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**Values and National  
identity –  
Challenges for  
Marginalised religious  
communities  
UK and India 2025  
UTC Bangalore  
Dr Sally Elton-Chalcraft  
Professor of Social  
Justice in Education**

**cumbria.ac.uk**

# PROJECT



VALUES AND NATIONAL  
IDENTITY



What are the challenges for  
marginalised religious  
communities in education:



Muslims in the UK



Christians in India

# PROJECT TITLE: Values and National Identity in Education – Indian Context

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

This project is part of a larger study looking at values and national identity in education in two countries. The first study looked at how government educational policy in England impacted negatively on Muslims. This second study asks what lecturers, teachers and parents think about Christian values in the political context of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and in the context of a secular education system. Between mid February and mid March 2025 the researcher will talk with teachers, lecturers and students in 4 capital cities in different Indian states, namely Bengaluru (Karnataka), Hyderabad (Telangana), Kolkata (West Bengal) and Shillong (Meghalaya).

# Research questions

## UK

How can we understand how different groups 'view' Muslims? (UK governmental security forces ; local people; teachers)



How can we understand '**Muslimness**' and its inherent complexities in UK?

## India

- How can we understand how different groups 'view' Christians? (BJP ; local people; teachers)
- How can we understand '**Christianness**' and its inherent complexities in different Indian states?



# Sections

1. Problem of viewing Muslims as a homogenous community
2. Concept of 'suspect community' and its ascription to Muslims
3. Blaming the 'Muslim Community' for terrorist acts
4. Implications of being a 'suspect community'
5. Typology of Muslims as a suspect community
  - a) Shamima Begum perceived as a terrorist 'bad Muslim'
  - b) Hamida perceived as a 'bad Muslim'
  - c) Nadiya British Bake off champion 'good' Muslim
6. 'Least Muslim role' v perceived Muslim violent extremist
7. Implications for the RE educationalist



# Shamima Begum

2015



2023

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/23/shamima-begum-loses-appeal-against-removal-of-british-citizenship>

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/shamima-begum-now-ex-isis-28690783>

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# Hamida

## – non hijab to hijab –

(Abbas 2019)



<https://ifyokoye.com/2011/04/21/hijab-less-by-choice-muslim-women-in-their-own-words/>





# Nadya Hussain British bake off champion 2015

<https://www.nadiyahussain.com/about-me/>

# 1. Problem of viewing Muslims as a community

1. Interviews with 42 MPs, civil servants, Muslim civil society actors and faith leaders - ***atmosphere of hostility*** has emerged towards Muslim representation' (Jones et al 2015, p. 207).
2. concept of Muslim representation is unhelpful, it is argued, because *there is no 'Muslim community' to be represented* –
3. Accusations against the **MCB** - simplistic stigmatisation of being 'Islamist- infused' .... secretive agenda ... Muslim civil society organisations .... treated as 'toxic'; privileging the perspectives of religious ... voices of women and young people .....unheard (Jones et al 2015)
4. **Quilliam** heavily funded by successive governments to target Muslim extremism and yet went into liquidation in April 2021 with very little media attention (Ahmed 2021). handmaiden of 'Big Society' conservatism before gradually devolving into an extension of pro-Trump lobbies'
5. **'conveyor belt' theory of radicalisation**, moving from 'grievance, through radicalisation, to violence had been called into question with undue weight given to 'ideological factors' (Ahmed 2021);

## 2. Concept of 'suspect community' and its ascription to Muslims

1. Muslims viewed as a suspect community not because they are all under direct legal surveillance but because they all feel they are viewed suspiciously. Pantaziz and Pemberton (2011)
2. examples of self-mistrust among families and communities eg -
  - Welpby (2018, p. 371) - 'cultural pathologizing'
  - Abbas (2019, p. 8) 'pathologised constructions' parents spy on their children and are in conflict, feeling both 'proud yet fearful of their daughter's religiosity'.
    - Heath-Kelly (2017) - a medical model the epidemiological imaginations of radicalisation

### 3. Blaming the ‘Muslim Community’ for terrorist acts

1. Muslims become a fantasy product of the securitised imagination.... an over estimation of risk (Breen-Smyth 2014, p. 232)
2. the judge who described a woman, Umm Ahmed, as a ‘good’ Muslim woman who was not guilty of any illegality and yet he nevertheless sentenced her to a ‘12-month prison term for possessing the magazine *Inspire* which she had been reading to understand her charged brother’s case.’ While not sharing her brother’s ideology she was subjected to a de-radicalisation programme (2015). Quereshi argues that such de-radicalisation narratives particularly in ‘schools, universities and hospitals has led to the criminalisation of large sections of the various Muslim communities in the UK’
3. Wendy Brown Brown calls the ‘dark others’ who are ‘metonymically associated with each other’ and as a collective group signal the ‘presence of barbarism, liberalism’s putative opposite’ (Brown 2006, p.172).

# 4 Implications of being a suspect community

1. Replace Us and them binary - Brown calls for a liberalism which is 'less invested in the absolute and dangerous opposition between us and them' in favour of a liberalism which is 'more modest and restrained in its imperial and colonial impulses' (2006:175). Brown questions whether democracy is always 'destined to be captured and co-opted by the socially dominant' (2017:203) with equality overthrown by market forces resulting in winners and losers.
2. O'Donnell (2018) in her research which charts the way in which vulnerability is conceptualized and those who are regarded at risk of radicalisation are positioned as vulnerable and requiring intervention. A therapeutic/epidemiological language is used to describe interventions, with the use of terms 'such as contagion, immunity, resilience, grooming, virus, susceptibility, therapy, autonomy, vulnerability and risk—a constellation of images/concepts resonant with therapeutic and epidemiological theories and practices' (O'Donnell 2018). She claims that when students, teachers and parents feel that their voice is not heard this leads to testimonial injustice and positions Muslims as a suspect community with 'hermeneutical injustice' (O'Donnell 2018).

# 5. Typology

The 'Prevent effect' positions Muslims as a suspect community

Three stances towards Muslims –

- Security forces
- Fearful people,
- Tolerant people

Three 'types' of Muslim

- Perceived terrorist ('bad' Muslim)
- Potential terrorist ('bad' Muslim)
- Harmless ('good' Muslim)

Abbas (2019) Kundnani (2015) Pantaziz and Pemberton (2011)

	Perceived as a terrorist (violent extremist)	Perceived as a potential terrorist ('bad' /extremist Muslim)	Perceived as harmless (‘good’ Muslim)
Suspicious of/ zero tolerance towards extremist views : Security forces and government	1 Incarceration and zero tolerance towards violent extremist Muslims	4 Anti radicalisation and suspicion of extremist/’bad’ Muslims	7 Use ‘good’ Muslims to ‘win hearts and minds’ of ‘suspect’ Muslim community .
Fearful of extremist views: - Muslim and non Muslim communities	2 Surveillance and referral of perceived violent extremists to security forces	5 Suspicious of extremist views and ‘bad’ Muslims Preventing violent extremism	8 Toleration ‘good’ Muslims who assimilate into secular society.
Tolerant towards extremist views:- Muslim and non-Muslim communities	3 Countering violent extremism Aware of devastating effects of violent terrorists Being Muslim is only one aspect of identity	6 Facilitate communities of disagreement to explore extremism Consider counter terrorism initiatives as counterproductive	9 Trust and respect diverse Muslim identity



# 'Bad' Muslim



- Shamima Begum

- 2015



- 2023

- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/23/shamima-begum-loses-appeal-against-removal-of-british-citizenship>
- <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/shamima-begum-now-ex-isis-28690783>

# Bad muslim – Wendy Brown

Wendy Brown (2006, p.44). discusses marginalised, relatively homogenous groups where the object of tolerance is not the group but individuals who carry the group identity. She argues that children are 'taught' to tolerate neither groups nor individuals but 'rather, subjects carrying what the sociologists call ascriptive identities..... cast as significant enough to provoke the rejection or hostility that makes tolerance necessary' (Brown 2006, p.45). The typology seeks to capture attitudes towards these three women seen as individuals who carry the group identity of 'Muslims as a suspect community' and reified 'othering' of two of the women who are explicitly seen as 'different'.

Zero tolerance positions Shamima as a 'foreign, erroneous, objectionable or dangerous element' threatening to destroy the 'host' as Brown's discussion of tolerance indicates (2006:27). Brown describes the use of 'tolerance' in a range of contexts – plant physiology, medicine, policing and engineering all of which reveal the extent to which the 'host' is able to tolerate what is foreign or strange and how it can endure what is 'patently toxic' (2006, p.26)

# Suspected 'bad' Muslim, (potential terrorist)

- Hamida (Abbas  
2015)



- <https://ifyokoye.com/2011/04/21/hijab-less-by-choice-muslim-women-in-their-own-words/>

## 6. 'Least Muslim' role



- Nadya Hussain British bake off champion 2015
- 'Least Muslim' role
- <https://www.nadiyahussain.com/about-me/>

## 6. Least Muslim role

Nadiya the 'good' Muslim - 'least Muslim role'

even the 'good' Muslims cannot fully shed the 'stigma of their difference' (Brown 2006: 76, 77).

Nadiya, the 'good' Muslim, in comparison with Shamima the violent extremist continuum between acceptability and rejection.

Even Hamida is part of the 'suspect' community because her views are considered extremist by her own family 'bad' Muslim. (Abbas 2019)

typology = range of perceptions (does not capture the nuances)

typology = range of views by a range of people belonging to a variety of organisations and walks of life

security forces' agenda to identify terrorists = YES appropriate behaviour in their NOT appropriate in education



## 7. Implications for RE community

What can teachers do? :

- **Thoroughly understand** the issues/ problems
- **Openly engage** in professional development alongside others
- **Bravely advocate** equitable learning and teaching





# 1. Thoroughly understand the issues

An example : The problems with the Prevent Policy

The 'Prevent effect' positions Muslims as a suspect community

Three stances towards Muslims –

- Security forces
- Fearful people,
- Tolerant people

Three 'types' of Muslim

- Perceived terrorist ('bad' Muslim)
- Potential terrorist ('bad' Muslim)
- Harmless ('good' Muslim)

Abbas (2019) Kundnani (2015) Pantazis and Pemberton (2011)

# Indian Context

- Indian Context
- The tag people carry as belonging to a marginalized and minority community may give rise to suspicion.
- Over the years, the majority has curtailed the rights of the marginalized communities' not through legislation but by depriving them of government benefits.
- The Sachar Committee - how to remove impediments preventing Indian Muslims from fully participating in the mainstream activities of Indian life.
- how have they been marginalized in the state of Gujar at and their contributions to the nation building tasks Dsouza, S. (2021, June).

Anti-Christian violence in India, Karnataka, Galtung violence framework (1969);  
Selvaraj (2021)

## Conception of violence

1. direct,

2. structural

3. cultural

Hindutva discourse against Christians = cultural violence (historically deployed to justify direct and structural violence against Christians in Independent India.


## Hindutva ideology

Christians seen as  
“foreigners” intent on  
destroying the “Hindu”  
nation’s integrity


Hindutva think that

- Christians target “vulnerable” Hindu populations - Dalits and Tribals.
- Christians conversions are a tool of foreign powers to influence India’s politics.
- Christian conversions are as result of “force”, “fraud” or “allurement”.

Karnataka – violation of Christians' free choice and practice of religion, direct violence 2008 Church Attacks; efforts to introduce anti-conversion legislation



constant fear of the 'other' = Christians replacing Muslims as targets for electoral arithmetic



violence flowed from its cultural forms -  
direct forms - structural form  
Challenging Galtung's flow )

- **PROJECT TITLE: Values and National Identity in Education – Indian Context**
- **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?**
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- **WHY HAVE YOU ASKED ME TO TAKE PART?**

- You have been invited to participate in this study because you have identified you are lecturing or studying in a Christian college, teaching in a Christian school or are the parent of a child attending (attended in the past) a Christian school.

- **WHAT WOULD TAKING PART INVOLVE?**

- You will be asked to tell the researcher about your experiences concerning Christian education in a BJP political context. The individual or group discussions will take place in a location mutually convenient to you and the researcher, (for example your college or school) and at a time that it is convenient for you, and should last approximately 45 minutes, though you will not be actively cut-off if you feel you have more to contribute. The discussion will be audio-recorded.



- **WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?**

- The researcher Professor Sally Elton-Chalcraft is a member of staff at the University of Cumbria and she is the sole researcher for the India data collection. The University of Cumbria is partially funding the research.

- **WHAT HAPPENS TO MY DATA DURING THE PROJECT?**

- Only the project team and a trusted transcriber, signed-up to the full ethical conditions of the project, will hear the raw data you provide; these sound files will not be made available at any time to other individuals or agencies. All your personal details, including names, email addresses etc., will be kept strictly within the research team. When the media files are transcribed, all names, places and exact dates will be removed (redacted).
- All raw and redacted project materials will be stored on the University of Cumbria's secure, Multi-Factor Authenticated (MFA) OneDrive, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) along with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). The project will be also be guided by and adhere to the University of Cumbria's data protection guidance

# Doing Research that matters : Vision and Aims of our Education Research Centre

- *To help to dismantle disadvantage and promote social justice by utilizing our time and expertise to engage in purposeful educational research grounded in practice.*



# Muslims described as a 'suspect community'

- Peer reviewed
- article
- 2024

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## Muslims as a suspect community: a typology to support classroom discussions

Sally Elton-Chalcraft  & Hazel Bryan

Received 24 Jan 2024, Accepted 29 Oct 2024, Published online: 26 Nov 2024

 Cite this article  <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2024.2428116>  Check for updates

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