ISSN: 3107-619X (Online)

NBPA Journal for Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
A Peer-reviewed Multidisciplinary Quarterly Journal

Bengali Muslim Intelligentsia: Socio-Political Ideologies and Trends in Early 20th Century Bengal

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Abstract

This research constitutes a comprehensive and detailed examination of the evolution of Bengali Muslim identity, culture, and politics during the first half of the 20th century. The study delves into the intricate and multifaceted nature of Bengali Muslim consciousness, underscoring the inherent tensions and contradictions among diverse ideological, cultural, and political currents. It posits that a complex interplay of factors, encompassing Islamic ideology, anti-colonial sentiment, pan-Islamism, conservatism, and liberalism, collectively shaped Bengali Muslim identity. The research emphasizes the significant role of Muslim intellectuals, writers, and politicians in moulding the cultural and political discourse of Bengali Muslims. Furthermore, the study investigates the tensions between communalism and nationalism, illustrating the nuanced ways in which Bengali Muslim intellectuals navigated these complex and often conflicting ideologies. It contends that the ascendance of communalism in the 1940s was not a predetermined outcome but rather a consequence of a confluence of historical, cultural, and political dynamics. In summation, this study offers a nuanced and detailed understanding of the evolution of Bengali Muslim identity, culture, and politics in the specified period. It accentuates the complexity and diversity of Bengali Muslim thought and experience, thereby challenging overly simplistic or essentialized interpretations of Muslim identity and politics.

Original Article

Open Access

Received: 01.09.2025
Accepted: 18.09.2025
Publication Date: 30 September 2025
Volume: 1
Issue: 2
Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.17244885

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Published by: North Bengal Philosophers Association
Website: https://nbpajournal.com/
https://nbpa.org.in/

Key Words: Orthodox . traditional-conservative . liberal-rational . Pan-Islamic . communalism . Muslimhood

The political transition in 18th-century Bengal incited Muslim resistance against British governance. The consolidation of British authority throughout the 19th century elicited responses from Muslim society, manifested in movements such as the Wahhabi and Faraji uprisings. The Sepoy Mutiny represented a pivotal juncture, fostering a new sense of awareness among Muslims (De, 1974). Muslim communities have long faced challenges stemming from cultural, religious, and political differences. Recognizing these issues and seeking peaceful solutions is crucial. Despite sharing a common Islamic faith, Bengali and Urdu-speaking Muslims have struggled to unite, leading to persistent tensions. Addressing these concerns transcends cultural and linguistic differences, necessitating consideration of political factors. In the late 19th century, Bengal Muslims underwent a transformative period of political and educational change, integrating Western and traditional learning to revitalize their community. This blending of perspectives fostered modern ideas alongside a strong religious identity (Lahiri, 1991, p. 40). Both liberal and orthodox movements influenced the political philosophy of the Muslim community in the late 19th century. Orthodox Muslim intellectuals adhered to traditional ideas, resisting modernism and liberalism. Their emphasis on Islamization and anti-Hindu sentiment significantly influenced Muslim political thought. Conversely, a liberal trend emerged among Muslim writers, focusing on socio-political issues such as 1. Cow slaughter. 2. Pan-Islamic ideas. 3. Adoption of English and scientific education. 4. India's independence.

The advancement of society necessitates a critical examination of existing norms. The rise and evolution of an intellectual community within Bengali Muslim society marked a new chapter in Bengal's social movement. During the early 19th century, a middle class gradually emerged among Bengali Muslims, characterized by both familiarity with modern education and an emphasis on religious principles. By the mid-19th century, reformist ideologies gained traction in both Hindu and Muslim communities. This reformist movement fostered a strong anti-British sentiment among the general Muslim populace. However, driven by a desire to safeguard community interests, the newly formed Muslim intelligentsia increasingly adopted a policy of communal cooperation. Abdul Lateef of Bengal and Sir Syed Ahmed occupy significant positions in Indian history. Sir Syed Ahmed championed education and social reform within the Muslim community, establishing the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (now Aligarh Muslim University) in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, in 1875. His influential writings addressed social and religious reform, leaving a lasting impact on the Indian subcontinent.

Concurrently, a center for Islamic practice was founded in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, under the leadership of Muhammad Qasim Nanutvi. Notably, both groups diverged from the anti-British sentiments of the Wahhabis and Farazis, opting instead for collaboration with the British administration. At the same time, various sects and practices of Muslims were debated as to whether they were in complete agreement with Islam.

Prominent figures among these emerging Muslim intellectuals included Maulvi Abdul Rauf, Syed Amir Ali, Nawab Abdool Lateef, and Amir Hossain (Roy, 2022, pp. 11–13). Syed Amir Ali was the first leader to recognize the need for a separate political organisation for Muslims. He was at odds with Abdul Lateef and Sir Syed Ahmad regarding the participation of Muslims in politics. Nawab Abdool Lateef was conservative; While he favoured spreading Western education, he was also against Western thought. His social outlook is also reactionary. In this situation, the educated society of Bengal was divided into two groups. Abdool Lateef was the leader of one group, and Amir Ali was the leader of the other group. Abdool Lateef was the leader of the conservative party. According to him, "Amir Ali cannot represent the Muslims of Bengal because he belonged to the Shia sect, while most of the Muslims of Bengal are Sunni." (Ahmed, Spring Issue, 1395 BS, p. 30) Abdool Lateef believed that if there is to be a family in society, it should be known through a religious person. Conversely, Amir Ali represented a relatively progressive trend. He supported Sir Syed Ahmad's efforts to improve Muslim society in North India and trusted Sir Syed's policy of education and Muslim independence. However, the disagreement was on the question of participation in politics.

The Muslim intellectuals' social and intellectual background also helped to develop the distinctness of the Muslim community. They were not attached to Bengali life and culture. Neither Karamat Ali nor Ameer Hossein was a resident of Bengal. Ameer Ali came from Hooghly, but the English influenced him. Abdool Lateef preferred Persian and Urdu to the Bengali language. The leaders of the Muslim Intelligentsia neglected the Bengali language and reminded the Muslims about their backwardness and separate identity. They failed to develop new ideas among the Muslims and to make modern education more effective for them. Despite providing educational facilities to the Muslims, they remained intellectually backwards. They remained separated from the mainstream of national and cultural regeneration. The study of the political thought of the Bengali Muslims in the late nineteenth century established that the Muslim Intelligentsia became admirers of the British Government, adopted English education,

and wanted to change their lot with the assistance of the government. The movement for Islamization encouraged orthodox ideas, established the basis of Islamic solidarity, alienated them from their Hindu neighbors, and strengthened the forces of Muslim separatism (Dasgupta, pp. 36-37). The broad-minded and non-sectarian outlook was not manifested in the writings of Muslim writers. Their views on religious and political issues made their writings community-oriented.

Islamization of the delta gathered momentum through the missionary activities of the earliest Sufis, Muslim mystics, and holy men, and their encounters with Bengali culture. Such ideological impact, more through Muslim missionaries than naturalized political elites, probably explains why the masses rather than the landed elite became the first converts to Islam in Bengal (Khan, 1985, pp. 834–851). Bengal saw the largest concentration of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were around twenty-six million, and nearly thirty-four million before 1947. There was an even more unusual preponderance of them in the lower districts of Bengal, the so-called rice swamps not contiguous with the dominant centres of Muslim political power and Islamic culture and civilization in medieval India (Ahmed R., 2001, p. 8), which underlines the predominantly rural character of the Muslims in Bengal, subsisting mainly on agriculture. This phenomenon contrasts significantly with the general pattern of Muslim distribution in India and elsewhere (Roy A., 1983, pp. 19–20). In the latter part of the 19th century, the process of assimilation of fundamentalist and traditionalist trends took place. Towards the close of the reformist movements in Bengal, the militant attitude of the reformists subsided. Reformists like Karamat Ali and his successors showed loyalty to the British government. They attempted reforms within Muslim society to bring about changes in the social and political spheres (Raza, 2013, pp. 28–31). In the second half of the 19th century, Muslim intellectuals took new steps to revive their community. During this time, ‘Sanatan Dharma’ was actively engaging with the educated Muslims of the city. The long-standing political and economic rights of Muslims in India had been deprived, leading to the emergence of anti-British sentiment among them. Its first manifestation can be seen through the Muslim revivalist movements. Fundamentalist tendencies influenced the thinking of the Muslim community. Contemporary religious ideologies influenced Muslim society in villages and towns. Fundamentalist Muslim intellectuals were traditional in ideology and opposed to

modernity and liberalism. Islamization and anti-Hindu sentiment influenced the ideology of Muslim intellectuals (Lahiri, 1991, p. 40).

Pan-Islamism refers to the political and religious movement that aims to unite Muslim countries and people under a common Islamic identity. The pan-Islamic ideas developed at the end of the nineteenth century when the Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid, organized reform work to counteract the external attack and check the growing nationalist democratic movement at home. To introduce Muslims to Turkish affairs, Bengal produced a large number of books on pan-Islamic ideas. Altaf Hussain Kali (1837–1914), Jakaullah (1832–1910), and Shibli Nomani (1857–1914) propagated the history of Islam and its glory in North India. In 1919, several works of literature on the Khilafat issue were published in Bengali. Abdul Gani wrote 'Muktarhar Sonarkhani', a collection of poems in praise of the Prophet. Abdul Ghafur Sidiki authored 'Hedayetul Ichlam o Niyot Nama', which provides religious teachings. Jamaluddin Afghani developed the Pan-Islamic theory after he visited Calcutta in 1881. Pan-Islamic ideas influenced the thoughts of the Bengali Muslims. This trend united the reformers. Jamaluddin Afghani founded an Islamic society in Mecca, intending to establish a caliphate for the entire Muslim world. The visit of Jamaluddin Afghani to Calcutta in 1881–1882 influenced the Muslims and developed the Pan-Islamic spirit among them (Anisuszaman, 1995, pp. 75-76). Pan-Islamism in Bengal, as in other parts of the Indian subcontinent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was partly a reaction against European interference in the Turkish Khilafat's territorial integrity. Bengal Muslims grew increasingly concerned during the nineteenth century, initially without forming any organised pan-Islamic movement, about the fate of the Ottoman Empire. Pan-Islamic movements in Bengal, involving organised efforts to oppose European aggression on Muslim lands, can be specifically traced to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, which fostered widespread frustration among Muslims about the shrinking borders of Islam. An inclination to support the Turks became a prominent theme among Bengal Muslims at this time, evident in public discussions and Muslim newspapers and periodicals. In principle, pan-Islamism in Bengal promoted the idea of supporting Turkey among Muslims in northern India; Turkey had become a symbol of Sunni Muslim hope, and defending Turkey was seen as defending Islam. Muslims generally believed that the British pursued an anti-Muslim agenda driven by their imperial ambitions, aiming to eliminate the last visible symbol of Muslim both secular and spiritual authority, embodied in the khilafat.

This liberal group sought to address pressing concerns and promote progressive ideas. Many understood that the real purpose of British rule in India was to serve the interests of the British nation. That is why they also realised that the British would never easily agree to give up those interests. Therefore, to achieve Swaraj, one must engage in hard work (Alochona (Discussion): 'Swaraj Sadhana', 1334 BS). In colonial contexts, the intelligentsia served in various critical capacities, including spearheading protest and reform movements, challenging the existing elite, forming alliances with powerful figures, and, at times, pursuing revolutionary change to gain power (Morris, 1966, p. 30). Sometimes, the Intelligentsia threw up national political leaders who have become decision-makers or the power elite (Mills, 1956, p. 3). The Muslim intelligentsia was not homogeneous regarding intellectual orientation. The concept of the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia is used in their crucial role in politics and the Bengal Cultural realm. Bengali Muslim intellectuals were not highly educated. The concept approximates understanding in terms of occupation, including writers, Journalists, and thinkers (Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 98). Concurrently, the mullah's influence, power, and respectable status are documented within a 'Bhadralok' framework. They are not regarded as members of the Intelligentsia because they lack a specific type of intellectual concern or a certain level of primary formal education. It is possible to differentiate the Intelligentsia according to socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics. Some members of the Bengali Muslim Intelligentsia preferred to speak Urdu, and many members of the small Muslim elite spoke the language. However, some members of the Bengal Muslim Intelligentsia completely agreed with the goals of the middle class that speaks Bengali (Murshid, 1995, p. 492).

In the field of politics, Bengali Muslim writers initially kept themselves at a distance. Like their moderate Hindu counterparts, they were hopeful about British compassion. Just as the Hindus had previously welcomed British rule as a safeguard against Muslim cruelty, so too did many Muslims believe that the formation of the British Empire in India was a blessing that rescued them from the clutches of the Marathas and the Sikhs (Islam, 1310 BS). Earlier, when the Indian National Congress was founded to ventilate the Indian demands for representative institutions, English-educated urban Muslims like Lateef, Ameer Ali, and their followers refused to join that organization lest their cordial relations with the Raj be affected. Besides, they firmly believed that representative institutions would not benefit the Muslims, as they would result in the Indian Muslim minority 'being utterly swamped in every department of the

state.' (Seal, 1971, p. 314). Such views, no doubt, laid bare their faith in the established government. Their politics of loyalty aimed, on the one hand, at perpetuating their traditional hold over the community under the protection of the Raj and keeping the community aloof from any anti-government politics, on the other. A group of educated Bengali Muslims feared that the Hindus would dominate any concessions obtained by that organization (Islam M. N., 1973, p. 35). This suspicion had found its material ground in the composition of the Congress, dominated as it was by the Hindu property owners, pleaders, and merchants against whom Bengali Muslims, in general, as a dominated community, had genuine grievances. The impact of the Hindu-biased cultural nationalism practiced by the nationalists also played a role in their refusal to join Congress activities (Ahmed S., 1897, p. 46). However, a section among them, perhaps due to the lack of any other political forum, began getting interested in Congress. The programme and activities of the Congress, especially of the dominant moderate part of it, seemed to them neither anti-British nor anti-Muslim. Some of them also felt that Muslim aloofness from political activities had caused a disservice to themselves.

Thus, two groups of Bengali Muslim intelligentsia evolved by the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. One group consisted of a section of the exotic Ashraf, boasting their blue blood and holding the Atraf in contempt. Most of the English-educated urban professionals belong to that group. They tried to work out an all-India identity for the upper-class Muslims through the linkage of Urdu. In a limited sense, they were supporters of the Aligarh movement, as they also felt the need to collaborate with the government for the progress of the community in general, their section. Members of the other group were educated traditionally and profoundly religiously, but were Bengali-oriented. Conscious of their culture, they were also not blind to English education. Some of them even frowned upon the Aligarh movement. Abdul Jabbar Khan, for instance, thanked God that the Aligarh movement did not influence Bengal so that, in his view, Bengali Muslims could remain a profoundly religious people (Jobbar, 1906, p. 140). They indeed represented only a meagre section of their community's half-articulate Intelligentsia. Naturally, their impact was limited. They truly reflected the dilemma confronted by the section on the dilemma of retaining their identity as a part of a separate religious community and making rapid progress in English education so that members of their community could compete with the relatively advanced Bengali Hindus.

The Bengali Muslim intellectuals played a distinctive role in awakening the Muslims, though ideologically, they differed from one another. They sought consolation in the glorious past of the Middle Eastern Muslims and pan-Islamic ideas. The urban Muslim Intelligentsia who led the movement had a narrow social outlook. Various questions about their language, literature, social problems, and politics, which had already begun to agitate the Bengali Muslims, found expression in their writings. The Muslim mind was divided into two broad categories throughout the colonial period. One was largely influenced by liberal-rational thought, and the other was rooted in traditional conservative thought. Since the latter half of the 19th century, Muslims have been influenced by conflicting ideologies. The terms rational, liberal, and orthodox used in the study need further explanation to ensure clarity and understanding. The term 'rational' should be understood as referring to the use of reason as the foundation for determining religious truth. A rational intellectual is expected to demonstrate sound judgment and moderation in their perspectives, affirming reason and empirical evidence as the essential means for resolving societal challenges. The idea of adopting Western education and science for the welfare of a community should be taken as a qualification of a rational intellectual. The term 'liberal' should be construed as a broad-minded, tolerant, and non-sectarian outlook, not bound by orthodoxy or traditional forms. The political intellectuals belonging to this group should be generally unprejudiced, open-minded, and believe in communal harmony. They should accept issues aiming at the welfare of all sections of society and the development of Indian nationality. The term Orthodox is used in the work to denote ideas of established religious or political groups. It refers to the section of society that believed in the established doctrine in religion. The orthodox impact on the Muslim community can be traced to the ideas of the Muslim divines and the community-oriented ideas of the Muslim intellectuals. From the early twentieth century, modern educated Muslims were significantly influenced by both Islamic ideals and a range of Western ideologies, including nationalism, liberalism, rationalism, Marxism, and feminism. Consequently, a unified approach to addressing emerging challenges has been difficult to establish within the Muslim intellectual community.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a new trend in the political thought of Muslims in Bengal. At the beginning of the 20th century, a political upheaval began in Bengali society, regardless of Hindu-Muslim, surrounding the partition of Bengal. In 1905, agitational politics among Muslims began around the partition of Bengal. The Khilafat movement infused new

ideas into Muslim thought. It became clear that the orthodox section of the Muslim political intelligentsia influenced the Muslim mind by directly linking it with the country's political development and communal ideas. A section of Muslim intellectuals organized the communist movement in Bengal. In the first half of the 20th century, the names of intellectuals and middle-class Muslims associated with the raiyat and Praja movements were found. A section of Muslim intellectuals organized the communist movement in Bengal. In the early 20th century, the Krishak Praja Party and the Muslim League represented two competing ideologies for Muslim support in Bengal. After 1937, there was a significant rise in fundamentalist trends in the political thought of Muslim intellectuals in Bengal. These tendencies took on a communal colour toward the end of the independence period.

Thus, these two competing ideologies confound the shaping of socio-political culture and need help finding a clear path to follow collectively. Such a contradictory nature of thought has not only affected cultural life but has also greatly affected the political sphere. Therefore, this investigation attempts to understand the nature of their rivalry and explore the role of these two rival factions in shaping the Muslim mind as reflected in the socio-political culture of Bengal from 1905 to 1947. The present study seeks to outline the evolution of Bengal Muslims' intellectual and cultural growth and the rise of the political construction of Muslimhood during the first half of the 20th century among Bengali Muslims. It focuses on the reaction of the writers engaged in the broader debates and discussions, and various socio-religious and political problems confronting Muslims of Bengal. We encounter many serious issues concerning their ideologies, ambivalence, and social regeneration. Some writers who reconstructed the Islamic thought process advocated the ideal of emancipation of intellect and the reappraisal of old values in the light of new social and political relations to the extent of a healthy Muslim society in Bengal.

The role of the Bengali intellectual community in the spread of Muslim education in the first quarter of the 20th century is undeniable. From the beginning of the 20th century, Muslim writers, journalists, and politicians encouraged Muslims to study Arabic, Persian, and English. However, there was disagreement among intellectuals about the nature of Muslim education, its methods, and the medium it used. A large section of Muslim intellectuals termed madrasa education as unnecessary, traditional, and unscientific. In favour of reforming the Muslim education system, replacing Arabic-Persian with the mother tongue, Bengali, and closing all

new and old madrasas in school-college education. A large section of Muslim intellectuals tried to shape public opinion in favour of the spread of modern education in Muslim society. A large section of Bengali Muslim intellectuals expressed their strong support for modern and up-to-date education. The Indian National Movement, as it developed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was dominated by high-caste Hindus. These men, recruited primarily from the Brahmin, Kayastha, and Vaidya, played paramount roles in positions in the professions and the Cultural life of Bengal (Broomfield, 1968). Faster to adapt to Western education, they continued to hold a high status during earlier ages in colonial Bengal (Seal A., 1968). In Bengal, census data indicated a slight disparity between Muslims and Hindus, with Muslims lagging in education, professional occupations, and government employment. A significant portion of the Muslim population consisted of lower-class agricultural workers, primarily residing in the eastern districts of Bengal. The adoption of Western education progressed more slowly among Muslims in Bengal compared to their Hindu counterparts. (Gordon, 1978, pp. 279-80) Questions arose as to whether Muslims should participate in politics in British-ruled India. Bengali Muslim society was also divided in this regard. Some people think that the participation of Muslims in politics is essential for the all-round improvement of life. The newspaper Navnur commented: "Muslims have done themselves a great disservice by keeping away from the political movement." (Jahan, Kartik 1312 BS, p. 103). Such internal contradictions may be traced to changing concerns and perspectives of the emerging Bengal Muslim intelligentsia. The early intellectuals, whether they came from the Ashraf aristocracy in urban areas or rose to Ashraf status from poor rural backgrounds through their hard work, were all social reformers in one way or another with a deep concern for the education of their community. Ashraf aristocracy from urban areas: Nawab Abdool Lateef, Syed Amir Ali Khan, Sir Salimullah, Mir Musharraf Hussain, Wajed Ali Khan Panni, etc. Ashraf status from poor rural backgrounds: Munshi Meherullah, Danshil Ketabuddin, Munshi Bu Ali, etc. (Kasim, 1940, pp. 68–78). Of the later intellectuals, a large proportion came from Ashraf with rural solid links. At the same time, a significant section descended from the urban aristocracy with weak rural connections. Those belonging to the latter group included Maulana Akram Khan, Nawab Abdur Rahim, Shahid Suhrawardy, Khwaja Nazimuddin, Abdul Karim Ghaznavi, etc. Among the former were A. K. Fazlul Huq, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abul Mansur Ahmad, Abul Hashim, Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed, etc (Hashim, 1974, pp. 3-6). The later generation of intellectuals, though more vocal and assertive than their predecessors, represented a spectrum of attitudes:

moderate, radical and conservative. Abdur Rasul, Abdul Karim Ghaznavi, A. K. Fazlul Huq, Muzaffar Ahmed, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abul Hashim, Maulana Akram Khan, Nawab Sir Salimullah Shahid Suhrawardy, and Khwaja Nazimuddin may be cited as representatives of these three tendencies respectively.

The pre-partition linguistic-territorial Bengali nationhood had an ideological pull in which neither the Muslim middle class had interests. Rabindranath understood this and said it on various occasions. Rabindranath explained the matter by saying people will turn to it if separation is more profitable than togetherness. According to him, Bengali Muslims have been attracted to the path of separatism due to individual politics (A., 2009, pp. 174-262). In a word, within the Bengali nationalism blossoming under the umbrella of pan-Indian nationalism, the Bengali Muslim in his Swadeshi movement, a movement advocating for the use of Indigenous goods and services, did not find a reflection of his economic interests anywhere but saw the possibility of future monopolies and socio-economic interests of developed neighboring communities. This realism influenced the thinking of the Muslim middle class, helping in its political direction. The nationalist leadership did not try to realize this simple truth. That is why the pull of self-interest and self-establishment became predominant in the Muslim psyche rather than nationalist ideals and struggle. Their idealist Nazrul-Wadud-Fazlul's ideology or call for unity did not evoke any response.

There has been an increased focus on communalism when discussing the limitations of traditional interpretations of Bengali Muslim politics. However, it is widely acknowledged that communalism played a significant role after the 1930s. It is believed to be inherent diversity in forming Muslim identity or self-identity. There were two opposing views on this matter. One view, represented by ‘Saugat’ Patrica, was that Bengali Muslims were forgetting that Islam was a religion and not a race. As a result, they were alienating themselves from the land they had been nurtured in for a thousand years. On the other hand, ‘Shariat-i-Islam’ Patrica had a different view. Until the 1930s, these two types of thought coexisted simultaneously. A general statement seems acceptable among the various interpretations of Bengali Muslim politics. The language of Muslim politics increasingly came to dominate religious identities, regardless of the source or internal driving force, through rallies, writings in Muslim newspapers, the imposition of significance on sites and symbols, etc. Efforts against this tendency to prioritize religious identity weakened in the public sphere in the late 1930s and 1940s. Commentary on

religious nationalism was not the sole and necessary cause of the political conflict but was a broader context that constructed a political culture of division by imposing new meanings on all reactions. Tajin M. Murshid's insightful analysis of Bengali Muslims in a recent study is noteworthy. He claims it is wrong to think that all Muslim people share the same way of thinking. He has demonstrated how Muslims in Bengal have changed and evolved in response to the presence of the other by examining how identity formation is constructed, highlighting the dynamic nature of Muslim identity.

This study examines the cultural and political thought of early 20th-century Bengali Muslim intellectuals, focusing on their writings, community development approaches, views on education, and relations with other religious groups. It traces the evolution of their intellectual, cultural, and political identity within the context of Bengali and pan-Indian nationalism. The study argues that the Muslim middle class, feeling unrepresented in the Swadeshi movement, developed a distinct political orientation based on perceived economic interests. It explores the construction of Muslim identity in colonial Bengal, highlighting the role of literature and language in fostering secularism. The research analyzes the diverse factors shaping Muslim consciousness from 1905-1947, demonstrating that pre-1940s Bengal offered varied paths for Bengali Muslim identity. The period witnessed intellectual and cultural growth alongside the political development of Islamism, resulting in a multifaceted cultural consciousness, distinct from Hindu nationalism and culminating in a later literary renaissance.

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