

## **THE POLITICS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY AND RELIGION: CREATION OF PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

There is hardly a state in the world which owes its existence to religious dogmas excepting Pakistan. Pakistan was born strictly on religious basis and it is not correct to say that religious differences were not responsible for the creation of Pakistan. This great historical event was preceded by a manipulation of religious feelings and stereotyping of historiography for the achievement of political ends. For furtherance of these political ends, a versatile use of historiography and religious sentiments became a handy tool and to a great extent it still remains so. The division of the Indian subcontinent witnessed a bloodbath and had a myriad of implications. In the present context it becomes imperative to avoid a situation similar to the communal orgy of nineteen forty- seven especially in states like India that are sensitive to communal friction. An attempt to replace nationalism by religio-political dogmas embraced by a cloak of sentimentalism and the possibility of a corresponding reactive phenomenon might prove to be very destructive.

**KEY WORD:** Religious Dogmas, Historiography, Communal Friction, Sentimentalism.

The debate among present day historians suggests that religious issues were never the fault line of Hindu-Muslim relations, rather they are 'modern political inventions' created either by the British or the Indian leaders and could have been ignored. The birth of Pakistan is an event which owes its existence in greater part to a man who thought it a crime to mix up politics and religion. However, the essence of the creation of

Pakistan was paradoxically based on religious lines .It is undeniable that religion was the reason for the partition of British India into the dominions of India and Pakistan. Many notions have been put forth with respect to the Indian freedom struggle and reasons for partition of the country. The demand for Pakistan is generally claimed to have been the outcome of Muslim communalism since Muslims were the largest minority in India in 1947 and it is the demand of this largest minority which caused the partition of India. The Indian subcontinent was partitioned on the forceful demand of the Muslims represented by Jinnah and the Muslim League. It was neither the desire of the British nor the dream of the Hindu led Congress to see India divided and separate states emerging out of a single and united entity.<sup>1</sup> The creation of Pakistan, it is argued, left a substantial number of Muslims outside the scope of Muslim sovereignty. These children of a lesser God who amounted to one hundred million were left to the mercy of a hostile majority with nothing but advice of patience and tolerance. Were they not Muslims or was their struggle of slighter value? As time tells they were never spared on any occasion, be it the Babri Mosque incident, Bharat losing a lost cricket match on Indian soil or the Bombay attacks. Communal hatred seems to be an ongoing tale even with no end in view and the Partition saga with its dominant religious overtones seemingly bears the burden<sup>2</sup>. However, taken in a different light these incidents only reinforce the fact that the creation of Pakistan was absolutely indispensable. Notwithstanding the incorporation of fundamental rights in the Indian Constitution, most importantly the right to life and liberty, the right to freedom of religion /and a myriad of other rights, incidents such as the man lynching incident of Dadri only reinstate the fact as to how impossible the implementation of these ‘constitutional’ rights becomes for protection of a susceptible minority in the presence of a hostile majority. The case of the Kashmiri Muslims is an eye-opener in this respect, where the Friday prayers were not allowed from the month of July 2016 to November 2016 to the Muslims in the largest Jamia masjid in the state inspite of the Muslim majority character of the state. Such is the role played by the iron-fist of political parties with shifting majorities at the center in communally volatile states.

If we study the political lives of the most prominent supporters of the idea of Pakistan, a common trend is deducible vis a vis their attitudes in respect of a belief in a unified India and its metamorphosis. Among the first and foremost political thinkers of the Muslims in the subcontinent was the educationist and reformer Sir Syed Ahmed Khan whose political ideas played a vital role in molding Muslim political thought. Sayyid Ahmed Khan was a great believer in religious toleration. He believed that all religions had a certain underlying unity which could be called practical morality. He was also opposed to communal friction. Appealing to Hindus and Muslims to unite, he said in 1883<sup>3</sup>:

Now the both of us live on the air of India, drink the holy waters of the Ganga and Jumna. We both feed upon the products of the Indian soil. We are together in life and death: living in India both of us have changed our blood, the colour of our bodies has become the same , our features have become similar, the Musalmans have adopted numerous Hindu customs , the Hindus have accepted many Muslim traits of conduct, we became so fused that we developed the new language of Urdu , which was neither the language of the Muslims nor that of the Hindus .Therefore, if we accept that part of our lives , which belongs to God , then undoubtedly in consideration of the fact that we both belong to the same country , we are a nation , and the progress and welfare of the country, and both of us , depend on our unity , mutual sympathy , and love , while our mutual disagreement , obstinacy and opposition and ill-feeling are sure to destroy us .

In 1884 , Syed Ahmed Khan said :

“Do you not inhabit the same land? Are you not burned and buried on the same soil? Do you not tread the same ground and live upon the same soil? Remember that the words Hindu and Mohammadan are only meant for religious distinction; otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mohammadan, even Christians who reside in this country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation .When all these different sects can be described as one nation, they must each

and all unite for the good of the country which is common to all.<sup>4</sup>

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan proclaimed Hindus and Muslims to be a nation and four years after making this declaration, he asserted that the *muslims were a 'separate people', a 'separate nation'*. How did this perfect picture of togetherness and one nationhood fade away within a period of four years? What 'drastic' revelation made Sayyid Ahmed make such an assertion within such a short period of time. Sayyid Ahmed Khan came into open conflict with the Congress from 1887. He categorically warned against the 'disaster that the Muslims would court if they supported the Congress'. In the meantime, the Congress had then been demanding that Indian members find a due place in the Imperial and Provincial Councils, but through elections. For Sayyid Ahmed this meant representation in the councils only of the majority (the Hindus) and this too, permanently. It is in this context that he, for the first time, asserted that the Muslims were a separate 'people', a separate 'nation'.<sup>5</sup> The drastic transformation that can be seen in the thought process of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, can also be seen in the evolution of the political thought of Allama Iqbal, the writer of one of the famous Indian national songs, "sare jahan se acha" who for the first time floated the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims. Iqbal, in his presidential address to the 1930 convention of the Muslim League said that he felt a separate nation for Muslims was essential in an otherwise Hindu-dominated subcontinent.

### **Jinnah : The Frankestine Monster <sup>6</sup> and Gandhian Politics Of Religion**

The year 1906 saw the entry into the Congress of Mahomed Ali Jinnah who was hailed as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, of which the 'Lucknow Pact' in 1916 between the Congress and the Muslim League was the crowning achievement.<sup>7</sup> The same Mohamed Ali Jinnah became the separator of Hindus and Muslims in 1947, 31 years from the passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1909, a system of

separate electorates under which all Musalmans were grouped into separate constituencies from which Muslims alone could be elected was introduced. Jinnah initially rejected the provision of separate electorates but by 1910 his views on the same had altered greatly. By 1910, the transformation of Jinnah had occurred because of the attitude which the Indian National Congress adopted towards the partition of Bengal. The partition of Bengal was supported by Muslims as they perceived it as a way out of the domination of Hindu elite who subjected them to economic exploitation in Bengal. In spite of the changed attitude Jinnah still remained in the fore front of efforts aimed at forging Hindu- Muslim unity .It was the result of these efforts that the historic Lucknow pact was concluded. The historical Pact was characterized by the Muslims promising to work with the Hindus to achieve freedom in return for the Congress conceding to the Muslims separate electorates with weightage far in excess of their numerical strength in the provinces where they were in minority. Jinnah attended the Congress sessions as a Nationalist Muslim working for the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims. When Gandhi supported the Khilafat movement led by the two brothers Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali against the abolition of the Khalifate in Turkey after the First World War , the movement was based upon religion .Gandhi wrote :

I claim that with us both the Khilafat is the central fact , with Maulana Mohammad Ali because **it is his religion** , and with me because , in laying down my life for the khilafat , I ensure the safety of the cow , **that is my religion** , from the mussalman knife.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly , attempts to protect the ‘cow from the muslim knife’ still remains a sensitive issue in modern day India , a highly controversial one indeed . Jinnah, however, had warned Gandhi against such encouragement of “fanaticism”<sup>9</sup> of such muslim leaders and their followers. Jinnah had told Gandhi that *he had ruined politics in India by dragging up a lot of unwholesome elements in Indian life and giving them political prominence ,that it was a crime to mix up politics and religion the way he had done* . Gandhi , for sometime remained

indifferent to the views of Muhammad Ali Jinnah as he saw in Khilafat movement an opportunity of achieving political mobilization of Indian society against the British rule. Once this mobilization was achieved Gandhi distanced himself from the Khilafat Movement. He, however, used the mobilization achieved as a result of it to launch non-cooperation movement. The non – cooperation movement targeted to achieve self-rule for Indians without any reservations for minorities. This created a lot of friction between the Muslims and Hindus. Jinnah did not remain immune to this friction. By 1930, Jinnah had begun to despair of the fate of minority communities in a united India and had begun to argue that mainstream parties such as the Congress, of which he was once a member, were insensitive to Muslim interests .At the 1940 All India Muslim League Conference in Lahore, Jinnah made clear his commitment to two separate states in the following words ;

“The Hindus and the Muslims belong to two different religions, philosophies, social customs and literature... To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state.”

A commonality of predicament of the supporters of the idea Of Pakistan comprises in the substitution of the belief in a united India by the urgency of the call for the creation of Pakistan. Transformation of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan , Allama Iqbal and most importantly Muhammad Ali Jinnah from being a messenger of Hindu-Muslim unity into the propounder of a resolution for the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims was reactive in so far as it was the result of the negative attitude that was adopted by the Secular as well as Communal nationalists soon after the inception of the Indian National Movement. Nor did Indian nationalism have truly secular ideological and philosophical underpinnings .The nationalist campaigns often manipulated religious imagery and issues to win popular support .The leaders evidently had no other base to launch their struggle from, disregarding the fact that emotions evoked on the basis of religious identity cannot be prevented

from turning into a frenzy at even the slightest provocation. Nationalist thought tended to share the colonial view that the basic unit of Indian society was the community as defined by religion. From the late nineteenth century, communalists were concerned with the internal make-up of the Indian people. They were concerned over the question of which groups were properly 'Indian'<sup>10</sup>. Nationalist identity came to be described in terms of religion in so far as equating being an Indian with being a Hindu. This was particularly marked in Bengal especially in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Aurobindo Ghosh and Swami Vivekananda and in the brand of extremist nationalism they inspired.<sup>11</sup> For example, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandmath* (1882) linked the Nationalist's struggle with the Hindu cult of Shakti personified in the Goddess Kali and the song *bande mataram* began the virtually a Hindu Bengally National Anthem<sup>12</sup>. Even to this day the Indian Muslims continue to raise the slogan, "*hum hindostan ke hisedar hai kirayadar nahi*" (*We are owners of this land called India, and not mere tenants*). Seeking acceptance in their own land, irrespective of the fact of their being born and buried there. In similar circumstances of doubt and insecurity, Jinnah taking a very pragmatic approach said:

"We have our past experience of the last two and a half year. We have learnt many lessons. We are now apprehensive and can trust nobody ...it has always been taken for granted mistakenly that the Muslims are a minority. He said, Muslims are a nation by any definition of a nation. Hindu and Muslims belong to two religions, philosophies, social customs, literatures. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine and indeed belong to different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their concepts of life are different. They have different epics, different heroes and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is the foe of the other and likewise their victories and defeat, overlap. He also added that, to take together state, one as numerical majority other as a minority must lead to growing discontent. Muslims are a nation according to any definition of a nation and must have their homeland, their territory and their state."<sup>13</sup>

A communal nationalism had begun to grow from 1880's, running parallel to the secular nationalism having its roots in a pluralist vision of civic nationalism. The former established a political process based upon 'communal mobilization', throughout the same period, with an alternative claim to nationhood based upon the Hindu majority religion of India.<sup>14</sup> From 1870s, a section of the Hindu zamindars, money – lenders and middle class professionals (the Bengal Bhadrak) had begun to arouse anti-Muslim sentiments especially in the Bengal. Fully accepting the colonial view of Indian history, they talked and wrote about the 'tyrannical' Muslim rule in the medieval period and the liberating role of the British in 'saving' Hindus from the Muslim oppression. It was declared, totally unhistorically, that Urdu was the language of the Muslims and Hindi of Hindus. The same is reflected in the programmes of The Prayag Hindu Samaj, a society established in Allahabad in 1880. By the early 1890's the Prayag Hindu Samaj along with other organizations in northern India had adopted programmes that included cow protection and script reform: replacing the Arabic script for writing Hindi language with devanagiri, which was the script used for Sanskrit. The Mahasabha's hierarchy demanded that Hindi language should be the *lingua franca* of India.

All over India, anti cow slaughter propaganda was undertaken in the early 1880's. In the year 1893, serious riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims around Patna in Bihar less than a decade after the propagandists of Hindu-nationalist Arya samaj began their activities there. These 1893 disorders, which led to Muslim deaths, ostensibly grew out of the Hindu passion for rescuing cows from the Muslim slaughterhouses<sup>15</sup>. The campaign was, however, primarily directed not against the British but against Muslims, the British cantonments, for example, were left free to carry on cow slaughter on a large scale.<sup>16</sup> Cow slaughter prohibition and Beef ban still remains contemporarily, heated issues and have evoked a lot of tension among different religious groups and the rising phenomenon of cow vigilantism has resulted into unwarranted perpetration of acts by unauthorized groups such as the lynching of a man at



Dadri which evoked a lot of debate and criticism especially in the media.

Among the groups which contributed to a negative campaign against Muslims was the Hindu Mahasabha. The Mahasabha has been described as one of the most militant Hindu organizations in the 1930's and 1940's.<sup>17</sup> While Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League bear heavy responsibility - since they demanded and pressed for Pakistan - the Congress cannot escape blame. Least of all the hypocritical Sangh Parivar. Its chief mentor V.D. Savarkar formulated the two-nation theory in his essay *Hindutva*, published in 1923, 16 years before Jinnah came up with it. The Hindu Mahasabha leader Lala Lajpat Rai wrote in *The Tribune* of December 14, 1924;

"Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier; (2) Western Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India." This was 16 years before the League adopted the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore, on March 23, 1940.<sup>18</sup>

The first session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha was held in April 1915 under the presidentship of the Maharaja of Kasim Bazar. In 1937 at the 19th session of the Hindu Mahasabha held at Ahmedabad, Veer Savarkar in his presidential address asserted:

"India cannot be assumed today to be Unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main —the Hindus and the Muslims."

The existence and activities of the Communal Hindu organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha added to the fears and insecurities of the Muslims. They actively opposed the policy of giving adequate safeguards to the minorities so as to

remove their fears of domination by the majority. In every country, the religious or linguistic or national minorities have, because of their numerical position felt at one time or the other that their social and cultural rights might suffer. But when the majority has by words and deeds given proof that these fears are groundless the fears of the minorities have disappeared. On the other hand, if a section of the people belonging to the majority becomes communal or sectional and starts talking and working against the minorities, the minorities tend to feel unsafe. Similarly, the Punjab Hindu Sabha was founded in 1909. Its leaders attacked the National Congress for trying to unite Indians into a single nation. They opposed the Congress' anti-imperialist politics. Instead they argued that Hindus should placate the foreign government in their fight against Muslims. One of its leaders Lal Chand declared that a Hindu should believe that he was a "Hindu first and an Indian later."

### **The Shuddi And Sangathan Movements (1920's)**

The attitude of the Hindu communalists was revealed in many situations followed by controversies and disorder. The Mahasabhaites patronized the anti-Muslim movements such as the Shuddhi and Sangathan with the aim of terrorizing and converting Muslims back to Hinduism<sup>19</sup>." This phenomenon finds its modern day reincarnate in the "ghar wapsi movement" which evoked a lot of criticism lately. Sadly, this party also supported the writing of pamphlets/articles/pieces critical of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) and the leading Muslim religious and historical personalities. *Rangila Rasul* or Rangeela Rasool (meaning 'Promiscuous Prophet') was a book published during a period of confrontation between Arya Samaj and Muslims in the Punjab during the 1920's. It was written by an Arya Samajist named Pandit M.A. Chamupati or Krishan Prashaad Prataab or Jivan Das in 1927, whose name, however, was never revealed by the publisher, Rajpal in Lahore. On the basis of Muslim complaints, Rajpal was arrested but acquitted in April 1929 after 5 years of trial because there was no law against insult to religion. Such an attack on the religious sentiments of the Muslims reaffirmed the fears as to their future situation in an

independent India. The Mahasabha also called for the purification of the Hindus by withdrawing participation of Hindus in Muslim festivals; it even encouraged playing music before mosques at the time of prayers and instigated anti-cow-killing riots. One of Mahasabha's aims was to train Hindus for "self-defence" with the aim of driving out (meaning ethnic cleansing) the Muslims from India.<sup>20</sup> In modern India, this trend is still found prevalent time and again. The politically generated inter community and intra community trust deficit is horrible. Pointing to the recent Kishtwar communal riots it has been said the VDC's (Village Defence Committees) are a great threat to the social ties. It has been reported that arming of a particular community, in fact any community in the name of self-defence is creating two major problems viz., communal riots and trust deficit between people of different communities.<sup>21</sup>

The speeches and writings of some of the militant nationalists had a strong religious and Hindu tinge. They identified Indian culture and the Indian nation with the Hindu religion and Hindus. They tried to abandon the elements of a composite culture. For example, Tilak's propagation of the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals, Aurobindo Ghose's semi-mystical concept of India as a mother and nationalism as a religion, the terrorist's oath before goddess Kali and the initiation of the Anti-Partition agitation with dips in the Ganga could hardly appeal to the Muslims. In fact, such actions were against the spirit of their religion, and they could not be expected as Muslims to associate with these and other similar activities. Nor could Muslims be expected with full enthusiasm when they saw Shivaji or Pratap being hailed not merely for their historical roles but also as "national" leaders who fought against the "foreigners".<sup>22</sup>

The implantation of the two nation notion also owes its development to the misadventures of the use of language. Language most certainly became the most exploited weapon of setting up a wall between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Mahasabha's hierarchy demanded that Hindi language should be the lingua franca of India. It was declared, totally

unhistorically , that Urdu was the language of the Muslims and Hindi of Hindus. Sayyid Ahmed Khan in 1883 observed that the newly developed language of Urdu was neither the language of the Muslims nor that of the Hindus which contradicts such contention as unhistorical and entirely baseless<sup>23</sup>. The motive of such contentions lay in the communal effort to separate the Hindus and the Muslims. Also a mass propaganda about the tyranny of the Muslim rule in India in the Mughal period was launched, identifying the “tyrant” by his religion and not as natives of a particular region. Hindu zamindars , money-lenders , talked and wrote about the ‘tyrannical’ Muslim rule in the medieval period and the liberating role of the British in ‘saving’ Hindus from the Muslim oppression. Even though the Muslim masses were poor and oppressed by taxes as the Hindu masses , even though both were looked down upon by the rulers, nobles, chiefs and zamindars, whether Hindu or Muslim ,with contempt and regarded as low creatures , *yet these writers declared that all Muslims were rulers in medieval India and all Non-Muslims were the ruled*. The manner in which Indian History was taught in colleges and schools in those days also contributed to the growth of communal feelings among the educated Hindus and Muslims. British Historians and following them, the Indian historians described the medieval period of Indian history as the Muslim period. Aurangzeb, for instance, became the hated ‘ Muslim’ ruler . The rule of Turk, Afghan and Mughal rulers was called Muslim Rule.<sup>24</sup> Such errors have been committed again and again, sometimes out of negligence and sometimes purposefully. Why not in the case of the British Tyranny was the tyrant identified by its religion: Christianity? It is this kind of standard historiographic practice or shorthand that has given birth to our fixations with such misleading phraseology which is why this nagging question remains : Why make an exception in the case of Islam alone ?”<sup>25</sup> All this was seen by many contemporary observers. Gandhi , for example ,wrote: “Communal harmony could not be permanently established in our country so long as highly distorted versions of history were taught in her schools and colleges, through the history textbooks” In addition , the communal view of history was spread widely through poetry, drama, historical novels and

short stories, newspapers and popular magazines , pamphlets and, above all, orally through public platform, classroom teaching, socialization through family and private conversation.<sup>26</sup> The fate of school education in India is still in jeopardy in as much as the content of books is distorted and put together in a completely different manner depending wholly on the political party that comes to power time after time in the endeavour of imposing its own versions of history and creation , thereby , of a particular type of socio-political set up often inspired by religious influences.

### **CONCLUSION**

The partition of India was accompanied by some of the most tragic events in the history of mankind. A question that cannot be avoided is whether the partition of India was inevitable. A retrospective evaluation of the forces leading to this event is necessary keeping in view the blame game that followed this so called ‘vivisection’. The essence of the matter rests in the two nation theory and the highly accentuated Muslim nationalism. The two nation theory had many proponents and may not be in actuality an attack on the unity of India . As Jaswant Singh in his book states in the following words , “Islam came to India wielding the evangelizing sword of the invader, in consequence it arrived as an outsider and , atleast initially , remained just that (an alien faith .)”

The endeavors of having to keep intact the ‘vedic foundation’ of the ‘Indian marvel’ which Mr.Singh in his book identifies to be the main problem , raises questions as to the efficacy of the secularist ideals that the Constitution of India so eloquently proclaimed and is regarded as basic structure by the Supreme Court of India in S R Bomai’s Case <sup>27</sup> . The cause of the friction between the Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent which led to the partition of 1947 still continues to perturb the peaceful co-existence of the two. Isn’t then this endeavor to keep this foundational layer ,“vedic” responsible for cultivating the feeling of separatism among the Muslims , for separation brought forth from one end or the other tends to tear apart . Thus was the Hindu communalism and not Musalman Communalism responsible for tearing apart the ideal of unity

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and the birth of a Muslim state of Pakistan. The division of the Indian subcontinent witnessed a bloodbath and had a myriad of implications. In the present context it becomes imperative to avoid a situation similar to the communal orgy of nineteen forty- seven especially in states like India that are sensitive to communal friction. An attempt to replace nationalism by religio-political dogmas embraced by a cloak of sentimentalism and the possibility of a corresponding reactive phenomenon might prove to be very destructive.

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