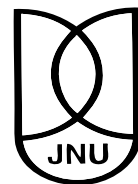# Ummah, Qaum and Watan

Elite and Ordinary Constructions of Nationhood among Muslims of Contemporary India

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The tension between the 'territoriality' of *watan* (country) or *qaum* (nation), and the 'universality' of Islamic *ummah* (muslim brotherhood) has remained intense and alive among theorists and practitioners of Islam in India. A search for the theological validation for Muslim presence in India, required reconciliation between territorial affiliations of Indian Muslims on the one hand, and their assumed propensity towards pan-Islamism on the other. In the period prior to Independence, the unsettled debate had variegated manifestations: a. Muslim nationalism leading to Partition; b. territorial nationalism that argued for Hindu-Muslim entente and; c. a refutation of both, the pan-Islamic trend. Going by broad historical sweeps, one identifies three distinct phases in the trajectory of Muslim politics. The initial phase of 'minorityism' with claims over cultural and political safeguards; the second phase in the decade preceding Independence when the theory of a distinct 'Muslim nation' gained salience among sections of Muslims of north India; and the post-Independent phase in which Muslims again as a 'minority' have emphasized on multicultural co-existence with cultural rights. In recent years, the Muslim identity is disaggregated further with powerful voices of 'minorities within minority' construed around caste and gender receiving political attention and

articulation. The tension between *ummah*, *qaum* and *watan* has in an altered situation called for new innovations in thought and Muslim intellectual exercise responded by dissociating the two as operational in different contexts without committing to any hierarchisation of identity and thereof, of loyalty. This paper attempts to analytically separate various threads in Muslim political thought, without missing the context in which they emerged and gained predominance. It looks into various turns and twists, theoretical shifts, accommodations and innovations that the Muslim elite, irrespective of their ideological location, have made to come to terms with the idea of Indian nationhood.

Arguably, the Muslim imageries of nationhood emerged in the backdrop of the construction of Indian nationalism—its various variants— and have actively responded to it. Regrettably, 'Muslim nationalism' as a theoretical basis for Muslim separatism in India has received wider academic attention much to the neglect of other strands. The task undertaken in the paper, however, does not confine itself to the mere description of an assortment of conceptualizations of nation and national identity among the Muslim inhabitants of India. In the wake of the emerging sociological cognition of 'nation', 'nationalism' and 'state' as conceptually distinct categories, the effort is to comprehend the extent to which the viability of the various trends can be sustained in theory. The paper draws both from historical evidence such as speeches and writings of key political actors and members of Muslim *intelligentsia* as well as contemporary narratives gathered through field interviews. The respondents in this section are the informed and the opinionated—community leaders, religious specialists, cultural and political virtuosos, members of an emerging Muslim civil society etc. Their formed opinion is counterpoised with those unformed and unorganized yet significant for they reflect the very ways in which ordinary Muslims relate and negotiate with these categories. The paper seeks to capture and comprehend these representations and conceptualizations in three critical phases of post-Independence Indian political history viz.,

  i. Post-Partition: Initial denunciation of Muslim nationalism and adoption of minority identity
  ii. Post-1971: Rise of Bangladesh and the demise of religious nationalism, dissociation of *qaum* (cultural nation) from *ummah* (religious nationalism)

iii. Contemporary Phase: Emphasis on *wataniyat* (territorial nationalism), minority identification comes to be interrogated

Having delineated three different phases of evolution of Muslim quest for Indian nationhood, a line of caution is warranted. While the phases are not necessarily water-tight compartments, and overlaps can be traced, yet it is the prominence of certain elements that characterize each phase.

i. Post Partition Phase

For Muslims in India, the partition of the subcontinent and the subsequent creation of the sovereign Muslim state were accompanied by major social and psychological upheavals. The Muslim case of an independent Pakistan was built on the community's fear of material oppression and cultural submergence in the wake of an assertive Hindu orthodoxy. The ideological orientations notwithstanding, a *hijrat* (migration) to the promised *dar-al-Islam* (land of Islam)*,* was also a matter of real choice-making mired in serious pragmatic calculations. Over 12 million people were shunted across the haphazardly drawn frontiers, and yet, Partition-induced migration, despite its religious pattern, failed to render India and Pakistan as homogenous enclaves. Nevertheless, it did impact the religious demography of the two states.

Post-Partition, the political context for Muslims had completely inversed. Amidst allegations of vivisecting the country and suspected on account of their loyalty, political aspirations of Muslims came to chart quite a different trajectory wherein they were to seek adjustments not merely as Muslims *per se* but as members of the larger national collectivity. In the context of determining their national identity, a discernible trend was the diminishing vigour of "Muslimness". In an altered context, the relics of the past were to be discarded and the verdict was cast against the 'two-nation theory'. As A.J. Faridi, prominent leader of Muslim Majlis, opined:

> Followers of Islam are to be found in practically every country of the world from America to China. Hence, the concept of 'Muslim Nation' embracing all these diverse races, cultures, languages and regions does not appeal to reason. Even in India, the Muslims of Bengal, Punjab, Madras, U.P., Mahrashtra, Mysore and Kerala cannot be categorised as belonging to one nation.[22]

The Muslims in India, especially those overwhelmed by the traditional doctrine, were faced with a situation unparalleled and unenvisaged in Islamic political theory. India neither qualified to be a *dar-al-Islam*, where social and political behaviour was to be ordained by the Islamic jurisprudence, nor was it a *dar-al-harb* in the strict sense of the term, meaning whereby the Muslims had no stake in the institutionalized power. The secular state and democratic polity, theoretically at least, had made them co-sharers of power with other religious groupings. The resultant was a dilemma, a product of the contrary pulls of their dual personality: the traditional and the existent. This tension, as Anwar Moazzam reminds us, was 'directed towards their adjustment with the secular-democratic set up of India, secondly towards inventing new categories of knowledge to recast their social values.' Emanating out of situations of contest and coalescence, three modes of thought can be discerned among the Muslim elite, namely;

i.   Pan-Islamists: Represented by Jamaat-i-Islami Hind
ii. The traditionalists or the religious leadership, the *ulema*
iii. The modernists wedded to the idea of secular nationalism

With deep implications for the grafting of the national identity of the faithful, all three have undergone accommodation and adjustments, while still clinging to the core of their value-orientation. The Jamaat-i-Islami, with its prescribed objectives of achieving *Hukumat-I-Ilahi* had rejected modern secular state as it defied God's sovereignty and His exclusive title to the obedience of his creatures. Sovereignty of the people, the cardinal principle of democracy stood sharply at variance with the Jamaat's espousal of undivided loyalty towards the divine:

> When we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, no other way is open to us except the way of submission to His will and of obedience to His commands, which implies of necessity that we should disabuse our minds of the sovereignty of kings, dictators, parliaments and state, obeying them only insofar as they themselves obey God, the real Sovereign…We surrender also our freedom to legislate for ourselves and promise, henceforth, to take His commands as the basis of our law and custom.

Despite its stated opposition to democracy and secularism, the Jamaat, in the years following Independence, began to move towards an accommodation with

the stark reality when it sought to extricate secularism as a political praxis from its fundamental philosophy. It defended secularism as state policy to the extent that it advocated religious neutrality and not irreligiosity. In continuation with the above comprehension of secularism, the Jamaat has been upfront in taking the government to task on any digression, real or perceived, from the principle of neutrality and equality.

At the same time, the Jamaat cautioned that in sanctioning its approval for secularism, it was 'utilitarian expediency' that had prevailed, and that under no circumstance should it be tantamount to the endorsement of the philosophical foundations of secularism. It particularly derided secularism for its origins in the raging conflict between theocracy and science in Western Europe that eventually resulted in the rejection of religion and God altogether. The Jamaat sought to clarify that it regarded 'religion as a foundational concept of life', and that the 'ills of the modern age' were essentially owing to the 'separation of religion from effective participation in the affairs of life'.

> The term secularism has been used in different meanings. There is a background of this term that is related to the conflict of theocracy and science during the European renaissance, during which not only religion but God also was opposed. In reaction to the extreme behaviour of Christian clergy another extreme form of anti-religiosity was brought that caused great damage to the supreme human and moral values. Jamaat has always opposed secularism in that sense because its real spirit was to throw out the God and divine guidance from the collective and social affairs. Islam presents a complete system of life for human beings not only in individual domain but also in the domain of collective social and political life.

For some of its members, Jamaat's critique of secular state led to an extreme position of endorsing a Hindu religious state over a secular state on the plea that Muslims were not in the position of founding an Islamic state. In the 1960s, as calls for Indianisation were raised by the Hindu Rightwing, *Radiance*, Jamaat's mouthpiece, initiated a debate on the topic 'Hindu vs Secular state'. Prominent contributors such as Anwar Ali Khan Soze and Shahabuddin Tyabji persuasively argued in favour of a religious Hindu state over an irreligious secular state. Soze started the debate by stressing that in the struggle between secularists and the ideologues of the Hindu state, Muslims should remain on the fence and hence refrain from antagonizing the forces of *Hindu Raj.* Instead of seeking equality that secularism assured, the community should

pitch for their status as a 'protected minority'. Another contributor, Shahabuddin Tyabji, sympathized with the 'Hindu frustration' that despite the fact that India was the only country where they had 'lived for centuries' and 'established their religion and culture', yet, when after 'centuries of foreign domination' there was an opportunity, they failed 'to establish a Hindu state'. In yet another article, Soze argued that 'prevailing corruption in the country' warranted the state to seek guidance of religion 'to teach morality and to lead a disciplined life'. Since Hindus were dominant numerically, 'Hindu religion should be honoured as state religion.'

In the ensuing debate, the *Radiance* editor showed no inclination to take sides; rather, he preferred ambivalence by terming Soze's views as 'very important, at the same time highly controversial'. The views of Soze's detractors were also presented in the weekly. One of them, M. Basheeruddin warned the supporters of the 'would be Hindu state' that the 'various minorities shudder at the very thought of Hindu state'. This fear was not unfounded as it was based on their experience of majoritarianism in the garb of secularism. He counterpoised, 'If this is the state of affairs in secularism what would happen if the dream of Hindu state is fulfilled?' Despite the neutrality expressed by *Radiance*, the idea of the Hindu state did have some sanction within the organization as Maududi, the founder, in his speech delivered on the eve of Partition, prescribed political isolation and closer ties with the Hindu nationalists for Muslims of India:

> We have to prepare general opinion on a large scale among Muslims so that as a community they adopt complete indifference towards power and administration in the government. Confidence is to be reposed in the Hindu religious nationalist movement that there is no other religion competing with them politically. Citation.

On the question of determining the national identity of believers, the Jamaat continued to tread the line carved out by its founder, Maududi who had rejected both Muslim nationalism of Jinnah and composite nationalism of 'nationalist' Muslims as essentially promoting territorial affiliations that were fundamentally antithetical to the Islamic *ummah*. However, the Jamaat sought to address the anomaly between non-territorially defined Muslim nationality and Pakistan as the homeland by dissociating the concept of Muslim nation from the Muslim state, and relating it instead to the concept of the universal *ummah Islamiyya*. On other occasions, the Jamaat approved of 'national unity

and harmony' on the basis of shared religious values' 'within the parameters of multi-racial, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural Indian society.' Muslims, in the eyes of the Jamaat, are a minority that is zealous of its distinctiveness and individuality. Following this, it resisted the Jana Sangha's insinuation to Muslims and other minorities to Indianise. It viewed it as a euphemism for Hinduisation and sought to defuse such assimilative endeavours.

The Jamaat has been second to none in cataloguing the community's contribution and sacrifices for the progress of the 'Indian nation'. In a recent speech, the present *amir*, Sayyid Jalaluddin Omari, emphasized on Muslim claim to Indian nationhood and demanded supportive measures to facilitate their continuation towards progress:

> The Muslim community has been a magnificent resource for our Indian nation. It has given great sacrifices repeatedly for the progress of this nation. It has provided outstanding and undeniable educational, social, and cultural contributions. The need of the hour is that …its knowledge and skills be utilized for furthering nation's progress.

However, on the question of relationship between Islam and nationalism, the Jamaat's position continued to be ambivalent, often revealing contradictions in its public pronouncements. A.L. Islahi, a former *amir* of the Jamaat, denounced nationalism and exhorted Muslims to eradicate the evils of nationalism. This was echoed by Abdul Moghni, a Jamaat ideologue, who highlighted the western-Christian origins of nationalism and attributed nationalism in the East to its westernized elite. As a consequence, the eastern nationalisms too duplicated the characteristics of the West by emerging as the 'material God'. Moghni expressed his apprehension about the ability of nationalism to serve as an ideology for the welfare of a 'particular nation' and 'humanity in general'. Oblivious to the various strands and nuances within nationalist discourse, Moghni chose the maximalist version to repudiate it. It was condemned as a 'retrogressive' thought that was detrimental to the 'unity and integrity of the nation' as it is likely to promote 'fascism of a particular, privileged section against the whole nation'. However, Moghni approved of patriotism even as he rejected nationalism:

> The matter at issue is not the love and service for one's homeland. Man is a creature of the soil. None can deny an attachment and sentiment for his place of birth and rearing. That is something natural, inborn and spontaneous. But

patriotism is one thing and nationalism is something else. Psychology of love is something; psychology of worship is a different matter.

The second stream of thought is represented by the *ulema*, the bearers of tradition. The Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, the apex body of Deobandi *Ulema*s, had in the past resolved the contradictory pulls of *qaum* and *millat* by declaring both as operating in different contexts and conditions. The Muslims on account of their faith were members of a universal community of believers, the *millat*; while their location in multiple streams of cultural and linguistic groups, made them part of the nation or *qaum*. Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Islamic scholar and rector of the Lucknow seminary, while describing the constituting elements of the Muslim cultural personality, laid down two determining factors. The first being the 'Islamic faith, way of life and code of ethics', which despite their language, dress and geographic location makes them 'members of a single brotherhood'. The other component being that part of their culture 'which distinguishes them from their co-religionists in other parts of the world and imparts to them their individual national character'.

The Maulana recognized the critical significance of both components. His advice, hence, being against any hierarchisation of identity and consequently, loyalty:

> To seek to deprive a person—or to make him revolt against—transcendental values and ethical ideals which are common between him and large portions of mankind spread all over the globe will mean an attempt to freeze his spiritual fountain-heads and destroy the universality of his outlook. In the same way it will be utterly futile and unjust to expect him to cut himself aloof from his environment and lead a life of complete immunity from the local influences.

Although both the Jamaat and the Jamiat claimed legitimacy from the Quran and the *Hadith*, the difference lay in their approach towards politics and history. The infallibility and ahistoricity of tradition is what the traditionalist *ulema* emphasized upon, the Jamaat has been open to limited adjustment through the Islamic sanction of *ijtehad* or new interpretation through consultation among the learned. The nub of this debate was to be found in the authenticity of the Islamic spirit or *Din* which the *ulema* viewed as unchanging: 'Neither the mightiest governments nor any political power and organization can effect, by themselves, the decline of the genuine Islamic temper or the deviation from it.'

Maududi, in his renditions on Islamic philosophy, had argued that the purpose of Islam was obedience and submission to God who is the 'Creator and the Ruler of the universe'. The whole of universe was therefore obligated to obey the law of the God. He made a distinction between *Din* and *Shariah*. *Din* referred to the belief in God with all his attributes, faith in the Day of Judgment, and in the prophets and their revealed books. The *Shariat*, on the other, constitutes the code of conduct or the canons comprising ways and modes of worship. *Shariat*, unlike *Din*, was specific to every prophet, until the last one, Mohammad, 'who brought with him the final code' which was obligatory on 'all mankind for all times to come'. Between *tasawwuf* (devotion) practiced by the Sufis and *Shariat* emphasized by authorities and jurists, Maududi, who had set out the task to found an Islamic state, preferred the latter. *Tasawwuf* was derided for its proclivity towards accretion and syncretism:

> Islam cannot admit of *tasawwuf* that takes liberties with the *Shariah*. No Sufi has the right to transgress the limits of the *shariah* or treat lightly primary obligations…Anyone who deviates from the divine commands makes a false claim of his love for Allah and His Apostle.

In Nadwi's view, the Jamaat's political philosophy articulated through its founder, Maududi, took an extremely reductionist approach. It overstressed the political aspect of religion, particularly, the concepts of God's rulership and dominion. This has narrowed the Islamic weltanschauung, since establishment of theocracy is stated by the Jamaat as the first and foremost objective of the revelation of the Quran and the preaching of the Prophet. The relationship between God and man was seen exclusively as one between ruler and ruled or that between Creator and creature. Thereby acts and forms of worship (*Ibadat*) receive secondary significance, as mere tools to establish theocracy. In what can be termed traditionalist condemnation of modern Islamism, Nadwi held that the acts of worship together with the four pillars of Islam hold central position in the Islamic religion, fundamentals on the basis of which the last judgment is to be pronounced. All other elements, such as politics and theocracy, qualify as 'means' to achieve this end, and hence have a secondary significance. God, in the opinion of the Muslim orthodoxy, was not merely a divine ruler who commanded obedience, but evoked love and remembrance. Nadwi expressed his apprehension that by ignoring the practice of devotion (*tasawwuf*) and insisting on a distorted version that saw religion as primarily a socio-political endeavour, a whole generation of Muslims was being misled.

The third category of Muslim opinion-makers can be termed as secular-modernists who reveled in invoking the constitutional provisions of a secular political order and citizenship rights. In the Nehruvian era, a section of the secular Muslim intelligentsia, closely aligned itself with the ideology of the state and called upon Muslims to actively demonstrate their loyalty towards it. M.C. Chagla, minister in Nehru's cabinet, declared loyalty towards the country and motherland as supreme:

> '…what we need is that our first, foremost, paramount loyalty should be to our country…But our trouble today is that our people postpone loyalty to the country to all other loyalties, minor loyalties, forgetting the major loyalty which is loyalty to India'.

Following this, the secularists were unequivocal in denouncing communal trends, both among Hindus and Muslims. Muslim modernists, while being critical of Hindu communalism, also appealed to the orthodoxy to review their own ideas and programme so far as the task of modernizing the community's outlook was concerned. Hamid Dalwi, socialist leader and a Marathi writer took issue with the Muslim leadership on the subject. He called upon the Muslim leadership to embark on the exercise of self-introspection and criticism so far as the question of Muslim integration with the Indian polity and society was to be considered:

> Among Indian Muslims there is a conspicuous absence of unbiased self-critical and rational individuals who can discuss this problem (problem of integration) fruitfully. This is not entirely the fault of individual Indian Muslims. The capacity for self-criticism, the courage to face facts, the ability to lead the community with a critical awareness of one's own virtues and shortcomings implies the existence of a level of sophistication in the intelligentsia. The Muslim intelligentsia in India lacks these qualities. Their so-called leaders are usually the leaders of a blind, orthodox, and ill-educated community. Such people do not discuss their own faults; rather they obdurately cling to their own view. …When they find faults, the faults are invariably those of other people. They do not have the capacity to understand their own mistakes.

The split between modernists and traditionalists in Indian Islam and Muslim politics has had a history that dates back to the colonial period. Organizationally, the Jamiat and the Muslim League represented the two divergent trends. Jinnah was conscious of the divide that existed and thus the Muslim league

was seen as a formation representing rational ideas and vision of the modern elite. The '*Maulvis* and *Maulanas*' were termed as 'reactionary elements' from whom, the League claimed to have undertaken to set the community 'free'. The traditional leadership too had remained extremely suspicious of the Muslim rationalists. Hamid Dalwai, for instance, was denounced as 'infidel' by the religious establishment. Islamic scholar, A.A.A Fyzee's call to the Muslim women to 'break the shackles of the shariah Act' was chastised as apostasy:

> Muslim secularist would do well to remember that in Islam there is no place for believe in nothing and dare everything. Their call to revolt against the Shariat amounts to a call for apostasy…They want to wreck the Muslim society from within.

One of the persisting themes among Muslims since Independence has been the issue of joining the 'national mainstream'. Muslim responses have questioned its constituting elements exposing the inherent bias in its very composition. Amidst the bogey of 'Indianisation' raised by Hindu traditionists, Muslims have resisted any submergence. The insistence is rather on cultural co-existence and an acknowledgement of the Indian diversity. Following Partition, while the Muslim conceptualization of distinct nationality elapsed, the recovery of minority consciousness could be observed.

> After all, a minority–religious, regional or lingual–remains a minority because it considers the differences that distinguishes it from the majority of sufficient value to itself to put up with the disadvantages that inevitably attach to a minority position in any situation.

ii. The Demise of Two Nation Theory and the Reformulation of Muslim Identity

a. Collapse of Muslim Nationalism

Geo-politics apart, the formation of Bangladesh as a sovereign political entity was pregnant with deep socio-political implications. In particular, for the Muslims of the subcontinent, now neatly distributed in the three states, the cataclysmic events of the early 1970s, carried significant connotations necessary in the moulding (or remoulding) of their political consciousness.

The Muslim-ness of their identity, which many among them for so long had zealously guarded, lay shattered by the turn of history. 'The two-nations theory, formulated in the middle class living rooms of Uttar Pradesh, was buried in the Bengali countryside.' The dismemberment of the 'Muslim nation-state' has also provided a fecund source for scholars investigating the myriad ways in which identities, both ascribed and achieved, reveal and gain salience and also, get obliterated, in different interactional situations. Post-Bangladesh South Asia is also a ground to re-examine the concepts of nations, nation-state and nationalism. The most pertinent question being put to sociological enquiry then is, can religion define nationality and allow the consolidation of nation-states?

The failure of the Muslim state to accommodate Muslims in their entirety, or seen obversely, the choice of a large majority of Indian Muslims to remain tied to the land of their birth had begun to condition their identity and nationality. Still, for a number of Muslims, faced with majoritarian backlash and loss of power, Pakistan continued to be a promised land of unseen and unfulfilled opportunities. For the 'nationalist Muslims', who had foreseen the absurdity of Muslim nationalism, Bangladesh was a vindication of their prognosis that religion could not be the basis to hold nations together. Mohammad Yasin, writing in the midst of Bangla-liberation struggle saw in the instance, the death of the concept of 'Islamic nationalism':

> When Islam could not survive the baseness of human nature, it is doubtful that Pakistan's Islamic nationalism will do better. It is fighting a lost cause. After all, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not an exception in the history of Islam… Islam lives but the concept of Islamic nationalism died its natural death before it was born in Arabia thirteen centuries ago.

The Islamic revivalists too feted on the dismemberment of Pakistan, however, unlike the secular-modernists, they saw the seeds of its disintegration in the temporal and material foundations of Pakistan and its ruling elite. The failure of Pakistan in adopting Islam as the guiding spirit behind the organization of the state and society was diagnosed as the critical factor. The *Radiance* editorial blamed the westernized League leadership, particularly Jinnah and his policy of religious neutrality. The two nation theory, it reminded, 'was falsified on the…day when the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan…and Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared that Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims in the political sense in Pakistan'. Jamaatis such as Anwar

Ali Khan Soze found a silver lining in the collapse of the 'two-nation' theory—the prospect of Islam expanding its influence in the subcontinent. Disagreeing with the secularist interpretation, Soze tried to distinguish between communalism and religiosity. Muslim nationalism was a communal project as it thrived on particularizing cultural artifacts such as 'Urdu language, sherwani, pyjama, Jinnah cap'. True Islamic principles such as 'the unity of God, theory of prophethood and the concept of accountability before God after death, or the socio-moral injunction of the Quran and the Hadith' failed to get translated in times of competitive polarization and hostility. In the demise of Muslim nationalism Soze saw the opportunity to revert to inter-religious peace of normal times—a situation conducive to propagate the message of Islam. The decimation of two-nation theory, in truth, was the context in which the idea of united India could gain currency in the community:

> None of the Bharati (Indian) Muslims any more dream of going to Pakistan… Bangladesh has proved that all Muslims of the subcontinent need not be considered as pro-Pakistanis ambitious of reviving the old Muslim empire of India…What has added to the poignancy of this situation is the sudden and strange desire of the Indian Muslims to see India united once again. Many of them have started thinking that their position would be much better in a united India. Pakistan has failed to solve their problems. Why not try the concept of a united India now?

From a denunciation of all forms of nationalism to identification with Indian nationhood, the ideological shift in the Jamaat ideologues is not astonishing as it is consistent with the consensus across the spectrum of ideological persuasions among Indian Muslims. In other words, the collapse of Muslim nationalism exacerbated the process of integration of the Muslims with the idea of India. The new realization was also facilitated by factors both extraneous as well as structural, those emerging from within and significant in the recasting of Muslim thought. The post-Bangladesh Muslim India had a sizeable proportion of a new generation devoid of the bitter memories of the past. In 2006, more than two-thirds (67.6 per cent) of the Indian population was born after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 and more than 90 per cent after the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Although no such data disaggregated along religion exist, the proportion is believed to be the same across communities. Thus, for the majority of the Muslim population in the country, Pakistan and Bangladesh were events narrated through oral transmissions

and history texts. Though communities preserve their cultural memories, it would be far-fetched to believe that they retain the same vigor when passed on to the next generation. This section of the Muslim population had their life experiences moulded in post-partitioned India, where Muslims were a relatively small and dispersed minority.

As realities of their existence set in, even tradition had to be interpreted in a new light. It is often asserted that for a Muslim the world exists in bi-polarity. Either it is a *dar-al-Islam* (countries where Islam rules) or *dar-al-harb* (countries at war with *dar-al-Islam*). In this view, Islam yearns for political power, absolute and exclusive, the denial of which lands it either into a perpetual confrontation with non-Islam or the choice of *hijrat* (migration). The Muslim theorists in India have reinterpreted the traditional doctrines to find a doctrinal validation for their existence in India. Thus India, with its principles of secularism and religious pluralism, is seen as qualifying to be *dar-al-aman*, that is land of peace. As Syed Shahabuddin, leader of Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, writes:

> … Islam also recognizes the concept of *watan* (homeland) because everyone is presumed to love his land of birth or domicile. In purely theological terms, therefore, from the Islamic view, India is not a *dar-al-Islam*, but neither is it *dar-al-kufr* nor even *dar-al-harb*. It is *dar-al-ahad*, *dar-al-aman*, and *watan*.

The traditionalists and the emerging political leadership betrayed a weariness with the ideas of pan-Islamism and Khilafat. Zealous pronouncements favouring Khilafat as an antithesis of nationalism were rebutted as unrealistic and naïve: 'Does or doesn't Islam recognize as 'people' in the Quranic sense, human groups which may wholly or partly profess Islam and inhabit a defined territory or cutting across boundaries of State, form an identifiable region of concentration?' In other words, religion does not have any criticality in the constitution of nations as people of different faith may form one nation. In an article, aptly titled 'Restoration of Khilafat Nothing But a Mirage', Shahabuddin reminded the protagonists of Khilafat of the triumph of nationalism even in the Muslim world:

> All over the world, Muslim peoples waged wars of liberation in the name of nationalism against colonialism and imperialism, with the clear objective of forming territorial nation-states. Pakistan was the only exception, but the "religious ideology" was soon buried in the foundations of a nation-state, the secession of Bangladesh and ethnic conflicts in what remained of Pakistan.

iii. *Ummah, Qaum* and *Watan*: Contemporary Narratives

Is a Muslim self consistent with an Islamic one? In what ways do Muslims in contemporary India, relate to the ideals and institutions of political Islam such as jihad, *hijrat, dar-ul-Islam* and *dar-ul-harb*, *nizam-e-mustafa*, *ummah* and *millat*? The question to be asked is whether the Indian Muslim identity is torn between the scriptural ideals of Islam and the conditions of its existence in plural India? While the classical tension between the text and the context comes to be an important of point of departure for the researcher, what emerged from the study was that the lay conceptualizations may not necessarily be at odds with textual analysis and prescriptions. Textual constructs, even when difficult to emulate, are often idealized and referred to by the subjects. More often than not, classical scriptures and the enshrined injunctions themselves are subject to incessant interpretations and innovations. The respondents in this section are the informed and the opinionated, constituting the political vanguard of the Muslim literati. Community leaders, religious specialists, cultural and political virtuosos, leaders of Muslim subaltern communities and those active in students' and women's organizations are the key respondents. Their formed opinion is then counterpoised with those unformed and unorganized yet significant set of responses, for they reflect the very different ways in which lay Muslims relate and negotiate with these categories.

Are Muslims True Nationals? The Foreigneness of Muslim Blood

Indigeneity of Islam and Muslims are the unresolved issues in the nationalist framework. Could Muslims—given the supposed foreignness of their origins—be true nationals? Muslims marshal a plethora of evidence—constitutional legality, historical antiquity as well as civilisational rootedness—to attest to their nationalist credentials. Maulana Qasmi, a member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and the then-general secretary of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat invoked the constitutional guarantee of equality and religious freedom to ascertain how citizenship and nationality were not contingent on the nativity of faith. The Indic/non-Indic dichotomy was termed by the Maulana as false and lopsided as it obfuscates history:

> If the criterion of coming from outside is to be invoked then it is the Brahmins—those who practice untouchability—who are the real aliens. Most Muslims are natives of this land. It was only a small number who came from Arabia. The trading ties between Arabia and India's coasts—Sindh and Malabar—predate Islam. During the period of the advent of Islam, these traders also carried Islam with them. The bald historical fact is this: that most Muslims today are those indigenous to India who accepted Islam. No one can deny this historical fact. The only difference with Aryans is that they came five thousand years ago.

Safi Akhtar, a native of Darbhanga in Bihar, has an M.Sc in Botany and at time of the interview, was the office secretary at the central office of the All India Milli Council in Batla House. He expressed his wariness over the issue: 'If there are people raising questions of origin then they should not forget that the ancestors of a large majority of upper caste Hindus came from elsewhere. Similar doubts can be raised about their nationality as well'. Akhtar sensed a design to erase the distinctiveness of Muslim identity to merge it with the Hindu one: 'It is Islam that informs our tradition and cultural practices…it is Islam that makes our personality distinct from others'. Md. Qasim, a Meo and teacher of Arabic sought to complicate the subject further: 'Yes, Islam was born in Saudi Arabia, but it was never meant for the Arabs alone…We Meos accepted Islam much before the Mughals came to India…We fought against Babar because he was an invader. Why should we allow anyone to doubt our nationality?'.

Ummah or Watan: The Reconciliation Within

Given the situation how would Muslims reconcile the tension between *Ummah* and *qaum*? Which amongst the two would take precedence in the event of a clash between the two identifications? Muslim political consciousness appears divided, as can be seen in the opposing views expressed by the Jamaat e-Islami and Jamiat. Syed Jalaluddin Umri, the then-vice president of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, prescribed a dual political behaviour for Muslims: one, when in a minority, and another, when in a majority. In a dominant position Muslims should strive to establish an Islamic state and be governed by the laws of the *Shariat.* For the Muslims in minority situation, the Jamaat advised a remarkable elasticity of approach. They were counselled to follow the law

and Constitution of the country of their residence: 'as a minority they have to lead their lives in accordance with laws of the country?' In terms of the dichotomy between *dar-ul-Islam* and *dar-ul-harb*, Umri preferred to describe the Indian situation through the latter connotation, *dar-ul-harb* to refer to the Indian situation. At the same time, he felt that the dichotomy was inapplicable to present times:

> What will you call Pakistan? Muslims are in a majority, but they are not governed by the *Shariat*. Neither is it *dar-ul-Islam* nor *dar-ul-harb*.

Maulana Asrarul Haque—a native of Kishanganj in Bihar, a Congress M.P and a member of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Hind—saw no contradiction between *ummah* and nation. *Ummat* was described in universal terms as the entire humanity: 'The entire humanity is our brotherhood because we are children of the same Adam and Eve'. It was obligatory for all Muslims to come to the rescue whenever any section of the *ummat* was in crisis, he held. Thus, the message of Islam was universal, liberated from the narrow confines of race, language, tribe, family ties. 'To that extent, nationalism is antithetical to Islam, but it is also true that in the history of Islam, there have been periods when nation-states were formed', he conceded. In the Indian context, the Maulana saw no tension between Islam and nationalism because the Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience; 'In return, this is our responsibility that we should uphold the honour and dignity of this land, and be prepared to lay down our lives to protect its sovereignty.' India, for him, was neither a *dar-ul-Islam* nor a *dar-ul-harb* but a third reference: *dar-ul-aman*:

> This debate over *dar-ul-Islam* or *dar-ul-harb* is stale now. This is the age of globalization. There are only two questions relevant—whether it is *dar-ul-aman* (land of peace) or *dar-ul-fasad* (land of conflict). A country where the law and the Constitution ensure peaceful coexistence and gives equal rights, we can declare it as *dar-ul-aman*. Today there is no option for migration. India has a secular structure, as long as the Constitution remains the basis of governance, India is also *dar-ul-aman*.

Following this, the associated idea of jihad also came to be contested. The difference between the Jamiat and the Jamaat view as reflected in the thoughts of Maulana Asrarul Haque and Jalaluddin Umri is significant. Since the Jamaat flirts with the idea of *dar-ul-harb* to refer to lands where Muslims are not

governed by Islamic law, a comprehension of jihad as a holy war prescribed for Muslims follows. A fine distinction is however drawn, purportedly to denounce acts of terror, between violence as individual action and that obligated by the Islamic state: 'In Islam, no individual action can be passed of as jihad. Most people are not clear on this, particularly, the youngsters.'

On the contrary, in Maulana Asrarul Haque's rendition, jihad was divorced from its inextricable association with violence and war. Jihad, in this sense, is *jaddo-jahad* or a relentless effort to achieve certain ideals. The meaning of the term cannot be enclosed within a narrow or restricted definition. Indeed, it hinges on the context. Jihad is engaged with one's self as also against the tyranny of the other. Both history and theology bear witness to it:

> In Quran, the word jihad is used in a number of places. Not everywhere is it in the context of war. There is *Jehad* in convincing the other without using any sort of coercion. This has been called *Jihadul Kabeer*. There is another Koranic verse according to which, if your parents are restraining from accepting Islam, you shouldn't accept their religion either. At the same time you should not bequeath all your duties towards your parents. This is also Jihad…In another verse, God's message is that if they struggle (*jaddo-jahad*) on His path, there will be no dearth of ways to reach him. Jihad has also been equaled with resistance against tyranny…In India for instance, the struggle for Independence has been called by the ulama as *Jihaad-e-Azadi*.

The everyday world of Muslim identity

The debate within the orthodoxy notwithstanding, the imperative to comprehend reality can only be half achieved sans the perspective from the everyday world. In what ways have ordinary Muslims reflected and reproduced ideas, thoughts and recommended actions emerging from classical Islam? Does the scriptural or high Islam of the orthodoxy influence a Muslim's political behaviour to any verifiable extent? A reified identity discourse often turns a blind eye to the politics of the average and the quotidian. The ideas here are unformed, struggling for want of attention, and often unorganized and ephemeral, as also susceptible to contradictory pulls. Aas Mohammad, a crane operator, had his fundamental identification with *watan*, the land of his birth and from where he drew his livelihood: 'My *watan* is India and

not Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. If I am in trouble, it will be my fellow Indians who would come to my help.' Tanveer Hassan, a 33-year-old entrepreneur running his own printing unit, felt that the tension between *qaum* and *ummah* was irrelevant: 'If you are a Muslim then you have to believe in Mecca. Mecca can't come to India'. The idea of jihad too was inapplicable as rule of law prevailed here. Jihad or holy war could be waged only when established rules of governance were frequently transgressed and violated.' These ideas however coexisted with the feeling that Indian secularism was tilted towards the Hindus. Md. Yasser, a student activist from Kerala, linked secularism with the question of Muslim representation: 'If you look at the statistics of education, public service and representation of Muslims in Parliament and State Legislatures, their number is declining, which undermines the entire notion of secularism.' Mushtaque Siddiqui equated Jihad with an honest life and loyalty towards one's country:

> If you live honestly, do not steal or loot, and bring up your children, provide proper education to them, this is also jihad. Jihad also means to protect our *watan* from external aggression. Even if Saudi Arabia, an Islamic country invades India, it is obligatory on Indian Muslims to protect their motherland. *Watanprasti* is an Islamic value; there should be no doubt about it.

On whether Muslims constituted a distinct nationality on account of commonality of their faith, opinions across the spectrum seemed categorical in rejecting the thesis. While *ummah* and nation in most renditions appeared as clearly spelt out distinct realities, *qaum* had multiple usages and was deployed to refer to a range of collectivities: namely, a caste group, a religious community as well as common Indian nationality. Feroze Khan was explicit in rejecting religious nationhood: 'I do not think that nations should be founded on the basis of religion. The purpose of Islamic laws is to facilitate peace and harmony, and not conflict and violence that such theories eventually result in.' For him, q*aum* was neither a nation nor the religious community; the term was rather reserved to refer to the Meos, his caste group:

> We are local converts. Many from our *qaum* accepted the religion of Islam in the period of great Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. Till recently people of my *qaum* shared many rituals with our Hindu brethren. We even had common names. Until 1960, my late father's name was Buddha. This was widespread and whether Hindu or Muslim, we consider ourselves one *biradari*.

Muslims nationalism for Mushtaque Siddiqui was an oxymoron, and Pakistan, its product, a proof of its failure. He said that he had never considered visiting Pakistan though he had many relatives settled there: 'I have not even got my passport made. What is the need? This is my *mulk*, my *watan*. This land belongs to both the communities.' For those who have gone to Pakistan, Siddiqui holds no regrets; ''If you have a boil on your hand it is better to remove it when it is nascent otherwise it might become more painful.'

Ali Anwar Ansari, a backward class leader and currently a Member of Parliament, sought to foreground a different memory of Partition by declaring Muslim nationalism as a project of the *ashraf*s amongst Muslims. Muslim artisans, weavers and other occupational castes, according to Anwar, had vigorously opposed Jinnah's Muslim nationalism—a fact that has been obliterated in nationalist historiography. He cited a 1941 CID report that stated that more than fifty thousand Muslim weavers under the banner of Momin conference descended on Delhi to refute the two-nation theory: 'The non-*ashraf* Muslims constituting a majority of Indian Muslims were opposed to partition but sadly they were not heard. They were firm believers of Islam yet they were opposed to Pakistan'.

Despite their avowed belief in the common Indian nationality and protestations repudiating the two-nation theory, for Anwar, the state of backward Muslims remained unaltered in Independent India owing to the hegemony of *ashraf* Muslims: 'At the time of Partition, those Muslims who overnight had started wearing Gandhi cap though they had been hardcore Leaguers till a day before came to form the Muslim leadership of Independent India. These turncoats prospered while those who had staunchly opposed Partition were forgotten,' he complained.

Conclusion

Muslim political consciousness, in the present context, stands fragmented and fractured. The phantasmagoria of unity, uniformity and cultural homogeneity imagined in the narratives beginning with 'minority', then 'nation' and now again 'minority' is punctured in varying degrees by the caste, gender or regional constrains. It flouts treading a singular trajectory and in doing so, underscores the imperative to talk in terms of a plurality of Muslim subjectivities—not necessarily in harmony with each other. *Ummah*, *Qaum* and *Watan*, theoretically inconsistent with each other, are embedded with new

meaning and applicability to adjust with and respond to various pronounce-
ments of Indian nationhood. While the renunciation of Muslim nationhood
and re-interpretation of *ummah* consciousness is evident and runs through
almost all ideological formations, a pluralist version of Indian nationhood
comes to be appreciated. For the everyday world of ordinary constructions of
nationhood among Muslims, *wataniyat,* is a concrete reality that defines their
material existence, *ummah* on the other is essentially an abstraction. Avoid-
ing any hierarchisation, the two are however seen to have distinct contextual
relevance and application.

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