The Muslim Elite’s Perceptions of Representation in Village Panchayats (councils) Towards Local Urban Authorities

An Explorative and Descriptive Case Study of the Muslim Elite’s Perceptions of Representation in Three Villages Towards the Local City Authorities of Lucknow Chinhat (چنھت) Block, Uttar Pradesh, India

Fredrik Larsson

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Department of Government
Uppsala University
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Supervisor: Oscar Almén
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ABSTRACT
This explorative and descriptive case study aims to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards local urban authorities within three village panchayats (councils) in Chinhat block panchayat, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India through the application of Will Kymlicka’s theory of liberal minority group representation. Even though Will Kymlicka’s theory of liberal minority group representation focuses on a minority such as Muslims in India on a national level, the theory is used in the thesis since the issue of rural perceptions of representation towards urban authorities, especially concerning minority representation (Muslims) is a national level issue. Therefore, Kymlicka’s theory is used to give clarity to how the Muslim elites perceive themselves represented towards urban authorities and does not focus on representation within the village itself. The influence of caste, class and gender dynamics, will contribute to understand the Muslim perceptions of political representation within the three village panchayats towards the urban authorities. The thesis aims to contribute to the field of study by complementing earlier research and to document present events that are shaping Uttar Pradesh politics.

Key words: representation, Uttar Pradesh, India, Muslim, panchayat, Lucknow, perceptions of representation, Kymlicka, minority group representation
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Abbreviations and glossary

BJP- Bharatiya Janata Party, ‘Indian People’s Party’, the present dominating political party in national level with roots in Hindu nationalism.

BSP- Bahujan Samaj Party, ‘Majority People’s party’. An inclusive and secularist political party which promotes the idea that 85% of India’s population whom are lower castes or Non-Hindus are being politically discriminated by the upper caste minority of Hindus.

Communalism- Community mobilizing phenomenon based on caste, class, religion, ethnicity etc.

Dalit- Groups of people who are outside of the Hindu “Varna” system of castes, on the lower ends of the social status ladder. Previously named ‘untouchables’.

Gram panchayat- Local village level democracy.

Gram Pradhan - Leader of the village panchayat.

Hindutva- A political ideology based on the idea of an Indian state dominated by Hindu religious, cultural and moral values and the exclusion of Non-Hindu minorities.

INC- Indian National Congress.

INLANSO- Center for the Study of Indian Languages and Societies

Jamaat-E-Islami- Political movement founded in 1941 by Abul Ala Maududi, based on ideas of Islamic cultural and moral hegemony in India, before other religions.

Jati- Caste based on occupation and social conduct.

Lok Sabha- Lower house of India’s Bicameral-Parliament.

The Muslim League- Organization which founded Pakistan.

OBC- Other Backward Classes, groups of people which are on the lowest end of the Hindu Varna system, namely ‘shudras’.

Pancha- Leaders of the panchayat council.

Panchayat- Literal meaning in Hindi/Urdu is ‘five heads’. Basic rural democracy/council.

Sarpanch- Leader of the gram panchayat

Scheduled Castes- SC. Indian census for Dalit groups.

Scheduled Tribes- ST. Indian census for indigenous populations, which are seen as lower in Indian caste society than Dalits and OBCs.

UP- Uttar Pradesh, state of India where fieldwork and Urdu studies were taking place.

Varna- Brahmnic Hindu view of a hierarchical system of “ritual purity”

Zamindari- Feudal system of land ownership and tax collection.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this bachelor’s thesis is to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in three village panchayats towards the urban authorities in Chinhat block panchayat in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Will Kymlicka’s definition of liberal minority group representation as the best way to benefit the minority group’s interests will be applied to analyze the three villages since Muslims are an underrepresented minority in Indian national politics. Combined with Kymlicka’s theory, caste, class and gender dynamics will be taken into consideration concerning quota laws of women, SCs and OBCs in gram panchayats (village councils). The panchayat system and political mobilization where Islam is a unifying factor for Indian Muslims will be explained. The historical connection the Muslim community in UP has had with the INC will also be presented. The focus on village level democracy and the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the urban authorities are of scientific importance since it gives a deeper perspective on the issue of minority representation in Indian democratic institutions but also provides unique information about an issue which has not been studied extensively before, namely rural minority representation. The choice of studying gram panchayats is to create a better understanding of the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in India from the level of grass root democracy towards local urban authorities.

Field studies of three gram panchayats in Chinhat block in Lucknow were conducted in December of 2015. It is an explorative study but also a descriptive study since it aims to gather new information about the subject through fieldwork, but also aims to understand the subject. The research questions are: Do the Muslim elites in the studied villages of Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemay in Chinhat block in Lucknow feel politically excluded or underrepresented from the local urban authorities and if so, in what way?

1.2 Disposition

The panchayat system will serve as a background, since the aim of the study is to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in grass root democracy towards the local urban authorities, but also theories concerning Muslim representation in India on a national level, where Sajjad Mohammad’s work Muslim politics in Bihar, from 2014, is used to describe dynamics in Muslim perceptions of representation nationally.
Previous research will be the work of political scientist Paul R Brass’ work *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, from 2005, which covers the importance of language and religious identity as a political mobilization apparatus in India. The work of historian David Ludden *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, from 1996, will be used as previous research since he covers the idea of a constructed political identity on religious communalism concerning Muslims. The contribution of political scientist Neil DeVotta, *An Introduction to South Asian Politics*, from 2016, is used to describe the adaptation of the political institutions in India according to majoritarian Hindu society and Hindu castes. Complementing this will be interviews conducted with Dr. Dipak Malik concerning the panchayat system and its role in grass root democracy.

Will Kymlicka’s definition in *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, from 1995, of the liberally elected minority as the most efficient way of promoting issues that affect the minority; will be the theoretical framework for the study to see if Kymlicka’s theory is applicable to the three cases. The methodology of fieldwork will be presented as well as the choice of written and oral sources about the recently held panchayat elections and the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities. Descriptions of how the fieldwork was conducted and how the interviews were structured will also be included. Criteria for the choice of gram panchayats will be presented and why they are important for the study. After the methodological framework, the results of the fieldwork data will be presented and analyzed along with the conclusion.

2. BACKGROUND, PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Background: The Panchayat System

Since the political institution of panchayats in South Asian rural societies are liberal and electoral, it fulfills the requirement Kymlicka has on liberal minority representation and is therefore suited for studying the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation from the gram panchayat level towards the local urban authorities. The panchayat system which in Hindi/Urdu means ‘meeting of five’ is an ancient political structure in South Asia. It crosses religious, ethnic and cultural lines and is a liberal, rural, political institution since it is run by electoral politics. It is based on local leadership and self-government, in what could be named
as grass root democracy. It works in the reverse way of parliamentarian democracy, which is lead from the higher institution to the lower, while the panchayat as a rural institution works from lower institution towards the higher. It is politically significant in contemporary India since the majority of the population live in rural areas. The panchayat is the foundation of what in Indian contexts is called ‘communalism’, which works as a community mobilizing phenomenon. In other words, the local community which shares common linguistic, religious or ethnic features which mobilizes as an entity against other communities or towards intercommunal coexistence. There have not been many studies conducted on panchayats and neither on minority representation within panchayats.

The panchayat as an institution is not only a grass root democratic institution but also upholds laws concerning marriage, cultural customs and treaties as well as prevents crime in the village. The panchayat institutions must be understood as an institution for the rural population, and is therefore only used in rural contexts, and not in cities. Postcolonial attitudes exists concerning panchayats which leads to stigmatization, since the contemporary legal system of India, influenced by the British colonial administration, is seen as ‘progressive’ and ‘modern’, while the panchayat is seen as a rural ‘non-progressive, outdated’ system. The panchayat system has been promoted by Mahatma Gandhi as an anti-colonial and nationalistic version of ‘Indian democracy’, as an alternative against using the British imposed parliamentarianism.

Since Muslims can mobilize as a communal group in the gram panchayat but also along religious, class and caste lines the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities can vary depending on background. The leaders of the panchayat, called ‘Panchas’ and the main leader called ‘Sarpanch’ (‘main head’) are elected by

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4 ibid.
5 Dipak Malik, Professor at Banaras Hindu University, interviewed by Fredrik Larsson, 13 November 2015, Lucknow, India.
8 Dipak Malik, Professor at Banaras Hindu University, interviewed by Fredrik Larsson, 13 November 2015, Lucknow, India.
community members.\textsuperscript{9} Terminology for seats, posts and quotas are institutionalized and used nationally. After the gram panchayat is the block/tehsil-level panchayat, which is a collection of gram panchayats summarized, which works as a mediator between the gram panchayat and higher state administration. After the block/tehsil-level panchayat is the district-level, also called zila panchayat. In this part, block-level panchayats are summed up into a district or zila panchayat which in turn is a part of the main districts/states of India.\textsuperscript{10}

In Indian nationalistic critical point of view, the panchayat system is portrayed as an ideal democracy, but there are aspects of the system that has to be taken into consideration to understand fragmentation and corruption within the system. Until the 1990’s panchayat politics were dominated by elitist structures where only older male members of the community could be elected to govern, which has changed in contemporary India due to quota systems.\textsuperscript{11} The nationwide panchayat election is a ‘non-party’ election, however when it comes to local or district levels it gets politically, religiously, ethnically and culturally motivated due to above mentioned communal attitudes. The influence of caste in Indian rural society leads to caste and class communalism in all levels of panchayats.\textsuperscript{12}

Due to caste hierarchy the panchayat structure usually benefits higher castes by exploiting lower castes. This is a cross cultural phenomenon since caste and class dynamics exists among all religious groups in India, except for some indigenous communities which have a more cooperative and equal division of power in the panchayat structure.\textsuperscript{13} In the gram panchayat Muslims are seen as a communal group as a caste, even though they have caste communalism within the Muslim community itself, according to occupational categorizations (jati) and in lineage to the Prophet Muhammad (varna), which is an influence by Hindu caste systems, due to a strict hierarchy of power, the village elites were only interviewed about their perceptions of representation for the village community towards local urban authorities.

\textsuperscript{12} Dipak Malik Professor at Banaras Hindu University, interviewed by Fredrik Larsson, 13 November 2015, Lucknow, India.
Quotas within the panchayat system were introduced during Rajiv Gandhi’s rule. These quota systems for marginalized groups such as women, SCs, OBCs and STs were implemented in India in 1992 by the INC as the 73rd amendment after Rajiv Gandhi’s death. However, were Muslims not included in these quotas except for the case of women’s quotas since the quota systems are adapted to Hindu caste structures. The 73rd amendment proclaimed that women should constitute \(\frac{1}{3}\) and SCs and OBCs \(\frac{1}{5}\) of gram panchayats.\(^{14}\)

These quota systems have made power divisions more equal in some districts and in others not, but caste, class and gender dynamics tend to keep these quota systems under the rule of higher castes. An example of this is a woman who is elected as the gram Pradhan but refers to her husband or male relatives when asked about politics which means that her male relatives are the ones in real political power, as will be the case in Mutakkipur and Malesemau villages in the fieldwork later presented. Another example is quotas for SCs and OBCs which are created for SC and OBC representation and to guarantee division of power in caste dominated village politics. The upper castes can use these quotas for their own benefit also. It is a ‘status quo’ created by upper castes, based on oppression and perceptions of inferiority amongst SCs and OBCs in favor of upper caste domination which will be presented in the cases of Mutakkipur and Malesemau where there were caste issues within the Muslim community. These quotas can also be a misguided way of ‘social advancement’ for SCs and OBCs which in reality only promotes upper caste rule by adapting to higher caste demands of shaping village politics.\(^{15}\) However democratic the panchayat system may seem, it still continues to be a system heavily influenced by feudal structures, where a minority of higher castes controls a majority of lower castes. The panchayat system is democratic due to liberal, electoral cycles of power, but the power within its institution is not necessarily equally distributed.\(^{16}\)

### 2.2 Theories Regarding Muslim Representation in India

To apply Kymlicka’s theory of minority representation on the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in the village panchayats around Lucknow, UP, existing theories concerning


\(^{16}\) Dipak Malik Professor at Banaras Hindu University, interviewed by Fredrik Larsson, 19 November 2015, Lucknow, India.
Muslim representation in India will be mentioned. The Muslim community in India is not a homogenous political movement and caste issues concerning representation has risen within the Muslim community and developed into lower caste Muslim movements for example in the state of Bihar which is mainly lower caste Muslim communities. This is however not the case in caste dominated politics in UP since the Muslim community in UP is more diverse according to caste lines. Demands for quotas are proposed in gram panchayats by lower caste Muslims in Bihar, a development that could spread into UP. The element which unifies the demand for Muslim representation is that Muslims due to communalism only can promote issues affecting their community which correlates to Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority. Without Muslim representation on a regional and national level, other groups will focus on their respective issues instead of issues affecting other communal groups.

Within Muslim representation are ideas of exclusion from the major parties, even though the Muslims of UP have been strong supporters of the INC. There are demands for an Islamic party, without becoming a separatist movement to promote issues that affect the Muslim community. The major party that promotes a secular view of Islam but where Muslims represent Muslims is the “All India Majlis-e-Ittihadul Muslimeen” which is led by Asaduddin Owaisi. This party is however centered in Hyderabad and not in UP. The line between Muslim exclusiveness and Muslim separatism can become very vague when it comes to formation of Islamic based parties.

The idea promoted by lower caste Muslims in Bihar is called the ‘social equality idea’ which focuses on underrepresentation of lower castes within the Muslim community and the need to create quotas for representation of the lower castes. This is based on the idea that quotas not only based on Hindu varna quotas, but for all lower castes will benefit internal democracy in India and also representation for marginalized minorities. Another idea is the ‘secular participation idea’ which focuses on Muslims as secular Indian citizens who does not use their communal adherence but instead undermine caste structures within political institutions.

17 M. Sajjad, Muslim politics in Bihar, Aligarh Muslim University, Routledge India, 2014, pp. 280-281.
18 ibid., p. 318.
20 ibid.
by voting for secular parties which would engage more Muslims politically. It is easy to create images regarding Muslim representation which leads to perceptions of a ‘vulnerable minority’ which is excluded continuously due to its complex secular and religious identity. It is oversimplifying to address a single Muslim identity in the context of representation since it is dependent on caste, class and geographical contexts. The constitutional democracy which is the foundation of India does not mean political representation in the case of ‘Muslims represent Muslims’, but rather an elite that represents a majority through a minority, therefore the elites in the villages were interviewed, since they represent the village to outsiders and their perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities represent the whole village’s perceptions of representation towards local urban authorities.

2.3 Previous Research: Politics Based on Religion

To understand how Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority is applied in the study, communalist politics based on religious adherence in the panchayat has to be described. Panchayat politics are according to Paul R. Brass influenced by religious, linguistic, caste based, cultural and geographical communalism from the gram panchayat level till national level. Political mobilization is dominated by Hindu and Muslim political movements in Uttar Pradesh since British colonial times, where Hindus would be the majority population, fears amongst minorities grew regarding representation in the constitutional democracy in the making. Muslims who were the biggest minority feared underrepresentation and discrimination in an independent India.

Hindu nationalist ideas of an ancient Hindu nation, which should be separated from the Muslim nation by creating two separate religious states was more intensified when independence was a fact. Prejudices towards Muslims as earlier oppressors of the Hindu masses combined with negative colonial stereotypes of Muslims contributed to the partition of India since the British colonials created Muslim upper classes based on earlier ‘historical lineages of Muslim dynasties’ who had governed Hindus for centuries as ‘oppressors’. According to David Ludden, the British colonial strategy was to divide and conquer by

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dividing the independence movement through the creation of Muslim upper classes ruling the Hindu masses.\textsuperscript{26} The stereotypes of ‘overpopulation’ of Muslims and Islam ‘overtaking’ the role of a dominating cultural and religious influence than Hinduism was implemented in India by the British and later used in the polarized politics to justify the partition of India.\textsuperscript{27}

Muslims in UP were mobilized in the Muslim League before independence, due to fear of discrimination and marginalization in a democratic, electoral representative democracy.\textsuperscript{28} The idea of Pakistan and a Muslim nation was created and demanded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, which was promoted by the upper classes of Muslims in UP. However, the majority of Indian Muslims remained in India, while the educated elites immigrated to Pakistan during the partition of 1947, mostly due to fear of underrepresentation and uncertain economic prospects in India where the zamindari (feudal landlord) system which had been the power base for the Muslim elites was abolished by Jawaharlal Nehru.\textsuperscript{29}

According to Paul R. Brass the creation of Pakistan combined with the immigration of the Muslim elites to Pakistan was the main reason to political underrepresentation for Muslims in India since the Muslim League had been representing and unifying the Muslim communities. Political marginalization increased for the Muslim communities in India since the lower class Muslims had not been engaged in politics before independence, since the Muslim League had been leading Muslim politics. They also felt abandoned and powerless by the disestablishment of the Muslim League.\textsuperscript{30} Factionalism within the Muslim communities of India increased, however the idea of universal suffrage in independent India and the disestablishment of the zamindari system which undermined caste structures, made electoral politics more accessible to the Muslim masses.\textsuperscript{31} However, the accessibility was not given to Muslim beneficiary parties since there were none after the disappearance of the Muslim League, but it gave the Indian Muslims means of affecting politics as a community on a national level. After independence the bond between the INC and the Muslim community

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} D. Ludden, \textit{Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India}, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1996, p. 211.
\item \textsuperscript{27} ibid., p. 197.
\item \textsuperscript{28} P. R Brass, 2005, pp. 182-183.
\item \textsuperscript{29} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{30} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{31} ibid., pp. 235-236.
\end{itemize}
was initiated when the Muslim community in UP was transformed from a political community to a religious community.\textsuperscript{32}

Muslim politics took two major divisions, where one was integration with the secular major parties, like the INC to promote issues that affected the increasingly marginalized Muslim community. There was a major issue within the INC that divided the Muslims voters, due to the ideological foundation of the INC as a secular socialist party lead by Jawaharlal Nehru. This ideological foundation of secularism conflicted with the Muslim religious identity, since it was the religion that unified them, not their ethnicity or language.\textsuperscript{33} The other division was religious fundamentalism through orthodox Islam with the leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami and its ideas of Islamization in India.\textsuperscript{34} The Jamaat-e-Islami movement which was elitist like the Muslim League never appealed to the majority of Muslims since they felt excluded from the party and therefore integration with the majority of society to end marginalization appealed more to the Muslim masses.\textsuperscript{35} According to Paul R. Brass, elitism shaped the political preferences of the Muslim masses, and the demand for Muslim representation was low until the 1970’s, since Muslim perceptions of representation still is dominated by upper caste and class elitism as in the villages studied in this thesis.\textsuperscript{36}

According to David Ludden, the foundation of Bangladesh in 1971 initiated the demand for political participation and representation for Indian Muslims since it increased awareness of discrimination and marginalization in politics and demands for integration of the Indian Muslim community increased.\textsuperscript{37} The Muslims of India were never represented by the masses but rather by alienated elites who wanted to keep or increase their political and religious hegemony over the community itself.\textsuperscript{38} This resulted in Muslim support of the INC in UP since the INC was pro-integration and also pro-communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims since the INC’s foundations on secularism, where minorities in India would be guaranteed representation in communal politics appealed to the Muslim masses.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{32} P. R Brass, 2005, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{33} ibid., pp. 176-177.
\textsuperscript{34} ibid., p. 241.
\textsuperscript{36} P. R Brass, 2005, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{38} P. R Brass, 2005, pp. 413-414.
\textsuperscript{39} N. DeVotta, \textit{An Introduction to South Asian Politics}, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 9.
2.4 Hindu Majority Versus the non-Hindu Minority in Representation

To see how Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority is applied in the study to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities, the issue of political institutions based on Hindu caste systems must be covered. Muslims are the biggest minority in India and seen by the ruling extreme right wing party the BJP with its foundation in Hindutva based ideology as a demographic threat to the BJP’s ideology. According to Neil DeVotta, after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 a more polarized landscape between Hindus and Muslims in UP escalated.\(^{40}\)

Hindutva based ideology is based on the idea that the Indian nation should transform into a Hindu society only. According to David Ludden, since Hindus are the majority they are as a communal group more represented than the religious minorities, therefore Muslims are underrepresented, in the majoritarian constitutional system based on religious adherence.\(^{41}\)

Concerning the quota system for representation for OBCs, SCs and STs in the gram panchayat, the quota system is adapted to the Hindu caste system. In the Indian census SCs, OBCs and STs are seen as Hindu communal groups and therefore representation of different Hindu groups is higher than other communal groups.\(^{42}\) According to Neil DeVotta, the quota system and political institutions are adapted to benefit the greater Hindu majority, therefore castes within the Muslim communities are not being officially recognized by authorities even though it is very much present, therefore Muslims cannot receive OBC or SC quotas, even though the majority of Muslims belong to lower castes. This creates several problems in quota systems since Muslims are seen as an equally represented homogenized group in political contexts and are not given access to all quotas which in turn creates inequality of representation within the Muslim community.\(^{43}\)

This excludes lower Muslim castes from political representation since higher caste Muslims dominate village politics in Muslim villages, since the norms are created by the Hindu Varna caste system in quota systems. Muslims can only be elected in the panchayat in the regular election quota by votes, or as a woman in the women’s quota regulation as will be the case in

\(^{40}\) N. DeVotta, 2016, p. 13.  
Mutakkipur and Malesemau villages where fieldwork was conducted. Hindus can be elected in the general quota, women’s quota, SC, OBC and ST quotas. This does not mean that power within the Hindu community is equally distributed in the panchayat and not amongst Muslims. It rather shows that Muslims have a smaller chance of being elected through quotas or by popular vote than people belonging to Hindu groups because of the quota system’s adaptability to the Hindu Varna caste system.  

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Kymlicka’s Theory of Group Autonomy

Will Kymlicka writes in *Multicultural citizenship, A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, from 1995, about the mobilization of group autonomy to empower and highlight issues that are affecting marginalized groups, which can only be done if the marginalized group is empowered by the affected community itself in a liberal way of electoral representation. Group rights, which in Western contexts are phenomena which can have negative connotations, due to the idea of liberal individual autonomy, can be a mobilizing factor for political representation for minorities facing exclusion, discrimination and marginalization.  

Within this theory, Kymlicka’s main argument is that culture and identity are liberal rights that should be integrated into the liberal democracy to promote inclusion and representation of excluded and marginalized minority groups who are affected by the decisions of the majority. With India being the world’s most populous constitutional democracy and one of the most diverse nations in the world, the theory of minority representation according to liberal, electoral ideas of group empowerment is very relevant due to the panchayat structure of electoral politics where all members are officially granted the same opportunity to participate in elections as candidates.  

Kymlicka argues for three kinds of group rights for minorities, one being self-governmental rights which means that minorities should be given certain self-ruling privileges or autonomous regions which are adapted to the minority’s context and culture. Another is polyethnic rights which are based on certain regulations in a liberal democracy that guarantees the preservation and non-discrimination of certain religious, cultural, ethnic traits,

44 N. DeVotta, 2016., p. 15.
46 ibid., p.138.
47 ibid., p.141.
etc. For example, the right for Sikhs in India to not wear a helmet while driving is such a right. Even though it is a law it does not include Sikhs, since it violates their distinct identifying cultural traits.\textsuperscript{48} The third is the right of special group representation, which is based on the notion that a marginalized minority can only highlight issues which concerns the minority through liberally elected members from the minority which addresses the issues.\textsuperscript{49}

All group rights are promoted by Kymlicka as a way of creating an even balance of power distribution in the sense that marginalized minorities will not only be affected by the majoritarian society’s decisions but through these group rights also can promote their own issues. The aim of the group rights is not according to Kymlicka to benefit one group over another but rather to create equal benefits for marginalized minorities in the same way as the majority is being benefited by systems adapted to the majority.\textsuperscript{50} Kymlicka has a specific demand for these group rights, and that is that the political institution within the minority must be liberal, which the panchayat system in all the Muslim villages observed is with its repeated electoral politics and quotas for marginalized groups and since it officially grants all members of the community an official chance of participating as a candidate in the elections.\textsuperscript{51} The group right with most relevance to the study is the right of liberally elected minority members to more efficiently promote issues that they face as a marginalized group. In this particular case the minority groups are the Muslim elites in the three villages of Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemau in Chinhait block panchayat of Lucknow and how they perceive representation towards the local urban authorities of Lucknow. Kymlicka’s definition of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority and to reduce the impact of the majoritarian society’s decisions which affects the minority will be the definition of minority representation used in the study.

Kymlicka’s definition is used in the thesis since Muslims as a communal group are an underrepresented group on an Indian national level concerning representation and the aim of the thesis is to explore if (and if so how) the elites of these villages where Muslims are the majority (the elites could not have been chosen as the leaders of these villages if Muslims had not been in the population majority) feel excluded/underrepresented from the local authorities.

\textsuperscript{48} W. Kymlicka, 1995, pp.142-143. 
\textsuperscript{49} ibid., p.143. 
\textsuperscript{50} ibid., p. 137. 
\textsuperscript{51} ibid., p. 138.
3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is an exploratory and descriptive case study since it aims to apply Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in the gram panchayats of Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemau in Lucknow towards local urban authorities through fieldwork. The choice to study gram panchayats is important since it is the founding level of democracy in rural society and is also electoral in the sense that any person in the village can become a candidate in the panchayat elections. This fulfills Kymlicka’s requirement for minority representation in the sense that all members in the minority officially have access to equal means for political participation, however due to status and power dynamics in the villages only the elites have been interviewed. The perceptions of representation among the elite are based on the accessibility to promote issues affecting village life and if the local authorities seem to prioritize village issues. It is explanatory since there is no previous data collected, except from the fieldwork that was conducted, which can’t be applied to similar cases, but rather to the cases that were researched. It is also descriptive since it aims to understand the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities, through the research of fieldwork.

3.1 Media Reporting

The Rashtriya Sahara Lucknow Monday 14 December 2015. Urdu Newspaper, contained a list over gram panchayat elections in Lucknow Zila panchayat. The cases Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemau villages in Chinhat block were chosen for the research. The Ghaila gram Pradhan (Obaid Ali) received 1102 votes, the Mutakkipur gram Pradhan (Kahkasha Bano) received 535 votes and the Malesemau gram Pradhan (Shama Parveen) received 1277 votes.

3.2 Case Selection

The case selection for this explorative study will be the three randomly picked villages Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemau out of the 44 villages in the Chinhat block in Lucknow. The random picking of cases is selected on the criteria that the villages has chosen a Muslim leader (gram Pradhan), which is a strong indicator that the village has a majority Muslim population in the panchayat elections from the result statistics of the zila panchayat of December 2015. Statistics for this is gathered from the Rashtriya Sahara newspaper Lucknow from the 14 December 2015. Even if Muslims are in majority in the villages, they are a
minority on Indian national level representation and therefore underrepresented. In order to see dynamics and a wider perspective of this issue a focus will be to analyze if there are differences in the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities.

3.3 Study Design

The design of the study is to analyze the different Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in the villages to see if there are perceptions of exclusion or underrepresentation from the local authorities, due to their religious background as Muslims. In the analysis error sources combined with Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to more effectively promote issues that are affecting the minority, will be applied to give a wider understanding of the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards urban authorities. There are structured questions in Hindi/Urdu which works as the base for the interviews; however, these questions are modified throughout the interviews since they turn into discussion. The choice of respondents will be the gram Pradhan and panchayat members but also random villagers, in order to see a diverse image of the panchayat. The fieldwork will be based on interviewing the gram Pradhan, the members of the panchayat and also villagers concerning the Muslim elite’s perceptions of political representation towards urban authorities and if they can affect decision making concerning village life.

3.4 Fieldwork

Fieldwork Report, Case 1 Ghaila 16 December 2015, 2-5 pm

The first case studied is called Ghaila, a village which is in Chinhat block panchayat outside of Lucknow city. The village panchayat consists of Ghaila with 5000 inhabitants and two smaller villages called Roznabad with 780 inhabitants and Mankhira with 800 inhabitants. Out of the 5000 people living in Ghaila, around 2500 of these are Muslims, and out of these 1400 are qualified to vote. The village is composed of Hindus and Muslims, and within both groups there are different castes. The Hindus consist of a few upper caste Pandit (priests) families and lower caste Hindus such as Kaumhars (potters), Yadavs (herders) and Lodhs (dyers) which all are OBC in census. The Pasi (landless farmers) group which is Hindu is an SC in the census. There are no STs in the village. The Muslim community consist of upper caste Sheikhs, Pathans and Mughals whom all are seen as immigrated Muslim groups.

52 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.1.
(descendants from the historical Muslim ruling dynasties), and below them are lower caste Dhobis (washers), Darzis (tailors), Naus (barbers), Faqirs (beggars) and Telis (oil pressers), descendants of converts to Islam. All village Muslims are Sunnis.53

The fieldwork is carried out with standardized questions54 and performed in colloquial Hindi/Urdu. The newly elected gram Pradhan Obaid Ali and the former gram Pradhan Nadim were interviewed, since Nadim has ruled the village as gram Pradhan for five years and is more experienced than Obaid, which recently got the seat of gram Pradhan and has no experience yet. They are both middle aged upper caste Sheikh (elite) Muslim men.55

In the fieldwork the respondents had difficulties to understand some words as ‘representation’ (تحفظات) in high Hindi/Urdu which meant that Hinglish (रेजर्वशन) (rezerveshan) also had to be used. When asked about changes in village life after Modi’s government was created in 2014 (کے آنے کے بعد کوئی تبدیلی آئی ہے؟), the respondents only mentioned negative ones. Land issues are one of the main issues in the village, since the LDA (Lucknow Development Authority) has acquired land, (which does not benefit the villagers) for city dwellers to use and also to expand the city. However, this land has been idle for seven years and the villagers cannot use it since the LDA acquired it. They can neither sell their own lands to city dwellers nor to the LDA since the land prices have declined due to the high acquirement of land (2200 acres) in the village by the LDA. There is a feeling of exclusion from decision making and ability to create impact in local politics.57

When asked about religious tensions (کیا مذہبی گروہوں کے بیچ میں دوستی ہے؟), in the village, both men proclaimed that there is no caste or religious related conflicts or discrimination. However, their upper caste background must be taken into consideration when they claim there is no discrimination in the village. They proclaimed that the mentality in the village had changed since the last panchayat elections of 2010 and also since the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 when Narendra Modi became prime minister. There was a candidate called Ashok Yadav who uttered anti-Muslim sentiments in the panchayat elections when he proclaimed that “he did not want Muslim votes”, which is a big difference from the earlier Hindu

53 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.1.  
54 Appendix 1.  
55 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.1.  
56 Appendix 1, p. 1. See question 4.  
57 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.1.  
58 Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 17.
candidate of 2010 who was not concerned about communal polarization, but rather a progressive candidate for communal harmony. Here the question of class discrimination may be raised due to urban/rural power dynamics and that people in rural areas perceive they are not being prioritized.

Since Obaid received 1102 votes he won the majority of support of the village and this is because of the support he received also from the SCs and OBCs. Even though the candidate Yadav tried to encourage communal polarization, the SCs and OBCs voted for Obaid. This may be a sign of solidarity of the lower castes and religious minorities against upper caste Hindus who traditionally have been the most empowered castes in village society. There are fifteen seats in the village panchayat and in this election 105 candidates participated. Nine seats are reserved and six are non-reserved. In the non-reserved seats six Muslims (including Obaid, and also a female candidate) were elected and in the nine reserved seats which constitute about 60% in total of the panchayat, five are SCs (two are women) and four are OBCs, were two also are women. In total women constitute 30% (five in total) of the seats in the panchayat which is in accordance to Indian panchayat law.

Concerning local politics in Lucknow and freedom of speech, both men agreed that even though they are represented in the village community due to over 50% Muslim population, they see the authorities in Lucknow as excluding since they do not promote issues this village is facing. They perceive that the authorities do not take their issues in concern and that their voices are not being heard, neither in the city nor in the countryside. Here the issue of discrimination from higher authorities must be seen as a rural identity issue.

Finally, Nadim and Obaid said that in this election the OBCs and SCs were giving support to the Muslim candidates and did not vote according to communal lines, but rather according to class lines since village society is based around farming and most people feel alienated from urban politics. There may be some form of solidarity between the SCs, OBCs and the Muslims. Obaid said that the Muslims in this community would vote for the BSP, which is

59 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p. 2.
60 ibid., p. 2.
61 ibid.
62 Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 15.
63 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.3.
traditionally seen as a Dalit party, in the coming election of 2019, which is a shift from the INC.  

Fieldwork Report, Case 2 (متكیپر) Mutakkipur 23 December 2015, 1-3 pm

Next village studied was Mutakkipur which is near Ghaila in the same block panchayat of Chinhat. A Muslim woman called Kahkasha Bano (کہکشا بانو) received the title of gram Pradhan with 535 votes. Unfortunately, Kahkasha Bano could not receive guests for interviews since she was pregnant. Therefore, interviews with the selected questions in colloquial Hindi/Urdu were conducted with her husband Mohammed Imran and relatives Afsar and Chand who all are upper class (Sheikh) Muslims. The village has a population of about 3200 people and Muslims make up 75% of the total population, which are about 2400 individuals. In the Muslim community there are higher castes such as Mughals (also called Mirza), Sheikhs, Pathans and lower castes such as Naus and Telis. Among the Hindu community there are only SCs such as Pasis and Chamar (leather workers), and those make up 25% of the village population.

The main concern (مشکل ہے؟) in the community is the lack of functioning water tanks and the local authorities’ lack of dedication to the issue which the villagers are concerned about since it affects the quality of water. Concerning communal harmony and caste discrimination, all respondents in the panchayat agree that there is communal harmony in the village and that no communal violence or caste or class discrimination exists. The caste background of these men must be taken into consideration and if they are credible sources. In the village there are two different kinds of reservation, through the general reservation of election and through women’s reservation. There is no reservation for SCs or for OBCs. In the gram panchayat there are thirteen seats and no numbers were given regarding women’s quota neither by numbers nor by percent. All the four candidates participating in the last election were Muslims. The respondents perceived themselves represented in village politics, but that can be because they are higher caste Muslim men in a village where the Muslim community is the majority. They do not feel represented among local authorities,

64 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p.3.
65 ibid., Mutakkipur, p. 4.
66 ibid.
67 Appendix 1, p. 1. See question 5.
68 Appendix 2, Mutakkipur, p. 4.
69 ibid., p. 4.
concerning water supplies. They also feel they cannot promote the issue to higher administration due to their rural identity since they see authorities as only prioritizing urban issues. Another aspect of representation is that they perceive that the local authorities were more keen on highlighting their issues previous to the foundation of Narendra Modi’s government in 2014. They perceive a feeling of exclusion in local decision and priority making when it comes to the water tank issue.

To get a dynamic picture of the gram panchayat, interviews with villagers were also done. An interview was conducted with a middle aged woman. She expressed feelings of exclusion since her community identifies as STs but are not recognized as such by the local panchayat or by local authorities. There is no possibility for them to be quoted into the gram panchayat and therefore they face exclusion from village politics. This can be since the higher castes are not keen on highlighting representation for lower castes since they do not want to break the caste hegemony or ‘status quo’ of power for upper castes. Another factor can be that these STs just recently migrated to the area and therefore have not been registered, since STs are not usually found around Lucknow and mainly inhabit mountainous regions in eastern UP.

Summarizing the fieldwork in Mutakkipur, Kahkasha Bano got 535 votes which is not a clear majority in a village of 3200 people but she did receive 60% of the votes from the SCs and OBCs. This may be a sign of class adherence amongst lower Hindu castes to promote their class issues to higher political administration through Muslim (since Muslims are in majority in the villages) candidates as rural dwellers experiencing the same class discrimination from urban authorities. It could however also be Muslim upper caste hegemony in the village since Muslims are a clear majority and there seems to be little political participation amongst the lower caste Hindus. It signifies that even though local representation of Muslims in the village is proportionate it does not mean that they feel represented in higher administration of urban politics. They feel marginalized when it comes to decision making and that urban authorities do not prioritize the issues the village faces not because of their Muslim identity but because of their rural identity and class adherence with SCs and OBCs.
Fieldwork Report, Case 3 (ڈاک اولصیہ) Malesemou 23 of December 2015, 4-6 pm

The last village for fieldwork studies was Malesemau where a Muslim woman, Shama Parveen (شاما پروین) was elected as gram Pradhan. This village is also within the panchayat block of Chinhat. Shama received 1277 votes in the gram panchayat election and was not present for interviews, neither were her husband so two male relatives, Mohammad Madloob and Mohammed Azhar were interviewed. Both men are upper caste (Sheikh) Muslims. Azhar is 70 years old and Madloob is 30 years old. There are around 7500 people living in the village. Muslims make up 6000 of the total population. 2971 people were alleged to vote in the gram panchayat elections but only 2463 did, which means that around 500 people did not vote. This is due to emigration from the village to Gujarat and the Gulf states etc. and also due to lack of interest in the election itself. The higher Muslim castes are Sheikhs, Pathans and Siddiqis and the lower are Telis, Naus and Faqirs. Hindu groups consist of Yadav’s and Shrivastav’s (accountants) who are SCs. The number of OBCs was not given.

Concerning recent changes, opinions were only negative and focused on the development program that the village had been promised during the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 (مودی جی کے آنے کے بعد کوئی تبدیلی آئی ہے؟), to improve infrastructure. In every Lok Sabha election promises are made that a village in each city block ought to be improved concerning infrastructure etc. Preparations with paperwork for the development program were signed for Malesemou, but after the elections the program was changed to another village. This created feelings of exclusion among the villagers and they felt excluded from being able to affect local politics, decision making and to highlight issues that concern them to higher authorities. This is due to the rural identity, where they feel only urban areas are being prioritized but also since the promised development program never was completed. There are fifteen seats in the gram panchayat where OBCs are given two reserved seats, SCs are given two and women are given only one seat. There are no STs in the village. The village does not fulfill legal requirements made by the Indian government concerning gram panchayat quotas for women and lower castes.

75 Appendix 2, Malesemou, pp. 6-7.
76 ibid. p. 7.
77 Appendix 1, p. 1. See question 4.
78 Appendix 2, Malesemou. p. 7.
79 ibid.
80 ibid., p. 8.
There are no caste or communal conflicts in the village, and according to Azhar there is no caste discrimination, (اس گاؤں میں کوئی ذات امتیاز نہیں ہوا؟)\(^{81}\), which must be taken into consideration since he is an upper caste Muslim man related to the ruling gram Pradhan. Therefore, interviews were conducted with villagers in the bazaar and also at a flour mill.\(^{82}\) However Azhar accompanied the whole time and therefore the answers which were given were affected by his presence. Villagers did not want to speak about their political preferences nor about discrimination and they were reluctant to answer questions. Therefore, the caste dynamics in the village may not be as good as Azhar promoted. Villagers did not want to talk about coming panchayat elections in UP or about the coming Lok Sabha elections of 2019.\(^{83}\)

Concluding the visit to Malesemou, the reserved quota for women is low as well as for OBCs and SCs which means the village does not fulfill the standards of Indian gram panchayat laws. The fact that Azhar accompanied while I conducted the fieldwork also created problems in the way of receiving credible answers about lower caste people’s opinions on politics in the village. This was evident since the villagers did not want to express opinions concerning politics etc. There seems however to be a feeling of exclusion from the urban authorities since the villagers feel excluded from decision making and also that their issues are not taken into consideration, mainly in the sudden change of plans concerning a promised infrastructural development program in the village. This is however due to their rural identity and not their Muslim identity since they do not refer to their religious identity but rather to their class identity as rural dwellers.\(^{84}\)

### 3.5 Error Sources

Five error sources have been taken into consideration, the first being if the respondents are telling the truth, due to power dynamics in village society or if they want to portray the village dynamic in a more ‘appealing’ way for an outsider? Another being the issue of group interviews, since conducting personal interviews is nearly impossible in rural India. Mostly several people participate during the interview and this may contribute to lack of credible information concerning issues that are disrupting village power dynamics? The dynamics of

\(^{81}\) Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 13.
\(^{82}\) Appendix 2, Malesemou, p. 8.
\(^{83}\) ibid.
\(^{84}\) ibid.
gender is also included, if women are used as ‘token’ quotas and referring to their husband or male relatives when interviewed? Another dynamic is about caste, if SCs and OBCs speak for their community, or if the OBC and SC communities use their votes to change rural political dynamics? The last one being if the OBC and SC communities are ‘token’ quotas for representation on behalf of benefitting the higher castes and fearing retaliation from upper castes if they express their own political views?

4. Analysis

The application of Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected minority to most effectively promote its own issues and to empower itself, will be used as the analysis apparatus on the three villages, combined with the margins of error sources which are presented above to explore the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards local urban authorities.

In the application of Kymlicka’s theory of the liberal, electoral minority representation to more effectively promote the issues the minority faces, all three villages are examples of this since the Muslim elites highlight the issue of underrepresentation of Muslims and rural dwellers on a regional and national level. The respondents in the gram panchayat (male respondents if the gram Pradhan is a woman) perceive that increased Muslim representation will lead to highlighting issues that affect rural life since the respondents are rural dwellers and are in majority (the village populations are majority Muslim) in all villages. This is mainly through the idea that they only can promote these issues themselves since they feel excluded from urban authorities, in the way that they do not feel prioritized as rural dwellers and that they have to promote their issues to higher political institutions to create change.

There are ideas of unifying interreligious, class solidarity as rural dwellers in the case of Ghaila, where the panchayat leaders proclaimed that their support in the next Lok Sabha elections of 2019 would go to BSP with the support of the Hindu OBC and SC groups. This is a sign of class solidarity when the Non-Muslim minorities support the Muslim elite candidates since the rural population as a unified unit wants more representation and their issues to be more prioritized by authorities, which they perceive only focus on urban dwellers.

85 Appendix 2, Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemou, pp. 3, 6, 8.
86 ibid.
87 ibid., Ghaila, p. 3.
In Mutakkipur and Malesemau Kymlicka’s theory of the liberal, electoral minority representation to more effectively promote the issues the minority faces to the majoritarian society, is applicable in the sense that the Muslim elites in the villages perceive themselves underrepresented in relation to the local urban authorities and that change can only come through the empowering of the group itself as a rural community, but not as a religious or caste based community. Perceptions of exclusion from decision making and the local political authorities exists as well as perceptions that the authorities do not prioritize rural issues.\(^8\)

Considering the margins of error regarding representation of women (since two of the gram Pradhans chosen for the study are women), Ghaila follows the Indian panchayat quota laws which requires 30% representation for women while Mutakkipur and Malesemau do not, even though they have female gram Pradhans.\(^9\) Since interviews could not be conducted with the female gram Pradhans and they referred to their husbands or male relatives, it seems like their quotas are used as ‘token’ quotas by the respondents, even so the people using these quotas are part of the Muslim elites of the village and their perceptions of representation has been representing these villages’ perceptions of representation in the thesis.\(^10\)

In Ghaila where a Muslim upper caste man is gram Pradhan, Kymlicka’s theory of the liberally elected group members to more effectively address the specific issues affecting the minority to the majority is applicable.\(^11\) The Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation in Ghaila are that upper caste Muslims feel represented in village politics, since they possess the leading political positions in the gram panchayat, however they feel underrepresented towards the local urban authorities which do not prioritize the issue of land acquirements in the village. Neither the Muslim lower castes nor Non-Muslims have been interviewed in this village, so the perception of representation can vary from social status in society.\(^12\) Due to caste politics in UP panchayats, the lower caste Muslims and Non-Muslims perceive a communal feeling of representation through the upper caste elites since they are part of a minority on a regional and national level (Muslims), which seems to be the case in Ghaila, since the village unites under a class identity as rural dwellers rather than through caste and

\(^{88}\) Appendix 2., Mutakkipur, Malesemau, pp. 6, 8.
\(^{89}\) ibid., Ghaila. p. 2.
\(^{90}\) ibid.
\(^{91}\) W. Kymlicka, 1995, p. 143.
\(^{92}\) Appendix 2, Ghaila, p. 3.
religious identity. Concerning the error sources of gender and caste these cannot be applied since the gram Pradhan is a Muslim higher caste man. Interviews with other villagers would have been needed but could not be conducted since interviews had already been conducted with the panchayat members who are the Muslim elite who represent the village for outsiders. If villagers were interviewed they would probably redirect the questions to the panchayat council. Village society is tight knit, and those questions would have been perceived as odd and possibly offending to ask the villagers after interviewing the gram Pradhan which strengthens the error source concerning the effect of not being able to conduct personal interviews in rural India. Ghaila appears to have an interreligious tolerant atmosphere of solidarity between Muslims, SCs and OBCs which seems to be based on class solidarity where the Muslim elite is chosen to represent all the groups to promote issues that affect them as rural dwellers, feeling excluded from urban political decision making.

Regarding the error source, fear of retaliation, it is not applicable in Ghaila since interviews were conducted with the upper caste Muslim elite only. However since Muslims are a minority in UP, which is dominated by increased communalism, there was a concern amongst the panchayat leaders concerning the polarized environment between communal groups. This was evident in the answers concerning the Hindu candidate’s attempts to mobilize the SCs and OBCs according to communal lines in the election of 2015, which had not been the case in the previous panchayat election of 2010. Since the gram panchayat’s main objective is to maintain communal harmony and justice, the issue of land is central. The land acquired by the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA), which is perceived by the villagers as an excluding action since they perceive the LDA acquired the land without any intentions by the urban authority to develop the village. The respondents (Muslim elite in the village) were not included in decision making and felt excluded from higher level politics even though they feel represented in the village panchayat.

Caste is dominating gram panchayat politics but there seems to be no demands from lower Muslim castes for representation, since they are homogenized into the same communal group.

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93 Appendix 2, Ghaila, p. 3.
94 ibid.
95 ibid.
96 ibid.
97 ibid., pp. 1-2.
as higher caste Muslims as a rural Muslim caste in Ghaila which is represented by the Muslim elite of the village. Therefore, they feel represented in village society but not in relation to urban authorities.\footnote{Appendix 2, Ghaila, p. 2.} One cannot talk about fear of retaliation from upper castes, except in the case of Malesemau where interviews were conducted with lower caste Muslims and a member of the gram Pradhan’s family accompanied the interviews. This fits the error source that it is almost impossible to perform personal interviews in rural India since the communities are tight knit and power dynamics exists concerning whom interviews can be conducted with since the panchayat members (the Muslim elite of the village) see themselves as representing the village and should therefore be interviewed, instead of the villagers. This also fits the error source that the respondents do not feel comfortable to speak their opinions in front of others and to outsiders due to fear of the effects it may cause. The lower caste villagers were not keen on giving answers concerning politics, voting nor about village dynamics and one could tell that the situation was uncomfortable for them.\footnote{ibid., Malesemau, p. 8.}

Regarding the error source concerning SC and OBC gram Pradhans, no information exists since there was no gram Pradhan elected in the villages from these groups, since all the panchayat members are a part of the Muslim elite of the villages. These groups were neither invited to the interviews due to power dynamics of village authority, since the majority population of the villages are Muslim and the SCs and OBCs are lower caste Hindus.\footnote{ibid., Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemau, pp. 3, 6, 8.} Higher caste Muslim elites will represent the villages to an outsider conducting interviews since they are the gram panchayat council and also since the interviews were conducted with the relatives of the panchayat members and not the minorities of SCs and OBCs. Due to power dynamics of authority these groups would probably refer questions regarding the panchayat to the gram Pradhan and the gram panchayat leadership even though they had representatives quoted in to the gram panchayat. This is due to a strict village hierarchy system of caste and division of labor.\footnote{ibid.}

There seems to be communal unity between the Muslims, regardless of caste adherence and the SCs and OBCs in Ghaila since the majority of votes were given to Obaid, even though attempts were made by the Hindu candidate Yadav to encourage the SCs and OBCs to vote according to communal lines of religious adherence. The class solidarity between the
Muslims, SCs and OBCs as rural dwellers cooperating via the elected Muslim elite of the villages to make their issues heard by higher authorities seems stronger than communal adherence.\textsuperscript{102} According to Kymlicka’s theory of the liberal, electoral minority representation to more effectively promote the issues the minority faces, this village is an indicator that Kymlicka’s theory can be applied to this village since the Muslims feels politically empowered in their locality, it does not however mean that the Muslim elites who are elected as leaders perceive themselves or the village as represented to local urban authorities.\textsuperscript{103} This local empowering by electing Muslim elites give indications of a feeling of future representation in regional and national contexts, by using the Muslim elites as representatives for this communal force which highlights class issues which affects the rural community and not according to religious communal lines. This is also seen in the mobilization by panchayat leaders among the OBCs and SCs along with the Muslims to vote for BSP in the next elections of 2019. There are assumptions in the community that they would be benefitted by this party, rather than the INC.\textsuperscript{104}

Regarding Mutakkipur and the application of Kymlicka’s theory of liberal minority representation to more effectively highlight issues the minority faces, the theory is proven as a means of highlighting issues that affect the rural community and indirectly the Muslim community since they are the majority, via electing the local Muslim elite as leaders.\textsuperscript{105} All villages observed consist of a majority Muslim population which must be taken into consideration to understand the dynamics of representation since Muslims on a national and regional level are underrepresented, and also since they are located near urban areas which means they could perceive a more direct exclusion from urban politics and decision making, than if their communities were located far away from urban centers must be taken into consideration. In Mutakkipur and Malesemau there were only Muslim candidates and there were very few candidates comparing to Ghaila which had 105 candidates, while in Mutakkipur and Malesemau it was only four and two.\textsuperscript{106} This shows the centralization of power in the villages which seems to be more divided amongst lesser candidates than for example the case of Ghaila.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{102} Appendix 2., Ghaila, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{103} W. Kymlicka, 1995, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{104} Appendix 2, Ghaila, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{105} ibid., Mutakkipur, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{106} ibid., Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemau, pp. 3, 6, 8.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid., Ghaila, p. 2.
In Ghaila there are upper caste Hindus, while in Mutakkipur and Malesemau there are only lower caste Hindus, therefore the demand for representation can be higher in Ghaila within the Hindu groups. However Ghaila also has the highest level of increased negative communal attitudes that has changed since the last Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and Narendra Modi’s rise to power, which does not seem to be the case of Mutakkipur and Malesemau but rather caste inequality. This can also be due to the fact that both Mutakkipur and Malesemau were cases where local villagers were interviewed which was not the case in Ghaila. Representation quotas for OBCs, SCs and women are applied more in Ghaila than it is in Mutakkipur and Malesemau where upper caste Muslim elites seem to be the most powerful group politically. All villages approximately have the same number of seats (Ghaila; fifteen, Mutakkipur; thirteen, Malesemau; fifteen) in the gram panchayat and it seems the local caste demography has a major role in how the gram panchayat is shaped.

Even though all villages are majority Muslim and the respondents (Muslim elites) perceive themselves to be represented in the gram panchayat and in local village politics there are perceptions of exclusion among the Muslim elite in relation to the local urban authorities, which they perceive do not prioritize rural issues that affects the villages and therefore they feel underrepresented. This exclusion is not based on their Muslim identity but rather on their identity as rural dwellers which are neglected by the urban authorities, since they perceive local politics are only focused on the urban areas and are not highlighting issues that affect the rural population. There is a perception of exclusion from decision making concerning local infrastructural development that affects rural life such as land and water issues which is being decided by urban authorities. There have not been any perceptions amongst the lower caste Muslims that they are not represented since the upper caste Muslim elites dominate the three village panchayat councils and are representing the villages based on communal identity as Muslims and rural dwellers since the majority of the population are Muslim. However, the question of creating quotas for backward Muslims is lifted, since in a wider context the Muslims cannot be quoted in for example as SCs and OBCs which in the

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108 Appendix 2., Ghaila. 2.
109 ibid.
110 ibid., Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemau, pp. 3, 6, 8.
111 ibid.
112 ibid.
Indian census are regarded as Hindu groups, the creation of quotas for lower caste Muslims could empower Muslims on a regional and national level.\textsuperscript{113}

The adaption of Indian political systems to the majoritarian Hindu caste system where castes within Islam are not being recognized as castes, results in the fact that Muslims are given less opportunities to be voted into a gram panchayat, unless they are the majority as in the cases observed.\textsuperscript{114} Muslims can only go by the women’s quota and by the general voting quota while Hindus per religious definition can be admitted to general voting quota, women’s quota, SCs quota, STs quota and OBCs quota. Therefore when Muslims are not a majority they will be less likely to be chosen into the panchayat council and underrepresented.\textsuperscript{115} In the analysis one cannot homogenize the Muslim community in terminology of caste, even though they are seen as a caste in rural areas, however one can homogenize the community in terms of communal perceptions of representation where the Muslim elite represents the community.\textsuperscript{116} The perception of representation within these villages is based on local empowering of the village community from the Muslim community and Non-Muslim minorities itself through the liberal, electoral institution of gram panchayats to promote issues they face as rural dwellers to urban authorities through the Muslim elite which handles the issues in cooperation with local urban authorities. The main issue is the conflict between rural and urban India, where they as rural dwellers perceive themselves as neglected and excluded by the urban political institutions which only focus on urban areas.\textsuperscript{117}

4.1 Credibility and Adaptability to Other Cases

The credibility of this field study is valid since there is a pattern of perceptions of underrepresentation concerning exclusion from decision making, from urban institutions and the lack of opportunities of affecting local politics among the rural Muslim elites of the villages studied. The study is credible in the sense that a general pattern of exclusion is evident, based on the Muslim elite’s identity as rural dwellers whose issues are not taken into consideration by the urban political institutions. The adaptability to other cases is however not certain, since these studies are based on the three cases. If further substantial studies were made, the results could be generalized to other cases. The adaptability to other cases is

\textsuperscript{113} Appendix 2, Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemou. pp. 3, 6, 8.
\textsuperscript{115} ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Appendix 2, Ghaila, Mutakkipur, Malesemou. pp. 1, 4, 7.
\textsuperscript{117} ibid.
although credible in the sense that rural dwellers as well as religious or ethnic minorities as communities may feel excluded and non-prioritized and therefore underrepresented by urban political institutions who do not take their issues into consideration which is not depending on religious or ethnic identity, but on rural identity. The vicinity of the urban authorities must however be taken into consideration since cases that are far away from urban centers may not perceive the same kind of direct exclusion from decision making as in the cases studied. This idea of an underrepresented rural community as a class issue rather than a communal one in all cases researched transcends caste, religion and ethnicity and can work as a mobilization force for change for the communities who perceive themselves as underrepresented and excluded.

5. CONCLUSION

Concluding the fieldwork conducted in Ghaila, Mutakkipur and Malesemau, the Muslim elites who represents the villages perceive themselves excluded from the local authorities, decision making and issues that affect village life. They do not perceive themselves represented in relation to the urban authorities, since they perceive their issues to not be prioritized because of their rural identity and not their religious identity. The quotas based on the Hindu caste system which does not recognize the Muslim caste system, automatically creates underrepresentation for Muslims on a regional and national level, since they can only be elected through general voting quota or through women’s quota, while Hindus can be quoted in by general quota, women’s quota, SCs quota, STs quota and OBCs quota. Since caste is a major part of UP politics and no demands to promote lower caste Muslim quotas have been made since they perceive themselves represented by the Muslim elite in the villages, this will continue to be an issue.

Muslims need to be in majority demographically as in the cases observed to be able to promote their issues to a regional level. Above village level democracy there seems to be ideas of class cooperation between the Muslims, SCs and OBCs to promote marginalized rural people’s issues to higher political levels via the Muslim elites of the villages, since these groups did not vote according to communal lines, but rather for Muslim candidates. The issue of the Muslim elite’s perceptions of representation towards the local urban authorities in the cases studied concerns their rural identity and not their religious identity and portrays the dynamics of representation between rural and urban dwellers in India. Kymlicka’s theory of
the liberal, electoral minority representation to more effectively promote the issues the
minority faces is applicable to all three cases studied, since it shows that the Muslims as rural
dwellers need to empower themselves democratically via the Muslim elites to highlight issues
they are facing to urban authorities on a regional or national level, since they do not perceive
these issues would be highlighted otherwise.

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**List of respondents**

All the names of the respondents except Dipak Malik, Obaid Ali and Nadim are pseudonyms to guarantee the anonymity of these people in the study since they are not public persons as the respondents already mentioned.


Azhar, relative of Shama Parveen newly elected gram Pradhan in the panchayat election of 2015 in Malesemau village. Semi-structured field interview, Malesemau, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.

Chand, relative of Kahkasha Bano newly elected gram Pradhan in the panchayat election of 2015 in Mutakkipur village. Semi-structured field interview, Mutakkipur, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.


Inshad, lower caste Muslim man working in a flour mill in Malesemau village. Semi-structured field interview, Malesemau, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.

Madloob, relative of Shama Parveen newly elected gram Pradhan in the panchayat election of 2015 in Malesemau village. Semi-structured field interview, Malesemau, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.

Malik, Dipak, former Professor at Banaras Hindu University. Semi-structured interview, Lucknow, 13 and 19 November 2015.

Meraj, lower caste Muslim man working in a flour mill in Malesemau village. Semi-structured field interview, Malesemau, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.


Sunita, ST woman living in Mutakkipur village. Semi-structured field interview, Mutakkipur, Lucknow, 23 December 2015.
Appendix 1

Questions Used in Fieldwork

In Hindi/Urdu

Name: نام (Naam)
Age: عمر (Umr)
Caste: ذات (Zat)
Religion: مذهب (Mazhab)
Sex: جنس (Jans)

1. How many Muslims live in this village?
   کیہ اس گاؤں میں کتنے مسلمان بن؟
   (Kyaa is gaan mein kitne musalman hai?)

2. Who lives in this village?
   کیہ اس گاؤں میں کون کون رختے بن؟
   (Kyaa is gaan mein kaun kaun rehte hai?)

3. How many Muslim families live in this village?
   کیہ اس گاؤں میں کتنے مسلم خاندان بن؟
   (Kyaa is gaan mein kitne muslim xandan hain?)

4. Since Modi became PM, has any changes occurred?
   کیہ مودی جی کے آنے کے بعد کوئی تبدیلی آئی بن؟
   (Kyaa Moodii jii ke aane ke baad koi tabdyaalii aaii hai?)

5. Is life hard in this village? (concerning poverty etc)
کیا زندگی اس گاؤں میں مشکل ہے؟
(Kyaa zendegi is gaanv mein mushkil hai?)

6. Who is reserved (for representation)? Is that for women and lower castes?

کس کے لئے تحفظات ہیں؟ خواتین اور ننچھوں کے لئے؟
(Kiske liye tahfazaat haim? Xwoatin aur nichlii zaatiyo ke liye?)

7. Are there any scheduled tribes in this village?

کیا اس گاؤں میں کوئی تحریک جنگی کے لوگ ہیں؟
(Kyaa is gaanv mein koi taxsochit janjaatii ke loog haim?)

8. Are there any OBCs in this village?

کیا اس گاؤں میں کوئی دیگر پسماندہ طبقے کے لوگ ہیں؟
(Kyaa is gaanv mein koi digare pasmande tabaqe ke loog haim?)

9. Are there reservations (for representation) for them?

کیا ان کے لئے تحفظات ہیں؟
(Kyaa unke liye tahfazaat haim?)

10. When Modi came (became PM) has any social improvements happened?

کیا مودی جی آنے کے بعد کوئی سماجی بہتری آئی ہے؟
(Kyaa Moodii jii ke aane ke baad koi samaajii behtaarii aii hai?)

11. Is there any reservations (for representation) for untouchables?

اچھے لوگوں کے لئے کونی تحفظات ہیں؟
(Kyaa achuut logoom ke liye koi tahfazaat haim?)

12. Has there been any communal conflicts in this village?
13. Has there been any caste discrimination in this village?

کیا اس گاؤں میں کوئی ذات نفرت ہے؟
(Kyaa is gaanv mein koi zat nafrat hai?)

14. Has there been any riots in this village?

کیا اس گاؤں میں کوئی ذات امتیاز ہوا ہے؟
(Kyaa is gaanv mein koi zat amtiyaaz hua hai?)

15. According to you, can one speak one’s mind? Or not? (Freedom of speech and fear of retaliation)

آپ کی رائے میں، اپنی بات بول سکتے بیں یا نہیں؟
(Kyaa aapki rai in, aapni baat bool sakte haain ya nahi?)

16. Do you need to stay quiet about certain things? (In fear of persecution, exclusion etc)

کیا آپ لوگوں کو چپچاپ ہونا چاہئے؟
(Kya aap logom ko chupchaap hoonaa caahiyee?)

17. Is there communal harmony between religious groups?

کیا مذہبی گروہوں کے بین دوستی بیں؟
(Kya mazhabii groopoom ke biich mein doostii haim?)
Appendix 2
Fieldwork Report

Case 1, Ghaila 16 December 2015

At the 16 December 2015 between 2-5 pm I conducted fieldwork studies with the former leader of the village panchayat Nadim and the present panchayat leader Obaid Ali in the village of Ghaila in Chinhat panchayat block, outside of Lucknow city. The fieldwork was carried out with the standardized questions I had prepared for the thesis and was conducted in colloquial Hindi/Urdu. Both the current panchayat leader and the former leader are in the same age (34) and are of the Sheikh caste, which is an upper caste. Since Obaid recently got his post as the elections of panchayats in Lucknow were finished at the 15 December, a majority of the information was given by the former leader, Nadim.

The village panchayat consists of three villages, where Ghaila is the main village with around 5000 inhabitants, out of which 2500 are Muslims, and out of these 1400 are eligible to vote in the panchayat. The panchayat includes smaller villages due to administrative reasons for cooperation, but are independent entities. The other two villages Roznabad and Mankhira have 780 and 800 inhabitants. The village is composed of Hindu and Muslim castes and no STs live here but scheduled castes and OBCs do. Of the Hindu castes there are two Pandit families and the lower Hindu castes are Kamhars, Yadavs and Lodhs which are also a part of the OBC definition, while the SCs are Pasis. All these groups are a part of the Hindu caste system, but defined differently in census, as scheduled caste and OBCs. All Muslims in the village are Sunnis and they are divided into the upper castes of Sheikhs, Pathans and Moghuls and the lower castes Dhobis, Darzis, Naus, Faqirs and Telis.

When asked the question if any changes has happened in the village since the emergence of the Narendra Modi government last year 2014, the replies that Nadim and Obaid gave were negative, which means that no positive changes has happen to the community, rather negative changes has happened. Land has become cheaper, after the acquiring of land by the LDA (Lucknow Development Authority, the city political administration) of 2200 acres in the village. This does not benefit the local farmers since they cannot use the land that the authorities are acquiring and they are not in

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118 Appendix 1, p. 1. See question 4.
position to get reasonable prices for their own land and neither can they affect the deals of land acquirements by the local government. These acquirements of land are meant for city dwellers to expand the city with new residential areas, but currently no city dwellers buy land in the village from the farmers on private basis or from the LDAs land. For seven years the land has laid vacant, which affects the lowering of land prices in the village, which makes the villagers more impoverished and their opportunities to administer their own land diminishes.

When asked about tensions in the village, Nadim and Obaid answered that there are no caste conflicts or discrimination and that there is no tensions between religious groups. However, this must be taken as a margin of error since they both are upper caste people, so they cannot necessarily be authorized to talk about caste discrimination as such. However, they can be authorized to talk about religious tensions and they said that there has been a change in mentality between the religious groups in the village, which was not seen before Modi’s government came to power in 2014. This was seen in the rhetoric of one of the panchayat candidates called Ashok Yadav who openly had said before the village panchayat elections that he “did not want Muslim votes” and was not interested at all in Hindu-Muslim communal harmony, which on the other hand had been a focus of the previous Hindu candidate Kailash in the elections of 2010 when Nadim was elected panchayat leader. Kailash had not used rhetoric of communalism, but rather about cooperation and communal harmony. Ashok tried before the elections to encourage the SCs and OBCs to vote according to communal lines (within the Hindu caste system), but it failed and Obaid won with over 1102 votes, and the SCs and OBCs have shown their support for Obaid. This is a clear influence of BJP politics and the tensions created by the BJPs Hindutva mindset to spur on communal tensions, since it had not been the case in the previous panchayat elections of 2010.

There are 15 electoral seats in the village panchayat and this election that just had finished had 105 candidates. Out of these 15 seats nine are reserved and six seats are non-reserved. The outcome of the elections was that six Muslims got elected, one of which is a woman in the general non reserved seats. Among the reserved seats which make up nine seats, scheduled castes occupied five of those, two out of these are women. Among the OBCs reserved group there are four seats, where two are women. That means an overall of five women in a panchayat of 15 seats, which means it fulfills the quota of one third of women in

\[119\] Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 17.
the village panchayat. It also fulfills the quota of giving to the SCs and OBCs the parts they should be quoted in for according to national law in village panchayats with around 60% of the seats.

When questions (کیا آپ کی رائے میں اپنی بات بول سکتے ہیں یا نہیں؟) concerning the UP local and state government handling Muslim community issues were asked, Nadim and Obaid answered that the authorities were not concerned about issues that affect the Muslim community, especially not on the village level. Therefore, they do not feel represented in larger scale politics, even though they feel represented in the local village level panchayat. This can have several reasons, the main one being the size of the Muslim community in this particular village and the fact that it constitutes around 50% of the population. Therefore, representation is higher than in a case where Muslims are a clear minority. Another one can be the fact that communal harmony is prevailing in the village and people do not vote according to communal lines, which means that the OBC and SC communities are voting for Muslim panchayat leaders instead of Hindu leaders according to class lines as rural dwellers sharing the same discrimination from urban authorities.

An interesting aspect of this first part of the fieldwork was that there seems to be an inter religious and inter caste cooperation between SCs, OBCs and Muslims, the groups which usually experience a lot of discrimination. It seems there are perceptions of class unity between the SCs, OBCs and Muslims, which may be due to similar discrimination in the division of labor and property rights in village life and perceptions of exclusion from urban authorities since they belong to the rural community. Nadim and Obaid, as a final remark in the interviews also pointed out that they are voting for BSP in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, along with the SCs and OBCs of the village, which also is a sign of cooperative mentality for change and maybe also for representation.

There seems to be no aspiration by the lower Muslim castes to be included into the OBC and SC quota group in this village, mainly due to the fact that they are unaware of the issue of lower and upper caste Muslim representation. The lower Muslim castes in this village let the higher castes represent them, maybe as a way of promoting rural issues through class representation from the village panchayat to the urban authorities.

120 Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 15.
Case 2, Mutakkipur 23 December 2015 (متکپر) 1-3 pm

The second village I visited for case studies was the village of Mutakkipur which is in the vicinity of Ghaila village and in the same panchayat block of Chinhat. A Muslim woman by name Kahkasha Bano (کہکساں بانو) had won the gram panchayat elections which ended at 14 December with 535 votes in total. I had hoped that I would be able to talk to her but that was not the case. She was pregnant and therefore could not receive visitors, so I interviewed two village elders and also the husband of Kahkasha. The interviews were conducted in colloquial Hindi/Urdu with the same standardized questions as in the previous case study of Ghaila. One of the village elders by name Afsar, a Muslim upper caste (Mughal caste) man in his 40’s, was the first man I interviewed since Kahkasha’s husband would arrive later. Kahkasha’s husband, Mohammed Imran, is 32 years old and also of the Mughal caste. Another village elder called Chand also later on was interviewed about the elections. Chand said that the council did not have correct numbers of the entire population of the village due to migration etc. but that the Muslim population which was around 2400 individuals made up 75% of the entire village population, thus making up 3200 individuals. Concerning castes, there are three Muslim higher castes in the village, i.e. Mughals (Mirza), Sheikhs and Pathans and two SCs which are counted as Hindus. These are Pasis and Chamars and they make up around 25% of the village population. There are Muslim lower castes such as Naus and Telis but their presence is very small.

Concerning village life and problems (کیا مذہبی گروہوں کے بیچ میں دوستی ہے؟) Mohammed insisted on that there was communal harmony in the village and that there were no tensions between religious or caste groups and also there had been no kind of unrest or violence between religious and caste groups. According to Mohammed, Afsar and Chand the village is “equal” in decision making and all people are treated “equally”. This must be taken into caution since they are all upper caste Muslim men in a village where the Muslims make up a majority. (کیا زندگی اس گاؤں میں مشکل ہے؟) However there were problems concerning the water distribution for homes and agriculture in the village since the water reserve tanks were in very bad shape and leaking and that there had been no investment nor check-up by the local government to repair them, nor to compensate the affected villagers.

121 Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 17.
122 ibid., p. 1. See question 5.
There are only two kinds of reservations in the gram panchayat of Mutakkipur. The general reservation, i.e. the electoral reservation where anyone can participate and also the quota for women. There are 13 seats in the gram panchayat and in the previous elections only 4 candidates, who were all Muslims contested. No Hindu candidates contested. Kahkasha Bano got 60% of the votes from the Hindu groups, in other words the SC votes in the village. There was no quota system implied in the village to guarantee OBCs and SCs representation and the respondents gave no figures concerning the legally imposed presence of at least 30% women in the gram panchayat which may suggest that it is actually not 30% women in the panchayat.

Concerning local village politics, the three men all perceive themselves as represented and they also perceive that they have power within the village community, probably due to caste, gender and population dynamics since they are upper caste Muslim men in a Muslim dominated village, so their status is more integrated in the village life than if the Muslims would be a minority in the village. However, they do not perceive that the local political authorities listen to their issues, especially concerning the water supply to homes and irrigation. They also perceive that the local authorities prior to Narendra Modi’s government was formed were more keen to take their issues into consideration, which is not the case now.

Not only people in powerful positions were interviewed but also a neighborhood of lower castes which was in the vicinity from the newly elected gram Pradhans house. A middle aged woman Sunita, was interviewed concerning representation with the same questions as the men previously were asked. She gave a different perspective of it all. Her entire neighborhood claimed they were STs but were not recognized as such by the local authorities or by the village community. Therefore they are not given any kind of reservation quota and feel excluded from local panchayat politics. She spoke in Awadhi which may indicate that they have migrated to the village from another place. This can be due to the fact that STs are not very commonly found in this part of UP, but rather in mountainous areas and to the eastern borders of Bihar. It can also be deliberate since local authorities may not be too keen

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123 Appendix 1, p. 2. See question 6.
124 ibid., p. 3. See question 15.
125 ibid., p. 2. See question 7.
126 ibid., p. 3. See question 13.
to empower the lower castes and classes in this community. People of higher incomes and higher castes have more time to spend on political interests and careers than people affected by poverty and discrimination. Within this dynamic, people from lower castes can also culturally and politically be suppressed by the upper castes to receive an “inferior” identity which also excludes them. This identity is basically rooted in caste dynamics, where the lower castes are told to keep to their duties in the traditional caste society, and let the upper castes “rule” as a form of “status quo”.

Summarizing the visit to Mutakkipur, even though a woman was elected as gram Pradhan she refers to her male relatives or husband to perform political objectives which clearly proves the margin of error of women’s representation as a mere symbolic feature in this village panchayat. Due to the lack of reserved seats for OBCs and SCs the village does not fulfill the legal requirements of the quota of lower castes within gram panchayats. It does neither fulfill the requirement of women’s quota representation even though a woman was elected as gram Pradhan since there was no guarantee that women made up 30% of the panchayat board. Concerning the actual voting, Kahkasha did not win with a large majority since it is only 535 votes out of a total population of 3200; however, it shows that the lower castes, not only Muslims but also especially the Hindu SCs and OBCs by 60% have shown support for her. This could be an indicator to class adherence as rural dwellers facing similar discrimination and exclusion from urban political authorities, rather than communal caste adherence in local politics, but it could also be an indicator of Muslim upper caste domination of the village, since they make up the majority and all of the panchayat members were of upper caste male Muslim background. It also shows that even though the upper caste Muslims who rule the gram panchayat have local power, they do not feel they can participate in local state politics nor be able to affect local authorities when it comes to the issues of water supplies and water reserves etc. They also do not feel like the local authorities or state authorities prioritize them, or try to develop infrastructure in the village which can be seen as a feeling of exclusion from local politics.

**Case 3, Malesemau. 23 December 2015, (ملشمو) 4-6 pm**

The last village for the case studies was the village of Malesemau. This village is very far away from the villages of Ghaila and Mutakkipur in the Chinhat block panchayat. In Malesemau a Muslim woman, Shama Parveen (شاما پروین) was elected as gram Pradhan with 1277 votes. However, when I arrived in the village to perform the fieldwork, I did not get to
meet her or her husband since they were away at a wedding so I interviewed two of her relatives - her brother in law Mohammad Madloob and an older male relative Mohammed Azhar. In the village there were also posters with Shama’s name on, but only portraying her husband Mohammad Farookh which can be seen as a way of using the women’s quota to fulfill men’s political aspirations by using the women’s quota.

Both the interviewed men were upper caste Muslims (Sheikhs) and Madloob was 30 years old and Azhar was 70 years old. Muslims make up 80% of the 7500 villagers, which means that around 6000 Muslims live in the village. Out of this population 2971 people were eligible to vote but only 2463 executed their right, which means that more than 500 people did not participate. This was mainly caused by migration, since a lot of villagers had migrated to other parts of the country and to the Gulf due to high unemployment rates, and also some villagers did not want to participate because of various reasons, according to Azhar. The main Muslim castes in the village were upper castes of Sheikhs, Pathans and Siddiqis and the lower castes are Naus, Telis and Faqirs. Among the Hindus there were SCs such as Yadavs and Shrivastau’s and they all together make up about 30 households. No figures were given in population or in percent of the village population. There are also OBCs in the village but no figures concerning their numbers were given.

When asked about social changes in the village since the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 (کہا مودی جی کے آنے کوئی تبدیلی آئی؟) Azhar replied that that no positive changes have occurred but rather negative ones. The village was previously chosen by the local city development authority to develop infrastructure etc. - which is always promised by local authorities whenever a new election is held and agreements had been set up with Malesemau village to this development program. However the development program was abruptly moved to another village, Mohanlalganj, which made the villagers perceive exclusion from local politics and ways to affect or participate in decision making. It also made them feel upset and not prioritized by the urban authorities. They also perceive that the local urban authorities as well as higher urban authorities do not debate nor highlight their issues in the village. The village has huge problems with infrastructure, partly because they are living in a village community and local politics revolves around urban development and also because they feel excluded due to the abandonment of the infrastructure program that was planned for the village.

127 Appendix 1, p. 1. See question 4.
There are 15 seats in Malesemau out of which two are reserved for OBCs and one for SCs and one seat for women. The village does not fulfill the legal requirements of the Indian government on gram panchayats. There were only two candidates in the latest gram panchayat election that Shama won and a majority of the OBCs and SCs voted for Shama. 

There are no STs living in the village. When asked about communal violence or tensions (کیا اس گاؤں میں کوئی فساد ہوا ہے؟)128 Azhar said that the village is neither affected by communal violence, nor caste discrimination nor religious discrimination or violence. This must be seen as an error source when it comes to credibility since both of the respondents are of Muslim higher castes and also men in a community where the majority of the population is Muslim.

I tried to interview other villagers in the street and also at a flour mill but Azhar, the first respondent accompanied me, which I think also affected the outcome of the interviews with lower caste and working class people. I asked about discrimination and communal violence as well tensions and the villagers, Inshad and Meraj replied that this village had no communal violence. But they also said that there is no caste discrimination, which I doubt would be the case if Azhar did not accompany us. Therefore, I also asked questions concerning freedom of speech, (کیا آپ کی رائن میں، اپنی بات بول سکتے بہنیا ہیں؟)129 to which both respondents also replied with hesitation and said that there were no such issues in the village. The respondents also did not want to tell their political preferences nor about the latest election results and whom they had voted for. Concluding the visit to Malesemau, even though Shama was elected, she is elected as a token for her husband and his family’s political aspirations. The village does not have high levels of quota for lower castes and women which does not meet the legal requirements of the Indian state concerning gram panchayats. Even though there is no communal violence or conflict in the village I can conclude that the influence of Azhar and merely his presence, when I interviewed lower caste villagers was strongly felt.

Unfortunately, independent interviews in this village among the local villagers could not be done which probably would have given a more diverse picture of the political representation of the village. Concerning the next Lok Sabha elections of 2019 the villagers had no idea of which party they should vote for.

The villagers perceive exclusion from urban politics due to their village identity since they feel that the urban authorities do not take their issues of improving the infrastructure of the

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128 Appendix 1, p. 3. See question 12.
129 ibid., p. 3. See question 15.
village into consideration. They perceive that they need to empower their community in order to highlight this issue, through the panchayat and the village council by voting according to class lines as a rural community and not as caste or religion based communal lines.