Chapter 2

Literature Review:
Charting Topography of Discrimination

In an interdisciplinary, theory driven and theory generative study such as the present one, review of literature is not just *one stage* in the research process that can be completed and set aside. Although, like all research, this study also started with a review, its progression was continued throughout the research process culminating only in the final wrapping up of the thesis. As the research process moved forward with increased engagement with theory and data, the objectives with which the literature review had been undertaken were chiselled further. While I charted the course of various disciplines and research genres in an attempt to understand discrimination, I encountered both empirical research studies which were focused and contained, philosophical works vast in their scope and, of course, those that combined both of these approaches. I write this chapter more as a reportage of my distillations of these ‘readings’ rather than a definitive and exhaustive review of all literature pertaining only to Muslims in India or even Muslims broadly. This is partly due to the fact that the interdisciplinarity in my approach made my field of vision so broad that the panoramic view that held my researcher’s gaze was not easy to compress while being comprehensive too. I found that if I tried to show the breadth, the details would have to be compromised upon and if I stressed on the details it would be impossible to finish the task in the foreseeable future. Another difficulty was that though I knew
that a simple chronologic approach was sure to fail in face of the multi-dimensional scope of the review, I was not sure that even a thematic approach would succeed in capturing and presenting my readings. It was difficult to thematise the subject of my enquiry because while the scholars in each discipline in social science bother a lot about boundaries of their disciplines, these boundaries are mostly emotively drawn and constantly overlap or intersect in reality. Geography often ventured into cultural studies; cultural studies contained media studies and frequently met politics. Just as urban studies found it difficult to avoid political economy, political philosophy was never too far away from history. As such, my efforts to thematise the review on disciplinary lines were largely futile. But I did realise that some kind of directions would need to be specified at each turn so as to make sense of the journey undertaken.

I take recourse of some unconventional characterisation of portions of the review journey that stood out to me as speaking of something specific. The themes explored may be presented as in the following figure:

![Figure 2.1: Review Themes](image)
2.1 Conceptualising ‘Place’ and ‘Space’: From Environmental Determinism to Social Constructivism

As much as human history is concerned, the preoccupation with place and, thus, interest in geography appears continuous and unbroken. The early geographers of the descriptive tradition took ‘place’ to be an ontologically ‘given’ phenomenon and pursued their science in the fashion of environmental determinism. In their view it was the physical place, environment and climatic conditions that determined how human beings residing in the area would behave and indeed even look. Aristotle went so far as to describe the climate of Greece best suited to progress of human cultures, politics etc.

Environmental determinism as a framework was to lose much of its authority because there was too much mounting evidence against it. Such as discovery of past cultures in the climatic and physical landscapes that were thought to be incapable of producing such complex cultures, for example Mayan civilisation in Tropical climate. (Fouberg, Murphy, & Blij, 2009). Later, environmental determinism also came under fire due to its colonial roots and manifestations. (Sluyter, 2002)

In other attempts to grasp the notion of ‘place’, philosophical works such as Being and Time (Heidegger, 1962) and Phenomenology of Perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1962) emphasised perception and ‘being-in-the-world’ in what is known as phenomenological framework. This view also emphasises the practical, bodily experience understood through tasks and actions over any theoretical or philosophical view of place (Tilley, 1994). Tilley further opines that this approach turned its attention towards how interaction with landscapes, monuments and such other material ‘things’ shaped human lives and memories. This move, even though criticised by Tilley for privileging visual perception and contemplation, is recognised for moving more in the direction of accommodating ‘contingencies of history and embodiment’ (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 205). This existentialist and historical turn in the understanding of the place gave rise to the possibility of recognising that ultimately all material culture is imbued with social meaning and that material culture may therefore be read as text. Also, the emphasis on perception made it important to realise that any reading is not final because it depends on the readers’ perception much as on the context in which the text was produced. (Tilley, 1991).
Phenomenological understandings of place made way for and gave way to radical geographies of such authors as David Harvey (1973, 1982, 1985 a, b 1989, 2000, 2003), Edward Soja (1989, 2000) and Doreen Massey (1994, 1999, 2004, 2005). From issues of culture and belonging it then became possible to extend the concept of textuality of the material culture to social construction of place. It is this social construction of place that is termed space. The moment of theorisation of space as a social construct is marked as what is popularly called a ‘spatial turn’ in social sciences. Space is understood at the very minimum as activity of experiencing things and activities of relating to one another (Soja, 1989). Massey (1999, 2005) brings to our notice that space has become a useful term to express a form of organisation that can simultaneously engage with social difference, plurality and reciprocity. Space is thus an extremely useful conceptual framework to grapple with modern processes of differentiation such as exclusion and inclusion in an age when boundaries cannot be assumed to be imaginary and ambiguous. In fact, inclusionary/exclusionary processes as well as boundaries are very material. Not only that the ‘local’ is real but even ‘global’ spaces and ‘virtual’ spaces are no longer only figments of intellectual imagination. This brings us to Harvey (1989) and Lefebvre (1991) both of whom contend that spatial structures are a product of and context for social action, and Giddens (1984) who asserts that as an abstract construct space helps makes analysis at macro level more conducive while it is rendered less and less useful as the context becomes more local and micro.

This spatial turn in even reading of texts and understanding representations gives me an opportunity to focus on development of studies of geographies of discriminations—especially in the Urban.

### 2.2 Theorising the City

When the new science of sociology began urban spaces were one of the first subjects of study. Marx, Weber and Durkheim credited as being the founders of sociology were essentially dealing with social changes brought about by advent of industrial capitalism and, by corollary, of Urbanisation (Saunders, 1981). Nevertheless, the first Urbanists or urban sociologists occupied themselves with what they called ‘urban
ecology’. Ecological school of urban sociology also known as Chicago school, first through the work of Albion Small and his successors Robert Ezra Park (1926) developed a notion of ‘human ecology’ which drew from Social Darwinist ideas of biotic and symbiotic development of plant ecology to study groups and urban processes (Robert, 2006). Park himself is reported as having said that his conception of city and community was not a geographical one but rather resembled a social organism. The school’s approach put a lot of emphasis on the ‘scientific’ view rather than what they criticised as ‘moralistic’ view but various commentators have noted that Chicago School’s Urban Ecology remained an ambiguous and theoretically deficient view (ibid) because of its ‘ecological fallacy’ arising from reliance on environmental determinism (Taylor, 1973, p. 122). Social Darwinism led Park to not only proclaim that the city was a ‘natural’ habitat of the ‘civilised man’ but also that social phenomenon were an outcome of unplanned, natural processes that inevitably form a chain of events akin to stages in individual life (Roberts 2006). Obviously, such a view did little more than just describe and in any case had no interest in analysing the conflicts (such as race conflicts in contemporary cities in US) which, for them, were but merely a stage in the natural scheme of things that were ‘progressing’.

Louis Wirth’s book The Ghetto (1928) and article ‘Urbanism as a way of life” (1938), considered classics in urban sociology, have an essentially pessimistic view of the urban in which he regarded that urban society represents a break from its ‘natural’ situation. Urbanism, according to Wirth, gave rise to anomie and other negative processes despite its claims to utility and efficiency (Smith, 1988). Another classic of second generation of human ecologists, Street Corner Society by W. Whyte (1943), represents Chicago schools’ enduring interest in deviance. Chicago school also made something of ‘classic’ model of city formulated by Anthony Burgess (1925) in the form of concentric zones representing a core of commercial and elite residences, a middle ring of low-income neighbourhoods and an outer periphery of manufacturing districts.

While the researchers related to Chicago school with their urban ecological view of city did look at the changes brought to everyday life by technological advancement, they mostly neglected to study inequality of resources among classes, capital flows
and built spaces. Beyond a vague notion of benign neglect they also neglected to study the role of the state in maintenance of the inequalities. The school instead focused its energies and attention to ghetto life and essentialised it rather than look for structural processes underlying the so called ‘culture of the ghetto’. This approach was attacked by C. Wright Mills (1970) for neglecting structure and for being what he called a ‘situational approach’ (in which, incidentally, he included Social Work). Castells (1976) also criticised the school scathingly for not realising that the changes they were studying could not have been an outcome only of individual preferences and stylistic matters but were, in fact, the processes of industrial capitalism. Castells emphasised that the concentric zone model was an outcome of specifics of urban processes in one city and that it could not be used indiscriminately as a universal model. Further, Wirth’s view on disintegration of community and individualism were shown to be not specific only to urban societies. In fact, Herbert Gans (1962) called urban neighbourhoods ‘urban villages’ because the modes of association in the neighbourhoods he studied in Chicago were similar to those in rural.

In the final analysis, the contribution of Chicago School remains its attention to peculiarities of city life and to its spatial pattern. Even though Chicago school appeared deficient in theory, it did go on to be influential in later ‘interactionist’ works in the realm of social psychology and urban ‘micro’ studies. In reaction to the theoretical deficiencies of Chicago school, by 1960s urban studies had taken a Marxist (or a Weberian turn) (Roberts, 2006). Interestingly enough, while symbolic interactionism located itself as a micro-theory in opposition to structural approaches which they alleged are macro, it is possible to see the Marxist approaches as those in which macro and micro level features of social phenomenon can both be interpreted (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004). In fact, these approaches can beautifully show how the structure writes itself in the everyday experiences of individuals.

With the engagements of Castells, Harvey and Lefebvre, the Marxist turn in urban studies marked a new concern in the practise of Marxism itself. Merrifield (2002) in his lively book titled Metromarxism elaborates on initial anti-urban tendencies in Marxist thought which envisioned revolutionary practise as flowing from countryside to city, as in Guevara’s thought, and which derided cities as bourgeois in the complex
anti-cosmopolitan attitude of the Soviet Bolsheviks. Debray, whose writings are said to be inspired by Castro and Guevara said, “As we know, the mountain proletarianizes the bourgeois and peasant elements, and the city can bourgeoisify the proletariats.” (cf Merrifield 2002, p3). Merrifield credits Antonio Gramsci for coming up with a Marxist praxis which identified organising as a more central issue than the supposed dichotomy of urban and rural. According to Merrifield, Marxist Urbanism embraces the urban with all its paradoxes and possibilities. The ‘urban’ turn in Marxism also probably facilitated its meeting with the ‘cultural’ and the ‘spatial’. This promulgation of Marxist thought is discussed in some further detail in another part of this review which deals with the city as text and the work of critical theorists.

The next major turn in Urban Studies, which brings us to the present situation, came with the post-fordist and post-industrial turn in western developed societies in the eighties (Harvey, 1987). Globalisation and structural adjustment programmes driven by international monetary organisations pushed the economies of developing world to ‘liberalise’. It involved ‘reorganisation of economic activities and cultural attributes’ of societies at a global scale (Banerjee-Guha, 2010). This is recognised by many authors as a logical extension to the enduring story of capitalism and has been aptly termed neo-imperialism (Harvey, 1985). Several trends stand out as a result of this process—namely, manufacturing and other low paid services began shifting to the third world economies (often rapid shifting from one location to another) and, privatisation and deregulation of economic sphere to facilitate an extreme fluidity of capital. Other effects were increased migration flows—both inter and intra national (Sassen, 1988) and, technological changes—especially in modes of communication and transportation (Castells 1989, 1996, 1997, 1998). A very important impact of all this has been the incredible pace of urbanisation (ibid) and emergence of what has been called world cities (Friedmann & Wolff, 1982), or global cities (Sassen, 1991) from which the capital flows are being controlled. Social, political and cultural changes as an impact of globalisation are too many and too intricate to even begin to enumerate in this space. Suffice it to say that the trends here are of deeper and wider inequalities between the haves and have-nots, xenophobia of different kinds have proliferated across the world (Appadurai, 1996, 2006), the citizen has been reduced to a customer – getting served by the state proportionate to their purchasing power (Katz, 2001). It has been
noted that in wake of globalisation even democratic governments have done little to reduce inequalities. All this and more obviously has spatial ramification occupied attention of the scholars of ‘urban’.

If at the end of this section of review, we were to look at a summary of urban studies genre we may take help of Setha Low’s analysis. In her book *Theorising the City* Setha Low (1999) traces the historical development of the anthropological study of the city and delineates a number of theoretical approaches that were developed over time and continue to be drawn upon by the urban anthropologists. According to her, these approaches include urban ecology models; community, family and network analysis; studies of power/knowledge of planning and architecture; supralocal/local linkage analyses; and political economic, representational and discursive models. The present study locates itself somewhere in what Low calls political economic, representational, and discursive model of study. Elaborating on ‘representational cities’ approach further, Jane Jacobs (1993) says that this is an approach in which messages encoded in the environment are read as text. Jacob argues that “ethnographic studies were commonly prescribed the role of rendering more real the exotic and marginalised, but were seen to have little value in terms of the modern project of theory-building” (ibid, p 828). Jacobs suggests that in this new radicalised ethnography of the city the urban built environment is also a discursive realm.

### 2.2.1 Geographies of Discrimination

Despite their theoretical deficiencies and Darwinian moorings Chicago School researchers did look at segregation and were among the first to engage in the systematic study of residential segregation in Urban America based on racial and ethnic differentiation. Thomas and Znaniecki’s (1958) epic study *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* and Louise Wirth’s *The Ghetto* (1928)- a study of the Jewish immigrants reflect the School’s interest in the ideas of the ‘marginal man’ as formulated by Park. Park posited that the mind of this ‘marginal man’ was where the changes were taking places, which needed to be studied for a study of ‘processes of civilisation and of progress’ (Park quoted from Robert 2006, p.16). In grasping the determinants of
segregation Robert Park defined it as involving a link between social distance and physical distance between communities (Park, 1915).

Examining the phenomenon of De jure segregation is a good place to start examining the role of the state in segregation. European Jewish ghettos are widely thought to be precursors of all such segregation having continuity into Russian ‘Pale’ till Nazi German laws of segregation and later culmination in the horrors of concentration and extermination camps (Wirth, 1928). South African apartheid is another such example of residential segregation by law in recent history (Christopher, 1990). Similarly, Israeli state policy relating to segregation of Arab-Israeli citizens in Israeli towns has also been studied as an example of specific laws and policies directly pertaining to discrimination (Falah, 1996). These studies show that in instances of extreme segregation of populations by law even when the two communities have to share a space it was/is not as equals. In most cases, it leads to a very limited social interaction accompanied with an economic interaction of a coercive, debilitative nature. In a less extreme method of segregation zoning and public housing policies are often used by states as exclusionary devices even when these policies do not explicitly exclude (Berry, 2001). Extension of financial support for housing is another such example. Jackson (1985) established in a study in US that housing loans were given only to white families for houses in whites-only neighbourhood the white families also demanded and exercised exclusion of black families. Michael Katz (1990, 1997, 2001) has written extensively on the history and functioning of welfare in US framed along the debates on ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. He concludes in his work that the discrimination against African Americans is an underlying thread in the working of the welfare state.

Massey and Denton (1988) are credited for a framework to understand residential segregation in what is widely recognised as a more nuanced and a more spatial approach. They specified five dimensions of residential segregation, namely, (i) Evenness, which was related to distribution of minority community’s members across city and was said to have an inverse relationship with segregation, (ii) Exposure was the measure of degree of potential contact of minority group with rest of the population in the city, (iii) Concentration was amount of relative physical area that minority groups occupied relative to their proportion in population, (iv) Centralisation, proximity
of minority groups to the city centre and (v) *Clustering* was the extent to which minority groups live in contiguous areas. Massey and Denton (1993) also wrote a compelling book tracing the history of segregation of African American people. Calling these ‘apartheid’, their main argument was that, the practices of segregation were responsible for existence of the black ghetto and that the poverty between black and whites is different because of racial discrimination and segregation. Citing empirical and reviews of literature pertaining to racial segregation in US cities, Galster (1988) concludes that both ‘market forces’ and ‘illegal discriminatory acts’ were responsible, *equally*, whereas others (Clark 1986) were concluding that private discrimination had waned and alluding to poverty that it was only benign market forces that were responsible.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the debate on segregation also turned towards what has been called Black Self-segregation. These alleged that white prejudice and discrimination driving segregation had markedly alleviated and could no longer be held to be responsible for continued segregation of blacks, instead it was the preferences of the black people themselves that were responsible. Noting these debates, Ihlanfeldt and Scafidi (2001) point that this implied that enforcement of fair houses and lending laws would not be required. Many statistical studies citing secondary data but also numerous studies conducting primary research reached conflicting conclusions. In Ihlanfeld and Scafidi’s analysis it was found statistically significant self segregation but that it could not be said to play more than a minor role in explaining residential segregation of blacks (ibid).

In Brazilian literature, racial discrimination as a base of segregation is not emphasised as much as class differentiations (de Santos Oliveira, 1996). Oliveira’s own opinion is that, “... although residential segregation by race and class are interrelated and driven by similar socio-economic factors, the relative lack of racial segregation in Favelas of Rio de Janerio has facilitated more effective political engagement around class issues without eradicating racial identities” (ibid, p. 72). Comparing Favelas in Rio de Janeiro and Ghettos in New York City, he says that while African slaves in US were always a minority of not more than 20 percent mostly concentrated in the southern US, whereas black people sold to slavery in Brazil were of much higher proportion to the entire population and spread all over Brazil. White people in colonial Brazil were actually a
numerical minority and later, after the promotion of European immigration in the last two centuries whites are barely a majority in the present day Brazil. Also, US saw much more sudden abolition of slavery and violent conflicts following the abolition compared to Brazil where the process was much slower and long drawn out.

On the matter of nomenclature, Oliveira (1996) says, that the term ‘ghetto’ in the United States currently alludes to economic and race/ethnicity but also has “physical and social dimensions of poverty represented by the decay and abandonment of neighbourhoods, crime, substandard education, unemployment, the decline of ‘family values’ and so forth”. He says that while the stereotype of favelados refers to laziness, and social and political disorganisation it does not carry negative connotations about race or ethnicity per se because favelas are not exclusive race neighbourhoods. In a primary study, Pearlman (2007) found that ‘living in favela’ was reported by people to make them more prone to be targeted by discrimination, generally, and especially in employment, than ‘race’ itself. Later, Pearlman (2009) says that favela was considered a very pejorative term as it is no longer characterised by a shanty squatter settlements on undesirable land (marshy, steep hills) in the city. As the land is developed, increasingly, favelas are no longer free places for poor people to settle and now have fierce real-estate markets. Nor does Perlman find that they are home to acute and chronic poverty any longer. According to her, Favela residents are victims of a ‘myth of marginality’ which is an ‘ideology’ that justifies inequity, blames the so-called ‘marginals’ for social problems while legitimates dominant discourses and norms. Pearlman says that, “Although they are neither economically nor politically marginal, they are exploited, manipulated, and repressed; although they are neither socially nor culturally marginal, they are stigmatised and excluded from a closed class system.” (ibid, 150)

On the similar lines, Loic Wacquant (2008) compares French working class quarters banlieues and black ghettos in US and again comes up with a conclusion that it would be an error to conflate the two. Wacquant points to these places in France and US as being products of different historical processes and arising from different criteria of classification. In banlieues it is primarily the class position ‘modulated’ by ethnicity while in a ghetto it is ethno-racial identity irrespective of class. Also, importantly,
Wacquant points out that they are products of different political construction and bureaucratic management. He elaborates further by saying that even though both are deprived zones of inequality, the black ghettos have a task of containing undesirables and dishonoured category of people which were needed as labour in the industrial society but these unskilled labour are not needed now in the post-industrial set-ups. He says that to talk of ‘French Ghetto’ is a ‘sociological absurdity’ and amounts to ‘transatlantic smuggling of American concepts’, an uncontrolled usage of which is ‘scientifically fraudulent and politically irresponsible’ (ibid, p. 160-162)

2.2.2. Spatialisation of Discrimination in Delhi

Thought like most old cities, Old Delhi or Shahjahanabad also had a centre in which the affluent and economic activity was concentrated, while the populations with lower status were relegated to periphery of the city or even outside the boundary walls (Dupont 2004). Dupont contends that while this was true for all cities in India but many authors noticed that this pattern changed and from 1960s onwards Delhi saw a more complex pattern of development characterised by “industrializing and tertiarizing belts or strips along transport axes” (Rao, 1983, quoted from Dupont 2004).

In India, the provision of public housing for members of the scheduled castes often turns out to be a mode of segregating them from rest of the population into Harijan, Valmiki or Ambedkar colonies (Dupont, 2004). In an analysis of caste based segregation in Indian cities (Vithayathil & Singh, 2012) it has been found that among the seven cities studied there is high level of caste based segregation at the ward level and on comparison the study found this to be more prominent than the level of segregation by socio-economic status studied at the same level of disaggregation. The researchers note that the data for population based on religious identities not being available at ward level they were not able to study segregation on those lines but indicated that in some cities “religion is likely to be a more important axis of residential segregation... (and that) analysing residential segregation by religion would improve our understanding of socio-spatial inequalities”. (ibid, p. 64-65)

Segregation of Muslims has attracted less scrutiny in this regard as far as scholarship in urbanisation and urban sociology is concerned. In book titled Urbanisation and
Urban systems in India, Ramachandran (1989) presents a classification of cities based on religion and ethnicity. He remarks that, “it may be reasonably argued that when the population of Muslims in any city equals or exceeds 20 percent of the city’s population, they add a new dimension to the city’s socio-cultural milieu.” Without qualifying what he means by ‘a new dimension’ or divulging how he reached that conclusion Ramachandran proceeds to apply “the same yardstick to other religious minorities in cities” and comes up with three types of cities namely, Muslim cities, Sikh cities, Christian cities “in addition to the cities which have a predominantly Hindu population with only an insignificant proportion of religious minorities” (ibid, p. 173-174) while making no mention whatsoever of segregation of Muslim populations within cities.

In an illustration of how built environments and real estate markets impact communal relations, (Field, Levinson, Pande, & Visaria, 2012) conducted a study in city of Ahmedabad in India exploring the relationship of segregation and rent control with communal violence. They report that 71 percent of population of the city lived in exclusive, homogenous neighbourhood by 2002. They actually found that more incidents of violence occurred in mixed localities in 2002 violence. Field et all refute Ashutosh Varshney’s (2002) view that communal violence is less likely to occur in mixed localities because increased interaction fosters increased tolerance, and say that in their findings the reasons indicated lie in the holding patterns of housing units. Most mixed localities in 2002 in Ahmedabad were actually chawls built for mill workers where the rents were low and tenancy rights secure. While the mills were now defunct the secure tenancy of the tenants made sure that they could not sell these properties in real estate markets. Therefore, they did not shift to segregated areas even though the tolerance levels remained low. Field et all conclude that the tenancy right of minority tenants amidst ‘mounting tensions between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat led to a territory war rather than segregation in these locations. As tensions mounted, acts of violence and intimidation were used to push out residents belonging to the religious minority group’ (Field et al., 2012 p 509).

Patel and Deb (2009) in Urban Studies Reader edited by them note that many small towns and medium size cities have become characterised by communal conflict and
thus communal riots. She lists Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Godhra, Hyderabad, Meerut, Moradabad among such cities and asks whether “the control of the local governance structures by a majority community aids and sometimes instigates such conflicts?” it is important to make a note of Patel’s contention “that riots have become a form to claim a space in the city rather than social movements” asks why would that be so.

As far as segregation of Muslims in certain areas in Delhi is concerned there is only one study by Ali and Sikand (2005). In a sample survey of Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin and Mehrauli in Delhi and Juhapura in Ahmedabad, Ali and Sikand use the terms ‘ghetto’ and ‘ghettoisation’ uncritically to refer to the areas and processes of segregation of Muslims. They report that a high percentage of persons in the sample had moved to these areas, and from amongst those, a significant number had moved in from Hindu residential localities. Most people reported ‘fear of communal violence’ as the reason for their migration and also poor welfare and civic amenities in these areas. The study is poorly conducted and even poorly documented and reported but points in the correct general direction. In 2006 Sachar Committee reports “Compared to the Muslim majority areas, the areas inhabiting fewer Muslims had better roads, sewage and drainage, and water supply... For instance, a Hindu dominated urban slum in Lucknow had better quality roads, drainage system, sanitation water supply and sewage disposal compared to another slum populated by Muslims.”(PMHLC, 2006, p. 149).

In terms of spatialisation of inequality in Delhi, Ananya Roy (2009) and Amita Baviskar (2003, 2006) have written important articles which keep the slum and resettlement colonies at the centre of their enquiry and urban planning perspectives in focus. A volume on Delhi edited by Dupont and Tarlo (2000) mainly concerned itself with Delhi as a city of migrants since independence, prominent among which are Punjabi ‘refugees’ that came in at the time of partition of the country and later, the working class migrants from UP and Bihar. The volume speaks of the resettlement colonies. The articles other than these concerned themselves with history of conservation and architecture of the post-independent city. The contributions to this volume and much of the urban studies of the contemporary Delhi for over a decade now have been mostly anchored in research institutions such as Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH), Centre for study of Developing Societies along with Centre for Policy Research. Much
of this work continues to engage with concerns reflected in the aforementioned volume. Recently, team of researchers associated with CSH has published an edited (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012) volume containing study of Muslims in 12 cities across India and come to the conclusion that Muslims self-segregate.

2.3 Space as a Social Construct: History, Memory and Identities

Sauer [(1925) 1963] calls landscape ‘culturally loaded geography’. He also talks of palimpsest-like quality of landscape which acts as a cultural record because landscape is shaped by culture and is marked by it. According to Cosgrove (1998) landscape has a discursive quality- it has a discourse that frames a social group historically in their relationship to the material surrounding of the place they inhabit but also to the other groups. He further stresses that this discourse shapes the way things are seen epistemologically, as well as technically.

In different kinds of debates a reductive, essentialist view of collective identities has been challenged by various authors. Hobsbawm (1983) invokes what he calls ‘invention of tradition’ which is somewhat similar to Anderson’s (2006) conception of ‘imagined communities’. In the both the cases a conception that is a modern construction is presented as if it is of old historicity and its contents are given and unchanging. Religious identities are, in a similar way, often presented as if they do not require any definition because they are so natural. Following the debate on construction of nationalistic identities I am lead towards the issue of connection between identities (including religious identity) and places, and the idea that identification of people with a place is an important part of their awareness of themselves and each other. As such a place that is identified with certain people is constructed in a way which is infused with particular meaning. The landscape and monuments also acquire space in collective memory invoking recollection, commemoration and even forgetting. The spaces, thus, not only have monuments or cultural historical infrastructure but are also dotted with memory (Halbwachs, 1992).

What constitutes national identity may be a matter of getting the history wrong and ‘a daily referendum’ in the view of French political thinker Renan. Renan, in his famous
essay titled *What is a Nation?*, elaborates on why nations get their history wrong, “Forgetfulness, and I would even say historical error, are essential in creation of a nation” [1990 (1882), p. 10]”) Anderson in fact criticises Renan by pointing out that the act of saying that ‘such and such has been forgotten’ is also an act of remembrance.

Spaces (with monuments and landscapes contained within them) form the material spatial axis among the co-ordinates along which life can be plotted. But time also remains an important co-ordinate. However, Lefebvre emphasised that it is not the space or time itself that constitute life content but rather the everyday practices, history and change around the material things (Lefebvre, 1991). This conception of production of space along with Lefebvre’s call for difference unavoidably leads into the matter of identities (Fraser, 1997). Contemplating on these conceptions, I am led to think that communities are not necessarily imagined only on the nationalistic terrain. The difference between Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ and Lefebvre’s ‘representation of space’ may not just be a matter of scale. In fact, whether the two are different at all may be the right question to ask.

### 2.3.1 Grasping the Materiality of Culture

Walter Benjamin rued in streets of Paris that the modern era lacked the aura of other times. It is here in the arcades that he begins his extensive work on fetishism of commodities and deepens it because it was in arcades that he saw how a dreadful world of oppressive relations of production became repackaged and made ready to be sold in glittering display windows. He asserted that this fetish character seeped into all aspects of everyday life so much so that the very image of everyday was fetishised when people went through intense, pleasurable experience this image provided (Merrifield 2002). According to Merrifield, while Marxist thinkers in the political economic track see the capitalist modernisation in the urbanisation processes Benjamin felt the ‘experience of capitalist modernity.’ (ibid p 65)

Reading Lefebvre and Benjamin together brings to us the understanding that modern spaces were increasingly ‘produced’ not as spaces of work and production but as spaces of commodification and consumption. Marx had said that ‘the strangest things are often the most trivial’ to which Lefebvre quipped that “the most extraordinary
things are also the most everyday. (quoted from Merrifield 2002, p. 79)’. I am reminded of Lefebvre’s influence on Guy Debord, who took the concept of space as spectacle a little further and said that not only has it been commodified but also banalised. The consumer is also a ‘tourist’ who goes to witness this banalisation at leisure. Benjamin’s practise of ‘against-the-grain’ reading of history and Debord’s *derive* (walking in a space contrary to its design) and *detournement* (purposeful reversal of meaning by disfiguring a work) are a way of protesting against marketisation of culture and space, indeed of life itself.

It is perhaps the biggest paradox of modernity that while on one hand *life itself* has been commodified but on the other hand the materiality of the processes that have achieved this feat have become slippery and difficult to grasp, at least in the academia. Indeed, authors have already taken note of this paradoxical aversion of academia to the materiality of social processes. In his book *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Miller calls material culture an elusive part of modernity which has “consistently managed to evade the focus of academic gaze, and remains the least understood of all cultural phenomenon of the modern age”. (Miller 1987, p. 217)

Postmodernism contends that consideration of relationship of life with the material things is necessarily at the cost of consideration of relationship of people to people. Miller is a staunch critic of this position in his prolific and wide range of writings on various aspects of material culture. In his book called *A Theory of Shopping* (1998 a), he painstakingly studies how even the most intense human emotions such as love of a person or loss in death are expressed through and intricately intertwined with buying and giving gifts, and retaining or giving up object associated with a dead person. Miller further studied the consumption of material culture- artefacts, food, electronic and other consumer goods and shows that consumption is constitutive activity of social and individual self creation and self-understanding as it is of understanding of ‘others’. He asserts that, ‘the key for judging the utility of contemporary objects is the degree to which they may or may not be appropriated from the forces which created them, which are mainly, of necessity alienating. This appropriation consists of transmutation of goods, through consumption activities, into potentially inalienable culture.’ (Miller 1987, 215)
2.4 On ‘Reading’: Consciousness and Ideology

Critical theory’s approach on this matter, drawing from Marxism, postulates that the modern technologies of material culture and cultural reproduction are but only the manifestations of fake beings— who are reified, inauthentic and alienated. Thus, cultural theory largely aims at emancipation or freedom which is understood as escape from reification. How is this possible? If all ideas of a time are contingent upon the relationships of production characterising that society at that time, then, reification of the material and alienation of life is inevitable in our times. Terry Eagleton (1989) explains that this is a case of much prevalent understanding based on misreading of Marx. He contends that Marxian understanding actually sees the counter-hegemonic processes as intrinsic part of the hegemonic processes. Marx himself spoke of the potential in art to develop disproportionately to the ‘general development of the society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structural, as it were, of its organisation’ (quoted in Eagleton, 1989, p. 9) and thus, art has the potential too, to act as a vehicle of counter hegemony. However, Eagleton cautions us lest we veer towards the other extreme that art can transcend ideology completely. Here he brings in Althusser who argued that while art is neither mere ideology nor completely free of it but it actually has a particular relationship to ideology. Eagleton contends that ideology is often mistaken as amorphous, unconnected free floating ideas; instead, he asserts that ideology of a time has a certain structural coherence which is also what makes it suitable to be subjected to systematic analysis to discern the principles which binds it together and point where these principles falter.

For my purpose, the preceding discussion of uniqueness of art and artistic texts point towards a direction where we can get to a closer understanding of how ideology functions and how it may possibly be transcended. Literary criticism has actually contributed much to the social scientific understanding of these discursive processes. Semiotic tradition in this context is the one that critical theory and Marxist approaches owe much to. In Saussure’s semiotic framework, language is the basic structure which orders, divides and shapes the world - that is the phenomenal world. His contribution to structural analysis was that language is not a system of signs whose meaning is ‘inherent’ and ‘obvious’ but is rather ‘produced’ by the internal logic of structures of
difference. In other words, it is our language that enables us to see ‘differences’ between ‘our’ culture and that of the ‘other’.

Building on Saussure’s work Levi Strauss showed that structural analysis is applicable to not only written texts but to myriad other textual practices. He stressed that even though the various forms of social life such as language, art, law, religion seem to be different from each other, it is possible to see a basic similarity between all these forms by extricating and analysing the structures which communities use to constitute themselves such as ‘customs, institutions and accepted patterns of behaviour in addition to the written text’ (Levi-Strauss, 1963).

Roland Barthes (1993) contends that in a narrative the codes\(^1\) that enable the coherence of the narrative are also the very codes that divulge its limits. It is by analysing the very structure or ordering of these codes that they can be transcended. In this regard, for example, if the discourses regarding Muslims rely and revolve around the figure of violent, irrational being then the structural analysis of this narrative would not just confirm the structure of meaning that the narrative gives rise to but would also challenge these codes. The practice of emancipatory reading of the discourses aims at discerning and divulging the meanings behind a hegemonic discourse must then focus on the contradictions, the inconsistencies within the meaning which produces a conflict in the narrative between a central figure confirming the codes, and a figure of the ‘radical other’. An emancipatory reading does not attempt to resolve or harmonise the conflict but to display it.

Emancipatory reading leads me to Deconstruction. Derrida’s ‘Deconstruction’ is important because he conceives it both as an approach to inquiry and a political strategy. Derrida distinguished between ‘deconstruction’ and ‘destruction’ from the point of view of the philosophical tasks the two verbs involve. By his own admission, Derrida’s

\(^{1}\) Codes are points that define a network of meaning that shape a narrative. Barthes defines them rather ambiguously but the definition could be discerned from his typology of codes. He says that codes may take shape of voices, characters, events that take the narrative forward, sometimes giving it an unexpected twist. ‘Code’ may also refer to the structure of meaning inherent in a text. All in all Barthes probably refrains from defining ‘code’ because of his view on possibility of multiple readings of the texts. It is the specific unique, combination of codes in a text that a reader reaches that makes an alternative reading possible.
deconstruction project has an interest primarily in radicalization in ‘a certain spirit of Marxism’ (Derrida 1994, p. 92). It is essentially a reading that demonstrates inherent elements of a position that undermine the very position that contains them. Derrida said that deconstructionist reading is a ‘gesture’, rather a ‘double-gesture’ in which the first ‘move’ consists of inverting the hierarchy of opposition and the second ‘move’ consists of displacing the system in which the hierarchy operates. This kind of reading requires a readiness to give full attention to complexities of all the elements of a text, or an idea. It requires a special eye for contradictions and paradoxes. Derrida uses ‘Differance’, a term he coined by combining the two words in the phrase ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’, to indicate that each ‘sign’ or idea contains within itself, its own absence. If it signifies deference to its own meaning it also signifies its difference from that idea. It is this state of affairs in use of language that Derrida calls ‘play’ and uses it to bring in a ‘playful’ form of reading.

Derrida’s playful reading is not too far away from Levi-Strauss’s Study of Myth (1955). ‘Myth’ in this usage is a unique way of producing a combination of ideas that are similar in form and are universal. Myths, according to Levi-Strauss are ahistoric but also claim historicity. In his book ‘Imagined Community’ Benedict Anderson’s discussion of ‘Nation’ is a discussion of exactly such a myth. The way national communities are imagined across cultures and the tropes that are used to prop-up these imaginations in different languages are strikingly similar, while in reality ‘Nation’ as a concept is a recent invention. Finally, like all good myths discourses of a Nation are nationalism performed. The performative nature of myths is what renders it the strength of a political position and also a political strategy.

Barthes further worked on the idea of myth as something so widely accepted as truth that it goes without saying. That which need not be said because it is so well understood and widely accepted. He further elucidates that this happens through well orchestrated ideological stage-management.

For analysing media discourses, Barthes’ idea of ‘myth’ is important because according to him the core competency of myth is to transform history into nature. He theorises the myth as a coded form of communication, it is a form of signification that is subject
to history. Thus, myth again is performative and processual rather than an object, or an idea. The claim to historicity of myths require that they depend upon rehashing old material and recycle it and Barthes claims that while myths may be universal in form, they are specific in content.

In his conception of myth Barthes was aided by his engagement with the theatre of Bertolt Brecht (Jameson, 1998). Brecht used a technique called estrangement-effect in which he would deliberately stage his plays in such a manner that the experience of the audience is frequently interrupted by techniques that remind them that they are watching a performance rather than experience the performance as ‘natural’ or ‘real’ suspending their faculties. We know that cinema screenings in theatre today actually use strategies exactly opposite to this- known as alienation-effect. For this purpose various tropes such as the dark proscenium, surround sound etcetera are used to draw the viewer ‘totally’ into the narrative- to the point that they forget that it is not a natural experience but a performance. In this sense, media stands in the modern society as a powerful tool of myth making. In fact, Frederic Jameson (1992) goes so far as to say that this realist- ‘performance’ as ‘natural’ quality of Hollywood cinema enables it to be ‘read’ as depicting ‘real problems’ and proposing ‘symbolic solutions’.

I can now feel a little more confident to discuss Jameson’s view of reading texts. In his book titled The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, Jameson (1981) talks of a ‘political unconscious’ which refers to underlying political and social assumptions in all cultural works and texts, including of course, popular cinema but also architecture, space and economics. As mentioned earlier, according to Jameson, cultural texts contain symbolic solutions to real historical problems. He further asserts that in the cultural texts of its time each society is confronted with an image of the society that it has no vision to see. Extending this understanding further, Jameson (1991) refutes the idea that inherent contradictions of capitalism have been harmonised in the contemporary. He also rejects that postmodernity heralds the exhausting of ‘modern’. According to him, famously, it is only the cultural logic of late capitalism.

In other words, what is explained as postmodern situation of the post-industrialist society is merely a cultural explanation for a situation when capitalism has deeply
permeated all aspects of life including consciousness (ibid). Understandably, it is an explosive argument that has altered the way humanities was charting the course to find ways in which to grasp the present realities. Jameson elucidates on certain features that are symptomatic of the social shift to late capitalism or full-blown postmodernity. Among other things he mentions a ‘geopolitical aesthetic’- a controversial concept according to which representations of people and communities now have to contend with their linkages to the inter-relationships between the nation states, and what he calls ‘a mutation in built space’ which is now interfering with people’s ability to produce a cognitive map of situations they are in.

2.4.1 Representation and Issues of Justice

Habermas [1989 (1962)] introduced an important concept- ‘public sphere’, which is a realm in society where citizens can freely discuss their opinions regarding issues of public interest. He also elaborated on situations in which specific types of public spheres arise or decline. It is a concept that has proved very influential and useful in understanding the way social or public discourses change. Further, his idea of ‘communicative action’ (1984) propounded that social life is a reflection of people’s ability to communicate with each other. The social life for Habermas does not merely refer to doing things and getting others to do something but to represent or change by communicating a symbolic status. Habermas did not limit the idea of symbolic status to only people or communities but extended it to places (and objects) too. Habermas [1990 (1983)] took a position that modernism’s emancipatory potential was not over and should not be given-up just yet. His view of communicative action and public sphere, though called ‘naïve’ and ‘extremely idealistic’, have proven to be immensely influential in analysing the contemporary social realities as also in offering a performative, programmatic content to ethical dilemmas of the times we are living in. Among his critics the view of Nancy Fraser (1990) merits a special mention because she pointed out that public sphere in the liberal democracies are severely and forcibly limited for many categories of people whose identities ‘deviate’ from the norm in the given society- women, minorities, poor etcetera. Fraser conceptualised counter-publics as those multiple spheres, which are often depicted in the dominant discourses as undermining the effectiveness of the ‘idealised’ and ‘unified’ public sphere.
Continuing on the issue of characterising the times we are living in, and thus, understanding our situation, the voice of Jean-Francoise Lyotard is also provocative. Following what he perceived as ‘failure’ of the May 1968 students’ protest in Paris, Lyotard eschewed all contact with Marxism. Characterising it a ‘grand narrative’ he declared that the present age is defined by the unavailability of any grand narratives that according to him had hitherto lent legitimacy to knowledge discourses. For example, he elaborated further, the idea of ‘Revolution’ lent credence to the discourse that if the problems in society or ‘its faults’ become known then social movements would occur spontaneously. Another example was that of the idea of ‘Enlightenment’ which legitimated the view that knowledge, arts, science made people more human. Thus, according to Lyotard, the non-availability of ‘grand narratives’ necessitates knowledge to take recourse to localised ‘little narratives’. Lyotard calls these ‘little narratives’ or ‘language games’ (borrowing from Wittgenstein, this is the idea that also impacted the Habermas’s Communicative action) and says that these can be conceived as being not only local but also totally disparate and non-analogous. There are innumerable language games and they are characterised by their inability to communicate with each other. This renders them a source of injustice or ‘differend’ as Lyotard called it (1988). Although in this study, I am not convinced by Lyotard’s declaration of death of ‘grand narratives’ (because, for example, the narrative of western liberal democracy is a present day master narrative, even the mainstream feminist discourses form a master narrative), I do find useful for my purpose Lyotard’s differend. Beautifully conceived as a philosophical problem differend is an instance of injustice in which the redressal requires that the oppressed represent their position in the manner and form which is actually excluded by the very act of injustice that they are seeking redressal for. Lyotard relates this with the example of holocaust sceptic who insists that he would believe that the extermination in Nazi camps took place only if the one who was exterminated testifies it. (Malpas, 2002)

I would not be very off-track if I suggest that Spivak has similar view of ‘representation’ at least in terms of ‘testifying’. In her seminal work Can the Subaltern Speak she maintains that the position of subalternity has inbuilt into its definition a political inability to speak. This is not so much to do with the capacity to ‘speak’ per se but the
dominant system’s unwillingness to ‘hear’. The way relationships of dominance are structured the representations that subalterns are likely to make would not fit the requirements of the dominant discourse. Further, and less famously, Spivak also questions whether the likely representations of the subaltern would necessarily be ‘pure’- unblemished by the dominant discourse. As a political strategy Spivak advocates a certain ‘strategic essentialism’ which can help the subaltern speak such that this speech is heard. Thus, Spivak especially, but postcolonial studies generally, have a position that even though allows for strategic essentialism, does not agree with essentialist approach to identity.

2.5 Representation: Essentialised, Phobic, Phantasmal Muslim Identity

Gayatri Spivak and her work on subalterns and representation offer me a great point of reference to talk of Muslims specifically. The story of what grew into subaltern studies begins with narratives of Arabs whose representations in the western world have long been subjected to caricaturing, exoticisation, and dehumanisation. Spivak (1993) refers to Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, both as writers of “great texts of the ‘Arab World’” calling Said’s Orientalism the ‘source book’ in her discipline. In this regard, the importance of Orientalism cannot be overstated. The radical nature of Said’s work which followed Fanon in against-the-grain reading of the history of their people and the way it has been represented by the subjugating, hegemonic west, made possible a new kind of articulation. It contains a fairly straightforward idea that construction and ascription of identities are part and parcel of processes of control and subjugation in the relationship of West (‘the Occident’) with ‘the Orient’. In a narrow sense of orientalism it is a study or interest in the Arab and Muslim world which conceives it as a monolithic and undifferentiated region. Orientalism is, in Said’s own words is,

...a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of ‘interests’ which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only
creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power... (Said, 1978, p. 12).

The central thesis of Said’s entire oeuvre of work is that the measure of control over who gets represented in what manner is a measure of power. This nature of representation as power exercised is the prime task of a postcolonial critic. We may also see Malcolm X and Ali Shariati within this attempt of Fanon and Said at reading one’s own history from a perspective that is aware of subjugation but is not subjugated itself (Dabashi, 2009). ‘Orientalism’ as described by Said is still alive and kicking as evidenced by the cultural discourses in western media and the geopolitics of military interventionist foreign policy of USA and developed countries of Europe. It is also evidenced in the work of the academia in different measures with design or inadvertently. And even though Said’s critique of orientalism is revolutionary and capable of providing a programmatic content for resistance, it is, in the final analysis, a discourse that is still often interrupted and sidelined by the might of capitalism and its cultural hegemony.

US scholar Francis Fukuyama wrote an article called *End of History* (1989) following it up with a book (1992) along the same line of argument which was that, ‘The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism... What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’ (Fukuyama, 1989, p 162).

Fukuyama asserted that that only Islam has proposed a political alternative to both liberalism and communism in form of its ‘theocratic state’, which according to him, is an alternative that holds an appeal only to Muslims. He also spoke of paucity of
viable economic alternatives to capitalism. He claims that success of some far-eastern economies may be partially ascribed to their non-western cultural values related to work and savings etc but that Islam again is the only real challenger to western capitalism because it specifically prohibits certain kinds of economic behaviours and instils ‘deeply ingrained moral qualities’ (ibid, 1989, p. 5).

This would all be well if it were to stop at economic and cultural hegemony. Western Islamophobia also has a militaristic and geopolitical content. Around the same time when Fukuyama was sanctifying western liberal democracy and liberal capitalism another American scholar with an expertise in the West Asia, Bernard Lewis (1990) wrote an article titled *The roots of Muslim Rage*. The article depicted Muslims as a threat to the more ‘superior’ western world. The ideas expressed in the article were already gathering immense clout in US foreign policy and before long, Samuel Huntington further formulated these ideas in his article titled the *Clash of Civilisation* (1993) followed with a book with the same title (1996). These ideas not only essentialised ‘Muslims’ as a homogenous entity but strangely conflated the concept of civilisation with religion. Huntington divided the entire world into several ‘civilisations’ essentially, along the majoritarian identities of a particular region. So Muslims were seen as a homogenous group even when they were in countries in disparate geographical regions into one ‘Muslim civilisation’. Countries like Bangladesh which have a Muslim majority population were included but India where the largest population of Muslims live in absolute numbers was excluded. India was labelled a Hindu country in the ‘Eastern civilisation’. Similarly, the states where whites and Christians are in majority were all clustered in a ‘Western civilisation’. There is so much theoretical incongruity in the conception of ‘civilisations’ by Huntington that it is difficult not to think that the measure of attractive of this conception is the measure of prejudice against the non-western ‘civilisations’ generally, but particularly against Muslims and Arabs. Huntington prophesised that the battle lines of the future will be drawn along the ‘fault lines between civilisations’. This was essentially the framework which lent intellectual legitimacy to Bush administration and its foreign policy (Dodds, 2007).

As such there were numerous academic protestations. Amartya Sen (2007) challenged the assertion that diversity and democracy are western values. Edward Said reacted to
Huntington sharply, calling his conception nothing but ‘imagined geography’ in an article titled *Clash of Ignorance* (2001). Said also called Huntington ‘...dead wrong on every point he makes. No culture or civilisation exists by itself. None is made up of things like individuality and enlightenment that are completely exclusive to it, and none exists without the basic human attributes of community, love, value for life, and all the others. Even Arabs have those things in their culture. To suggest otherwise, as he does, is the purist, invidious racism of the same stripe, as people who used to argue that Africans have naturally inferior brains or that Asians are really born for servitude, or that Europeans are a naturally superior race. This is a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed uniquely today against Arabs and Muslims.’ (Said 2004, p. 293).

The question that bears asking is with regards to the reason for so much hostility against Muslims and Arabs. Are the reasons merely rooted in the historical quibble between the three Semitic religions- Judaism, Christianity and Islam? Commentators do point towards something more contemporary in these hostilities. In his discussion on resistance to globalisation, Frederic Jameson (2000) does agree that Islam and, various anti-western-imperialist nationalisms in the third world are the only two forces to offer any resistance to advent of globalisation, but he points to the ‘weakness’ of the former’s position and the danger in the strengthening of the latter. Interestingly though, on the matter of nationalistic impulses in opposition to globalisation, Jameson’s opinion is that communalism in India is only ‘Hindu identity politics’ and distinguishes it from Indian nationalism. His view on the weakness of Islam as a serious challenger to globalisation lies in the fact that the resisting factions within Muslims are those that are characterised as ‘fundamentalist’ and, thus, lack the universal appeal. I contend that, it is in this background that western Islamophobia must be seen- a manifestation of process of responding to the next ‘enemy’ of the capitalist ‘west’ after the disintegration of communist USSR.

Obviously, all this discussion took place before 9/11. Not only the Muslim factions or states that challenged the western hegemony lacked the universal appeal but post 9/11 they also became enemies fit to be abhorred and even annihilated. Huntington’s prophesy in *Clash of Civilisations* became an apt example of a self-fulfilling prophesy.
The contours of militarised Western Islamophobia paid lip service to the incidental ‘collateral’ damage but went on to devastate many parts of the Arab-Islamic world in a guise to establish US styled ‘liberal democracies’ in Afghanistan and Iraq and force or coerce others in the region to bow down to their neo-imperialist designs. There were terrible fallouts of this in the streets-turned battlefields of the various parts of west Asia but equally debilitating was the phobic, phantasmagoric identity foisted upon Muslims living in different societies and countries across the world (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Allen, 2010). Thus, ‘Orientalism’ took a new turn and ‘Global Islamophobia’ was born.

This also marked a turning point in research interests in Muslims lives, perspectives and attitudes. In Europe, for example, there are studies conducted to reach an estimate of Muslim population, studies that investigate Muslim immigrants, Muslim citizens of colonial origins and native Muslim converts (Buijs & Rath, 2001). There was also a plethora of academic and journalistic writings on the experience of being a Muslim in different western countries (Saggar 2009; Pargeter, 2006; Schebley & McCauley 2005; Abbas 2007). For the most part these works do express the angst of discrimination and, environment of suspicion and misrepresentation but in most cases these representations mostly fall in the trap of essentialised phobic identities themselves. The questions framed, the behaviours observed, the values probed are all from within the dominant discourses which are, of course, orientalist. Only difference is from the exotic, erotic, backward Muslim the representations has moved to suspect, disloyal, fanatic Muslim who, if he is not a terrorists himself, must then be a sympathiser.

With the flooding of media and academia with this kind of literature there were also incantations from the establishment that ‘good Muslims’ needed to be distinguished from ‘bad Muslims’. In his influential book *Good Muslims, Bad Muslims* Mehmood Mamdani (2005) analyses this binary. Mamdani asserts that the binary is a result of tendency to trace Islamist politics as having its roots solely in Islam, completely obliterating the historical ‘encounter’ of Islamic societies with the western societies. The interesting thing about this binary is that it is not a binary at all because its one pole- the ‘bad Muslim’ is defined in such terms that essentialises all Muslims as bad. Mamdani further explores how Muslim cultures are not only represented as
homogenous monoliths but as premordern; and Muslims as people who do not live and create culture but are trapped in a primitive culture which they can only confirm to. Mamdani objects to the formulation of ‘terrorism’ as a premodern reaction to a progressive modern western civilisation. He contends that terrorism is a ‘modern ensemble at the service of a modern project’.

2.5.1 Muslims in India: Trends in Representation

Barbara Metcalf (1995) brings to our notice that the usage of good and bad Muslim binaries to subjugate them by an imperial force is not a new phenomenon. In the essentialised binary created by the British colonisers in India the good Muslim was a Muslim who was a rationalist practitioner of a higher form of religion distinct from superstition and syncretism of the lower order. Metcalf places her awareness of concerns regarding study of India’s history by historians working in the frameworks of nationalist, post-colonial and left-modernist discourses, the politics of knowledge it entails and its impact on ‘public life’ in India. I probably read her correctly where she especially points to use of history in public sphere (calling it ‘public life’). She weaves a narrative of history writing as a colonial exercise in providing one group of ‘natives’ a rationale for their subjugation as continued but ‘more civil’ and ‘more equal’ subjugation. Metcalf maintains that such histories and their use in public discourses have rendered Indian Muslims’ situation similar to those of Jews in Europe or African-Americans. But she also accepts that analogies are not perfect. She argues further that histories of bygone eras are not static things. They are always being rewritten not only on unearthing of new material but also by changes in present structures of the power. The version that was useful for the colonialists is wreaking havoc on the present much as it subjugated the past. She specially emphasises rewriting history with a geographic sensibility, which is writing history of connection between different spaces and mobilities across them, and of institutions and practices beyond the orientalist sensibility. In present day’s India we may well do better to listen to Metcalf’s advice.

“Historians need to tell a new story about South Asian Muslims-for themselves and whoever can hear them. That history has been doubly marginalized by legacies of European orientalism and Indian politics. More
of us need, above all, to take Muslims into account… We need scholars who, unlike my generation, do not study Muslims alone. And, instead of creating difference, we need to draw boundaries around common human experiences and, above all, around common social and political structures, situating Muslims squarely within the complex world of opportunities and constraints, motivations, and tastes they shared with everyone else.” (Metcalf, 1995, p 965)

Here, I would say that she correctly diagnoses what ails not only historical literature on Muslims in India but literature across social science discipline. They study Muslims in isolation as if their experiences, the social and political structures in which they live have no bearing on their Muslimness in which they are assumed to be trapped. This is an indigenised, local version of Orientalism that Said pointed out and critiqued. Well intentioned efforts to argue for social justice and equality for Muslims fall in the discursive traps that do not allow for alternative imaginaries that can actually free Muslims from the discursive double bind and claim social equality and justice for themselves.

Since my intention in this review is not to undertake an updated profiling of Muslims, but rather to discern in literature the trends of representation of Muslims in India, I shall limit myself to delineating these trends and illustrating these with a few examples.

The works that study Muslims ‘in isolation’ are the most proliferating kind of studies that continues to be undertaken on Indian Muslims. Sociological studies on the caste composition of Muslim communities (Alam, 2009; Ali, 2002; Anwar, 2001; Bhatti, 1996; Ahmed, 1978), educational status (Mainuddin, 2010; Hasan & Menon, 2005; Mondal, 1997) and reproductive behaviour- especially use of contraceptives abound (Hussain, 2008). Many studies seek to address a combination of these issues (Mistry Ahmed, 1993-1996; Faridi et all, 1992; Engineer 1991; Mondal, 1992; Ahmed, 1983)

In the most sociological studies seeking to profile them, Muslims are portrayed as a laggard community, loath to change its attitude in the race of demographic transition in India in which other religious communities have reached milestones much ahead of them. One of the favourite flogging horses of Muslim detractors is the fertility rates
of Muslims in India. Mistry (2006) reports on figures comparing fertility rates of various religions and concludes that decennial growth rates of Muslims have been higher than Hindus because of the relative backwardness of Muslim women. She fails to take cognizance that in many decades the Muslim fertility rate has been lower than Sikhs and Christians also that for many decades the infant and child mortality rates among Muslims have been lower than Hindus, because this fact does not fit into the framework of ‘backwardness of Muslim Women’ which has almost become a touchstone in the study of poverty and/or women’s rights among Muslims. On matters of contraception use and relating fertility to education levels Mistry continuously ascribes it to Muslim ‘backwardness’- achieving no mean feat of establishing the existence of a phenomenon without defining it.

Mistry’s failure to define what she means by ‘backwardness’ in a sound philosophical or empirical way is a problem that is symptomatic of subaltern nature of Muslims and the entire spectrum of these studies rather than a problem of her individual scholarship. What unfolds in most such efforts is an essentialised identity tag, which pretends to have some operational basis but ends up only confirming the view of the hegemonic gaze. Also what is discernible in this review of literature is the ritualistic tone and vocabulary of the literature. Much of the journalistic writing on Muslims as well the sociological studies are conducted and/or written on routine lines. It is as if scholars start with a precautionary inventory which was designed by someone in the seventies and since then not much has changed in the nature and manner of enquiries. Especially among the Muslim scholars it was disheartening to see the extent of dumbing down in research engagements on issues related to Muslims in the last three decades. It is only now that some recent studies are beginning to initiate alternative enquiries or against-the-grain readings of dominant discourses. Methodology and approach is one of the considerations and we are beginning to see ethnographic and narrative approaches in the studies. In my opinion, reached after undertaking this review is that the most important question in front of Muslim scholarship is that of renewed rigour, creativity, inventiveness in even framing and asking questions. Dragging ourselves on the well-treaded path may be easier but it is time to recognise that this has not gotten us anywhere.

I will take just one example highlighting the importance of posing a new question and rigorous work. A recent study (Bhalotra, Valente, & Soest, 2010) looked at the earlier
mentioned lower infant and child mortality rates among the Muslims compared to Hindus and commented that the figures are paradoxical within the frame of reference in which these figures have always been seen. Terming it ‘puzzling’ the study highlights and describes “a hitherto neglected fact that … despite being, on average, less educated and poorer, Indian Muslims exhibit a substantial advantage in child survival over high-caste Hindus This religion differential is much larger than the more widely recognised gender differential in child survival in India and it appears to have persisted for decades.” Subjecting the already available data to rigorous analysis and looking for possible explanations for the puzzle they reach a conclusion that is indeed radical in that the vocabulary it uses for Muslims has almost never been used before. The researchers conclude that in the closer knit community due to various reasons such as its minority status and endogamous marriage, expectant and new mothers as well as children are receiving better care. They add lower preference for male child and better girl child survival and sex ratio than the upper caste Hindus to the explanation along with practices eating and hygiene practices related to their faith.

Numerous works on Muslim women’s status have studied their subjects from several fixed perspectives- purdah, talaq, polygamy (the issues of ‘Uniform Civil Code debate) seclusion, reproductive behaviour etc (Kazi, 1999; Vatuk, 2001). Most of these ultimately essentialise the Muslim women’s identity as victims of Islam and/or Muslim men (Vatuk, 2008). An alternative reading in this regard was survey study of Muslim women (Hasan & Menon, 2004) at a national scale which emphasised the intersectionality of various issues such as widespread poverty, patriarchy etc which impact Indian Muslim women just as they impact other Indian women from the same class backgrounds.

With the controversies around Shahbano case and the banning of Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses affair there is also lot of literature around the issue of anti-liberal attitudes of the Muslims. While several authors contend that Shahbano case divided the women’s movement in India my opinion is that it merely illuminated the rifts that already existed (and still exist) but were painted over by the movement which claims a pan Indian sisterhood that does not exist in reality. Scholars such as Zoya Hassan (2000, 2006), Flavia Agnes (1992, 1995, 1999), Martha Nussbaum (2001), Nivedita Menon (2001)
and Madhu Kishwar (1998) have debated the issues involved extensively. What is interesting is that in both the cases the opinions in the left-liberal and Hindu right converge and chastise Muslims for being irrational and anti-liberal. Both these controversies flared up under Rajiv Gandhi government. His governments stand on both the counts caused the dominant discourses to allege ‘appeasement’ of Muslims which in turn obliged the government to arrange for opening the locked Babri Masjid for Hindus to worship inside the Mosque. This handing over of the mosque to Hindus and later its demolition is marked in academic literature almost unanimously as a blot on Indian democracy, its secular character and so on, but there is absolute silence on what did these turn in events mean to the Muslims in India.

While studies on Muslim women abound Muslim men on the other hand, are severely under-studied. The studies that do exist are located in Madrasas for example, Sikand (2005, 2008) Husain (2004). In fact, the interest in madrasas among the academics in India seems to have surfaced only after 9/11 when these were described in the dominant media discourses as dens of terror or radical training. This interest is extending now to girls’ madrasas for example Jeffrey et al (2004) and Weinklemann (2007) too, but the representations remain as problematic.

The place of Muslims in India’s history is perhaps the part of the literature on Muslims in India that has probably seen most contestations and controversy but this is also the genre of literature which has probably done well in terms of coming up with alternative readings as well. It is no surprise then it was the historian Barbara Metcalf who set the tone for this part of the review. Perhaps it is the strength of Marxist traditions in History as a discipline in India that can be credit for this feat. Numerous contemporary historians of have recorded histories that have taken a look at the experiences of Muslims within Histories of Colonial India and Partition (Pandey, 2001, 2006; Hasan 1995, 1998,1997, 2001) with a perspective which is largely unencumbered by any kind of baggage. In this regard, Mahua Sarkar’s (2008) study of invisibilisation of Muslim Women from history of Bengal is also an important work in illustrating the discursive processes that have marginalised Muslims in India. Mushirul Hasan (1990, 2004, 2008) has been at the forefront of recording contemporary history of Muslims in India.
The matter of Muslims’ situation in India has also been mostly placed at the doors of overt communal violence unleashed by the Hindutva groups or Sangh Parivar. And the apathy of others among the ruling classes, especially political parties (Congress mainly among them). The truth is that a prejudiced view that prevails more deeply and spans over a much broader range of discriminations is mostly ignored. MJ Akbar (1988), Gyanedra Pandey (1990) chart the chronology of communal violence beginning with 1962 riots in Jabalpur being the first one in independent India. Later violence targeting Muslims is recorded as breaking out with much regularity in towns and cities all over India- Ahmedabad, Bhiwandi, Jamshedpur, Aligarh, Varanasi. Through these accounts the communal violence and killings experienced by Muslims is recorded as tied closely to political contestation between Congress and Jansangh/BJP as electoral front for RSS and its political thought.

As mentioned in the earlier section on studies related to the ‘urban’ and urbanisation in India a few authors do recognise that the violence is connected with claims over resources, markets and city space. This recognition makes an appearance in the studies of the Muslims but the engagement is fleeting- it is a fact commented upon but not studied deeply for detailed explanations. This is an eminently discernible trend in all writing for example, Asghar Ali Engineer (1988, 1989, 1985, 1991 b, c, 1995, 2004) in his writing has been chronicling the intricate terrain of communal violence, quantum of damage suffered by Muslims and the impact on the victims in each of the instances. Indeed, in the face of unfortunately long and wide history of communal violence in India, his work has also assumed formidable proportions. Unfortunately, Engineer’s theoretical engagement leaves much to be desired and beyond recounting, his work is unable to offer any insights regarding the connection of violence with other processes than the usual clichés. In this tradition of raconteurs of communal violence, Christopher Jaffrelot is also an important name. His work (1999, 2005) is marked by deep descriptions of genesis and proliferation of Hindutva ideology and outfits. Here too I discern that the rich descriptions do not extend into sustained efforts at theorisation. In any case, in Jaffrelot’s formulations Muslims appear as victims of Hindutva outfits and actors who are the main protagonists of his œuvre.
The work of Paul Brass (1997, 2005) stands apart who has developed a strong theoretical approach to understanding communal violence. Recent work of Parvis-Ghassem Fachandi (2010, 2012) on analysing the ferocity of violence in 2002 pogrom is also a step further in this direction. While Paul Brass’s engagement is with discursive and political processes at work, Fachandi takes a social-psychological pathway to understanding ferocity in 2002 Gujarat Pogrom. One common feature of both these readings are that they deviate from the path treaded till now in this genre which was to somehow call these instances of violence as spontaneous ‘riots’ which are disconnected to the ‘normal-natural’ harmonious course of social relations. Ashutosh Varshney (2003) also attempts to provide an alternative reading of communal violence. He proposes that ethnic conflict and ethnic violence be differentiated from each other and that it is in the nature of engagements of the civil society with ethnic communities that the key for ethnic conflict to flare out as ethnic violence rests. Ayesha Jalal (1996, 1999) has also explored Communalism in the broader South Asian context and has made astute comments pertaining to history and legacy of partition in the present day communal contestations. In her formulations subaltern reading of Muslims’ history in South Asia is a running theme.

Another trend is the one that shows a tendency to employ psychopathological frameworks to study of Muslims. The title of Rajmohan Gandhi’s book on Muslims—Understanding the Muslim Mind (1999) is an example of this trend. Presenting concise biographies of eight Muslim men who are deemed by the author to be important personalities that have shaped the destiny of the community in India, he claims to make a statement about this entity called ‘the Muslim Mind’. The singular number, proper noun- ‘the Muslim Mind’ in the title is an indication of a subconscious motivation to ‘understand’ a phantasmal, mega and singular-unified ‘Muslim mind’ by showing some common thread in eight prominent male ‘minds’. This is a peculiar way to title a study which hints at a representation of ‘the Muslim’ as suffering from some psycho-pathological ailment and which can be uncovered by psychoanalysis. Numerous works exist that employ this peculiar academic formulation and claim to look into, examine and understand what goes on in ‘the Muslim Mind’. Edward Said (1998) noted, “Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about Muslim mind,
or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians…” In the west this has amounted to cognitive psychological approaches in studying Muslim attitudes on the line of marketing studies are increasingly being undertaken. In India, too there is increasingly a trend towards using focus groups and surveys in assessing Muslim attitudes towards various issues such as modernity, contraception, terrorism etcetera.

There is also some literature in the past decade that pertains to Muslims as participants in politics in India. Most of it predictably pertains to electoral politics (Hassan 1990) and controversies regarding the voting preferences of Muslims or the so called ‘Muslim vote bank’ (Engineer, 1995). The debates around reservations in education, jobs and parliament also make references to Muslims (Bhambri, 2005; Wright, 1997; Zainuddin, 2003; Hasan & Roy 2005). Many of these writings focuses on caste identities and women within the Muslim community pitting these as oppositional to the larger questions of the Muslim communities (Sikand, 2001; Shahabuddin, 2002; Jenkins 1999, 2001). Literature pertaining to politics of caste and discrimination among Muslims along caste lines makes arguments much along the same lines as Hindu dalit movements do such as in Anwar Alam (2009, 2003) and Javeed Alam (1999) Ahmed (2003). Most studies assume that the caste situation among Muslims is just a replica of Hindu caste system with some minor variations. In terms of alternative reading recently, some writings regarding Muslims’ participation in public sphere have appeared which are posing questions regarding the role played by the ascribed identities of Muslims in limiting their participation (Ahmed, 2009; Ali, 2001). This factor has never gone unnoticed by the state which has periodically been interested in taking stock of positioning of Muslims vis-à-vis rest of the society.

Beginning the report by Hunter on *The Indian Musalmans* [2002 (1871)] in response to Lord Mayo’s query with regards the Muslim subjects of the state, the Indian state (colonial and independent India) has been commissioning various enquiries around the grievances of/around Muslims (Khalidi, 2009). These include enquiry commissions on numerous instances of communal violence but also enquiries into the developmental status of Muslims such as Sachar Committee (2006), Rangnath Misra Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities (2007). These state sponsored studies have often
done a good job of delivering the tasks that they were mandated to but the various
governments have consistently failed to take any action on the recommendations of
any of these enquiries except paying some lip service. Apart from this failure at
achieving the stated motives behind commissioning them, the reports have served
very well to strengthen the stereotyped, essentialised representations (Das & Samaddar,
2009). In fact, various data generated by the governments through its programmes,
census and surveys have done little more than this. And in the planning documents
successively Muslims are rarely mentioned being clubbed up with all other minorities
who are doing well on many of the development indices which see planned
interventions. Systematic studies analysing this policy situation and its reason on this
count are missing.

2.6 Summative Remarks

At the end of the walk meandering across and around the disciplinary boundaries I
evaluate and summarise what I think I have been able to achieve in this review. I state
these in a series of remarks that may be seen as post-facto objectives of this review. I
have, in this chapter, taken an overview of the philosophical literature that underpins
the theoretical framework of the study. The main problem with these representations
is not that they are entirely false but that these make no attempt to engage with or
examine the historical processes that produced the situations. This huge gap in
engagement is what essentialises the Muslim identity and snatches away from them
their ability to represent their own issues in any alternative way. It is the nature and
processes of these academic representations too that Muslim communities are kept
back into a subaltern status.

In the chapter that follows I bear the issues raised in the preceding debate to chart out
the methodological course that is mindful of all these perils of representations and
readings. Also arising from this discussion, I lay down and articulate the theoretical
and philosophical framework within which this research was conducted and written.
This framework also circumscribed the analysis of the observations, conversations
and other textual material created and collected in this study.