SIMULATING THE SOCIAL: A COMPARATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY OF SUBJECTIVITY AND BELONGING AMONG AHMADIS IN NORTHERN INDIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Simulating the Social: A Comparative Ethnography of Subjectivity and Belonging among Ahmadis in Northern India and the United Kingdom

by

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For *Abbu*, *Naseem*, & *Ray*

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled **Simulating the Social : A Comparative Ethnography of Subjectivity and Belonging among Ahmadis in Northern India and the United Kingdom,** submitted by Umtul Aleem Kokab, to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a bonafide record of the research work done by her under my supervision. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standards of fulfilling the requirements for submission relating to the degree.

The content of this thesis has not been submitted, in part or in full, to any other institute or university for the award of any other degree or diploma.



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Abstract

Situating historical debates on Islam in South-Asian region has been a contested and challenging endeavour. Ahmadi Muslims form one such sensitive topic in the dictionary of such debates. Ahmadi movement and its uprising in 1900's rapidly transformed the ground for articulating Islam in a new light. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the movement, received great opposition from other Islamic sects especially from the Sunni scholars. The opposition turned into a constitutional subjugation of their rights in the 1974 declaration of Pakistan which framed the Ahmadis as non-Muslims constitutionally. They were imagined as an anomaly or controversy rather than agents who were reforming the religious sphere of Islam on a global scale. The thesis attends to the absence of Ahmadi Muslims from both scholarly discussions and public sphere by re-examining the terrain of concealment and everyday. This is achieved by investigating the everyday gestures performed by communities that are ostracized based on their religious practices to navigate their existence as denigrated identities. Using this as a premise and further borrowing from Goffman's (1963) conceptualisation of stigma and the presentation of individuality in reference to an 'other,' the study tries to uncover the historical trajectories, social experiences, and modulated interactions used by persecuted religious minority groups to assert themselves in the public domain. I conduct an ethnographic exploration of Ahmadis in four different field sites ranging from North India to South London. Being an Ahmadi Muslim at the altar of Islamic paradigm is probed with questions like how does muslimness of Ahmadis come to fore when the social milieu is a Muslim majority? To address this question, the thesis engages with the everyday that is inhabited and curated by Ahmadis for safe habitation and grounding their existence. Memory becomes a refuge for the migration anxieties embodied by dispossessed communities in a globalized world. Then, does a personal memoir qualify as the evidence/ testimony for the neglect and oppression experienced by Ahmadis as a historically marginalised community? The thesis incorporates

this form of literature to build a parallel repository of archives that bring to notice collective memory in the print form through the auto/biographic sketches authored by Ahmadis. Encountering field challenges renders researchers disarmed which calls for new methodological nuances to equip them with the vocabulary of reading these challenges in the form of silences. The thesis moves away from the vocabulary of heterodoxy and deviation to generate a more lived account of Ahmadis and the ways in which they perform religiosity in the social.

सार

दक्षिण एशियाई क्षेत्र में इस्लाम पर होने वाली ऐतिहासिक बहसों को संदर्भित करना एक विवादास्पद और चुनौतीपूर्ण प्रयास रहा है। अहमदी मुसलमान ऐसी ही बहसों के शब्दकोश में एक संवेदनशील विषय हैं। अहमदी आंदोलन और बीसवीं सदी के प्रारंभ (1900 के दशक) में उसका उदय इस्लाम को नए दृष्टिकोण से अभिव्यक्त करने की ज़मीन को तेज़ी से बदल देता है। आंदोलन के संस्थापक मिर्ज़ा ग़ुलाम अहमद को अन्य इस्लामी संप्रदायों, विशेषकर सुन्नी विद्वानों, से कड़ा विरोध झेलना पड़ा। यह विरोध 1974 में पाकिस्तान की संवैधानिक घोषणा के रूप में उनके अधिकारों के संवैधानिक दमन में परिणत हुआ, जिसने अहमदियों को संवैधानिक रूप से गैर-मुस्लिम घोषित किया। उन्हें वैश्विक स्तर पर इस्लाम के धार्मिक क्षेत्र में सुधार लाने वाले कर्ताओं के बजाय एक विसंगति या विवाद के रूप में कल्पित किया गया।

यह शोधप्रबंध विद्वत् चर्चाओं और सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र—दोनों—से अहमदी मुसलमानों की अनुपस्थिति पर ध्यान केंद्रित करता है, और छुपाव तथा 'दैनिक जीवन' के क्षेत्र का पुनः परीक्षण करता है। यह उन रोज़मर्रा के इशारों/अभ्यासों की जाँच के माध्यम से किया गया है, जिनका सहारा धार्मिक आचरण के आधार पर बहिष्कृत समुदाय अपनी निंदित पहचानों के साथ अस्तित्व को साधने के लिए लेते हैं। इसी आधार पर, और गोफ़मैन (1963) द्वारा प्रतिपादित 'कलंक' तथा 'अन्य' के संदर्भ में व्यक्तित्व की प्रस्तुति की अवधारणा से उधार लेते हुए, यह अध्ययन ऐतिहासिक पथों, सामाजिक अनुभवों और उन विनियमित अंतःक्रियाओं को उजागर करने का प्रयास करता है, जिनके माध्यम से उत्पीड़ित धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यक समूह सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में स्वयं को स्थापित करते हैं।

मैं उत्तर भारत से दक्षिण लंदन तक फैले चार विभिन्न क्षेत्रीय स्थलों में अहमदियों का नृवंशविज्ञानात्मक अध्ययन करता/करती हूँ। इस्लामी प्रतिमान के केंद्र में एक अहमदी मुसलमान होना—इस प्रश्न के साथ परखा जाता है कि जब सामाजिक परिवेश मुस्लिम बहुसंख्यक हो, तब अहमदियों की 'मुस्लिमियत' कैसे प्रकट होती है? इस प्रश्न के समाधान हेतु शोधप्रबंध उस 'दैनिक जीवन' से संवाद करता है, जिसे अहमदी

सुरक्षित निवास और अपने अस्तित्व को स्थिर करने के लिए बसाते और सँवारते हैं। वैश्वीकृत दुनिया में विस्थापित समुदायों द्वारा वहन की गई प्रवासन-जनित चिंताओं के लिए स्मृति एक शरण बन जाती है।

तब प्रश्न उठता है—क्या व्यक्तिगत संस्मरण, ऐतिहासिक रूप से हाशिये पर रखे गए समुदाय के रूप में अहमदियों द्वारा अनुभव किए गए उपेक्षा और उत्पीड़न के प्रमाण/साक्ष्य के रूप में मान्य हो सकते हैं? यह शोधप्रबंध इस प्रकार के साहित्य को सम्मिलित करता है, ताकि अहमदियों द्वारा रचित आत्म/जीवनीपरक रेखाचित्रों के माध्यम से मुद्रित रूप में सामूहिक स्मृति को सामने लाने वाला एक समानांतर अभिलेखागार निर्मित किया जा सके। क्षेत्रकार्य के दौरान आने वाली चुनौतियों का सामना शोधकर्ताओं को निरस्त्र-सा कर देता है, जो इन चुनौतियों को 'मौन' के रूप में पढ़ने के लिए नई पद्धतिगत सूक्ष्मताओं और शब्दावली की माँग करता है। यह शोधप्रबंध विषमता (हेटेरोडॉक्सी) और विचलन की शब्दावली से हटकर, अहमदियों के जीवन-अनुभवों का अधिक जीवंत विवरण प्रस्तुत करता है और यह दिखाता है कि वे सामाजिक क्षेत्र में धार्मिकता का प्रदर्शन किस प्रकार करते हैं।

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