

**Qasba Mubarakpur:
Lifecycles of Weaving in Colonial United Provinces**
Santosh Kumar Rai

This paper discusses tradition of weaving in Qasba Mubarakpur of district Azamgarh, especially noted for its compound cotton and silk tussar or pure silk cloth. History of the Mubarakpur shows the rise and fall of indigenous textile products in the colonial Indian economy in relation to the social and political processes. By early twentieth century the products of Mubarakpur changed from Sangi, Galta, Jamdani, and other cotton made products to silk sari only. There was a great change in the area as the graph of making Silk saris soared to greater heights, which received national and international fame with the active involvement of officials and traders of Banaras. The invasion of power-loom in the adjoining regions like Mau, which is gradually reducing the handloom sector in the region changed the forms of production in this region. In spite of all fluctuations a kind of association with the traditional skill and a sense of prestige associated with this continuing association to weaving occupationally and psychologically as well kept Muslim Julaha weavers struck to their traditional skills. A sense of dispossession cannot be just contextualized in the Hindu- Muslim dichotomy. Here one has to observe totality of complexities of colonial economy, including industrialization, modernization and de- industrialization of traditional skills along with changing patterns of cloth consumption and use of raw material to explain the lost opportunities.

This paper discusses that how interface with external economic factors in the case of the qasba Mubarakpur situated in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, famous for its silk and cotton cloth products provided a new social context for the weaving community in early twentieth century. Here fluctuations in the market and change in the demand pattern had already seen a 'long' nineteenth century of economic transformations. The search for stability ended up in experiments with new alternatives in the types and quality of cloth production which in turn influenced the process of production as well as socio- economic structure of these weaving localities. The dilemma of loss of the traditional status at these sites of weaving, along with economic fallout, points to emergence of local tensions. Instead of a division into 'external' and 'internal', 'social' and 'economic' categories, one finds a sequence of interrelated processes. The prospects of decline of localities led to religious realignments, quest for a new identity, a tense local politics and renewed search of relevance for these localities in a fast changing context.

Since ancient times Eastern Uttar Pradesh has basked in the glory of its textile handloom industry. Kautaliya noticed Kashi and Allahabad (*Vatsa Desa*) as seats for the manufacture of finest cotton fabric¹. The proficiency of Muslim *Julaha* weavers in the craft lay in their adaptation to the craft during the medieval age. The lower caste of urban artisans who converted to Islam during medieval period cultivated it as hereditary skill. Under the Nawabs of Awadh and later on under the East India Company rule as well some *qasbas* like Tanda, Mubarakpur, Maunath Bhanjan and Kopaganj had continued the tradition of cloth manufacturing². Thus the region now known as

Eastern Uttar Pradesh enjoyed a reputation for a non agrarian production of textile industry since medieval period. But even at the end of the nineteenth century Benaras remained the main centre for manufacturing and marketing and many regions and qasbas served it as its hinterland.

This local context of a long tradition of weaving underwent a major change in the course of the nineteenth century. The first occupation which suffered due to the Industrial Revolution and the import of the English yarn was indigenous yarn spinning. India's emergence as a supplier of raw cotton to Britain led to a series of other changes such as the decline in hand spinning of yarn. In its place, imported mill spun yarn and cloth entered Indian markets. This not only displaced the livelihood of millions of spinners, but, over a period of time, also brought about significant changes in the organization of weaving industry. In fact the well known centres of textile industry of Eastern Uttar Pradesh lost their importance by mid- nineteenth century. In Benaras, Mau and Mubarakpur, the weavers and spinners faced violent fluctuations in their trade and a progressive erosion of their markets- a tendency that was the combined result of the British policy of importing machine made goods as well as that of a decline in demand following the erosion in power and influence of military and royal establishments along with their patronage³.

Mubarakpur had never been very famous for its textile industry unlike its prestigious neighbours like Maunath Bhanjan. It had no reference in the "ordinary histories or in old records extant in the district". Though at the time of cession it was a flourishing place, even then it remained a smaller town compared to Mau⁴. During the course of nineteenth century Mubarakpur remained in a situation of flux and economic dislocation reflected in the communal strife between Hindu moneylenders and Muslim weavers. Ultimately by early twentieth century Mubarakpur became a hinterland to the silk textile production of Benaras and the people from neighboring areas like Amilo, Nevada, Saraiyya, Rasulpur Sikri, Mustafabad took up weaving as profession. Mubarakpur weaver was more inclined and interested in silk cloth production which required huge investment and very specific training and skills. This limitation certainly curtailed the possibility of accommodating large number of weavers and workers involved in the secondary works of production activity. One could contextualize experiences of the weaving communities living in these localities with reference to the contemporary concerns. There was a history of conflict between neighboring agricultural communities (predominantly Hindus) and the non-agrarian weavers communities (predominantly Muslims) in which at times Muslim landlords also became a party. The economic dislocation of the nineteenth century has been seen as the cause for the disadvantageous groups' aggressiveness⁵.

At the time of cession to the English East India Company in 1801, Mubarakpur was a flourishing place with a population of 10,000 to 12,000 persons of whom about ¼ were Mohammedans weavers and some of whom were also wealthy Hindu traders. Mubarakpur had a population of 5440 in 1865 and 12,068 in 1872. By 1877, the wealth and business of the Hindu traders had declined but Mubarakpur weaving was still in business compared to other places in the district. There were 1700 looms at that time and population was found to be 12,937. A retail market was held twice a week in Mubarakpur Khas and twice a week in Amilo, the neighbouring village⁶. Nearby Kopaganj in *pargana* Mohammadabad was established in 1745 by Iradat khan, who got settled in the *qasba* the weavers mostly brought from Mau and merchants chiefly Agarwals induced to migrate from

various places. Here retail markets were held thrice a week. The number of looms in 1877 was 536⁷. During the census of 1881 the total population was 13,157. The inhabitants were chiefly weavers. There were about 1700 looms and manufactured cloths were chiefly silk and cotton mix or *tussar* and cotton⁸. *Sangi* and *ghalta* (mixture of silk and cotton) were the famous products. The origin of this art was not known and its practice was confined to the two villages of Mubarakpur and Khairabad⁹. Retail markets were held twice a week on Sundays and Thursdays in Mubarakpur Khas and twice a week Mondays and Thursdays in the katra at “Amlau” or Amilo, the neighbouring village¹⁰. The chief Muslim fair was the *sohbat* which is held on the first Tuesday in *baisakha* (April) with estimated attendance of 2700 the chief commodities brought to the fair for sale are earthen and glassware, sweets, aluminum utensils and clay toys.

Weaving trade of Mubarakpur had very much declined in the course of the nineteenth century (but less than that of other places). During 1882 -1907 due to flood in 1894, famine in the years 1882, 1894, 1895 and 1897 and plague in 1904, 1905 and 1907 this qasba suffered. These natural calamities influenced the weaver class which appears to have suffered much. In this difficult phase the rise in the price of yarn combined with unfavourable agricultural seasons. Since the opening of the railway lines in the region between 1896- 1904 the textile trade revived to certain extent and henceforth fewer weavers left the town of Mubarakpur to seek employment in the mills of Bombay, Kanpur and Calcutta. Owing to trade depression however many of the weavers of Mubarakpur had been compelled to resort to the weaving of cotton handkerchief and the Deccanese *pagris* (south Indian turban) which were more in demand in Maratha dominating areas than silk cotton or satin¹¹. The silk saris were woven in large number for local use as well for Deccan districts. A large number of wholesale dealers visited Mubarakpur from west Bengal at the time of Durga puja. The outside dealers made their purchase from the wholesale dealers who obtained their suppliers from the artisans through the brokers. The moments of crisis for a already poverty stricken community was big challenge to change their perceptions, “their temper and general outlook on life has been soured by the very severe losses they have suffered from plague”¹².

The realm of productive activity required to be defended and controlled at ‘the community’ level because the whole process of production was the ultimate location of identity formation for ‘the community’ of *Julaha* weavers and source of their prestige. Thus, at least, the weavers of Mubarakpur gave priority to this issue but migration and political actions were the activities where ‘the community’ could not decide the collective course of action which diluted the authority of ‘the community’. Thus, the use of boundaries of ‘community’ by individuals having commercial concerns was the logical culmination of many an actions.

Sheikh Abdul Majid, (1864-1934?) a weaver of *muhalla* Pura Sofi in Mubarakpur, kept notes in form of diary about the major happenings in the life of Qasba. His diary recording the events from 1902 onwards to the last entry of 1934, establishes his credentials as a prosperous member of the weavers’ community, in all probability a *grihasta*. Most of his entries give status of price of different kinds of cloth and of various types of thread and other commodities but he never refers to his loom. This well to do weaver was a government sympathizer and police informer as well. His major concerns are about his business (not the work!), cloth trade, community issues and Panchayat,

notorious personalities, scandalous affairs of the qasba, local politics and Non-Cooperation movement. Certain issues about the qasba reach to us from his perspective and outlook only.

In the first decade of twentieth century at Mubarakpur “the wealth and business of the Hindu traders have much declined, but the weaving trade seems to have fallen of less in Mubarakpur than in other places in the district”¹³. In the year 1919 business at Mubarakpur led to the prosperity of the qasba. *Sanghi* and *ghalta* cloth of Mubarakpur was sold at great profit. One 4 yard piece of *ghalta* was sold for Rs. 10/- and even went up to Rs. 11/-. White *ghalta* of 16 yard length went up to Rs. 41/-. Abdul Majid viewed ““*ab ke saal rozgaar huan jis se Mubarakpur aabaad huan, aaj tak aisa rozgaar kabhi na huan aur na hogaa*” (i.e. this year business brought prosperity to Mubarakpur, until date there has never been such business either happened or will happen again). This year in Mubarakpur even the people weaving on *bani* and *adhiya* when wove independently became prosperous and “*munafa haath aa gaya*” (i.e. handsome profit was earned). In each *mohalla* people purchased buffaloes even if they were not producing milk. They wasted their money. In this year as many as 142 persons of the brotherhood performed Hajj-i-Kaaba, indeed a pious work”. This phenomenon of prosperity continued during November 1919 to 20th December 1920 and “since the days Mubarakpur was inhabited business never reached to this level of prosperity”. But during October 1918 to March 1919 Abdul Majid also complains about continued price rise in Mubarakpur. It was only from March 1919 onwards that prices started coming down and grain became somewhat cheaper¹⁴.

By 1920s trends in Mubarakpur manufacturing shows shift from ordinary silk to high end *jari* saris. The development of the handloom industry of brocade sari started in Mubarakpur in 1930. The handloom industry of brocade sari was first developed in Muhalla Purani Basti (also known as bakhari) of Mubarakpur in Azamgarh district in 1930 by Abid Hussain- a clannish Ansari *Julaha*, who prior to this industry, started his business with weaving of *sangi*¹⁵ and *ghalta*¹⁶. The infusion of this industry was started from the house of the founder, who trained some persons belonging to his own community at Mubarakpur, Amilo and Saraiya within fifteen days. Even today, it is so popular in the region that practically every household has some brocade sari. Manufactured at Mubarakpur and its suburbs (locally known as Varanasi sari), it is interwoven with silk yarn and threads of gold or silver, real or imitation on handlooms. By 1950s total numbers of looms in Mubarakpur were 5,275 of which 1250 i.e. 20% used for cotton fabrics. The wells to do richer weavers were engaged in silk weaving while the poor engaged in cotton weaving. In rare cases same house hold practised both silk and cotton weaving. Silk industries were essentially cottage industry. Silk was not woved on power looms. Single weaver working at home on own looms was “commonest unit”. Some small workshops had two or more looms whose owners employed weavers, gave them dyed thread and paid on piece rate basis. “It leads to a system of intensive exploitation of the actual workers to the benefit of the employers”¹⁷.

The smallest unit of production, the single weaver was handicapped for want of capital and raw materials. “The middleman who is also the dealer supplies him yarn and purchases the finished product on fixed rate”. Weaver was almost entirely under the command of middleman and wove saris and other silk fabrics according to order. “The institution of intermediary brokers was quite

powerful and dominated a major portion of the trade". The owners of workshop got the silk saris manufactured through the skilled weavers whom they paid on piece rate basis. The goods were lifted by the brokers; the brokerage was 6 paisa in a rupee. The workshop owners were at the mercy of such intermediaries and their malpractices. They did not receive immediate payment but were given post dated cheques cashable after three or four months. The capital of the manufacturers was thus blocked causing monetary inconvenience. In early 1960s there were twenty one middlemen in Mubarakpur, nearly 10, 000 silk saris manufactured every month in Mubarakpur were sold through them. Therefore the earnings of the brokers were substantial.¹⁸

Since 1930s the handloom industry of brocade sari made a good progress however this boom could not continue successfully and suffered a set back during the Second World War and at the time of independence. One of the main reasons was the dependence of the industry on the important raw silk mainly from Japan and as a result prices of brocade sari went beyond the reach of the common consumers. Secondly, prior to independence, Bangladesh (the then eastern part of India afterwards eastern Pakistan from 1947- 1971) and Pakistan (the western part of India, afterwards western Pakistan from 1947- 1971 now known as Pakistan) were both large consumers of brocade sari. The industry had to face some difficulties after partition. Communal tension and disturbances that followed the partition resulted in the emigration of a number of weavers to Pakistan. This caused a great set back to the industry. In addition, Pakistan imposed a very heavy duty on the silk and embroidered fabrics. Consequently, the demand for these saris declined appreciably. The principal raw materials used in the manufacturing of brocade sari have been silk yarn and threads of gold or silver real or imitation. Both the mulberry and tussar silk yarns are used as warp in the manufacturing of brocade sari. Although mulberry and tassar silk was produced in several districts of Uttar Pradesh i.e. Dehradun, Garhwal, Nainital, Etawah etc. on a small scale, the weavers of Mubarakpur preferred raw silk of Malda (west Bengal). The silk yarn was supplied at Mubarakpur by the dealers who imported it from Varanasi, or Malda and dyed at home with cheaper and easily available aniline dyes, instead of indigenous dye which was used by the forefathers of the weavers. The second most important raw material has been the *zari* thread¹⁹ of pre gold and silver, which was used as weft over silk till March, 1963, when the gold was available in the open market. But after the enforcement of gold- control under the Defence of India (Amendment) Rule 1963, the dealers experienced difficulty, to bring down the cost of brocade sari Indian (J.K. Mill, Kanpur) or Japanese golden or silver lurex²⁰ was used as weft up to 1970. Prior to 1970, the threads of pure gold or silver were supplied by the dealers from Varanasi or Surat²¹. This industry lost its previous glory due to ever increasing value of gold and silver²².

The economic fluctuations had a bearing on the social experiences. Hindu moneylenders' antagonistic relations with Muslim weavers and process of Islamization were the defining aspects. This process of 'Islamization'²³ of *Julahas* needs to be viewed with an understanding that there are critical differences within the Muslim community which inherits a hierarchy of assertive plural identities defined along linguistic, cultural, geographical, racial, tribal and occupational lines. In the case of Mubarakpur the Islamic tendencies remained embedded to the local politics and personality clashes. The sects found in Mubarakpur are Bareilvis, Kachhauchchawis, Deobandis, Shias,

Ismailishias (Bohras) and Ahl-i- Hadis (Wahabis). According to Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri Ismailishias (Bohras) sect was established in Mubarakpur by Mulla Nisar Ali Mubarakpuri²⁴. First sect of Muslims in Mubarakpur was of Sunni Hanafis. During the nawabi phase of Awadh in the eighteenth century Shiaism came to Maubarakpur. In the reign of Nawab Asaf ud daula, Ramzan Ali Shah built his imambarah. Many preachers came in this period and built up the Shia support under the Nawabi patronage. Ismaili Shias (Bohras) had already come before 1813. Later on Ahl-i- Hadis i.e. Wahabis emerged in Mubarakpur for which the credit goes to Shah Abu Ishaq Lohravi (Wafat 1234 Hijri). The last sect to emerge was Deobandi faith in 1317 Hijri. Initially, Maulana Mahmood Marufi and Maulana Hakim Ilahi Baksh (1280- 1356 Hijri) worked to spread the Deobandis faith. Each of these sects established their own Madrasas with the help of donations from their followings. Sunnis had their madrasa Asharfia, Deobandis owned Jamiya Arabiya Ihyaul Uloom (1899), Ahl-i- Hadis have Darut Talim and Shias have Babul Ilm. Shia Bohras madrasa was established by Mulla Nisar Ali Saraimiri and it received money from the Bombay Bohras. In early twentieth century Bohra madrasa remained closed for a long period and Bohara Dini (religious) continued either in Imambarah or houses at personal level.

In the years 1909- 10, Mubarakpur police noted that apart from communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims there were four sects of Muslims in the *mauza*, *Sunni*, *Hanafi*, *Wahabis* (also called *Ahl-i- Hadis*) and Shias. In the Hanafi sect Sheikh Abdul Wahab, Sheikh Tayyab Grihastha, Hakim Ilahi Baksh and Haji Abdul Haque were main leaders. Ahl-i- Hadis or Wahabis were led by Maulvi Salamat Ullah, Abdul Majid and Hakim Muhammad Shafi, while the Shias were led by Hakim Yaar Ali. It was observed that all these sects had their own separate mosques and they never offered *namaz* in each other's mosque. *Taziadari* (during Muharram) witnessed participation by all except *Ahl-i- Hadis* who never took part in it. During the procession of *Tazia*, most of the riots or disturbances originated from *mohalla* Shah Mohammadpur. It was further noted that Sheikh Abdul Wahab, Sheikh Tayyab Grihasth (Sunni Hanafi), Hakim Yaar Ali (Shia) and Babu Bhawani Prasad were very instrumental in accomplishing government work. It was suggested that whenever inhabitants of Shah Mohammadpur create disturbances pertaining to *Tazia*, officers should try to appease Hakim Yaar Ali because he used to resolve the very origin of the problem. If he really does not want, then no disturbance would take place. It seems that Shah Mohammadpur was dominated by Shias²⁵. From 1930s onwards Shia- Sunni conflict developed in a quite serious manner in Mubarakpur. Among Sunnis, too there existed divisions and conflicts between *Ahl-i- Hadis* (Wahabis), *Deobandis* and *Barelvi* though Wahabi or *Ahl-i- Hadis* bore limited impact in Mubarakpur with only a few Amlo people joining it²⁶.

In 1917, in Bombay a legal dispute known as Galla case was fought between Mulla Rahmat Ali Mubarakpuri and Mulla Saif ud Din. As an outcome Mulla Rahmat Ali had to leave Bombay to take refuge in Mubarakpur and Mulla Saif ud Din used his influence to stop all Bombay grants for Mubarkpur Boharas. Prior and parallel to the establishment of the above mentioned madrasas in Mubarakpur and surrounding rural area, the system of education was also run through households. Elders used to impart education of Quran-i- Sharif, Urdu, Arabic and Persian from their households. Literate ladies used to teach the neighbourhood children from their houses and beneficiaries of this

informal education were the girls. The Hafizs (one who orally remembers the Quran) used to teach from their houses only. This education basically based on religious values was instrumental in developing community ethos. The people holding command over Persian language and literature were known as Mian Sahebs²⁷. Thus now Mubarakpur was trying to gain status of an Islamic centre.

This development could have given immediate impetus for the exclusion of Hindu traders and moneylenders by 1920s. One finds that increasing commercialization led to redefinition of the role of community institutions and leadership. Now terms of Islamization were defining. The resurgence of community was not limited to the negation of the modern techniques or restrictions over its members; even the commercial alliances were being reviewed and reformulated. On Friday, 12th December 1919, weavers of *atthaisi* (twenty-eight) Mauzas of Mubarakpur met at the place of Haji Abdur Rehman in Gajhadha village and decided that henceforth they will not transact with Babu Mahabir, Babulal and Kamta Prasad Aggarwal in yarn and silk. Further it was resolved that Muslims would exclusively trade among themselves²⁸. On 9th January 1920, *panchayat* of *atthaisi* was held at a house in Pura Dulhan of Mubarakpur for opening the shop by Mahabir Chaudhary, Kothi Babulal and Babu Kamta Prasad. Over the issue of selling of cloth in certain houses by weavers, fines were imposed and Abdul Majid was also fined Rs. 101/-, heaviest fine of the whole lot. On the night of Saturday 8th February 1920, the *panchayat* assembled in Gola Bazaar. The shop of Chaudhary (probably Mahabir Chaudhary, mentioned earlier) was opened and Chaudhary paid the fine of Rs. 200/- to the *panchayat* along with Rs. 25/- on the expenses incurred over assembling the *panchayat*. Moreover, among the weavers themselves, the *panchs* collected the fine of Rs. 200/- from Karim Baksh Dalal of Sarian village. He was also made to stand up for two hours along with *gosh maali* (pulling of ears), only then he was forgiven. But Sabir, son of Ismail of Sarayin was even expelled from the *biradari* for the offence²⁹.

The weavers' *Panchayats* diversified their roles in political affairs also. During Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements *panchayats* played a significant role in maintaining the movement. In July 1921 in the orchard of Pichri village, *panchayat* of *chaurasi* was assembled. It was called by Munshi Yaqub and Maulvi Shibli of Khairabad and offenders were Ahmadullah Dalal, Haji Hasan, Abdullah Haji and Subhan Mehtar. The *panchayat* began on Sunday 24th July, 1921 at 9 a.m. and on the night of 25th July at 8 p.m. a decision was taken that offence was proved on Ahmadullah Dalal, Haji Hasan, Abdullah Haji and then *panchs* fined them. The Punishment satiated the community brethrens of Khairabad. Ahmadullah Dalal was fined for Rs. 100/- and the money was paid to the appellant. Haji Abdullah and Haji Hasan were also fined Rs. 50/- each. The money was deposited with the Khilafat committee of Khairabad. Subhan Mehtar was pardoned. In the wee hours of 26th July i.e. 4 a.m., *chaurasi* was adjourned. Ahmadullah Dalal, Haji Hasan, Abdullah Haji spent a lot over the *afsarran-i- quam* Mubarakpur (officials of the community in Mubarakpur) to save themselves but ultimately they were punished³⁰. At Kopaganj, Panchayat could play a positive role for the Non-Cooperation volunteers who were handled roughly by some toddy contractors. On reference, Panchayat ordered the accused to be beaten by shoe. Panchayat also denied them the permission to appeal to the District Congress Committee. Then the accused

refused to submit to the punishment and consequently all Congress and Khilafat activities were closed down³¹.

Sheikh Abdul Majid did not like Non- Cooperation and Khilafat Movement or the idea of 'swaraj'. Yet his sympathy for the participants of the Khilafat movement from Mubarakpur was evident when six of them were convicted for six months of rigorous imprisonment for picketing at the cloth shop of Babu Bal Kishan Aggarwal because they ultimately belonged to the community of *noorbafs*³². Ironically the six *noorbafs* were convicted on the evidences provided by five witnesses belonging to 'the community'. Abdul Majid's sympathy with the Khilafat volunteers was not due to them being nationalists but his brotherhood was linked to them on account of being Muslims for he condemns prosecution witnesses "these people got Musalmaans imprisoned in spite of themselves being Musalmaan"³³. Here, one needs to view the term Muslim synonymous with the term *Julaha*. Thus, the community was changing and unity could not be maintained. Here the sequence of events as per Shaikh Abdul Majid, is quite interesting. In 1922, disagreements within 'the community' over the issue of Non- Cooperation and Khilafat Movement were explicit and Abdul Majid was one of the weavers opposing 'anti- government' activities³⁴.

Local politics played a dominant role in the process of community formation in Mubarakpur. Mohammad Amin *grihasth* of Mubarakpur was a big renowned zamindar who was famous for his womanizing and lavish life in 1920s. He was one of the most important men in *qasba* who did not care to hoots for collector and administrative officers. He remained chairman of municipal board for a long period. He was also leader of Barelvi sect. He always moved around with a body of twenty- twenty five followers. Ultimately he died in miserable conditions "begging few pennies from all and sundry but still drinking"³⁵. His rival was Maulvi Shukrullah who was leader of Deobandi sect in Mubarakpur and secretary of Khilafat Committee in Mubarakpur. He "was said to be grandson of Hindu woman taken from Kopaganj and therefore familial rascal". The inherent bias of the diary writer Sheikh Abdul Majid to the personality of Maulvi Shukrullah and his antipathy to the extent of neutrality for Khilafat movement comes out in the following description "during the period of Khilafat this Maulvi Shukrullah was a very big leader, he beagn speaking rough and foul to the people and started closing their shops. In ultimate result a case was charged against Shukrullah and went to jail for six months. When he came back from jail, he maintained low profile for four- five years. Later on began his old deceptiveness and began targeting the big *alims* and earned the support of big people of town particularly the wealthier. Ultimately he became a big religious preacher". In 1930s between Deobandi group of Shukrullah and Barelvi group of Mohammad Amin *grihasth* "there were frequent *lathi* fights in which ultimately Shukrullah was subdued and began calling Amin *grihasth* a good man which shows he was familial rascal"³⁶.

In 1929 question arose regarding the conversion of all Notified Areas of Azamgarh district in to Town Areas. On 30th July, 1930 special committee of Notified Area of Mubarakpur met under the Presidentship of Sheikh Abdul Majid, members were Sheikh Muhammad Amin, Sheikh Muhammad Shafi and Babu Ganesh Prasad. The government was informed that this Notified Area was constituted in 1908 and kept growing since than. Population was 12,500. It seems that Mubarakpur was going through a difficult phase of local politics as the Notified Area committee

urged the continuation of its existing term “so long as present act is in enforce, at least until their present term expires in 1932 for the whole year was spent up in litigation with the unsuccessful party in the past election”. On 16th July, 1930 President of Notified Area, Mubarakpur submitted a note about the agricultural areas particularly Amlu or Amilo which included Amlo Khas, an agricultural village. “Only two of its *mohallas* Pura Mohabbat and Pura Mahmud are skilled in industries in manufacturing the silk cloth called *sangi* and *ghalta* and residents are weavers with few Raitis”. The hamlets of Pura Bahlol, Newada, Sarion, Rasulpur, Katra, Alinagar were all inhabited by weavers, were manufacturers of silk cloth and importers of its goods. But all members of the Notified Area Committee agreed with the conversion to Town Area. In this regard a counter petition was submitted to district magistrate with the signature of thumb impressions by ninety five inhabitants of Mubarakpur on 2nd August, 1930. The petition said that “present members of Notified Area are against conversion to Town Area but we the residents of Mobarakpur support it and have no objection if agricultural areas of Amilo and Sikhti are excluded from limit of Town Area”. S.M. Jafar, Town Magistrate had already put up a note on 12th December, 1929 about Mubarakpur that with a population of 12,500, an income of Rs. 6, 883, annas 12, paisa 4 (for the year 1928- 29) it was “going down”. N.C. Mehta, District Magistrate Azamgarh while forwarding these opinions to Commissioner Gorakhpur on 2nd April, 1930 noted that Mubarakpur was on decline “trade has been slack for years and little hope for future recovery”. It was difficult to maintain as Notified Area therefore Town Area status was advisable. In 1940 then District Magistrate in his inspection note observed about Mubarakpur that “it was a mistake to have reduced the status to a Town Area”. Even with reduced area “I think that the place is important and prosperous enough *for a Notified Area*”. But the Sub Divisional Magistrate replied that “the prosperity of the town has further declined since 1931 when it was reduced to a area of Town Area”. Income now stood at Rs. 3, 200/- only “the satin and brocade cloth for which once it was famous, is gone out of fashion and prices have gone up on account of dearness of silk taxation, therefore cannot be increased, therefore it should remain Town Area for present”³⁷.

On 28th July, 1948 in the Purani Basti Mohalla of Mubarakpur, the issue of conch blowing in a Hindu house during a religious gathering led to an aggressive violent attack by 200- 250 Muslims of the qasba. As per the police reports due to Muslim majority in the qasba, minority Hindus could not blow conch. As per the police reports after the ‘auspicious’ independence of India Hindus wanted to independently assert their religious activities and conch blowing and after this incident conch blowing continued uninterrupted. Thus one can infer that the traditions had to be broken as independence of India was taken to be Hindu independence as well. For police also this occasion of conch blowing was similar to converting a ‘wrong’ imposed over the Hindus³⁸. The Hindus had made similar attempts in past as well. In 1906 as well when a Muslim police officer took bribe from them to give permission for conch blowing³⁹. In a way protest against conch blowing was more an issue of prestige for the local community of the Muslims of the qasba. Yet, the last Hindu- Muslim riot of Mubarakpur in 1959 on the occasion of Holi festival was broadly seen as an outcome of Muslim support to the Communist Party in this region⁴⁰.

Thus by peeping into process of embedding of local space with larger social and economic

processes, this paper situates the community identity within locality. Its economic life embedded within social networks, describes affiliation that spans geography through occupational network, but is grounded in concrete places, practices, and material relations of particular historical contexts. Crisscrossing these were the localized political processes shaping the occupational pursuit of the *Julahas* of eastern Uttar Pradesh who found new external terms of work and business percolating down to their localities and communities. Yet the contrast between global flows and local practice and identity is the wrong starting point for approaching such experiences. Rather than being a univocal force of globalization, resistance for survival was both produced by and productive of localized social relations and interests. Ultimately it is in the arenas of locality and community where external/global processes are experienced and worked upon.

Notes and References :

1. J.C. Ray, "Textile Industry", *Journal of Bengal and Orissa Research Society*, Part III, Vol. 3, 1917, pp. 181- 186, 206-207.
2. A.Yusuf.Ali, *A Monograph on Silk Fabrics Produced in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1900, pp. 102-103; Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri, *Tazkira-e-Ulema-e-Mubarakpur*, Bombay, 1974, pp.17, 56.
3. Pankaj Rag, "1857 : Need for Alternative Sources", *Social Scientist* , Vol. 26, No. 1-4, Jan.-April 1998, p.123.
4. J.R. Reid, *Reports on the Settlement Operation in the District of Azamgarh*, p.148.
5. Gyanendra Pandey,, "Economic Dislocation in Nineteenth Century Eastern U.P.", in Peter Robb, ed., *Rural South Asia: Linkages, Change and Development*, London, 1983, pp. 89- 129; Idem, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North-India*, Delhi, 1990.
6. J.R. Reid, *Reports on the Settlement Operation in the District of Azamgarh*, pp.148- 149.
7. Ibid., pp. 149-150.
8. F.H. Fisher, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account.....*, *Azamgarh*, pp.171-172.
9. Ibid., p.125.
10. J.R. Reid, *Reports on the Settlement Operation in the District of Azamgarh*, pp. 148- 149; D.L. Drake Brockman, *Azamgarh: A Gazetteer*, p.262.
11. D.L. Drake Brockman, *Azamgarh: A Gazetteer*, p. 62.
12. Mubarakpur Riot Case, Political Department Proceedings for January 1905, Serial NO. 10, File No. 254/ 1904, Box No. 662, UPSA.
13. D.L. Drake Brockman, *Azamgarh: A Gazetteer*, p.261.
14. Sheikh Abdul Majid, Diary, Entry, Entry dated, 10th August, 1919,(1902-1934?) unpublished Urdu Manuscript, Maulvi Kamaruzzaman Mubarakpuri, Muhalla Sufipura, Mubarakpur, Azamgarh.
- 15.. The name *sangi* derived its name from the fact that the two warp threads are treated together as one in weaving.
16. The name *ghalta* is derived from the Persian *ghaltidan*, to roll, probably with reference to its smooth glazed surface. Though a mixture of silk and cotton, the upper surface of ghalta in completed length is so well pressed and calendared that none of the cotton shows, while the back shows very little silk and almost all cotton. The characteristic pattern of a ghalta is checks bounded by one, two or three lines and the portion between the lines running in direction may be filled in with silk of a different colour from the rest of the fabrics, so that there will be a combination of checks and strips.

17. R.I. Verma, *Silk Textile Industry in Uttar Pradesh with special reference to Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, Handicrafts Survey Monograph*, No. 7, General Editor., P.P. Bhatnagar, *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. XV, Uttar Pradesh, Part VIIA, Delhi, 1965, pp.9-10.
18. *Ibid.*, p.21.
19. *Zari* is a special type of thread manufactured by winding pure gold or silver.
20. *Lurex* is a special type of thread manufactured synthetically.
21. R.I. Verma, *Silk Textile Industry in Uttar Pradesh with special reference to Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, Handicrafts Survey Monograph*, No. 7, General Editor., P.P. Bhatnagar, *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. XV, Uttar Pradesh, Part VIIA, Delhi, 1965, p. 1.
22. Now in 21st century only imitation thread of mercerized silk polished with copper and then gold or silver is used in the manufacturing of brocade sari. These imitation threads are locally known as Himalaya, Vidhansabha, Koh-e-noor, Rachana, Amestry etc. according to their quality. These are supplied at Mubarakpur by the dealers who import it either from Varanasi or Surat.
23. The category may be explained in terms of 'great tradition' and 'little tradition'. In anthropological usages, "great tradition" refer to the culture of great community of priests and theologians. Since the community of priests and theologians is also in a sense textual community, the concept may be used to highlight the textual reading of religion. A textual reading of religion reifies identities to the exclusion of other practices. The "little tradition" is a repository of inherited customary practices which may not necessarily be compatible with the textual religious tradition. My point is that multiculturalism only operates at the level of great traditions to the detriment of little traditions, which are inherently plural.
24. Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri, *Tazkira-e-Ulema*, p. 101
25. Village Crime Register, Police Station, Mubarakpur, Part IV, 1909-1910.
26. Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri, *Tazkira-i- Ulema-i- Mubarakpur*, Bombay, 1974, pp. 31- 33.
27. Interview with Maulvi Kamaruzzaman Mubarakpuri, Muhalla Sufipura, Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, 23 May, 2007.
28. Sheikh Abdul Majid, Diary, entry dated 12 December, 1919.
29. *Ibid.*, entries dated 9th January, 1920, 8th February 1920.
30. *Ibid.*, Entry ,dated ,July,1921.
31. *Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, United Provinces* (henceforth PAI), No. 3, 25 March, 1922 , Police Intelligence Department, Lucknow.
32. Sheikh Abdul Majid , Diary, Entry dated November 1921.
33. *Ibid.*, Entry dated 19th June, 1922.
34. *Ibid.*, Entry dated November 1921.
35. Sheikh Abdul Majid, Diary, Entry, without date.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Note by Sub- Divisional Magistrate, Hashmat Ali, 6th April, 1940, Status of Mau and Mubarakpur, Department XXIII, File No. 24 of 1929- 30, Azamgarh Collectorate Record Room.
38. Village Crime Register, Purani Basti, Police Station Mubarakpur, 28th July, 1948.
39. Sheikh Abdul Majid Diary Entry for 29th June, 1906.
40. Maulana Mohammad Usman Marufi, *Masahir i Kopaganj*, Azamgarh, 1988, pp. 68- 69.

