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Presentation: 'Violence and Exclusion: The Multiple Dimensions of Marginalization of Muslim Women in India

The consequences of violent conflict, particularly civil war and ethnic conflict, on the long-term development of marginalized communities is relatively less understood than the causes of such conflict. What we know is that conflict leads to immediate loss of livelihoods, the devastation of families and communities through loss of earning members of the household, and damages other aspects of the social fabric. More specifically, the effects of these changes on women are less well understood. How and to what extent do women shoulder the burden of broken families, raising children and securing livelihoods? How is their potential for long-term development affected? For example, what happens to the education of girls and other opportunities that women might have availed of in the absence of conflict? My paper examines the effect of ethnic violence in western India on Muslim women. The discourse on Muslim women in India remains mired in discussions about personal law and often viewed through the lens of 'backwardness'. In 2005 a High Level Committee on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India (the Sachar Committee) examined the existence and extent of the marginalization among the Muslim community in India. It found extensive marginalization on various fronts – education, literacy, access to resources, and various other indexes of empowerment. The double-effects of marginalization in 'peace-time' and the targeting of Muslim women during ethnic conflict in western India remain to be systematically examined. In turn, the conservative and patriarchal impulse to restrict women to the household and withdraw them from education is a trend that requires further investigation. This paper will explore the multi-dimensional causes of Muslim women's exclusion in the post-conflict period, in a context where extreme religious and Islamophobic discourses and policies prevail, and their agency in addressing these forms of exclusion.

Bio

Dr Manali Desai is a Lecturer in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

She has received her PhD in Sociology from the University of California-Los Angeles where she trained as a comparative and historical sociologist. Her work encompasses the areas of state formation, political parties, social movements, development, ethnic violence, and post-colonial studies. She is currently

developing work on three new projects: aspiration and middle class formation in Indian cities; colonial rule and long-term development, and sex selection in India. Her first book *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India, 1860-1990* (2006) is a historical analysis of the emergence of two different welfare regimes in India where social democratic parties have ruled consistently since independence. She has published her research in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Social Science History*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, and *Journal of Historical Sociology*. Among her recent projects is a British Academy funded project (2006-8) that focused on the history of urban communal violence in India. Her most recent research was funded by a Leverhulme Research Project Grant (2011-13) titled "Beyond Identity? Markets and Logics of Democratization in India, 1991-Present."