

ALLAHABAD JN.

Opinion Piece on  
**Allahabad to Prayagraj**  
**Exponent of Religious Supremacy & Extremism**  
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Marginalizing, discriminating and violence against minorities in India has seven decades of shabby past. [Demolishing of Babri Mosque](#), killings of thousands innocent Muslim civilians in Gujrat massacre, [Golden Temple attack](#) and brutal killing of hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris are a few examples among many. India is the only state on the earth which is still using rape as state policy to subjugate the people demanding their right of self-determination in Occupied Kashmir. The recent [UNHCR report](#) on human rights in Indian Held Kashmir is an ample proof of how the Indian state has ruined the lives of large numbers of people. More than 189 million Muslims-the third largest Muslim population in the world-are living in India. However, they have been facing serious discrimination on different fronts from social, political and religious aspects. Intolerance against minorities is not limited to the Muslims but Sikhs, Dalits Tamils and others also bear the brunt. In 1998, Christians in India have faced a wave of violence, 90 incidents were reported, besides a [priest Graham Staines](#) was burnt to death. Similarly, Sikh minority also being victimized since the inception of India.



Photo: Financial Express

Although the minorities in India have been discriminated and remained the victim of extremist Hindu hostilities since its independence, the tensions between Hindus and Muslims multiplied after Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) backed extremist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed government. The victory of the BJP in May 2014 posed a severe menace to minorities through violence, discriminatory attitudes, forced conversions and harassment. BJP leaders publicly promoted Hindu supremacy and ultra-nationalism, which encouraged further violence. Human rights watch releasing its [world report 2018](#) illustrates well, how Mob attacks by extremist Hindu groups affiliated with the ruling BJP against minority communities, especially Muslims, continued throughout the year.



Demolishing of Mosque in Allahabad by orders of prime minister despite Court stay order.

The current decision of renaming the popular city of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh by the BJP government is yet another manifestation of its hatred against the political and religious sentiments of 20 percent Muslims living in India. Allahabad was developed by Mughal Emperor, Akbar, 443 years back in 1583. The city was the epicentre of Indian Freedom Movement against the British colonial rule. City is also known for Allam Iqbal's famous Allahabad address on 29 December 1930 in which Allama Muhammad Iqbal outlined a vision of an independent state for Muslim-majority provinces in northwestern India, thus becoming the first politician to articulate what later became to be known as the Two-nation theory. Allahabad address has great historical significance for Muslims of subcontinent.



Although certain hardliner, extremist Hindu sections were demanding to change the name of Allahabad, the discriminatory decision was not taken by previous governments to preserve the historical importance of the city and avoid any communal violence. However, the BJP government intentionally appointed Yogi Adityanath, the hardliner Indian priest, who has been accused several times of provoking violence against Indian Muslims, to govern UP last year. This controversial decision was taken by the biased cabinet of UP led by Yogi Adityanath, three months prior to the mega Kumbh Mela. The main motive behind this decision by BJP government was to play their ethno-religious political card to attract Hindu vote bank in upcoming general elections in 2019. Moreover, the BJP government is trying to please their Hindu religious fanatics.

Unfortunately, the city of Allahabad is in shambles, desperately needs infrastructural development. The BJP government failed to fulfil their promise on these counts and instead playing a political card by exploiting the Hindu religious community by showing a so-called commitment to Hinduism. This is not for the first time when BJP has taken prejudicial decisions. For example, they changed the name of Mughalsarai Junction railway station to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction railway station. Furthermore, the secretive amputation of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's picture from Aligarh Muslim University which sparked massive protests in AMU was also part of the chain of events against Muslims in India under BJP government. They have also proposed to change the name of many buildings which were named in the Mughal era. By changing the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj, BJP has reinforced authenticity and relevance of Two Nation Theory.

The tremendous role played by Allahabad in the history of Indian sub-continent, independence struggle and post-independence era would be badly affected by this decision, besides undermining the sentiments of minorities. The decision would ultimately diminish the identity of globally recognized Allahabad University. These kinds of racist and biased decisions clearly depict how the RSS influenced BJP's government is eradicating India's Muslim heritage, their diversified history and ultimately unique identity through 'saffronization' of historical places. Hindu communalism will not only destroy the social fabric of India but also badly affect the peace and security of the region as around one fourth population of the world belongs to South Asia. The psychological impact of this decision needs to be understood. Imagine, if Pakistan had not been a reality, the name of Badshahi Qilla would have been Ayodhya Fort, Ahmadpur would have been Amrithashpur and Bahawalpur would have been Arumughanpur.



The creation of India and Pakistan in August 1947 was based on Two-Nation Theory which was negated by Hindu nationalists. However, it has been proved as undeniable fact time and again by the hostile attitude of Hindus towards other communities. The forefathers of Pakistan, one century ago, understood the intentions of Hindu extremists leading the politics and laid the foundation of Pakistan. Due to the persecution of communal groups there are more than twenty-five prominent separatist movements in India till date which are demanding their freedom. This move of eliminating cultural identities of other communities would have serious repercussions for India and may act as catalyst in its disintegration.

The United Nations Independent Expert on Minorities as well as other human rights bodies should take measures to safeguard the rights of minorities and their cultural identities in India and should prevail upon the BJP to refrain from changing the name of Allahabad. The BJP government should withdraw this prejudicial decision. However, a separate city may be planned with the name 'ParyagRaj' which will be a win-win situation. On one hand, the Muslim community and Indian historical site will remain intact while on the other, the Hindu community will be satisfied with the fulfilment of their demand to develop 'ParyagRaj'.