proved to be a godsend for these *gomashtas*. Indeed, being the *protégés* of the British administration, these Hindu revenue-collectors, by means of swindle and oppressive conduct, managed to accumulate huge fortunes at the expense of the

growing feeling of antagonism towards Muslims amongst Hindus was coincident with the decline of the Mughal Empire.

[44] It was Lord Cornwallis, Governor General of India from 1786 to 1793, who introduced the Permanent Land Settlement Act. By this Act, the British destroyed the old system of collective ownership of land in the Indian Subcontinent and replaced it with the system of individual proprietorship. B. Chandra, A. Tripathi and B. De. *Freedom Struggle.* New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1983:17.

[45] A "zamindar" was an official person in pre-colonial India who had been assigned to collect the land taxes of his district. After the East India Company took over, this word was used to denote a landholder who was responsible for collecting and paying to the government the taxes on the land under his jurisdiction.

[46] Desai 1959:36. Some British officials confessed that the reason why they created this new class of landlords was that the British administration needed a social support in the country to maintain its rule. As a matter of fact, the Company officials expected full loyalty and support, when need be, from this new class of Indian landlords-cum-revenue collectors, which owed its existence to the British, and thus had much stake in their rule. As the Indian sociologist A. R Desai quoted Lord William Bentinck, Governor General of India between 1828 and 1835, saying that: "If Security was wanting against extensive popular tumult or revolution, I should say that the Permanent Settlement … has this great advantage … of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuances of the British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people."

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poor Muslim peasants (Wasti 1993:58). Commenting on this, S. R. Wasti stated that the Permanent Settlement Act "elevated the Hindu collectors to the position of landholders, gave them a propriety right in the soil and allowed them to accumulate wealth." Meanwhile it "practically reduced the Muslim peasantry to serfdom" (Wasti 1993:58).

This degenerative process of the Muslim community in the Subcontinent was not only confined to the agricultural field. Even in the administrative government positions Muslims were being gradually replaced by Hindus. According to J. Masselos, this process of Muslims being replaced by Hindus was set off when the East India Company replaced Persian, or Urdu,[47] with the English language, and the latter became the official language of the bureaucracy (Masselos 1996:119). As a matter of fact, it was in 1835, namely during Lord Bentinck's[48] general-governorship, that English was made the official language of governmental and legal business in the Indian Subcontinent (Spear 1990:223). Furthermore, even in law courts, the position of Muslim officials was steadily undermined as the British imposed their own procedures in the courts to supersede the ones already established by the Mughals (Spear 1990). Illustrating this situation in the Bengal region, T. R. Metcalf wrote:

> In Bengal, to be sure, the fall from power was complete and catastrophic. Corwallis and his successors swept away the whole structure of Muslim administration which they had inherited from the Mughal rulers of the province. The Muslim … judges were discharged, the Islamic code was set aside in favour of the British Regulations, and under Bentinck Persian was abandoned as court language.[49]

Hence, the fact of refusing to learn the language of the new conquerors, as well as their education, served as an impediment for Muslims to get, or to continue to be in, the administrative posts under British rule, knowing that the English education was the only qualification that opened the door for government positions (Masselos 1996:119). About this statement, K. K. Aziz wrote:

> The Muslims did not take to the English language, and thus denied themselves opportunities of material as well as intellectual progress. Material, because Government jobs were open only to English-knowing persons; intellectual, because the entire corpus of Western knowledge and learning was shut out from them. (Aziz 1967:130)

[47] Urdu is a language that uses the Persian script, which is similar to the Arabic script. It was the official language that was used during the Mughal administration.

[48] Lord William Bentinck was Governor-General of India between 1828 and 1835.

[49] T. R. Metcalf. *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1870*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965: 300.

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In a word, under British rule, Hindus fared better than their Muslim counterparts, and the latter lagged far behind. S. Hay attributes this Muslim degeneration partly to the fact that the areas where Muslims were present, namely the northern regions, were the last to come under British rule (Hay 1992:173). On the other hand, many other historians attribute this Muslim backwardness to the fact that Muslims were not pre-disposed to absorb "alien ideas, methods and language of the new rulers"; thus they failed "to grasp the opportunities available in the new structure of government" (Masselos 1996:119).

Muslims' rejection of Western education and culture and their attitude towards their successors in the seat of power had indeed many reasons. One of these reasons was imperial pride. In fact, whereas Hindus were, by nature, too willing to submit to the rulers, Muslims were too proud of their past glory to submit to the British. The takeover of the Indian Subcontinent by the East India Company proved to be a bitter pill for Muslims to swallow (Aziz 1967:76-77). They had been dethroned and could not reconcile themselves with the current *status quo*, as K. K. Aziz put it: "When Muslim hegemony was gone and real power lay with the British, the Muslims would not, could not, forget that they had once ruled over the land. Their reaction was bitter and truculent" (Aziz 1967:76). As a result, they developed a hostile attitude towards the British whom they accused of expropriating their prestige. This made the Muslim community shy away from everything associated with the British, including their culture, language, and education.[50] Furthermore, this state of affairs of the Muslims led them to insularity, that is, only interested in their own culture, ideas and so on (Aziz 1967:77). Naturally, to avoid coming under the influence of the new culture, they clung tenaciously to the fundamental teachings of Islam and most of them prevented their children from attending British-patronized educational institutions throughout the different Indian provinces (Desai 1959:276), as reflected in the data contained in the following chart:

[50] Desai 1959:276. This Muslim reluctance to take Western education was to have serious repercussions on the Muslim community by the second half of the nineteenth century. According to S. Tandon, Muslims were to trail far behind the Hindus in the field of modern education. Taking the case of the Bengal region, he stated that by 1875, Muslims made up only 5.4 per cent of the total college enrolment while the Hindus made up 93.9 per cent. He added that the same situation was witnessed at secondary schools and universities. (Further data are given below in a tabulated form) S. Tandon. "Genesis of the *Wahabi* Movement." *The Tribune*, India: Chandigarh, March 24, 2002.

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PROVINCES	CLASSES OF INSTITUTION	TOTAL N° OF STUDENTS	MUSLIMS	%
MADRAS	Colleges	1669	30	1.7
	High Schools	4836	117	2.4
	Middle	18553	723	3.8
	Total	*25058*	*870*	*3.4*
BOMBAY	Colleges	475	7	1.4
	High Schools	5731	118	2.0
	Middle	14257	781	5.4
	Total	*20463*	*906*	*4.4*
BENGAL	Colleges	2738	106	3.8
	High Schools	43747	3831	8.7
	Middle	37959	5032	13.2
	Total	*84444*	*8969*	*10.6*
NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES (U.P.[51] EXCLUDING OUDH)	Colleges	223	29	13.0
	High Schools & Middle	4273	697	16.3
	Total	*4496*	*726*	*16.3*
OUDH	Colleges	126	7	5.5
	High Schools & Middle	1081	195	18.0
	Total	*1207*	*202*	*16.7*
PUNJAB	Colleges	103	13	12.6
	High Schools	453	91	20.0
	Middle	2671	703	26.3
	Total	*3227*	*807*	*25.0*
ALL THE ABOVE PROVINCES	Colleges	5334	192	3.6
	High Schools & Middle	133561	12228	9.2
	Total	*138895*	*12480*	*8.9*

Table n° 1: Muslim Students Enrolment at British-patronized Educational Institutions
Source**:** Ali Khan 2004:57-58.

[51] "U.P." stands for United Provinces.

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As can be inferred from the tabulated data above, a highly insignificant percentage of Muslims frequented educational institutions that provided English education, knowing that the Muslim community constituted, at least, one fourth of the total population inhabiting the Indian Subcontinent.

It is noteworthy to mention the fact that the type of education that the British introduced in the Subcontinent also played a significant role in incensing the Muslim community. In fact, in accordance with Lord William Bentinck's policy of religious neutrality, this new system of education did not make any concessions to religious instruction and Islamic cultural heritage (Aziz 1967:132). According to K. K. Aziz, the aim behind the spreading of secular education was ostensibly to give full religious freedom to all creeds in the Indian Subcontinent (Aziz 1967:132). Nevertheless, Muslims were convinced that the British intention was to forcibly Christianize the whole inhabitants of the Subcontinent, including the Muslim subjects (Metcalf 1965:122-123). Indeed, Muslims' apprehension was well founded. In fact, the foreign Christian missionaries, who were one of the main agencies responsible for spreading education in India,[52] went on openly and overzealously proselytizing in Mission schools, thinking that they were on a "civilizing mission" in the Indian Subcontinent. In this respect, Dr Ghazanfar Ali Khan argues that Muslims overwhelmingly objected to the Western education provided by the Christian missionaries because the purpose of the latter was "neither the education of the Indian natives nor the eradication of backwardness, but only the propagation of Christian ideas" (Ali Khan 2004:45). To back up his statement, he quoted a Western missionary saying openly:

> Our great object was to convey as largely as possible knowledge of our literature and Science to the young persons; but another and more vital object was to convey a thorough knowledge of Christianity. (Ali Khan 2004:47)

Again in this respect, C. Hibbert bears witness to the fact that copies of the New Testament were distributed to the learners at schools run by these missionaries.[53] On the other hand, G. Ali Khan stated that the Colonial Government of India was, in a way or another, involved in this scheme of converting native Indians to Christianity. He added that even Government's warning to the missionaries not to tamper with the people's faiths was but "an outward posture" (Ali Khan 2004:45).

[52] According to A. R. Desai, there were three main agencies responsible for the spread of education in the Indian Subcontinent. One was the foreign Christian missionaries; second, the British Government; and third, the progressive Indians who had received Western education from the two previous agencies (1959:127).

[53] C. Hibbert. *The Great Mutiny: India 1857*. London: Allen Lane, 1978: 52.

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Briefly speaking, with the consolidation of British rule in India, the Muslim community was badly affected, as well as faced serious setbacks in all spheres of life. They, Muslims, plunged into a sense of humiliation and grief at the loss of their power, and as a result, they developed bitter feelings towards the British. This bitterness was going to lead, by the mid-nineteenth century, to a major Revolt that shook the Company's rule to its very foundations.

III. THE IMPACT OF THE INDIAN GREAT REVOLT ON MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Anti-British and anti-western feelings that had long been building up amongst the Muslim community culminated in the Great Revolt of 1857.[54] This Revolt, which initially took the form of a mutiny amongst the Muslim as well as Hindu Sepoys[55] in the barracks and then later spread to the civilian population, is usually considered as a restorative revolt (Ghosh 1989:7-16). This is because the aim of the insurgents, Muslims as well as Hindus, was to restore the pre-British conditions in the Subcontinent. Muslim rebels, for instance, aimed at restoring their past imperial glory. Indeed, in an attempt to restore the Mughal Empire, the Muslim Sepoys, shortly after the outbreak of the mutiny in the barracks, headed to Delhi, where they pledged allegiance to Bahadur Shah II,[56] the then titular Mughal Emperor.[57]

The Great Revolt was doomed to failure, and many historians attribute this failure to, among other things, the lack of unity among the insurgents. In spite of the fact that Muslims and Hindus joined hands in their effort to throw the yoke of foreign rule, differences related to religion as well as the diversity of interests served as a hamper for the cultivation of any feeling of national sentiment among them (James 1997:273).

[54] The Great Revolt of 1857 is usually referred to as the "First War of Independence" by most historians from the Indian Subcontinent, and as the "Great Mutiny" by most of Western historians, particularly British.

[55] "Sepoys" were Indians who served in the British army under the East India Company.

[56] Bahadur Shah II was the last Mughal emperor of India. He reigned between 1837 and 1858.

[57] R. A. Huttenback. *The British Imperial Experience*. London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966:59-62. Some historians bear witness to the fact that Bahadur Shah II was forced by the rebellious sepoys into accepting leadership. According to S. David, when Bahadur Shah II was solicited by the rebellious sepoys to make him king, he told them: "I did not call for you; you have acted very wickedly." Then the sepoys replied: "Unless you, the King, join us, we are all dead men, and we must in that case just do what we can for ourselves." Soon after, the King seated himself in a chair, and the sepoys came forward one by one and bowed their heads before him. S. David. *The Indian Mutiny: 1857*. London: Viking, 2002:104.

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Notwithstanding the fact that Muslims were not the only "culprits" responsible for the outbreak of the Revolt, they were to bear the brunt of it. As the events of 1857 ended, the British chose to throw the cover of responsibility on the Muslim aristocracy alone (Metcalf 1965:301). As a matter of fact, the British had always regarded the Muslims as their archenemy in India due to the fact that they (the British) had unseated them from power, and the fact that the insurgents endeavoured to restore Bahadur Shah II to power convinced the British enough to assume that the Muslim leaders were behind the planning and leading of the uprising. Besides, the British officials in India admitted the fact that they had wreaked havoc on the Muslim community, particularly the upper class, and so it was no surprise that the latter would bear a grudge against the British. In this respect, T. R. Metcalf stated that:

> As the British were well aware, the Muslim aristocracy could not but resent the complete revolution in their fortunes brought by the imposition of British rule. Once an imperial race, they were now ordinary subjects, on a par with the despised Hindus, and excluded them from all higher posts in the Government. (Metcalf 1965:300)

Be that as it may, many historians who wrote about the events of 1857 bear witness to the fact that the dispossessed Muslim potentates were not the only ones to have taken part in and led the uprising. Actually, R. A. Huttenback confirms that even Hindu maharajas (i.e. princes) and landlords, who, under British rule, had suffered deprivation in terms of possessions, political rights and prestige, were the first to seize the opportunity of the Revolt when it broke out (Huttenback 1966:71). For the sake of illustration, it is worthwhile to set out a couple of examples. One was Nana Sahib (1820-1859). The latter had been deprived of his titles and rights that he inherited from his late father, Baji Rao II, the last Maratha Peshawar (Prince), as a result of Dalhousie's "Doctrine of Lapse."[58] As the Great Revolt broke out, Nana Sahib is said to have joined the rebellious native regiments without any hesitation. According to an American contemporary, Reverend Hollis Read, Nana Sahib ended up as a prominent leader in the course of the uprising and inflicted heavy losses, material as well as human, on British troops.[59]

[58] Dalhousie's "Doctrine of Lapse" was a formula devised by Lord Dalhousie (General Governor of British India between 1848 and 1856) to deal with questions related to succession in Indian princely states as well as titles and pensions owed by the East India Company to former native rulers of territories that had previously been annexed. K. A. Ballhatchet. "James Ramsay Dalhousie." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,* England, 1973, Volume 5:438. According to L. James, under this stratagem, five semi-autonomous states within the Indian Subcontinent fell to British rule (1997:234).

[59] H. Read. *India and its people: ancient and modern, with a view of the Sepoy mutiny: embracing an account of the conquests in India by the English, their policy and its results: the Moral,*

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Hindu active involvement in the Great Revolt can also be epitomized by the story of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani, or Queen, of Jhansi.[60] Based on Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, which stated that "a state whose ruler died without a direct male heir was forfeit to the company," Lakshmi Bai had her adoptive son denied the right to replace her late husband, Rajah, or King, of Jhansi following his passing away (David 2002:350). As the events of 1857 unfolded, the Rani led her troops and fought like a noble warrior. Many contemporaries were fascinated by her courage on the battlefield as she held her sword and reaffirmed her allegiance: "Nothing will give me greater happiness than to die on the battlefield" (David 2002:362). K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac quote Antonia Fraser, a British historian, stating that "the Rani has her parallel in Queen Boadicca, the early-day Briton who with a spear in her fist vainly led an army against the Roman invaders who had wronged her family and people" (Meyer & Brysac 2001:138). Nevertheless, the British would not hear of this and chose to make Muslims the first "culprits" behind the outbreak of the 1857 events. As a result, they were going to make them pay for it.

Briefly speaking, both Muslims and freedom-loving Hindus did participate in the Great Revolt, and in spite of that, the British decided to revenge themselves on the Muslim community, as the latter were regarded as the *bona fide* formentors and the most beneficiaries of the uprising. Commenting on this, T. R. Metcalf wrote:

> As the former rulers of Hindustan, the Muslims had, in British eyes, necessarily to place themselves at the head of a movement for the overthrow of the British Government. (Metcalf 1965:301)

This anti-Muslim feeling was well reflected in the harshness of British reprisals towards the Muslim community immediately after the Revolt was put down. Besides the expropriation of Muslim landowners, some contemporaries bear witness to many instances of barbaric acts of ruthless vengeance being inflicted indiscriminately by British soldiers, with the connivance of their superior officers, on ordinary Muslims.[61] Describing this British heavy-handedness on the Muslim community, S. R. Wasti stated that "mass massacres, indiscriminate hangings, inhumane tortures and large scale confiscation of properties were some of the means adopted by the British for the purpose" (1993:8). To add insult to injury, even Hindus, who had an active hand in the

Religious, and Political Condition of the People: their Superstitions, rites, and customs. Columbus: J. & H. Miller, 1858:72.

[60] "Jhansi" was a small Martha principality in cntral India. K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac. *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia.* London: Abacus, 2001:138.

[61] S. R. Wasti. "British Policy towards the Indian Muslims Immediately after 1857." *Muslim Struggle for Freedom in India*, Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1993: 7.

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events of 1857, pointed an accusing finger at the Muslim community and joined hands with their new masters, namely the British, in their anti-Muslim campaign (Wasti 1993:8).

Anti-Muslim sentiment can also be inferred from the British policy towards the Muslim community during the several decades that followed the Great Revolt. As a matter of fact, since the early days when the East India Company imposed its hegemony over the Subcontinent, the British had looked down on the Muslim community and saw Muslims as their *bona fide* adversaries (Ali Khan 2004:53). The events of 1857 were but an opportunity that the British seized to get rid of the last vestiges of the Mughal Empire once and for all, as well as curb the Muslim influence in the Indian society. The first objective was, indeed, successfully fulfilled. In fact, shortly after Delhi was retaken, the British captured the ageing Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, with his three sons and tried them for complicity in murder. Found guilty, the sons were executed, and the old Mughal was sent into exile with his wives to Burma, where he died in 1862. Thus, with the departure of the last Mughal Emperor, Delhi, the last foothold that remained of the Mughal Empire, came under British suzerainty (Meyer & Brysac 2001:146-147).

With regard to the second objective, Muslims were to face terrible discrimination in all spheres of day-to-day life, and particularly in Government employment. This discriminatory policy was mainly carried out upon the advice of some high officials in the Government of India. Charles Raikes, for instance, who was a senior British official in India during the events of 1857, was of the opinion that Muslims had been trusted too much and thenceforward, they should be watched. He asked the Government of India to take drastic measures to prevent Muslims from "enjoying too large a share of the Government patronage" (Metcalf 1965:301). Indeed, Raikes' and his colleagues' recommendations were well heeded by the Government of India. In fact, the number of Muslim appointments in Government posts decreased sharply during the couple of decades that followed the Great Revolt, and by the 1880's, the British managed to reduce Muslims to the position of "hewers of woods and drawers of water."[62] For instance, in the Bengal region, T. R. Metcalf stated that whereas on the eve of the Great Revolt the Muslim community used to monopolize the higher positions in the judicial service, by 1886 they could lay claim to only 9 posts out of a total of 284 (Metcalf 1965:301-302). For the sake of further illustration, it is useful to report the figures advanced by Dr. Ghazanfar Ali Khan with regard to appointments in all Government positions during the early 1870's:

[62] R. Upadhyay. "Aligarh Movement: Could it fulfil the dream of Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan?". *South Asia Analysis Group* at http://www.saag.org/papers7/paper611.html

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GAZETTED POSTS	EUROPEANS	HINDUS	MUSLIMS	TOTAL
COVENANTED CIVIL SERVICES	260	00	00	260
JUDICIAL OFFICERS IN THE NON-REGULATION DISTRICTS	47	00	00	47
EXTRA ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS	26	7	00	33
DEPUTY MAGISTRATE AND DEPUTY COLLECTORS	53	113	30	196
INCOME-TAX ASSESSORS	11	43	6	60
REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT	33	25	2	60
JUDGES OF SMALL CAUSE COURT AND SUBORDINATE JUDGES	14	25	8	47
MUNSIFS[63]	01	178	37	216
POLICE DEPARTMENT	106	03	00	109
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (ENGINEER ESTABLISHMENT)	154	19	00	173
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (SUBORDINATE ESTABLISHMENT)	72	125	4	201
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (ACCOUNT ESTABLISHMENT)	22	54	00	76
MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OFFICES ATTACHED TO MEDICAL COLLEGES, JAILS, CHARITABLE DISPENSARIES, SANITATION AND VACCINATION ESTABLISHMENTS AND MEDICAL OFFICERS IN CHARGE OF DISTRICTS, ETC.	89	65	04	158
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION	38	14	01	53
OTHER DEPARTMENTS SUCH AS, CUSTOMS, MARINE, SURVEY, OPIUM, ETC.	412	10	00	422
TOTAL	1338	681	92	2111

Table n° 2: Muslim and Hindu Appointments to Government Positions
Source: G. Ali Khan 2004: 55-56.

As can be inferred from the table above, Muslims lost most of their positions in Government. According to G. Ali Khan, there was "scarcely any Government office … in which a Muhammadan can hope for any post above

[63] A "munsif" means a junior judge

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the rank of poster, messenger, filler of ink-pots and menders of pens" (Ali Khan 2004:56).

It is worthwhile to mention the fact that it was the new *"protégés"* of the British, namely the Hindus, who were to benefit the most from this anti-Muslim discrimination. Even when meeting all the requirements for Government positions, Muslims were officially and publicly kept away by official decrees. This was confirmed by S. R. Wasti, who quoted an article from a Persian newspaper in Calcutta (14th July 1869) describing this anti-Muslim and pro-Hindu attitude on the part of the British authorities in India:

> All sorts of employment, great and small, are being gradually snatched away from the Mohammedans, and bestowed on men of other races, particularly the Hindus. …time has now come when it (the Government) publicly singles out the Mohammedans in its gazettes for exclusion from official posts. …even when qualified for Government employ, they are seriously kept out of it by Government Notifications. (Wasti 1993:23-24)

In a word, the post-Great Revolt period was probably the gloomiest period in the history of the Muslim community in the Indian Subcontinent. In the British eyes, Muslims had concocted and taken a prominent part in the events of 1857, whereas Hindus kept a low profile. As a result, the former were to shoulder, alone, the blame. Swift and merciless reprisals were to be inflicted by the British administration, which would result in a harsh reality to the Muslim community. Their pitiable conditions can be read from the following passage addressed by the Muslim community in Delhi to the Governor-General:

> We the Muslim inhabitants of Delhi have since sustained the extreme losses of life, property and honour. At present we have absolutely nothing to feed our children and ourselves. There is no ceiling under which we could seek shelter against inclement weather, and no clothings to cover our bodies. Thousands of us not bearing the severities of climate perished last year and if nothing is done to protect us many more will die this season.[64]

On the other hand, the Government of India embarked on a discriminatory policy that disfavoured Muslims in every walk of life. This wreaked havoc on Muslims who were reduced to a state of degradation and destitution. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Sir William Hunter (1840-1900), a contemporary member of the Indian Civil Service as well as an imperial historian, depicted Muslims in his book *The Indian Musalmans* (1871) as "a community in decay, economically backward and deprived of access to positions in government service by a rival Hindu community" (Masselos 1996:120).

[64] Punjab. *C.S. Records*. General Department of proceedings of the 1st January, 1859, F. N° 11-12. Quoted by Syed Razi Wasti, S. R. Wasti 1993:22.

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