**The Muslim Nationalism**

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| The uprising of 1857-58 was the last fitful assertion of an all but moribund Mughal Empire. Mutinous sepoys had marched from Meerut, the site of the first outbreak, to Delhi proclaiming their intention to restore the poet-emperor Bahadur Shah II to imperial glory. British forces with Punjabi sepoys recaptured Delhi and banished the emperor to Burma, where he died in penury in 1862. British distrust of Muslim aristocracy resulted from the rebellious sepoys' attempt to restore the power of the emperor. Muslim leaders were alleged to have had a major role in planning and leading the revolt, although the revolt itself was a series of badly planned and uncoordinated uprisings and the principal leaders, Nana Sahib and Tantia Topi, were Hindus. In the eyes of British rulers, Muslim leaders had been discredited.  As a consequence, the landed Muslim upper classes in the north Indian heartland retreated into cultural and political isolation, while fellow Muslims in Punjab were rewarded for assisting the British. The former failed to reemerge economically and produced no large group comparable to the upwardly mobile British-educated Hindu middle class. They did not revise the doctrines of Islam to meet the challenges posed by alien rule, Christian missionaries, and revivalist Hindu sects, such as the Arya Samaj, attempting reconversion to Hinduism. The former Muslim rulers of India were in danger of becoming a permanent noncompetitive class in the British Raj at the very time the forces of Indian nationalism were gathering strength.  One response to British rule came to be known as the Deoband Movement, which was led by the ulama, who were expanding traditional Islamic education. The ulama also sought to reform the teaching of Islamic law and to promote its application in contemporary Muslim society. They promoted publications in Urdu, established fund-raising drives, and undertook other modern organizational work on an all-India basis. While most Deobandis eventually were to support the Indian National Congress and a united India, a group that favored the creation of Pakistan later emerged as the core of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam party.  Another response was led by Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98, known as Sir Syed) and was called the Aligarh Movement after the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (now Aligarh Muslim University), which he founded in 1875 at Aligarh in north-central India. Sir Syed considered access to British education as the best means of social mobility for the sons of the Muslim gentry under colonial rule.  Meanwhile, the beginnings of the Indian nationalist movement were to be discerned in the increasing tendency to form all-India associations representing various interests. English-speaking Indians, predominantly middle-class but from different parts of the country, were discovering the efficacy of association and public meetings in propagating their views to a wider audience and in winning the attention of the British government. In 1885 the Indian National Congress (also referred to as Congress) was founded to formulate proposals and demands to present to the British.  A national, all-India forum, Congress was an umbrella organization. Many of its members envisioned a long British period of tutelage and advocated strictly constitutionalist and gradualist reforms, but after World War I, Congress argued for a speedy end to alien rule. The idea of the territorial integrity of India and opposition to any sectarian division of India, however, always remained sacrosanct to Congress.  Although Sir Syed often voiced demands similar to those made by the founders of Congress--local self-government, Indian representation on the viceroy's and the governors' councils, and equal duties for Indian members of the Indian Civil Service and the judicial service--he remained aloof when Congress was founded and advised his followers not to join Congress, because he thought the organization would be dominated by Hindus and would inevitably become antigovernment. It has been argued that Sir Syed's fear of Hindu domination sowed the seeds for the "Two Nations Theory" later espoused by the All-India Muslim League (also referred to as Muslim League), founded in 1906, and led to its demand for a separate state for the Muslims of India-- reinforcing his view that the British were the only guarantor of the rights of the Muslims. Sir Syed argued that education and not politics was the key to Muslim advancement. Graduates of Aligarh generally made their careers initially in administration, not politics, and thus were not greatly affected by the introduction of representative institutions at the provincial level by the India Councils Act of 1892.  Events in Bengal proved that agitation was as useful as politics. Lord Curzon (George Nathaniel Curzon), the viceroy, partitioned the large province of Bengal (which then included Bihar and Orissa) in 1905. Although the province was unwieldy, Curzon's plan divided the Bengali speakers by creating the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and reducing the original province to western Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. The eastern province had a Muslim majority.  A massive antipartition campaign was launched against the British by Hindus in Bengal, using constitutional methods as well as terrorism spearheaded by revolutionaries. The partition of Bengal was annulled in 1911. The province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was dissolved, Bengal proper was reunited, Assam was separated, and a new province of Bihar and Orissa was created. Although the reunited Bengal province had a small Muslim majority, ambitious Muslims in the province were disgruntled and looked to the Muslim League for better prospects.  In 1906 the All-India Muslim League had been founded in Dhaka to promote loyalty to the British and "to protect and advance the political rights of the Muslims of India and respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government." It was also stated that there was no intention to affect the rights of other religious groups. Earlier that same year, a group of Muslims--the Simla Delegation--led by Aga Khan III, met the viceroy and put forward the concept of "separate electorates." If the proposal were accepted, Muslim members of elected bodies would be chosen from electorates composed of Muslims only, and the number of seats in the elected bodies allotted to Muslims would be at least proportional to the Muslim share of the population, but preferably "weighted" to give Muslims a share in seats somewhat higher than their proportion of the population. The principles of communal representation, separate electorates, and weightage were included in the Government of India Act of 1909 and were expanded to include such other groups as Sikhs and Christians in later constitutional enactments. |