

nature of Ghalib's diary also points out that almost all post-rebellion negotiations of the British and Muslims can only make sense if read within the realm of politics; culture alone fails to carry the burden of Muslim representation.

## NOTES

1. This chapter is reproduced here with the permission of Taylor and Francis Publishers Limited. Previous publication details: "The Indian Rebellion of 1857 and Mirza Ghalib's Narrative of Survival," *Prose Studies* Vol. 31(1) 2009: 40–54.
2. For details about Ghalib's pension petition see P. Hardy, 'Ghalib and the British', *Ghalib: The Poet and his Age*, Ralph Russell, Ed., New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, 54–69.
3. This perception of Ghalib exists in the popular realm only and not in scholarly opinion.
4. By far the best translation in English of Ghalib's selected works is *The Seeing Eye* by Ralph Russell.
5. For a good explanation of Sharif culture See David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, 35–92.
6. The page numbers for Ambedkar's work are from a privately bound copy and may not correspond to a published copy. B.R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, 1945. The text is also available online: <http://www.Columbia.edu/itc/mealac/Pritchett/00ambedkar>, 17 July 2009.
7. All citations from Ghalib's Urdu letters are from Volume 1 and are in my translation.
8. For details on this particular habit of Ghalib see Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 164–209.
9. According to Khwaja Ahmad Farooqi, Ghalib 'attended the Mughal court frequently during the revolt of 1857, fully shared the jubilation of Indians on the fall of Agra' (19).
10. This has been one of the most important imperial strategies and even finds its expression in our own times in the rhetoric of the United States government about the Abu Ghraib torture case in Iraq. The US policy makers insisted that it should be seen as acts of individual transgression and not as systemic, for the latter is an indefensible project.

## 2

## Post-Rebellion India and the Rise of Muslim Exceptionalism

The political landscape altered drastically in post-rebellion India. While for the British it started the final phase of the consolidation and legitimization of the raj, for the Muslims of India the beginning of the raj also initiated the politics of the popular, in which the Muslim imaginary was constantly haunted by their loss of power, their immediate condition after the rebellion, and their anxieties about a political future. Overall, a general mythology of Muslim troubles and backwardness took hold and launched the multifaceted Muslim campaign for creating a particularly Muslim space within the British system.

As stated earlier, the Muslim perception of politics was transformed after the rebellion, but so was the British view of Indian politics. The so-called Muslim *question* became critical to the British, and it became imperative for them to work towards creating a hegemonic relationship with India's Muslims. It was this need of the British to create their hegemony and the Muslim attempts to be included within the British hegemonic structure that eventually brought about the idea of Muslim nationhood. The practice of divide-and-rule in India has been broached by many a scholar, but what really needs to be studied is that the whole edifice of British power in India depended upon creating a hegemonic relationship with the Muslims of India. This chapter explores some seminal British and Muslim texts to tease out the genesis of the idea of Muslim exceptionalism and the centrality of the Muslim question to the post-rebellion British policies.

Before I attempt a textual analysis of my chosen texts, I find it apt to first provide a brief discussion of Paul Brass's *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, for this chapter, in a way, challenges Brass's main assertion about the rise of Muslim national consciousness. In a chapter entitled 'Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces' Paul Brass questions the established historical assumptions about the nature of Hindu–Muslim

differences. Brass sums up these flawed historical assumptions as the idea of 'the backwardness of the Muslims compared to the Hindus', the failure of the Muslim elite to 'compete with Hindus for English education and government jobs', and finally, a belief that the Hindus 'took advantage of the new opportunities and moved ahead of the Muslims' (120). In response to these normative assumptions in Indian historiography, Brass suggests:

This entire argument and its assumptions do not apply to the United Provinces and...the objective situation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in the United Provinces was in most respects exactly the opposite of that described above. (121)

Thus, the main crux of Brass's argument is that the traditionally held views about the relative backwardness of Muslims as compared to Hindus did not really exist in the United Provinces; but rather this perception develops as a mobilizing strategy against the actual existing conditions that were not so terrible for the Muslims of United Provinces. Brass also moves on to trace the real cause of such commonly held views by the Muslim elite and the populace. Thus, in Brass's view, 'a myth which originated in yearnings by an upper class for the maintenance of aristocratic privilege...when attached to the theory of Muslim backwardness, became later, a means of uniting elites and mass in the Muslim community by exploiting fears of Hindu dominance' (140). Brass provides one British text as the core source of this myth-making process: W.W. Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans*, published in 1871. In Brass's view, Provinces, and the mobilisation of the myth of Muslim backwardness owed its birth to the published text of a British civil servant. Brass opines as follows about Hunter's text and its attendant impact on the Muslim politics:

Hunter's arguments, generalised for the whole India, soon became integrated, with embellishments, into the minds of Muslim elites, who used them to appeal to the British policy-makers and later to the Muslim masses to separate the Muslim from Hindu interests. (141)

Thus, interestingly, we are told that not only did the Muslims of United Provinces have no factual basis for any sort of particular communal grievances, but that even the myth of such grievance percolated down to the Muslims through a work produced by a British official. The native, it

seems, is not even capable of imagining and visualizing his own condition under a new regime. Of course, Brass's misplaced assertion has already been complicated in the first chapter, for Ghali's account of the rebellion is already an incipient narrative of Muslim particularity, but this chapter, I hope, will convincingly refute Brass's version of the downward filtration theory. In the ensuing pages I juxtapose Hunter's work with that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's to suggest, among other things, that the idea of Muslim particularity was shaped much earlier than Hunter's putative work about the Muslims was published.

#### SAYYID AHMAD KHAN: THE CAUSES OF THE INDIAN REVOLT

Published in Urdu in 1859, *Asbab-e-Baghawat-e-Hind* was the first detailed Muslim treatment of the specific causes of the 1857 Rebellion, especially due to its focus on the particularities of the Muslim involvement in the rebellion. The author, a survivor of the rebellion and a British Indian Civil Servant, lays down through this particular document the foundations of what later, at least in Muslim elite historiography, becomes the idea of Muslim exceptionalism. Sayyid Ahmad's account also dispels the overarching Cambridge thesis that it was the European stimulus that launched the liberal notion of citizenship and eventually nationalistic politics. I will, henceforth, discuss the process of production of this particular text as well as its eventual appropriation by the Muslim freedom movement. It is this particular document that became instrumental in making the Muslim question central to the British administration of India from the point of view of the Muslim natives of India.

The writing and publication of *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* was not without its attendant dangers. Sir Sayyid's biographer, Altaf Hussain Hali informs us that post-rebellion India 'was an exceedingly dangerous period. There was no freedom whatsoever to voice ones opinions' (91). Hali also declares that conditions were exceedingly harsh for the Muslims. 'To incriminate a Muslim,' he writes, 'there was no need for any proof' (91). It was under such perilous circumstances that Sayyid Ahmad Khan wrote this particular work: a political narrative of courage aimed at affecting and altering the British view of their Muslim subjects. This narrative, in its very materiality and means of production, also defies the European stimulus thesis and places the agency of creating a Muslim response within the native structures of the public imperative: the need for the elite to speak for, and work in the name of the people to legitimate their own

place within the British political order. The attempt was not without its dangers for the work was produced at the height of British dominance over India where a hegemonic relationship related to the bourgeois liberal discourse of rights had not been established, for the country was 'under martial law' (Hali 91). Hali also informs us that 'when the work was finished, without waiting for an English translation, Sir Sayyid sent the Urdu version to be printed' (93). When the printed copies were received Sayyid's friends beseeched him 'not to send the pamphlet to the parliament or the Government of India' (93). Yet another of his friends 'begged him to burn the books rather than put his life in danger' (93). Sayyid replied that:

He was bringing these matters to the attention of the British for the *good of his own people*, of his country and of the government itself. He [also] said that if he came to any harm while doing something that would greatly benefit the rulers and the subjects of India alike, he would gratefully suffer whatever befell him. (Emphasis added, 93)

There are two aspects of Sayyid's lived experience that lend him the courage to converse with a very dictatorial regime of his time: he can make his claims under the rubric of loyalty, which he had already proven during the rebellion,<sup>1</sup> and by employing what Ranjit Guha calls the idiom of obedience ('Dominance Without' 252). The work was not distributed in India, but 'almost all the 500 copies [were] sent to England' (Hali 94). Hence, this particular work was written primarily for a British audience, where, Hali points out, it was 'discussed by Parliament' (96). The editors of this particular edition of the pamphlet inform us that when it was finally discussed in the British Parliament, the Foreign Secretary, Cecil Batton, 'made a strong speech against it and said that this person had written a very seditious essay, and that he should be interrogated and punished accordingly' (Khan 8). This suggests that *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, though it entered native Muslim politics at a later stage, did launch a series of parliamentary discussions in England, and was important in highlighting the particularity of the Muslim situation, and certainly made the question of Muslim grievances central to the British parliamentary discussion of India.

*The Causes of the Indian Revolt* is divided into two major parts: the first refutes all the reasons forwarded about the rebellion by the British press and men of letters; while the second explains the causes from a native, often Muslim, point of view. Sayyid Ahmad Khan first gives the main

cause of the rebellion and then goes on to explain its attendant ramifications under five separate registers. To him, rebellion is a terminal manifestation of a long process of native grievances against their British administration. In his words, 'a vast store of explosive material had been collected. It wanted but the application of a match to light it; and that match was applied by the Mutinous army' (53). Hence, from the very start, Sir Sayyid aims to dispel the notion of a spontaneous event fuelled by religious fanaticism and hatred into a process which ensures that, if the contours of this process are outlined, then a long rehabilitative phase could replace the retributive and summary justice that followed the rebellion. Sir Sayyid goes on to articulate the main reason for the rebellion:

I believe this Rebellion owes its origin to one great cause to which all others are but secondary branches, so to speak, of the parent stem... Most men, I believe, agree in thinking that it is highly conducive to the welfare and prosperity of Government...that people should have voice in its Councils. It is from the *voice of the people* only that governments can learn whether its projects are likely to be well received...There is no reason why the natives of this country should be excluded from the Legislative Council and, hence, it is that you come upon the one great root of all this evil...From causes connected with this matter sprang all the evil that has lately happened. (61-3).

Sir Sayyid does not argue about the native lack of representation from within the norms of a liberal bourgeois vision of a civic state, but rather from a different utilitarian paradigm. The purpose of the native representatives is to act as native informants who can 'teach' the government a better way of reaching the native populations, for the government 'has not succeeded in acquainting itself with the daily habits, the modes of thought and of life, the likes and dislikes, and the prejudices of the people' (63). Here lies the crux of Sir Sayyid's whole argument: the British need to create a native collaborator class upon which the whole edifice of the raj can stand; in other words, a move from the mercantile dominant policies of the East India Company to the future hegemony of the raj. At this stage, it must be noted that Sir Sayyid cannot argue from within the bourgeois liberal ideal of equal representation; he must instead argue from the perspective of the utility of native participation to the raj, and he must also argue on the plane of obedience under the general rubric of loyalty. Thus, as a text with a specific focus on the plight of Muslims, Sir Sayyid's pamphlet ensures the creation of a space for Muslims within

the British administration of India, and his timely intervention precedes any British works about the subject.

Sir Sayyid then goes on to explain the concomitant consequences of the lack of native representation under five different areas. All these five arguments highlight the importance of native informants, for if there had been such a class, such misunderstanding of the British administration would have not arisen in the first place. Consequently, through this one document Sir Sayyid writes, the native informant, who had previously been foreclosed, into the very fibre of the British administration of India. Sir Sayyid lists the five concomitant causes of the native lack of representation as follows:

1. Ignorance on the part of the people: by which I mean misapprehension of the intentions of the government.
2. The passing of such laws and regulations and forms of procedure as jarred with the established customs and practice of Hindustan, and the introduction of such were in themselves objectionable.
3. Ignorance on the part of the government of the condition of the people—; of their modes of thought and of life; and of the grievances through which their hearts were becoming estranged.
4. The neglect on the part of our rulers of such points as were essential to the good governance of Hindustan.
5. The bad management and disaffection of the army. (65-6)

Together these five points are a total reversal of the British view of the rebellion: except for the first point that places some blame on the natives for misreading government policies, all the other points shift the blame onto the East India Company and the local administrators of India. And since the argument is forwarded by a faithful Muslim under the rubric of loyalty and general welfare of the raj, the document then becomes a native manuscript for better governance of India, an instruction manual from the governed to those who govern them. This document, therefore, creates a space for the native to speak from, and, because of its Muslim specificity, forces the British discourse of India from the practice of sheer dominance towards the realisation of a workable hegemony. Considered together, all these points seriously highlight the need for a comprador class: a class of natives who can translate the local culture for the British administrators. Note that Sayyid is not asking for parity with the English, nor is he asking for equal rights: he cannot ask for that at this stage of the colonial encounter. Instead, he is attempting to create a space for the native elite

within the new order, and that space can only be created from the point of view of the administrative efficiency of the raj itself and not on the basis of inalienable rights for all individuals within the bourgeois liberal project.

In explaining his first point, Sir Sayyid clearly states that his main concern is not the actual policies of the British, but rather, their interpretation by the natives. The whole problem then is the problem of cultural translation. He begins:

I would here say that I do not wish it to be understood that the views of the Government were in reality such as have been imputed to them. I only wish to say that they were misconstrued by the people, and that this misconception hurried on the Rebellion. Had there been a native of Hindustan in the Legislative Council, the people would never have fallen into such errors. (Emphasis added, 66)

This particular argument begins with the general religious anxieties of both Muslims and Hindus, for they believed that, 'the Government intended to force the Christian Religion and foreign customs upon Hindu and Musselman alike' (66). Eventually, however, the argument becomes specific to the Muslim anxieties: Sir Sayyid suggests that the people feared that having established its dominance in the region and 'as the power of the Government increased...it would turn its attention inwards, and carry out a more systematic interference with their creed and religious observances' (67). The most important reason for such a popular perception, Sir Sayyid suggests, is because the people 'believed that the Government appointed Missionaries and maintained them at its own cost' (67). Sir Sayyid also touches upon the differences in religious practices of the natives and the missionaries. He suggests that traditionally, the preaching of religion was a private affair and people did it in the mosque or at their own house: missionaries had violated this contract by preaching publicly (68). Similarly, Sir Sayyid links the same anxieties to the missionary and the village schools, which people saw as tools for native conversion to Christianity. What Sir Sayyid seems to assert here is that even if these steps were taken to facilitate the government or to simply educate the people, the lack of native cultural translators allowed the rumours to be concretised as popularly held beliefs, adding yet one more reason for the rebellion. He then gives an account of a particular missionary document and its misreading by the native public. The letter by a missionary, Mr Edmond, in Sir Sayyid's views expressed the following:

It was to the effect that all Hindustan was now under one rule; that the telegraph had so connected all parts of the country that they were as one...the time had clearly come when there should be but one faith. (72).

As this private document was circulated through public means, and mailed to public servants particularly, it suggested that proselytizing had now become public policy of the government. And even though the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal issued a public denunciation of this particular missionary circular 'men still thought that the Government had given up its projects only for a while' (73). Having laid down a broad and specific argument for native anxieties about a possible Christianisation of the natives, Sir Sayyid then particularises the Muslim response, a sort of nascent Muslim exceptionalism. Based on highly essentialised ideas of the religious identities of Hindus and Muslims, this is where the argument of the text becomes Muslim-specific. Sir Sayyid writes:

All these causes rendered the Mahommadans [sic] more uneasy than the Hindus. The reason for this, I take to be that the Hindu faith consists rather in the practice of long established rites and forms, than the study of doctrine. The Hindus recognise no canons and laws, or appeals to the heart and conscience...hence it is that they are exceedingly indifferent about speculative doctrine. They insist upon nothing, excepting the strict observance of their old rites, and of their modes of eating and drinking. It does not annoy or grieve them, to see such rites and observances, as they consider necessary, disregarded by other men. Mahommadans, on the contrary, looking upon the tenets of their creed as necessary to Salvation...are thoroughly well-grounded in them. They regard their religious precepts as the ordinances of God. Hence, it was that the Mahommadans were more uneasy than the Hindus, and that, as might have been expected, they formed the majority of the rebels. (73)

I would like to dwell a little upon the translation of this passage: it fails to capture the true import of Sir Sayyid's argument, and if read in such a way it can simplify his argument in terms of the differences of a naturalised, unconscious practice of rites (Hinduism); and that of a faith based on canonical law and choice (Islam). The difference between the two main religions involved here can be more aptly, and closely, translated as follows:<sup>2</sup>

The Muslims were more annoyed with these developments than Hindus. This is because the Hindus perform their religious rites according to custom and not as commands of their religion. They are not aware of the precepts, articles of faith, upon which their salvation may depend, and it is not in their common

usage. Hence, in the practice of their religion, other than normal customs of eating and drinking, they are not so rigid and prejudiced. For them as long as they can hold their own faith in their hearts, it does not trouble them if someone speaks against it. (47)

It becomes obvious through this brief translation that Sir Sayyid is not claiming that Hinduism is static and ossified in custom as compared to a more dynamic Islam. Rather, he finds Hinduism secure in its practices and, therefore, not troubled by contamination from outside. Islam, on the other hand, is based on textual interpretation as well as an idea of a hereafter, thus more insecure and sensitive to any outside threat. This argument also suggests that while Hindus could still exist in their faith despite Christian propaganda, the Muslims saw the same as a threat due to this perpetual sense of crisis. This aspect of Muslim anxiety about their religious way of life later becomes one of the main tropes in the Muslim freedom movement. What Sir Sayyid inaugurates is the specific idea of the Islamic negotiation of the changing political realities. Of course, the emphasis here is not to prove that his argument is right or wrong, but how this argument plays a role in articulating Muslim exceptionalism within his text and later. By this claim, however, he is able to establish that Muslim anxieties about Christian influences are different because of a different world-view and hence need a special dispensation. This line of argument also particularises the Muslim situation and ensures that if his text is to be taken seriously, then the British must create a specific space for the Muslim native elite to act as cultural informants and interpreters, for only they can truly translate the governmental policy to their Muslim constituencies and vice versa.

In explaining the second cause of native discontent, Sir Sayyid moves from questions of native perception of the acts attributed to the government to the actual laws and acts passed by the government. Hence, this and the other three points seek to prove the wrongs of the government, and of course, the remedy for the wrongs has already been provided through the agency of native representation. Despite its attempt to list the grievances of both Hindus and Muslims, Sir Sayyid continues to particularise Muslim grievances, thereby creating a space for Muslims within the raj.

In explaining the second concomitant cause of the rebellion, Sir Sayyid emphasises the role played by the British administration. He begins: 'The Legislative Council is not free from the charge of having meddled with religious matters' (74). Here the need for native informants is further

accentuated, for the question is not only how to preclude the wrong interpretation of the actions of the British, but also, how to ensure that no such laws are henceforth passed that could increase religious tensions and undermine British authority in India. Sir Sayyid then goes on to give specific examples of the acts and laws promulgated by the legislative council; and the grievances caused by them. Here again, the general subject is the Indian native, but the Muslims clearly receive specific attention; hence, the entire argument then articulates itself about the question of laws; and the place of Muslims as subjects of such laws.

Sir Sayyid begins the discussion of his second cause with a reference to the Indian Act XXI of 1850.<sup>3</sup> He finds this particular act of legislation especially detrimental to Muslim interests, both in material and spiritual terms. He asserts that, 'this Act was thought to have been passed with the view of cozening men into Christianity' (74). Also, in terms of its material advantages, it was the Muslims rather than the Hindus, who seemed to have been targeted. As the Act dealt with the rules of inheritance based on conversion, it did not affect Hindus for, according to Sir Sayyid, 'the Hindu faith ... allows no converts' (74). As no Muslim converts could benefit from this Act, it was deemed that it was not only meant 'to interfere with people's religion, but to hold out a strong inducement to conversion' (74). The discussion of this particular law not only, therefore, foregrounds the Muslim view of the legislative process, but it also points out that for the Muslims, such laws were not merely laws, but were also seen as the British government's way of isolating the Muslims, which accentuated the Muslim distrust of the government. Note that Sir Sayyid is not citing the concerns of the elite; but rather of the people: his indictment of the legislative policies must invoke the people, for the purpose is to force the British to include native informants in the legislative councils who would be able to instruct the government about the likely popular interpretation of laws to forestall the possibilities of another rebellion.

The discussion of Act XV of 1856<sup>4</sup> explains Hindu anxieties about family law and the rights of widows. Here, Sir Sayyid's approach is more cosmopolitan and less restricted to Muslim concerns, but after concluding his discussion of this particular act he moves on to suggest how sometimes decisions of the courts involving people of the same religion tend to aggravate the problem and generate more distrust of the government. This particular point suggests that any attempt to write religion out of the courts would cause trouble, but that if the contestants are both of the same faith, then it might favour the government if 'the decrees issued by

the courts should be in accordance with the religious practice of the parties'(75). What he is suggesting then is that one universal secular legal code cannot meet the requirements of the whole of India, and that wherever possible the government should accommodate the religious legal code if the litigants share the same religion.

The rest of the discussion is about the material outcome of the land and revenue acts, which, in Sir Sayyid's view, are the main area of problem of the British legal system. It is here that a narrative of the local elite develops in Sir Sayyid's argument. The debate moves on from the realm of the popular to the realm of the elite. Here, Sir Sayyid also invokes the historical precedent of landowning and taxation; he even compares the British land revenue laws with the positive laws that existed before, which, of course, make it imperative to engage the native elite in promulgating land revenue laws. I will only briefly cite his comparison of the land taxes to qualify my point:

Akbar [the Great] divided the land into classes, and changed the payments in kind into money payments. The first class...by the name of 'Pulich' was cultivated yearly, and the produce of this he divided with the cultivators according to their respective shares. The second class, was called 'Paroti' and was not kept in constant cultivation.... The produce of this class of land he shared with the cultivators in such years as it was cultivated. The third class...called 'Chachar' remained uncultivated for 3 to 4 years, and required the expenditure of money in order to make it fertile. In the first year of cultivation, Akbar took two-fifths of the produce...increasing his demand yearly, till in the fifth year, he received his full share. The fourth class which was called 'Bunjar', and required to lie fallow for more than five years, was treated on still more lenient terms.<sup>5</sup> (79)

The above passage displays the intricate degree of detail involved in the Mughal land revenue system: a system that taxed qualitatively and not quantitatively. The blanket taxation of the land by the British, Sir Sayyid suggests, not only reduced productivity but also put the landholding classes in financial ruin who now 'look back with regret on the dynasties of former days' (80). Note the grievances of landholders here are not posited in terms of loss of power or distrust of the government but on the level of the efficiency of the taxation system. Driven to their ruin by a less accurate system of land taxation, one could argue, the landowners could become willing participants in a rebellion that might replace the present system with a former one that they considered just. This summary explanation of the British laws also strikes the British ideology at its very

core, for what could be worse than to realise that, despite their advanced administrative techniques, the British did not fare quite as well as compared to the former rulers of India.

The third cause of the rebellion, according to Sir Sayyid, is the ignorance on the part of the British administration about 'the state of the country and their subjects' (83). He explains the reasons for this ignorance:

There was no real communication between the Governors and the governed, no living together or near one another, as has always been the custom of the Mahommadans in countries they subjected to their rule.... It is however not easy to see how this can be done by the English as they almost look forward to retirement in their native land and seldom settle for good amongst the natives of India. (83)

This is a searing indictment of the mercantile and non-assimilationist approach of the British administration. What it implies is that, for the government to have a deeper knowledge of its subjects, it cannot just keep the posture of an overseas empire; it must portray an intent to stay. Furthermore, its officials must have, like the earlier invaders of India, a stake in the day-to-day affairs of the country. Hegemony, it seems, cannot just be enforced by a system that tends to stay outside the sphere of the governed; the British as participants within Indian affairs must create it. Had this government been in touch with its people and considered them to be a part of the whole system, Sir Sayyid contends, it would have had more access to the feelings and grievances of the people. In a nutshell, it is an expectation of national and not colonial government, for any civil government must, in order to seek consent, make an attempt at understanding the problems of the people and then represent itself as a benevolent government. Sir Sayyid explains:

There is nothing wonderful in the fact that the natives were poor and in distress. A native's best profession is [government] service. Now, although, everyone felt the difficulty of getting into the service, this difficulty pressed most heavily on the Mahommadans....The Mahommadans [as opposed to Hindus] are not the aborigines of this country. They came in the train of former conquerors and gradually domesticated themselves in India. They were, therefore, all dependent on service, and on account of this increased difficulty in obtaining the same, they, far more than the Hindoos, were put to much inconvenience and misery. (85)

This is how Sir Sayyid particularises the Muslim state of being under the British and bolsters the claim of Muslim exceptionalism. Since the Muslims have a different history and since they have always depended upon government service for their sustenance, the British must also continue this policy of providing jobs for the Muslims or else the rebellion may repeat itself. Although Sir Sayyid does not cite any figures or statistics, he does create a logical narrative of Muslim material losses under the British, and to some extent, this is enough to create a future narrative of Muslim exceptionalism. This claim also makes it important for the British to come up with a strategy of transforming possible future mutinous citizens into willing and dependent subjects of the raj, hence, making the Muslim issue central to the functioning of the raj.

Sir Sayyid's fourth argument is clearly focused on the concept of governmentality itself: 'Neglect in matters which should have received consideration from government' (88). The narrative, therefore, moves from the realm of native grievances to the question of British governmental failure. It is important to note here that Sir Sayyid puts forth his argument in the language of love and care—a paternalistic function—but it could also easily be read as an argument of rights; which informs us that the discourse of rights was not just initiated by the downward filtration of European ideas, but that the native culture had its own vocabulary to invoke the rights of the citizens:

I cannot here state at length what the benefits of friendship, intercourse and sympathy are, but I maintain that the maintenance of friendly relations between the governors and governed is far more necessary than between individuals. Private friendships only affect a few, friendship and good feeling between Government and its subjects affects a whole nation. (88)

Before attempting to unpack the claims forwarded in this passage I must point out an important discrepancy in the translation: The term *muhabbat* is translated as friendship here. In order to reconstruct what Sir Sayyid is actually implying here, it is necessary to retranslate this passage and then read both translations comparatively. The same passage can also be translated as follows:

It is important to stress here that the government's love is more important than [private] mutual love and friendship towards one's neighbours. While friendship may involve love of one for another; governmental love must be for all its subjects. *The lover and the beloved are two people who unite as one when*

 *their hearts are united.* Similarly, the government must also develop such a closeness to its people that they become one body. (Emphasis added, 64)

When the two translations are compared, one learns that Sir Sayyid is arguing not just for imperial benevolence, but also for a relationship based on love, the kind of love that unites the governors and the governed as one. The relationship, therefore, must be based on equality and compassion, the very concept of nationhood that, we are told, came to India from post-enlightenment Europe. Sir Sayyid, of course, is claiming this relationship through the Islamic concept of *akhuwwat* (love). Hence, his demand is for a government that works through hegemony and not through dominance alone. Note also that this way of government is desired for all people, since he uses the term *rizaya* (people), and not just for the Indian elite. Of course, this love and oneness are impossible to achieve if there is disparity between the lover and the beloved.

To highlight his claim, Sir Sayyid once again invokes the past governments of India. He states: 'A feeling of cordiality was first established in the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar I and continued till the reign of Shah Jehan' (91). Thus, what he expects of the British is not just based on an abstract idea of people-government relations but something that already existed in Indian history. This history, it seems, cannot just be obliterated, and it might serve as a beacon for the new conquerors of India in the process of developing their governmental procedures. Thus, from Sir Sayyid's point of view, the need for creating such hegemony demands that the elite informant must be rewritten into history and made an important instrument of the new hegemonic project.

Based on this historical comparison, Sir Sayyid goes on to forward a politics of honour and entitlement, a better way of harnessing the local elite for the imperial project. Sir Sayyid links this with the dissatisfaction of Muslims for their 'exclusion' from 'high appointments' (94). Here, Sir Sayyid also comments upon the superior services examination that all natives are required to pass for them to qualify for government jobs. He asks here, 'are the best amongst the British statesmen those who have passed the high examination? Are high diplomatic posts not often given to them on account of their birth and practical common sense and sometimes without the latter qualification?' (95). Thus, through this comparison, Sir Sayyid is demanding that the same standards be applied to both native and British nobility. Exceptions must be made, based on birth and lineage, and not just academic merit. If such a measure is

adopted, it would automatically outflank the *de facto* exclusion of Muslims from the civil services. He probably made this assertion, since, at that time, there were not many academically qualified Muslim candidates for the higher echelon jobs in the British administration of India.

The fifth and final cause of the rebellion deals with the administrative structuring of the military, i.e. the causes for the insubordination of the Indian army. In fact, this is the one cause that shook the confidence of the British in India, for without absolute loyalty from the Royal Indian army—predominantly composed of native soldiers—the very existence of the raj was at stake. Surprisingly, here Sir Sayyid suggests that it was the British practice of combining two 'antagonistic races in the same regiment' that eliminated race rivalries and united them against their British officers. It seems that in organizing the army, the British themselves had failed to follow the general policy of divide and rule. It might have been caused by the strong indoctrinating project of the army, but for Sir Sayyid this became a root cause of the mutiny. Sir Sayyid suggests, 'the difference which exists between Hindus and Mahamodans had been mostly smoothed away' (100). Thus, the British idea of creating a certain unity within the army in itself became a motivating factor behind a joint rebellion. Sir Sayyid suggests that if 'separate regiments of Hindus and Mahamoddans had been raised...the Mahamoddan regiments would not have refused to receive the new cartridges' (101). The Muslim sepoys had revolted under the same pretext as their Hindu counterparts, because they shared a common interest, but if their concerns had been isolated from their Hindu counterparts then they would not have followed suit. This also suggests that if the British were to rely on Muslim soldiers in future, their degree of loyalty would be greater than the Hindus, especially since the Muslims are a people who rely on government service for their sustenance. On the whole, then, this argument also aims at creating a sense of exceptionalism for the Muslim masses as well as the elite. Sir Sayyid concludes his argument by attempting to explain the reasons why the Punjab had not participated in the rebellion, for the 'poverty which was so rife in Hindustan had not yet had time to become rife in the Punjab' (104).

On the whole, this particular document is the first native Muslim intervention into the political narrative of the raj. Considering that the document was extensively discussed in the British parliament, and that Sir Sayyid continued to produce other works that highlighted the state of Muslims in India, it is not hard to suggest that Sir Sayyid inaugurates a specific narrative of the general state of Muslims under the British. The

document is also instrumental in creating a tradition of political narrative that dwells on the specificity of the Muslim condition under the British; and eventually serves as a model for Muslim claims of particularity within the collectivity governed by the British in India.

I am not attempting to ascertain the veracity of Sir Sayyid's claim, for that would assume the presence of an objective history void of ideology and circumstantial biases. Rather, I am trying to trace how a Muslim intellectual posits a sense of history and represents his people, and how his writing then becomes an archive and a monument, both in the British and in the Muslim political imaginary. It is important to note that all these reasons for the rebellion catch the raj at its most vulnerable position in its Indian politics: a time when the fear that the natives could rise and massacre their own masters and army officers had suddenly become a reality. Written as a period piece, the text transcends its time constraints and eventually becomes the basis of Muslim exceptionalism.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's political and literary career does not end here; rather, this text launches his career as a British loyalist and a Muslim reformer. What he inaugurates is the two-sidedness of the native experience: the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority. From this point onward, the single most important aspect of Muslim elite politics is to define a Muslim space within the new collectivity. Consequently, except for a few religious and nationalist groups, the Muslims choose to imagine Hindus, rather than the raj, as the 'other': within that context they seek special privileges, including eventually a separate nation-state, in return for their services rendered to the raj. Sir Sayyid, of course, continues with his career as a reformer, and his discursive treatment of Muslim particularity eventually becomes the basis for the idea of a separate Muslim nation.

Naturally, quite a few British texts were written about the rebellion of 1857 and the Muslim role in it. The most important of these texts is W.W. Hunter's *Indian Musalmans*, a text that Paul Brass, as discussed above, erroneously considers a seminal text for launching the myth of Muslim backwardness. I will now turn to this particular text to highlight the importance of the Muslim question for the British administration after the rebellion from the British point-of-view.

### W.W. HUNTER'S INDIAN MUSALMANS AND MUSLIM RESPONSES

Published in 1871, *The Indian Musalmans* is a political document focusing on one particular aspect of Indian-Muslim politics: the so-called Wahabi Movement in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of India. However, due to the fluid signification of the Muslims in the text, it cannot be read only in its particularity. The text extrapolates from its particularities to suggest a certain generalised argument about the Muslims of India. Hunter's polemic can be considered the central text of the British negotiation of the Muslim question, while also claiming to be one of the first British political documents that invite numerous Muslim responses. I will first juxtapose two parallel texts of the late nineteenth century: W.W. Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans* and Ja'fer Thanesarī's *Kala Pani*,<sup>6</sup> English and Urdu texts, respectively, and then briefly analyse Sayyid Ahmad Khan's response to Hunter's book. This brief discussion will highlight the importance of post-rebellion Muslim politics and the centrality of the Muslim question to the post-rebellion British administration of India. Hunter begins his book with a fair degree of particularity while dedicating it to Brian Houghton Hodgson:

In these pages I have tried to bring out in clear relief the past history and present requirements of a persistently belligerent class—of a class whom successive governments have declared to be a source of permanent danger to the Indian Empire. (i)

So far, the reader does not really know the nature of this particular class, but the title suggests that this particular class may be construed as Muslims in general, and also as a specific Muslim group. The term 'class' is certainly not used in the Marxist sense of the word; rather, it refers to a specific group within the people who pose a great threat to British India. The publishers also tell us that this particular polemic was written in response to a certain question posed by Lord Mayo: 'Are the Indian Muslims bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen?' This question in itself, to which the book is a reply, highlights the degree of Muslim particularity to British interest and the centrality of the Muslim question to the British administration of India. Hunter's work is written with a specific backdrop of the ostensible Wahabi Trials,<sup>7</sup> and with a broader spectrum of the Muslim-British relationship, hence the Viceroy's question. In four chapters, Hunter provides his readers with the historical