**The Birth of Muslim Nationalism in South Asia (1857-1947)**

**Introduction**

In this report an attempt is made to figure out the rise and development of Muslim nationalism and how constitutional reforms by the British government intensified it. The report will analyze how the partition of India was the the result of strong developments towards Muslim nationalism, which began in a constitutional shape in the second half of the nineteenth century. It will also observe the role of Muslim League in developing political awareness among Muslims and how it led to Muslim nationalism. The role of Jinnah and his progressive ideology on muslims as their leader and how the philosophical views of Iqbal groomed the muslim beliefs and ideology.

**Main Theme**

According to **Jamil Ud-din (1943),** Jinnah said that Pakistan Movement started when the first non-Muslim in India was converted to Islam. This may not have much significance, what it meant was the beginning of a new ideology. A state gives birth to a nation and a nation is generally recognized with some reference to a state.A nation is formed on the basis of color, caste, creed and area. However according to Islam, religion comes as a founding basis for its nation and a nation is built on it consequently. Hence, Muslim leaders of the subcontinent considered Muslims a separate nation which reflected their social and cultural identity.

The cultural and political history of the sub-continent shows that Muslims have always been hostile towards non-Muslim political leaders which most of the time seemed to be against their interest. Hindu leaders in this case exploited this difference between the two majorities, Muslims and Hindus to their own political interest. It is an interesting fact to observe how Hindu leaders who promoted a secular state, however, failed by adding fuel to the fire. This developed the two-nation theory and Muslim nationalism was upheld because of this.

**Causes/Factors**

**Formation of Congress and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan**

Muslim Nationalism’s main goal initially revolved around the reaction to the actions of Congress. 1885 was the year Indian National Congress came into existence and the year when the idea of nationalism took its first step in the subcontinent. As Congress developed as a political, nationalist organization, Muslim nationalism moved forward too in order to crystallize their ideology into a nation too.

In 1883, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was against the western framework as it had adverse effects on Muslim interests **(Hamid, 1967)**. He thought wherever Muslims were enabled to vote in elections, they owed their success to dominating influence of non-Muslim Majority and their role was not felt within their own homeland. This ideology formed the basis Muslim political awareness, asserting Muslim nationalism

The consciousness of Muslim nationalism took a practical turn in Simla Deputation, 1906. This can be seen as the first constitutional attempt in which Governor-General Lord Minto gave his consent to separate electorate for Muslims. The Hindu-Muslim unrest became greater than before. Muslims were recognized as a distinct community with historical and military background to the British since their forefathers ruled over the land **(Prasad, 1999)**. Hindu leaders, who were preachers of a secular state viewed it as a devastating constitutional reform to their political goals and that the Muslim nationalism has become their enemy. The unrest in the Hindu majority increased as they were not being able to rule over other minorities and were unable to impose their own ideology and concept of nation. Muslims were against these believes as their idea of state included a nation Islam was the basis of the nation which devised all other aspects which help in building up a nation.

Simla delegation in 1906 was simply the adoption of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s memorandum in 1892. Sir Agha Khan explains in his book ***The Memoirs of Agha Khan****,* the delegation asked the British government that Muslims of India should not be regarded as a minority but as a nation whose rights and obligations must be protected by the state. He goes on and accepts that the demands of his delegation were the foundation of all future constitutional proposals and its inevitable consequence was the partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan.

**All India Muslim League and Partition of Bengal**

The success of Simla deputation demanded the Muslim leaders to create a political representation to protect political and nationalist ideas of Muslims. The main goal of the organization was to protect the effectiveness of separate representation of Muslims where they were treated as minorities.

Another immediate goal was protection of the ruling of partition of Bengal. Although, partition of Bengal was another time delaying tactic for British exploitation in India, it infuriated most educated Bengalis, Hindus and Muslims, students and professionals. Bengal was the focal point of the swadeshi agitation. However, majority of muslims gave a favorable response. Partition of Bengal gave way to muslims in East Bengal to be free of Hindu dominance. It also helped uplift the political representation of muslims in the government. An interesting change in behavior is seen both in muslims and hindus. Poor muslims were rejoiced of being free of oppression as they could be free in following their beliefs. It gave further strength to muslim nationalism it showed them a glimpse how different their lives could in separate state, as a separate nation.

However, there was no such appreciation shown by neither the muslim elites nor the hindus. In fact, Jinnah, also known as the founder of Pakistan did not give any attention to a separate muslim state. He was a member of Indian National Congress at the time.

The Morley-Minto reforms in 1909 are recognized as one of the biggest achievements of Muslim League. It not only revolutionized the concept of Muslim nationalism but gave the ideology shoes to walk in. Muslims were now more interested in Muslim nationalism and Indian nationalism was now only its way. It is true to some extent that British themselves also played a part its Muslim nationalism. Even though the intention was never to create a powerful enemy, but an ally to counter a stronger opposing force which used to be its previous ally.

**Jinnah’s Impact on Muslim Nationalism**

In the coming years of annulment of Partition of Bengal in 1911, Jinnah joined Muslim league. His policy, ideology and views were seen and marked as double standard. His noteworthy effort in Lucknow Pact in 1916 created further discontent. Hindus not only accepted Muslims as a separate identity, they lost power in their claim of a secular state. Meanwhile, a nationalist idea of “a muslim state in the Indian state” kept on growing. This had a significant impact on Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms as well as on three the Round Table Conferences (1930-32).

Jinnah’s transformation from Indian nationhood to muslim nationalism can be seen after the events of 1937 in the Congress “Tyranny” rule of 1937-39 which made him realize how his concept of the charismatic muslim community cannot withstand Hindu Rule. He finally replaced his English outfit a karakuli cap and tight Shalwar Kameez. Muslims already saw him as his leader even before the Pakistan Resolution in 1940. Muslims had a leader, they had an ideology, those political rallies raised awareness of muslim nationalism, all they needed was a separate state. Even though, Pakistan Resolution may seem like the only cause of muslim nationalism it was the result of the efforts Jinnah and others have made.

Jinnah’s evolution in his ideology and the learning curve his beliefs went through provided muslims a new perspective on the idea of nationalism. Although, western cultures deny the interference of religion in the formation of a nation and hence a state, the deep-seated ideology proved even Jinnah wrong on his perspective of nationalism. Many critics criticize him on using Islam as fuel to achieve political goals, however, he understood that muslim nationalism had better chances and better practicality rather than Indian nationalism.

S“You will find that in course of time, Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims; not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.” Jinnah always believed religion as part of the identity and not the other way around which is on the contrary to the majority of Islamic beliefs.

**Iqbal and His Idea of Nationalism**

"It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us the truth that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members."

Iqbal’s philosophy of khudi (self) has a significant role on Muslim’s perspective on a nation. Iqbal raised awareness among muslims by teaching them to know themselves by discovering their roots. In the nineteenth century Europe has declared and proven their dominance over the muslim world. They lost their independence one after the other, and lost their cultural pride and belief in themselves.

Iqbal’s poetry taught muslims to build their own narrative which was destroyed by the British to the core. A sense of pride, justice, self-exploration educated muslims to be self-aware. The teachings of Iqbal helped the nation to groom their minds into growing from an infant to an adult.

**Critical Appraisal**

The birth of Muslim Nationalism in South Asia imposes the idea on the muslim community that how muslims regained their roots back from the British after the war of Independence. Key figures like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal raised muslims by studying the ideologies of the west and taught them how muslims could regain their idea of nation. They not only helped in defining it but also helped them in redesigning it. However certain critics raised voices to question these approaches and if they were the best course of action or not.

When birth of Muslim nationalism is discussed the first thing that is accepted is the death of muslim ideologies that were a precursor to these events. A hilly road can be dangerous but a straight road with no end goal can easily make you hopeless and lose yourself in despair. That’s why ideas of muslim nationalism and two-nation theory were born. However, these attempts were not to revive something old, but to create something new. Muslim leaders of the time realized the weaknesses they had which led to the current situation of muslims at that time. That is why critic raise the question of what if there was a better way. Even after the efforts the muslim community seems to be raised in a wrong way. The feeling that even after all this effort we still have identity crisis.

One thing that the critics are right about is the massive difference of ideologies before and after the war. Both are a part of us and denying any one of them has led to massive ignorance among the public.

To conclude, the approach to raising the muslims as a nation was not perfect but the best we got. We still cannot know and only assumptions can be made. However, the end result is Pakistan’s ideology is still not mature. There always seems a missing piece in the argument of muslim nationalism being complete and ideal as an ideology or not. However, one thing which has kept on growing since its birth is the idea of muslim nationalism and that no ideology has come anywhere close to it.

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