



# **INDIAN MUSLIMS**

**A Study of  
the Minority Problems  
in India**

**Asghar Ali Engineer**



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*Asghar Ali Engineer*  
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## A STUDY IN MINORITY PROBLEM

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## INTRODUCTION

Muslims are a major minority in India constituting around 11.21% of Indian population according to 1971 census. All other minorities put together (Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Jews, tribals etc.) account for no more than 6.07%. Only the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (21.5%) outstrip Muslims in number. No democratic society can live in peace and harmony without solving the problems confronting the community so large in number. The problem gets further complicated when it is realised that the Muslims, as popularly believed, are not a homogeneous community, but are horizontally and vertically divided into various regional and cultural groups on the one hand, and, into castes and classes, on the other. Their response to socio-economic and political problems varies according to their group (religious, regional and cultural) interests and has to be carefully studied in this light in order to conform to empirical approach and to avoid a priori assumptions. However, one cannot ignore equally important fact that under conditions of external threat Muslims tend to behave, by and large, as a homo-

geneous group. But such conditions do not prevail except in abnormal times of war, communal holocaust or certain events in other Islamic countries. Also, there is a near homogeneity among them on certain questions like change in Muslim personal law etc. However, this homogeneity should not be stretched too far, as is often sought to be done by certain scholars.

Emphasising the factor of heterogeneity, Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan says : ...it should be evident that what is called the 'Muslim problem' has many ramifications, both in terms of levels and sectors. There are at least five levels of relevance: the local (village/town), the district, the state, the region and the country. At each level, due to variation in demographic composition, difference in the nature of socio-political significance, etc. the specificity of the situation/problem acquires a difference and a newness. Likewise there are several vital sectors of the Muslim situation. It is, therefore, a ridiculous simplification to speak of Muslim problem exclusively as a monolithic all-India problem.<sup>1</sup>

In my opinion Prof. Khan's assumption that the Muslim society is fragmented - rather than monolithic - is valid and no serious scholar of the Muslim problem can begin to understand it until he accepts the validity of this assumption. Needless to say, I propose to examine this question in the light of this assumption.

The Muslim problem in India has its own history; in order to understand this problem - it is my firm belief - one has to begin from the post-mutiny period when the modern developments began to take place with the consolidation of the British rule and its unleashing of new forces which brought about sharp conflict between the two major communities of India i.e. Hindus and Muslims. It is for this reason that the earlier part of this book deals with the post-mutiny

period. It also traces out the germination of seeds of conflict between the two major communities a decade or so after the major upheaval in which both these communities had combined together to fight their common foe.

Once the seeds of conflict began to germinate, there sprouted so many off-shoots on the ideational plane chief among them being on the historical plane. Both the communities embroiled in the dispute adopted selective bias towards history, highlighting those events which suited their purpose. Worse still, the historical events were distorted and torn out of context (such attempts still continue, at least in some circles, unabated). These partisans use history to show that there has been unceasing conflict between the Hindus and Muslims ever-since the establishment of the Muslim rule in India. However, the recent historiographical trends have categorically rejected such a naive approach to history. Acts of rulers - backed by ruling classes in a broader sense - are not simply motivated by religious considerations alone; other factors, it is not always easy to identify all of them though, specially the ones determined by relations of production, composition of ruling classes (based on common interests cutting across religious barriers), etc., also play important role. In order to undo the mischief done by wrong projection of history it is highly necessary that these historical events be projected in the right perspective and all relevant factors be examined so as to properly appreciate the real import of these events. This is very important from the point of view of putting the Hindu-Muslim relations on an even keel. An attempt, therefore, has been made in this book to emphasise proper evaluation of our past history.

Another important dimension of this problem is that the conflicts of the ruling classes have



been projected as the conflicts of the masses which, in my opinion, is just not true. There is ample evidence to suggest that at the lower rungs of the society in the medieval period sufis and saints tried to bring about a synthesis between Islam and Hinduism. I have tried to examine some of the source materials to unearth this evidence. This again needs to be highlighted in order to smoothen the curve of conflict between Hindus and Muslims.

As expected the partition of the country did not resolve the tangled Hindu-Muslim problem satisfactorily. Religion, our experience of post-independence period has categorically shown, is not a viable basis of nationalism. A sense of spiritual solidarity does not get transformed into political cohesion specially as the social dynamics of a developing country throw up complicated problems which tend to strenghten solidarity along class lines on one hand, and, on the other hand, along racial and linguistic lines. These racio-lingual groups and classes certainly cut across religious lines. The experiences of the three countries of the sub-continent namely India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh are a pointer in this direction. I have tried to throw some light on these issues as without it it is not possible to understand the key-problems facing the Muslims, specially in India.

More than thirty years after the vivisection of our country communal riots and fissiparous tendencies continue to dog our national life. In other words the cherished dream of our national life i.e. national integration has yet not been materialised. Some of the parties and groups, it is argued, by preaching their political, religious or social philosophy aggravate divisive tendencies in our social fabric. The R.S.S. and Jamat-e-Islami are often mentioned in this connection as they talk of Hindu and Islamic theocracy.

It is, therefore, necessary to examine and analyse the philosophy preached by them. I have, therefore, tried to examine in detail, by quoting from the writings of their theoreticians, their political programme. It is obvious from the writings of Shri Golwalkar and Maulana Maududi that they reject the concept of secular polity and give key importance to Hindu dharma and Islam respectively in political culture. Again, the R.S.S. in the Indian context cannot be totally exonerated from the charge of engineering or participating in communal riots (the Jamat similarly adopts chauvinistic attitude towards the Qadiyanis and other minorities in Pakistan). The divisive tendencies in our secular political culture cannot be effectively combated as long as the R.S.S. and Jamat continue to freely disseminate their parochial views. Apart from these pronouncedly communal and chauvinist political groups, other major parties interested in maintaining the status-quo (i.e. the Congress, the Janata Party and similar other parties) also keep on encouraging communal and casteist tendencies in order to win elections. Of late, there has been unhealthy competition between these major parties to promise anything and everything to the minority communities. Needless to say these promises hardly reflect the demands and aspirations of the masses of these communities. This ballot-box oriented game, rather than an honest commitment to solve the basic problems, has created vicious atmosphere. In this way these parties try to achieve two objectives: to lure minority communities in voting them to power and to perpetuate the status-quo.

The Muslim leadership is no less responsible for keeping the Muslim problem politically alive as it helps them in making most opportunistic alliances thus enabling them to reach the corridors of power. They bring to the fore the issues

which are highly emotional. Thus the Muslim leadership keeps on raising problems like Muslim personal law, minority character of Aligarh Muslim University, status of Urdu and similar other problems as if these are the genuine problems of the Muslim masses. The Muslim leadership, on the strength of these emotionally-charged issues, keeps on striking bargain with one or the other political party. The Muslim leadership can hope to get some share in power only by striking such bargains. In this process, needless to say, the genuine problems of the Muslim masses go by default. It is, therefore, highly necessary to understand real character of the Muslim leadership. I have tried to throw light on the nature of these problems while analysing the character of Muslim leadership and its role. This again brings us to the question of identity which is, naturally, of greater concern for the middle-classes among the Muslims. Any change proposed in Muslim personal law is construed as tampering with the identity of Muslims. However, those articulate among Indian Muslims have unfortunately taken one-dimensional view on the question of identity. While one need not reject the past heritage, one should not try to build ones identity only on that basis. Identity has to be dynamic and must have future orientation while retaining what is healthy in ones past.

The Muslim masses are an integral part of country's main-stream. It is wrong to maintain otherwise. However, one must also admit that they are comparatively more backward, both economically and educationally. Urban population among Muslims is slightly higher (27% as against the national average of 20%) and most of them belong to categories like artisans, petty hawkers, rickshaw pullers etc. Indian Muslims lack both industrial as well as commercial bourgeoisie.

## INTRODUCTION

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It is one of the reasons why Muslims in India lack future-oriented dynamic leadership. For these reasons the Muslims have been unable to shake themselves free from feudal incumbrances and past accretions. A perceptive social scientist can hardly ignore this fact while studying the Muslim problem in India.

I have tried to explore this dimension of the problem too in this book. It has been my endeavour to touch various dimensions of the Muslim problem in order to make it as comprehensive as possible. In doing so it might suffer in depth. However, this seems unavoidable. A narrow sweep may have advantage of greater depth but it may fail to unravel all the strands.

## Chapter 1

### MUTINY AND AFTER

The genesis of the 'minority problem' cannot be understood properly without following the chain of events immediately after the Mutiny of 1857. Undoubtedly the Mutiny (or the war of independence, as some people prefer to call it) was an insurrection of an unprecedented nature. Hindus and Muslims unitedly challenged British imperialism and fought against it heroically. In order to fight the foreign domination the Hindus and Muslims respected each others sentiments. "Since the Hindu and Muslim masses were united", says K. M. Ashraf, "the rebel government at Delhi banned the slaughter of cows as a gesture of goodwill to the Hindus; while the Hindu rebel leaders (for instance Nana Sahib) returned the compliment by maintaining all the state symbols of the Moghul government - for instance, the use of the lunar calender, the inscription of 'Bismillah' in official communications and reports and even the observance of Friday as a public holiday."<sup>1</sup>

But this united fight, after its unsuccessful culmination, resulted in engendering divisive tendencies among the dominant sections of both the communities, partly because of the British policy of 'divide and rule' and partly

on account of new competitive forces generated by the introduction of institutions such as self-government. It must be borne in mind that the Hindu and Muslim elites reacted differently to the new situation arising from the establishment of British hegemony after 1857. The advent and now consolidation of the British rule in India and its hegemonistic design proved to be a coup de grace for the Muslim rule. But the fact of having ruled India for centuries gave the Muslim upper classes a unique sense of pride which was almost indelible. This past-oriented power complex hid their present incompetence to face the real challenges of the changed power equation.<sup>2</sup> Ashraf also maintains, "In a sense, the Wahabi outlook on politics and religious life embodied the century-old hostility of the Muslim ruling classes to the growing encroachments of the British, as also, the urge of the working masses for better and happier conditions of life."<sup>3</sup>

Along with the Muslim ruling classes Muslim masses also greatly suffered when the British succeeded in establishing their political hegemony. The Muslim artisans were practically ruined by the introduction of British manufactured goods. The Muslim masses, therefore, along with Muslim ruling classes had fought against the British rulers with courage, determination and valour. For the Muslim masses the 1857 Mutiny was in fact the culmination of a long-drawn-out fight against naked and unabashed exploitation. The Company, say Premen Addy and Ibne Azad, having acquired a virtual monopoly over the industry squeezed and bullied the weavers into submission. The famine of 1770 had been a severe blow, for apart from carrying off thousands of village craftsmen, it caused irreparable damage to the domestic market. Nevertheless, even after this disaster the industry had its

minor boom. The growing influx of cheap Manchester textiles, the first fruits of the Industrial Revolution, however, signalled its end. And with it went the dream of economic recovery, for the prosperity of Bengal had rested more on its domestic handicrafts than on its agriculture. The weaver-cum-agriculturist had now to depend entirely on agriculture, and this further weakened the position of the tenant vis-a-vis the landlord.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of peasantry then in Bengal,<sup>5</sup> it must be noted, was Muslim. Almost all the weavers of Dacca too were Muslims. If this fact is born in mind it would not be difficult to understand the origin of Farazi movement in Bengal on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the influence of the Wahabi ulama in North India. About Farazi movement which was revivalist in nature, Premen Addy and Ibn Azad say :

The first of these movements, the Farazi began as a form of Muslim revivalism to 'purify' the practices of Muslim Bengalis. In Bengal the movement reflected the declining position of the Muslim aristocracy and the subordination of the majority of Muslim peasantry to Hindu landlords. By propagating strict Islamic observances, the movement first tended to rend the syncretic cultural fabric which tied Hindu and Muslim cultivators in a common social life. By 1810, however, although maintaining its religious cover, it had broadened along class lines, beginning most significantly in the areas where a system of commercial indigo plantations was being organised by European capital. A prominent Farazi leader, Didu Miyan, organised cultivators, whether Hindu or Muslim, against European planters as well as indigenous landlords and moneylenders, again regardless of religion. After 1830, Titu Mian, the former leader's



nephew, came into violent conflict with the English planters and native landlords, and after a number of successes declared an entire area a free zone and assumed the title of Khalif.<sup>6</sup>

This excerpt on the Farazi movement has been quoted here at length to show that it was more than revivalist and had economic content. It was as much directed against exploitation by landlords, (whatever their religion) as against 'impure' incumbrances. It was also a violent protest against the fast changing socio-economic situation which spelt ruination for the Muslim masses and loss of power till then enjoyed by the ruling classes among the Muslims. However, one cannot deny the fact that this movement had provoked religious fanaticism. But it would be wrong to ignore its economic content and look at it from purely religious angle as such. A religious phenomenon cannot be properly understood if it is not seen in proper socio-economic perspective. Dr. Ashraf calls the Faraizis as "Red Republicans" in politics and according to him they "broke into the houses of Hindu and Muslim landholders with perfect impartiality".<sup>7</sup> Didu Miyan, its leader, thus, as expected, came in conflict both with Hindu and Muslim landlords and also with the British planters in the districts of the 24 Parganas, Nadia, and Faridpur. Didu Miyan even led the peasant uprisings of 1833, 1841, 1844 and 1846. Finally in 1857, when the news of the Delhi uprising came, he was arrested.<sup>8</sup>

Another important movement of religio-political nature in north India was that of Wahabi ulama. It was also militant in nature and was fiercely anti-British. However, before we analyse this movement which has great significance in the modern Muslim history in India, it is necessary to throw some light on the gravity of the situation the Muslim artisans in general



and those of Bengal in particular, faced before the great insurrection of 1857. Talmiz Khaldun says :

The Industrial Revolution in England completely transformed the character of her relations with India. The expansion of British manufacture overwhelmed and ultimately destroyed the primitive Indian industry and converted the country into a source for raw material. India became a major market for British goods. The condition of the uprooted artisans and craftsmen became miserable.<sup>9</sup>

The plight of these artisans was so miserable that Lord William Bentinck wrote to the Court of Directors that their "misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."<sup>10</sup> The population of Dacca - renowned throughout the world for the fine quality of muslin that they produced - decreased from 150,000 to 20,000 between 1827 and 1837.<sup>11</sup> There were large number of artisans in at many places in north India too. Their fate was not much different in this respect. Thus the Muslims of all classes came to consider the advent of British rule as an un-mitigated calamity for the Muslim community.

This economic and political unrest among the Indian Muslims burst out, not unexpectedly if we keep the social milieu of unrelieved orthodoxy in view, in the form of jihād (holy war). Of course, the jihād was declared against the British rule. Shah 'Abdul Aziz', the grandson of the great Muslim thinker and reformer of 18th century India, had declared India as the dar al-harb (i.e. house of war) and so it was enjoined upon all the Muslims to fight against the illegitimate British rule and overthrow it. This movement, led by the prominent ulama of northern India, has been generally known

as the Wahabi movement as these ulama were generally thought to be the followers of 'Abd al-Wahab of Hejaz which of course was not true. They were followers of Shah Waliullah referred to above. According to A. R. Desai "The Wahabi movement was the first organised movement of the Indian Muslims. Though it started as a religio-reform movement, it developed, in subsequent stages, a political, social and economic content."<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Tara Chand, under the heading The Waliullah Movement writes about it. During this period, the movement which offered the most serious challenge to the British supremacy was the preaching of  Jihad  (holy war) by a section of the Muslims. The leader of the movement was Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareilly, a district in Uttar Pradesh. He was born in a family of noted divines who traced their descent from the Prophet.<sup>13</sup>

Throwing more light on the nature of the movement Tara Chand says, "What Syed Ahmad learnt in Arabia was not the creed of Abdul Wahab, but the story of the humiliation of the Muslim peoples, and the rapidly growing domination of the Western powers in Eastern countries. This realisation steeled the heart of a somewhat dreamy idealist into a fiery crusader with a clear and unalterable resolve to fight the enemies of Islam in order to recover the lands the Muslims had once ruled. On arrival in India, he immediately set upon organising his movement. He founded a system by which they (his followers) effected one of the greatest revivals known to Indian history, and which has kept alive the spirit of revolt against the British rule during fifty years."<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that in a similar situation (i.e. that of colonial domination) the ulama in other Muslim countries played, more

or less, similar role. More often than not they provided militant leadership to anticolonial movements. In Algeria, Indonesia, Egypt etc., the ulama played this kind of role. About the Algerian movement Maxime Rodinson says :

A more relevant case is the movement of the Algerian 'Ulemas', which flourished in the 1930s, long after Mohammad 'Abdoh's period. This movement parallel those mentioned above in that Algeria was a marginal Arab country and backward compared to other Arab countries for various reasons, notably because colonization of Algeria had started early and was very complete ... There was an underlying political programme, namely the struggle against French colonization. But, significantly enough, the Ulemas' conception of a reformed Islam did not stress modernism, tolerance and opposition to conservatism (the Wahabi movement in India bore similar features) as other movements in the East had in the period 1870-1910. On the contrary, the stress was on an Islamic fundamentalism, in opposition to the secularized Algerians of the period, who were assimilationists at the time...<sup>15</sup>

G. H. Jansen, the author of Militant Islam goes to the other extreme and maintains that but for the militant Islam (i.e. the militant Islamic movement under the leadership of Muslim divines) there would not have been in existence today the liberated group of Afro-Asian countries. He asks rather rhetorically "Could there have been an Afro-Asian movement without Islam?"<sup>16</sup> He questions the assumption that the nationalist movements that rolled up the imperial carpet in Afro-Asia in twenty swift years after 1947 were 'modern' and secular. He thinks that "So they may have been in such leading countries as Indonesia, India, Egypt and Ghana, but the

secular nationalist inheritors came late to the political scene...Without politically militant Islam freedom would have taken decades longer, that is if militant Islam and the freedom struggle had not been one and the same thing earlier on in Indonesia, Afghanistan, the Sudan, Somaliland, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and West-central Africa - in addition to the very large infusion of Islam in the national movement of Iran and some in that of Egypt."<sup>17</sup>

Although what Jansen says is rather contentious and needs to be examined in proper perspective, one cannot deny a core of truth in it. The Muslim religious leaders, in the countries mentioned above, did, with different degrees of effectiveness, challenge the colonial powers. In Indonesia, different factions of ulama are known to have reconciled their differences to fight against the Dutch colonialists. There even the members of a Sufi Tariqa called Qadiriya, provided the organisational framework for the revolutionary protest movement which resulted in the Tjilegon risings of 1888.<sup>18</sup>

Jansen fails to analyse the phenomenon he is referring to and tends to ascribe it to the inherent militancy of Islam. It amounts to begging the question. One has to search for reasons elsewhere, especially in the backwardness of these countries. Among the Muslims in these countries there was no trained secular leadership to head such movements. The ulama being closer to the people and having known their sufferings first-hand, as a result of introduction of colonial administration, were compelled by the situation to provide leadership. The movement led by the Mahdi of the Sudan against the British depredations there well illustrates this point. In Egypt, on the other hand, which was relatively advanced, religious militancy always remained on the sidelines and the most effective leadership to liberate

the country was provided by the Wafd party which mainly consisted of non-religious leaders. It also must be noted that even in countries like Indonesia, Algeria etc., subsequently, when the middle-classes equipped with secular education came into existence, they pushed the religious leadership aside and led the liberation movement. In the long run it is the situation which subtly or pronouncedly affects ideology. Also it depends whose interests a religion or an ideology is serving and accordingly, militant, passive or collaborative role it plays. This assumes a fundamental significance. If properly analysed it would become obvious that 'ulama, in colonial situation played, despite their deep seated conservatism, militantly anti-colonial role. In my opinion, it would be wrong to ascribe militancy per se to Islam, or any religion, for that matter.

The Wahabi 'ulama, as the followers of Shah Waliullah came to be known in India, played militant anti-colonial role and, this is important to note, despite fierce opposition from separatist elements (who had acquired secular education) from amongst their fellow-religionists, they continued to support the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress. The descendants of Shah Waliullah in fact were facing a different situation as compared to their master. Shah Waliullah was spurred to re-think Islam in a situation when the Mughal power was fast declining and his new interpretation, remarkable from a historical and socio-economic point of view, was intended to arrest this decline. In this respect the Wahabi movement in India fundamentally differed from that in Saudi Arabia although it was nearly contemporaneous with it. W. C. Smith pithily observes: "He (Shah Waliullah) grew up watching the Mughal Empire crumble. Unlike Ibn 'Abdal-Wahab, therefore, he thought and worked from within one of the

passing medieval empires, rather than outside. He would refashion and revive rather than reject."19

W.C. Smith further observes :

His political ambition was to restore Muslim power in India more or less on the Mughal pattern. Pure Islam must be re-enacted, a regenerated Muslim society must again be mighty. One finds this movement for Islamic regeneration expressing itself in two directions against internal decay and against external threat or domination.20

For his descendants there was no question of restoring the Muslim power in India; at least after the failure of the Mutiny all such hopes were dashed.\* The 'ulama, however, despite the severe persecution remained irreconciled to the British imperialism. Now, giving up the idea of restoring the Muslim power they resolved to cooperate with the Indian National Congress to drive out the British rulers. The Muslim society in the 19th century India was faced with 'internal decay' as well as external threat. No doubt the western ideas could have greatly helped in fighting internal decay but it is not how the 'ulama perceived the situation. For them 'external threat' posed imminent danger and as such needed to be fought against. In keeping with this doctrine of external threat they girded up their loins to fight against the British rule making common cause with all those who were against British rule in India irrespective of religion, caste and creed. It is interesting to note that in 1888 when Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded his Patriotic Association to wean the Muslims away from the Indian National Congress (we will talk about it more little later) Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi - a militant activist of Waliullah tradition - and others of his ilk from Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab issued a collection of fatwas (religious opinion) entitled Nusrat al-Ahrar21



calling upon the Muslims to support the Congress and to declare jihad against the illegitimate rule of the Britishers. Thus we see that these orthodox 'ulama, though conservative in outlook and drawing inspiration from the past for their moral, social and ethical life, were politically anti-imperialist and aspired for the total annihilation of the British empire in India.<sup>22</sup>

The Wahabi resistance to the British rule continued unabated despite heavy repression on the part of the authorities. In the post-Mutiny period several prominent 'ulama and hundreds of their supporters were blown by cannon, while others were deported to the penal settlement of the Andamans. Ashraf says, "In fact, among the first batch of prisoners to arrive in the Andamans were such well known Wahabi leaders of the revolt as Mufti Mazhar Karim of Delhi and Munshi Inayat Ahmad of Lucknow, followed by the victims of the Ambala (1865) and Patna (1869) Wahabi trials." Continuing further he says, "It is a remarkable testimony to the undying vigour and tenacity of these Wahabi leaders that the irrepressible Maulana Ahmadullah of Patna who was deported there, organised the assassination of Lord Mayo, the viceroy of India, on his official visit to the Settlement in 1872."<sup>23</sup> Hostility of these 'ulama towards the British regime was so intense that after suppressing the Wahabi uprisings of 1871, Mayo asked a Bengal civilian, W. W. Hunter, to write a book on the burning question of the day: "Are Indian Mussalmans bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen?"<sup>24</sup> Not surprising, therefore, that the Britishers considered these militant 'ulama as "a persistently belligerent class" and "a source of permanent danger to the Empire" and no wonder that W. W. Hunter used these words in dedication of his book The Indian Mussalmans.

Before we set out to discuss other trends among the Muslims of North India towards the British rule (it is highly necessary to understand the genesis of the communal problem) it would be better to note that even then the Muslim society was divided and fragmented and did not, as is often assumed, display characteristics of homogeneity. The impact of the British rule over the Muslim community was not uniform. Among the Muslims, like the other Indian communities, there were horizontal differences on the basis of race, language, culture, sects and professions as well as vertical differences based on caste and classes. It would, therefore, be misleading to argue that Muslims responded uniformly as community to socio-economic and political issues thrown up by the establishment of British Raj. Any realistic account of Muslim response must take these multilateral differences into consideration. This would explain why British rule did not evoke uniform reaction from the Indian Muslims.

It is well known that, the Muslims living in the western coastal region who were mainly traders, were not as anti-British as the Muslims of northern India; in fact the Muslims trading communities in this coastal region welcomed British rule and did not show any enthusiasm for the 1857 rebellion. Likewise, Muslims of northern India, divided as they were into different classes, reacted differently depending on the class or group they belonged to. Initially, some Muslim Nawabs and Jagirdars, to the extent they benefited from the British rule, took part along with the British in various intrigues and conspiracies to hold on to power. It was only when it became clear that the Britishers were out to usurp power in one native state after the other that these rulers joined the anti-British forces which ultimately coalesced and mutinied.



Even among these classes there were sections of jagirdar families who had taken up jobs in the British administrative set-up and who opposed the mutineers and helped the British rulers.<sup>25</sup>

After the failure of the Mutiny too, while the 'ulama, as already pointed out, continue to fight the British rule, those belonging to feudal classes found it more expedient to collaborate with the British Government. Some of them had already joined the British civil, police, judicial and administrative services. Apart from an economic necessity, for the members of the feudal classes, such services served other purposes. Says David Lelyveld :

A family with landed interests would be well advised to have one or two of its members connected with the government, familiar with the regulations, and friendly with the men in power. There was always the danger of litigation among kinsmen or peasant resistance against the collection of rent. So if there were adult males able and available to spend their time in some capacity at the Kacahri, then the police, courts, and revenue administrators might be available for necessary protection.<sup>26</sup>

Lelyveld also rightly informs us: "But after 1857 it was clear that the only way to participate in political decisions about the allocation and control of social resources was to make some accommodation with the ruling power. Men holding zamindari titles needed government assistance to collect rents; they were no longer permitted to have their own armed retainers... Commerce and manufacturing took place under government regulation that specified the nature of property and rights, and that could be enforced by police power. Transference and inheritance found their ultimate sanction in the courts. Religious leaders relied on the government to protect charitable endowments and other forms

of patronage that came their way as a result of economic enterprise. Sacred personal law touching on issues of marriage and family required government enforcement. Revenue administrators, policemen, and judges presided over the security and distribution of all kinds of wealth and property and even the physical safety of individuals."27

This clearly shows that the new administration was very much different from the traditional one prevalent at the time of the Muslim rule. Failure of the Mutiny dashed all the hopes of restoring the old administration. For the upper classes, therefore, there was no other alternative but to move closer to the new set-up and acquire whatever share in the power possible. For the Hindus transition to new situation was not very difficult, at least psychologically, in North India which was the seat of power. However, for the Muslim ruling classes (lower classes and downtrodden masses, either Hindu or Muslim, were not anyway in the picture as far as this power game was concerned) this adjustment was rather more painful as they held the Britishers responsible for depriving them of power. The Muslim ruling classes, partly due to the militant Wahabi movement and partly out of their own social prejudices refrained from acquiring western education (many, quite innocently of course, considered it tantamount to becoming Christians) which was now so necessary to hold key-positions in the British services.

However, in view of the comprehensive powers acquired by the Britishers as detailed above the Muslim ruling classes could not have completely remained isolated whatever their mental reservations or the preachings of the Waliullahi lulama. A section of the Muslim ruling classes, as pointed out earlier, had already compromised and joined the British services much before the Mutiny. That time the language of the admi-

nistration was Persian and hence they did not experience any difficulty. But after the mutiny the British policy changed and gradually the Britishers began to switch over to English. In North India Muslims were in privileged positions in the administration (their proportion was much more than warranted by their population) and now with the change of policy they felt threatened as they had not taken to western education. The Hindus did not feel any such inhibition and felt that with the change in policy the potential for their employment has increased. However, much should not be made out of Muslims' resistance to western education, as is often sought to be done; Muslims in north India - which had been seat of their power - were in a privileged position and resisted change as retention of Persian gave them advantage over others. We will discuss this in more details little later as the seeds of separatism germinated around this controversy.

Before we proceed further it would be interesting to throw some light on the Hindu reaction to the British rule as it also is the part of the complex the Hindu-Muslim problem was. In general the Hindu's perception of the situation after the consolidation of the British rule was very much different. For the Hindus, the British rule was not, initially at least (until a native class of bourgeoisie began to emerge), much of a calamity. Some Hindu rulers whose states were forcibly taken over by the British joined hands with Muslim rulers and 'ulama during the 1857 Mutiny. In the post-Mutiny period, like the Muslim nawabs and jagirdars, they too reconciled themselves to British hegemony and became its votaries. For the Hindu intelligentsia (there is a perceptible difference here), the British rule was a welcome change, in a way. In Bengal and elsewhere they were deeply in-

fluenced by Western ideas and liberal philosophy. It gave them a new sense of identity and national pride. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others started reform movements (his movement had begun before the Mutiny) to abolish age-old customs which were repugnant to liberal human values. British rulers initially supported these reforms.

The Hindu revivalist movements, unlike their Muslim counterparts, were directed on the one hand to arresting internal decay and on the other to instilling a new sense of national pride. For them there was no feeling of loss of power. On the contrary, in the new situation they felt more confident of their future and became slightly more assertive. The Arya Samaj of Dayanand Sarasvati is a typical example of such revivalist movements among the Hindus. It can be described as what Gramsci calls in a different context revolution/restoration. The revivalist movements among the Muslims, on the other hand, on account of a sense of loss of power and consequent sense of insecurity were directed, as pointed out earlier, not so much against internal decay as against external threat and hence was less rational and more emotional and fanatical.

In order to properly understand the genesis of the communal problem it would be necessary to trace out its socio-economic roots. The roots of the communal problem certainly lay in the emerging social conflicts in the post-Mutiny period and, not surprisingly, it was first predicted by no less a person than Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of whom we would talk in greater details. Communalism, it must be clearly understood at the outset, is a modern phenomenon. One can say it is politics by other means. It would be certainly wrong in my opinion to consider religion as the main causative factor as it has often been done. It has the status of means, less nothing more. This phenomenon emerges on our political

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scene only in the later part of the nineteenth century and, in this form, it is conspicuous by its absence in the medieval period. I have pointed out elsewhere ("Communalism - An Analytical Study") :

*notes* | The intense religiosity and unrelieved orthodoxy of the medieval period could not become fertile ground for nourishing and nurturing communalism in the absence of direct clash of interests between the aspirant communities for monopolising administrative, political and economic power. Seen in sociological perspective, the absence of opinion-mobilising machinery, competitive economic aspirations of a rising mercantile and industrial capitalist class, mass communication media and availability of service-oriented education to ever greater number of people in a pre-democratic stagnant social milieu, ruled out any possibility of sustained communal violence. In the medieval society the state had, through the agency of its coercive machinery, evolved a pattern of social integration which had basically transformed it into a regimented society wherein the dispossessed and underprivileged strata had been suffocated and stifled and religion used to superimpose the vertically integrated pattern of social stagnation.<sup>28</sup>

The seeds of conflict between the Hindus and Muslims, in fact were sown in a society which was undergoing, at that point of time, certain fundamental changes under the impact of the British rule. The problem has to be seen in the context of new social dynamics. It was the product of sharp conflict between the Hindu and Muslim social elites on introduction of certain democratic institutions (local-self government), competition for government jobs and political power. Muslim upper classes who, as already pointed out, had privileged position in government

jobs in North India were determined to retain it in the face of new pressures developing from the Hindu elites who were aspiring for these jobs and were taking advantage of western education. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan perceived this situation which was acquiring serious proportions. Sir Syed was a great advocate of renaissance among Indian Muslims. He strove very hard to spread Western education among them. The 'ulama of the Shah Waliullah school, as pointed out earlier, were mainly concerned with combating the external danger to the Muslim community in India and hardly were prepared to be seriously concerned with another dimension of the problem i.e. internal decay of the community.

Syed Ahmad Khan, who was no less conservative to begin with (he edited and published *Aine-Akbari*, wrote Asarus Sanadid etc.), grew out of the traditional frame-work and made sincere efforts to grapple with the new ideas which invading Indian society from the West. Unlike other fellow-Muslims he, once exposed to them, did not reject but tried to synthesise them with Islamic concepts and teachings. In other words, unlike the 'ulama, Sir Syed devoted himself to grapple with the problem of Muslim community internal decay. He perceived the situation so differently that for him there was no question of external danger to the community; on the contrary, the British rule was a great boon as it not only ensured protection and well-being but it also brought in its wake new ideas, science and technology. Thus, according to Atiq Siddiqui, Sir Syed formulated two principles to which he adhered throughout his life: spreading education and political alliance and friendship with the English masters.<sup>29</sup>

In order to spread scientific ideas he formed, with the help of his English friends, Scientific Society which was inaugurated on 9th January,



1864, by Lt. Greham.<sup>30</sup> The Society, needless to say, was in receipt of financial help from the government. Most of its members were government servants and out of 109 members, there were 48 Muslims, 33 Hindus and 28 Englishmen.<sup>31</sup> According to Hali, his biographer, in forming the Society Sir Syed's motive was:

"to enlist members from all the three communities i.e. the Hindu, Muslim and the English and thus to remove the feelings of separatism from each other and to demolish religious prejudices entertained by the Indians."<sup>32</sup> Sir Syed, in order to promote alliance with the British, also founded the Indian United Patriotic Association, one of whose objectives was to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. Sir Syed gave due importance to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity too. He wrote :

"In our opinion, just as the difference of religion which exists between the Musalmans and the Hindus ought not to prevent social dealings, mutual affection, love and sympathy between them, so also differences on political questions ought not to prevent social dealings, mutual affection and love and sympathy... Undoubtedly, just by ignoring difference of religion we desire that there should be established between the Hindus and the Musalmans friendship, affection, unity and sympathy, in the same way by ignoring political differences also, we desire that in social dealings there should be mutual friendship, affection, sympathy and brotherhood among them."<sup>33</sup>

The problem of 'Internal decay' of the community engaged his attention so much that he became completely oblivious of the fact that the British imperialist rule was based on exploitation of the Indian masses and that it was responsible for the ruination of Muslim artisans whose bones were 'bleaching the plains of India'. In fact

it was limitation of his class. Sir Syed's forefathers came from a distinguished noble family which had served the Mughal court. According to Sir Syed his father Syed Muttaqi had great influence in the Mughal court. He had close relationship with Akbar Shah II when he was still an heir apparent and after ascending the throne he used to call him 'brother Muttaqi'<sup>34</sup> Sir Syed's maternal grand father Khwaja Farid had also rendered meritorious services to the Britishers and he was appointed minister in Akbar Shah II's court for his relations with the Britishers.<sup>35</sup>

In view of this it is not surprising that Sir Syed looked at the situation in his time from the point of view of his own class. After all he was also serving the British government and had risen to the distinguished post of Sadrus Sudur. From the careful study of his writings it is obvious that he was sincerely attracted to and was enamoured of the British culture and way of life. He considered it much superior to that of his fellow countrymen's. His admiration for the English people increased on his visit to London in 1869. He wrote a travelogue in several instalments in his magazine "Institute Gazette" published from Aligarh. In one of the instalments he wrote: "It is six months since I came here. During this period I attended parties given by lords and dukes. I also met other persons of lesser status. On every occasion I saw ladies, nobles and able and cultivated women...The result of all this was that I realised that it was wrong on our part in India to accuse the English people of misbehaving towards us and considering us sheer animals. It is not only their understanding but in fact we are like that. Without exaggeration I say that all Indians - high and low, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, businessmen or artisans - are, as compared to



well educated and cultivated Britishers, like dirty, barbarous animals. Do you respect animals? Do you consider them worth respecting? Are you bothered about proper or improper behaviour with them? Then why the English people should not consider us like brutes and animals?" (tr. from Urdu mine).<sup>36</sup>

Naturally this caused a furore amongst his countrymen as their feelings were enraged. In North India feelings ran so high that even Sir Syed's English friends were worried. Number of news papers attacked him for a long time. However, Sir Syed was determined to teach the fellow-religionists of his class western knowledge and higher culture. Sir Syed also endeavoured to reinterpret Islam in the light of new knowledge<sup>37</sup> and for which too, he was strongly condemned in the conservative circles. It is interesting to note that he denounced polygamy (kasrat-e-izdiwaj). He considered it against the injunctions of God and His Prophet and on account of it Islam was getting bad name. For all this he was denounced as a dangerous heretic, deviationist and atheist. What was most painful to him was that he was falsely accused of having embraced Christianity. He wrote in his magazine Tahzibul Akhlaq : It is not surprising that people call us atheist, zindiq (unbeliever), anti-religion... But what is surprising is that they call us Christian. A fellow-religionist has written in his paper that we have been converted to Christianity and that baptism took place in a church... That man was not ashamed of publishing such a blatant lie about a Muslim in his paper.<sup>38</sup> (tr. from Urdu mine)

Sir Syed, thus we see, was the first liberal reformer among the Muslims in the later part of 19th century. In this respect at least his services would always be highly valued. Undoubtedly Indian Muslims owe him an intellectual debt.

Tara Chand, assessing his role, writes about him :

His position as a reformer was so advanced that he greatly annoyed the conservative elements in the community. He incurred specially the wrath of the traditionalists, who issued numerous decrees declaring him a heretic; abuses were hurled upon him in newspapers, books and speeches, and even his life was threatened. But nothing could daunt him, nothing could move him from the path which he had chosen... And although his bold adventure in Quranic interpretation was not followed even in his own institution, his basic attitude regarding Islam, namely its identity with reason and nature, was tacitly accepted by the Western-educated, modernised Muslims.<sup>39</sup>

Tara Chand further observes and it is worth noting :

The most significant implication of his theology, so far as Indian society was concerned was the repudiation of the view held by some narrow-minded theologians that the Hindus were infidels (kafirs). The enunciation of the principle that the laws of Islam were identical with the laws of nature and that all human beings were bound to obey them led to the logical conclusion that the differences between those who avowed faith in the Quran and the others who did not, was merely verbal and not real... Thus, Syed Ahmad Khan's liberalism opened wide the gates for social accommodation and co-ordination between Muslims, Hindus and Christians.<sup>40</sup>

Now let us come back to the question of the conflict as it began to develop between the Hindu and Muslim elites. There were several issues involved. The pivotal issue, it may be emphasised here, was sharing of power and government jobs among these upper classes. Sir Syed's

reaction to the introduction of the Local Self-Government Bill throws interesting light on this aspect. Sir Syed, opposing the bill said:

The system of representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population, and, in countries where the population is composed of one race and one creed, it is no doubt the best system that can be adopted. But, my lord, in a country like India, where caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of the races, where religious distinctions are still violent, where education in modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all the sections of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests on the local boards and the district councils would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations... The larger community would totally override the interests of the smaller community, and the ignorant public would hold the government responsible for introducing measures which might make the differences of race and creed more violent than ever. (emphasis supplied).

It would be no exaggeration to say that Sir Syed's above speech proved prophetic. The conflict between the Hindus and Muslims throughout the freedom struggle, as we shall see, was centred around the question of "the larger community overriding the interests of the smaller community." Even today our society continues to be fragmented along the lines of castes and creeds and voting takes place on these considerations, more often than not. The Hindu and Muslim elites used their communities as a cover for their own interests. Both these sections of the two communities wanted to grab as large a

share of the political and economic cake as possible. While grabbing the share in power for themselves, these classes very much feared that the lower classes of their communities might overwhelm them. Again, this can best be illustrated from the speech of Sir Syed which he delivered in Allahabad on 28 December on "the Present State of Indian Politics". He said :

Now I ask you, have Mohammedans attained to such a position as regards higher English education, which is necessary for higher appointments, as to put them on a level with Hindus or not? Most certainly not. Now, I take Mohammedans and the Hindus of our province together, and ask whether they are able to compete with the Bengalis or not? Most certainly not. When this is the case, how can competitive examination be introduced in our country? (Cheers). Think for a moment what would be the result if all appointments were given by competitive examination. Over all races, not only over Mohammedans but over Rajputs who have not forgotten the swords of their ancestors, would be placed as a ruler a Bengali who at sight of a table knife would crawl under his chair. (Uproarious cheers and laughter)... In the normal case no single Mohammedan will secure a seat in the Viceroy's Council. The whole Council will consist of Babu So-and-so Mitter, Babu So-and-so Ghose, and Babu So-and-so Chuckerbutty. (Laughter). Again, what will be the result for the Hindus of our province, though their condition be better than that of the Mohammedans? What will be the result for those Rajputs the swords of whose ancestors are still wet with blood?42

The speech brings out quite clearly and unmistakably the prejudices the feudal gentry had against the newly emergent middle-classes. Thus when he refers to 'Hindus' or 'Mohammedans'

Sir Syed means the feudal gentry of these communities, and not lower classes among them. Naturally, in keeping with their class prejudices the very idea of the middle or lower classes gaining upper-hand or ruling over them was highly repugnant to them. It is also brought out clearly in the above speech that Mohammedans are lagging behind in education. Muslims were largely dependant on land, commerce not being their forte. The feudal class was dominant among them but now the situation was changing under the impact of British measures. Robinson observes :

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the dominance of the Urdu-speaking elite was gradually undermined by several factors, most of them arising from the effects of British rule. For political reasons government was concerned to build up landlord power. Nevertheless, once the bureaucracy began to assume control over matters such as local posts, roads and police, which used to be in the hands of local magnates, it steadily cut down the very landlord power... At the same time there was another challenge to the magnates' position. Commercial men were growing richer as communications developed, as cash cropping increased, as trade expanded and as the law was enforced more rigorously. In some areas they not only rivalled the influence of the landlords but also began to buy up their land. This general pressure on the influence of landlords forms the background to changes which levelled quite specific threats at the position of the Urdu-speaking elite, in particular its Muslim members.<sup>43</sup>

As the landlord power began to erode under the impact of the new situation the Muslim elite began to worry more and more. W. W. Hunter's book Indian Mussalmans which threw

ight largely on the plight of the Bengali Muslims, heightened these feelings. Hunter argued in the book that the British rule was unsympathetic to Muslim needs. On the basis of evidence from Bengal he concluded that the British policies had dried up the sources of Muslim wealth, the Permanent Settlement had seriously reduced their income from land; the army under the British was no longer a source of gain for them and opportunities in government service and the professions which Muslims had monopolised earlier had come almost to an end.<sup>44</sup> The reason for this, Hunter argued was 'that our system of public instruction, which has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of centuries, and quickened their inert masses with some of the noble impulses of a nation, is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements, and hateful to the religion, of the Musalmans.'<sup>45</sup>

The book by Hunter was used by the Muslims in North India too, where they, as pointed out earlier, were better represented in services, to focus attention on the plight of Muslims in British India. Now some of the Muslims became conscious of the role of education and Sir Syed, along with some of his colleagues like Muhsin-ul-Mulk and others started a campaign for establishing an institution for Western education so that Muslims too could avail of job opportunities in government services. Sir Syed, to begin with, met with a stiff opposition. We do not wish to dwell upon its details here. Suffice it may to say that with his iron determination Sir Syed succeeded in establishing M.A.O. College. It is interesting to note here that the College, which had been born out of opposition to Macaulay's education policy, had become a tribute to its principles. The College began with three departments: English, Urdu and Persian/Arabic. By the early 1880s, only the English department



remained; students were not prepared to learn in languages which were unlikely to help them get jobs.<sup>46</sup>

In M.A.O. College "The major goal of education, then, was the mastery of English. Whatever concepts were taught in subjects such as history, philosophy, logic, or natural science, what was primarily being taught was English: not only its vocabulary and grammar, but genres and styles of exposition and expression as had developed in the historical tradition of English literature.<sup>47</sup> Sir Syed even said, the aim of the college was "to form a class of persons, Mohammedan in religion, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect."<sup>48</sup> Thus it is obvious that functional needs, in case of Muslims too, overrode the religious prejudices and they even took to English education at the cost of Arabic and Persian education.

As the competition for the government jobs became more intense, the conflict between the Hindu and Muslim elites also sharpened. This conflict assumed various forms including religious and linguistic controversies. In late nineteenth century linguistic controversy assumed serious proportions and became the most contentious issue between Hindus and Muslims. Before throwing some light on it (as it explains the genesis of communal conflict) we would say a few words about the composite culture of the North Indian elite.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the elite with power comprised Kashmiris, Kayasthas, Muslims, Rajputs and Khatri who, for generations had been serving the governments of northern India. They had evolved a common culture which has often been referred to as a composite culture. This group or class had common sartorial and food habits, besides cultural forums like mushairas (poetic symposia), nautch

parties etc. Its strongest point was literary expression. Upto 1837 Persian was the court language and besides Muslims, Kayasthas and Kashmiri Brahmins also contributed to the growth of its literature. Tej Bahadur Sapru, a Kashmiri Brahmin, was known for his scholarship of Persian and Dwarka Prasad Ufuq, a Kayasth of Lucknow, was a Persian poet. Munshi Hargopal Tafta, the chief disciple of the renowned poet Ghalib, was also a Kayasth. When Urdu replaced Persian, it became the main vehicle of literary expression for this class. Most of the books and newspapers were published in this language.<sup>49</sup> Some non-Muslim members of this class vigorously fought for retention of Urdu. In 1880, Pandit Ajudhia Nath fought against the government's proposal to suspend the Urdu law classes at Muir Central College, Allahabad. Kayasthas also joined the Muslims in their bitter protests against the Nagri resolution of April 1900.<sup>50</sup>

However, when the competition for jobs increased, the relations between the Hindu and Muslim members of this Urdu-speaking elite came under increasing strain. Proportionately higher percentage of jobs which Muslims held in North India began to decline. Between 1886-87 and 1913, the position of Muslims, and to a lesser extent Kayasths and Rajputs, deteriorated, while that of Brahmins, Banias and other Hindus improved. Francis Robinson comments, "It also shows that from the Mutiny to 1913 Muslims lost their dominant position and Hindus gained a much larger share of appointments."<sup>51</sup>

Soon there developed a controversy on switching over from Urdu to Hindi as far as court's and administration's language was concerned. Rafiq Zakaria says: "Though primarily a language controversy, it roused such passions on both sides that its repercussions on inter-communal relations were grave and far-reaching. It had



a marked effect on Muslim politics, making the educated Muslims, already suspicious of the rising Hindu leadership, more apprehensive of their future.<sup>52</sup> Sir Syed himself was deeply perturbed by pro-Hindi movement. Hali has recorded Sir Syed's reaction. He quotes him:

When the agitation spread in Benaras, one day I was talking to Mr. Shakespear, the commissioner of Benaras, about the education of Muslims. He was surprised to listen to me. At last he said it is first time that I heard from you about the well-being of Muslims in particular. Before this you always talked about the well-being of Indians in general. I said I am now convinced that these two communities cannot come together with heart and soul on any issue. It (conflict) is still much less. In coming days I clearly see more confrontation and enmity between those who call themselves educated. Those who survive would see this. He (Shakespear) said if your forecast proves correct, it would be very bad. I said I am also very sorry about it but I am convinced of my fore cast.<sup>53</sup> (tr. mine from Urdu)

And we know that unfortunately Sir Syed proved right. Again, Sir Syed had very correctly understood that the developing confrontation between the two communities was on account of those who were educated. It was an unmistakable trend of our national struggle. While the masses were fighting against the British imperialism under the leadership of various militant groups and parties, the educated elite - both Hindu as well as Muslim - were fighting among themselves for greater share of jobs and higher positions in the British administration. The 'ulama, it must be noted, despite their religious conservatism, were making common cause with the Indian National Congress to drive

the Britishers out. They were close to the urban artisans and poor masses and knew their misery through their own experience. Dadabhai Naoroji had calculated using simple but effective methods in 1873 that for the year 1867-68, the national income of British India was 3.4 billion rupees for a population of 170 millions or 20 rupees per head.<sup>54</sup> Since it is an average figure, the actual income of the poorest of the society must have been much less than even twenty rupees per year.

The masses were living and struggling in such abysmal poverty while the scions of the upper classes were only concerned with higher jobs in the British administrative hierarchy. It is these sections of the population that fanned the separatist movement. Thus we see that it was not basically religion which was the motivating force of the separatist movement as so often mistakenly believed. The basic motives were economic in nature and had class basis. Had it been basically religious in orientation the conservative 'ulama ought to have led it. But we see that the 'ulama were against the separatist movement and had firmly aligned themselves with the nationalist movement and the organisation representing it. These 'ulama remained aligned with the nationalist movement until we achieved independence. Not once they wavered in their commitment.

There is another important dimension of the problem which too must be properly understood in order to correctly analyse the Hindu-Muslim problem. While the Muslim revivalist movement in the nineteenth century India, in a way developed along class-lines (in the sense of espousing the cause of the poor and down-trodden even including that of Hindu peasantry in case of the Farazi movement of Bengal), the Hindu revivalist movement, represented

by the Arya Samaj, remained primarily a Hindu middle-class movement and developed anti-Muslim bias which frequently got intensified and caused communal tension (Brahmo Samaj movement of Bengal was also a middle class movement but it did not develop anti-Muslim bias). Robinson observes :

Clearly, Hindus in the nineteenth century were divided over how they should react to the new influences from the west. The organisations of Hindu revivalism had a wide variety of often conflicting approaches to this problem. But all, whether concerned with the defence of orthodox Hinduism, contributed to a new and greater sense of Hindu identity. There was in this new Hindu consciousness implicit opposition to western influences and alien rule. Also implicit was opposition to those elements of Islamic culture which had been absorbed from India's Muslim invaders; and this was extended by the Arya Samaj in particular to explicit opposition to the Muslims themselves... in 1880s and 1890s Arya Samajists attacked the Muslims with increasing intensity. The leader of the crusade, Pandit Lekh Ram, condemned all forms of Islam, particularly the 'naturalist Muhammedis' that is Syed Ahmed Khan's Aligarh movement, and demanded that the Muslims should be either expelled from India (beginnings of two nation theory?) or converted to Aryanism. The crusade lost vigour only after Lekh Ram's assassination in 1897. Such antagonism towards the Muslims and Muslim culture resulted, almost inevitably, from the growth of a new sense of Hindu identity. It had important political implications.<sup>55</sup>

Again, this difference in the Muslim and Hindu revivalist movement we can understand only if we look at them in class perspective.

The Arya Samaj movement was launched primarily with the objective of bringing about some modern reforms (although it also emphasised revival of the Vedic rites and in that sense it was a revivalist movement stressing the need for purified Hinduism i.e. in a way restoration/revolution model of Gramsci referred to earlier). But it was dominated by business men and middle-class intelligentsia which had their own aspirations which clashed with those of newly emerging middle-classes among the Muslims. In a backward country like India such clashes of interest, more often than not - specially when such interests clash with the aspirations of the masses, assume the form of virulent religious sectarianism.

The new educated elite among Muslims who came, by and large, from the land-owning nobility, was cut off from the people and provided intellectual and political leadership to the separatist movement among the Muslims. Sir Syed, who himself came from a distinguished noble family, advocated education, not surprisingly, not for all the Muslims, much less Muslim peasantry and artisans or for other Muslims of low birth (i.e. ajlaf), but only for the Muslims of upper classes (ashraf). Delivering a speech while laying the foundation-stone of Anjuman-e-Islamiyah in Bareilly he said in clear words that the English education must be meant only for the ashraf (i.e. nobility) and sardars (i.e. leaders) of the community. Replying to the address presented to him on this occasion, he said :

I say that to teach English in the madrassa, like the one set-up by you, is not proper (The madrassa was meant for poor Muslim boys). It is a mistake. No doubt English education is highly necessary for our community. It is necessary for the nobles and sardars of our family to impart higher education to their children.....

It would be more suitable for you to arrange for some elementary education for these boys (i.e. poor Muslim boys) so that they can read and write. Give them simple booklets so that they can learn namaz (prayer) and roza (fasting) and other elementary principles of Islamic religion.<sup>56</sup>

Among Indian Muslims, the beginning of the separatist movement, it is important to note, was rooted in these upper classes for whom Sir Syed was working. There were no traces of religious revivalism in this movement. As we will shortly see, the demands put forward by the leaders of this movement related to the share of Muslims (ashraf Muslims, naturally) in government jobs and seats in legislative assemblies. They did not raise any religious issue directly, nor any demand pertaining to the lower classes of Muslims, not even indirectly. Thus the class character of the separatist movement among the Muslims is unmistakably clear. I am not suggesting any simplistic approach to the problem. The remarks here about the class character of various revivalist and separatist movements among the Hindus and Muslims are general in nature. I do not mean to say that class is the only determinant factor; there are several other factors as well, including the religious one. What I mean to say is that these movements, claiming to originate for one or the other purpose, became, or were rather turned into, instruments of serving the class interest.

M.A.O. College, Aligarh, imparted western education to the scions of leading Muslim feudal families of the north. The British Government was carefully nurturing this Muslim centre of education in order to use it as a counter-weight to the militancy of the 'ulama on the one hand, and, on the other, to counter act the activities of the Indian National Congress. Before we



proceed further a few words about the formation of Indian National Congress will not be out of context here.

The Indian National Congress was founded by Mr. A.O. Hume in 1883, with the laudable objectives of fusing into one national whole all the different and, till recently discordant, elements that constitute the population of India; the gradual regeneration along all lines, mental, moral, social and political, of the nation thus evolved; and the consolidating of the union between England and India, by securing the modification of such of its conditions as may be unjust or injurious to the latter country. These objectives were laid down by A.O. Hume himself in his speech at Allahabad on 30th April, 1888.<sup>57</sup> Gradually The Congress became the harbinger of the rising national movement. Hume was shrewd English bureaucrat whose political antenna had caught the rumblings of brewing discontent in the lower rungs of the population. He once wrote, "Do you not realise that by getting hold of the great lower middle classes before the development of the reckless demagogues, to which the next quarter of a century must otherwise give birth, and carefully inoculating them with a mild and harmless form of political fever, we are adopting the only certain precautionary method against the otherwise inevitable ravages of a violent and epidemic burst of disorder."<sup>58</sup>

But anyhow whatever the intentions of Mr. Hume in forming the Congress, it was certainly becoming for the British rulers an instrument to keep the coming storm at bay. The other most effective way for them was to generate conflict, most subtly and skilfully of course, between the two major communities. Sir Syed was fully encouraged by the British Government. He was knighted and showered with all sorts of honours. It is not difficult for a perceptive

student of politics to understand that the Britishers were not cultivating Sir Syed for nothing. Slowly and gradually, the Britishers knew, discontent for jobs among the Aligarh students was bound to grow and this will certainly sharpen the divisive tendencies between the Hindu and Muslim elites. We have already quoted Sir Syed's prophetic remarks on this. As the activities of the Indian National Congress increased, British Government started leaning towards these Muslim elites as a counter-weight.

The British authorities, in view of the vital interests involved, began to worry when the Aligarh College faced financial crisis and also struggle for succession broke out after the death of Syed Ahmed, the father figure of the Aligarh movement. Sir Anthony MacDonnell, no friend of Muslims, told the then Viceroy, "The failure of the Aligarh College would be for these provinces....a disaster of the greatest magnitude."<sup>59</sup> Again, it was not for nothing that MacDonnell himself mediated in the succession struggle and the college was given financial help to tide over its crisis. This clearly shows the importance the British government attached to sustain the Aligarh movement as a counterpoise to the gradually evolving nationalist movement.

As already pointed out, a sharp conflict arose between the two sections of the Urdu-speaking elite i.e. Hindus and Muslims on the question of language. On his question, even those who were closest friends began to fall apart on communal lines. Raja Jai Kishen Das, the acting secretary of the Aligarh Scientific Society, and one of Syed Ahmed Khan's closest friends, started spousing the cause of Hindi and the Nagri script most vigorously. He now pressed for the abolition of Urdu in government offices; he placed a pandit at the service of the Aligarh High School. He also started a campaign for the estab-



lishment of a Sanskrit University.<sup>60</sup> Similarly many of the Hindu Urdu-speaking elite fell behind the Hindi movement.

All this, needless to say, came as a godsend to the British authorities. Also, after the death of Sir Syed, his followers led by Mohsin-ul-Mulk became more vocal, even aggressive, in their demands due to a series of developments which took place by the close of nineteenth century. Firstly, Persian was removed from the curriculum of Allahabad University. Secondly, the proportion of Muslims in the UP Civil Service began to be questioned. A list of candidates for tehsildar and deputy collector was rejected because it had too many Muslims. Also, an enquiry was conducted to find out why there were more Muslims than Hindus in the police department. To add fuel to the fire orders were issued that no more than three Muslims should be appointed for every five Hindus in any branch of the government. Then, some of the Hindi enthusiasts led a deputation to MacDonnell, chief commissioner of Oudh, demanding replacement of the Persian script by Nagri. In view of all this it was hardly surprising that Muslims began to question the assumption that government was friendly towards them. Robinson observes :

The Nagri resolution of 18 April 1900 was the last straw. Aligarh Muslims threw to the winds all the caution that they had learned at the feet of Syed Ahmed. Mohsin-ul-Mulk reorganised the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of Upper India as the Urdu Defence Association, and at a gathering presided over by the Nawab of Chhatari it was decided to hold a meeting of representative Muslims of north india to discuss the resolution and to present a memorial to the lieutenant-governor.<sup>61</sup>

A number of associations sprang up in Allahabad, Lucknow and other places, on similar lines in defence of Urdu. Though the situation was taking separatist turn, it must also be noted that along with Muslims some Kayasths and Kashmiri Brahmins also joined the protest movement. Historical events are nothing if not complex and cannot be ordered into neat categories, however rigorously evolved by historians. However, it does not mean that there are no well-discernible trends. We are more concerned with the later trends than the former approach (i.e. putting things in neat categories) is less rigorous, however pleasing it may be to a historian. Coming back to our point young educated Muslims from Aligarh and Agra landlords, Oudh taluqadars, 'ulama, lawyers and leading Congressmen such as Hafiz Abdul Rahim of Aligarh and Sajjad Hussain, the editor of Oudh Punch came together for the protection of Urdu. However, MacDonnell strongly disapproved of this agitation and a growl from him was enough to send most landlords scampering back to their estates. Only Mohsin-ul-Mulk seemed to be made of sterner stuff. But he too, when threatened by MacDonnell with the stoppage of the government grant to the Aligarh College, withdrew.

Whatever the end result of this agitation, it left behind strong and bitter feelings. Also, and it is important to note, the betrayal by the landlords, taluqadars and nawabs made the young and educated Muslims very angry. They now felt the necessity for a separate political organisation for ventilating the grievances of Muslims, Ghulam-us-Saqalain, one of the spokesman of this group, wrote in his journal Asr-i-Jadid: Intelligent Musalmans will readily admit the necessity for the establishment of a Muhammadan political association. Owing to the want of such an association the interests

of the Muhammadan community have already suffered in a variety of ways and are still being trampled under foot; some of the instances being the Hindi-Urdu controversy, the exclusion of Persian from the Allahabad University and the paucity of Mussalman members in the Municipal and Local Boards.<sup>62</sup>

Ghulam-us-Saqalain also argued that Muslims could not join the Congress as it stands for elective principle and competitive examinations (Sir Syed, too, it may be recalled, had opposed both) although he favoured cooperation with the Congress on other common issues such as reduction in salt duty, raising the limit of taxable income from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 and the greater employment of natives in the commissioned ranks of the army. He also emphasised the fact that the proposed political association of the Muslims should not have too many taluqadars and landowners in it since 'no association which had a preponderance of Muslim landholders can exist long, the fate of the Aligarh Urdu Defence Association is a case in point.'<sup>63</sup>

On the demand for a separate Muslim political association the big landlords, taluqadars etc. kept on vacillating as they were not sure of government's reaction to any such move. Meanwhile, the young educated Muslims were growing impatient and they even threatened to join the Congress. Seeing the danger signals Viqar-ul-Mulk, protege of Syed Ahmed and close friend of Mohsin-ul-Mulk, decided to Form a Muslim political association within which the young gentlemen could let off their steam. Starting with the assumption that the presence and permanence of the British rule was in the best interests of the Indian Mussalmans Viqar-ul-Mulk wanted to impress on them that in the government of the day they had the best and surest friend and that the public agitation was to be avoided.

He also tried to drive home the fact that since the government was confronted with so many conflicting interests, it needed the help of the government in the shape of true representation of facts which such a political association could place before the government.<sup>64</sup>

Before we throw more light on the formation of the Muslim political association which came to be later on christened as the Muslim League, we would like to say a few words about the activities of some prominent Muslims from west-coast area, primarily Bombay which was a business town. As emphasised earlier, the Muslims were not, and are not, a homogeneous group as far as their political and economic interests are concerned. While the feudal and landed gentry from amongst Muslims saw its interest in making common cause with the British rulers, the western traders and professionals of the Muslim community perceived the situation differently and tended to support the Congress. These prominent businessmen and professionals had a more secular and catholic outlook and felt that the interests of the Muslim middle-classes would be better served under the umbrella of a nationalist organisation like the Congress (Jinnah who later became the undisputed leader of the Muslim League also belonged to a business family from western India. We will analyse this phenomenon in the next chapter. Suffice it may to say here, as pointed out earlier, history does not fit into the neat categories evolved by us).

When the taluqadars and landed gentry of UP was stressing the need to forming a separate organisation some prominent Muslims, from western region joined the Congress and were championing its cause. Badruddin Tyabji, a Suleimani Bohra Muslim belonging to a prominent Business family of Bombay had the honour of becoming the Congress president in 1887. Tyabji in his presi-

dential address declared that there was nothing whatever in the position or the relations of the different communities in India - be they Hindus, Muslims, Parsees or Christians - which should make them stand aloof from one another in their efforts to obtain "those great general reforms, those great general rights which are for the common benefit of all".<sup>65</sup>

Similarly for the twelfth Congress again, in order to prove the non-communal character of the Congress, Rehmatullah Sayani, a well-known Bombay solicitor, was invited to preside over it in its session held in Calcutta in 1896. The Hindu press hailed his selection as one more instance of the Congress leaders desire to co-operate with the Muslims. To the newly elected president Sayani, it is interesting to note, Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan, one of Sir Syed's chief lieutenants, wrote to him that if the Congress was desirous of Hindu-Muslim unity, it should agree, as a basis of that unity, "equality of political representation" between the two communities. "The Congress must decide," he wrote, "by a resolution, that in the Councils of the Government and in Municipal and Local Boards the Hindus and Mussalmans may have an equal number of elected members."<sup>66</sup>

Sayani, according to Zakaria, devoted a large part of his address to a critical examination of the Muslim attitude to the Congress. He denied at the outset, that all Muslims were against the Congress and inquired, how there could be such a positive attitude on their part when most Muslims, due to lack of education, had not even heard of the Congress movement (Sayani at least thought of common Muslims; other Muslim leaders specially belonging to the feudal gentry never gave any importance to the poor and uneducated Muslims). He knew that there were some Muslims, either educated



in English or well-versed in Hindustani, who were against the Congress; indeed, they took delight in "abusing the Congress". But there were also some other Muslims, small in numbers at present but "destined soon to come to the front" who had educated themselves in the right direction and were with the Congress.<sup>67</sup>

Sayani's presidential address is important as he, in his address, listed down the objections raised by the Muslims towards Congress and answered them one by one. He found, in these objections, some truth but dismissed them as untenable. About the first objection that it was anti-religious for the Muslims to join it he said that "the Congress has no concern whatever with the religion or the religious exercise of any of its members." The second objection that if Muslims join it the government would maltreat them, Sayani said that it was unfounded as the purpose of the Congress was to ventilate "the grievances of the subjects in a legal and constitutional manner" and to remind the government of its promises to the people (The Congress, it is true, until Gandhiji came on the scene, believed only in submitting petitions to the government). The Muslims Sayani, therefore, felt "need not be frightened by phantoms created by their own imagination, phantoms which have no place in the realm of realities."

Thus we see that a section of the Muslims, specially from the western region was supporting the Congress while another section, mainly led by the Aligarh educated scions of Muslim feudal nobility of north India opposed it with subtle encouragement from the British rulers (however, it does not mean that all those educated at Aligarh College - which later became university - became the champions of the separatist cause. Many Aligarh students who came from middle and lower middle class families



became staunch supporters of the Congress and the nationalist movement led by it).

Before we go into the formation of the Muslim League which spearheaded the separatist movement, it would be necessary to understand the causes of unrest among the Muslim elite of Uttar Pradesh that led to its formation. As pointed out earlier, while the Muslims of Bengal were poor, backward and not proportionally represented in the government services, in UP the case was just the opposite. Some recent historians like Anil Seal, Peter Hardy, Prabha Dixit, Paul R. Brass etc. have thrown enough light on this aspect of the Muslim problem.<sup>68</sup> These historians have rightly argued that the Muslims of North-Western Provinces and Oudh (U.P.) were much more advanced than the Hindus and constituted an administrative and cultural elite. Muslim separatism, according to this view, was a determined attempt by this elite to protect its privileges. As for a long time Persian and then Urdu was the language of administration, a large number of Muslims got recruited in government services. Educationally too, they were ahead of others. The Director of Public Instruction of Oudh pointed out in 1874-75 that there were more English schools in Muslim towns than in Hindu towns like Ayodhya. The Muslims were not backward in higher education either. The percentage of Muslims in the total population of UP was 14.1 whereas the percentage of Muslim students in colleges was 18.6 in 1896-97, 19.7 in 1901-02 and 20.8 in 1916-17.<sup>69</sup> In government employment also Muslims continued to be ahead of the Hindus till 1931. C. J. Lyall observed in 1882, "...The Muhammadans as a class belong to the middle and higher strata, (they) possess much more than the share of Government employment which their mere numbers would give them, and are comparatively a thriving and

energetic element in society."<sup>70</sup>

In Bengal, on the other hand, the position was just the opposite. Educationally and economically, Muslims were quite backward. The peasantry and the artisans of Bengal - majority of them Muslims - were most hit by the British rule, Farazi movement described earlier being its barometer. The administrative reforms of Cornwallis deprived the Muslims of Bengal of higher executive posts and the policy of the Permanent Settlement elevated the Hindus to the position of landlords which gave them opportunity to amass wealth and wield power - an opportunity which otherwise would have fallen to the Muslims. As already pointed out it was Hunter who focussed on the plight of the Bengali Muslims and also established the myth of their being backward elsewhere too.

In Bengal too it was thought that the Muslims were backward in education as they hated western education and feared proselytization to Christianity. However, the truth lay elsewhere. It was mainly due to their economic backwardness. Shila Sen points out rightly, "What the Lt. Governor Reeves Thompson concluded in 1885 offers a more reasonable explanation for this. He emphasised that the low educational percentage of Muslims was confined to districts where they occupied a low place in the social scale and the situation was the reverse of it in those parts of the country where they were comparatively well off. This, he said, seemed 'to support the conclusion that the traditional explanation is incorrect, and that it is the comparative poverty of Muhammadans rather than any special prejudices of theirs which accounts for their apparent neglect of the facilities for higher education which the existing system offers.'<sup>71</sup>

It is important to note - and we will discuss it in more detail in the next chapter that

in the All-India Muslim politics, the Muslim elite of U.P. has dominated the scene since the later part of the nineteenth century and the Muslim majority provinces like Bengal, the Punjab and the Sindh, along with the provinces of western and southern India, have always remained on the periphery. The Muslim leadership of north India then comprising U.P. and Oudh, exploited the problems of the Muslims throughout India, to their own advantage. The reasons for this perhaps are that these provinces of the north were the seat of Muslim power and the privileged Muslim elite had to become very vocal to protect its privileged position.

When W. W. Hunter's book was published the Muslim elite of U.P. and Oudh fully exploited it for its own ends. Some other developments added fire to the fuel and the condition was ripe for the formation of the Muslim League. David Lelyveld says :

In the summer of 1906, John Morley, the new Liberal Secretary of State for India, announced a number of concessions to the long-standing demands of the Indian National Congress for an increase in the representative element in the Indian government. This was one of those landmark decisions, like Ripon's Local Councils Act of 1882 and the Indian Councils Act of 1892, that raised the ante in political competition by adding to the power of elected representatives and increasing patronage posts in government service.

Further, throwing light on other factors in this thrilling period, he says :

This decision, following on the great svadeshi agitation in Bengal, gave new life to the stale Congress politics of the nineteenth century. For the first time, northern India began to become interested in All-India politics. In this new political climate, many of

the crucial issues were construed in terms of Hindu-Muslim divisions: the contest between Hindi and Urdu, the partition of Bengal, the legality of cow slaughter. Now the fear that Sayyid Ahmad had enunciated in the 1880s was recalled: that a non-Muslim majority would use its power under democratic institutions to the detriment of Muslim interests and sensitivities. The low level of political activity that Sayyid Ahmad had fostered would no longer suffice to win the prizes or withstand the dangers of an expanding arena of political competition.<sup>72</sup>

It was in this climate that Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk drew up a memorial which was submitted to Muslim delegates from all over India in the Lucknow meeting on 15 and 16 September 1906. Its slightly amended version was presented to the Viceroy at Simla on 10 October 1906. The greater part of the memorial was devoted to securing for the Muslims as strong a position as possible in the new power structure revolving around legislative councils. The memorialists insisted on separate representation to be determined in accordance with "the numerical strength, social status and special requirements of either community".<sup>73</sup> The memorialists also begged the Viceroy for his assistance in founding a Muslim University. This demand was included in the memorandum as a result of discussion in the Lucknow meeting. After all the Aligarh College had provided them with a forum to fight their battles effectively.

However, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca outwitted the Aligarh Muslim leadership in seizing initiative to establish a separate political party of Muslims. He sent out a circular in November 1906 to all the Muslim associations declaring his intention to found a 'Muslim All-India Confederacy' and forced the Aligarh Muslim leaders to join hands

with him in his project and thus avoid the embarrassing situation of a large number of young Muslims joining the Congress. According to Pirzada, the editor of Foundations of Pakistan, the avowed objectives of Nawab Salimullah's association, were to be :

(a) to controvert the growing influence of the so-called Indian National Congress, which has a tendency to misinterpret and subvert the British rule in India, or which may lead to that deplorable situation, and (b) to enable our young men of education, who for want of such an association, have joined the Congress camp to find scope to exercise their fitness and ability for public life.<sup>74</sup>

Thus the All-India Muslim League was founded on 30 December 1906. The foundation resolution was proposed by Nawab Salimullah and seconded and supported by three 'young gentlemen', Hakim Ajmal Khan (who later became one of the leading lights of the Congress), Zafar Ali Khan and Mahomed Ali. It can be seen from the objectives listed above that the feudal leadership among the Muslims was greatly worried by the impatience of the young Muslims to join the Congress for redressal of their grievances. It was thus clear that the landed interests among the Muslims were eager to perpetuate British rule and counter the growing influence of the Indian National Congress. They saw in it a powerful threat to their vested interests. They also wanted to lure young Muslims towards the Muslim political organisation so that they could 'let off their steam'.

Naturally such an organisation comprising powerful vested interests would, in order to divert attention from the real issues facing the masses, concentrate on either obscurantist demands or those which affected the upper classes. Job reservations in the higher echelons

of administration, number of seats in the new legislative councils and so forth were the demands which hardly could enthuse the exploited Muslim artisans and impoverished Muslim peasantry. How these Muslim leaders were apathetic to the conditions of the poor Muslim masses can be gauged from the fact that although swadeshi movement with its emphasis on the boycott and burning of British cloth was greatly beneficial to the large number of impoverished Muslim weavers, it was opposed by the Nawab of Dacca and others of his ilk in the Muslim League. The Muslim League either ignored the vital interests of impoverished peasants and artisans who constituted the overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims and voiced the demands of a tiny section of Muslims who either belonged to the landed gentry or the educated middle-class with aspirations for jobs in the civil services and seats in the legislatures.

It would be interesting to throw some light on the socio-economic causes of this state of affairs prevailing among the Muslims then. While evaluating the separatist politics among Muslims one cannot ignore the fact that unlike the Hindus, Muslims in India did not develop a modern capitalist class. The Indian National Congress represented the interests of native bourgeoisie and thus had its support. In order to force the British rulers to give concessions to the native bourgeoisie, the Congress enlisted support of the Indian masses by including their demands in its programme. Again, having to accommodate certain demands of the impoverished masses, it could not have distinguished between Hindu and Muslim peasants and workers. Moreover, a modern capitalist class, even in a backward country, has to develop a secular perspective without which modern industrial development and creation of necessary infra-structure is



very difficult, if not impossible. The Congress by its secular programme thus took the masses within its ambit and thus isolated the separatists among the Hindus represented by the Hindu Mahasabha etc.

The Muslim separatists, on the other hand, had no such powerful rival in the form of modern capitalist class among the Muslims and, had the added advantage, on the contrary, of playing with the minority psychosis. The weak mercantile capitalists of the west coast were easily supplanted by the powerful separatist forces represented by the feudal classes which had no need for any modern ideology, not at least in the functional sense. Thus it can be said that uneven development of Hindus and Muslims created the right climate for the forces of communalism to thrive. W.C. Smith observes :

...Communalism would not have been so effective a divisive force, nor could the upper class Muslims have been so effectively repressed, had the Muslim and Hindu section of the classes concerned been at the same economic level. But they were not. Economic development within the British imperialist system benefited a group of Indians of whom a larger proportion were Hindus than Muslims.<sup>75</sup>

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## Chapter 2

### THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

Formation of the Muslim League was the first major step in the direction of the separatist movement among Indian Muslims. As already pointed out, more than religion, it was motivated by the interests of the upper class Muslims. When Muslim League was formed - as the resolution detailing its aims and objects shows - its founders neither aspired for independent status for India nor for its partition. On the contrary it was very eager to protect the British interests by acting as a counter-weight to the growing influence of the Indian National Congress. However, man cannot make history as he wishes. He is confronted with a complex of forces acting and counteracting on each other and thus the socio-political movement assumes a tortuous course, not always in the full control of its leaders.

Again, while trying to analyse such a socio-political movement one has to carefully sort out what is organic from what is conjunctural. Gramsci rightly points out :

A common error in historico-political analysis consists in an ability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes

as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of "economics", or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of "ideologism". In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element.1

From the later half of the first decade of the twentieth century the political situation in British India began to acquire new dynamism. National consciousness was spreading fast among the people of India and, in the face of rising militancy against the British rule it was difficult to keep the banner of separatism aloft. The partition of Bengal, primarily designed to create rift between the Hindus and Muslims, had led to country-wide agitation, although the top leadership among Muslims did protest against the partition of Bengal vigorously, the move did not succeed as much in creating the gap between the two communities as it did in radicalising the political atmosphere in the country. The Muslims as a whole did not, as often we are made to believe, support the partition of Bengal. A large number of Muslims, in fact, opposed it vigorously. Says Santimoy Roy :

At the Barisal political Conference the man who presided over the session that gave call for the movement against partition was Muslim, Abdullah Rasul, an eminent lawyer of Calcutta. He participated in this movement prepared for any sacrifice. The documents in government archives of Bengal - popularly known as "swadeshi movement" - prove that throughout East Bengal in different districts a good number of Muslim intelligentsia participated in the struggle along with the Hindus against the partition of Bengal. As given in the district

statistics, it is known that the number of mass meetings held in Mymensingh was 110, Dacca-75, Comilla-65, Barisal-80, Chittagong-30, Noakhali-70, Calcutta-200, and Faridpur-50. At these meetings a large number of Muslim masses assembled and Muslim leaders delivered speeches. A good number of pleaders, mukhtars, teachers and talukadars were among those speakers.<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand the Muslim problem in proper perspective it is necessary at very important juncture of the history of our freedom movement to distinguish between the political interests of upper class Muslim leadership from those of the Muslim masses. The Islamic rhetoric of the upper class Muslim leadership has, more often than not, misled many of our historians and Muslim specialists. In other words they have failed to establish correct relationship between what is 'organic' and what is 'conjunctural', to use Gramsci's words again. A perceptive scholar of Muslim politics has to give due emphasis on this aspect, at times, even at the cost and risk of being misunderstood as this aspect has been largely neglected.

Though setting up the separate Muslim political party was subtle move to widen the rift between the two communities (as until then the Indian politics was elite-oriented), the events soon overtook such expectations on the part of the rulers and an era of mass politics began. Slogans of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott, and National education, emerged during the anti-partition campaign. Tilak carried on a vigorous propaganda of this programme and recommended its adoption at the session of the Congress held at Calcutta in 1906. Tilak became a most popular all-India leader of the nationalist movement from that year.<sup>3</sup> Again, all nationalist leaders Tilak, Pal,

Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai and others organised a country-wide campaign through the press and the platform to popularize the boycott. The campaign was successful and seriously affected the demand of British goods and gave fillip to the Indian industries (thus the interest of Indian bourgeoisie was linked up with the Congress, a class, conspicuous by its absence among the Muslims).

The boycott was so effective that The Englishmen, an Anglo-Indian paper of Calcutta, wrote, 'it is absolutely true that Calcutta warehouses are full of fabrics that cannot be sold. Many prominent Marwari firms have been absolutely ruined (these Marwaris were comprador bourgeoisie whose interests clashed with that of national bourgeoisie. A section of the Muslims from the west coast also belonged to this comprador category), and a number of the biggest European import houses have had either to close down their piecegoods branch, or to put up with a very small business. In boycott, the enemies of the Raj have found a most effective weapon for injuring British interests in the country.'<sup>4</sup>

The movement spread very fast and aroused the masses. Mass meetings, demonstrations and hartals took place. Papers like Kesari and Marath of Tilak in Bombay and Samdhya, Bande Mataram, and Yugantar in Bengal, educated the people in the new outlook and programme. It would be wrong to assume that the Indian Muslims remained indifferent to this agitation. A section of the Muslims, no doubt, was under the influence of the powerful vested interests led by the Nawab of Dacca and privileged scions of the Aligarh College. Nawab of Dacca supported the Bengal partition plan and this even led to communal tension and rioting. Nawab Salimullah and Syed Nawab Ali Choudhary of Mymensingh tried to make partition (of Bengal) an all-India

issue. Both of them were in touch with the leader of Aligarh movement Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk and the English officials like Archbold pleading for their help.<sup>5</sup>

But, and it is important to note, it is, at best, a partial picture of the Muslim politics of that period. There were various currents and cross-currents which deserve more attention as often they have been ignored. The 'ulama of the Shah Waliullah School with their anti-British tradition had not, at any time, compromised with the British rule. A young researcher from Calcutta Mr. Rajat Ray has drawn our attention to the fact that right from the beginning Maulana Abul Kalam who adopted the pen-name of Azad, was involved with the underground terrorist groups of Bengal.<sup>6</sup> Maulana Azad tried to penetrate one of the terrorist groups despite the fact that most of these groups were exclusively Hindu and they generally did not trust the Muslims. Rajat Ray says, "Among the early revolutionary groups, the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, specially laid down that Muslims were not eligible as members. The other major revolutionary grouping, Jugantar, was not disposed to be anti-Muslim. But it, too, was almost exclusively Hindu in composition."<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Ray tells us that Maulana Azad sought to counteract the distrust of the Muslim community by the Hindu revolutionaries. He had scarcely crossed youth into manhood at this time. The principal contact of Maulana Azad was Shyam Sunder Chakravarti, an associate of Aurobindo Ghosh. Azad also met Aurobindo himself two or three times. He also made acquaintance with several other revolutionaries, who were surprised to find that he was ready to join the movement. He argued with his new comrades that Muslims could be won over and that their indifference

would make the struggle for freedom more difficult. He also argued with them that they should extend their field of operations to other provinces, and went to assist them in setting up secret societies in Bombay and other towns of Hindustan.<sup>8</sup> Intelligence branch records, however, yield partial evidence in support of Azad's claim that he had assisted in spread of extremist revolutionary activity beyond Bengal. After he became well known as the editor of al-Hilal (a fiery Urdu magazine which aroused the Muslims' militancy against the British rule by using highly rhetorical religious language), the intelligence branch conducted extensive enquiries to uncover his political antecedents. These showed that he had been active in the Punjab during 1907-1908.

Azad went to Arab countries and returned with rich experience. Rajat Ray significantly remarks :

Azad thus returned more convinced than ever that Indian Muslims must be mobilized behind the struggle for liberation.<sup>9</sup> The Middle Eastern experience of Azad, with its emphasis on revolutionary nationalism, shaped much of his later political thought. The importance of this early experience cannot be emphasised too heavily. It was no reactionary fundamentalist philosophy that he brought back with him from the Middle East, but a vision of national revolution. It must be stressed that nationalism was an integral part of the pan-Islamic outlook that he acquired during his tour of the Middle-East. When he identified himself emotionally and intellectually with the Islamic world of the Turks, the Arabs and the Iranians, he identified himself with the urge for national liberation that was stirring these peoples and his own people



back to India.<sup>10</sup>

We have dealt with Azad at some length here as his was not an isolated instance but rather he represented a powerful current within the Muslim politics of the time. The partition of Bengal, unwittingly of course, unleashed forces which took the British rulers by surprize. The growing militancy on the issue forced them to annul the partition in 1911. Now the annulment of partition gave a rude shock to those Muslims who had vehemently supported it as they had been drawing immense benefit from the partition plan. Even the Nawab of Dacca found it difficult to swallow and described the annulment of partition as "the deprivation of those splendid opportunities at self-improvement" of a community that was clearly in need of help.<sup>11</sup> Thus the Muslim elite in Bengal lost faith in the British promises. Further, this change in the Muslim attitude in Bengal coincided with a similar change on the all-India plane. By 1910 there emerged on the Muslim political scene a group of militant leadership which was keen on India's political advancement and was desirous in the changed conditions of ending the aloofness of Muslims from the general political life of the country.<sup>12</sup>

The international events were also egging on the Muslims for reassessment of their stand vis-a-vis the British rulers. The Balkan war of 1912 and the British policy towards the Ottoman empire were the factors, among others, for arousing pan-Islamic feelings and encouraging increasingly hostile attitude towards the British. Thus according to Rahman the agitation on the Balkan issue for the first time united the different sections of Muslims and led to a reversal of Sir Syed Ahamad's policy of eschewing anti-government politics and of 'toadism' followed

by the leaders who supported him.<sup>13</sup> The Muslim League, in its council meeting held on 31 December, 1912, drafted a new constitution which was adopted at the Lucknow session on 22 March, 1913. The most important change was adoption of 'self-government' as its aim and it also accepted the need for periodical meetings between leaders of both communities to find out the modus operandi for joint action.<sup>14</sup> The League thus settled now for "Attainment under the aegis of the British crown of a system of administration by promoting national unity, by fostering public spirit among the people in India, and by cooperating with other communities for the said purpose".<sup>15</sup> (emphasis supplied)

The outbreak of the first World War only accelerated this process. Muslims now felt greatly concerned at the British attitude towards Turkey, the seat of Islamic Caliphate. Muslims were drawing nearer to Hindus for a common action. Uma Kaura observes :

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 brought the Muslim League closer to the Congress. During 1915, the movement for Hindu-Muslim reconciliation was accelerated through the efforts of Jinnah, Wazir Hasan and other nationalist Muslims. On the other side, Anie Beasant also advocated co-ordination of activities between the two organisations so that they could draw up a mutually acceptable schemes of reforms.<sup>16</sup>

The main point of difference between the two organisations was about separate electorates, the Congress as a matter of secular policy advocating joint electorates and the Muslim League insisting on separate electorates. In the Lucknow session of 1916 both sides showed a spirit of accommodation and the Congress agreed to accept separate electorates. The Congress also agreed to co-operate with the Muslim League for demand-

ing weightage for Muslims in all those provinces where the Muslims were in a minority. Under the Congress League Scheme, Muslims got over-represented in the provincial legislatures in Bihar, Bombay, Madras and Central Provinces.

Further events tended to re-inforce tendency among the Muslims to unite with the Hindus. Khilafat became the central issue now. The 'ulama began to play a key role in re-orienting political priorities. Robinson in the appropriately titled chapter 'Religion overwhelms politics' says, "The two years that followed the war were to bring changes that were no less notable. Ulama became much more than useful agitational tools to be deployed by western-educated politicians, indeed from time to time they took the lead in Muslim politics. The Muslim League, the home of Muslim politics, disappeared from view completely, being overwhelmed by the new all-India Khilafat organisation. Hindus began to play a much bigger part in Muslim affairs. Arya Samajists such as Swami Shraddhanand and Pandit Neki Ram were to be found addressing Muslim meetings, while for a time the overall direction of Muslim politics, once the charge of Syed Ahmed, Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Viqar-ul-Mulk, lay in the hands of a Hindu bania, Mahatma Gandhi."17

We quoted the above passage at length in order to focus attention on the complete change in the political situation. Khilafat and non-co-operation ensured massive participation both of Hindus and Muslims for the first time in the agitation against the British rule. Earlier Gokhale and other liberal Congress leaders on the one hand, and, the Muslims League leaders on the other, had believed that politics was the exclusive preserve of the educated elite, masses having no understanding, whatsoever,

of it. Now Mahatma Gandhi, an ardent advocate of the participation of masses in politics, became the unchallenged leader of the Congress and he fully exploited the potential of the Khilafat issue in order to ensure the participation in the freedom movement of the Muslim masses and he eminently succeeded in his project. There also emerged on the political scene a new leadership, more dynamic and militant, more uninhibited in challenging the British rule. Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, better known as the Ali Brothers, were in the fore-front of this new leadership.

The newly emergent Muslim leadership and the 'ulama fully supported militant agitation and jumped into the fray whereas the 'Old Party' among the Muslims which was till then very influential, and would have benefitted most from the Congress-League pact, advised moderation on the Khilafat issue and lost its influence. But for the Khilafat agitation, the 'Young Party' among Muslims would have never acquired the political influence it did. They needed the feathers of Muslim identity to build their 'political nest'. The Khilafat agitation raises the important question of deeper motives in the arena of Muslim politics. It is, therefore, quite important to evaluate the role of the Khilafat movement in the history of our freedom struggle specially as it has been a subject of great controversy among some historians and social scientists. First let us evaluate the role of the Muslim leadership which controlled the reins of the Khilafat movement.

The leadership of the Khilafat movement was partly in the hands of the newly emergent leadership designated as 'new party' and partly in the hands of the 'ulama who had for last several years become rather inactive. The 'old party' mainly representing feudal interests,

though paid lip-service to the movement, never got actively involved into it for its militant anti-British character. Again, the leadership of a movement is motivated either by its class-interest, religious fervour or, not so obvious but rather deeper, motives of power struggle. As for the 'ulama it would not be wrong to say that generally (exceptions could be pointed out) they were motivated by their religious fervour. The old party, as already pointed out, in its own class interest, kept on the side-lines although taking care not to offend the religious feelings by occasionally paying lip service to it. The young party led by the Ali Brothers seems to have been primarily motivated by the considerations of power struggle vis-a-vis the old party which had been quite weighty until then, although, looking to Mohammad Ali's writings, it must also be admitted that religious fervour was not totally missing, at least in his and his brother Shaukat Ali's case.

D. D. Kosanbi while discussing the role of leadership has made interesting remarks for the religious type. He says :

Now there is another type of leadership (that we have often seen in history) which does not itself participate in the upheaval ... We see this in most religious movements, which gain head suddenly, become revolutionary for a while, put a new a set of rulers in power, and then settle down to a parasitic routine, all without the least apparent change of ideology ... One can hardly expect the poor of any era to understand and to fight for abstract theological problems...The fact is not that there are periods of sudden theological understanding for the masses, but that the religious leadership knew how to stand firm on some point in a way that suddenly

activated THE SOCIAL DISCONTENT.<sup>18</sup>  
(emphasis added)

The Muslim masses also, to be precise, hardly understood the theological issues involved in the Khilafat movement. Many of them, in fact, misunderstood the word khilafat (temporal succession to the Prophet) as meaning opposition to the British rule (in Urdu the word khilaf means opposition). What was of primary concern for the people was that the leaders took a firm stand against the British rulers and the masses responded enthusiastically. Apart from the question of leadership, let us evaluate the character of the movement and its consequences for the freedom struggle.

There are a number of historians who feel that the Khilafat movement - and the pan-Islamic movement of which it was a part - was reactionary in character and left a deep impress of religion on the Muslim politics for decades after that thus doing incalculable harm to the concept of secular nationalism. I think it is rather abstract theorising and mechanical approach to the problem. The concept of secular nationalism emerges from certain concrete historical conditions which were lacking in India at that time and specially among the Muslims. As pointed out earlier, there did not emerge among the Muslims, unlike Hindus, a native bourgeoisie class to lead the anti-colonial liberation struggle. In their case in India - and in other backward Muslim countries too - this role was played by the 'ulama and by a section of intelligentsia belonging to non-feudal middle and lower middle classes. It is also important to note that "at different stages of historical development, one and the same religious concept may play different roles depending on what social forces they serve."<sup>19</sup>



If, in a backward country like India, religion is made use of for the anti-colonial struggle for its strong appeal to the masses, its role should not be considered reactionary. Religion can also play a progressive role depending on the social forces it serves. It can serve narrow sectarian or communal ends as well, as it happened later on."...many petty-bourgeois exponents of Pan-Islamism in India who on the eve of the First World War and the early 1920s participated actively in the all-India struggle against imperialism, then went over in the mid-twenties to the reactionary positions of communalism. That is how Muhammad Ali, one-time colleague of A. K. Azad, turned up subsequently at the opposite side of the barricades."<sup>20</sup>

Moin Shakir evaluates Mohammad Ali's role little differently and draws interesting parallel between him and Tilak. He says :

Mohammad Ali acknowledged B.G. Tilak as his political 'Guru'. Like Tilak, he believed in providing a popular basis to the nationalist movement in the country. Both of them aimed at the same goal - Self Government. Both of them disapproved of the means and methods employed by the liberals...The influence of Tilak made Mohammad Ali the leading exponent of extremist Muslim nationalism....There is another striking similarity between Tilak and Mohammad Ali. Both of them used religion to provide a mass base to Indian politics. But Mohammad Ali's anti-British stand was the outcome of the British policy towards the Muslim countries.<sup>21</sup>

Mohit Sen, a Marxist theoretician, too, does not agree with those who disapprove of Tilak's attempt to use Hindu festivals for enthusing masses for anti-imperialist struggle. Criticising

them he writes, "Superficially these arguments may appear to be true. But their essential weakness is their lack of historicalness. What was the ideology available to Tilak, both personally as a patriot and as a leader who wished to move 'his' masses, i.e. the petty bourgeoisie, into action against imperialism? It would be wrong to imagine that Tilak believed in some so called nationalism but preached medievalism out of some pragmatic or opportunist considerations."<sup>22</sup> Polonskaya and Litman, agreeing with this approach maintain that the national bourgeoisie and middle strata who saw the need for mass struggle against colonial domination and tried to use religion as a key to the heart of the masses. New ideas were proffered in religious substantiation of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism, and the reform of religion was approached from new angles. This trend reflected the striving to link the people's attachment of religious traditions and the idea of religious revival with a reinterpretation of those traditions and of religion as a whole, in other words, to conjoin the people's utopian ideas of social equality to the needs of modern capitalist development.<sup>23</sup> The alliance between the Hindus and Muslims brought about by the Khilafat agitation was welcomed by Lenin too. He wrote, "We welcome the close alliance of moslem and nonmoslem elements. We sincerely want to see this alliance extended to all the toilers of the East." (emphasis added)<sup>24</sup>

Emphasising mobilizatory role of religion, Rodinson also says :

The religious values of Islam, like those of Christianity, can therefore supply an impetus for the struggle against iniquity on the precise lines laid down by the socialist project. We have witnessed a still limited number of Christians participating in the struggle on

this basis; and a man like Palmiro Togliatti recognised that some people could be motivated by religious faith in struggling for justice alongside those who found inspiration in a more secular ideology. Such analogies come naturally to mind, for Muslim culture is not the isolated world which some imagine it to be.<sup>25</sup>

We have been labouring this point only to show that the concept of secular nationalism, in the then Indian situation, was not organic to it and, even if employed by the political leaders, would have left the masses cold. Religion, on the other hand, had great appeal and there was nothing wrong in employing it for a just cause. The concept of Pan-Islamism stirred not only Indian Muslims to action but also those of many other countries. Jamal ad-Din Afghani, its architect, primarily used this concept for inspiring the Muslim masses in their struggle against the western imperialism. It served, as W. C. Smith aptly puts it, into urging the Muslims from a state of 'non-responsible quietude to a self directing determination'.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Pan-Islamism should not be misunderstood as being non-nationalistic, much less anti-nationalistic. Afghani put due emphasis on watan (nation). Afghani had known the sentiments of the Egyptian and other Arabs and hence could not ignore their nationalist aspirations. He wrote, "a people without unity and a people without literature is a people without language. A people without history is a people without glory, and a people will lack history if authorities do not rise among them, to protect and revivify the memory of their historical heroes so that they may follow and emulate. All this depends on a national (watani) education which begins with 'the homeland' (watan), the environment of which is 'the

homeland', and the end of which is 'the homeland'."27

Thus we see that Afghani's Pan-Islamism was not what it has been generally understood to be. However, having said this, one should not ignore certain negative aspects of the Pan-Islamic and its off-shoot the Khilafat movement. It was romantic and laid too much emphasis on the past glory. It is more an abstract and emotional factor<sup>28</sup> than rational and concrete. It sanctified use of religion for political ends which, in the hands of vested interests, could become breeding ground for communalism. Though communalism is too complex a phenomenon (there are several factors generating and strengthening it like social backwardness, scarcity of means, ballot-box oriented politics as well as religio-cultural ethos) to be directly ascribed to religion, nevertheless, religion too, plays its role. For many Muslim leaders it had powerful romantic appeal, including Mohammad Ali and Maulana Azad. Such emotional and romantic fascination towards religion-oriented politics, tended to relegate the concrete economic problems of the struggling masses to the background. In fact, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, this has become the bane of Muslim politics in India. Religio-cultural problems, at the cost of economic problems, have pre-occupied the Muslim leaders ever since. The speeches and writings of Mohammad Ali - one of the initiators of Pan-Islamism in India - are known for their emotional, even hysterical, pitch and lack cool and dispassionate analysis. He ignored all other factors save religious. He wrote that Islam as a religion and social polity binds all Muslims together. It recognises neither the sanctity of colour nor the virtue of geography, and by offering a set of common ideals, offers the only rational

basis for unity and cooperation among its followers. The sympathies of a Mussalman are co-extensive with the religion because they have bred into him by the unifying spirit of his creed.<sup>29</sup>

Such views of religion as expressed by Moham-mad Ali above is obviously not based on reality, social or political. Though theoretically not sanctioned, geographical, and even racial, conflicts have been as much part of the Islamic world as anywhere else. When the Indian Muslims were fighting for preserving the integrity of the Turkish Khilafat, the Young Turks were fighting for its overthrow and establishment of secular nation on one hand, and, on the other hand the Arabs were struggling to achieve freedom from the Turkish yoke. The Young Turks led by Kemal Pasha at last abolished the institution of Khilafat on 5th March 1924. The concept of Pan-Islamism, it thus can be seen, bristled with contradictions. These contradictions in fact reflected the contradictions of the situation being faced by backward colonial countries.

Prabha Dixit raises the question why did the Indian Muslims choose the ideal of Islamic brotherhood for the articulation of their political aspirations and make preservation of the khilafat the focal point of their movement? In her opinion the answer to this question does not lie in the verses and chapters of the Quran profusely quoted by the khilafat leaders; it lies in the minority status of the Muslim community in India. They wanted share of power and patronage available under the British Government in excess of their numerical strength. To achieve this they built up various arguments. One of the significant arguments in this regard was that the Muslims, who were a minority in India, constituted the most powerful majority in the world and in the global British Empire. Emphasizing this

aspect of political reality Mohd. Ali said, "The Muslims constitute not a minority in the sense in which the last war (Balkan War) and its sequel has habituated us to consider European minorities... A community that in India alone must now be numbering more than 70 millions cannot easily be called a minority in the sense of Geneva minorities, and when it is remembered that this community numbers nearly 400 millions of people throughout the world, whose ambition is to convert the rest of mankind to their way of thought and their outlook on life, and who claim and feel a unique brotherhood, to talk of it as a minority is a mere absurdity."<sup>30</sup>

Prabha Dixit may not be entirely wrong in characterising the Khilafat movement as far as Mohammad Ali is concerned. We have already said earlier that different sections of leadership can have different motives and certain noble objectives may be used either as a cover or for more subtle and deceptive process of rationalisation. In the later case the person concerned himself may not be conscious of this process. The Khilafat movement, on the whole, besides heightening the religious consciousness of the Muslims belonging to certain classes and bringing about unity of action with the Hindus against British imperialism, did not, in the long run, do much good to the Muslims themselves. Ali Ashraf has, I think, pungently assessed the worth of the movement and its leadership:

From the Cawnpur Mosque incident, and the Ansari Medical Mission, to the Khilafat agitation, and from there to opposing the progressive social measures including the right to free choice in marriage - this was the political itinerary of the Muslim revivalist-Khilafat leadership in India during the first quarter of the century when it dominated the Muslim



political scene. It could find no more important issues in the lives of Indian Muslims to engage its attention. It swore by the Muslim majority provinces for the sake of keeping Hindu hostages. But the fact that the Muslim peasants in the Punjab and Bengal, the Haris in Sind, the Moplas in Malabar were among the most oppressed people in the country, and were seething with discontent, did not enter the calculations of this leadership. A Musharraf Husain could portray the sufferings of the Bengali Muslims in his Jomidar Darpan, a Sheikh Gulab could be forced to take to the jungles and organise armed bands against the oppression of the indigo planters in Champaran. They could not find a place even in the broadened objectives of the Khilafat committee. Without any democratic social and political outlook, the religious separatist Khilafat leadership could only tumble from one adventure to another, picking out trivial issues having little relevance to the lives of the Muslim masses. Futility was its fate.<sup>31</sup>

The extremist section of the Khilafat movement made tall and unrealistic claim. According to Moin Shakir, "The extremist wing of the Khilafat leadership also asserted that the Indian Muslims could seek the help of any Muslim power to invade India. Dr. Ambedkar says that in 1919 the Indian Musalmans "who were carrying on the Khilafat movement actually went to the length of inviting the Ameer of Afghanistan to invade India." Dr. Kitchlew is also reported to have said that "If you put an obstacle in the path of our Tanzeem and do not give us our rights, we shall make common cause with Afghanistan or some other Musalman power and establish our rule in the country."<sup>32</sup> Despite these contradictions, it must be said, the Khilafat

movement was of historic significance in our freedom struggle. So far as its mobilisation of the Indian masses was concerned, only the Quit India Movement of 1942 could match it.

The Khilafat movement and non-cooperation movement enthused the Muslim and Hindu masses and forged unity between them. However, after the Chori-Chaura incident, Gandhiji suddenly withdrew the movement creating a vacuum which was then filled with communal reactionaries. This situation calls for some analysis. It would be wrong, as Mohit Sen points out,<sup>33</sup> to assume that the Indian peasantry was in deep slumber until Gandhiji appeared on the scene. It had experienced ruthless exploitation under the new British ryotwadi and revenue-settlement systems and was restive. No perceptive observer could have missed sensing this deep layer of unrest. The October Revolution in 1917 had its own impact which was no mean a contributory factor in aggravating unrest among the have-nots in India. First World War, on the other hand, had given some impetus for the development of capitalism in India and it now began to penetrate villages not only in the shape of usurious capital and commercial transactions but also by initiating a process of differentiation among the peasantry throwing up a thin layer of rich peasants, at least in some parts of the country. This development was bringing greater awareness of nationalism in ever widening circle of Indian people.

Bipin Chandra points out that the Indian political leadership was basically anti-imperialist and advocated the interests of Indian Capitalists in general. "The nature of the remedies", Bipin Chandra says, "the leaders suggested, or of their economic policies, was basically anti-imperialist. They demanded fundamental changes in the existing economic relations between India and Britain. Even when their political demands

were moderate, their economic demands were radically nationalist."34 Stimulation of native industry during the First World War does not seem to have split the Indian Capitalists into two groups, one going over to the camp of imperialists, as analysed by Stalin in his Address to the Students of the University of the Toilers of the East in 1925.

Thus the exploited masses on the one hand, and, on the other, the native capitalists, came together to oppose British rule. However, as pointed out earlier, there was no development of capitalist class among Muslims (the interests of a weak mercantile class along the west coast did not necessarily clash with the British interest) and hence no awareness of national interests. Thus their outlook remained more conservative and issues like Pan-Islamism had much greater appeal for them. Mahatma Gandhi understood this situation very well and welcomed the idea of supporting the Khilafat movement which, after all, had anti-British thrust. It would be interesting to note that except for a section of 'ulama belonging to the Shah Waliullahi tradition, the Muslim leaders in general had remained loyal to the British rule as they had no indigenous capitalist interests of their own clashing with those of the British imperialists. Mohammad Ali himself who became most militantly anti-British during the Khilafat agitation was swearing loyalty to the British rulers on the eve of the war. He advised his co-religionists:

...not to cause any embarrassment to their rulers during this grave crisis by demanding fresh concessions or reforms. On the contrary, "Whatever our grievances, whatever reforms we desire, everything must wait for a more reasonable occasion. Even if the Government

were to concede to us all we ever desire or dream; if, for instance, the Muslim University were offered to us on our own terms, or the Press Act repeal were to be announced; or if self-Government were to concede to us, we humbly tell the Government this is no time for it, and we must for the present decline such concessions with thanks. Concessions are asked for and accepted in peace.

We are not Russian Poles. We need no bribes."<sup>35</sup>

But the question of Khilafat turned on the wrath of Muslim leaders against the British and they joined those in their fight whom they had earlier denounced as 'the Hindu anarchists'.<sup>36</sup> For the Muslims no economic interests were involved directly clashing with those of the British unlike their Hindu counterpart. For them, therefore, Pan-Islamic could take precedence over nationalism. Once they turned against the British on the religious issue of Khilafat, they remained hostile to them. The non-Muslim leadership of the Congress, on the other hand, did not want the agitation to get out of hand as it could lead to uprising of the peasantry and urban workers against the landlords and capitalists. Mahatma Gandhi, therefore, after the Chori Chaura incident withdrew the movement as it was turning violent. Workers, peasants and the middle class intelligentsia felt frustrated at the Mahatma's untimely withdrawal of the movement. The Muslim leadership comprising 'ulama and others like Mohammad Ali also opposed Mahatma's decision. The Khilafat committee now had to pick up 'trivial issues' to continue its fight against the Britishers. Thus we see that uneven development of Hindus and Muslims threw up different problems at different stages of the freedom movement.

It is regrettable - but in a way inevitable - that the vacuum created after the withdrawal of

non-cooperation movement, was filled with communalist oriented politics once again. The landed and other vested interests among the Hindus as well as Muslims brought communal issues to the fore. Old issues like reservations and separate electorates again came into focus. Even chauvinistic and highly aggressive Shuddhi and Tabligh movements were launched by the communal reactionaries of both the communities. Communal conflict reached a high tension point and resulted in outbreak of violence at a number of places in the mid-twenties. Communalism, it is important to note, is a modern political phenomenon, a result of struggle between different religious communities for share in political power, government jobs and other economic means.

As a result of recurring communal trouble and the vexed question of representation of the two communities in the legislatures, the Congress in 1926 at its Gauhati session concentrated attention on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity and asked its Working Committee to "take immediate steps with Hindu and Muslim leaders to devise measures for the removal of the present deplorable difference between Hindus and Musalmans and submit their report to the All India Congress Committee not later than 31 March 1927."<sup>37</sup> Also, on 20 March, prominent Muslim leaders met under the presidentship of Jinnah and took an agreed significant step forward by showing their willingness to give up separate electorates if (1) Sind is separated from the Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province; (2) reforms are introduced in North-West Frontier Province and in Baluchistan on the same footing as in any other province in India; (3) in the Punjab and Bengal, the proportion of representation is made in accordance with

the population; (4) in the Central Legislature Muslim representation would not be less than one-third. The Muslim leaders came to the conclusion that if all these demands are accepted the Muslims would be prepared to accept joint electorates in all the provinces so constituted and to make to Hindu minorities in Bengal, Punjab and North-West Frontier Provinces the same concessions that the Hindu majorities in other provinces were prepared to make to the Muslims.<sup>38</sup>

These proposals, needless to say, were strictly on *quid pro quo* basis and as such were quite reasonable. According to these proposals, the Muslims would have got majority in the legislatures of five provinces of which no fewer than three i.e. Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan contained an overwhelming Muslim majority. Jinnah, who presided over the meeting, explained the purpose of these proposals :

Musalman should be made to feel that they are secure and safe-guarded against any act of oppression on the part of the majority and that they need not feel that during the transitional stage towards the fullest development of National Government the majority would be in a position to oppress and tyrannise the minority as majorities are prone to do in other countries.<sup>39</sup>

The Congress leaders also appreciated the Muslim leaders' readiness to accept joint electorates and the Madras session of the Congress held in December 1927 accorded its approval to the proposals put forward by the Muslim leaders and gave assurance that "their interests should be secured....by the the reservation of seats in joint electorates on the basis of population in every province and in the central legislature..." Similarly it also accepted other Muslim



proposals in respect of Sind, North-West Frontier Province as well as Baluchistan.<sup>40</sup>

Talking about the resolutions, says Uma Kaura, passed at the Madras session, another Congress leader, Govind Ballabh Pant, characterized them "as the best and most suitable arrangement which carried with it the largest amount of support from both the communities." He also said that even though reservation of seats was not "compatible with the complete independence", it had been accepted by the Hindus at a meeting of the All-India Committee with the full concurrence of M. R. Jayakar and Madan Mohan Malaviya, both of whom had been the Presidents of the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>41</sup>

The All India Muslim League held its session in Calcutta on 30 December and accorded its approval to the Delhi proposals. Jinnah, alongwith Abdur Rahim, Ali Imam and Raja of Mahmudabad, was instrumental in getting these proposals accepted by the League. However, this atmosphere of cordiality and mutual accommodation was not to last very long. A section of the Muslim League started campaigning for separate electorates and the representatives of the Maha Sabha began to express views which offended the feelings of the Muslim leaders. Soon the opinions became rigid on both sides and resulted in a stalemate. To resolve this deadlock, and evolve an agreed solution, the All-Parties Conference appointed a ten-member committee with Motilal Nehru as Chairman.

Before we throw some more light on the Nehru Committee it would be interesting to note that the Muslim League split into two factions, one led by Jinnah and the other by the Punjab leaders. In a session held by the rival faction in Lahore on 31 December a manifesto was issued opposing the boycott of the

Simon Commission. The manifesto said that "a resort to the sterile policy of boycott...will bring nothing but shame and sorrow."<sup>42</sup> The cleavage in the Muslim League, it is further interesting to note, was along the lines of the Muslim majority provinces and the Muslim minority provinces. The Lahore manifesto argued that the Muslims who had signed Jinnah's manifesto belong to provinces in which Muslims were in a helpless minority and asserted that their attitude could not mould the policy of Muslims in such provinces as the Punjab and Bengal, where they were in a majority. The Lahore manifesto too, needless to say, was signed by the Punjab Muslim leaders. In fact, later on, as we shall see, the League was dominated by the Muslim leaders of the Muslim minority provinces under the leadership of Jinnah which ultimately resulted in the partition of our country. The Muslim leaders of the Muslim majority provinces simply followed the suit.

The All Parties Conferences, to break the impasse, met at Delhi on 12 February 1928. The Hindu Mahasabha, meanwhile, had expressed the opinion that it was against the principle of reservation of seats in favour of any majority community in any province. The Muslim leaders felt offended by the Mahasabha stand on this issue. Further, Mahasabha also let it be known that it was inflexibly opposed to the creation of new Muslim provinces as a price for securing joint electorates. Its attitude made it clear that it considered separate electorates a lesser evil than the creation of new provinces.<sup>43</sup> Communalism was manifested in both the communities through feudal interests and educated middle classes. While middle classes mainly worried about government jobs and reservation of seats, the feudal interests were subtly manipulated by the British rulers in order to keep the two

communities divided and the feudal interests became willing tools in this game as they themselves feared that in a democratic India their feudal interests would be in jeopardy. Bourgeois leadership was slowly supplanting the feudal elements in the Congress.

At the All-Parties Conference, the Mahasabha leaders were not prepared to accommodate the Muslim leaders' demand for proper representation. The only achievement of the Conference was that it was unanimously agreed to placing the N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan on the same footing as other provinces in respect of the form of government and judicial administration with a rider that as long as it is not done the province of Sind cannot be separated from the Bombay Presidency as demanded by the Muslim leaders.<sup>44</sup> However, the Motilal Nehru Committee, kept on striving sincerely to resolve the problem in the spirit of mutual accommodation. In an informal conference held on 7 July, Motilal invited some non-members of both the communities to resolve the communal deadlock. The efforts bore fruit and a resolution signed by both the members and non-members was passed as under :

We are unanimously opposed to the reservation of seats in the legislatures either for majorities or minorities....But if this recommendation is not accepted and an agreement can be arrived at only on reservation of seats on the population basis, we recommend that such reservation be made for majorities or minorities without any weightage and with a clear provision that it shall automatically cease at the expiry of ten years by the consent of the parties concerned.<sup>45</sup>

However, says Uma Kaura, "The Muslims suffered extreme humiliation when the first

part of the above resolution was modified on the next day and only the reservation of seats for minorities in both central and provincial legislatures was permitted."<sup>46</sup> The Muslim leaders argued that while considering the question of reservation of seats in provincial legislatures in the Punjab and Bengal seats must be reserved for Muslims in proportion to their population. Their argument was based on the fact that in these two provinces the Muslims were very poor and backward while the Hindus were prosperous well organised minority controlling commerce and banking in both the provinces.<sup>47</sup> In the absence of adult franchise this had resulted in Muslim majority being reduced to minority in the legislatures of the two provinces.<sup>48</sup>

This argument was based on hard facts and was shared even by the Congress Muslims like Shafee Daudi, Tassaduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani and others. The Muslims were mainly agriculturists in these two provinces. Muslims in Punjab came mainly from Arains, Rajputs and Jats most of whom were cultivators. Among Hindus, besides these castes, there were Banias and Khatri who took to western education in large numbers and also dominated not only land but also commerce and other professions. According to the Census report the Muslims were double the number of the Hindus among the ordinary cultivators but among the landlords and urban middle classes, Hindus were nearly twice the number of Muslims. Almost all the big landlords were Hindus.<sup>49</sup> The Hindus feared that if the Muslim demand for proportional representation was accepted then they would lose their privileged position. It should also be born in mind that it was not the genuine concern for the poor Muslim masses that inspired the Muslim leadership to fight; on the contrary, taking advantage of the numbers the Muslim elites wanted

to extract maximum concessions for themselves. It becomes more obvious when the case of N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan is kept in view. The Hindu and Muslim leadership readily came to an agreement without much ado about the status of these two provinces as for the elites much was not at stake there. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, a selfless and truly nationalist leader held away in that area. Though the Muslims of that region were highly conservative Muslims, they remained loyal to the nationalists cause as the vested interests had nothing much to gain in the region. This once again proves that communalism did not primarily owe its genesis to religion as a primary factor, but only by way of its utility as an instrument for the vested interests.

The result of deliberations of the Nehru Committee was not very heartening. Hindu and Muslim representatives adopted rigid postures on questions like separation of Sind Province, status of N.W.F.P. and reservation of seats in the Punjab and Bengal. Even at this stage Jinnah felt that, "It is essential to our progress that Hindu-Muslim settlement should be reached, and that all communities should live in a friendly and harmonious spirit in this vast country of ours."<sup>50</sup> Tej Bahadur Sapru too, for the sake of unity supported Jinnah with regard to the demand for the reservation of seats in the Central Legislature and he described that demand as "not inconsistent with the Nehru Report."<sup>51</sup> The All Parties Convention failed to produce any agreement on the Nehru Report. Uma Kaura observes: "The failure of the Convention can only be attributed to the inability of the Congress leaders to stand up firmly against the pressure of the Hindu Mahasabha and override its opinions."<sup>52</sup>

"Jinnah's immediate reaction", Uma Kaura

further observes, "after the failure of the Convention was that Muslims as a body should reconsider their entire position vis-a-vis the Congress. He was confirmed in his belief that the disorganised condition of the Muslims had encouraged the Congress to ignore their demands which they had once accepted."<sup>53</sup> Motilal Nehru also felt that making mutual concessions over the heads of the common people would not bring about lasting unity between the Hindus and Muslims. Also, Hindu-Muslim unity could not be achieved by preaching it but "would be accomplished without either of them realizing that they were working for it. This could only be done on an economic basis and in the course of the fight for freedom from the usurper." He also said, "I have definitely come to hold the opinion that no amount of formulae based upon mutual concessions which those making them have no right to make will bring us any nearer Hindu-Muslim unity than we are at present."<sup>54</sup>

Motilal Nehru was right but the Hindu-Muslim question was never sought to be solved through struggle for freedom and stressing the demands meant for improvement of the lot of the masses. The vested interests from both the communities raked up demands which kept on widening the rift between the two communities. Before attempting a critical evaluation of Jinnah and the Muslim League's role, we must briefly consider the role played by the Hindu Mahasabha and its leaders.

The Nehru Committee and the All-Parties Convention came to agreement several times on reservation of seats etc. But, more often than not, the Hindu Mahasabha leaders subverted the agreements by putting impossible conditions. Moonje, a Mahasabha leader, came to attend the Round Table Conference in November 1930



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in London, fully armed with the determination to maintain his opposition to the Muslim demands until the end.<sup>55</sup> In fact the Hindu Mahasabha had sent strict instructions to him to be a diehard Hindu. He was empowered to concede one-third seats to the Muslims in the central legislature only on the condition that alongwith provincial autonomy there was a provision for a strong central government with residuary powers.<sup>56</sup> Other leaders attending R.T.C. like Chimanlal Setalvad, C. Y. Chintamani and Sardar Ujjan Singh challenged Moonje's right to speak on behalf of the entire Hindu community.

"If the leaders of the majority" wrote N. S. Bapat in sheer exasperation at the role played by the Mahasabha, "begin to proclaim loudly and vehemently that they are the sole masters of the nation how can they blame the minority if it shows a kind of distrust in them? Then why should not the minority harp on the same tune of safeguards endlessly? The communal unity is chiefly dependent upon the Hindus who are in the majority. Therefore, the Hindus must take such a stand which is correct from the national point of view and then they have every right to rebuke those Muslims who are reactionary and anti-national." Continuing further he says, "When some Hindu leaders are exhorting the Hindu youths to make their communal flag the political flag of the whole nation, how can the Hindus laugh at a Muslim leader if he thinks that his communal flag also should always be honoured with the national flag? Mr. V. D. Savarkar and his colleagues are exhorting the Hindus to Hinduttvify the politics of India. (To make it "Hinduttvamaya.") The Hindus as long as they are living in glasshouses should not throw stones at others,"<sup>57</sup>

Speaking at a meeting held by the students of Benaras Hindu University on 12 November 1933, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Under cover of seeming nationalism, the Mahasabha not only hides the rankest and narrowest communalism but also desires to preserve the vested interests of a group of big Hindu landlords and the princes."<sup>58</sup> The Hindu Mahasabha, it is not surprising, also accepted the two-nation theory without any reservations. According to Mr. N. L. Gupta, "In 1937, at Ahmedabad Session of the Hindu Mahasabha, Shri V. D. Savarkar propounded the two-nation theory before Mr. Jinnah did so."<sup>59</sup> Thus we see that the communalists, whichever community or religion they belong to, subscribe to the same political theories. The Hindu Mahasabha as well as the Muslim League, both subscribed to two-nation theory as both were ultimately trying to win over concessions for the elites of their communities at the cost of the poor masses. Now we will proceed to examine further developments to assess the role of Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League.

To begin with let us assess the personality and role played by Jinnah as it is he who led the Muslim League at the most crucial period before partition of the country. Mr. Jinnah acquired such prestige that his word carried more importance in Muslim League than did Gandhiji's in the Congress. Jinnah came from a mercantile family of western India and, by and large, had a secular outlook. He had no initiation in religious traditional learning. He never accepted the idea of theocracy as advocated by Maulana Maududi of Jam'at-i-Islami and conceived Pakistan, not surprisingly, as a secular state. He was not even a practicing Muslim. Ian Stephens says, "Most of the leading personages of the Muslim revivalist movement on the subcontinent during its first seventy years or so, though suspect

in the theologians' eyes, were nevertheless practicing Muslims. That, however, can scarcely be said of the great man who personally brought Pakistan into being, Mr. Jinnah....During much of his life he paid scant heed to conventional religious observances, and indeed was said, at one time, to hold opinions not very unlike Atatürk's."<sup>60</sup>

The real tragedy of Jinnah, as indeed of many other modern Muslims, was that the Indian Muslims remained imbued with feudal culture. There never grew, among the Indian Muslims - it was not much different in Pakistan even long after partition - a strong bourgeois class. The weak mercantile communities of western region, consisted mainly of petty traders who are known to be quite conservative and submissive. There never was a strong base among Muslims in India - and later in Pakistan - for a modern bourgeois culture to develop. The educated middle-classes, product of modern education, too, could not throw up bold leadership advocating modern reforms as their minority psychosis always compelled them to fall back on their religious identity in order to protect their interests in unfavourable 'political ecology' in India. That was Jinnah's tragedy indeed. Jinnah until thirties had not rejected the concept of one nation. He only desired a solution of the Muslim problem. Thus while going to attend the Second Round Table Conference, he said, explaining his position:

I am an Indian first and a Muslim afterwards and I agree that no Indian can ever serve his country if he neglects the interests of Muslims, because it is by encouraging them that you will be able to serve your country.<sup>61</sup>

The solution of the Muslim problem could not be found due to rigid postures adopted both by the Hindu and Muslim leadership of Hindu

Mahasabha and Muslim League and consequently Jinnah became - another irony of history - supreme leader of a party which represented, unabashedly, feudal interests and illiberal philosophy. Jinnah who had a bourgeois outlook and grew up believing in keeping religion out of politics was now leading a party which championed the cause of the Muslim feudal elites under religious cover. Jinnah, a shrewd tactician, missed no opportunity, once set upon a course, to humble his rivals. To achieve his objective he had no qualms to gain the support of the British. He stated that the Muslim League would be "the ally of even the devil if need be in the interests of Muslims." He now began to say that "in politics one has to play one's game as on a chess-board."<sup>62</sup>

Now let us have a look at the character of the Muslim League. Right from its inception, it had, as pointed out earlier, an elitist character. It was formed after the memorandum was presented in 1906 to the Viceroy in Simla which was mainly the handiwork of persons like Muhsin-ul-Mulk and others who followed the Sir Syed tradition in politics. They were mainly concerned with the interests of the upper echelons of Muslim society and had nothing but contempt for the poor and illiterate masses. For decades of its struggle vis-a-vis the Congress, the Muslim League did not, even once, voice any demand on behalf of the downtrodden Muslim masses be they from rural or urban areas. How could they? The interests of big Jagirdars clashed with those of poor peasantry. For them Muslim population meant nothing more than mere abstract number with which to strike political bargains in their favour. When the theory of separate Muslim nationalism was put forward by the Muslim League, it was not to serve the interests of the poor peasants of Bengal and Punjab who

were crushed by the burden of debt; instead a separate homeland was conceived to serve the interests of Muslim middle-classes, nascent Muslim bourgeoisie and of course the feudal classes.

P. Moon hints at the partial truth when he says, "The truth is that for the Muslim bourgeoisie the idea of a state, however poor, in which they and not the Hindus would be richmen and hold all the best posts in government service, industry and commerce had a powerful attraction."<sup>63</sup> The nascent Muslim bourgeoisie, no doubt, had its own ambitions but it would be a serious mistake to ignore the powerful feudal interests which dominated the politics of the Muslim League. The 1937 provincial elections had decisively shown that the Muslim League did not enjoy the support of all sections of the Muslims as it failed to win majority of the Muslim seats. Until then even all the Jagirdars had not decisively inrown their lot with it. But the decisive moment for the feudal interests came with the introduction of a bill by Rafi Ahmad Qidwai in the U.P. Assembly to abolish zamindari system. This was the storj signal for the Muslim jagirdars. They now joined the Muslim League en-masse. The League had kept its options open on economic programme.<sup>64</sup> In fact it never drew one. In order to understand the hypocritical nature of the Muslim League's 'concern' to protect the Muslim interests, it would be interesting to know the extent of poverty among the Muslims in the Punjab, Bengal etc.

S. S. Thorburn, a British administrator, was the first person to draw the attention of the Government to the problem of peasant indebtedness in the Punjab through his book Mussalmans

and Money-lenders in the Punjab (London, 1886). Giving figures he showed that indebtedness had resulted in depriving peasantry of their land. The number of mortgages, which in the early 1870s had averaged only 15,000 a year, averaged over 50,000 twenty years later (1883-1893); in ten years the annual increase in the area under mortgage rose from 165,000 acres (1875-1878) to 385,000 (1884-1888). Encouraged by the economic laissez-faire policy of the British government the number of moneylenders, including their dependents, increased from 53,263 in 1868 to 193,890 in 1911.<sup>65</sup> To check the evil the British Government passed the Land Alienation Act of 1900, which came into force a year later.<sup>66</sup>

Hafeez Malik comments :

The act by no means eliminated debts. At the beginning of the twentieth century, tenants and farm servants' families who were dependent upon agriculture but owned no land numbered about 1-1/4 million. Their average debt in 1930 was estimated at 20 crores (Rs.200,000,000). Adding this to the 120 crores (1 crore - 10,000,000) for peasant proprietors, the total agricultural debt in the province amounted to 140 crores, or £105 million according to the then current rate of exchange. Sir Malcom Darling stated that the Muslim peasant proprietors' debt exceeded 80 crores. The debt of £105 million represented 26-1/2 times the land revenue charged by the British government.<sup>67</sup>

It was this sad plight of the Muslims that Iqbal - a long time supporter of the League politics in the Punjab - tried to draw Jinnah's attention too. He wrote to Jinnah: "The League will have to finally decide whether it will remain a body representing the upper classes of Indian Muslims or Muslim masses who have so far,



with good reason, taken no interest in it. Personally, I believe that a political organisation which gives no promise of improving the lot of the average Muslim cannot attract our masses... The problem of bread is becoming more and more acute. The Muslim has begun to feel that he has been going down and down during the last 200 years....The question therefore is: how is it possible to solve the problem of Muslim poverty? And the whole future of the League depends on the League's activity to solve this question. If the League can give no such promises I am sure the Muslim masses will remain indifferent to it as before.<sup>68</sup>

Of course, even an eminent person like Iqbal's voice was completely ignored by Jinnah and other League leaders. For, Jinnah's one point programme was to achieve Pakistan and for that he needed the fullest support of big Muslim landlords and nawabs. Including anything for the improvement of the lot of the common Muslims in the League programme would have antagonised them. But for the shrewd tactics employed by Jinnah after the outbreak of war in 1939, the League, which had got only 5 per cent of the Muslim votes in 1937 provincial assembly elections,<sup>69</sup> would not have been able to catch Muslim attention. Jinnah who had always held that the masses should not participate in politics it being the business of upper class educated elite, was now forced to transform Muslim League into a mass party. Commenting on this S. Gopal says: "On the face of it, this seemed an illogical, impractical undertaking. The wealthy landholders, the aspiring men of business and the anglicized lawyers and politicians who constituted the members of the League had clearly no points of contact with the people. Moreover, they were mostly from those areas

where the Muslims were in minority."<sup>70</sup>

The 'ulama, it is interesting to note, under the leadership of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Husain Ahmad Maḍani and others, remained allied with the Congress and its concept of nationalism. They did not see eye to eye with the League policies. Ahrars, the militant Muslim nationalists of the Punjab, vigorously condemned the scheme of Pakistan. The Ahrars, it must be noted, were a sort of utopian socialists and condemned both Hindu and Muslim capitalists and propounded the theory of Islamic socialism, although this theory too, was not very coherent. Chaudhary Afzal Haq of Lahore was their leader. In his last presidential address at the Qusur district Ahrar Conference on 1 December 1941, exhorting those Muslims who consider Muslim League as their saviour says: "it is the irony of fate that (Muslim) has become a victim of Muslim capitalist who wants to deliver him from Hindu usurer only to throw him into the hands of Muslim Jagirdars. Hindu is looting him as an enemy and he (i.e. Muslim) would exploit him in the garb of a friend."<sup>71</sup> (tr. mine)

Further, castigating the concept of Pakistan, Afzal Haq says, "Ahrar consider this 'Pakistan' as 'Palidistan' (i.e. land of Satan) where the rich use appetizer to increase their appetite and the poor feed on their own sorrow."<sup>72</sup> (tr. mine). The urban artisans, specially the weavers - Ansars - were also opposed to the Muslim League policies. Following the passage of the famous resolution on two-nation theory in the Lahore Session of the Muslims League in 1940, the organisation of these Ansars called the Azad Muslim Conference, convened a meeting in Delhi to oppose the two-nation theory. This meeting was attended by about 50,000 people.<sup>73</sup> But unfortunately there was no organised working class at that time among Muslims to carry out

the systematic campaign against the two-nation theory. Moreover, in the Muslim minority provinces, where the Congress government had formed ministries after 1937 provincial assembly elections, the League leaders mounted a full-throated campaign denouncing them as imposing Hindu Raj and fully exploited the minority phobia to win over the support of the common Muslims who, otherwise, felt alienated from it on account of its upper-class character.

In 1938, in order to exploit certain grievances of the Muslims, the League appointed an inquiry committee to inquire into Muslim grievances in the various Congress governed provinces. The report known as the Pirpur Report pointed out :

...Whatever may be the underlying principle of Congress nationalism and whatever may be the justification for the foregoing incidents - the fact remains that the average Hindu is inclined to associate Swaraj with Ramraj and Congress Government with Hindu government. The Muslims feel that notwithstanding the non-communal professions of the Congress and the desire of a few Congress leaders to follow a truly national policy, a vast majority of the Congress members are Hindus who look forward, after many centuries of British and Muslim rule to the establishment of a purely Hindu raj.<sup>74</sup>

What the report stated rang true to most of the Muslims in that atmosphere. It is a fact that on account of our backwardness and lack of industrialization, we had not been able to develop a truly scientific and secular culture. In my opinion even today with much progress in science and industry a truly secular culture remains a distant dream. It was not, therefore, surprising that a common Hindu at that time

associated the Congress government in the provinces with Hindu Raj. Moreover, Gandhiji, in order to win over the support of the peasantry, had been talking of establishment of Ram Raj in India - a powerful myth, which touched the core of their hearts. However, the Hindu myths, whatever their appeal to the Hindu masses, created a sense of alienation among other communities, especially the Muslims. Myths are resorted to in the absence of scientific and secular culture but they create their own problems, they create an atmosphere of mystique which keeps members of that particular community spell-bound and making their approach irrational. The Muslim League, needless to say, fully exploited this atmosphere in the minority provinces. It resorted to the myths of its own, projecting Pakistan as a country, where all the Muslims will be free to pursue their own cultural and spiritual life unfettered and unobstructed which created a mystique of its own for the Muslim community.

In the absence of mass struggle against powerful vested interests in both the communities, the obscurantist ideas of Ram Raj and Pakistan attracted the masses. The Muslim League mounted such a powerful campaign against the 'Hindu Raj' of the Congress government that soon Congress Party felt loosing the Muslim support. In the elections held in the winter of 1945, the franchise was the same (limited franchise) as in 1937 but the results were very different. The League won all the 30 seats reserved for the Muslims in the central assembly with 86 percent of the Muslim vote and 427 of the 507 seats reserved in the provincial legislatures with 74 per cent of the vote. Its only set-back was in the North-West Frontier Province where the Muslims sponsored by the Congress won a clear majority.<sup>75</sup> It was clear proof, if any proof was needed, of the fact that in a backward

country in the absence of mass struggles clearly exposing the vested interests, religion can exercise a powerful influence.

It was irony of the situation that even the Communist party confused the situation and supported the concept of Pakistan identifying it with Muslim nationalism and aspirations of the Muslim masses. It completely ignored, in the complex situation that prevailed, apart from other factors, even the linguistic and cultural divergences between the Muslims of different regions like those of south India, Punjab and Bengal. Even Jinnah, not surprisingly, was not consistent about his argument on two-nation theory. On the one hand he argued that the Muslims constituted a distinct nationality. On the other, when he was confronted with the prospects of divided Punjab and Bengal - a 'moth-eaten Pakistan' as he termed it, "he appealed to the Viceroy not to weaken his Pakistan by destroying the unity of the Punjab or Bengal, each of which had a common national character."<sup>76</sup> (emphasis added) To prevent partition of the Punjab and Bengal Mr. Jinnah stressed their common national character but rejected the same argument on the national level. If the Hindus and Muslims of the Punjab and the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal could have common national character, why could not the Hindus and Muslims of the country as a whole not have the common national character? Of course obscurantism and political expediency has its own logic which often defies lucidity and rationality.

Mr. Jinnah had his own political reasons to be inconsistent but the Communist Party was expected to have done a thorough analysis of the national question in the Indian context. It was one thing to sympathise with the oppressed minority which, in a sense, Muslims were; and

it was quite different thing to consider them an oppressed nationality. Even a religious leader like Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani was arguing in favour of the common nationality of the Hindus and Muslims. When Iqbal, the eminent poet challenged Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani that his concept of composite nationalism was un-Islamic the Maulana wrote a booklet roving his point of view from the Koran. The Maulana argues that in the Koran the word qaum (nation) has been used to include both the Muslims and non-Muslims, even kafirs and hence, according to the Koran, the Muslims constitute one nation with the Hindus.<sup>77</sup>

The situation was really very complex and called for great ingenuity to evolve a satisfactory solution. Muslims were not in minority in every province at that time. In the Punjab, Sind, NWFP, Baluchistan and Bengal they were in decisive majority. In these provinces, though economically weaker and educationally backward, they could not be in a real sense of the word termed as an 'oppressed minority'. It was only in other parts of India that they were in minority. In U.P. - where the Muslim League was strongest of all other provinces - Muslims were not economically very weak. In fact, the U.P. Muslim landlords were fighting in the garb of religion, their own battle. Even in the Punjab, the Muslim landlords - though very few in number - were making a common cause with the Hindu landlords. The Unionist Party of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, in fact, represented the interests of the big landholders of the Punjab and wanted to save the unity of the Punjab in their own interest. Speaking on the Lahore resolution in the Punjab Legislative Assembly, Sikandar Hayat Khan had explained that for him it meant a Centre with limited powers enjoying the confidence of two autonomous units. He declared:



We do not ask for freedom, that there may be a Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means I will have nothing to do with it...If you want real freedom for the Punjab...then that Punjab will not be Pakistan, but just Punjab, the land of the five rivers; Punjab is Punjab and will always remain Punjab whatever anybody may say. This then, briefly, is the political future which I visualise for my province and for my country under any new constitution.<sup>78</sup>

Sir Sikandar Hayat was not opposing the idea of Pakistan and divided Punjab for nothing. He knew very well that if partition takes place the class antagonism will take the bloodiest course. When Mr. Penderel Moon, secretary to the Governor of the Punjab told Sikandar Hayat Khan that the Pakistan concept might after all be the best solution, he turned upon him, his eyes blazing with indignation, and exclaimed:

How can you talk like this? You have been long enough in Western Punjab to know the Muslims there. Surely you can see that Pakistan would be an invitation to them to cut the throat of every Hindu bania....I do hope I won't hear you talk like this again. Pakistan would mean a massacre.<sup>79</sup>

Of course it did result in massacre, class fury found communal channel and it suited the interests of certain politicians.

Sikandar Hayat Khan had a scheme of his own. In July 1938 he drafted a scheme later published as a pamphlet under the title 'Outlines of a Scheme of Indian Federation'. It envisaged a three-tier system of provinces, regions and Centre. Provinces were to be given maximum powers. According to this scheme the regions included Indian States as well as parts of British

India. Seven regions were suggested, two of them corresponding broadly with Pakistan. The first region grouped Bengal States and Sikkim with Assam and most of Bengal, and the second grouped Kashmir, Punjab States and two western Rajput States with the Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. The scheme also laid down that the Regional legislatures would collectively constitute the Central Assembly, whose powers would normally be confined to defence, foreign affairs, Customs, currency and communications, though it could be entrusted with additional concurrent powers at the option of the Regions.<sup>80</sup>

Several other schemes were suggested, including one by Iqbal. However, in that jumbled situation with politicians tempers frayed high; one could hardly expect a rational or schematic solution of the problem. When myriads of factors are interacting, it becomes very difficult to sort out those responsible for the decisive turn of events later. It has been suggested that by capitulating to Mr. Jinnah tactically over membership of the National Defence Council, and thus demonstrating his subservience, Sir Sikander capitulated strategically to the totally different concept of Pakistan which Mr. Jinnah championed, and which was to result in dismemberment of the Punjab which he sought to prevent.<sup>81</sup>

In Bengal too the overwhelming majority of the Muslims was poor and debted peasantry dominated by the Hindu landlords. Fazlul Huq's Krishak Praja Party was closer to the poor peasantry and broadly reflected their aspirations. Jinnah's League, on the other hand, found itself associated, in Bengal too, with the vested interests and aristocratic leadership. Fazlul Huq refused to have any truck with the League for this reason.<sup>82</sup> Religion, as yet, had not overwhelmed class interest. In 1937 election the League,

the Krishak Praja Party and Independent Muslims emerged more or less equally strong. Krishak Praja Party desired understanding with the Congress. However, the ambivalence of the Congress, which emerged as the single largest party, says Shila Sen, did in fact lead to at least a tactical understanding between the Krishak Praja Party and the League. The Krishak Praja Party could not come to terms with the Congress in Bengal due to the initial indecision of the central Congress leadership and the generally intransigent attitudes of the Bengal Congress leaders. In the event the Congress brought about the formation of a ministry by the League and the Krishak Praja Party.<sup>83</sup> From this time on religion became more and more driving force in the Bengal politics. Had the Congress leadership responded positively to the gestures of Krishak Praja Party, perhaps things would have gone a different way. But, again, a meticulous historian has to bear in mind that it was one of the several other factors. It also cannot be denied that in certain situations - like the one prevailing in India then - religious feelings overwhelm other considerations including the class interests. However, it does not prove the class point of view wrong. The vested interests only know it too well and manouvre religion for its powerful appeal to the backward masses for their own designs. Partition proves it beyond doubt. I need not describe all the crucial events which ultimately resulted in partition as the story is too well-known and has been the subject of many scholarly works. Suffice it may to say that the 'inevitable' - if I may use this much abused word - happened and the country got divided. If I am asked to broadly single out the factors responsible for this division, I would say: Backward masses, cleverer class interests,

ineptitude of some of its leaders and of course that egoistic supreme tactician Jinnah whose one-point mission in his last days was to regain that 'lost paradise' of the Muslim upper classes - Pakistan.

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## Chapter 3

### MUSLIMS AND THE POST PARTITION PERIOD IN INDIA

Partition's cost in terms of human suffering, to say the least, was terrible. It was nothing short of a traumatic experience for millions of people on both the sides of the border. For quite sometime after partition Muslims remained in a state of shock and bafflement. Recrudescence of communal violence, on either side of the border in that period added not only to human suffering but also to mutual hatred and acrimony. The amount of distrust between the two communities was really immense."...any Indian was", according to Hudson, "Muslim or non-Muslim, and the problem that the Viceroy faced was dominated by the communal split. It was bad enough to preside over a Cabinet that was balanced and divided communally without having to apply similar considerations to an intimate secretariat....They could not object to a purely British staff but they would be intensely suspicious of any Indians not of their community or party whom the Viceroy enlisted."1

The unity between the Hindus and Muslims which was forged during the Khilafat and other movements was badly shattered. The leaders of Jamiat-ul-'Ulama and other nationalist Muslims were completely isolated in their own community.

During those days of communal massacre human life had any worth only and only if it belonged to once own community (outbursts of frenzy are by no means rare even today in india as we shall see later in a subsequent chapter). In a way this was inevitable as the freedom struggle was led by a semi-feudal and semi-bourgeois party which, in its own interest, could not view the unity of the masses with complete equanimity.

The Muslim League, as pointed out earlier, was led by the feudal interests aided and abetted by the Muslim middle-classes interested in monopolising the government jobs of higher echelons. Jinnah, deeply imbued with the class prejudice, did not, even otherwise, consider it right for the poor and illiterate fellow-religionists to take part in politics as it was exclusive preserve of the educated upper-classes. The only effective weapon for the Muslim League was to appeal to the religious sentiments of the Muslims to win their support. The 14 point-demand charter of the League did not include any demand reflecting the aspirations of the Muslim masses and not for the feudal lords and neo-capitalists among the Muslims alone. A common Muslim could not clearly understand the actual aims of the League leadership and walked into the trap created in the name of the Islamic solidarity.

The Indian National Congress was, no doubt, more progressive than the reactionary League. It had formulated its economic programme which was partly anti-feudal incorporating some welfare measures for the masses. However, it too was more apparent than real. The Congress was dominated by powerful feudal elements on one hand and, by the emerging class of Industrial capitalists on the other. The newly emergent class had its own contradictions vis-a-vis the British rulers representing the interests of the



British capitalists and in its fight against them it needed the support of the Indian masses smarting under the brutal exploitation of feudalism (wholly Indian) and capitalism (both foreign as well as Indian). "One must remember", says Kosambi, "that, during the course of its struggle against the old every new class tends to assimilate and identify itself with the entire oppressed section of the human race - to take its own victory as the total desideratum of the progress of civilisation. In our own day and country, we have seen the worst aspect of this phenomenon only too often. How many talk of India and its needs when they are really making a case for a little greater share of the spoils for themselves and their minute group."<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see that the principal nationalist party as well as the Muslim League essentially represented the interests of either the old ruling classes or the new emerging classes or both and used the poor and exploited masses to realise their ambitions. They were not genuinely interested in people's struggle and their intra or inter-communal unity. Whenever the masses took initiative and showed signs of militancy, these classes withdrew the movement. The real unity between the Hindus and Muslims - I want to emphasise this even though it may sound a bit hackneyed - could have been achieved only as a result of militant armed struggle against all the exploiters. The upper classes kept on widening the rift between the two communities by exaggerating their respective demands for spoils in their minute group. Thus these vested interests created more and more distrust between the masses of both the communities by inducing a false sense of identity i.e. communal identity. Had there been real militant struggle for freedom from the foreign rule, there would have developed

a powerful current of national identity subduing communal and other identities.

Those Muslims who remained behind in India not only carried the bitter hangover of the inter-communal struggle for power but also experienced a sense of bewilderment and ever greater threat to their identity. Before partition there were some provinces where Muslims were in majority. Now, in the truncated India, they were in minority everywhere. In fact, a careful study of the inter-communal conflict for power would clearly show that more than anything else it was the minority phobia of the Muslims in minority provinces which gave greater impetus for partition. The Muslim majority provinces like the Punjab and Bengal fell in line with the Muslim League only at the last moment - either because, as we have seen in the last chapter, the Congress wavered in lending support to the popular Muslim leaders as in the case of Bengal or, as in the case of the Punjab, the provincial leaders like Sikandar Hayat Khan were outmanoeuvred by Jinnah. After 1945 the events moved very fast and no political leader - not even Gandhi and Jinnah - could fully control the situation. Lord Mountbatten very aptly described the situation while addressing the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on 14th August: "The birth of Pakistan is an event in history....History seems sometimes to move with the infinite slowness of a glacier and sometimes to rush forward in a torrent."<sup>3</sup>

Lord Mountbatten also advised the Pakistanis, in the same speech, that "There is no time to look back. There is time only to look forward".<sup>4</sup> However, it may have been true in the case of the Pakistani Muslims, it did not appear to be true in the case of Indian Muslims. Though the Muslim masses suffered equally badly in many ways including organised genocide, the

rising classes among them saw before them a bright future. Those who were small and inconsequential capitalists or industrialists in India - unable to compete with big Hindu bourgeoisie in India - rose to become a few among the top industrialists in Pakistan and bureaucrats and military officers too soon rose to occupy eminent positions on the other side of the border. However, the Indian Muslims, atleast immediately after the partition, found their prospects very bleak. The best among them, specially the intellectual elite, had migrated to Pakistan and those who remained behind for family reasons or nationalist background, were continuously urged by relatives and friends on the other side of the 'Great Divide' to migrate. It was not always easy to resist this temptation.

Mr. Jinnah had told Lord Ismay in April 'with the greatest earnestness', that, once partition had been decided upon, everyone would know exactly where they were, all troubles would cease and they would live happily thereafter.<sup>5</sup> The matter did not turn out to be so simple. From the hindsight we can say today that partition created more problems than it had sought to solve. This was much more so as far as the Indian Muslims were concerned. They had to pay a very heavy price for the creation of Pakistan without getting anything in return. What they were made to believe, in the words of Iqbal, was "that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian home-lands is recognised as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake all for the freedom of India."<sup>6</sup>

Iqbal rather oversimplified the matter. His approach, to say the least, was idealistic. He thought that if in certain parts of India a Muslim

autonomous region is created and if the Muslims are free to enforce the principles of Islam in that region, they will be capable of 'full and free development'. In fact this became the thrust of the League propaganda which deluded millions of Muslims. The poor Muslim masses continue to suffer as acutely as ever in Pakistan. Plight of haris in Sind (haris were landless peasants of Sind) is clear proof, if needed any, of the plight of the poor Muslim masses in Pakistan in whose name it was created. The plight of the haris was so bad that the government of Sind appointed the Hari Committee which, of course, tried to whitewash the landlords and paint a rosy picture of Sind.<sup>7</sup> However, a member of the committee, Mr. Masud, supposedly a pliant Government official, produced a dissenting report which came to be known as the Masud Report. This dissenting report exposed the despicable plight of the haris. The report said:

They (the haris) are human beings and, as such, rational animals, and though drudge like common beasts of burden, they enjoy no privileges of rationality nor any rights of human beings. Such are the haris of Sind...

When I came to Sind I was shocked to see the miserable conditions of the haris.... they are no better than serfs. They live in the most primitive conditions without any conception of social, political or economic rights. They have only one interest in life - food - with which to keep body and soul together. No other problem attracts them because the fundamental problem of living remains unsolved for them.

The hari behaves like a helpless slave when he has to face the zamindar. It is not an unusual sight to see how numerous haris come and touch the feet of a zamindar. As soon as the zamindar appears on the fields the

hari and his children go and bow before him till they touch his feet, then rise to kiss hand. This they do not out of respect but to make him feel that they are his humble creatures who prostrate before him and live at his mercy....

Islam gives him the ideal of the greatness of God and submission to no one except Him. But when his Islam is put to the test in the fields where the zamindar has taken hold of all the resources of the earth in the name of Islam and can at any moment starve the poor hari to death, the great ideals of Islam vanish from the hari's mind. He forgets the greatness of God and bows in abject submission to the zamindar.<sup>8</sup>

So much for the cause of the Muslims for whom Pakistan was supposedly created. The charter of the demands of the Muslim League mostly talked about preservation of Muslim culture, protection of Urdu and similar other demands. The fact was that the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in the provinces which constituted Pakistan was extremely poor. For these rural poor and heavily indebted peasants, like haris lived as animals. Culture did not mean anything to them. Again, in these provinces (the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, East Bengal etc.) the masses did not speak Urdu. Thus we see that the key demands of the Muslim League which swayed the urban middle-classes among the Muslims (especially in the minority provinces like U.P.) could not have made much of an impact on the overwhelming majority of the Muslims living in the rural areas.

The Muslim League which, as pointed out earlier, was dominated by the landed interests and newly emerging capitalist class (the later being the junior partner in the government)

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did not initiate any programme of land reforms. The poor peasantry in the rural areas continued to suffer in the Islamic Pakistan. It was much later that the Ayub regime, under pressure, initiated some measures which too could hardly benefit even the middle-peasants, much less the poor peasantry. Ayub established a Land Reform Commission. It produced a report. Commenting on the report Tariq Ali says:

The report, which was used to a large extent as a propaganda gimmick to illustrate the "progressive" nature of Ayub's government, turned out to be simply an old ruling-class trick: a few theoretical reforms whose main function was in practice to preserve the status quo. The Ayub regime decreed an ownership ceiling of 500 acres of irrigated and 1,000 acres of non-irrigated land. However, exemptions were provided, such as an extra 150 acres for orchards or for lands being used for cattle-farming. Landlords who had gifted some of their land to their heirs or other dependents to avoid paying tax or because they had been warned of the impending reforms were not seriously affected.<sup>9</sup>

The ceiling proposed by the Ayub regime was as such quite high (500 and 1,000 acres of irrigated and unirrigated land respectively) and that too was not implemented in all seriousness. One reason obviously of this state of affairs was that the big land owners (mainly feudal) continued to dominate the government and capitalist class remained quite weak. Unlike India, no serious efforts were made by the ruling classes in Pakistan to start industrialisation on large scale. Its economy depended, both for consumer and capital goods, mainly on imports. In view of these facts the power of landlords could not be seriously attacked. According to Tariq



Ali, "The Pakistani landlord still lives in a medieval world of his own construction, ruling "his" tenants with an iron hand. The power of the feudal landlords has increased since partition. The main reason for this is that the Hindu and Sikh moneylenders, who were the main group of moneylenders, migrated to India. They had been oppressive and grasping it is true, but they did offer an independent source of cash to the peasant. Now this function, like many others, is performed by the landlord.<sup>10</sup>

Lest one should think that feudalism reigned supreme in Pakistan in its early days, I must make it clear that the situation has not greatly changed even during the Bhutto regime which was swearing by progressive and pro-people policies. According to Ronald J. Herring, "...neither a land-to-tiller reform nor a radical land redistribution has ever been a serious possibility in Pakistan. Even if Bhutto's PPP had not in part been composed of powerful landlords, the political capacity to carry out so fundamental a reorganisation of the agrarian sector was problematic in the Bhutto period. Bhutto himself argued, as had Ayub Khan before him, that a truly radical land reform would be politically impossible.<sup>11</sup> Bhutto, in an interview, said, "I can't nationalise the land. It is not possible. Tomorrow, if someone wants to do it, let him try. At the same time, I can't allow bigger estates to remain. I must out them down so that production increases and the feudal power is eliminated. The world doesn't come to an end with one reform. If that reform is proper and successful, on that you can build other reforms. But no one can sweep the boards clean in one go."<sup>12</sup>

Summarising Bhutto's land policy Herring significantly remarks :

But if these strategic concerns mitigated the attack on feudalism via land reform, tactical political constraints played a more proximate and determinate role. Whether feudal, capitalist, or some permutation, the landowning gentry of rural Pakistan wields local political power; it is hard to imagine any regime - except perhaps a revolutionary one - governing long without their support. Given this constraint, and the economic and symbolic imperatives facing the regime, the land reforms were astute....the land reforms, as other agrarian measures of the regime, were not intended to eradicate feudals so much as to nudge them into the fold, the fold being comprised of progressive enlightened gentry who invest in the land and do not arbitrarily abuse their traditional paternalistic obligations towards the less privileged and who may be tempted to throw their considerable political weight behind the regime in order to protect their privileges and ward off future, perhaps more serious, attempts at their eradication.<sup>13</sup>

Hamza Ali, a noted scholar who terms the Pakistani State as the 'overdeveloped state in a peripheral capitalist society',<sup>13a</sup> is also critical of the Bhutto regime whose radicalism soon petered out. He comments:

"The radicals in the PPP began to fight a losing battle soon after the PPP regime was installed in office and had undertaken a number of radical measures in the first few months. The rout of the PPP radicals was complete when in October 1974, leading radicals like Finance Minister Mubashir Hasan, and senior partymen like J. A. Rahim and Khurshid Hasan Mir were thrown out of the cabinet. Others, like Mairaj Mohammad Khan had been removed much earlier and 1974

is not the time when the massive shift to the right began. In their place some of the worst and most reactionary elements in the country were appointed. The most brutal repression of the PPP regime, it was not surprising to see, was directed against the radical rank and file of its own party. Bhutto had thus forfeited his support from the masses whom he had betrayed."13b

Thus we see that Pakistan, far from being a paradise for the Muslims of the sub-continent as claimed by its propagandists, turned out to be the paradise for the powerful vested interests. It was not only in the rural areas that the exploitation of the poor reigned supreme. The story in the urban areas was no different. I could do no better than quote Dr. Ashraf, an eminent Muslim historian and active political worker associated with the freedom movement who had visited Pakistan in its earlier days. Dr. Ashraf writes in his book Hindustani Muslim Siyasat (Muslim Politics in India) :

When Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah put forward the demand for the Islamic Pakistan as opposed to the Congress's plan for freedom and swaraj, the simple-minded Muslims thought that the period of the rightly guided Caliphs (these caliphs represent the ideal period of the early Islamic state) is about to return. And when some propagandists projected Pakistan as a land better than that of socialism and communism in following the policy of social and economic justice then which stone-hearted Muslim would not acknowledge it as a country guaranteeing both the welfare of this and the other world. Apart from Choudhari Khaliquzzaman, Qaid-e-Azam himself told me while inviting me to join the Muslim League that let us just achieve Pakistan,

then you can build there socialism, communism or whatever you wish. And when after the declaration of Pakistan I travelled to Karachi along with hundreds of Muslim immigrants in a ship that scene is still fresh in my memory that when our ship touched the port of Karachi, the Islamic flag fluttered and atmosphere resounded with the slogans of Allahu Akbar (God is Great) and verses from the holy Quran and all the eyes glistened with tears. It looked as if the Caravan of immigrants from Mecca has come to Medina on the invitation of the Anṣars (Helpers) and that now the wealth would be equally distributed according to the needs of the people.<sup>14</sup>

But what was the reality as against this dream? Dr. Ashraf after describing how within a few days some influential people became millionaires and all possible unscrupulous means were used by them to accumulate the riches. As for the common man he quotes from a write-up in Jung, Karachi by a young enthusiastic Muslim League leader :

The struggle for power, profitterring, bribe, black marketing, illegitimate deals, taking hostages, rape, dead bodies of newly born babies, pick pocketing, theft, dacoity, molestation, immodesty, in fact what crime is not being perpetrated here. You see everything here except traces of Islam. Whatever I see is shocking. My limited understanding cannot comprehend all this. I would request the leaders and Maulavis to guide us whether this Government of Pakistan is an Islamic Government.<sup>15</sup>

This was the condition of Pakistan, the promised land for which more than a million lives on both sides of the border were lost. Now let us come back to the situation in India and Indian Muslims. The partition was followed by great communal holocaust in Delhi and other parts

of India. As pointed out at the outset of the chapter the Muslims in the minority provinces like U.P. fought most for the creation of Pakistan and now after the partition they were not only the sufferers, but also totally confused as to what course they ought to adopt. They also suffered, in a way, from a feeling of guilt. The Hindus looked upon them with suspicion as to their loyalty towards India and it was not altogether unexpected. Perhaps not totally unjustified too. Muslims whose families got divided into two countries could not, mentally at least, help having dual loyalty and in some cases greater loyalty towards Pakistan depending on their emotional involvement in the Pakistan movement.

Even the political leaders who ought to have shown much greater caution and tact, did not remain unaffected by such feelings. "Bitterness, suspicion and unreadiness, to let bygones be bygones", says Hodson, "and be friends, infected politicians on both sides of the borders who now took power, each according to his character and the opportunities he had of expressing it. Even some of the British who remained caught that mood. In some Indians hostility to Pakistan was an obsession. And from it sprang the murder of the largest-hearted of them all, Mahatma Gandhi."<sup>16</sup> This hatred between the Hindus and Muslims found expression in gruesome killings. Even transfer of population was by no means safe. The trains and caravans of Muslims going to Pakistan and those of the Hindus coming to India were brutally attacked. Between 20th and 23rd September, 2,700 Muslims and 600 non-Muslims were killed or wounded on trains.<sup>17</sup>

Referring to these attacks on the refugees Lord Mountbatten records :

The attacks on trains carrying Muslim refugees

from Delhi to Lahore had mostly been made by Sikh jathas operating from the States inside East Punjab. Sardar Patel, as Minister of States, therefore got together the Rulers concerned and induced them personally to accept responsibility for the safety of movement through their own territories. He also visited Amritsar and, by meetings with the Sikh leaders and public addresses to the population, succeeded in persuading them that it was in their own interests to let the Muslim refugees through, unharmed, both by rail and road, so that the non-Sikh would be allowed, reciprocally, out of West Punjab in safety.<sup>18</sup>

But soon Delhi itself was engulfed in communal massacre. The situation became so bad that Lord Mountbatten who had retired to Simla at the end of August for rest had to be summoned back in order to effectively control the situation. An emergency committee was formed with Mountbatten as its chairman. How grave was the situation can be gauged from the report Lord Mountbatten wrote to the King five days later:

We have cancelled Public Holidays, including Sundays. We have taken measures to keep at least two newspapers and the All-India Radio going in Delhi; to bring Government servants to their work; to get the telephone system on its legs again....to protect all diplomatic representatives...to collect and bury the corpses on the streets and in the hospitals.<sup>19</sup>

But the situation in North India and particularly the capital was very serious indeed. It seemed mere administrative measures could not have restored communal amity. Sensing the gravity of the situation Mahatma Gandhi announced on 12th January 1948 his intention to undertake fast, even at the cost of his life, to restore Hindu-Muslim unity. In this prayer meeting he



also said that he would not break his fast until the communal peace returned in the country, and particularly in the capital. Sardar Patel, according to Lord Mountbatten, was very unhappy about the fast. "He resented", says Mountbatten, "the fact that Mahatma Gandhi had made a 'unilateral' decision to fast, for the first time in his life, and declared that the timing was hopelessly wrong, and that the fast would have the opposite effect to what Mahatma hoped - and had, incidentally, put himself in an impossible position."<sup>20</sup>

On 17th January Gandhiji put forward seven conditions whose fulfilment alone could induce him to break his fast. In one way or the other they all concerned restoration of the rights and safety of Muslims, primarily in Delhi. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Congress, formed an all-party Peace Committee which pledged to fulfil all the conditions laid down by the Mahatma. Thus Gandhiji broke his fast on 18th January. The peace did return to the capital, but only for a shortwhile. The Mahatma was assassinated on 30th January 1948 by a Hindu fanatic called Godse who had been connected with the R.S.S. It was rumoured that the Mahatma was killed by the bullet of a Muslim and communal violence erupted afresh in many places. But for the quick rebuttal by the Government of this rumour, it would have proved to be an unmitigated disaster for the Muslims. Thus it can be said that the secular India was born amidst the fratricidal war between the Hindus and Muslims and the Mahatma became the first martyr for the cause of secularism in India.

Needless to say, the first few years after the dawn of independence, were indeed very difficult years for the Indian Muslims. They

were confused and made to feel guilty for creation of Pakistan by their Hindu neighbours. Some Muslims like the chief of the Jamat-e-Islami further confused them by their what could be construed in those circumstances as misleading statements. The chief of the Jamat Maulana Maududi had opposed the Jinnah's concept of Pakistan as it was not based on the concept of a theological state. He found the Jinnah's concept too secular to be acceptable to him. He was prepared to support Jinnah only on condition that the latter agreed to theocratic structure of state. But Jinnah would not oblige him. Jinnah's concept of Pakistan, not surprisingly, was secular in essence. Maulana Maududi, the founder of the Jamat-e-Islami could be called a neo-revivalist who, contrary to appearances, is essentially an exponent of feudal Islam. Maududi refuses to accept the sovereignty of any man-made institution as it belongs to none save God. We will discuss the ideology of the Jamat in greater details little later.

The Maulana, who had meticulously avoided taking part into any anti-British movement by equating imperialism and secular democracy and calling them as the 'two false gods', was now advising the Indian Muslims not to accept the political creed of national and secular democracy. While departing for Pakistan he, in his address to them, said :

As far as the Muslims are concerned I tell them clearly that the present secular and national democracy is totally against your faith and religion. If you bow your head before it you will turn your back to the Koran. If you work for its establishment and consolidation it would amount to rebellion against God and His Messenger and if you wave its flag you will have raised the flag of rebellion against God. Islam, by virtue of which you call yourselves as Muslims,

its spirit is ceaselessly at war with the unholy spirit of secular and national democracy and its foundational principles. Islam and this system can never go together. Wherever it reigns supreme Islam would be like bubble on water. And where Islam is supreme this system will have no place whatsoever at all. If you really believe in Islam which was revealed by God through Muhammad, then wherever you are you must resist the establishment of this nationalistic secular democracy.<sup>21</sup> (tr. from Urdu)

Thus we see that Maulana Maududi wanted to keep the Indian Muslims away from the process of evolving a democratic secular polity and thus become a sort of political untouchables in this country. It was a deadly poison which unfortunately did not spread among the Muslims in India. Had the Muslims accepted this advice it would have been an unmitigated disaster not only for the Indian Muslims but for the Indian polity as a whole. No society can make a meaningful progress by leaving out a sizeable section of its own population. Even though the recurring communal violence was intimidating the Muslims immediately after the partition, they did not completely lose heart but retained their faith in secular democracy despite the Maududi's advice to the contrary. The Muslims, like other people of India, played their part by taking part in the electoral process, to strengthen the secular and democratic India. It is also worth noting that as opposed to the constitution of Pakistan, the Indian constitution was a document of bourgeois liberalism. The founding fathers of the republic had given equal rights to all citizens of India irrespective of their religion, caste or sex and provided for adult franchise and joint electorates thus strengthening secular polity.

Whatever the reality (which we shall discuss in the course of the next few chapters), the Indian constitution, as far as intentions are concerned, is truly a liberal document. The part III of the constitution confers on all the citizens of India the rights to freedom of conscience and to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion (articles 25 and 26), and to conserve culture (article 29). These very significant constitutional measures were positive indicators of the fact that India was determined to forge ahead shedding its medieval legacy and conservative past. Pakistan, on the other hand, remained bogged down in its medieval past with bigoted mullahs in collaboration with the feudal classes pulling the country backward. Jinnah, the only modern visionary who could have tried to put Pakistan on a road to liberalism died soon after partition and unfortunately for the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan, until the emergence of Bhutto much later on the Pakistani scene (and he too met with a tragic fate at the hands of General Zia-ul-Haq, apparently a Muslim fanatic supported by Jamat-e-Islami) did not produce a bourgeois liberal and modern visionary like Jawaharlal Nehru. How could it? There was no modern entrepreneurial class among Indian Muslims. The ruling classes in Pakistan remained feudal in outlook and thus could hardly be expected to appreciate any thrust for modern change.

It has often been argued in this connection that Hinduism is more liberal and admits of change easily compared to that of Islam. "It should also be noted", write G. N. Sarma and Moin Shakir, "that the ethos of Hinduism has been flexible and tolerant, at least in the field of metaphysics. It has also been characterized by the absence of rigidity in matters of belief. In this sense, Islam is the complete negation of Hinduism. In the process of the interpretation

and adaptation, Hinduism was constantly renewed and its base was broadened. Hinduism bore its time honoured name without precluding change, enrichment and adaptation."22 As against this, the authors argue, "...the basic tenets of Islam have...a rigidity which would not brook any such liberties of interpretation as Hinduism allowed."23

While this is certainly true in a sense but it does not explain satisfactorily comparatively greater resistance on the part of Muslims to change. In fact to explain it thus is to take an idealistic view. Undoubtedly Hinduism is theoretically liberal and Islam doctrinaire, but people are not basically motivated, in their behavioural pattern by religious considerations alone; at best religion is one of the factors. Man's total behavioural pattern is determined, in the final analysis, by complex factors of which economic and certain other related functional factors are more decisive. There are both micro-level and macro-level factors in the study of human behaviour. The former are studied by psychology whereas the latter are studied by sociology. The former has its roots in the work of Fechner, Wundt, Pavlov, Watson, Freud and Hull while the latter has grown and developed out of the work of Comte, Marx, Sorel, Pareto, Durkheim, Weber, Mead and Parsons.....Those who study human actions at a macro-level contend that actions of individuals can be understood as instances of a more general, complex comprehensive process. Contrary to this, those who study human actions at a macro-level contend that actions of individuals can be understood as instances of a more general, complex comprehensive process. Contrary to this, those who pursue micro-studies maintain that the specificity of an individual's action

guaranteeing and hence more reassuring for the Muslims who experienced a cultural crisis in the total context of the Indian situation then prevailing, as also developing.

One has to view the situation as constituted by a number of complex factors. Iqbal and Jinnah were well versed in western secular ideas. However, both of them chose to spouse a cause which was at best narrow and sectarian. Iqbal did it on a cultural and Jinnah on a political level. Jinnah and Iqbal were representing a community which was backward and suffering from cultural and identity crisis. Their overall intellectual and political perspective was determined by the totality of Indian Muslims' situation. An individual's role, broadly speaking, is influenced, if not determined in the mechanical sense, by the totality of his situation. Here again I do not wish to play down other factors, foremost among them is religious factor. Though religion itself is a spatio-temporal product, it acquires autonomy of its own in its transcendental aspects. Also, Islam, as it developed historically, even after disregarding many of its medieval accretions, retains a strong core which is doctrinaire and totalitarian. It was no less determinative of the attitude of at least some of the theoreticians of two-nation theory. In this sense religion has undoubtedly played its part in the affairs of the Indian sub-continent and continues to throw up many problems in the process of modernisation of our country and its political management. This will be the subject of our following chapters.

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## Chapter IV

### COMMUNAL PROBLEM - HOW NOT TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Not only the supporters of the Muslim League but also many other well-meaning Muslims and non-Muslims had thought that perhaps the partition of the sub-continent would prove to be the 'final solution' of the Hindu-Muslim problem which had dogged our chivalrous days of the freedom struggle. Perhaps in those days of the hardened attitudes and the lost opportunities of the Hindu-Muslim unity, tension and frustration, it naturally seemed to be so. But - and this is important to note - it was a negative judgement which took static view of the situation, ignoring dynamics of the future developments. The price of the partition - more than a million dead, as pointed out in the last chapter - was not the only price required to be paid. If the later carnages are taken into account - and they must be - culminating in the massacre of the Bengali Muslims by the West Pakistanis in 1971, yes, it also must be counted as the price of the partition based on the wrong premise of religion as the basis of nationalism whereas it was not, it would, according to the hindsight and later experiences, clearly appear that the partition could not have been the right solution of this problem. Pakistan, despite the strong

bond of religion which many Muslim thinkers like Iqbal and others thought to be the most viable basis of nationalism, at least as far as the Muslims are concerned, proved to be quite tenuous, as tenuous as any other mythical basis. After the break-up of Pakistan into West Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971 even the most die-hard believer in the two-nation theory had to revise his opinion.

Those who took the dynamic view of the situation knew that partition was not the right, let only the final, solution of the problem though it may have enabled the leaders of the two organisations i.e. the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress (I would not like to refer to them as the leaders of the two communities, as many others do) to accept it as such. All the Muslims, even if they had shown willingness to, could not have migrated to Pakistan. Many of course did, leaving their near and dear ones in India and many, and this must be noted with due emphasis, despite favourable opportunities, did not agree to do so, leaving behind the place of their birth. We will discuss the problems of the immigrants to Pakistan from U.P. etc. later in one of the chapters. Suffice it may to say here that those who decided to stay behind in India showed a great deal of courage and fortitude, apart from the sense of pragmatism, if not patriotism although a large section of the Muslims from different parts of India had categorically demonstrated their sense of patriotism in the course of the freedom struggle. However, the public opinion, specially among the Hindus, was highly adverse to the creation of Pakistan and in those days immediately following the partition when communal carnage was rule rather than exception, every Muslim who stayed behind was held equally responsible for creation of Pakistan. The Muslims

thus in general, under this pressure of Hindu opinion, lived with a sense of guilt. Creation of Pakistan was thought to be, at least by the partisans of two-nation theory, as the 'final solution' of the communal problem. The later events proved it to be far from true. Of course, in a sense, for the Muslim bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, feudal lords and army officers - in short for the Muslim ruling classes - creation of Pakistan did prove to be a better solution as these sections of the Muslim community made the most out of it in the form of material gains. But for the Muslim masses in India as well as for the Muslim middle and upper classes it created much more complicated problems, politically, economically as well as psychologically.

Politically the Muslim problem remained quite intractable even after the division of the country. As we have seen in the earlier chapters that communal problem was nothing but struggle for power and also, by implication, for controlling the scarce resources between the two communities. Religion was but an instrument for this struggle mainly between the exploiting classes of both these communities. Even after the partition the Muslims remained a significant minority in India and the principle of adult franchise having been accepted, their importance in shaping the political future of India could not be ignored. In other words, more often than not, the Muslims could play politically decisive role. Such a situation, needless to say, cannot but lead to conflict and often unmanageable tension. Thus the problem of communalism very much remains with us. It is necessary to analyse and understand it in the context of social dynamics of a developing society.

Before we analyse the various aspects of this problem, it would not be out of place to

make some observations about the naive approach adopted by some otherwise well-meaning persons. It has, for example, often been argued that the Parsis are much better integrated community in Indian society as compared to the Muslims as their religion is not militant like that of Islam and that whereas the Muslims refuse to make any cultural adjustments and doggedly maintain their separate religious identity, the Parsis have integrated themselves with the cultural mainstream of the country and it is for this reason that there is no communal conflict between the Hindus and Parsis. No serious social scientist can accept this view as it ignores the very essence of the problem and its mechanism. The Parsis are, all told, less than one lakh and in no way pose any serious problem as far as sharing power and other national resources are concerned. Certainly such a microscopic community cannot be fairly compared with a large community like that of the Muslims in a developing society in the matters of giving rise to conflicts and social tensions. The Red Indians in America cannot pose the kind of problem the Negroes can (This is meant only as an analogy and not comparison and as such should not be taken in a mechanical sense). As for the attitude of Indian Muslims towards the problem of cultural assimilation, we will discuss it in greater detail in another chapter.

The problems faced by the new independent state of India were so formidable that many a westerner thought that she would follow the path of the post-Napoleonic Europe, and disintegrate.<sup>1</sup> Selig Harrison wrote as late as 1960 that "a realistic western approach to India must rest on a clear recognition that the odds are almost wholly against the survival of freedom and that...the issue is, in fact, whether Indian State can survive at all."<sup>2</sup> India opted for a



secular and pluralistic political culture but, and this is important to note, such a culture cannot work smoothly in a backward country like India, a jumbled mosaic of caste and communities all with their claims and counter claims on the scarcely developed resources. According to Mr. Gangadharan the most important social constituents conditioning our consciousness in the process of nation-building are (1) region (2) religion and (3) a number of institutions and associations which are neither religious nor regional, but secular and National (Caste and tribe are, according to him, essentially a regional phenomenon in Indian politics, and language too is often co-terminus with region, though not always).<sup>3</sup> These constituents, in a way, are so varied, complex and mutually conflicting - if not downright antagonistic - that they often bring the Indian polity under great strain.

It needs to be stressed here that unlike Pakistan, the newly emergent and increasingly more and more dominant class in India was that of bourgeoisie. The traditional ruling classes representing the feudal interests were gradually losing out. Thus for the bourgeoisie the out-dated political concepts based on metaphysical or theological considerations were of no use and the concept of modern secular nation state was found to be far more functional - if not organic and integral to the backward Indian society - and as such was adopted unhesitatingly by the fathers of the Indian constitution. However, it does not mean that religion was totally relegated to an unimportant position specially when it possesses a great divisive potential as against the integrative potential of secularism. Religion as a divisive potential, in a backward and developing society like India, as we shall see further, has its own importance for the ruling classes

in the face of the unity of the masses in their struggle against exploitation and social injustices. Thus for the Indian ruling classes integrative-divisive role has been determinant of their interest. The integrative role becomes a necessity for establishing a network of investments throughout India wherever cheap labour and other facilities are available and on ideational level it is expressed through the concept of 'national integration' on the one hand, and, 'secularisation of political behaviour', on the other. The -divisive role is resorted to in order to disrupt the unity of the exploited and this role is expressed on the intellectual plane through different concepts which have parochial and chauvinistic appeal (religious, casteist, linguistic, regional). Certain symbols and myths, both religious and secular (mostly regional in the later category) are used in order to foment parochial sentiments. We will throw more light on this little later.

The divisive tendencies in Indian society in the post-independence period too, were aggravated by communal riots. Communal riots did not come to an end. Secular and universal statehood, as adopted by the Indian people was nothing but a statement of an ideal to be achieved in future. But the divisive tendencies, for the reasons we will analyse, still continue to remain powerful making it more and more difficult to achieve the ideal. We shall first take into account the dilemma faced by the Muslims in the new nation-state that was India. According to Smith, "The situation, its problems and challenges, are so new that one may say....that nothing quite like this has ever happened before in the history of Islam."<sup>4</sup> The Indian Muslims, a large section of which had been swayed by two-nation theory and international brotherhood of Islam, suddenly found themselves living in a secular nation-state. No strong bourgeois class had emerged among

them and hence modern nation-state did not attract them as a functional need. They had to decide a new course of action which could derive legitimacy from their scriptural sources as well. Ubaidullah Sindhi tried to find a modus vivendi. According to him Islam is an international movement although it does not reject nationalities. He also accepts that nation is a natural division of men, living in the same geographical boundries and environment.<sup>5</sup> Thus the Indian Muslims are a nation like the Arab, Persian or Turkish nations.<sup>6</sup> However, he also points out, it should not be ignored that every nation is a part of a larger human brotherhood. Likewise the idea of Islamic nationalities is not opposed to the unity of Millat-i-Islamiya.<sup>7</sup>

It is this approach which still continues to attract the Muslims in India. This attitude on the part of the Muslims often finds deep resentment among a section of the Hindus. Muslims' concern for other Islamic nations or the holy shrines in other countries is often misunderstood as amounting to doubtful loyalty towards India. The feelings of Islamic solidarity manifested by the Muslims on the incident of al-Aqsa mosque came to be severely criticised in a section of Indian press. Such situations lead, more often than not, to acute communal tension and, at times, even bursts out in communal fury. Even more than thirty years after independence, on outbursts of such communal furies one begins to feel, we are no where near the goal of achieving full integration. If it is so now one can imagine the state of Muslim mind in the traumatic situation which followed after the vivisection of our country. They were left not only leaderless but also in a state of utter shock and mental confusion.

Even the leaders like Maulana Azad - one could hardly doubt catholicity of his outlook and integrity of character - found it difficult to influence Muslims in a decisive way. However, one had to act to chalk out the future course of action. On November 4, 1947, Maulana Azad and other nationalist Muslim leaders convened a conference to decide the future course and pattern of Muslim politics in India.<sup>8</sup> Maulana Azad analysed the situation with clarity of thought. He referred to the Muslim League as an organisation which had spread poison among the Muslims and led them on a wrong and dangerous path.<sup>9</sup> "That poison", he said, "had affected certain non-Muslim sections of the country too, and this convention must endeavour to change the entire mental outlook of the people and create a new, healthy atmosphere in the country."<sup>10</sup>

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad sincerely strove very hard to eradicate all the traces of Muslim and Hindu communalism. At the Lucknow conference later on December 28, 1948, the Maulana called for a liquidation of all communal organisations. He advised even the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind to keep scrupulously aloof from political squabbles.<sup>11</sup> According to Moin Shakir, "This was historically the first sincere effort to shed their separatism and isolationism and join non-communal organisations. This was historically the first sincere effort to crystalize the concept of national integration by working together and sharing a common political destiny with all Indians."<sup>12</sup>

However, the process of nation-building is much more complex in a backward country which launches on developmental course and results in social tensions and political conflicts between various groups and communities which stake their claims on the scarce resources. Only a

comprehensive sociological analysis can enable us to understand the nature of communal conflict and various ideological forms it assumes. Although it is necessary to attack the superstructural forms of communal institutions and its ideological expressions as Maulana Azad did by recommending the dissolution of all communal bodies, it is by itself not enough; even positive measures like promoting national integration - government of India often indulges in this exercise - is not enough to meet the challenge. What is needed is attack on its base. The root cause of communal and caste conflict is rampant inequality in distribution of national wealth and social injustices. Greater the magnitude of inequality and social injustices, greater will be the intensity of communal and caste conflict, although it may assume various forms.

Due to these iniquitous patterns of distribution of national resources in developing societies even democratic institutions like adult franchise come under great strain and lead to lowering the threshold of social tension. Thus Ratna Dutta rightly observes that economic compulsions generate communal conflict in India, and that "the religious, cultural and/or ideological idiom, in which the conflicts are sustained, is a mere expression of the more basic economic cleavages... The subsequent system changes in the economy and the emergence of ballot box politics threatens the privileged position of such elite-groups. If they can protect their interest by identifying with the interest of a recognisable community, and to the extent that economic divisions are co-terminus with communal divisions, communal conflict is inevitable."<sup>13</sup>

However, it does not, in any way, basically discredit the institution of adult franchise. There is nothing wrong with the electoral system but



what needs to be transformed is our social structure. The electoral system if tied up to the present social structure (representing capitalist form of economy) in a developing society would inevitably lead to the communal and caste conflict as emphasised by Ratna Datta above. The politicians seeking power identify themselves with the recognisable interests of a caste or a community and, with an eye on the ballot box, make these recognisable interests as their main propaganda plank leading to communal and caste tension vis-a-vis other castes and communities. Needless to say, apart from aggravating group tension this ballot-box oriented fight leads to emergence of elite groups in these groups who monopolize all the benefits at the cost of the poor of their caste or community in whose name this fight is carried on. This is specially true of the Muslim and Harijan leadership in our country today. There have emerged privileged groups in both the communities.

On the fringe of democratic process there are some organisations which are undoubtedly communal and employ, in their ideological propaganda, an idiom which is pronouncedly and unabashedly communal. Among the Hindus the R.S.S., the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Shiv Sena, the Anand Marg and similar other groups have strong anti-Muslim bias. Of them the RSS is the most formidable having an all-India network and a coherently expressed ideology. Among the Muslims the Jamat-e-Islami, Tamir-e-Millat and some other fringe groups can be said to represent the Muslim communal view-point. Of these the Jamat is the best organised group and, although lacks in an all-India network, has **evolved** a monolithically interpreted and rigid **system** of ideas based on Islam. It is, in **fact** the best example of political Islam oriented **towards** medieval period (although its coherent



and systematic presentation of Islam creates an illusion of modern methodology). These organisations and groups are total negation of the process of secularisation and their ideologues make no bones about it. In order, therefore, to understand the phenomenon of communalism in all its aspects, it is necessary to examine, in some details, the ideology of these organisations, specially that of the RSS and the Jamat-e-Islami. First we shall begin with the RSS.

The RSS which was founded by Hedgewar in 1925 even today symbolises majority communalism. It employs the Hindu religious and cultural idiom projecting its militant Hindu character. K. K. Gangadharan says:

In fact, the tendency of Maharashtrian militant Hindu revivalism is evident in the original prayer of the RSS, couched in mixed Marathi and Hindi languages, ending "Samarth Guru Ram Das ki jai". Guru Ram Das was the teacher of emperor Shivaji. One of the six festivals which the RSS celebrates is Hindu Samrajya Dinotsava (Hindu Empire Day). This is in memory of the coronation of Shivaji.<sup>14</sup>

In fact Hedgewar was a devotee of Shivaji and "his regard for Lokmanya Tilak was so deep that once in a meeting....a speaker made some indecent remark about him (Tilak), he got up and quickly gave a resounding slap in his face."<sup>15</sup>

According to Ajit Roy, "The RSS 'ideology' is based upon the equation of Hindus with the Aryans and the characterisation of the Vedic age as a golden age. Guru Golwalkar puts this in an extremely arrogant language when he says: 'We had brought into the actual life almost everything that was beneficial to mankind. Then the rest of humanity were just bipeds and so

no distinctive name was given to us. Sometimes in trying to distinguish our people from others, we were called enlightened, the Aryas, and the rest, the Mlechhas."16 Ajit Roy clearly states the communal and racist character of the RSS. He says, "...It should be emphasised, the RSS is not merely communal in the ordinary sense of seeking concessions and benefits for one community in relation to the other religious denominations in India. It represents a totalitarian ideology, based on racial arrogance and chauvinistic misinterpretation of history." Continuing further, Mr. Roy says, "The second point to note is that its ideology is not something that has been artificially grafted on to a movement. On the contrary, not only does it carry forward centuries-old ideology of the narrowly interpreted Sanatan Dharma, but also is the inheritor of a part of the legacy of the founders of militant nationalism who clung, at least partly, to the misconceived evaluation and valuation of the ancient heritage."17

As the RSS ideology, in the opinion of this author as well as many others, is a major contributor towards spreading not only narrow sectarian feelings but also injecting communal poison into the national mainstream, it is necessary to consider its organisational structure and the pronouncements of its ideologues - specially its chief theoretician Golwalkar - in greater detail with a view to properly grasp the fundamental role of this organisation which has been lately subject of great controversy.

Gangadharan feels that "The similarity of ideas, whether it was due to accident or imitation is really striking between Hitler and Golwalkar."18 He also points out that Hitler's major ideas centre round the concept Weltanschauung or outlook on the world.19 In German it "means a whole system of ideas associated together

in an organic unity - ideas of human life, human values, cultural and religious ideas, politics, economics etc. in such a totalitarian view of human existence."20 Mr. Gangadharan then proceeds to compare the salient features of Hitlerism with those of Golwalkarism. Both the isms are totalitarian and aggressive and intolerant to the extent of being exclusive of all other points of view and both have deep distrust of a parliamentary democracy. While Hitlerism believes in Volk Staat according to which only the Aryans are real folk or community, governed by aristocratic principles within the community, Golwalkarism preaches the concept of Hindu Nation. According to this concept Hindu (Aryans) governed by the principles of caste system are the nation and none else. Territorial nationalism which looks upon all the people - refugees like Parsis and invaders like Muslims and Christians as part of the nation - is absurd. Hindu is the positive content of nationhood.21

Similarly while Hitlerism talks of Germanization, Golwalkarism emphasises Indianization or Hinduization; for Hitlerism the victims of aggressiveness are Jews who supposedly undermined the German civilization, for Golwalkarism Muslims, Christians and communists etc. are supposed to be undermining the country. According to Golwalkar's ideas like 'internationalism', 'equality', 'world unity', 'Hindu-Muslim unity', 'peace', 'non-violence' are damaging the Hindu nation and making us a nation of imbeciles and cowards.22 Golwalkar, in his writings and pronouncements, employed highly militant communal idiom, like his counterpart Maulana Maududi of the Jamat-e-Islami, to project a concept of Hindu Rashtra.23 We find his views on the subject in his two books We or Our Nationhood Defined and Bunch of Thoughts.

Golwalkar, on the question of nationalism too, employs the same idiom as the one used by the Muslim League earlier. He denounces the very idea of territorial nationalism: "The idea of territorial nationalism (the notion that all the citizens of the country constitute the nation) and also the idea of facing the common danger from the British were the basis of our concept of nation. This had deprived us of the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood." Opposing the national flag and constitution, he wrote: "Ours is an ancient and great nation with a glorious past. Then, had we no flag of our own?... Undoubtedly, we had." According to Golwalkar our constitution has no reference to our national mission; the legacy of Lokmanya Tilak is totally missing.<sup>24</sup>

Not only this, Golwalkar is unwilling to accept minorities like Muslims, Christians and Parsis as co-equals in a democratic society. He is not persuaded to the idea that all of them make a nation. They are all foreigners in his eyes. "In the early days of our 'so-called freedom struggle', the top-ranking leaders used to say that we were a nation in the making. This is not true. They forgot that there was already a full-fledged ancient nation of the Hindus, and the various communities which were living in the country were here either as guests, the Jews and Parsis, or invaders, the Muslims and Christians."<sup>25</sup> He further goes on to say, "Forget - ing this fact that Jews and Parsis had come there as refugees and Christians had always belonged to the British side and the Muslims were invaders, entirely hostile to our way of life, and were desecrators of temples and molesters of women, the Congress formed a united front of all the people of the country."<sup>26</sup>

Golwalkar then draws the conclusion:

"All those communities that are staying in

this land yet are not true to its salt, have not imbibed its culture, do not lead the life which this land had been unfolding for so many centuries, do not believe in its philosophy, in its national heroes, and in all that this land has been standing for and are, to put it briefly, foreign to our national life. And the only real, abiding and glorious national life in this holy land of Bharat has been of the Hindu people."27

Thus we see that for the RSS chief nation is co-terminous with religion and India is not only a nation but also a holy land (not in patriotic but in religious sense as in the former sense all including the Muslims, will accept it as such). Throughout, in his books, he employs religious idiom to expound his concept of nation. As in Pakistan for the Muslims, for the RSS in India, nationalism is synonymous with communalism. The RSS implants these ideas in the minds of people right from childhood. They grow up with these ideas and spread in different fields of life. An air of secrecy is maintained throughout the training period. About the techniques of the RSS indoctrination camp K. K. Gangadharan writes :

The indoctrination process of the RSS is technically perfect. It works through narration of stories and games, often politically oriented, such as Kashmir aur Goa Kis ka hai (To whom Kashmir and Goa belongs?), Pratap ka Chetak (Pratap's Chetak) and so on. Baithaks or meetings are an important channel of communicating the RSS ideas to the members. It is significant that in such meetings taking notes is not allowed, and wherever this rule is broken such notes are recovered from the swyam sevak and torn off. Particularly in officers' camps this is observed with utmost



vigilance. Secrecy prevails everywhere, whether it is regarding collection of funds through Guru Dakshina, activities in the camps, or announcement of a meeting. Great secrecy is maintained in camps where only on the basis of uttering passwords is entry permitted at night. Once in one of the camps a member fell sick and died. The matter was kept away from the knowledge of other participants of the camp as a secret. Similarly, there is a practice of organising sudden attacks upon the camps or the guards. In one such instance at Lucknow the RSS men dressed as Muslims attacked the defence officer and overpowered him and tied him to a tree. The guards were taken unawares. There is also provision of a court martial in cases of indiscipline in the camps. Officers training camps are a big affair to which the largest number of swayam sevaks are attracted.<sup>28</sup>

The above passage on the techniques of the RSS has been quoted at length to show how a large section of our society which is wedded to the ideals of secularism and humanism are subjected to continuous indoctrination and ideas contrary to these ideals are injected into their minds. These poisonous ideas often stoke communal fire in sensitive areas. The enormity of this campaign can be gauged from the fact that it has been going on uninterrupted for over good five decades and has poisoned the thinking of thousands of young men who, later in the life, assume responsible positions in public affairs. What is more painful to note is that despite its new chief Balasaheb Deoras's protestations to the contrary, nothing much has changed as far as the ideology of RSS is concerned. When the Janata Government took office in 1977, the leaders of former Jan Sangh and the



RSS tried to project their new image. They even publicly professed that they have adopted secularism as a political creed and gave up their Muslim-baiting policy. On October 22, 1978, Balasaheb Deoras said in Bombay that the RSS was never anti-Muslim or anti-Christian, but that prejudiced people were carrying on a false propaganda on these lines against it.<sup>29</sup>

Again, in an interview to Sunday of Calcutta in May 1977, Deoras, in a reply to question "Do you still believe in concepts like Akhand Bharat and a Hindu Rashtra?", said: "There is nothing like belief. We realise that both concepts are extremely idealistic. We do not link these ideals with contemporary politics; we link them with cultural, natural, and historical affinities with nationalism. Our definition of a Hindu is a person who is a part of the national cultural mainstream.<sup>30</sup> Thus we see that Deoras does not disown the concept of the Hindu Rashtra. He only calls it 'extremely idealistic' and hence not realisable right now. But the concept as such is highly desirable. We will see that the Jamat-e-Islami too considers its ideal Hukumat-e-Ilahi (theocratic state) as its ultimate goal but unrealisable in near future. Kamleshwar, criticising Deoras's statement, says in the same issue of Sunday, "Pious oaths and sacred words are one thing - and there is nothing wrong about them - but action is something different. An organisation of menacing proportions like the RSS must not be judged by what it professes to do, but what it actually does."<sup>31</sup> Kamleshwar further commented :

The RSS is a revivalist force. it looks towards India's past with a sense of nostalgia and pride; but this past does not appear as an organic whole to it; it is truncated, piecemeal, Hinduist history of the country that fascinates

it. RSS does not strive to revive the total Indian cultural heritage; it adores the Hindu heroes and forgets the flow of history in its totality.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly Mr. Satindra Singh, a noted columnist, replying to K. R. Malkani's claim that the RSS is not communal<sup>33</sup>, says, in his letter to the Times of India: "So far as the ideology of the RSS is concerned, it is patently communal; it is anti-minority because it appropriates all rights to the Hindus and all glory to Hinduism. The late Mr. M. S. Golwalkar, wrote in his Bunch of Thoughts: 'The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture... or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation, claiming, deserving no privileges or any preferential treatment - not even citizens' rights.'"<sup>34</sup> Mr. Singh further says, "According to Mr. Golwalkar, 'non-Hindus' include not only Muslims and Christians but also Buddhists and Jains. About the Muslims, he writes: 'What has our good behaviour towards the Muslim people brought us? Nothing but destruction of our holy places or enslavement of our people.' Hence they are not 'children of the soil'. Mr. Golwalkar also condemns the Christians because 'they are not true to their salt.' He is against the Buddhists and the Jains because 'they have never made any contribution to social and political thought' and because 'history proves that Mohammedans could win the northwest and northeast areas easily where Buddhism had shattered the pattern of the caste system.'"<sup>35</sup>

The RSS has been accused of parochial Hindu character not only by its detractors, but also by those who had joined it in all sincerity but came out of its fold disillusioned. D. R. Goyal,

now a noted journalist, was once a swyam sevak. In his book Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh Mr. Goyal says, "In a game played in the RSS shakhas almost daily the group raises the slogan: Hindustan Hindu ka, nahin kisi ke Baap ka (India belongs to Hindus and not to anybody's father). The RSS had resolved to make an aggressive assertion of this idea."<sup>36</sup> "The first comprehensive statement of this novel idea", Mr. Goyal tells us, "was made in the book We or Our Nationhood Defined in 1938. ...what matters is that it has been treated as the ideological manifesto of the movement. The very title of the book proclaims that the definition of nationhood propounded within the covers would make a distinction between 'We' and 'They'. Obviously 'We' did not include all the inhabitants of this land, the non-Hindus were beyond the pale. Golwalkar calls it cultural nationalism (compare it with the concept of 'religious nationalism' propounded by the Muslim League) as against territorial nationalism prevalent in those days. The book has so many laudatory references to Hitler and his theory of racial superiority that it had become embarrassing for the organisation to continue its publication."<sup>37</sup> In his laudatory reference to Hitler's obsession with the purity of race, Golwalkar says, in this book "Germany has also shown how well high impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by."<sup>38</sup>

After 1977 the RSS leaders talked vaguely about the reorientation of its policy but they never categorically renounced the views of their chief theorician, Golwalkar. Also, the RSS leadership, despite pressure from various quarters, never agreed to throw it open for

the members of all the communities. It has been jealously guarding its exclusivistic character. It also stuck, despite enormous pressure - and eventual disintegration of the Janata Party itself - to the position of dual membership. Thus Kewal Varma wrote in Sunday: "The biggest problem with the Jana Sangh elements in the Janata is that the RSS is not declaring an ideological truce on the question of Hindu Rashtra. In fact, of late the RSS has become more aggressive in propagating its communal views. The RSS Chief, Balasaheb Deoras made it public that Atal Behari Vajpayee had apologised for pleading in an article in the Indian Express that the RSS should change its concept of Hindu Rashtra to Bhartiya Rashtra."<sup>39</sup> Thus this categorical statement on the part of Balasaheb Deoras, the present RSS chief, makes it quite clear that in no case the RSS is prepared to change its basic stand on its goal of the Hindu Rashtra. In fact in a press handout issued at Delhi, Shri Deoras said, "Some people feel ashamed of everything that is associated with Hindu as they think that the concept of Hindu is backward, rotten, out of date, despicable. It is with this mentality that they advise us to give up the use of the word Hindu Rashtra. This is absolutely unacceptable to us. The mentality at the back of this suggestion is despicable."<sup>40</sup>

In fact in his article of August 2, 1979, Vajpayee had made very mild criticism of the RSS position and had suggested that if it is really cultural organisation, and not political, as claimed by it, it should, like the Arya Samaj and similar other organisations, devote itself to reforming the Hindu society and should work for the unity of Bhartiya Rashtriya, giving up the concept of Hindu Rashtra.<sup>41</sup> Even for this mild criticism and constructive suggestion he was made to apologise by the RSS hierarchy. It shows that

the RSS is not prepared, under any circumstances, to give up its political goal of Hindu Rashtra.

Mr. George Fernandes, one of the Janata ministers said in his article, "The experience of 28 months however, has provided conclusive evidence that nothing has changed insofar as the RSS is concerned. That is why the Socialists' meeting of July 7 and 8 adopted the following statement on the RSS: 'It is the deep conviction of socialists that only the ideal of a secular state and the ethos of religious tolerance can hold this vast country together. The Socialists hold that the Janata Party's creed of a secular democratic socialist society is incompatible with the RSS concept of Hindu Rashtra and similar other concepts of theocratic state. The socialists and secularists must combat these ideologies and create a network of institutions to foster secularism and promote communal harmony.'"42

George Fernandes also forthrightly admitted in the same article: "Philosophy made the RSS-Janasangh group promote the Freedom of Religion Bill and alienate the minorities from the Janata Party and protect some of their cadres who were involved in the communal disturbances in Aligarh and Jamshedpur. It is their own playing the power game that created a credibility gap which could not be restored. The carefully cultivated self-abnegation postures of some RSS-Jana Sangh leaders were but a flimsy facade for the power grabbing that went on in places where it mattered. The worst was the whispering and sometimes open denigration campaign mounted by the RSS against certain selected individuals in the Janata Party."43 Thus it can be seen that the Jana Sangh and its ideological wing the RSS strove to maintain separate identity and were not prepared in any way to compromise



on that issue. It is a well-known fact that ultimately the Janata Party split on the RSS issue and lost power. The RSS, it must be noted, would risk rather losing power than compromise on its basic stand to establish the Hindu Rashtra in India. We will further see how the RSS has spread poison of communalism successfully for the years while discussing the phenomenon of communalism and the riots. It is for this reason that we have tried to throw light, in some detail, on the philosophy and organisational structure of the RSS.

Those who believe that the RSS has changed are sadly mistaken. Its philosophy is still as communal as it ever was. It has not undergone any change nor can it be expected to undergo any change. Mr. Kewal Varma writes :

"The hopes that like the Chinese de-Maoisation, the RSS would start a campaign of de-Golwalkarisation were belied. The RSS volunteers continued to be taught the same old communal teachings of Guru Golwalkar. The two RSS weeklies, *Organiser* in English and *Panchjanya* in Hindi which swayamsevaks read like *Gita* week after week, give communal twists to Indian history and present day events. While in the past they talked of 'Indianisation' of Muslims, now they felt so emboldened as to suggest 'Hinduisation' of Muslims. Thus *Organiser* in its issue dated 12 September 1977 wrote editorially that every organisation in India acts as an 'unconscious agent in Hinduisation of non-Hindus. There has been no let-up in this communal propaganda. Hardly a week before the Aligarh riots, Balasaheb Deoras in a statement in Madras gave a call: 'Hindus of the world unite' and asserted that communal riots could be stopped only if Hindus became strong. Deoras breathes communalism day in and day out."<sup>44</sup>



While discussing the phenomenon of communalism we cannot ignore the role played by the communal organisations within the minority community, however small and powerless they may be in the Indian context. There is no doubt that in terms of organisation and strength, a minority communal organisation cannot be compared with that of a majority communal organisation. Nevertheless, its communal character and reactionary role in obstructing social transformation is not diminished. Hence it is necessary to understand the character and role of the minority communal organisation as well. Like the RSS among the Hindus, the principal communal and reactionary organisation among the Indian Muslims is the Jamat-e-Islami. It is significant to note that during the Janata regime the Jamat leadership in India made an alliance with the RSS. The Jamat leaders even publicly felicitated the RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras immediately after the emergency in 1977. The Jamat's ideology, like that of the RSS is anti-secular and it condemns any government which accepts secularism as its political creed. We will throw light on the Jamat and its ideology.

The Jamat was founded by Maulana Maududi in 1941 who continued to be its leader till his death in late 1979. Maulana Maududi, as pointed out in an earlier chapter, had migrated to Pakistan in 1948. He considered Iqamat-e-Din (establishment of an Islamic society) as the mission of his life. Moin Shakir aptly describes this movement as the Islamic Neo-Revivalist Renaissance.<sup>45</sup> W. C. Smith calls Maududi "much the most systematic thinker of modern Islam."<sup>46</sup> Maulana Maududi is a voluminous writer with several books under his name. Illustrative of his religious ideas are books like Tafhimat (Lahore, 1947), Risala-i-Diniyat (9th edition, Pathankot). He

was also publishing a magazine Tarjuman al-Quran. Although, technically speaking, after the partition, he is no longer the leader of the Jamat-i-Islam-i-Hind, its affiliation to his ideas cannot be denied.

Jamat-e-Islami's ideology is more oriented to the medieval period than to the modern age. It would be hardly, acceptable to Liberal bourgeoisie due to its feudal outlook. Smith rightly points out:

Despite the consequent vitality, his (Maududi's) movement is in this matter rather a compromise and adaptation than a creative vision. Its position has been neither modern enough to win many from the advanced sections of the bourgeoisie, nor familiar enough to enthuse the masses. Its following has been chiefly confined to the lower middle-classes, the urban discontents, and to idealistic youth.<sup>47</sup>

Jamat-e-Islami did not support the Muslim League's movement for Pakistan, as pointed out earlier, as its concept of Pakistan was too secular for it to be acceptable. Maulana Maududi wanted to establish, like Golwalkar of the RSS, a theocratic state. While the RSS wants to establish Hindu Rashtra based on Hindu Dharma, the Jamat wants to establish an Islamic state calling it Hukumat-i-Ilahi (God's rule). The Maulana was totally opposed to the concept of secular state. In fact he considered secular state, as pointed out in the previous chapter, a rebellion against God and His Messenger. Sovereignty, according to his interpretation of the Koran, belongs to God alone. It is He Who legislates; man only interpretes and executes.

Here we will throw some light on the ideas propounded by Maulana Maududi who, though migrated to Pakistan, but continued to influence ideologically the Jamat-e-Islami's position in

India. Maududi's writings on Islamic state spread over decades have been compiled by Khurshid Ahmad in a book called Islami Riyasat<sup>48</sup> and published from Lahore. We shall mainly refer to this book in our discussion of Maududi's views on Islamic state.<sup>49</sup> According to Maududi religion cannot become merely a private affair of man's life. It is nothing if not the complete system on which is based entire culture and civilization.<sup>50</sup> Thus we see that Maududi holds an all embracing view of religion and it is hard to find his parallel in the contemporary Islamic world. He argues "If these people very well understand who is Muslim and on which group of people the term Islami Jamat (the Islamic Party) can be applied, then there misunderstandings can be removed. Legally everyone who recites the formula (i.e. there is no god but one God and that Muhammad is His Messenger) is a Muslim but his Islam is only a matter of formality, a passport to join the Islamic community and that he cannot be dubbed as kafir...But this is not true Islam. True Islam is one which envelops your heart and mind, which moulds your entire way of thinking to that of the Koranic way, makes all your values the Koranic values, makes your goal the Koranic goal, makes you abandon all other paths and leads you on to the Islamic and Koranic path. Only then you can be said to have adopted what is described by the Koran as the sabil al-mu minin (pathway of the faithful).<sup>51</sup>

Maulana Maududi tries to explain the necessity of the Islamic state. He says that according to the Koran God is the master of the world. He has created the world and so it is His right to rule over it. Maududi maintains that over His own creation, over His own world, no one else has any right to rule; it will be fundamen-

tally wrong. There is only one true path and that path is that the caliph should rule as His vicegerent according to Shari'a.<sup>52</sup> Also, the Maulana makes it very clear that except God no one else has any right to make laws. It is the exclusive preserve of God. An Islamic parliament will have no right to legislate; it can only interpret the laws formulated by Imam Abu Hanifa during the early medieval period.

In fact Maududi's approach is so rigid and his attitude so authoritarian that any state founded on his ideas would be a medieval dictatorship.<sup>53</sup> Freedom and creative thinking would be its first victims. The Maulana rigidly maintains that man has been deprived of the right to legislate as he is God's creature, His subject and under His rule. He has no option but to follow the laws imposed on him by God, the real Lord of this world. The man has been given, at the most, a little leeway to fill in details within the strict limits laid down by Shari'at as handed down to him. But, if he transgresses these limits or chooses to follow any other law to regulate the worldly affairs he will be guilty of following the Satanic powers and that amounts to rebellion from God and His Prophets.<sup>54</sup> It is the considered opinion of Maulana Maududi that any government and its laws based on any source other than that of God and His Messenger is illegitimate. All its acts are worthless, weightless and untrue. There is no legitimacy whatsoever for its acts<sup>55</sup> (evn if these acts are based on the universally accepted principles of social justice; this is what his assertions clearly imply).

Thus it is very clear that Maulana Maududi, the chief theoretician of Islam monopolises the understanding of Islam and denounces any other interpretation as heretical and 'Rebellion Against God and His Messenger.'<sup>56</sup> It is thus very clear

that to the Maulana and his followers, a secular state will be the last thing to be acceptable. The Hindu majority, strictly speaking, has never been accepted as co-equal. Maududi also makes it very clear that existence of anyone other than those professing Islam should be an open challenge to the Muslims. Others may or may not like it, it may or may not lead to cooperation or intercourse with non-Muslims (it may even mean confrontation with them), if we are sincere to our religion and faith, says Maududi, we must then struggle to impose shariat, the law of God. Anyone who opposes this is an enemy of God.

For Maududi, any rule other than the Islamic rule, is Satanic (interestingly, this is precisely the language used by Khomeini also against those who oppose the Islamic rule as being imposed by him). Though in all fairness to the Jamat-e-Islami in India it must be said that Maududi is not its leader, nor its official ideologue. But this is true only in technical sense. In fact, the Jamat, in its forty years of existence, has not produced any other leader of Maududi's stature. For all practical purposes, he continues to influence the thinking of the Jamat in India. Unlike the Jamat-e-Islami of Pakistan, its immediate goal is not creation of theocratic state in India. However, it is tactical rather than ideological stand. The Jamat continues to oppose nationalism and secularism and in this respect is very close to the RSS or Hindu Mahasabha. Thus according to Moin Shakir:

The Jamat's abhorrence of secularism is so strong that it prefers a religious state on the basis of the religious scriptures of the Hindus than a secular state in India. It is no accident that the Jamaat is closer

to Hindu obscurantist organisations. "We do not deny the value and worth of some of the slogans of Hindu Mahasabha. For example, it is against secularism and supports the incorporation of the religious ethical values in the political life of the people" says A. L. Islahi. Ideologically the Jamaat feels that co-operation with the secular government is a negation of Islamic government, is haram.<sup>57</sup>

In this context it would be interesting to note that in the post-emergency period, when the Janata Party came to power, the RSS leaders and the Jamat leaders started fraternizing with each other. Neither the RSS tried to come closer to other secular Muslims nor the Jamaat made any attempt to fraternize with other secular non-Muslims or their organisations. Since the RSS and Jamat both reject the key-concepts of Indian political culture i.e. secularism and nationalism, there has, in fact, never been unbridgeable gap between the two politically, if not religiously.

It would be wrong to maintain, as the leaders of the Jamat for reasons of strategy do, that the Jamat's political creed substantially differs from that of its counterpart in Pakistan. Equivocating on the issue, Maulana Abul Lais, the then Ameer of the Jamat said in a conference held at Rampur in April 1951:

The condition of Muslims is, and it should be so, that they should constitute themselves into an ideological party which has nothing to do with the unnatural boundaries of nation or country. In tune with the universality of their ideology they should be a universal party. A Muslim could have a natural attachment with the country, and Islam does not deny it; as a matter of fact, it would insist that all Muslims should do their natural duty to the country they live in. But Islam and



its tenets cannot countenance the Muslim giving up Islamic principles for the sake of nationalism or patriotism. He cannot be permitted to ignore the duties cast upon him as a Muslim and give up his identity as a Muslim. These things are in contradiction to the belief in God. We believe that these two evils are more fatal than all the evils spread by the Devil which afflict mankind. They have destroyed religion and morals and also the material life.<sup>58</sup>

Upto 1962 the Jamat was continuing to retain the Hukumat-e-Ilahiya (Kingdom of God) as its goal.<sup>59</sup> But later it changed, as pointed out earlier, its goal for tactical reasons. But even after this it continued to boycott elections. In July 1961, it set up a committee to consider whether it would be in keeping with the Jamat's objectives to participate in the elections. The Committee, according to Dr. Nizami, reported that if a person fights an election and goes to the Assembly under a secular system of government with the aim of running that system, it was against the tenets of Islam and, therefore, an ungodly act<sup>60</sup> (This is what Maulana Maududi had said addressing the Indian Muslims on the eve of his departure to Pakistan, vide last chapter). But - and this is important to note - participation in elections could be considered legitimate if the same is done with a view to changing the Constitution in a manner as to establish the sovereignty of God in place of the sovereignty of people. This, according to the committee, could be done provided :

- 1) that conditions in the country were such that merely public opinion could be harnessed to change the system of government; and
- 2) if public opinion had been consolidated to

such an extent that the system of government could be changed through the electoral machinery and the Constitution could be suitably amended.

The Committee reached the conclusion that the second stipulation could not be met and, therefore, the question of taking part in the elections under the present circumstances did not arise.<sup>61</sup> Since then the policy of the Jamat has not appreciably changed although, under the pressure of varying situations, there have been slight shifts here and there. The Jamat, for example, during the parliamentary elections in March, 1977 after the withdrawal of emergency, supported the Janata Party candidates. However, the Jamat did not set-up its own candidates and as such this tacit support to a particular party under extra-ordinary circumstances could not be considered as fundamental change in its ideological orientation. The Jamat thus continues to consider participation in the elections as an ungodly act.

The Jamat's is closely-knit and fairly rigid structure. It maintains rigid discipline among its members. Their membership is very much limited not exceeding 1367 in 1967.<sup>62</sup> However, besides full members there are a large number of Muaweneen (supporters), Muttafiqin (ones who agree) and Mutasirin (those who are influenced). But, it must be said that the Jamat has not been able to penetrate deep into Muslim masses. Its following remains confined to a small but seriously committed section of the Muslims. Its call to keep away from elections and other democratic processes was, by and large, ignored by the Indian Muslims. Such an attitude would simply reduce more than 80 million Muslims to a status of second-class citizens and serve the very purpose the RSS desires and has failed to achieve.

Also, the Jamat, all said and done has always remained on the periphery of Muslim politics in India. In Pakistan it follows an aggressive course and aspires to achieve power. Though it preaches morality in politics (after all its professed goal is the kingdom of God on earth), it resorts, like any other party, to all such tactics which it condemns others for. It supported a military dictator in the name of Islam and became a powerful force in Pakistani politics. It also failed to project clean image and was often accused of corruption and accepting funds for the Party from industrialists and others for issuing licenses and quotas. The Jamat fully supported hanging of Bhutto in the name of Islamic justice. However, it was most un-Islamic act. Strangely enough the Pakistani dictator who was swearing by Islam on every available occasion and enforcing the Islamic penal code for other ordinary mortals chose not to try Bhutto under the provisions of divinely-ordained code for more down-to-earth reasons of his own political survival. "Had the military regime been really serious" says a report, "about the implementation of Islamic laws, it would have tried Zulfikar Ali Bhutto under them; and under Islamic law pertaining to murder, which requires eyewitnesses to testify against an accused, which does not take complicity into consideration, and which has a provision for payment of blood-money (diyat) as compensation for life taken, Bhutto could never have been convicted and hanged."<sup>63</sup>

However, the Jamat in Pakistan as well as India not only whole-heartedly supported Gen. Zia's move to hang Bhutto but celebrated his death by distributing sweets. The considerations for this support were obviously more mundane

and political than Islamic justice and its rigorous enforcement. The Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan is so closely allied with the Zia's Government that it is difficult for even anti-Bhutto elements to feel much sympathy for it. A lot of people wish that both would go away; unfortunately, politics rarely offers such simple solutions.<sup>64</sup> And the Jamat abundantly resorts to such unprincipled politics to capture and remain in power of which it often accuses secular parties.

In India, it must be said, the Jamat maintains a rather low posture in politics and presently concentrates on indoctrination activities through literature and study-circles. It has attracted quite a few Muslim youth, specially from the lower middle class. Its low posture and non-aggressive political conduct could be explained by the fact that the Muslims are in minority in India and also that the Jamat realises that it has not succeeded to penetrate deeper among the Muslims. Of course, the first factor is politically of overwhelming significance and minority communalism can never become as aggressive as the majority communalism. The Jamat thus is destined to play, in my opinion, at best a subsidiary role in aggravating communal problem in India. However, on ideological plane the Jamat is a far more serious a challenge compared to other small communal groups and parties among the Muslims. While these other groups can do no more than exploit certain real or imaginary grievances of the Muslims, the Jamat is silently and steadily endeavouring to spread anti-secular ideas among the Muslim youth in the name of Islam. Its core group is very deeply influenced by Maulana Maududi's consistent tirade against the concepts of nationalism and secularism and the Jamat's followers consider the Maulana's writings next only to the holy Kuran.

The Jamat has now planned, through student movement to attract more and more Muslim youth to its fold. Students Islamic Movement (SIM) has been started since April, 1977. Its president Dr. M. Zaki Kirmani says, "On April 25, 1977, a band of youth and students representing nearly all the regions of India decided that it was time to initiate India-wide efforts to introduce Islam among Indian youth. The formation of Students Islamic Movement of India amounted to a declaration that Islamic youth will take the Islamic ideology to each and every young man and woman of India."<sup>65</sup> Around three years later, it held a conference at Nagpur about which the president SIM says: "Nagpur Conference has been instrumental in attracting a large number of boys and girls. There could be two reasons for this phenomenon. Either it could be its all-India character, its mammoth proportions and organisational finesse which is the source of attraction, or its aims and objectives and methodology which is drawing the youth."<sup>66</sup> Although the SIM apparently maintains the myth of being an independent organisation, it has, at least ideologically, if not organisationally, an organic link with the Jamat. In the Aligarh Muslim University too, it has established a strong base and openly propagates the Jamat's ideology. Such developments have to be viewed rather seriously by the secular forces among the Muslims.

Of course, some Muslim organisations like the Jamiat al-'Ulama-i-Hind have launched frontal attacks on the ideology of the Jamat and its interpretation of Islam. The Jamiat wrote a series of editorials in its mouth organ al-Jami'at. Thus referring to these attacks an article in Radiance - the Jamat-e-Islami's mouth piece - says: "I am referring to the extremely belige-

rent and highly provocative stance the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-e-Hind and its official organ the Urdu daily Al-Jamiat have adopted against the Jamat-e-Islami Hind during the past fortnight. The huge posters that are plastered on the walls of Delhi carrying derogatory writings against the Jamaat by the Jamiat and its sympathisers are additional eyesore.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakaria of Deoband has published a book Fitnae Maududiyat<sup>68</sup> (The Error of Maududism) in which the learned author has systematically examined the beliefs of Maulana Maududi and exposed them. The learned author of the book has called Maududi's concept of Hukumat-i-Ilahiya a mere utopia (khyali pulao)<sup>69</sup> Among modern and secularist writers apart from myself, Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad, Dr. Moin Shakir, Dr. Z. Ahmad Nizami and many others have written articles and books exposing the Jamat's politics and its dangers for socialist and secularist forces, especially among Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

It is also important to note that several other organisations among the Muslims do not agree with the Jamat's politics or its interpretation of Islam. Jamiat-ul-Ulama's tirades against the Jamat have been referred to above. It is an organisation of Muslim divines (but the Jamat-i-Islami, on the other hand, is not necessarily the party of the 'Ulama). The Jamiat al-'Ulama does not advocate a separate system of government. It accepts secular parliamentary institutions and believes in composite nationalism. Maulana Azad, one of its leaders, was quite catholic in outlook and liberal in his approach. The Jamat al-'Ulama opposed the theory of two nations and firmly allied itself with the Congress before and after independence. Many of its leaders have been members of parliament and also held ministerial portfolios. The Indian



Union Muslim League, with its main base in the south, is another Muslim political party of some importance. It too has been split into two with one faction supporting the Janata and another one supporting the Congress (the division has formalised in Maharashtra). One or the other ruling party keeps on allying with it in some states (especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu where it has comparatively stronger base). The Majlis-e-Mushawarat was ostensibly formed to bring various Muslim parties and groups together on one platform to solve the common problems being faced by the Muslims. However, it has been formalised into a separate group ever since and has its own identity. Tamir-e-Millat is Hyderabad based small political group which has branches in some cities of north too. Unlike the Jamat-e-Islami, all those groups and parties accept the parliamentary system of government and at best work as pressure groups, more for their own respective interests, rather than the general good of the Muslims.<sup>71</sup> We will have more to say about the opportunistic character of these parties and groups later.

**Communal Riots**

The main objective of describing the ideologies and organisational structures of the RSS and the Jamat is to make our readers understand the way communal poison is injected into the minds of our people by these organisations which result in communal flare-ups. The RSS believes in the technique of 'catching them young', as they say. The RSS puts these venomous ideas into the heads of very young who have highly impressionable mind and they carry these ideas - with some exceptions, of course - right through their lives. Many of them later hold high posts in civil and police services and thus a section

of the central as well as state administration also gets affected by this poison. Add to this the opportunism of our vote-begging politicians who, while paying lip-service to national integration, exploit every possible opportunity to appeal to caste and communal sentiments to grab a few votes, and the picture is complete.

As we have seen, right from the inception of our nationalist movement, there has been a strong tendency to equate, both among the Hindus as well as Muslims, nationalism with religion. To some extent it was the result of backwardness of our masses. Thus Prof. Bipin Chandra points out :

· A major dilemma faced by the Indian national movement, as any other movement, was that any 'massization' of politics would also tend to bring in the masses, backward cultural and social outlook and ideology. As a recent author has pointed out, any nationalist attempt "to come closer to the mass of population was in the nature of things likely to adopt a Hindu (or Muslim or Sikh) idiom."<sup>72</sup>

Bipin Chandra further observes :

So long as the national movement was confined to the intellectuals, as in the moderate phase in the 19th century, it could maintain a certain balance in keeping religion out of political vocabulary and trying to build an entirely modern nationalist ideology. But as the social base of the movement shifted to the lower middle classes, most of whom were socially and culturally conservative and intellectually narrow and limited, its ideological modernity began to get compromised. As the movement reached down to the masses, religious idioms, myths, symbols entered its language, for in the language, culture, way of life, and world-view of the Indian people religion played an important part.<sup>73</sup>

Thus we see that because of this background it is very easy for the politicians to employ an idiom with communal overtones and cause communal trouble. Although the Muslim minority is by no means faultless, it is the majority communalism which is more aggressive and mischievous. It is not for nothing that more often than not the RSS activities in a particular area has resulted in communal carnage in that area. The phenomenon of communalism and violence which often accompanies it is not unconnected with politico-economic crisis; it often follows it. Communalism therefore, cannot be, as is often sought to be done, equated with religious fanaticism. The latter is nothing but passionate attachment to a narrow, sectarian and dogmatic view of one's religion, the former is instrumentalisation of religion for political ends. The communal conflict does not necessarily involve religious fanatics; well educated and otherwise quite secular in outlook whose interests can be served by the process of polarisation of their identity around a religious, cultural or linguistic group are often instrumental in aggravating communal conflict.

Harbans Mukhia defines communalism as essentially amounting to organise an exclusive religious group on the basis of hostility to one or more of the others at social level. The implicit hostility becomes sharper when two or more groups have to live together and share common economic, political and other scarce resources.<sup>74</sup> While Prabha Dixit speaks of communalism as a consciously conceived political doctrine propagated by one section of the traditional elites to counter-act the forces of nationalism and democracy<sup>75</sup>, W. C. Smith defines it as that ideology which has emphasised as the social, political and economic unit the group of adherents

of each religion, and has emphasised the distinction, even the antagonism between such groups; the words 'adherent' and 'religion' being taken in the most nominal sense.<sup>76</sup>

Thus whichever way communalism is defined the fight for power or scarce economic resources is obviously an important factor. It is in this sense that with political or economic crisis the communal crisis also gets aggravated. The major communal holocausts in India after partition have often accompanied such crises. Major communal flare-ups have taken place from the early sixties (the period before this has not been of course free of communal violence altogether) and this also has been a period of economic crisis followed by political crisis. Jabalpur riot in 1962, Jamshedpur riot in 1964 and other similar major riots had shaken the country and it was after the Jabalpur riot that Jawaharlal Nehru was forced to set-up National Integration council. According to the Union Home Ministry review of the communal riots from early fifties onwards:

From 1954 to 1960 there was a clear and consistent downward trend, 1960 being a remarkably good year with only 26 communal incidents in the whole country. This trend was sharply reversed in 1961. The increase was however, largely in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. There was a substantial fall during the next two years indicating stabilization of the situation. 1964 was an abnormal year when largely as a repercussion of serious communal riots in East Pakistan there was large-scale communal violence in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. There was no marked rise in communal incidents in other parts of the country. Because of the two conflicts with Pakistan, there was

serious apprehension of communal trouble in 1965, but most parts of the country remained on the whole peaceful; it was only in Maharashtra and particularly in and around Poona that there were a very large number of incidents mostly involving loss of property; the incidents followed a case of sacrilege and had no connection with the Indo-Pak conflict. In 1966 the number of incidents fell; but it was still relatively high and therefore a matter of concern. The special feature of incidents in 1966 was that Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra which had earlier been relatively free from communal trouble (except the Poona incidents of 1965), indicated persistent tension. The deterioration in communal relations noticed in 1966 continued in 1967, the most serious outbreak of violence being in Ranchi where 155 lives were lost in weeklong disturbances. There was a marked rise in incidents in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh compared to 1966. A disturbing development of 1967 was extension of communal tension to Jammu & Kashmir. The deterioration noticed in 1967 continued during the first quarter of 1968.<sup>77</sup>

Further in 1968 there occurred 342 incidents as compared to 220 in 1967 and 132 in 1966.<sup>78</sup> We have quoted at such length from the Home Ministry Review so that we may have a picture of the zig-zag trend of communal riots during the sixties which was the worst decade from that point of view after independence. As pointed out above, the rising incidents of communal violence is not unconnected with the economic and resultant political crisis in our country. During the periods of such acute crises the extreme rightist and militantly communal organi-

sations like the RSS, taking advantage of some incidents, try to provoke communal violence. Reacting to the mad frenzy of senseless communal violence at the end of sixties, Mr. Inder Malhotra, a senior journalist wrote: "The strength and influence of the avowedly communal and objectionably militant Hindu parties have grown alarmingly. This cannot be utterly unconnected with the distressing rise in the number of communal incidents and riots. It would, of course, be unfair to believe or even allege that the entire or even the bulk of the majority community is under the influence of communists.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, on January 1, 1970 the Indian Express carried a report on the RSS which noted "the growth of the RSS has coincided with the recent wave of communal riots in the country."<sup>80</sup>

These communal, parochial or chauvinist organisations try to give communal twist to a politico-economic crisis so that the status quo is perpetuated. The ruling classes too - otherwise swearing by secularism - to avert the danger to the system when faced with the militancy of the masses in situations of such crises use these rank communal organisations to foment communal trouble. The encouragement which the Shiv Sena - a parochial and chauvinist organisation - received from the ruling classes in Maharashtra after 1967 in the face of industrial crisis and rising unemployment is a clear case in point. The Sena never concealed its hostility towards the communists on the one hand and, the minorities - especially the Muslims - on the other. Maharashtra state which, according to the Government review quoted above, was remarkably free from communal violence, began to experience it by the end of sixties and beginning of seventies. The Sena was mainly instrumental in fomenting communal violence. Its role



in the Bhivandi riots of May 1970 proved its blatant communal character.<sup>81</sup>

The Ahmedabad riot of 1969 also falls into this pattern. The country, during this period was passing through a political crisis. The Congress had split and Mrs. Indira Gandhi was trying to consolidate her position by adopting left of the centre line in order to increase her appeal among the masses. This political crisis was basically the manifestation of an acute economic crisis through which the country was passing. The increasing poverty of the masses had tremendously increased the appeal of socialism. Smt. Gandhi knew this as a shrewd tactician. She, therefore, took an unprecedented step and nationalised the major banks and abolished the privy purses of the erstwhile princes. The rightist forces felt alarmed at these developments and failed to perceive the shrewd tactics of Mrs. Gandhi. They thought that she is taking decisive steps towards socialism and hence the rightists, in order to frustrate Mrs. Gandhi's left of the centre policies tried to create an atmosphere of communal chauvinism in the country which was the easiest way to create chaos and confuse the issues.

The Jan Sangha had, during those days, adopted highly militant posture towards the Muslims. The Jan Sangh during this period gave a call for Indianisation of Indian Muslims which, in effect, meant Hinduisation. Even Hinduisation is an umbrella-term. Commenting on the concept of Indianisation Mr. Gangadharan says: "By a process of elimination, the logical answer to this question (i.e. of Indianisation) would be that Brahmins or upper castes who are the repositories of Hindu culture should be treated as the ideal type - the model for Indianization.

This conclusion is unavoidable because any one looking for that elusive model of Hinduism will ultimately land up in Brahminism."<sup>82</sup> However, the Jan Sangh insisted on nothing less than Indianization for establishing the credibility of Muslims.

During this period the atmosphere in the country was emotionally charged and the riots in Ahmedabad took place in this atmosphere. The RSS was also very active in the field. According to Ghanshyam Shah "...a mammoth rally of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was held at Ahmedabad at the end of December 1968. It was addressed by Guru Golwalkar who emphasised that only Hindus were secular in this country as they had tolerated all sorts of sufferings at the hand of others. Golwalkar pleaded for 'Hindu Rashtra', a concept on which there had already taken place a long discussion in the Press."<sup>83</sup> A content analysis of the discussion suggested that the theory of 'Hindu Rashtra' had powerful support among the Hindus in Gujarat many of whom felt that the Muslims had destroyed Hindu culture and enjoyed special favours and that 'Hindu Rashtra and the activities of the RSS were synonymous with nationalism."<sup>84</sup>

A fortnight before the Ahmedabad riot the Muslims had taken out huge processions in almost all towns of Gujarat to protest against the attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque; the one in Ahmedabad was the largest of all. Hindus interpreted the procession and some of its slogans as both a demonstration of Muslim strength and solidarity and a threat to the Hindus.<sup>85</sup> Shortly afterwards Balraj Madhok, the then Jan Sangh leader, visited Gujarat and addressed number of meetings. He criticised Muslims for raising hue and cry over a mosque which was thousands of miles away from India. He also said that they did not speak a word when Pakistan attacked the

Dwarka temple during the India-Pakistan war. "Do they think that Hindus have no feeling for their religion?"<sup>86</sup> Now it was all set for the communal carnage. The right atmosphere was there. What was needed was an incident or two to ignite the accumulated gun-powder. The Jagannath temple incident provided the needed spark. The Hindu Dharma Raksha Samiti gave a call for the protest. A number of unsigned handbills were distributed giving exaggerated accounts of the Jagannath temple incident from the point of view of the Hindus.<sup>87</sup> This coupled with baseless rumours played havoc. The newspapers too played their part by publishing biased or uninvestigated reports.

According to Mr. Ghanshyam Shah there was clear evidence of careful planning for the riots. Describing the incidents he says:

There was not a little planning in their actions. In order to prevent police vans from entering the area they dug ditches at the three ends, some volunteers occupying seats near the ditches and watching. Meanwhile, Muslim shops were broken open, goods were looted or set on fire. Even in this the mob showed a calculated sense of discrimination. Muslim shops in Hindu-owned buildings were plundered but not set on fire; similar shops in Muslim-owned buildings were set on fire; shops run by a Hindu and Muslim in partnership remained undisturbed....riot organisers in this and other area moved with voters' lists to identify Muslim houses. On the whole...the Muslim population found itself overwhelmed in number and utterly demoralised in the face of such a massive attack.<sup>88</sup>

The cruelty exhibited by the rioters was unparalleled after the partition. The Hindu mob

forced the Muslims to shout "Jai Jagannath." A youth who refused was sprinkled with petrol and burnt alive.<sup>89</sup> In this context mention should also be made of a Muslim hostel called Kamal Hostel for university students in which there were 30 Hindu students as boarders. The hostel provided a possible platform for expressing solidarity among the two communities. Instead it was completely destroyed, pillars and slabs of the huge building were physically removed, suggesting that skilled engineers were employed in the destruction.<sup>90</sup> Atrocities multiplied by the 20th September evening when several poor labourers were either burnt alive or murdered. Scythes, axes, knives and spears were used for killing people. Women were raped or ripped bare and forced to walk naked on the road; children were beaten against stones or their legs were torn apart. Limbs were cut out of dead bodies, women's breasts were cut and sex organs were mutilated or torn apart. In this made orgy, animal instincts of the worst kind seem to have got hold of the people of Ahmedabad.<sup>91</sup>

Even responsible Congressmen were deeply affected by the communal passions. They suggested that the Muslims were not loyal to the country and they should go to Pakistan. A highly placed Congress leader of Gujarat, in a public meeting exhorted the youth in these terms:

There are anti-national elements in this country whose loyalty is towards Pakistan. Police, having some limitations, cannot trace these elements. Therefore, it is your duty to find them out. You should enter their houses, catch hold of them, then do whatever you want to do.<sup>92</sup>

The only secular political force on the scene was the leftist parties - PSP, SSP and, above all, the Communists - who tried their best to

prevent riots. There were other elements too, more isolated but effective, such as the radical humanists of Ahmedabad and their labour union.<sup>93</sup> The RSS volunteers not only inspired the rioters but also actively helped them including arranging finance. Jagmohan Reddy who inquired into riots in Ahmedabad and other Gujarat towns has made significant observations in this direction:

Another noticeable feature of which we must make a reference is the definite part played in various districts which were affected, by the workers of the local Jana Sangha and Hindu Mahasabha organisations or by persons having leanings towards them. There is evidence definitely that they took a leading part in the districts of Amreli, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Baroda. In one of these instances, there is evidence to show that they were inciting the crowds to riot.<sup>94</sup>

Communal fascism is practiced, no doubt, most blatantly by the RSS and its political arm the Jana Sangh (now rechristened as Bhartiya Janata Party). However, it does not mean that other secular bourgeois parties like the Congress do not carry its tinge. As already pointed out, communalism in the Indian context is the most powerful weapon for dividing the masses and hence the entire election strategy of the bourgeois parties are based on communal and caste calculations. The Indian bourgeoisie finds it most convenient to manipulate the communal forces to divert the attention of the people from economic crisis. Also, the elites of these communities use communal identity to win the sympathy of the respective members of their communities for protecting their own interests. The common people from both the communities are thus made an instrument for realisation of the demands of the elite-groups of their communities.

The recent elections in Jammu and Kashmir has exposed the opportunism of the ruling Congress. Smt. Indira Gandhi appealed to the communal sentiments of the Hindus of Jammu in order to win a few seats there. She also appealed to the sectarian sentiments of the Shias in certain areas of Kashmir valley in order to get their votes. In Jammu, the RSS volunteers worked for her party. Similarly Farooq Abdullah made an alliance with pro-Pakistani Mir Waiz so as not to risk losing some seats in the valley. The politicians, whether ruling or in opposition, aggravate the communal situation for their narrow ends. It is also not a secret that in Kerala the Congress (I) led ministry gets support of RSS on one hand, and, that of Muslim League, on the other. The Nilakkal Cross issue which led to exacerbation of communal situation in Kerala was by no means un-connected with the politics of the state. It was the first major confrontation between the Hindus and Christians of Kerala.

Mrs. Gandhi also inaugurated recently a temple in Vrindavan known as the Bharat Mata Temple constructed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad - a new front organization patronised by the RSS. Indira Gandhi is reported to have blessed the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in its campaign against conversions of Harijan to Islam. The Meenakshipuram conversions - an outcome primarily of persecution of Harijans at the hands of caste Hindus - were utilised by the communal forces for a virulent anti-Muslim campaign throughout India. Number of communal riots from 1981 to 1983 at Ahmedabad, Pune, Solapur, Meerut, Malegaon and Hyderabad were the direct result of this campaign. Mrs. Gandhi has been trying to win the upper caste Hindus to her side by subtly encouraging the VHP campaign. When this was sensed by the people and was much



talked about she began to deny this. In view of coming parliamentary elections she is trying to convince the Muslims that she has always worked for the well-being of minorities. Thus we can see how the politicians use and encourage communal feelings for their own ends.

Here there is another quite interesting instance of this. The Uttarkhand movement was pressing for a separate state in some of the districts of West Bengal including Cooch-Bihar. The movement was being led by the Rajbanshis, an elitist group who has benefited most by the land distribution policies so far. It has an anti-left tendency. According to Sivadas Banerjee of the Times of India "Officials figures suggest that the Rajbanshis have benefited from vested land redistribution, barga settlement, farmers' pension and even local employment out of proportion to their number in the district. This may be one reason why the poorer sections of Rajbanshis and even sections of middle peasantry are still finding the slogan for a separate state of their own unattractive. The leadership is still elitist."<sup>95</sup> He also informs us that "Observers are hopeful that if the left front working unitedly can ensure speedy implementation of land reform measures in districts like Jalpaiguri and Cooch-bihar without allowing favouritism to foul the programme, the government will still be able to stem the tide of the Uttarkhand movement."<sup>96</sup>

Thus we see that the only effective way of counteracting parochial or communal forces is concerted efforts to solve common people's problems with their effective participation. However, the bourgeois political parties, in order to win over particular communities or castes over to their side, make promises to solve their grievance within the community on the one hand,

and, on the other, promoting a sense of rivalry among other communities, aggravating communal tensions. More often than not, the Jana Sangh (now BJP) effectively carries on the propaganda that in this country (which belongs to the Hindus, it says rhetorically) the Muslims are being pampered by parties like the Congress (I) and such propaganda has its own effects among the jobless and frustrated people of the other community. In most of the riots this has been the refrain of the communal bodies like the RSS. Thus in this political game neither the problems of this community nor those of the other community are solved and the only result is accentuation of communal trouble between them. The whole syndrome of the Congress pampering Muslims and the BJP denouncing it thus giving rise to communal problem has become a well-rehearsed game of the politicians of these parties. The outcome of this game is perpetuation of *staus-quo* and bringing non-issues to the fore which have nothing to do with the actual problems of the people.

After the emergency when the Janata Party was installed in power at the centre in March 1977, there was some hope (illusion?) of this syndrome being broken. The Jana Sangha, which was one of the constituents of the Janata, tried to convince, specially the Muslims, that it would no longer play the role of the Muslim baiters and make a gift of the Muslim votes to the Congress (I) on a platter. However, its avowal of secularism convinced few political observers. The RSS never gave up unequivocally the concept of 'Hindu-Rashtra.' In fact, it was the RSS controversy which proved to be the foundering rock of the Janata Party. The erstwhile Jana Sangh members preferred to split the party rather than sever their connections with the RSS or persuade the RSS to give up its concept of the

'Hindu-Rashtra.'

However, much before the Janata Party split on the question of the RSS, the Aligarh and the Jamshedpur communal riots which became reminiscent of the Ahmedabad riot of 1969, had already exposed the hollowness of the Jana Sangh and the RSS claim of having turned into the friends of the Muslims. The RSS cannot wash its hands off the communal carnage in Aligarh and Jamshedpur. Even the Janata Party team which made an on the spot inquiry into the Aligarh riots blamed the RSS for the riots. Nikhil Chakravarty wrote in Mainstream:

Chandra Shekhar sent a three-men fact-finding team led by Janata MP Krishna Kant. The team could not draft out a proper report but submitted its interim observations in which it is reliably understood, there are references to allegations of the involvement of the RSS.<sup>97</sup> And, according to Sunday, "Raj Narain was the first top political leader to go there and make an on-the-spot survey. He squarely accused the RSS for the riots."<sup>98</sup> Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the CPI (M) leader, also led an investigation team to Aligarh, and wrote, "All the accusing fingers in Aligarh, not only of the Muslim community but all secular-minded and democratic people, are pointed at the RSS leader, Krishnakumar Navman, for the holocaust."<sup>99</sup>

The role of the protectors of the law and order, specially the PAC and SRP, is found to be no less deplorable. In Aligarh, its role was no more glorifying. An investigating team sent to Aligarh by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) says in its report:

The team is convinced of one fact which was corroborated by both Hindus and Muslims; the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC)

resorted to firing indiscriminately: the team came across several Muslim houses in the Manak Chowk area bearing bullet marks. When it was inspecting the bullet marks on 21 October (16 days after the firing) it could still see PAC men posted on the roofs of some high buildings (owned by Hindus) with their rifles aimed at the Muslim houses. According to Iqbal Ansari of AMU, a Hindu gentleman of the area was asked on 5 October by the PAC men to identify the Muslim houses so that they could shoot them from a vantage point.<sup>100</sup> The team, in its report, mentions several

incidents:

Bene Israel Lane is a market area where in a particular portion only Muslims live. This is about 0.5 kilometers from Abdul Karim Chowraha. No Hindu communalists were there making trouble on 5 October, and it was free of provocation. In spite of all this, the trigger-happy PAC men marched into the area and fired on the Muslims. Two persons died. Shamim, clerk, in Abdulla Girls College, who succumbed to his bullet injuries on 20 October, and other who had come from Meerut in search of a job and was staying in Aligarh as a guest.<sup>101</sup> According to the evidence collected by the team, another Muslim was killed in the same area as a result of such deliberate firing. "The victim, belonging to Banaras, happened to be inside a mosque in the locality when a bullet hit him." The role of PAC in Meerut riots was even more brutal. My own investigation of the riot indicated that the PAC men dragged innocent people out of their houses and shot them dead in Feroze building area on 1st October 1982. There were banners in Meerut city hailing the PAC as the defender of Hindus. It was a fatal mistake to employ the PAC after what it had done in Mora-

dabad to the members of the minority community. Similarly the role of SRP in the Baroda riots in December 1982 was equally unsympathetic towards Muslims. They beat them up ruthlessly and damaged their houses. In Malegaon riots the same pattern was repeated. After Janata came to power almost all the major riots i.e. in Aligarh, Benaras, Sambhal and Jamshedpur took place in the Hindi-belt where the Jana Sangha wielded comparatively more influence. The riot in Jamshedpur was much more violent than that of Aligarh. Sunday of Calcutta characteristically described it as 'A Brutal War'. And brutal war it was.

Though a communal riot is a complex affair and entire responsibility for it cannot be pinned on one individual, it would not be wrong to say that the Janata MLA Dinanath Pandey with RSS background was playing leading role. According to Sunday "Among the people ignored by the SP was the local Janata MLA, Dinanath Pandey, who has an RSS background, and who played a key role in engineering the riots. According to one source, the Janata politicians, working with the RSS and others, including probably the Jamat-e-Islami (the organisation which has been and continues to be the biggest enemy of Indian Muslims), had decided to provoke communal riots as early as October last year."<sup>102</sup> The worst and most brutal incident of this riot was burning of an ambulance van which was carrying a large number of children and women to a refugee camp. In a pre-planned way the ambulance, leaving the chartered route entered into a side lane and a mob which was waiting there set it to fire killing most of the helpless inmates.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Professor, Zaki Anwar, a man with profound faith in secularism and who, only a day before

the riot, undertook fast to prevent it, was killed by his Hindu neighbours some of whom he has tried to save from the irate Muslim mob. Zak Anwar's death, probably symbolizes the helplessness of secular forces in the country.

Commenting on these riots, Inder Malhotra, in his article "A Nightmare Without End" says, "Of course, the communal problem today is not as grave as in the 'sixties when there was a series of nasty riots and the Muslim minority throughout the country felt terribly insecure. But the situation is grave enough and only those unconcerned with national unity and elementary human decencies can afford to adopt an ostrich-like approach to it. The high hopes about the advent of a brave new era of communal harmony, aroused by the virtual disappearance of serious communal riots from 1971 to 1977 have unfortunately been belied. Of late, the menace of communalism has increased and is increasing; it must be curbed."<sup>104</sup>

As pointed out earlier, the communal riots are, in a rather complex manner connected with the politico-economic crisis. One would only delude himself if he thinks that communal riots can disappear from the national scene forever without re-structuring the society. Mere secular professions on ideological level cannot bring about the real change, unless the social base changes. The Congress adopted the capitalist path and the last thirty three years saw a great deal of industrialisation, no doubt. But, as the post-independence experience of almost all the third-world countries shows, capitalism cannot cope up with the magnitude of the problems thrown up in the course of development. The revolution of the rising expectations produces acute social tensions which often erupt along communal lines. In the backward societies where



capitalism has not succeeded in completely transforming the social structure, religious and communal identities play very vital role and ironically the process of democratisation deepens the process of polarisation along the communal and caste lines. The politicians, in their power grabbing game, are always ready to seize all such opportunities. Thus we observe that in the former colonies of the Western capitalist countries, capitalism, having failed to fulfil its historical mission, could not bring about change in social outlook.

In the third world countries the phenomenon of class formation is extremely complicated in view of deep loyalties to the primordial religious or caste traditions. Religious and caste groups ensure far greater solidarity than the class groups. Religious ethos criss-cross class ethos with the result that the elites of religious communities find it much more convenient to use religion or caste as a mobilizatory force. In such a situation, to put it briefly, the class loyalties get overshadowed by primordial loyalties.

Although attack on the super-structure does help but does not suffice to bring about deep-rooted transformation. What is needed is simultaneous efforts to change the base and finally it is the interaction between the base and the superstructure which, in the long run, would produce the desired result. No amount of debates in the national integration council is going to solve the communal problem; it may, at the most, succeed in sharpening the awareness of the problem among the small section of the society. It is for this reason that despite Congress's commitment to secularism - its significance need not be belittled on ideological level - communal problem has very much remained alive in the post-independence period. Right through the

Nehru-era to the second spell of Indira Gandhi's rule with about two years of the Janata rule thrown in, communal violence never stopped although it may have abated in certain phases.

The Janata Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai, refuting the view that the number of riots increased during the Janata regime quoted the following figures of communal incidents since 1967: 1967-198, 1968 - 346, 1969 - 519, 1970 - 521, 1971 - 321, 1972 - 240, 1973 - 242, 1974 - 248, 1975 - 205, 1976 - 169 and 1977 - 188. Upto the time Mr. Desai made statement in the Parliament, the number of riots in 1978 were 171.<sup>105</sup>

In the interest of objectivity it also must be admitted that the Muslims in India are prone to violence. The Muslims, like the Scheduled castes, are one of the most deprived communities in the Indian society and hence more frustrated. And it needs no argument that the frustrated people are more violence prone than the more contented one. It is not their religious fanaticism, as argued by some writers and journalists, but their social situation, which at times makes them rather aggressive. No one would deny the fact that poverty and frustration are breeding grounds for violence, aggression and crime. It is, therefore, observed that in many cases Muslims become initial cause of igniting the communal riot. But, and it must be noted, except in a very few cases, it is no more than igniting the fuse. The rest of things in major communal riots as Ahmedabad, Bhivandi, Aligarh and Jamshedpur riots clearly prove, are done by the careful planning and execution by the communalists of majority community.

About the Ahmedabad riot of 1969 for example, The Gujarat Herald, an Ahmedabad daily, specifically noted: "The Jagannath temple incident had been only a spark that ignited an atmosphere

that had already been rendered volatile and charged with violence ready to burst into flames at the least provocation. Two days prior to the temple incident there was an inciting speech delivered by none other than Balraj Madhok, the Jana Sangh leader, who was threatening Ahmedabad that a Pakistani attack on Gujarat was impending and questioned the loyalty of the Muslim leaders in the city. He even hinted that there were many Muslims in the city who were Pakistani agents and who owed allegiance to that country."<sup>106</sup> Even Jay Prakash Narayan, referring to the Ahmedabad riot, wrote, "It is quite surprising that the next major trouble occurred not in the area of the temple but six miles away, in a labour colony. In this and other places where serious rioting occurred in the next few days there were signs of detailed preparations."<sup>107</sup>

The communal riots, let the RSS and Jana Sangh, if they are really patriotic as they claim it as their main virtue as against other parties, realise that are not in the best interests of the country. The Muslims are a largest minority numbering more than 8 crores in India. The country cannot achieve political stability if such a largest minority lives with a perpetual sense of insecurity. Even much smaller minorities in other countries with strong sense of grievance have succeeded in creating instability. Moreover, the BJP (formally the Jana Sangh) should realise, earlier than later, that by provoking riots they are forcing Muslims to vote for the Indira Congress which promises them more security. This way the elections are not won on real issues facing the masses but on the strength of block-voting for a party by the minority suffering from the sense of insecurity. The riots thus, more than anything else, serve the political purpose of such parties. It is a regret-

able fact that today, more than anything else, caste and communal factors have become much more decisive in influencing the outcome of elections. What could be greater tragedy of our secular democratic system than the fact that more and more polarisation is taking place along caste and communal lines than along class lines. All voting calculations are based on these considerations and they are subsequently born out by the polling results. In other words the ideological and economic considerations go totally by default.

After every major communal carnage the Indira Congress, by condemning it, emerges as the champion of the Muslim minority and draws its full advantage at the time of elections. Commenting on the last Lok Sabha elections, Moin Shakir says, "The victory of Indira Gandhi in the recent Lok Sabha polls is attributed to the solid support extended to her by the minorities all over the country. Earlier in 1971 and in 1977, the minority vote to a great extent decided the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls."<sup>108</sup> Commenting on the Muslim vote before the January 1980, Lok Sabha elections, the Times of India editorialised: "Among the principal contenders for the office of Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi has given more assurances to the Muslims than either Mr. Jagjivan Ram or Mr. Charan Singh. For example, the Congress(I) manifesto alone promises a special peace-keeping force composed of 'people drawn from the minority communities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and others' to prevent and suppress communal riots. This is understandable. In the past the support of the Harijans and the Muslims has been vital for the victories of the Congress party."<sup>109</sup>

The promise of the peace-keeping force comprising members of the minority communities of special significance after the major holocausts

in Aligarh and Jamshedpur. The security of life and property becomes, after such calamities, the major consideration in the struggle for survival. This bourgeois game - one party benefiting by the anti-Muslim propaganda and the other by pro-Muslim assurances would go on in this system. This system has fully legitimised it and as such, as far as the propaganda for and against any community is concerned, it does not face any 'legitimation crisis', to use the term coined by Jurgen Habermas.<sup>110</sup> But, over last so many years, the Indira Congress failed in solving the problem of communal riots as dismally as any other party like the Janata.

According to the annual report of the home ministry for 1979-80, communal incidents, which numbered only 169 in 1976 rose to 188 in 1977 and to 230 in 1978. The number of people killed and injured in these years respectively was: 39 and 794; 36 and 1,122; and 110 and 1,853. The Indira Gandhi Government called a conference of the chief ministers to discuss the remedial measures. However, nothing radically new emerged. The same sanctimonious suggestions like frequent recourse to punitive fines or recovering the cost of quartering an additional police force, prompt

investigations and prosecution of cases, revival of integration committees in various states, taking strict action against rumour-mongering and publication of alarming news, adequate representation for minority communities in services under government, public sector undertakings and other bodies and institutions and promotion of religious and communal amity at the grass-roots level.<sup>111</sup>

Most of these suggestions (except perhaps that of adequate representation of minority communities in services which has no direct bearing with communal riots) have been made repeatedly

but were hardly ever effectively followed up. Moreover, the suggested measures seek to solve the problem administratively only after it arises. The communal malaise is much more deep rooted and can be effectively tackled only politically. However, as pointed out above, most of the political parties are much more concerned with cornering the votes by employing communal idiom and thus giving respectability to those elites who bargain in the name of their community than with preventing the communal violence. That this can go to a ridiculous extent was proved by the mad rush of various parties to conclude a bargain with the Imam of Jami' Masjid, Abdullah Bukhari on the eve of the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. The Imam can hardly be said to represent Indian Muslims; in fact he hardly has any following worth the name among the Muslims and the Muslims intelligentsia reject his leadership outright. However, the political leaders of national stature were competing with each other to conclude a deal with the Imam in order to win over Muslim votes. At last Indira Gandhi, through her emissary A. R. Antulay, concluded a deal with him, only to drop him like a hot potato after winning the elections. Even a politician like Indira Gandhi with her appeal among the Muslims was unsure of the situation and showed undue eagerness to ensure the Muslim support.

In fact it is this kind of behaviour which encourages communal politics and, more often than not, leads to communal violence. The bourgeois parties with their apparent profession of secularism derive double advantage out of such deals: they enable them to win at the hustings and also help them keep the people divided to facilitate the continuance of the system. Thus it will be seen that seeking legitimisation



of communal-oriented politics within the parliamentary system is at the root of the problem. Not that the administrative measures are not necessary in the event of outbreak of communal violence, what is of fundamental importance is to prevent this needless violence by political means. However, in the topsy-turvy world of the politicians, bath water is more endearing than the baby.

Communal riots, it should not be forgotten, have very damaging effect on the Muslim mind. Not only that will-forming process for participating in the nation-building activities among them gets weakened and they feel more and more alienated (of course this happens and it is very much evident) but they also tend to interiorise a deeply conservative tendency and treat any attempt at meaningful change as a threat to their religious identity. The Muslims in India are not a monolithic lot and have both horizontal as well as vertical stratifications (although vertical mobility among them is not barred rigidly as among the Hindus nor horizontal stratification results in water-tight compartments) but their perception of threat to their existence, is, despite these differences, stereotypic. This biting sense of insecurity makes them develop a sense of communal solidarity and any centrifugal tendency is strongly denounced. It is nothing unique with the Indian Muslims. Minorities, squeezed in by majorities, tend to close their ranks and become inward-looking. It helps them to survive with their identities intact. It is, therefore, not surprising that even western-educated intelligentsia among the Muslims resist change. It is not to deny that the traditional Islam, which is most encompassing of all the major world-religions, also influences their think-

ing to a large extent but, nevertheless, no perceptive observer can deny the fact that the gnawing sense of insecurity makes a man more inward-looking.

Communal riots have another side too. Many scholars including those who support the RSS view point, had begun to argue in the late sixties that as the Muslims spurn modern reforms (including the change in the status of their personal law) the young generation of Hindus tend to become more and more militant and aggressive towards Muslims and that it is one of the causes of communal riots. This lop-sided thesis was put forward by some scholars at the time of Ahmedabad riots. It is not only wrong, it is a malicious thesis despite the sophistry and scholastic arguments behind it. These scholars may not be arguing in favour of communal violence but it certainly gives the impression of justifying it at least so far as those who indulged in it are concerned. It also creates the impression on the victims of the violence that they are being compelled, at the gun-point, to accept reforms. This results in further hardening their attitude towards change and reform. We have the example of Jews before us. The European Jewry preserved its religious and linguistic heritage with more determination, more it was persecuted. The sense of being persecuted makes a community more conservative and resistant to any change. Even otherwise minorities (dominated, not dominant) are known to be highly security-conscious and strongly despise any centrifugal tendencies.

The Muslims have often been projected as fanatics, aggressive and violent who prefer to jealously guard their religious identity. It is argued that it is on account of doctrinaire and totalitarian nature of their religion. No

doubt Islam is both doctrinaire as well as totalitarian; but it would be wrong to develop such stereo-types about Muslims ignoring other factors. What Ilya Ehrenburg, the noted Russian writer and critic, wrote on the Jewish question in September 1948 applies to some extent to Indian Muslims today. Ehrenburg said :

Obscurantists have for ages past invented lies representing the Jews as a special kind of creature, unlike other human beings. They said that the Jews led a life apart, isolated from the rest of the community, not participating in the joys and sorrows of the people amongst whom they lived. The obscurantists claimed that the Jews felt no attachment to any country, that they were eternally rootless. The obscurantists stated that the Jews in every country were bound together by mysterious ties...Yes, the Jews did lead a life apart, isolated from the community when they were forced to do so. The ghetto was not an invention of Jewish mystics but of Catholic, religious fanatics. In the days when a religious fog obscured men's sight, there were fanatics among the Jews just as there were fanatics among Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox and Muslim believers. But as soon as the gates of the ghetto were thrown open, and the fog of the medieval night lifted, the Jews of every country were absorbed into the common life of the peoples.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately India has not yet fully emerged out of the medieval fog. Religious obscurantism continues to possess our minds and thus prejudices rather than rational concepts reign supreme. Religion, however totalitarian in its sweep, cannot be the only factor in determining ones

behaviour and attitude; it is rather ones social situation which is more decisive. Also, another myth of Hindu tolerance and liberalism versus Muslim fanaticism and aggressiveness has been systematically cultivated in some quarters. Such myths need to be demolished as they often lead to communal violence. We shall deal with some other aspects of this question in one of the subsequent chapters. Suffice it may to say here that communal violence is a deep-rooted phenomenon and several factors like religious, political, social and economic give birth to it.

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## Chapter V

### MEDIEVAL HISTORY - OBSESSION OF THE COMMUNAL FASCISTS

Interpretation of medieval history has been one of the pre-occupations of the Hindu and Muslim communalists. The reason for this is very obvious. The Hindu communalists have maintained that the Muslim invaders enslaved the Hindus, dishonoured their women and looted their menfolk. The Muslim communalists, on the other hand, glorify the Muslim period in India and consider it as the most affable time in the Indian history. The British rulers too, to serve their own political ends, used Indian history to accentuate Hindu-Muslim differences. In fact history has been systematically used for number of decades to inject communal poison in the minds of school children and other innocent people and thus to create communal tension. It, therefore, becomes an important problem to deal with while discussing the Muslim problem in the Indian sub-continent. Even as late as the period of Janata rule, some history text books became a subject of great controversy and the Morarjee Government, through a secret circular, withdrew those text-books from the school syllabi.

- Why politicians are so much obsessed with history? According to Sarvepalli Gopal, an eminent

historian, "Of all the social sciences, it is history which rouses the greatest interest in the minds of the politicians. There are various reasons for this. It has always had an inventive and purposive use. The line between history and mythology is thought to be thin; the past can be used to lend legitimacy to any aspect of the present and, especially in the years of resistance to imperialism, history could be utilised to strengthen the forces of cultural nationalism."<sup>1</sup> The history in being thus used by the politicians, either for anti-imperialist fight or for communal ends, is, needless to say, is transformed into a mythology.

It is true that history is not scientific in the sense of experimentation and recreation of the conditions which are being examined. Also, no precise laws are possible.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore sought to be reduced to a pre-determined purpose. One can do so, as far as history is concerned, maintaining the fiction of 'facts'. 'Facts are sacred, opinion is free', said the great liberal journalist C. P. Scott.<sup>3</sup> However, E. H. Carr, the famous British historian, challenges the sacredness of facts. According to him, "It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context. It was, I think, one of Pirandello's characters who said that a fact is like a sack - it won't stand up till you have put something in it."<sup>4</sup>

And there is no doubt that the communal historians in Indian context call on the historical facts as they please. Their selective bias changes the context and meaning of those facts. It is a fact that Mahmud of Ghazna attacked and defiled the temple of Somnath. This fact has

been over-emphasised in the text-books of our history. However, while mentioning this fact, similar other fact is totally omitted. Mahmud was not the first defiler of a Hindu temple in the history of India. There were others whose sacrilegious acts were much more shocking than those of Mahmud Ghaznavi. King Harsha of Kashmir (A.D. 1089-1101; not to be confused with the seventh-century emperor Harsha), says D. D. Kosambi, systematically melted down all metal images throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom, with just four exceptions. The work was carried out under a special 'minister for uprooting gods' (devotpātana-nayaka). Each image was publicly defiled by leprous beggars who voided urine and excrement upon it before dragging it through the streets to the foundry. Not the slightest theological excuse was offered.<sup>5</sup>

This Harsha was no barbarian to indulge in such sacrilegious acts. He was man of culture, excellent litterateur, connoisseur of drama, music and ballet. He supported brahmins within reason and honoured a Buddhist preceptor whose pleading, in fact, rescued the four images, two of the Buddha.<sup>6</sup> According to Kosambi the real motive of defiling these images was economic. The metal was needed for financing the king's desperate and expensive wars against rebellious Dāmara barons.<sup>7</sup> Mahmud of Ghazna's plunderous expeditions had no less economic promptings though they may have been sought to be theologically masqueraded. The primary motive of Mahmud was to plunder and not to establish his rule over India. A ruler has to behave with restraint in order not to inflame the sentiments of his subject people. Mahmud being a roving plunderer, hardly cared for religious sensibilities of his victims. That Mahmud's motive was plunder and not punishing the idolators, is accepted by modern historians.



Thus Romila Thapar maintains, "Mahmud's interest in India was based on the proverbial wealth of the country and the fertility of the Punjab plains, which appeared even more rich and lush from the barren mountains of the Hindu Kush. The politics of Afghanistan were at this time more closely allied with those of central Asia than with India, and incursions into India were, from Mahmud's point of view, incidental and of little permanent significance. With the continuing trade between China and the Mediterranean it was far more lucrative to hold political power in Khvarzam and Turkestan, as the Ghaznavids did for some years, than in northern India. The campaigns in India were largely raids aimed primarily at replenishing the Ghazni treasury."<sup>8</sup>

Throwing more light on the motives of Mahmud for attacking the temple of Somnath, Romila says: Temples were depositories of vast quantities of wealth, in cash, golden images, and jewellery - the donations of the pious - and these made them natural targets for a non-Hindu searching for wealth in northern India. Mahmud's greed for gold was insatiable. From 1010 to 1026 the invasions of Mahmud were directed to temple towns - Mathura, Thanesar, Kanauj, and finally Somnath. The concentration of wealth at Somnath was renowned, and consequently it was inevitable that Mahmud would attack it.<sup>9</sup>

The communalists have tried to over-simplify history as, in their view, the basic motivation for the actors of the history or its pre-eminent individuals, comes from religion, race or caste. However, this far from true. Historical process is extremely complex one and is basically determined by the material forces (including as Marx rightly stresses, forces and relations of produc-

tion), besides religious and political forces which are of the nature of superstructure. "Relations of production", says Mcmurtry, "as a totality, constitute the economic structure. The economic structure, in turn, Marx calls the 'anatomy', the 'essence', the 'form', or the 'base' of all historical human society."<sup>10</sup> The communalist point of view of history, thus we see, completely ignores elliptical and complex nature of history. Religion, according to the communalist interpretation of history, is not only supra-historical, but is also the sole motivator.

Such a view of history cannot be sustained seriously. It is basically such a view which leads Golwalkar and others on one hand, and, the Muslim communalists on the other, to assign to the race or religion, a mystique role. Thus according to Gangadharan, Golwalkar wants to create a distinctive Hindu historical consciousness.<sup>11</sup> "Through such an effort Golwalkar seems to be aiming at the creation of a powerful partisan historical perspective which could be employed to mesmerize the people into an activist movement which would transform the society into a communal Utopia of his own aspiration."<sup>12</sup> The Muslims are similarly thought to be cut out for a special role which they must fulfil as it has been assigned to them by God. All that is needed to be done is to follow the teachings of religion and the whole universe will fall in order. Certain individuals, according to this view of history, are then thought to be saviours of this or that religion or race.

Thus individuals like Rana Pratap, Shivaji and others are glorified and projected as the Hindu heroes who fought against the Muslim domination. Their rivals are then projected as embodiments of evil. The Muslims, according to this view, become mlechhas and thus need to be avoided. Rulers like Aurangzeb are seen,

according to this view of history, merely as religious fanatics devoid of any political motives and factors. Shivaji who fought against Aurangzeb, in keeping with this theory, becomes defender of Hindus and is glorified as such. History is thus shorn of its complex character and is reduced to a predominant motive that is religion. Religious loyalty becomes the prime-mover of historical forces. It need not be said that Muslim fanatics too have reduced the history to the same plight. Overlooking the class-character and feudal exploitation, the Muslim rule is treated by them as a period of great boon for Muslims in particular and others, in general. Aurangzeb is projected by such historians as the last defender of faith in India. He is seen as the embodiment of all virtues. Needless to say such a theory of history, though not at all sustainable by any serious historian, has done considerable damage to inter-communal relationship both before and after independence. In fact, it has been one of the favourite and most powerful tools to arouse communal feelings. No wonder, therefore, that after the Janata Party came to power, some individuals owing allegiance to the RSS were so keen for getting those history textbooks deleted from course which projected historical events from more objective point of view.

Mr. Vijay Prasad Chaudhary maintains that Dr. K. K. Datta of ICHR and some other members of this organisation were instrumental in getting these text-books withdrawn. Also, Shri Nanaji Deshmukh, a former Jana Sangh leader, wrote an anonymous note to the Prime Minister (Shri Morarjee Desai) urging him to ask the education department to withdraw these textbooks.<sup>13</sup> V. Shankar, the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary on 27th May, 1977 (no. P. 388/EM/76, P.S.

to Minister for Education PM's officer U/O No. 40 (227) 77-PM's dated 28.5.77) sent a note to the Education Minister which reads as follows:

I mentioned to the Minister for Education that PM had received some books along with notes on them and he felt that the books contained a very large element of controversial and biased material and the readers are likely to acquire a prejudiced view of Indian history.... PM thought that the Education Ministry might consider withdrawing these books from circulation, particularly those which are intended to be text-books in schools. He suggests that similar other publications that may have been issued by the appropriate authorities under the Education Ministry might be examined from the same point of view and suitable steps taken to ensure that readers do not get wrong ideas about the various elements of our history and culture.<sup>14</sup>

The text books which became subject of such heated controversy were Medieval India by R. Thapar, Modern India by B. Chandra, Freedom Struggle by B. De, A. Tripathi, and B. Chandra and Communalism and the Writing of Indian History by R. Thapar, H. Mukhia and B. Chandra. For the first time the historians who had written these text-books had questioned the over-simplified version of history treating religion as the most important motivating factor. The communalists' whole theory of history, however, is based on this assumption. Their wrath, therefore, against these text books was quite understandable, if not justified. Criticising those who attacked these text-books, S. Gopal says: "The specific flaws in the criticism levelled at these text-books rise from this approach (i.e. communal approach). If historical analysis were as easy as this, everyone can claim professional expertise and happily make authoritative

pronouncements. For example, that Aurangzeb was a bigoted and communal Muslim is thought to be beyond dispute, and scholars who do not describe him as such are blamed for secular partisanship. It is not grasped that the honest historian has to come to terms with the fact that there are a number of documents of Aurangzeb's reign referring to cash and land endowments made by him to individual Brahmins and to Hindu temples."<sup>15</sup>

We will examine this question in more details little later. It should be noted here that the historians who wrote these text-books wanted to emphasise the fact that there are more fundamental causes and deeper motives apart from religion which shape history. These historians basically questioned the very concept of periodisation of Indian history. "What is perhaps the most significant aspect of Mill's History of British India", says Romila Thapar commenting on the subtle mischief played by the British historians for using history for dividing the Indians, "was that in a sense it laid the foundation for a communal interpretation of Indian history and this provided the historical justification for the two-nation theory. He was the first historian to develop the thesis of dividing Indian history into three periods which he called Hindu civilisation, Muslim civilisation and British civilisation (interestingly enough, not Christian civilisation)."<sup>16</sup>

This concept of periodisation on the basis of religion has done, needless to say, a grave harm to, not only the cause of historiography, but also to the cause of healthy nation-building in India. Due to such simplistic concepts, religious factor, as if, has overwhelmed all other factors while writing Indian history. The charlatans like Oak, who have nothing but glorification

of Hindu culture, have further aggravated the problem. The Indian history, since the medieval ages, in the mind of a common man, has assumed the form of an incessant struggle between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslim rulers, according to this concept, fanatically adhered to their religion and persecuted Hindus and tried to decimate them in every possible way. Most of the Hindu regional governors or Rajas who rebelled against the central government, according to these communal historians, did so only to save Hinduism and the honour of the Hindus.

However, a perceptive historian knows that the motives of such rebellions were more complex than such simplistic approach assumes. Power struggle played more decisive part than religion. It is another matter that at times, in order to rally round the people, slogans having religious appeal were raised. But this should not be mistaken as fight for religion. If one avoids selective bias, it would not be difficult to find the instances of the Muslim provincial governors having rebelled against the Muslim rulers at the centre. In fact such rebellions would exceed those by the Hindu rulers against the Muslim rulers at the centre. Even Mehmud invaded the Hindu kingdoms of India after crushing or reducing to submission his co-religionist Afghans. Thus according to Firishta, "Mahmud, on the contrary, made furious war against the Afghans, putting to death all who did not acknowledge his supremacy."17

Thus more than religion what was important for Mahmud was absolute political power. In the struggle for power, combinations cutting across the religious barriers are not uncommon. Thus we find that Sheikh Hamid Lawi, the ruler of Multan, fought against Subuktigin, Mahmud's father, in the company of the Hindu kings.<sup>18</sup> We find such combinations cutting across the religious barriers throughout the medieval history



of India. One dynasty of the Muslim rulers made common cause with another dynasty of the Hindu rulers in order to oppose the particular Muslim dynastic rule at the centre. Thus we often find the Afghan Muslims fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Hindu soldiers to oppose the Moghul rule at the centre. Afghan nobles, for example, frequently fought along with the Hindu rebels to weaken to Mughal rule at the centre.

It is for this reason that the simplistic notion of periodisation introduced by Mill is not adequate. Challenging this concept of periodisation, Romila Thapar says: "It is assumed that the period from about 1000 B.C. to A.D. 1200 can be called Hindu because the ruling dynasties of the subcontinent subscribed to the Hindu religion. However even on the basis of dynastic history alone, this period cannot correctly be described as Hindu since there were a number of major dynasties which cannot be fitted into this description - the Mauryans the Indo-Greeks, the Shakas and the Kushanas. Many of their kings were Buddhists and although not antagonistic to the Hindus, they consciously identified themselves as Buddhists."<sup>19</sup> Similarly commenting on the notion of the Muslim period, she says: "Equally pertinent to our discussion is the question of the terminology which the Hindus used to distinguish themselves from the Muslims during the early period, i.e. from the seventh to the thirteenth century A.D. It is significant that today when we write about this period of history we bracket together the Arabs, the Turks and the Persians and describe them all by the single term, 'the Muslims'.<sup>20</sup>

Inter-dynastic power struggle prevailed in a monarchic and feudal system. It was never material whether the dynasties fighting for power belonged to the same religious group

or otherwise. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to name these periods after the ruling dynasties like Tughlaq period Mughal period and so on rather than calling it a Muslim period. It is also important to note that it is the socio-economic system which is more basic to understanding the history of the period than religion of the ruling dynasty. The socio-economic system until the final collapse of the Mughal rule was, one can say with some qualifications, feudal, in its broadest sense. Land was the main source of revenue and thus the surplus came from the exploitation of peasantry. Exploiters and exploited, rulers and the ruled may or may not have belonged to the same religious group. Exploitation or extraction of surplus was not dependent on religion. In fact even after the establishment of 'Muslim' rule, the lower functionaries responsible for collection of revenue and enforcing other administrative measures continued to be Hindus. Harbans Mukhia says:

Thus the lower rungs of the administration remained completely in the hands of the Hindus. It is the Hindus who thus helped the Turks establish their empire and they ran its administration for them. But for their support the Turks could not have been able to stay in India for any but a small length of time. Those Hindus became very much a part of the ruling class for they as much as the Turks were living off the surplus produce of the peasant. In fact historians like Barani and others use the term 'Hindu' only to refer to that section of the community which had become a part of the imperial ruling class as has been stated above.

Mr. Mukhia also draws our attention to another important aspect of struggle for power among different sections of the court nobility. This struggle also has often been misinterpreted

by the communalists. Annihilation of Hindus demanded by some Court historians, according to Mr. Mukhia does not refer to entire Hindu community as such but to that section which threatened the composition of nobility. "Now", says Mukhia, "the main threat to this status quo emanated from the Hindu rajas, raos, rais, Zamin-dars, etc. who were themselves a very significant part of the larger ruling class...when, therefore, the contemporary historians advocate the annihilation of the Hindus they desire the annihilation only of this section of the Hindu community rather than the entire community including the peasantry, the taxes paid by whom sustained the historians themselves alongwith the Hindu rajas and Muslim iqtadars in their luxurious life."<sup>22</sup>

Similarly the courtesans of foreign stock, in their attempt to monopolise power for themselves, did their best to stop the upward mobility of the native Muslims. Thus we see that Zia Barni, a chronicler and himself a high ranking noble pours contempt on the native Muslims of lower birth. He even calls these lowly placed Muslims as dogs and swines who deserve nothing better than the most elementary religious education to enable them to observe the essential rituals prescribed by Islam. In his Fatawa-i-Jahandari Zia Barani suggests that only persons of high birth, i.e. persons belonging to noble families (mostly of foreign origin) should be admitted into the ranks of imperial nobility thus guaranteeing a few noble families to retain their hold over the high offices in the imperial court. Thus most of the converted Muslims found their way blocked for upward mobility and met with nothing but contempt from their co-religionists belonging to the noble families and ruling classes.

Ala-ud-din Khalji did not show any hesitation in slaughtering thousands of neo-Muslims when they, discontented and frustrated at not getting better opportunities of employment, rebelled. "They were discontented and restless", says Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta, "because their aspirations for offices and other gains in their land of domicile had not been fulfilled, and they actually rebelled when 'Alā-ud-dīn's army was returning from the conquest of Gujarāt. The Sultan also dismissed all 'New Mussalmāns' from his service. This added to their discontent, and in despair they hatched a conspiracy to assassinate him. But this conspiracy was soon discovered and the Sultan wreaked a terrible vengeance on them by issuing a decree for their wholesale massacre. Thus between twenty and thirty thousand 'New Mussalmāns' were mercilessly slaughtered in one single day."<sup>23</sup>

It was in this spirit that Ala-ud-din had replied to Qazi Mughisud-din of Biyana when the later advocated ecclesiastical supremacy: "To prevent rebellion, in which thousands perish, I issue such orders as I conceive to be for the good of the State, and the benefit of the people. Men are heedless, disrespectful, and disobey my commands; I am then compelled to be severe to bring them into obedience. I do not know whether this is lawful or unlawful; whatever I think to be for the good of the State, or suitable for the emergency, that I decree."<sup>24</sup> Though other Muslim rulers may not have stated so bluntly as Ala-ud-din did, the fact remains that they also did not act strictly according to the religious injunctions. Even if they ever thought of doing so the compulsions of the situation did not permit them. Thus Jalaluddin Khalji says, rather helplessly, "Every day Hindus pass from below my palace sounding conch...and worship idols on the bank of Jamna and perform

other acts of polytheism right before our eyes."<sup>25</sup>

Thus it is obvious that even when the rulers like Jalaluddin Khalji felt indignant at the 'polytheist practices' of their Hindu subjects they found themselves helpless in putting them down as it would have been politically disastrous. The main concern of these rulers was to consolidate their hold over the seat of power and it was imperative for them to achieve this end to respect the religious sensibilities of Hindus who were in overwhelming majority. The most bigoted Muslim historian Zia-ud-din Barani in his Fatawa-i-Jahandari says indignantly:

If the Muslim kings, despite so much power and glory the Muslims have acquired in the world, keep on tolerating in the capital city itself and other Muslim towns spreading of traditions of non-believers and open worshiping of idols, giving concessions to kufir and kafiri (non-belief and non-believing) and (they) openly and without any fear practice their untrue faith (din-i-batil), they have idol-worshiping centres, and hordes of them go out dancing, singing, drum beating and merry-making and by paying a few tanka by way of jaziya they are allowed to practice their untrue faith, then how can true faith (din-i-haq i.e. Islam) acquire dominance over other religions?<sup>26</sup>

Zia-ud-din Barani either did not understand the compulsions of statecraft or else, was using the big stick of religion to prevent entry into the higher echelons of power of a section of aspiring Hindu nobles. Whatever the motivation of Zia-ud-din Barani the fact remains that even the most bigoted and most powerful of the Muslim rulers could not have dared to put restrictions on the practices of Hinduism. No Muslim king, not even Aurangzeb, could fiddle with the idea of proclaiming India a theocratic state. The

Muslim rulers confined themselves to enforcing certain provisions of the Shari'a on Muslims alone; in every other respect their rule was no different from other rulers. In respect of the Lodi kings P. Saran says, "The monarchy of the Lodis derived its authority from their tribal customs and organisation and not from the law of Islam to which in practice they seldom conformed. It had been a kind of hegemony exercised by the leading chieftain of the tribe, who happened to be most dominant or the most clever."<sup>27</sup>

It would, therefore, be wrong to say that the Muslim rule was Islamic rule in India. The Muslim rulers never tried to Islamise the country's administration. Either they followed the administrative pattern as they found it or introduced certain innovations in keeping with the indigenous requirements. P. Saran has convincingly argued in his The Provincial Government of the Mughals that two main factors influenced the growth of the Mughal local governments: (1) The aim and object of the sovereign, that is to say, the Mughal ruler's ideal of government. (2) The existing institutions of the country when its administration fell to the lot of the Mughal rulers.<sup>28</sup> About the grassroots level administration Saran observes: ....almost all other affairs pertaining to religion, charities, public works and education, were left to private initiative, because the socio-economic system of the country was so deep-rooted and worked so well in those days that it would have been unwise to interfere with it. Thus while the Mughal rulers did not initiate any positive schemes of serving their rural subjects, they at least extended their full patronage to the time-honoured institutions which had long served the land and were still good for service...Thus in a way the whole of the village local government became assimilated



into the general administrative system so as to create a harmonious machinery in which no part seemed isolated or to suffer from neglect."<sup>29</sup>

The bulk of the people lived in villages and, as pointed out above, at this level the administrative machinery not only followed the local pattern inherited from the past but also left the grassroots officials undisturbed. Thus the self-sufficient villages, where the mass of the Indian population lived, remained, by and large, unaffected by the political vicissitudes and the turbulence at the nerve-centre of power. Local Hindu chiefs, Zamindars, Rais, Thakurs and Chaudharis were instrumental in the revenue exactions for the central imperial authority. As long as they did this job well and paid the revenue to the imperial treasury, they were left undisturbed.<sup>30</sup> Prof. Toynbee feels that even at the upper echelon the Brahmins played an important role in running the Muslim empire. "Under all political regimes in India", says Toynbee, "one of the prerogatives of the Brahmins had been to serve as ministers of state. They had played this part in the Indic world before playing it in the affiliated Hindu society. The Mughal's Muslim fore-runners and the Mughals themselves in their turn had found it convenient to follow the example of the Hindu states which they were supplanting. Brahmin ministers and minor officials in the service of Muslim rulers made this alien rule less odious to Hindus than it otherwise would have been..."<sup>31</sup>

From the fore-going account it is reasonably clear that the Muslim rulers did not, to any appreciable degree, disturb the village autonomy where the majority of the people lived. However, the ruling classes (including both the Hindus as well as Muslims) extracted and lived off

the surplus from the toiling peasantry. The imperial glory was based on the sweat and blood of the peasants. The ruling classes, however, had their own mutual contradictions. Our historians, more often than not, pre-occupy themselves with the conflicts and contradictions of these ruling classes and project them as the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Such an approach has, besides over simplifying the complex historical process, completely distorted it. Religion, at the most could be one of the factors in this complex process but seen from the communalists' eyes it becomes the most important factor.

Some acts which apparently seem to be motivated by religious bigotry also are found to have other deeper motives as well. Take demolition of temples and mosques, for example. According to Mukhia "...demolition of temples in enemy-territory was symbolic of conquest by the Sultan. Incidentally, many Hindu rulers also did the same with temples in enemy-territory long before the Muslims had emerged as a political challenge to these kingdoms. Subhatavarman, the Parmara ruler (1193-1210 A.D.), attacked Gujarat and plundered all the temples at Dabhoi and Cambay."<sup>32</sup> We have earlier referred to the demolition of temples by Harsha, the ruler of Kashmir who did so to replenish his treasury. Imposition of jazya too was not always spurred by religious zeal. More often there were economic motives as well.

Aurangzeb is known to have tightened the measures to realize jazya with harshness. Aurangzeb's period was of deeper economic crisis. His predecessor Shahjahan had spent great deal on pomp and show and had depleted state treasury. The same could not be matched by increased surplus from the toiling peasantry. "The political problems of Aurangzeb",<sup>1</sup> says Satish Chandra, "were accompanied by a deepening

crisis of the Jāgīrdārī system which accentuated and, in turn, was accentuated by the political crisis."<sup>33</sup> The administrative measures taken by Aurangzeb to tide over the situation were found inadequate. According to Satish Chandra, "These administrative devices, while valuable in themselves, could not, however, help them to overcome the basic problem, viz. that the available social surplus was insufficient to defray the cost of administration, pay for wars of one type or another, and to give the ruling class a standard of life in keeping with its expectations."<sup>34</sup> It was in these circumstances that Aurangzeb levied more taxes including jazya from the Hindus. The rulers, while imposing oppressive taxes, sought to legitimise them and Aurangzeb found sanction for jazya in Islam.

How religion was used as per the convenience of the rulers is shown by another incident. When M. Amin Khan submitted a petition to Aurangzeb making a request for the post of the Bakhshī, on the ground that "both the Bakhshī-ships have been conferred on heretical demon-eating Shi'ahs and that he was a Sunni, Aurangzeb sternly rejected the petition<sup>35</sup> and wrote across it, "What connection have earthly affairs with religion? and what right have administrative works to meddle with bigotry? For you is your religion for me is mine. If this rule (suggested by you) were established it would be my duty to extirpate all (Hindu) Rajas and their followers."<sup>36</sup> Aurangzeb's remark may appear to be closer to the spirit of secularism. However, it would be wrong on our part to think by this casual remark that Aurangzeb upheld the principle of secularism. He was a clever politician and a shrewd administrator. The religious factor used or discarded depending on the situation. The primary objective of these rulers including Aurangzeb was not

to build a theocratic state but to consolidate their political power either by means of waging war or using other factors like diplomacy and religion.

For a fair assessment it would be necessary to keep the total situation in view rather than pick-up a few instances to pass judgement. Communal historians do just that i.e. select few incidents which fall into their pattern. Aurangzeb has been much maligned for his being orthodox Sunni Muslim which he certainly was. However, it would be equally wrong to deduce from this that his religious orthodoxy always coalesced with his political aims. Percival Spear is not far off the mark when he says that "The first Mughals were 'kings by profession' and Muslim by birth or circumstance."<sup>37</sup> His assessment of Aurangzeb is not far wrong when he says:

He differed from Akbar in consciously tolerating Hindus rather than treating them as equals, but his supposed intolerance is little more than a hostile legend based on isolated acts such as the erection of a mosque on a temple site in Benares.<sup>38</sup>

Here it would be interesting to quote from Bernier what Aurangzeb told his childhood mentor when he requested the emperor to reward him suitably for his services. He told him :

Admirable geographer! Deeply read historian! Was it not incumbent upon my preceptor to make me acquainted with the distinguishing features of every nation of the earth; its resources and strength; its mode of warfare, its manners, religion, form of government, and wherein its interests principally consist; and by a regular course of historical reading, to render me familiar with the origin of states, their progress and decline; the events, accidents or errors, owing to which such

great changes and mighty revolutions have been effected? Far from having imparted to me a profound and comprehensive knowledge of history of mankind, scarcely did I learn from you the names of my ancestors, the renowned founders of this empire.....A familiarity with the languages of surrounding nations may be indispensable in a king; but you would teach me to read and write Arabic, doubtless conceiving that you place me under an everlasting obligation for sacrificing so large a portion of time to the study of a language wherein no one can hope to become proficient without ten or twelve years of close application.....Can we repeat our prayers, or acquire a knowledge of law, and of the sciences, only through the medium of Arabic? May not our devotions be offered as acceptably, and solid information be communicated as easily, in our mother tongue?....If you had taught me that philosophy which adapts the mind to reason, and will not suffer it to rest satisfied with anything short of the most solid arguments, if you had inculcated lessons which elevate the soul and fortify it against the assaults of fortune, tending to produce that enviable equanimity which is neither insolently elated by prosperity nor basely depressed by adversity.<sup>39</sup>

This lengthy quotation has been given here to show that it would be wrong to think of Aurangzeb merely as a religious bigot who was after imposing the severest form of Islamic orthodoxy in India. Aurangzeb, above all, was an astute ruler and his actions - excluding of course, those of strictly personal variety - were mainly guided by his political interests. He never allowed religious considerations to interfere with political matters. The conflict between

Aurangzeb and Shivaji, like similar other conflicts between central monarch and provincial vassals, has been portrayed as a religious conflict. Nothing could be farther from truth. It was basically a struggle for power with no holds barred. While lionising of Shivaji by the Maratha historians is understandable fight as he did to fulfil Maratha aspirations and to achieve autonomy for them, it would be knave for a serious historians to be swayed by such prejudices. He has to objectively evaluate the character and nature of this conflict as also its genesis.

Shivaji undoubtedly fought for, in a way, liberation of the Maratha peasantry. He, thus, became the symbol of their aspirations. "...there is no doubt", says Sardesai, "that in his approach to the people he introduced the idea of the unity of the Marathi speaking people as a political entity for the achievement of Swaraj. The word Swaraj, which occurs in his letters and contemporary documents, was to be a Swaraj of Marathas, meaning the Marathi people."<sup>40</sup> Shivaji was a master strategist of guerrilla war. He challenged the might of Mughal empire with his small but highly compact and mobile army Marathas were hardy, capable, and rough-hewn people. The exploited Maratha peasantry rallied round Shivaji who symbolised their aspirations.<sup>41</sup> However, he was not fighting in defence of Hindu religion. His use of epithet like Go-Brahmana Pratipalak or his slogan of Hindupad Padshahi should not be misunderstood in this context. Such epithets or slogans were used by Shivaji not to rally round Hindus in defence of Hinduism against the onslaughts of Islam but to establish his caste equation vis-a-vis other upper Hindu castes and thus to legitimise his rule.

As a matter of fact the germs of conflict lay elsewhere. The Mughals had traditionally given much more importance to alliance with



the Rajputs than with the Marathas. Shivaji was aspiring for a status in the Mughal court which was higher not only to that granted to other Maratha sardars but also equal to that of Rajput sardars. Aurangzeb, within the framework of the system went farthest to accommodate the aspirations of Shivaji. He was given autonomy in his area and was exempted from personal service (except in the Deccan) - a privilege extended only to the Rana of Mewar, the most illustrious and the oldest ruling house in Rajputana. The manşab granted to Shivaji's son was also not a low one, being equal to that held by the Rana of Mewar. But it was not likely to satisfy Shivaji since similar ranks had already been granted to a number of Maratha chiefs regarded by Shivaji as inferior to him in status and power.<sup>42</sup>

It was difficult to grant more than this to Shivaji as the jagirdari system, as pointed out earlier, was undergoing a deep crisis. Furthermore, for strategic reasons the Mughals did not like emergence of a powerful Maratha state sprawling across important trade route. Satish Chandra says:

Thus, the main differences between Shivaji and Mughals centred around the territory and manşab which was to be granted to Shivaji, and later, around the claim for 'chauth and sardeshmukhi. For strategic and economic reasons, the Mughals were unwilling to see a powerful Maratha state arise on their southern border, on the flank of the vital trade route to the west coast. Financial stringency made it impossible to satisfy the ambition of Shivaji, except at the expense of the Deccan states.<sup>43</sup>

Aurangzeb and Shivaji were not fighting for defence of their respective religions is also proved by the fact that both had chosen allies

from the other religious groups respectively. While Aurangzeb's army sent to fight Shivaji was being commanded by Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur, Shivaji had the backing of the Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda and other Muslims opposed to the Mughal rule. Also, as Aurangzeb had to give grants to some Hindu temples despite his personal bigotry as a political expedient, Shivaji also had to show tolerance towards Muslims to win their support. There were in Aurangzeb's employment some of Shivaji's relatives like his son-in-law Achlaji, one of his uncles Arjuji etc.<sup>44</sup> Similarly there were some Muslims in Shivaji's employment. In fact, even Shivaji's army and navy had a good number of trusted and prominent Muslim officers.<sup>45</sup> In view of these facts it would be utterly wrong to project the conflict between Shivaji and Aurangzeb as religious conflict as sought to be done by the communalists.

Thus we see from the foregoing discussion that the communal historians have not only misinterpreted our past history but have also oversimplified it by singling out religion as the central motivating force. History, as we have seen, is far more complex and barring a few exceptions religion has hardly played the role the communalists assign to it. Apparently purely religious acts like demolition of temples or mosques too have far deeper motives other than those of religious. In fact in the final analysis important historical events are determined by number of complex factors like geopolitical, socio-economic, religio-political and several others. It is different thing that in a particular instance one or the other factor (and in some cases even religious factor) might play more decisive role than other factors. Thus each important historical event must be placed properly within totality of the situation.

History has often been written to suit one or the other interest: religious, national, racial or cultural. Often, tensions and conflicts within an 'in' group is minimised (or even ignored) as compared to an 'out' group. The group may be religious, national, racial, regional or cultural. History thus can be used not only for glorification of past but also as a powerful motivating factor in a fight with the 'out' group. Such a use of history may be good or bad - it essentially becomes an ethical question - but such a use cannot be justified on its own grounds (i.e. historical grounds) as it is bound to distort and mutilate history. I am certainly not advocating here a positivist or even purely empirical approach to history. Certain ideological biases, subtly, if not manifestly, are bound to play some role, even decisive in some cases. But such a bias, if allowed to ride over empirical truth, the result will be distortion. A historian, in order to be truthful, has to give primacy to empirical truth as the truth, above all, is conformity to fact. Of course, he can enrich and deepen the understanding of empirical facts by putting them in his ideological perspective but, and it is very important to remember, without injuring the complexity and richness of various factors.

While in certain sections communal interpretation of history has been encouraged, Marxist interpretation has been denounced with full blooded vigour. I, for one do not hold brief for crude and vulgar application of Marxism but it cannot be denied that Marxism has greatly enriched our understanding of history and has been a major influence to the world over. Marxist methodology can be highly useful if employed to understand the conflicts, tensions and contradictions of medieval Indian history. "Without some Indian scholars writing serious Marxist

history", says Sarvepalli Gopal, "Indian historiography would be much the poorer."<sup>46</sup> Such serious Marxist history have begun to be written in India and it would certainly enrich the Indian historiography. For, much too long, Indian history has been under the sway of religion. It is high time we take cognizance of the multiplicity of causes determining the shape of historical events as the fact remains, says E. H. Carr that the historian must work through the simplification, as well as through the multiplication, of causes. History, like science, advances through this dual and apparently contradictory process.<sup>47</sup>

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## Chapter VI

### RELIGIO-CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

#### Syncretic Approach and Ideational Tensions

Although there was acute struggle for power **among the** different sections of ruling classes which was often given communal colour as we saw in the last chapter, at the level of the masses, there took place, throughout the medieval ages, a gradual process of synthesis having far reaching implications in the world of religious ideas. Even at the level of ruling classes there was, despite their mutual struggles and conflict, a synthesis in cultural sphere. It is in this sense that the culture of ruling classes during the medieval period has been referred to as a composite culture. This synthesis was reflected in almost all matters i.e. linguistic, sartorial, gastronomical, architectural, creative arts etc. This synthesis was no mere superficial. It had profound influences on the Indian cultural scene. Normally such influences have been traced in the northern and central regions. Some scholars have maintained that south remained more puritan in this respect and did not imbibe much from the Muslim culture. But it is only a partial truth. It is true that the north was the bastion of Muslim power and hence left in that region much deeper influences. However, it does not mean that south escaped such influences. South of Vindhya

right from Maharashtra to Bijapur and Golconda on the one hand and, on the other, Tamil Nadu and Kerala too imbibed quite a bit from the Islamic and Muslim practices.

The communal historians while seeing too much in the mutual struggle for power and conflicts and tensions of the composite ruling classes have totally ignored, or deliberately underplayed, the contribution of this cultural synthesis which has gone long way in enriching our cultural heritage. The mainstream of our cultural heritage cannot be conceived of without the confluence of Islamic and Hindu thought. Dr. Tarachand maintains that "The influence exercised by Muslim mystics and religious thought inspired a number of reform movements among Hindus, which spread over the whole of the country and profoundly affected Hindu outlook upon life and Hindu modes of thought. Sufism played the most important role in working out the great synthesis. We will examine the role of the Indian Sufis at some length in this respect.

The role of Sufis must be understood in proper social context in order to better understand and appreciate their valuable contribution. Analysing the social role of the Sufis K. Damodaran says :

Sufism was a spiritual reflection of the growing social conflicts. The Sufis disliked the vices and luxurious living of the upper classes, which violated the Quranic precepts of simplicity and the brotherhood of man. They saw that Islam was becoming more and more subordinate to the state, and that the ulema, the kazis and the mullas representing religious orthodoxy were exploiting the Quranic doctrines to uphold and justify a social system based on oppression. But, at the same time, they found themselves in a helpless position,

unable to mobilise the people and fight for justice and the purity of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

The Sufi movement among Muslims and the Bhakti movement among the Hindus had its social roots in the exploitative system. The rigid orthodoxies of both the religions sought state patronage and got it in varying degrees as the ruling classes needed the support of religion to reinforce their rule. However, it should not be deduced from this that there was perfect equation between the rulers and the respective religious orthodoxies. Quite often, different sections of the ruling classes utilised religion for their own ends. In such a situation the masses turned to the deviant forms of religion represented by Sufism and Bhakti movement. These two deviant forms reflected the popular aspirations and became social protest movements. It has often been maintained that Islam being a doctrinaire religion there was no meeting ground between it and Hinduism. This is true but only in respect of Islamic orthodoxy in its pristine pure form. But such an orthodox doctrinaire form of religion as professed by the 'ulama (although not practiced even by them with all its rigidities, I dare say) had never been the religion of the Muslim masses. Before we deal with the syncretic forms of religion it would be enlightening to throw some light on the socio-economic milieus of both the religions so as to enable us to understand them better.

Islam originated and even developed in an urban and commercial milieu of the then two major towns of Arabia namely Mecca and Medina.<sup>3</sup> G.E. Von Gruenbaum says very rightly:

Every civilisation and every age favour a limited number of human types for whom they will provide the fullest means of self-

realisation, while denying it to an even larger number for whose peculiar gifts the prevailing pattern affords no socially meaningful use. The athlete and senator, idolised in antiquity, are unknown in Islam; the peasant, idealised by romanticism as the repository of genuine folk culture, is held in low esteem by Islam and never attracts the attention of the learned. Islam prefers the sedentary to the nomad, the city-dweller to the villager. It accepts the artisan but respects the merchant. The sword ranks lower than the pen.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, every religion or an ideology is an answer to the basic maladies of the situation within which it arises. (It may either seek to materially alter the situation to remove the maladies like Islam in Arabia or may only seek to sublimate it by encouraging asceticism or renunciation like Christianity or Buddhism). In pre-Islamic Arabia there was a basic malaise as the settled life in towns like Mecca or Medina was suffering from the paradoxical situation that the economic and social organisation had been developed under the shadow of the norms and sanctions of the desert. Superior to their Bedouin neighbours in every respect of material civilisation, the town dwellers remained subservient to nomad culture patterns in terms of human ideal as well as of what minor intellectual or artistic aspirations they would support.<sup>5</sup> Islam, thus, was born as a consequence of transformation of nomadic into urban culture. Its basic characteristics were piety, sense of duty and practical rationalism. There was no place for elaborate rituals, ecstatic trances and emotional states as these characteristics are found in peasant societies. The petty bourgeois strata of urban centre are a practical lot.<sup>6</sup>

Hinduism, on the other hand, has been less doctrinaire and more amorphous sort of religion

whose evolution began in the pastoral culture. Hinduism, unlike Islam, evolved over a long period of time. In fact, some scholars think that a part of the Rigveda hymns belonged to the period between 1200 B.C. and 1000 B.C. and the later portions between 1000 B.C. and 800 B.C. According to S. Radhakrishnan, there is evidence to indicate with some certainty that the hymns were current fifteen centuries before Christ.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, like Islam, Hinduism did not grow in one locale only, it evolved all over the subcontinent from Assam to Sindh, on the one hand, and Punjab to Kanya Kumari, on the other. It went on assimilating various cults prevalent in these regions. Thus according to D. D. Kosambi:

Like avatars of Vishnu-Narayana, the various Krishnas, gathered many different worships into one without smashing or antagonising any. Krishna, the mischievous and beloved shepherd lad, is not incompatible with Krishna the extraordinarily virile husband of many women. His 'wives' were originally local mother goddesses, each in her own right. The 'husband' eased the transition from mother right to patriarchal life, and allowed the original cults to be practiced on a subordinate level.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we see that space as well as time-wise, Hinduism's growth has very large spread. Its growth, moreover, accompanied many changes in techniques of production from nomadic-pastoral economy of the second millenium B.C. to settled agrarian economy of the later period. These changes are reflected in the growth of the thought-system as well from the Vedic hymns and rituals to the Vedantic philosophy of Sankracharya and others.<sup>9</sup> We can, thus see a striking contrast between Hinduism and Islam. As against

Hinduism, Islam grew in one locale (the Arabian Peninsula, that too in two major towns of Mecca and Medina) and over a short span of time (about 22 years, to be precised). Unlike Hinduism, Islam is, thus, a doctrinaire religion. Modifying or rejecting any doctrine came to be condemned as heresy. Hinduism, on the other hand, for the reasons explained above, remained amorphous, non-doctrinaire agglomeration of bewildering number of cults. There are no rituals and no priesthood in Islam, whereas Hinduism comprises both. Both the religions, thus, to many scholars and observers, appear to be irreconcilable.

It is for this reason that it has often been argued, not without justification of course, that although Hinduism could absorb many other alien ideas and ideologies, it failed to assimilate Islam on account of its exclusivistic nature. However, it is true only at the level of 'ulama who tried to preserve rather jealously its pristine purity. But at the level of the masses 'ulama's doctrinaire rigidity was hardly operative. Number of heretical cults, openly deviating from the official doctrines, patronised by the Sufi saints, flourished at the level of the masses. Oppressed and exploited masses, neither had heart nor the necessary intellectual equipment to grasp the intricacies of theological doctrines. Personalised god offered them by the Sufi saints served their spiritual needs better. The Hindu masses on the other hand could hardly grasp the subtleties of Vedanta philosophy. Ecstatic Bhakti songs composed by the popular saints meant much more to them than its wry intellectual exercises. A careful observer can find many common features between Islamic mysticism and various Bhakti cults as they influenced each other immensely.<sup>10</sup>

Thus at this level Hinduism and Islam influenced each other considerably. They came close



to each other in some respects while remained closed to each other in some other respects. This process began much before the establishment of Muslim rule in India through cultural contacts which ante-date the Muslim rule. Let us begin with the Abbasid period. During eighth and ninth centuries the Abbasid empire was at the height of its glory. Unlike the early period of Islam which was austere and simple due to paucity of resources, the Abbasid period saw the splendours of rich culture as during that period enough social surplus (both through trade and exploitation of peasantry and also to some extent through the exploitation of slave-labour as well) was available to look after a class of scribes and intellect-workers. Among them there was hunger for knowledge and all possible foreign sources were tapped as much as was not available indigenously in the then Arab world.

Being at the zenith of their glory the Muslims, moreover, did not feel threatened in accepting or assimilating foreign ideas. It was during this period that books from various countries, specially Greece, Persia and India were translated into Arabic in a big way. The Arabs, as H. G. Wells puts it, became "foster fathers" of knowledge, if not its originators. It seems some Indian monks too had an access to the Islamic empire (the evidence for this is rather scanty, of course). Jahiz who was a brilliant essayist (d AD 866) pictures very graphically the wandering monks who could have belonged neither to Christianity nor to Islam. He calls them Zindīq monks. One of the anecdotes told of the beggar lives of these monks goes so far as to say that one of them preferred to bring suspicion of theft upon him-

self, and endure maltreatment, rather than betray a bird which had swallowed the pearl, because he did not wish to be the cause of the death of a living being.

If these people were not actually Indian Sadhus or Buddhist (or Jain?) monks, feel Murray. T. Titus, they were at least men who were following the example and method of the latter.<sup>11</sup> He also tells us:

Mention should be made of Buddhist works, which were translated in the second century of the Islamic era, largely under the Abbasid caliphs, Mansur (AD 754-775) and Harun (AD 786-809). These were rendered into Arabic partly from the Persian or Pahlavi translations, while others were translated direct from the Sanskrit.<sup>12</sup>

Among these translations of Indian books "we find an Arabic version of the Balauhar wa Budasaf (Barlaam and Josaphat, which is the story of the conversion of an Indian prince, Josaphat, that is, Buddha, by the ascetic Barlaam), and also a Budd-Book."<sup>13</sup> D. D. Kosambi has also referred to this:

For that matter, the Christian saint's legend that goes under the title "Barlaam and Josaphat", is a direct adaptation of the Buddha's life story. The Barmecides, an important ministerial family under the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid of Baghdad (immortalised in the Arabian Nights) were once the hereditary abbots (paramaka - paramukh) of the Buddhist monastery of Nao-behar. As new converts to Islam, they came under suspicion of retaining some heretical doctrines from their old religion.<sup>14</sup>

It may also be mentioned here that there was direct contact with Buddhist monasteries in Eastern Persia and Transoxiana, which were in existence and flourishing in Balkh long before

the eleventh century, when the extended Muslim conquest of India began.<sup>15</sup> We find that on advanced philosophic level the influences were felt in the sphere of Sufism. Nicholson thus tells us that the idea of fana (absorption or passing away) into Universal Being is certainly of Indian origin. He further tells us that, while its (doctrine of fana fi Allah - passing away into God) first great exponent was the Persian mystic, Bayazid of Bistam (d AD 875), it is quite probable that he might have received it from his teacher, Abu 'Ali of Sind, who may have himself become indoctrinated with Vedantic teachings.<sup>16</sup>

Hallaj was one of the most important 'revolutionary mystic poet' of Iran who deeply influenced the later Persian and Urdu poetic tradition. 'Ali Mir Fitrous, a scholar of Iran has convincingly shown in his book on the revolutionary mystic poet<sup>17</sup> that he came to India and was greatly influenced by the Indian thought. He refutes the French scholar Louis Massignon's thesis developed in his book Martyr Mystique de l'Islam that he came to India primarily to preach Islam.<sup>18</sup> Mir Fitrous instead develops the theme that Hallaj came to India to learn and imbibe from its philosophical thought and he traces in this tenth-century mystic poet the traces of Charvaka materialism as well as those of Zen Buddhist philosophy. He also quotes the mystic's verses to prove influence of Charvaka philosophy on his creative thought.<sup>19</sup>

It is certain that the mysticism as it earlier developed in Islam was under the influence of neo-platonic theory of Pantheism. There was no concept of absorption into the universal being whereas it had existed in the Vedantic philosophy in India. In fact, merging into Brahman-s the highest aim of soul. One cannot be very

definite whether it was really borrowed from the Vedantic philosophy, but a strong probability does exist. Similarly another eminent scholar of Islamic culture in India, Dr. Tarachand, thinks that Sankaracharya in expounding his philosophy of advaita was influenced by the Islamic concept of Tawhid, unity of God-hood. Here again though it is difficult to be certain but it appears to be a plausible hypothesis.

It is also known that a condensed version of Mahabharata was translated into Arabic from an Indian language and from it into Persian in 417/1026.<sup>20</sup> Al-Biruni, the great Arab genius, "had a correct knowledge of the national epic or Mahabharata, called by him Bharata, which has a historical core. An analysis of what he has written about the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and a comparison between the two, leads to the conclusion that his knowledge of the contents of the later was more accurate than that of the former. He knew that the author of the Mahabharata was Vyasa, the son of Parasara."<sup>21</sup> Al-Biruni was highly respected scholar and was widely read in the medieval world of Islam. His writings have influenced many other Muslim scholars.

In 1258 AD, Baghdad was sacked by Tartars and, in senses more than one, it became a terminal point in the thought world of Islam. The Islamic empire was destroyed and Muslims lost their self-confidence and developed a deep sense of insecurity. Liberalism now onwards was at a discount, and revivalism became quite pronounced. There was now a tendency to salvage orthodoxy which, during the heyday of Islamic empire, was inundated in various heterodox trends that had emerged under the influence of Greek, Persian and Indian thought. Thus, by the time Islam spread to India, a shadow had already fallen on it. It was not only past

the prime of its youth and had lost its full-blooded vigour but was also enveloped by decadent practices. The energies of theologians of Islam were concentrated on conserving rather than cross-fertilising. However, when Islam percolated down to the masses, theologians could not prevent it from acquiring local hue. Translated from Arabia via Persia and Central Asia, its roots were now in the Indian soil.

Many Sufi orders came into existence which had close contacts with the social elites as well as the poor masses. In fact, according to F. Mujtabai, an Iranian scholar, "Sufism, as a moral and spiritual way of life, and as a current of thought with universal appeal, found in India as exceptionally congenial ground for its growth and spread. Indian mind, from the earliest phases of its history, had a strong tendency towards mysticism, and almost all the mystical tenets that developed in other religious and philosophical schools, find their clearest expressions in the Vedic and Upanisadic literature of ancient India."<sup>22</sup> Mujtabai rightly points out in this connection:

Hinduism and Islam, strictly bound by the tenets of their own scriptures, had no points of contact with each other. They were like the two banks of a river ever separated by the stream that flows between them. Who was to build the connecting bridge? The orthodox Hindus as well as the orthodox Mohammedans were unfit for this task, and it was left to the free spirits and lovers of humanity from both these groups, the Hindu bhaktas and the Mohammedan Sufis to devote their lives to the construction of the bridge.<sup>23</sup>

After the advent of Islam in India there was continuous struggle between the orthodox ulama and the mystic saints. The 'ulama wanted the

Islamic shari'a to be followed rigidly and condemned any deviation from it as unpardonable heresy. The mystic saints on the other hand respected the local religious and philosophical thoughts and many of them even tried, to different degrees of success, to evolve syncretic systems. Qazi Javed of the Punjab University, Lahore, also points out, that the objective conditions in the subcontinent helped this process (of synthesis) as the mystic rebels against the (Islamic) orthodoxy were close to the Hindu esoteric thought (*sirriyat*) and to a great extent were its product. The thought-system of Shaikh Abu Yazid Bistami which was influenced by the Vedas and Upanishads, is the clean example of this process.<sup>24</sup>

The Sufis adopted many local practices and made them an integral part of their cult. Some of these *sūfī* saints were half sadhus. They spoke local dialects and, if I may be permitted to use a rather controversial term, Indianised Islam. Here I would like to quote an interesting passage from a book written by Khwaja Hasan Nizami who himself was a *sūfī* belonging to a very famous sufi school. He says:

According to the custom of Sufis, it was necessary to celebrate the death anniversary of Hazrat Khawaja Ajmeri. The elderly disciples (*mashaikh*) wanted neo-Muslims to take part in it and their participation should also impress non-Muslims. And, by contemplating over the nature and habits of Hindus, they had understood that they were very fond of rituals of their taste. The consolidation of Islam among them was possible only by suitably adopting those rituals which were prevalent among them (i.e. neo-Muslims) during the days of idol-worship so that they do not consider Islam to be alien to their taste and way of life.<sup>25</sup>



Such Sufi practices were not necessarily confined to north India. Such Sufi schools came into existence throughout India including the west-coast (Gujarat) and south. Quite a few Sufi saints belonging to various orthodox and heterodox sects of Islam were engaged in proselytising activities right from 10th century onwards, specially in Gujarat. Nizami, in his said book, has given description of many such Sufi-sects engaged in such activities. He describes various local Hindu customs and rituals so Islamicised. Even some songs on the pattern of local folk-songs were composed and were sung to the accompaniment of indigenous drums while carrying flag and sandal in the procession to the holy tomb. Sandal, like the idol in a temple, was used to wash the grave of the Shaikh. Large number of people, Hindus as well as Muslims, joined the procession singing these songs. The green thread worn by the visitors to the tomb, he tells us, was an imitation of the sacred thread worn by the Hindus.<sup>26</sup>

Hasan Nizami, records many devices used to convert the Hindu masses to the faith of Islam. He discovered a sect called Pranami Panth in Gujarat whose followers are half-Hindu and half-Muslim. Their holy scripture is called Qulzum Sarup. Its language is a mixture of Arabic, Sindhi, Hindi, Gujarati etc. Krishna and Muhammad are both revered as the Prophets of God. The book gives description of Muhammad's ascension (Me'raj), heavens, hell, day of resurrection, etc. This book is kept on the pulpit and visitors to the shrine bow their heads before it. Pranami Panthis personify God saying that the Prophet in his heavenly sojourn talked to God in person. They wear sacred thread, apply tilak (vermillion) on their fore-heads and grow a long tuft of hair on their heads. They consider

idol-worshippers as infidels (kafir)<sup>27</sup>.

Another Sufi saint, Imam Shah, in Gujarat employed the gradual method of converting local population to Islam and used Hindu idiom to explain certain concepts of Islam. Thus, in a poem, he says to his followers:

Earlier Lord Krishna spoke in nectar-like tone, now the knowledge comes through the medium of Arabic. Krishna used to apply tilak to his forehead and now in our age he has grown beard. Earlier he (Krishna) used to wear dhoti and now he wears cap and kurta. Krishna had appeared in the guise of Brahmin and now he has appeared in the Arab country. His name was Krishna before and Muhammad in our age.<sup>28</sup>

It was much easier for the people of India who, for ages had belief in the theory of transmigration, to accept Islam couched in that idiom. Some peripheral and heterodox sects of Islam in Gujarat like the Bohra and Khoja (both Shi'a Isma'ili sects) successfully employed such concepts to attract more and more people thoroughly immersed in native traditions towards them. Another interesting example of syncretic thought is that of the Bohra saint-poet Syedi Sādiq 'Alī. Syedi Sādiq 'Alī wrote didactic poetry in Gujarati and employed local idiom and many Sanskrit words like Sad Guru etc.<sup>29</sup> He also employed the concept of transmigration in this respect.

Now every student of Islam knows that there is no place for the concept of transmigration in Islam. Although the Dawoodi Bohras are highly Islamised sect they could not escape the influence of Indian thought. Thus the Bohra Saint-poet says in some of his verses:

Whosoever is born as an awtar of man is destined to die. The dark night follows the moonlit night. Among all the awtars, the awtar of

man is the highest awtar. The awtar of those who crawl on earth (like reptiles) is the lowest. The lowest of the awtar is that of snake and scorpion. Those devils who on hearing the truth used to plug their ears, descend in that awtar.<sup>30</sup>

There is unmistakable imprint of Hindu thought on these verses. One would not find such concepts in whole of Islamic literature either in Arabic or Persian. This concept is typically Hindu concept that depending on the good or evil deeds, a man descends or ascends by degrees into lower or higher form of life. Those who commit gravest sins will be born as reptiles. The poet is clearly under the influence of the theory of transmigration of souls. In the verses which follow these, he does try to distinguish between the Hindu concept of rebirth and that of his gurus i.e. Imams and da'is, but the difference is merely of words. In essence the theory is same and a student of comparative religion can clearly discern the influence of Hinduism on the religious beliefs of the Bohras. Though Maulana Rum in his Mathnavi M'anavi also mentions gradual change in forms of life from lower to higher, but it is concept of evolution rather than that of awtar or transmigration. As against this what Sadiq 'Ali, the Bohra saint, says is more akin to the Hindu theory of karma according to which a person goes through lower or higher form of life depending on his deeds in the previous birth.<sup>31</sup>

The Nizaris (a sub-sect of the Isma'ili Shi'as popularly known in India as the Khoja Muslims) also adopted purely Indian idiom and religious concepts for preaching their faith in India. Pir Imamuddin, one of the Nizari missionaries of Gujarat founded Imamshahi Sat Panth (i.e. The True Path). The Nizari Da'is, in the guise of

popular Hindu saints ambulated around singing bhajans and giving people the good tidings of two new awtars of Kal-yug i.e. Hazrat Muhammad and Hazrat Ali. The conversion of the local people to the new faith used to be kept secret and the proselytised were called Guptis (i.e. hidden). These Guptis were required to perform all the Hindu rituals and only secretly practiced their new faith. In some of the sacred books of the Khoja Muslims it is even maintained that Om is 'Ali and 'Ali is Om.<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that there is close resemblance between the way 'Ali is written in Arabic script and Om is written in Sanskrit and the Nizaris write 'Ali, with little modification in their sacred books so as to look like Om.<sup>33</sup>

We have discussed at some length various syncretic movements along western coast which was not a strong centre of Muslim power. It does not mean that in north, which was the citadel of Muslim power, only Orthodoxy ruled. In that region too, various syncretic trends existed and flourished. From the beginning of Jahangir's reign, there arose, no doubt, a powerful revivalist movement launched by Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Many Muslim nobles supported this movement to safeguard their own interests. Sirhindi felt that the philosophy of Wahdat al-Wujūd (pantheism) has compromised Islamic monotheism and stamped on it alien influences. "Thus, in the first place", says Faruqi, "the Mujaddid brought the Islamic kingdom of India back to Islam. In the second place, he induced the divines of Islam to the study of Qur'an and Hadith, which they had neglected so long. In Tasawwuf or mysticism he revolutionized the doctrine of Islamic mystics, questioned their pantheism, and brought them round to Ittiba'-i-Sunnat (following the example of the Prophet).<sup>34</sup>

However, it is an interesting episode of the

Muslim spiritual history of this sub-continent that when the religious orthodoxy was revived, the Qadiriya school of mysticism raised the banner of revolt against it. This school of mysticism has been the most popular among the Asian Sunnites.<sup>35</sup> Shah Husain of Lahore, a Punjabi Sufi poet, belonged to the Qadiriya school who revolted against the orthodoxy. In the Punjabi Sufi poetry he is the most important poet after Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar. Shah Husain, through his charming poetry, preached his ideas based on humanism, deviation from orthodoxy, strong disapproval of divisions on the basis of religion, search for the meaning of life etc. Bulleh Shah (1680 to 1757 AD), another Punjabi Sufi poet who rose to prominence after Shah Husain, goes even further than him in this respect. Bulleh Shah was a truly pantheistic poet and was disciple of a well-known intellectual and thinker of 17th century India 'Inayat Shah Qadri. 'Inayat Shah was greatly interested in Hindu philosophy and Dara Shikoh was attracted towards him for this reason.<sup>36</sup>

Another remarkable person of the Qadiriya school of free-thinkers was Miyan Muhammad Mir. He greatly influenced the thinking of Prince Dara Shikoh. Born in 1550 AD he settled in Lahore in 1575 and achieved great eminence in Islamic theology as well as mystic practices. Even the great Islamic scholars and mystics of his time could hardly dare to speak in his presence.<sup>37</sup> He was great admirer of Ibn 'Arabi, the founder of the philosophy of pan-theism as far as the Islamic Sufi traditions are concerned. Miyan Mir was also a pantheist and had taken deep interest in vedantic philosophy. In fact he had worked out a synthesis of Islamic Sufi traditions and the Vedanta philosophy. The orthodox mullahs were against him and often he had

to enter into argument with Mullah 'Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti and others of his ilk to defend his syncretic philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Miyan Mir had very cordial relations with many Hindu and Sikh scholars of his day. Prince Dara Shikoh admired him so much that he used to call him Bārī Ta'ālā (an epithet of God).<sup>39</sup>

Prince Dara Shikoh, whom Shah Jehan held in high esteem and wished to succeed him, is a unique personality and a product of the confluence of Islam and Hinduism. In him the syncretic thought reached its climax. He knew Sanskrit very well<sup>40</sup> and may have learnt this language from the Hindu scholars of Benaras with whom he had very close relations. Dara Shikoh was greatly interested in Hindu philosophy and religion and even rendered some of the Hindu scriptures in Persian. He was also close to Christian priests. He had also studied Semite holy scriptures. He can thus be regarded as a real free thinker Sufi who had no place whatsoever among the orthodox circles. He never formally renounced Islam but believed in the unity of all religions and was interested in discovering the common basis of all the religions. Dara Shikoh had very close relations with a Hindu Yogi called Baba Lal Das. He used to discuss with him mainly the theological problems.<sup>41</sup>

His syncretic thought has found expression in his book Majma'ul Bahrain (Confluence of Two Seas). As is obvious from the name itself, Dara Shikoh has tried, in this book, to harmonise the belief-systems of the two great religions namely Hinduism and Islam. This book is the proof, if any proof is needed, of a well pronounced trend of liberal and free-thinking among an important section of Muslim divines and scholars during the medieval ages in India. These mystic saints, divines and Muslim scholars not only showed deep reverence towards the Hindu scrip-



tures but also tried to establish a common denominator between the two religions. For them the unity of all faiths was the basic ingredient of their faith. Dara Shikoh translated into Persian some selected chapters of Upanishads with the help of Hindu scholars of Benaras and published it under the title of Sirr-i-Akbar (The Great Mystry). In his preface to this book he has traced the evolution of his religious thought. It is interesting to note that the book begins not with the usual Muslim formula 'In the name of God...' etc. but with the image of Lord Ganesha as is the Hindu practice. Perhaps this was thought to be more appropriate by him as the book contains chapters from Upanishads. Dara Shikoh considered the Hindu Scriptures as much of heavenly origin as the holy Koran itself. He never hesitated to acknowledge this publicly.

Dara Shikoh has been called by some scholars as 2nd Akbar. Akbar, they argue, founded Din-e-Ilahi to synthesise the common elements of various faiths, including Hinduism. So did Dara Shikoh. But there is an essential difference between the two attempts. Ghalib, the 19th century great Urdu poet while discussing about Akbar's Din-e-Ilahi with one of his disciples Pandit Sheo Narayan says: The religions founded by the kings have nothing to do with humanism. There were Akbar's political considerations in it (i.e. Din-e-Ilahi). It was not ecstasy of Buddha but political tactics of a king. There is truth in what Ghalib says. (Ghalib himself was believer in Wahdat-i-Adyān i.e. unity of all faiths). Though Akbar had inclination towards establishing a common base for different faiths and he took part in discussions held among the representatives of various faiths. But it is also an undeniable fact that Akbar did have political considerations in starting the new faith for

which he could not gather many followers. The search for truth cannot be polluted with selfish motives. The sanctity of truth cannot go at ease with profanity of this-worldliness. Dara Shikoh was certainly not motivated by any such consideration. On the contrary it became a political liability for him. It was his inner urge and intellectual search for truth and his deep interest in metaphysical and theological problems which led him on to this path. For him it was as much intellectual venture as a spiritual experience.

The Mughal rulers were liberal and tolerant, one can hardly deny. In a multi-religious society, no other policy can work better in the long run. The question then arises, for a social scientist as to why after Shahjehan the liberal trend declined. The answer lies as much in the social factors as in personal preferences. As pointed out earlier, after Shahjehan the Mughal rule came under strain and faced political as well as economic crisis which it was not easy to resolve. With the deposition of Shahjehan there started an acute struggle for power between his sons. This made some provincial governors bold enough to challenge the central authority and the nobility was divided in its loyalty to different claimants to the throne. When the Muslim nobility felt threat to its position it sought refuge in orthodoxy. Earlier too a section of Muslim nobility had welcomed the revivalist movement of Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi. When the feeling of insecurity became stronger Sirhindi's movement found more followers and thus orthodoxy began to consolidate its position once again among the ruling circles.

It is interesting to draw a parallel between the decline of the Abbasid rule in Arabia and the decline of Mughal rule in India. During the heydays of Abbasid empire the Muslims welcomed

with an open arm the Greek, Syriac, Persian and Hindu sources of thought. Bait al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) was founded to collect books from various sources and to translate them into Arabic. Various Islamic sects like the Isma'ilis and the M'utazila sprang up which worked out synthesis of Islamic doctrines with Greek reason and metaphysical propositions. However, the liberal trends came to an end with the decline of the Abbasid rule. One of the Abbasid rulers during the period of decline al-Mutawakkil was a bigot and persecuted all those who deviated from orthodox positions. In a way he could be compared with Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal ruler. It was no mere coincidence that al-Mutawakkil and Aurangzeb both were products of the declining periods of the Muslim rule. Again, it was not inherent orthodoxy of Islam that produced al-Ghazālī at the terminal point of the Abbasid rule and a number of brilliant philosophers who accepted the supremacy of intellect over faith during its zenith.

As al-Ghazālī (himself a great scholar and brilliant thinker) rejected supremacy of intellect and subordinated it to the domain of faith, Sirhindi in India resented latitudinarian attitude of mystics and other liberals and their non-chalance towards Shari'a and vigorously re-asserted the supremacy of Islamic orthodoxy. Sirhindi's movement was thus analogous to that of al-Ghazali with the only difference that when he asserted the supremacy of faith over the intellect and that of Shari'a over the mystic philosophy of Wahdat al-Wajud (pantheism) the Muslim power in India was not on its decline. However, it is also to be remembered that Sirhindi's revivalist movement became politically significant only when the Muslim empire faced more and more insecurity due to various developments.

Aurangzeb's orthodoxy thus should not be viewed out of social context of his time.

Aurangzeb was, undoubtedly, a follower of Sirhindi and to that extent more orthodox in his personal life than the other Mughal emperors. Though, in view of these circumstances of socio-political crisis, Islamic orthodoxy acquired more significance and Aurangzeb's personal predilection gave it further impetus, one cannot ignore the political compulsions of an emperor of India who as much needed allegiance of his Hindu subjects as that of the Muslim nobility. Thus it would not do for a conscientious historian to blame everything on the orthodoxy of Aurangzeb neglecting other equally important socio-political factors. The poet Iqbal who calls him as the last arrow in the armoury of Islam in India errs as much as any historian who denounces him as sheer bigot who swept aside all other considerations in order to conform to the principles of Islam.

Aurangzeb's or al-Mutawakkil's bigotry translated in some of their political actions on one hand, and, on the other, the orthodoxy of al-Ghazali and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi should be viewed in the socio-political context in order to understand it better. This is precisely what our communal historians are not prepared to accept. The modern historiography does not simply accept the professed intentions but tries to find out socio-economic roots of a particular historical phenomenon. Similarly it has often been maintained by communal historians that Islam, due to its inherent orthodoxy has been, an exclusive religion which Hinduism failed to accommodate. Such a view, although true in a sense, would be too narrow and tends to ignore many other important factors. At the level of the masses it not only sought accommodation with the local traditions and beliefs but found

it an inevitable process in order to gain acceptability. Also, on higher intellectual plane, during the hey-days of Muslim empire, it produced many mystics as well as unorthodox sects who attempted creative synthesis and thus deeply influenced what came to be known as the composite culture of India.

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which any evolution or deviation was treated as 'unpardonable heresy'.

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## Chapter VII

### TENSIONS OF MODERNITY

India after independence drew up a constitution which is modern, bourgeois and secular in character. It accorded equal rights to all the citizens of the country irrespective of religion, caste or creed or sex. However, the constitution reflects future intentions rather than the present reality. The reality is much too complex to lend itself easily to any neat solutions or changes. Bakunin had very aptly said that we have to create 'not only ideas but also the facts of the future'. There is always bound to be tension between idealism and pragmatism. It takes a wise and experienced statesman to strike right balance between idealism and pragmatism. It is much too easy to say this than to realise it in practice. It is precisely for this reason that more often than not tensions become unmanageable and take their own toll. If the situation we are dealing with is continuously changing due to introduction of modern technology and processes of production as is the case in India today, it becomes still more difficult to smoothly manage it. Also, in a parliamentary democracy with many forces and vested interests competing for votes, it becomes all the more difficult to maintain balance between all the

competing interests and it ultimately leads to explosions of violence.

We will be concerned, in this chapter, mainly with the attitudinal and psychological problems thrown up by the process of modernisation and change as far as the Indian Muslims are concerned. It is often argued that the Muslims in general and those of India in particular are highly conservative and doggedly refuse to creatively respond to the changing reality.<sup>1</sup> While it is true but the reasons ascribed by a section of scholars for this situation among the Indian Muslims are not always correct. This section of the scholars maintains that the Muslims are inherently conservative and doctrinaire and reject anything that deviates (technically called *bid'a*) from their religious doctrines. It is also partially ascribed to the lack of education among the Muslims. Religion does not approve of modern education and lack of education leads to obscurantism. Thus it becomes a vicious circle.

M. A. Karandikar maintains that "Sir Syed was the first and last modernist to take interest in other cultures. After him the pseudo-modernist literature had only one theme: to sing the praises of Islam and show its superiority... The spate of apologetic and repetitive literature on Islam in the first half of the current century continued unabated and the process has persisted even after independence."<sup>2</sup> While this is by and large true, Mr. Karandikar does not attempt a serious analysis to find out the reasons for this stagnation. This question of the behaviour of the Muslims in modern India naturally falls within the domain of social sciences and, "Theories of social sciences", writes Hayek, "do not consist of 'laws' in the sense of empirical rules about the behaviour of objects definable in physical terms"; all they provide is 'a technique of reasoning which assists us in connecting individual facts' and can never

be verified or falsified by reference to facts'. Hayek concludes that 'all we can and must verify is the presence of our assumptions in the particular case....The theory itself...can only be tested for consistency.'<sup>3</sup>

In complex matters like the analysis of the behaviour of a community in certain given or changing social conditions one has to be very careful in venturing ones opinion. Often one is tempted to make sweeping generalisations which, at best, remain of doubtful validity. What is important, as rightly pointed out by Hayek above, is not merely the consistency of the theory but the validity of the assumption in a particular case. Indian Muslims conservatism and their refusal to accept change also needs to be studied and analysed carefully without falling victim to certain popular myths or personal prejudices. Islam is undoubtedly highly doctrinaire (and also tending to be totalitarian religion in as much as it seeks to encompass minutiae of ones daily life) religion but it does not automatically follow from this that its followers too would exhibit doctrinal rigidity in complete disregard of their actual circumstances. To assume this would amount to completely ignoring the complex social reality and its influences over human behaviour.

Any change (or modernization), if it has to be acceptable to the people must be in accordance with their socially felt needs. Mere abstract ideals of modernization conceived by social elites cannot become socially relevant for the masses without being related to their social needs. Thus Rodinson also says:

A dislike of change amongst the least privileged, especially amongst the poor peasants, has often been noted and blamed on Islam. But a closer look at the specific examples given often shows that such resistance has

been mainly based on the fact that the proposed innovations had very little to do with the real needs of the people to whom it was offered as a model; indeed in some cases it was actually to their disadvantage.<sup>4</sup>

Giving example Rodinson illustrates this point: G. Destanne de Bernis' work on the modern houses rejected by the Tunisian peasants is a case in point. It was realized that these houses were in many ways ill-suited to the peasants' life and work; when the peasants were offered houses more in keeping with their needs, they adopted them enthusiastically.<sup>5</sup>

Social backwardness is often mistaken for religious or theological dogmatism. The problem is to be seen in proper sociological perspective and not purely from religious angle, if it is to be correctly understood. Religion, it must be remembered, finds its level in a concrete sociological situation and not at an abstract intellectualized level. Religion for an illiterate person from a rural area or an urban slum is nothing more than certain superstitions prevalent in his/her social milieu. At this level one will find very little to distinguish between a Hindu and a Muslim except religious lable which, unfortunately, in a ballot-box oriented political milieu is turned into a powerful identity-symbol. In India, as far as the Muslims are concerned, the problem is further complicated by their being in minority. Thus, in the concrete Indian situation, it is backwardness-minority syndrome. Only an integrated view based on totality of the situation can enable us to understand it properly. It would not do, as rightly pointed out by Maxime Rodinson, to blame it on Islam.

It may be argued that Rodinson has chosen his example of the housing needs of the Tunisian peasants not from theological but socio-economic

arena. Perhaps when it comes to accepting change in some vital theological matter, even the pressing social needs may be sacrificed. However, this also does not appear to be true. An example would suffice. The Muslims of Transvaal in South Africa lived among a predominantly Christian population and found it difficult to obtain meat slaughtered according to Islamic Shari'a as, according to it, meat slaughtered by Christians was not permissible. Some Muslims from Transvaal approached Mufti 'Abduh of Egypt (he was then Grand Mufti of Egypt i.e. at the close of nineteenth century) to obtain his opinion whether in the situation as prevailing in Transvaal it was permissible for them to eat meat slaughtered by Christians. Mufti 'Abduh's reply to this question was in the affirmative.<sup>6</sup>

Another interesting problem is that of prohibition of *riba* in Islam. There is complete unanimity among the Muslim theologians about the prohibition of interest in Islam. But under the pressing social needs it has been most widely practiced in violation by the Muslims. Rodinson says in his Islam and Capitalism, "Let the reader look back over the pages in which I have given examples of shameless violation of the ban on *riba* (interest), under cover of obviously false interpretations of the sacred texts. And that went on in a milieu that was particularly proud of its peity, the world of the Moroccan bourgeoisie!"<sup>7</sup> He then rightly remarks: "The fact is that it is clearly vain to seek the basis for social conduct in this world mainly in the Koran and the Sunnah. The basis lies elsewhere. The Koran and the Sunnah serve essentially to provide a conformist and religious veneer to behaviour that is basically responsive to pressures of quite another kind."<sup>8</sup>

It is not only in Morocco or the other parts of the Arab world where Muslim behaviour submits



to the pressures generated by the changing needs of the society. In India too, as well as in Pakistan and other parts of South and South-East Asia, Muslim behavioural pattern shows similar characteristics. However, as Rodinson also tells us, in Morocco as elsewhere this behavioural response does not necessarily get reflected in theological position. All doctrinaire systems, religious as well as secular, face the problem of bridging the gap between theory and practice. Even Christian theology in the west has remained rather unresponsive to the technological changes and scientific progress. It is only lately that some new trends - liberal as well as radical - have emerged in the western Christianity. This problem merits some more detailed consideration.

As pointed out above, there are, apart from others, two main factors namely backwardness and minority status of a community which militate against change. There are, of course, some other factors too like lack of security, being subject to oppression and exploitation etc. which obstruct change or cause communities to adopt radical path. To begin with we shall deal with the first two factors i.e. backwardness and minority status. It is not implausible to propose that more backward a community is more it tends to resist change, specially if change pertains to traditions held to be sacred. Maurice Dobb pertinently points out that for Marx the movement of society is a movement in its base and not merely on its base.<sup>9</sup> In other words for far reaching changes in super-structure the base should also change. It does not mean that one should take mechanical position in this regard establishing one to one relationship between base and super-structure. Not so well known a Marxist A. Labriola draws our attention to this direct correspondence theory when he says:

The underlying structure, which determines

all the rest, is not a simple mechanism, from which institutions, laws, customs, thought, sentiments, ideologies emerge as automatic and mechanical effects. Between this underlying structure and all the rest, there is a complicated, often subtle and tortuous, process of derivation and mediation, which may not always be discoverable.<sup>10</sup>

While admitting the truth of Labriola's insight into the correspondence theory between base and super-structure, one has not to be little the fact that change in the base causes, inspite of undiscoverable mediatory factors, profound changes in the super-structure. In the absence of any change in the base, i.e. in the absence of structural social transformation it would be futile to expect abiding changes in the super-structure. Christianity still continues to hold sway in relatively backward areas of Europe like Italy, Spain and Portugal. Similarly, as compared to North America, it is in Latin America that Christianity holds greater sway. The Italian Marxists, it is interesting to note, had to come to grips with the problem of reconciling Marxism with the faith of believing Christians. Palmiro Togliatti, the former chief of the Communist Party of Italy, for example, recognized that some people could be motivated by religious faith in struggling for justice alongside those who found inspiration in a more secular ideology.<sup>11</sup> Antonio Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist, also favoured a dialogue with Christianity as the influence of Catholicism was too strong on the Italian people to be ignored. According to James Joll "Gramsci was deeply interested in the relation of Marxism to the old intellectual and social order; and indeed, partly no doubt because of his respect for the Catholic Church, he knew how tenacious old ideologies could be."<sup>12</sup>

Gramsci was also aware of the fact that progress towards modernity could be much faster if the drag of the traditional society were absent. Thus he points out, "They (Europeans) import into America, together with themselves, apart from moral energy and energy of the will, a certain level of civilization, a certain stage of European historical evolution, which, when transplanted by such men into the virgin soil of America, continues to develop the forces implicit in its nature but with an incomparably more rapid rythem than in Old Europe, where there exists a whole series of checks (moral, intellectual, political, economic, incorporated in specific sections of the population, relics of past regimes which refuse to die out) which generate opposition to speedy progress and give to every initiative the equilibrium of mediocrity, diluting it in time and in space."<sup>13</sup>

Sociological findings also corroborate the view that notwithstanding certain social institutional variables there tend to be direct relationship between religion and the state of development of a community. Thus according to T. Luckmann "In Europe it is common knowledge that the country is more 'religious' than the city. This is generally borne out by the findings of research in the sociology of religion. From church attendance figures to religious burial reports, various statistics which can be taken as indicative of church-oriented religion show consistently higher averages for rural than for urban areas. On the basis of such statistics only a small proportion of the urban population can be described as church-oriented.<sup>14</sup> When in an advanced region like Europe such differences between country-side and urban areas exist it should not be surprising to find such differences between different communities in India on account of differing degrees of educational and economic advancement.

The Muslims in India, it is a known fact, are relatively more backward than the Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians. However, like other communities the Muslims are also vertically (and also horizontally) divided in terms of classes and, no doubt, a few among them are economically and educationally better off. But nevertheless, it is also true that comparatively speaking Muslims as a whole are more backward. Their attitude towards religion, therefore, is likely to be more conservative. Their backwardness makes them more resistant to change and modernity. This is of course a highly generalised statement. There could be any number of variations in this general pattern. The Muslims are, unlike what is generally thought of them as a monolithic community, a highly variegated and stratified people. In the horizontal stratification we could include regional, cultural, linguistic and sectarian differences. There is much less in common between the Kashmiri Muslims on the one hand, and, the Keralite Muslims on the other. Both culturally as well as linguistically the Muslims of these two regions share much in common with their co-regionalist Hindus and other non-Muslim communities than their fellow religionists in these diverse regions. Even their perception of reality and the consequent attitudinal orientation differs from region to region. The Kashmiri Muslims' attitude over Pakistan is not the same as that of Kerala Muslims. The sectarian differences can also be hardly minimised.<sup>15</sup> In such a complex situation it would not be surprising if there is variation, depending on their class and cultural affiliations, in their attitude to religion also.

There is another social phenomenon, specially in India, a sociologist has to take note of. It has been called in sociological jargon Sanskritization and Islamization syndrome. According

to M. R. A. Baig, "...the rise in their standard of living results in most cases in what has been termed 'Islamization' or 'ashrafization'.<sup>16</sup> It is generally expected that with the rise in economic and educational status a person would become more rational in outlook and would be more inclined to accept modernization. However, in a complex and traditional society like that of India, it does not result in such an attitudinal re-orientation. Our society as a whole has still not as a whole accepted modern rational and scientific values. The old cultural values, attitudes and rituals continue to be highly valued specially those which go with higher castes and higher status-groups. Those placed in the lower status groups aspire to adopt all those values and rituals which go with the high status groups in the society. Had modern scientific and rational values prevailed among the high status groups, those making into those groups from the lower ones would also have aspired to adopt them. However, in our socially conservative milieu Sanskritization and Islamization, rather than modernization commands much more respect.

It has also been often said that unlike Indonesian Muslims the Indian Muslims doggedly refuse to imbibe Indian culture. They insist on maintaining their separate Islamic identity. The argument on face of it appears to be plausible but not on closer examination. Firstly the Indian Muslims are in minority and among Hindu and Muslims elites there has been, in north India, an acute struggle for power. The struggle, needless to say, was always couched in religio-cultural idiom. The Muslim elite, in order to win greater concessions emphasised, throughout freedom-struggle, their separate identity. This attitude is perpetuating itself until today and gets reinforced as the new Muslim elite perceives its

problems in similar terms. The emphasis on separate identity tends to be directly proportional to the degree of grievances entertained by the elites among the Muslims.

It also must be borne in mind that the question of separate identity among the elites is most pronounced in the Hindi-belt as the struggle for power was, and still is, most acute in this region. In regions like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka (with the exception of Bangalore) and Andhra Pradesh (with the exception of Hyderabad) this question does not arise. Even the Muslim elites in this region are well assimilated in regional culture. The field studies by well-known anthropologists very well establish this fact.

As for the masses majority of whom live in rural and semi-urban areas, are well integrated in the local culture in any part of India, north, south, east or west. Most of them belong to the lower castes. Degree of Islamization among them, as perceived by the religio-cultural elites, is extremely low. Also, one must bear in mind that the religious identity is a function of a situation a community is faced with. In normal times religious identity does not assert itself but gets accentuated in times of acute crisis. The example of Iran where the Islamic identity is now asserting itself is a case in point.

The other important factor impeding change among Indian Muslims, as pointed above, is their minority-status. Before we discuss the problems pertaining to the Muslim minority in India, it would be quite in order to make the concept of minority quite clear. The definition of minority is no less controversial. There may be dominant and privileged minority groups enjoying special status and political rights. The Minorities Treaties of The League of Nations say that "all inhabitants differing from the majority of the population in race, language or religion"



constitute a minority.<sup>17</sup> The definition as recommended by the Sub-Commission in its report to the Commission on Human Rights was as follows:

Protection of Minorities is the protection of non-dominant<sup>18</sup> groups, which, while wishing in general for equality of treatment with the majority, wish for a measure of differential treatment in order to preserve basic characteristics which they possess and which distinguish them from the majority of the population.....The characteristics meriting such protection are race, religion and language. In order to qualify for protection, a minority must owe undivided allegiance to the Government of the state in which it lives. Its members must also be nationals of that state....<sup>19</sup>

Also, the Sub-Commission made it clear that the term minority had no numerical significance, i.e. it is not a smaller number or part of a whole, but the 'non-dominant group' in a state irrespective of its size.<sup>20</sup> Although it is not strictly judicial definition as made clear by the Sub-Commission itself but it is fairly comprehensive definition for practical purposes. The Muslims in India are in minority as a whole but in certain states like Jammu and Kashmir they are in majority and also in a district in Mallapuram in Kerala they numerically outnumber others. But, however, the Muslims in these majority areas perceive themselves to be members of a minority community on all India level and entertain a sense of grievance (imagined or real) as such.

The term minority presents many problems as such and is, therefore, not considered as a satisfactory concept. Prof. Rasheedudin Khan rightly points out: "The term minority essentially is a quantitative term. It refers particularly to members, and that too not so much in aggre-

gate terms as in terms of proportion. It is too abjectly a statistical concept, and unidimensional in its connotation. More often it conceals rather than reveals the essence of human situation. It also lends itself more to a static rather to a dynamic frame of reference. It generates a sense of fatalism - what may be called an unchanging destiny of despondency."<sup>21</sup> This fatalism, as we shall see, has become ingrained in the outlook of Indian Muslims and has resulted in, as Prof. Khan says, in despondency and frustration. Prof. Khan also points out the vital difference between political minority and linguistic or religious minorities. He says:

When one speaks of a political minority or a minority party in a democracy one implies a prospect of its transformation into a majority. But when one speaks of social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious minority in a territorial sovereignty, a State, then one cannot imply hopefully any such prospect of a minority becoming a majority or vice versa. Hence one should make a clear distinction between changeable equation as implied in the former (i.e., minority-majority set-up in politics) and the more or less constant and unchanging relationship (except sometimes marginally) as implicit in the latter (i.e., socio-cultural segments).<sup>22</sup>

Thus we see, apart from defining the term minority, it presents many other problems as well and becomes quite unsatisfactory concept in ways more than one. Nevertheless, it has certain operational implication and as such has got currency in political parlance. It finds operational usage even in international forums like the United Nations Organisation also. There is no country in the world which does not harbour either linguistic, religious, racial or some other minority. Hence despite its rather unsavoury

Implications in human terms, it is found to have certain functional use. Various sociological studies show that minorities (excluding political one as referred to Prof. Khan as it has different implications) exhibit certain well discernible behavioural characteristics. We could call it as minority-syndrome: sense of insecurity, obsession with identity symbols and consequent resistance to change, militancy and even aggressive-ness in certain situations which again is manifestation of sense of insecurity and looking for inspiration to some other country or state inhabitants of which share similar religious or racial weltanschauung, if there is one.<sup>23</sup>

Indian Muslims too exhibit several of these symptoms as a religious minority group in India. They suffer from sense of insecurity, they are obsessed with the feeling of threat to their identity and consequently some inconsequential issues, as we shall see, become centres of their emotional upsurge. The sense of insecurity is heightened by frequent occurrence of communal riots in the country. We have already discussed this issue in the Chapter IV in detail. However, a brief observation here will be in order, specially in the wake of the recent outburst of communal fury in the country. This goes on to show that one cannot afford to be complacent about this question. Recent communal riots in Kalyan (near Bombay), Moradabad, Allahabad, Delhi, Meerut, Baroda, Assam, Malegoan, Hyderabad and other places are a grim warning to all those who cherish secular values and care for nation-building.

The riot in Moradabad on the Id day on 13th August, 80 in which more than 150 people perished cannot be dismissed lightly. Of course, there were no clashes between the Hindus and Muslims and mainly the fight was confined between the Muslims and the police and other security forces. A Delhi weekly even maintains

that the bond of communal amity between Hindus and Muslims emerged unscathed from these disturbances. The weekly quoting a local Muslim leader Anis Jalali says that "the police action has not been able to break the strong bonds of communal amity, notwithstanding all the efforts of the administrative officials."<sup>24</sup> Mr. Jalali even maintained, "What is singularly noteworthy is that both Hindus and Muslims have condemned the police misdeeds, 'unprecedented in Moradabad's history!'"<sup>25</sup>

What is most damaging in such a situation is uncalled for guess-work which may or may not be confirmed later on by judicial inquiry (it may not see the light of the day as it happens with so many such inquiries) but succeed in creating more suspicion and bitterness. The Times of India's editor, Girilal Jain's signed article "Hidden Hand Behind Riots"<sup>26</sup> is one such example of rather irresponsible writing based more on guess-work than investigative reporting. Mr. Jain confidently maintains in his article, "The attack on the police in Moradabad was clearly pre-planned. No one can possibly dispute it in view of the fact that some members of the congregation at the Eidgah had brought knives, daggers and even fire-arms with them. Since nothing had happened in recent months in the city or in the state to create a sense of insecurity among the Muslims, the inference must be that the individuals or groups concerned had brought fire-arms with them with the deliberate intention of creating trouble."<sup>27</sup> As against this the special correspondent at the Idgah had brought knives, daggers and even fire-arms with them."<sup>28</sup> Further the correspondent of the Mainstream calls such an assertion that the Muslims brought arms to the Idgah as the "height of fantasy".<sup>29</sup> He even adds, "... the police who first claimed that there was

firing from the Muslim mohallah behind the Idgah...never said that those in the congregation of Muslims offering prayers inside the Idgah were armed. In fact police officers and local policemen whom this reporter met clearly pointed out that the one lakh congregation inside the Idgah was totally peaceful. Only those outside had turned unruly and violent, they said."<sup>30</sup>

Mr. Jain, as a responsible editor of a responsible national daily ought to have been more restrained in his pronouncements. It is no use rushing to conclusions on the basis of scanty and contradictory evidence. It is for the judicial enquiry to sort out all the facts and come out with the truth. Mr. Jain also saw the role of foreign countries in engineering riots. It was also rumoured that foreign arms were used in the clashes. However, soon the official sources contradicted these rumours. According to a PTI report, "There has been no evidence of foreign illicit arms being used in the recent disturbances in Moradabad..."<sup>31</sup> The Muslim fundamentalism is so much in the news these days that it has added a new dimension to the causes of communal riots being discussed in the papers and the magazines. Mr. Jain goes on to say that "A lot of oil money has certainly been pouring into India. This has certainly encouraged the extremists and facilitated their task of promoting fundamentalism."<sup>32</sup> Then connecting its role with communal violence, Mr. Jain says, "Of late these extremists have adopted an aggressive posture."<sup>33</sup> However, in the next breath contradicting himself, he says, "But it must be admitted that they could have done so without much encouragement and financial support from abroad."<sup>34</sup> Such an 'objective analysis' by a senior journalist speaks for itself.

Also Mr. Girilal Jain forgets that the Muslims from India have gone for ordinary jobs. Very



few of them are even doctors or Engineers or Managers; in most of the cases they work as unskilled workers and do not have much potentiality of earning. Their remittances are bound to be limited. The Hindus on the other hand have won big contracts and have established business collaborations. Their earnings in the middle-east are far more than those of Indian Muslims. It is not even fair to compare the two. And it is very serious allegations of course to say that the Arab Governments are financing the riots. I hope Mr. Girilal Jain does not make such serious charge without anything to substantiate.

Mr. Kuldip Nayar, however, draws our attention to an interesting aspect of the role of foreign money. He says:

Islamabad's instigation or Middle East money is not the cause but an effect. The cause is the feeling among the Muslims that they are not equal citizens. Since that is a grievance, countries like Pakistan exploit the situation.<sup>35</sup>

It is also interesting to note how the perception of minority and majority intelligentsia differs in such a situation. The letters appearing in the Times of India as a reaction to Mr. Jain's article are a pointer in this direction. Whereas all the Muslim letter writers including some Muslim M.Ps generally criticised Mr. Jain for his 'biased' and 'partisan' approach (with one exception of Prof. Agwani of J.N.U.), the Hindu intellectuals like Prof. Dharendra Sharma, Keshav Dev Sharma, etc. supported his analysis as "well-balanced and analytical piece of work."<sup>36</sup> I do not wish to go into the merits and demerits of the case of Muslim or Hindu intelligentsia here; I only wish to draw the attention to the fact that how the minorities differ in their perception of the situation from the liberal intelligentsia of the majority community. This also



becomes one of the causes of misunderstanding among the two communities.

It would not be fair to maintain that the Muslims do not stand to be blamed. Quite often, by providing the spark they queer the pitch. Also, there are extremist elements among the Muslims who, by their misguided and fanatical pronouncements, excite feelings on both sides of the communal divide. Prof. M. S. Agwani has rightly drawn out attention to this fact through his letter to the Times of India. "A few months ago", he says in his letter, "a mass-circulation national weekly otherwise known for its liberal outlook published a lead article making out the preposterous case that the Indian Muslims feel "cheated" by the government's alleged "pro-Russian" stance on Afghanistan, that like the multinationals the Indian Muslims justifiably do not like to identify themselves with their own country, and that they yearn for "transnational loyalties". The author claimed to be a spokesman of the Indian Muslims."<sup>37</sup> The Jamat-e-Islami, of whom we have talked in detail in another chapter<sup>38</sup>, draws inspiration from its parent body in Pakistan as well as the fundamentalist movements in different parts of the Islamic world, specially, and strangely enough, from two contradictory sources: Saudi Arabia and Iran. Its aim is to propagate for the establishment of a theocratic state and succeeds in drawing to its fold some Muslim youth from lower middle-class families. Kashmir, a Muslim majority state, has become one of the important centres of their activities. Recently, ignoring the advice of the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, the Jammat-e-Tulaba, a front organisation of the Jammat-e-Islami (although the Jammat leadership denies this), tried to hold an international conference there. According to the Sheikh, this section

of "the youth was propagating an Iran-type revolution in Jammu and Kashmir".<sup>39</sup>

Whoever stands to share the blame, the fact remains that in this game innocent and poor Muslims suffer, both by way of life and property. It is also a fact that the police and the para-military forces like the PAC and the BSF are far from sympathetic to the Muslims and consequently they stand to suffer the most at their hands. It is for this reason that there is now groundswell among the Muslims for the demand to recruit 20 to 30 percent Muslims in the police and other para-military forces. Various Muslim leaders are voicing this demand. Even those sympathetic to the plight of the poor Muslims concur with this. Kuldip Nayar says: "...some way must be found to increase representation of Muslims in the police."<sup>40</sup> According to Mr. Nayar, "The late Shastri, when he was Home Minister, informally suggested to all Chief Ministers to give weightage to Muslims in recruitment to the police force at lower levels."<sup>41</sup>

A few extremists among the Indian Muslims who have either been enamoured of the fundamentalist movement sweeping certain Muslim countries or who have their own political or other vested interests are, partially, responsible for causing so much suffering and agony to a large number of Muslims. Fundamentalist movement has left the majority of Muslims quite cold in India. Kalim Bahdur rightly points out, "that the revivalist ideology and programme is hardly relevant to the myriads of problems that Muslims face in this country. Their appeal remains confined to a very limited section of Indian Muslims."<sup>42</sup> Kalim also says, "Islamic revivalism does not even help unite the Muslims. The ideology of the Jamaat is based on the Hanafi school of thought. Followers of other schools would be treated as minorities in an Islamic State."<sup>43</sup>

Communal violence does another grave damage to the Indian Muslims. It brings to the fore cheap demagogues who push all the real problems of socio-economic nature under the carpet and try to enhance their appeal by indulging in hyper-emotional outbursts. The Muslim masses in their anxiety and heightened sense of insecurity take them to be their saviours and delude themselves. Such a state of affairs also makes the process of change and reform abysmally slow. A Muslim who is otherwise progressive put it very aptly that one does not think of decorating the house when it is on fire. Caught in such a state of mind either liberal Muslims do not at all talk of reform and change or when they do they are looked down upon as the 'Hindu agents' bent upon destroying the Muslim identity.

A state of grave insecurity pushes the question of identity to the fore at the cost of more fundamental questions. In fact it is the urban middle-classes which are more concerned with a distinct identity as the rural masses are far more integrated with other local communities. But it is the urban middle-class which is more vocal and thus the question of identity assumes importance and it is often wrongly exploited. It would, therefore, be of some interest to deal with the question of Muslim identity here. There are, I maintain, four concentric circles defining Muslim identity: the great Islamic (international brotherhood), Indo-Islamic (sub-continental), national (Indian) and regional. These concentric circles do crisscross with class alignments. For a middle-class Muslim the great Islamic identity may even be on a par with his national identity with Indo-Islamic squeezed in between, and regional identity merely on periphery. For a poor peasant or a worker belonging to ajlaf (of lowly origin) regional identity is far more important than any other level of identity. Think of a poor peasant from Bengal, Assam

or Kerala or a poor worker or a peasant from eastern or western UP. His regional identity takes precedence over other identities. To many peasant converts from Gujarat, Muhammad was presented, as discussed in an earlier chapter<sup>44</sup>, as a Kalyug awtar (present-era incarnation) of Krishna. He is only vaguely aware of his great Islamic identity.<sup>45</sup>

An upper-class Muslim is still feudal in his outlook. Though fully aware of the great Islamic identity, he is much more proud of Indo-Islamic identity. Even the upper-class immigrant Muslims from UP take much more pride in this Indo-Islamic culture than being Pakistani. These Urdu-speaking emigrants from India are proud of calling themselves Pak-Indians. One of them, Rais Amrohi, a noted Urdu poet writes in Jung, Karachi:

No people in the world feel ashamed of the land of their origin. So why should we? We are proud of the fact that our ancestors gave to the subcontinent one of the greatest civilizations of the world. We are the inheritors of the immortal Indo-Islamic culture. We are proud of the delta land between the Ganga and the Jamuna on which flourished the great edifices of the Indo-Islamic civilization. We opted for Pakistan which promised to have Urdu as its national language, Indo-Islamic culture as its ethos, and Pakistan as its sole nationality. Today, however, we are confronted with the proposition that Pakistan is the homeland of our nationalities, the Sindhis, the Baluchis, the Pathans and the Punjabis... There is nothing wrong in the Pak-Indian's demand for recognition as the fifth nationality of Pakistan, and having its own homeland.<sup>46</sup>

The above passage is quite revealing in many respects. It shows that in Pakistan too, the upper-class immigrants from UP continue to

have same ideas about their old feudal grandeur and think that the Indo-Islamic culture (the ruling class culture of UP) should continue to be glorified at the cost of the regional cultures of Pakistan. For them the very raison d'etre of Pakistan ought to have been the Indo-Islamic culture. The same attitude has been adopted by the north Indian Muslims leadership on the question of cultural problem in India. It would be contrary to all the facts to maintain that the Muslims in India have a monolithic culture. Nothing is farther from the truth. The question of culture and cultural or religious identity cannot be viewed abstractly. It would amount to mystification or, in other words, creating a modern myth. This question of identity is intricately linked with both, class as well as region and, it must be admitted, religion too.<sup>47</sup>

The reactionary Muslim leadership treats the question of identity and culture as static as if the current or future developments are not going to influence it. The fact is that greater degree of industrialisation and consequent process of modern urbanization has created a serious crisis of cultural identity for all the communities. It has been rightly observed by Andre Beteille that groups might become more conscious of their opposed identities precisely at a time when external differences between them are being reduced.<sup>48</sup> Backward orientation can only deepen this crisis. What is needed is a dynamic and future-oriented approach to the whole problem. This does not necessarily mean throwing away the entire past cultural heritage. What is healthy and valuable from the past must be assimilated with what is healthy and in keeping with the ethos of our own era. If what is dynamic and growing is assimilated or organically integrated, it not only deepens and enriches, it also imparts greater meaning to our sense of identity. Exclusiveness while sharpening the

sense of identity, cuts adrift, and, inclusiveness, while diffusing it a bit, integrates with other components of the society and makes it more living and dynamic.

Many modernists treat the question of identity rather superficially. They adopt a permissive approach, letting modernism coexist with the past which often results in tension and conflict. What is needed is creative assimilation of both, an organic and assimilative growth of culture. The whole process is extremely difficult and complex and requires bold and visionary approach. Also, pluralism and not exclusivistic orthodoxy, which would help Indian Muslims better adjust to modern reality. Imtiaz Ahmad rightly observes: "I dare say that it was this essential pluralism that enabled Indic Islam to obtain a foot-hold on the Indian subcontinent and survive. Again this pluralism and our ability to harness it can enable Indic Islam to face the challenges of secularization and modernization with which it is faced in contemporary India.<sup>49</sup> W. C. Smith also felt that the Indian Islam, in facing these challenges of secularization and modernization would emerge as more progressive, dynamic, creative, liberal and genuine than Pakistani Islam.<sup>50</sup>

However, this is no mere optimistic prognosis. Smith is fully aware of the difficulties involved. "If this proves so", he says, "it will not be because such creation is easy. On the contrary, it is agonizing. If it comes it will result from the stark difficulty of the community's more manifest involvement in the problems of modernity and a wider world."<sup>51</sup> The process is, undoubtedly, turning out to be highly agonising. It is not only the question of attitudes, it is also of participation and adequate opportunities thereof. Indian Muslims, impartial observers admit, have not got fair share of Industrial development and



have suffered, among other reasons, on account of their minority status. Dr. Shakir rightly says, "discrimination" in the United States "against ethical minorities annually brings the monopolies at least 30,000 million dollars in super-profits. Unlike the United States India is a land of scarcity. Economic resources are meagre. Jobs are few. Discrimination is inherent in such a situation. The first casualty are the members of the minority groups, particularly of large ones.<sup>52</sup> Modernization and secularization can come about only by the process of social transformation and economic base. Some people wish to force the pace of change on the base without changing the base itself.

Pakistan is currently in the grip of religious bigotry. In more than 33 years of its existence it failed to shake off its feudal past as it always remained a satellite of world imperialism and failed to transform its social base. The suffering lower middle classes and petty bourgeois elements become victims of Jamaat-e-Islami's religious rhetoric and searches for illusiory solutions in medieval religious society. This is quite natural for a people with immediate feudal past. In India, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie slowly began to supplant the landlords and emerged as a senior partner in state power. It naturally adopted secularism as the political creed and set-out to modernize India by more and more industrialization (though it is running up against structural crisis and the growth remains very painful and tardy). The Indian environment is thus relatively free from religious bigotry, at least in theory, if not in practice. Indian Islam had thus greater opportunities, free from the grip of political power of intolerant orthodoxy. However, that harbinger of change, middle class intelligentsia is too weak among Indian Muslims to impart the needed dynamic character to Indian Islam.

The Muslims of Indian sub-continent have, until today, remained feudal and did not develop modern entrepreneurial class. Even Pakistan, as pointed out earlier, by and large, remains a semi-feudal country. Unlike India, it can be said without fear of contradiction, the big landlord class in Pakistan continues to be a major partner in state-power along with military and bureaucracy. The capitalist class in that country is so weak that it does not even control the press. The condition of Indian Muslims is much worse. Business enterprise has never been in the Muslim blood. There are a few small business communities along the west coast among Muslims like the Khojas, the Bohras and the Memons. Numerically these communities do not account for more than 1.5 million out of the total population of nearly eighty millions. Of these business communities also an overwhelming majority is of petty traders. If one scans through the list of first 200 industrialists one does not find a single Muslim business house in India. Thus the needed social base for the modern reforms and scientific outlook is lacking.

The case of small business communities along the west coast and mainly in Gujarat is also very interesting. All these communities whether the Bohras, Memons or Khojas, are closed and well-knit and because of their petty trader character continue to be quite conservative and inward looking. Among them the case of the Bohras is the most pathetic. The Bohras, about five to six lakh strong community in India, is tightly controlled by the priestly establishment headed by Da'i (literally summoner to the faith). The priestly establishment maintains such a control over its followers that dissent is almost impossible. Anyone who even slightly deviates from the course laid down by the high priest is severely punished. Social ostracism imposed

on the dissidents through the instrument of oia boycott nearly paralyses the person within the community and, in most of the cases bring him to his knees.<sup>53</sup>

According to the findings of the Nathwani Commission, appointed to inquire into the charges of inhuman treatment of the Bohra dissidents at the hands of the high priest:

On the threat of Baraat (social boycott) and the resulting grave disabilities, Bohras are prevented from reading periodicals which are censored by the Syedna (such as the Bombay Samachar, the Blitz and the Bohra Bulletin); from establishing charitable institutions like orphanages, dispensaries, libraries, etc. without the prior permission of the Syedna except by submitting to such conditions as he may impose....<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, the interference by the priesthood in the personal affairs of its followers is not limited only to this extent. It goes much deeper. The Bohras are even prevented "from contesting elections to municipal and legislative bodies without securing beforehand the blessings of the Syedna; and above all, from having any social contact with a person subjected to Baraat, even if the person is one's husband, wife, brother, sister, father or son. The weapon of Baraat has been used to compel a husband to divorce his wife, a son to disown his father, a mother to refuse to see her son, and a brother or sister to desist from attending the marriage of his or her sister or brother."<sup>55</sup>

Such a monstrous regimentation has been possible for the priesthood to maintain within the community mainly because of its petty-trader character. While the reformists are mainly derived from the western-educated middle-classes and tend to get support from among the similar ranks in the community, the bulk of the Bohras

(especially the women-fold) continue to be quite conservative and consequently in need of the religious institutions devised by the priesthood (although to serve its own selfish ends). Also, the Bohras being a minority within the Muslim minority in India, they tend to cling steadfastly to the tightly-knit structure of their community and doggedly maintain their distinct identity. The Bohra reform movement thus provides an interesting arena both for the sociologists and political-scientists for study. Although it is an extreme case (other Muslim communities except perhaps the Khojas are open and without a tightly structured hierarchy like that of the Bohras), it does indicate the magnitude of the problem to be faced by all those who propose to bring about certain reforms among Indian Muslims in general. It was not without significance that the conservative Muslim leadership tended to support the Bohra high priest in opposing the appointment of the Nathwani Commission to inquire into the affairs of the Bohra community.<sup>56</sup>

The Bohras are a heterodox sect and even the Muslim 'ulama in general do not approve of many of the un-Islamic practices of the Bohra high priest (some even condemn them strongly as kufr i.e. amounting to unbelief in Islam) and yet most of them lent their support to him to oppose an inquiry by a 'non-Muslim' commission. The patent argument was that the commission was interfering into the internal affairs of a minority community. Such a commission, if allowed to function, would open the 'flood-gates' of government interference in the Muslim personal law. The Bohras may or may not be an integral part of the Islamic ummah but their being a peripheral Muslim minority was an undeniable fact. The Bohra high priest too, in order to save his flagging prestige, not only began

to woo the Muslim leadership but also started asserting his Islamic identity. He commissioned his brother to champion the cause of opposing any change in Muslim personal law. In fact Y. Najmuddin, his brother, became treasurer of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and his holding this post strongly suggests generous financial help to the Board. Also, to impart more solemnity to the community's Islamic identity, he issued, in the late 1979, a fireman requiring all his followers to stop interest-bearing transactions as interest is forbidden in Islam. He also issued an injunction making it compulsory for all the Bohra women to observe strict purdah and all Bohra men to wear cap or turban and to compulsorily grow beard. The fear of social ostracism produced desired results, at least initially.

Thus it can be seen that in a closed and controlled community efforts for reforms can run into serious and complex problems and may even occasionally strengthen the tendency for counter-reformation. I dwelt on the Bohra reform movement at some length because it has become an integral part of reform in the Islamic community in India. It has often been argued by a section of non-Muslim intelligentsia that it is easier to usher in reforms in the Muslim community in India with the help of progressive sections of secular Hindus.<sup>57</sup> They also argue that it may be difficult for the modernists in Pakistan to bring about such reforms for lack of such support from outside. However, as we see in the case of the Bohra reform movement, it does not work out so neatly in practice. The support sought from the progressive and secular Hindus always remains suspicious and becomes great liability. After all what matters is not what is the intention of such progressive elements but how this intention is perceived by the minority.

Here I wish to propose an hypothesis: A reform, howsoever desirable, would be accepted or rejected by a community depending upon (1) how the community in question perceives the total situation within which it exists; (2) how strong is the need felt for the reform (i.e. its functional need); (3) how powerful are the vested interests within the community opposing the reform and what degree of control do they exercise. The reform proposed will have much better chances of acceptance if the total situation perceived appear to be favourable for the survival of the community provided, of course, the reform serves some functional need of the community. Even if these two factors are favourable to reform, the vested interests, if they have appreciable degree of control over the community, can successfully block the chances of reform. In case of Muslims in general, and that of the Bohras in particular, all these factors have been adverse for the reforms. The role played by the powerful vested interests in opposing even highly desirable reforms cannot be minimised. These interests use Islamic ideology in Mannheimian sense<sup>58</sup> to preserve the status quo by presenting it in an embellished, mythical and mystified manner.<sup>59</sup>

There is another interesting aspect of the control exercised by the 'ulama on the community or lack of it. It can be stated that greater the degree of control exercised by the 'ulama or the priests, greater will be the urgency for reforms. This is borne out in the case of Bohras. Due to the severity of control exercised by the priesthood over the community the reform movement assumed the proportions of a revolt among the Bohras in Udaipur.<sup>60</sup> However, among other Muslims there is no such oppressive priesthood or a church and hence lack of strong feelings for the reforms. Rashid Talib observes:



The lack of an organised church, an official clergy, or a spiritual head or Pope, in Islam, has given Muslims a freedom unknown to the followers of most religions. This freedom, incidentally, remains largely unrecognized by non-Muslims. Now, the lack of organization and a clergy has permitted individual Muslims to be deviants without running the risk of getting themselves excommunicated. So long as the individual is willing to call himself a Muslim, and has not made himself a grave physical or ideological threat to others, there is no agency to order and implement his ostracization from the fold of Islam.<sup>61</sup>

And, therefore, Mr. Talib draws the conclusion: Therefore, educated and liberal Muslims generally have not felt their religious norms or laws to be in any way personally oppressive. Nor are they felt to be socially oppressive inasmuch as every deviant finds company for himself. Thus, in Islam the sting and torture of religious tyranny is absent and this has created a motivational chasm insofar as a strong desire for religious change is concerned.<sup>62</sup>

That the lack of church in Islam has given great deal of latitude to individual Muslims is a fact. Prof. Smith also maintains that in Islam "It is possible to believe that the law is not only eternal but immutable, the same yesterday, today, and forever, and nonetheless to be persuaded that the early Muslims' grasp of that law was incomplete. One may hold that those early interpreters were simply inadequate; that they missed certain basic truths in their human apprehension of the transcendent pattern, or, alternatively, one may hold that inevitably and in the nature of the case interpreted the eternal law in terms of their own relativities, their own needs and conditions; and that this,

though not eternally valid, was quite inevitable and indeed for them quite right and proper. For, one may even postulate as a general principle, that, human understanding of divine truth is inevitably human, partial, relative, and more or less ad hoc; that the Law is perfect and fixed, but man's apprehension of that Law is, and always must be, imperfect and destined to be superseded.<sup>63</sup> Smith goes much further and in a foot-note justifies Turks abolition of Islamic code in these words:

Their (i.e. Turks') ijtihad consists not in a modification of the traditional fiqh, but in a rejection of it as a whole system, and an interpretation that what God requires of human society, at least for today, is a social order of a new kind - one in which the pursuit of justice is not dictated by a deduced logic from a fiqh system but by an induced and constructive deliberation from the facts as seen by a sensitive (viz. Muslim) conscience.<sup>64</sup>

It is true that to most of the Muslims such a position would be unacceptable not only in India but in progressive Muslim countries as well. For, as a Supreme Court Judge put it, it amounts to 'reforming a religion out of existence.'<sup>65</sup> However, ijtihad (i.e. reinterpretation of law, literally meaning to exert) has been accepted as one of the important principles of Islam even by the most orthodox 'ulama. In fact Iqbal, the famous poet, calls it "The principle of movement in the structure of Islam"<sup>66</sup>. He asks the question "What then is the principle of movement in the nature of Islam?" and proceeds to answer, "This is known as 'Ijtihad'"<sup>67</sup>. Hailing this principle as the one of fundamental importance in Islam he welcomes all such attempts at the reinterpretation of the Islamic laws. He is all praise for Ibn-i-Taimiyya, a late thirteenth century thinker who rejected all traditional

schools of fiqh and went back to the first principles of Islam. Dr. Iqbal says about Ibn-i-Taimiyya: Claiming freedom of Ijtihad for himself he rose in revolt against the finality of the schools, and went back to first principles in order to make a fresh start...he rejected the Hanafite principle of reasoning by analogy and Ijma (consensus) as understood by older legists; for he thought agreement was the basis of all superstition.<sup>68</sup>

Thus independent thinking, even in the face of ijma of the learned scholars, or the entire community, is not discouraged by Islam. An individual, or group or a nation, can reject the traditional interpretation as dated or fallible and evolve a new one with good Islamic conscience. After oil, it can be legitimately argued, God had not limited His wisdom and justice to the people of a particular period, howsoever close that period may have been to the revelation of His message through the Prophet. According to one Prophetic tradition even one who errs in ijtihad earns divine reward for his sincere effort.<sup>69</sup>

It is in this spirit that Iqbal sets-out to welcome the Turkish abolition of the traditional Islamic laws. "Passing on to Turkey", he says, "we find that the idea of Ijtihad, reinforced and broadened by modern philosophical ideas, has long been working in the religious and political thought of the Turkish nation. This is clear from Halim Sabit's new theory of Mohammedan Law, grounded on modern sociological concepts."<sup>70</sup> He then goes on to say, "If the renaissance of Islam is a fact, and I believe it is a fact, we too one day, like the Turks, will have to re-evaluate our intellectual inheritance."<sup>71</sup> He gives Turks the credit for creating new values when most of other Muslim countries are mechanically repeating old values.<sup>72</sup> It has often been main-

tained by many Muslims that after the four great schools of jurisprudence crystallized, the gates of *ijtihād* were closed. Iqbal calls it a pure fiction and attributes it partly to "that intellectual laziness which, especially in the period of spiritual decay, turns great thinkers into idols".<sup>73</sup>

Today the Muslim leadership in India has converted the question of change in Muslim personal law primarily to their political advantage as we shall see later. It would be wrong to argue that Muslim personal law is immutable as it is divine. There is an inbuilt human element in it as we have seen above. And, for that matter, even divine is not always immutable as no law can ever escape the restrictions imposed by spatio-temporal frame. Even conservative 'ulama opposing any change in Muslim personal law are compelled to acknowledge this fact. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his commentary on the holy Koran The Tarjumān al-Qurān emphasised the fact that the Koran makes distinction between *Dīn* and *Shari'at*; only the former (*Din* i.e. the essence of religion) is immutable while the later (*Shari'at* i.e. the legal code, rituals, etc.) is not.<sup>74</sup>

Even Maulana Minatullah Rahmani, General Secretary, All India Muslim Personal Law Board, in an interview to Sunday weekly had to acknowledge this fact. Answering a question on distinction between *Dīn* and *Shari'at* he said, "Yes, there is a clear distinction between 'Deen' and 'Shariat'. 'Deen' is based on the fundamental values of religion, hence it is immutable. 'Shariat' is merely the manifestation of 'Deen'. 'Deen' remains same, may it be the period of Moses; or Prophet Mohammad. The Prophet was not given the same 'Shariat' as the one that was given to Issah (Jesus).<sup>75</sup> The Maulana also candidly admits that "Even after Prophet, his followers adopted many new 'Shariats' according to the

need of time."<sup>76</sup> He also claimed, in the same interview, "We have also adopted new principles of 'Shariat' to meet the need of time. For example, in older days the verdict of Imam Abu Haneefa was prevalent which says that the wife of an absconded husband will have to wait for 90 years before remarrying. But we realised that in modern times it is impracticable; so we left it and adopted the verdict of Imam Malik. According to this verdict such wives will have to wait for only four and a half years. Therefore, it is wrong to think that 'Shariat' is stagnant. It can be amended to suit the new circumstances but it must be in accordance with the commands of the Almighty." (emphasis supplied)<sup>77</sup>

Number of modern scholars among Muslims have argued the case for change in Muslim personal law as it operates today. Mr. Fyzee raises some interesting and fundamental questions in this respect. He asks: What is the present state of the personal law? How far does it fall short of the highest norms fixed by modern juristic thinking? In what way can the rules be sustained, amended, or repealed, so as to conform to modern concepts of social justice and to promote the social well-being of the Muslim community as an integral part of society in general?<sup>78</sup> (emphasis in the original). Then he goes on to comment, "If the complete fabric of the Shari'a is examined in this critical manner, it is obvious that in addition to the orthodox and stable pattern of religion, a newer 'protestant' Islam will be born in conformity with conditions of life in the twentieth century, cutting away the deadwood of the past and looking hopefully at the future. We need not bother about nomenclature, but if some name has to be given to it let us call it 'Liberal Islam'."<sup>79</sup>

Tahir Mahmood has also very ably argued the case for reform in Muslim Personal Law tracing its origin and growth in Indian situation.<sup>80</sup> Mr. Mahmood also gives the list of prominent Muslims who have supported the case for reform. This list includes, among others, Justice Hamidullah Beg of the Supreme Court, Justice V. Khalid of the Kerala High Court, Judge Aziz-al-Shafi of Delhi, Kamila Tyabji, Danial Latifi, A. G. Noorani, Asghar Ali Engineer, Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan, Badruddin Tyabji, Alam Khundmiri, S. T. Lokhandwala, M. S. Agwani, Zarina Bhatta and others.<sup>81</sup> Prof. Jamal Khwaja in his book Quest for Islam has done what many other Muslim intellectuals have shrunk from doing: he has systematically attempted reconstruction of Islamic teachings in the light of modern developments. Prof. Khwaja makes it bold to redefine the concept of God itself. He propounds the Elan Conception of God. "According to the Elan Conception of God", Jamal Khwaja says, "this fact of ceaseless change is not a brute datum or just a contingent or accidental ultimate, but is rooted in or springs forth from a Value-Elan or Nisus which is eternally and universally operative. Without this Elan the cosmos would have been a static and ossified X, no matter what the primal nature of X may have been."<sup>83</sup> He further points out, "It is this Value Elan that is called God in the language of religion which, however, attributes to this Elan many other features which may or may not be acceptable to the critical and mature believer."<sup>84</sup> It would be interesting to note that in the heyday of Islam some of the heterodox sects of Islam like the Isma'īlīs had radically departed from the traditional concept of God under the influence of Greek reason and assigned Him the role of creation of Intellects.<sup>85</sup>



Prof. Khwaja redefines the concept of 'kafir' (unbeliever) too. "Who, then, is a 'kafir'?", Khwaja asks and goes on to reply, "A consistent and persistent nihilist who has lost all faith in values and is in the depth of total despair, including hatred of his own self - he is a 'kafir'. Such a person denies all values without exception and feels like destroying his own self as well as all others. He is, therefore, the denier par excellence."<sup>86</sup> Does it mean reforming religion out of existence and destroying its identity? Prof. Khwaja feels otherwise. I would do no better than quote the author himself:

One simply must answer the basic question whether a religion which abdicates the claim to regulate the totality of man's life could still perform a vital function in the economy of life. My answer is obviously in the affirmative. In fact, the delinking of the institutional system from the core function of religion would not destroy religion, but rather strengthen it from within. Religion would then flourish and truly enrich the life of the genuinely religious man....Religion, in the final analysis, is not a matter of external discipline, but an inner and free commitment to basic ethical values, plus a mystical yearning to surrender oneself before some Power, Being Presence, or Elan, which is judged as the source of these values.<sup>87</sup>

I think it is the farthest one can go in interpreting religion in the light of modern spirit and knowledge. One may not agree with Prof. Khwaja in certain respects but one can hardly doubt his sincerity and liberalism. Similarly many others from amongst the Muslim intelligentsia are advocating reforms and liberal approach towards Islam. It has often been argued by some that there has been no reform movement among Muslims in India and that the Muslim

intelligentsia tends to be quite conservative. It is a stereotyped approach and conveys only a partial truth. There have been number of Muslim intellectuals from Sir Syed, Justice Ameer Ali and Khuda Bakhsh to Prof. Jamal Khwaja who have advocated liberal reforms.<sup>88</sup> A close scrutiny would show that as compared to Hindu reformers, as popularly believed, Muslim reformers do not emerge in poorer light. The reform movement among the Hindus has not been very widespread. The reformist tradition was confined to certain regions like Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. There has been no worthwhile reform movement among Hindus in north and central India, the heartland of Hindu religion. A comparative study of Hindu and Muslim reformers would not only make interesting reading but would also bring to light much that is not generally known about liberal and reformist currents among many prominent Muslim writers and intellectuals.<sup>89</sup>

Also, it is necessary to understand the problem of social reforms in the sociological perspective rather than religious one. A religion and its laws and rituals do not make much sense outside a concrete social milieu. Christianity has very strict sexual norms. However, in western society sex has no longer remained a taboo. Pre-marital or extra-marital sex is no longer frowned upon. Virginity is no longer a virtue and even wives are swapped without any moral compunction. Vance Packard has carried out extensive field surveys of sexual norms and practices in North American society in the late sixties.<sup>90</sup> The book throws light, through field data on the crumbling sexual morality in the U.S.A. Such a sexual behaviour was considered outrageous in America only in the recent past. In the late thirties Bertrand Russell's views on sexual morality were considered shockingly intolerable and on

this ground he was prevented from teaching at the College of the City of New York in 1936.<sup>91</sup> What brought about this revolutionary change in sexual ethics? Certainly the great social transformation which took place after the post-industrial revolution in American and European societies. The Church is still debating whether to permit priests to marry or not. The people on the other hand have left the sexual morality preached by the Church far behind. It was not merely due to the impact of a few libertines advocating sexual freedom. Advocates of sexual freedom did have their own influence. But the change in the social base brought about by technological change did the rest.

The question of social reforms in India too must be seen in concrete social conditions. By and large we have traditional agricultural base with more than 70% people living in rural areas. A large section of urban population is also nothing but conglomeration of rural migrants to urban areas with great job potentials. These rural migrants providing the main work force live in shanty towns at no better than primitive levels with their rural habits and attitudes of mind as their abysmal poverty does not permit them to avail of modern amenities of life much less of higher educational and cultural opportunities. Many of them finding no jobs in modern industries take to hawking and similar other odd jobs or get involved in anti-social or criminal activities thus becoming lumpen proletariat. The lumpen element, as is well known, not only proves to be quite conservative force but also becomes tool in the hands of fascists or crafty and unscrupulous politicians. In such conditions modern reforms do not make much sense to the masses of people. The modern reformist movements, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy's period down to our own time have remained confined

to liberal intellegentsia. Without transforming the social base superstitions, obscurantism and similar other irrational forces cannot be effectively fought.

Here it will be interesting to refer to Henri Lefebvre's simple and faultless method for integrating sociology and history in the perspective of a materialist dialectic.<sup>92</sup> Lefebvre begins by pointing out that a living rural community appears first in a horizontal complexity; we are dealing with a human group in possession of techniques and with a definite agricultural productivity related to these techniques, along with the social structure which they determine and which in turn reconditions them. This human group, whose characteristics depend in large part on great national and worldwide structures (which, for example, condition specialisations on the national scale), offers a multiplicity of aspects which must be described and fixed (demographic aspects, family structure, habitat, religion, etc.) But Lefebvre also adds that this horizontal complexity has its counterpart in a "vertical" or "historical complexity". In the rural world we observe "the existence of....various ages and dates." These two complexities "react upon one another."<sup>93</sup>

Methodologically speaking, Lefebvre provides an interesting insight and helps us in understanding present-day society, integrating sociological and historical aspects. Among Indian Muslims too one finds today various groups at different stages of historical development and with their own traditions and conventions which are a product of existing techniques of production. Dr. Ali Shariati (who was killed by Savak during the Shah's regime in Iran) also makes an interesting distinction between 'Calende- Time' and 'Social Time'.<sup>94</sup> He criticises the modernists for their confusion between the two. From the

point of view of the Calender Time all who exist at the present moment are contemporaries since they are present in the 20th century. But the fact is that all are not contemporaries (from the point of view of historical and mental development). The oppressed of the third world do not live in the 20th century (of course the elites of the third world do). It is one of the major tasks of the enlightened to determine the historical time in which his community (jāmi'i Khwesh) lives, i.e. its existential time. Most of the oppressed humanity though in the midst of the 20th century has not yet arrived on the stage of history and lives what can be called in the prehistoric time.<sup>95</sup>

The problem is not very much different in India. Different strata of our society are at different stages of development. The kind of modernism the elites of our society want to see accepted, would not (actually it has not) find acceptance among the people. Even on the streets and houses of Bombay, one of the most advanced and industrialised city in India, one can see most weird rituals being performed. According to the Calender Time they are contemporaneous with the intellectual elite who advocate modernism but according to historical or social time, their contemporaneity would be comparable with those living in pre-Industrial era, if not in outright primitive era. Even the elites of such a society existing at various levels of social time cannot escape its influences. The same is reflected in the complexity of their attitudes. The elites advocating modernism have to establish their coordinates in this complex society according to these influences. Iqbal and Savarkar, for example, both desire reforms under the influence of western paradigm and yet one would find fundamental differences in their approach under the respective influences of their social

milieux. Thus we see that even the western paradigm of human and technological development does not produce uniform effect on our complexly structured society.<sup>96</sup> Ignoring these sociological aspects would lead to over-simplification (a disease by no means uncommon) of the issues involved.

One must also distinguish between genuine modernism and pseudo-modernism. While the former implies rationalism and scientific attitude and discarding superstitions which are product of ignorance in favour of scientific findings which are product of new industrial technology, the later implies adopting superficial western mode of life which is often manifested through vulgar ostentation, laxity of morals (gambling, drinking, sexual licentiousness) and similar other traits. While it is possible to persuade the people to accept the former by demonstrating that it can better serve their functional needs, it would be very difficult to get them to accept the later; in fact it is deeply resented. The resentment against ostentation and licentiousness is expressed by emphasising traditional morality. Also it was one of the reasons why Islamic fundamentalism took ever growing number of people in its sweep in Iran.

In a backward country where the pace of change is very slow one has to be rather cautious in advocating reforms. While one could be unsparing in ones campaign against superstitions one will have to show more circumspection when it comes to certain practices regarded as integral to ones religion. Creative synthesis rather than complete substitution by something never regarded as integral to religion would be more helpful. It may rather tax our patience but there is no other easy course. As far as Indian Muslims are concerned the pace of change has been relatively more slow - to the point of being



tortuous. Like the scheduled castes (this comparison is valid only to a limited extent as otherwise Muslims are better off than the Harijans in many respects, specially they do not carry any social stigma of untouchability) Muslims have benefitted but little from industrialization in the country. Right from the British period the Muslims failed to produce any entrepreneurial class. Their ideational moorings, therefore, remained feudal. Even today in India a majority of Muslims in urban areas continue to be economically depressed and thus have very little stake in the present system. They, therefore, hardly feel any functional need for modern reforms. It is only upper classes with high stakes in big business and industries feel the pressures for fundamental changes in age-old traditions and religious laws which become positive hindrance in their functioning. Among Hindus too it is bourgeois intellectuals who fight for reforms whereas the masses of people continue to be deeply religious and even superstitious. What matters, therefore, is pressure for change rather than its abstract perception.

Also, around the traditional social structure there develops powerful vested interests. Any process of change tends to erode their authority. These interests who have fairly good hold over the masses oppose all such changes which erode their socio-religious authority. When changes are effected in Shariat laws the authority of Mullahs is eroded as their services are then no longer required to dispense justice and hence their opposition to all such changes.

Gramsci makes an interesting distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals.<sup>97</sup> The traditional intellectuals - priests - are integral to feudal economy and are patronised by landed gentry. He says:

The most typical of these categories of intellec-

tuals is that of the ecclesiastics, who for a long time (for a whole phase of history, which is partly characterised by this very monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc. The category of ecclesiastics can be considered the category of intellectuals organically bound to the landed aristocracy. It had equal status juridically with the aristocracy, with which it shared the exercise of feudal ownership of land, and the use of state privileges connected with property.<sup>98</sup>

The industrial society of today has thrown up number of complex functions which are required to be performed by modern intellectuals integral to the new system. They take away number of functions from the traditional intellectuals and hence the struggle between them ensues: one favouring the change and the other opposing it. Even in Pakistan there is lack of large scale industrialisation and hence lack of strong base for modern organic intellectuals. The mullahs - traditional intellectuals attached to various landed interests - continue to exercise great deal of influence.<sup>99</sup> In Iran too one of the reasons for the Shi'a clergy's powerful opposition to the Shah's regime was its attempt, through the so-called land reforms, to divest it (the clergy) of its traditional powers and endowment lands attached to various holy shrines.

In India the Muslims, as pointed out above, have, by and large, remained outside the pale of industrialisation. They have, therefore, failed to create a strong base of modern intellectuals, independent professionals as well as part of state bureaucracy. The traditional intellectuals, mullahs and 'ulama, on the other hand, still continue to enjoy benefits of endowment properties.

The 'ulama have, naturally, acquired powerful interests in retaining their hold on such institutions. Muslims have wakf properties which bring in several crores of rupees by way of income every year. Today all these not very meagre although not sufficient funds are spent either on conducting madrasas (where elementary or, in some cases, advanced religious education is imparted) or, pocketed by corrupt mutawallis (those in charge of wakf properties) in collusion with the members of the wakf boards.

The 'ulama, in view of their interests, resist any change in traditional madrasa system of education. According to Mushir-ul-Haq, "on the whole, the changed political, economic and social conditions have not reduced the number of Madras."<sup>100</sup> Some institutions of higher religious learning declared their intention to combine the traditional system with modern education. But nothing much happened in practice. Mushir-ul-Haq says:

...the Darul-ulum Madwatul-Ulam did not succeed in its goal of combining two altogether different educational systems: the curriculum at the Nadwah was revised several times but to little effect. Compared to other madrasas, Darul-Ulum Nadwatul-ulama maintained - and is still maintaining - the 'innovation' of teaching English language; but English, in fact, is treated in madrasas as an 'out-caste'.<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, religious education in these Muslim institutions of higher learning is far from achieving what theological seminaries have achieved in Western countries. Fyzee points out:

The work of Western orientalists is generally unknown to the 'ulama, and if perchance some of these investigations come to their knowledge, they are regarded with a hostility which is not far removed from bigotry.(2) No

attention is paid to modern advances in sciences, philosophy, history, or comparative religion. (3) No acquaintance with other Semitic languages, such as Syriac, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Ethiopic, an indispensable adjunct to linguistic research, is considered necessary. (4) Acquaintance with modern European languages, such as English, French, or German, is considered otiose. It is therefore obvious that the religious education imparted in such madrasas leaves much to be desired from a twentieth century view-point.<sup>102</sup>

In W. C. Smith's opinion it is partly because: most of the productive centres of Islamic culture in India—from a semi-classical institution such as the Nadwah at Lucknow to a Westernizing journal such as Islamic Culture of Hyderabad—are chiefly financed either from landed property or from the largesse of princes; that is, from obsolescent remnants from an earlier age.<sup>103</sup>

Even Sir Syed Ahmad had to agree to teaching traditional theological sciences as he needed money for his college from the big jagirdars of UP. There is not a single Industrial house among Indian Muslims which could create sufficient fund for modern scientific research on Islam. It would be difficult to cultivate modern scientific outlook in these traditional centres of Islamic learning. Even a modern funding agency runs into trouble for lack of suitable conditions as well as personnel. The Islamic institute run by the Hamdard Trust in Delhi is good example of this. The Muslims of this sub-continent have yet not emerged out of feudal era and their economic base has not undergone substantial transformation so as to create pressure for change in their weltanschauung. Nazeer Ahmed rightly points out that "There is always a dynamic equilibrium between the social values of a people,

the institutions that govern them and their changing culture. Structure, people and their culture are thus three corners of a framework within which any examination of a society must be made."<sup>104</sup> As far as Indian Muslims are concerned they are in a static equilibrium rather than dynamic equilibrium. Their social values and culture have become stagnant and hence their ideological paradigm does not undergo any change. And such a stagnant milieu cannot throw-up modern organic intellectuals in Gramscian sense who can re-examine and re-think Islam rather than re-thinking its defences. Those who do so, as pointed out earlier, find themselves completely isolated. Perception of the community as a whole would not change without appreciable movement in its base.

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- 18 Italics not in original text.
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- 22 Ibid.



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- 59 Muslim 'ulama have in particular completely ossified Islam and rendered it quite incapable of facing the modern challenges. Glorification of the past and emphasis on the eternity of Islamic doctrines without meaningfully

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- 62 Ibid., p-25.
- 63 W. C. Smith, "Law and Ijtihad in Islam", International Islamic Colloquium Papers, December 29, 1957 - January 8, 1958, Lahore (Pakistan), 1960, p-112.
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- 65 Vide Judgement written by J. Dasgupta on Writ Petition filed in the Supreme Court of India on Original side bearing No. 128 of 1958.
- 66 It is the title of the VI Chapter of Dr. Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Lahore, reprint, 1960,
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- 68 Ibid., p-152.
- 69 This tradition has been accepted by almost all the tradition collectors with reliable chain of isnād.
- 70 Dr. Iqbal, op.cit., p-153.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid., p-162.
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- 74 See Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's The Tarjuman al-Qur'ān, edited and rendered into English by Syed Abdul Latif, Asia Publishing House, 1962, p-160-161.
- 75 See Sunday, 26 November, 1978, Interview of Maulana Minatullah Rahman, "No Politicians Please."
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 A. A. A. Fyzee A Modern Approach to Islam, Asia Publishing House, 1963, p-104.
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- 80 Tahir Mahmood, Muslim Personal Law, Vikas, 1977.
- 81 Ibid., p-150.
- 82 Jamal Khwaja, Quest for Islam, Allied Publishers, 1977.
- 83 Ibid., p-115.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 See this author's The Bohras, op.cit., II Chapter.
- 86 Jamal Khwaja op.cit., p-197.
- 87 Ibid., p-228.
- 88 Maulana Azad's is also very important contribution for paving the way for liberal and enlightened interpretation of Islam. A profound scholar of Arabic and Islamic sciences, he was no contradiction between Islam and secularism. He emphasised that Dīn is essence and Shari'at on which the traditional 'ulama lay so much emphasis, changes with the changing time and place. "He also displayed a great distrust in the anachronistic institution of the Ulema", say G. N. Sarma and Moin Shakir. See their book Politics and Society. Aurangabad, 1976, p-289.
- 89 As far as this author's knowledge goes, no such comparative study has been done by any modern scholar. Though a challenging task, it can prove quite rewarding as it would demolish many a myth.
- 90 See Vance Packard, Sexual Wilderness, Pan Books, London, 1968.
- 91 See Appendix by Paul Edwards to Why I am not a Christian by Bertrand Russell, New York, 1964.
- 92 See Jean Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, New York, 1968, p-51.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 See Syed Alam Khundmiri, "Minbar as the Symbol of Islamic Revival, - A Critical

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- 95 Ali Shariati, Iqbal (Persian), p-50-51. Cf. Alam Khundmiri, ibid.
- 96 See Claude Alphonso Alvares's Homo Faber: Technology and Culture in India, China and the West, Allied Publishers, 1980, for useful discussion on this aspect.
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- 99 This is true in general of most of the Muslim countries in the middle-east as they are more backward than Pakistan.
- 100 Mushir-ul-Haq, Islam in Secular India, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1972, p-25.
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- 104 Nazeer Ahmed "Framework for an Islamic Life in India", Journal Institute of Minority Affairs, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Vol. I, No. 1, Summer 1979, p-69.

## Chapter VIII

### ECONOMIC PROBLEM

#### **Role of Leadership, - Opportunism and Betrayal**

The Muslims, as it is widely known, are much more backward economically and educationally too, as a consequence. In this chapter we propose to throw some light on the gravity of economic problem faced by the Muslims and the role of their leadership in responding to this challenge.

Before independence the economic mainstay of the Muslim upper classes was Jagirdari or taluqadari system. In other words, the ruling classes among the Muslims on the Indian subcontinent were mainly feudal. The scions of these classes took to higher military, police or other administrative jobs and some of them to legal, medical or other professions. The bulk of the Muslim population was the rural and urban poor. Traditionally the upper class Muslims had a purely feudal outlook and could not develop a mercantile or entrepreneurial class before or after the advent of the British as already pointed out. Only a few small communities like the Khojas, Bohras, or Memons from the west coast had a mercantile character. Also, some sections of Muslims from South specially Kerala and Tamil Nadu, are engaged in commerce. These communities, in the first place, do not constitute more than a very small fraction of



Muslim population and, secondly, they too, could not go beyond small business, and, unlike the Hindus and Parsees, could not develop an industrial or financial bourgeoisie.

It was precisely for this reason that the Muslim League primarily remained a feudal party and, in sharp contrast to the Indian National Congress, did not develop any economic programme in the modern sense of the word. The Congress, on the other hand, apart from the landowning classes, represented the interests of the emerging national bourgeoisie too. As a result of this in 1945, two years before independence, it had drawn up a blueprint for developing industries in India known as the Bombay Plan. The Muslim League, on the other hand, despite its demand for a separate nation did not draw up any such modern industrial plan for Pakistan. It is partly as a result of this failure that the leadership of Muslims even in modern India continues to be thoroughly feudal in outlook.

In post-independence India even the Jagirdari system was abolished thus totally dislocating the Muslim feudal class. Along with it its dependents and hangers-on were also economically ruined. Thus we see that in India those Muslims who were left behind on this side of the great divide had no firm economic roots. An overwhelming majority of them was either rural or urban poor. Belonging neither to the industrial nor to the business classes, they hardly benefited from the industrial development which took place. After partition even the educated classes who were in the professions or military and government services had mostly migrated to Pakistan. Very few of them, belonging to the category of 'haves' were left behind. And, from among the Muslim masses living in India, only a very few, due to their abysmally poor economic conditions, could go in for higher education.

so as to qualify for new jobs and professions being created by the developmental process underway in independent India.

Here of course there is a controversial point. A few scholars who are often swayed by their personal prejudices which is expressed, in order to find more credibility among the community of intellectuals and scholars, in a very sophisticated language, maintain that the Muslims shun higher education, especially of scientific variety, on account of their religious attitude. Muslims are very orthodox, the argument goes, and hence they forbid their children to go for scientific education. Thus arguing on these lines A. B. Shah maintains that :

The Muslims are backward mainly because they refuse to shake off a crippling cultural heritage and identify themselves with the rest of the nation. This is not the place to go into a detailed analysis of the nature of this heritage....., but it has to be noted that a community which refuses to equip itself with the knowledge and skills required in the modern world cannot register significant progress in any field of life. For instance, according to Basheer Ahmed Syed, a former judge of the Madras High Court, the incidence of literacy among Muslim males in India in 1971 was about 10 percent, and that among Muslim females only about 0.5 per cent. Most of these persons would have studied in madarasas and dropped out after a few years of elementary education. Very few of them go to college even today and still fewer study science, which is a precondition for entry into professional colleges.1

Thus the whole burden of Mr. Shah's argument is that in general Muslims are reluctant to go for higher education as they refuse to shake off their cultural heritage which is a positive

hindrance for modern education. Needless to say Mr. Shah ignores all social realities in assigning overwhelming significance to religio-cultural factor in resisting the acquisition of modern education. It is rather poverty and lack of functional need which become impediments in acquiring higher education rather than religio-cultural prejudices. Religious attitude is but one of the many factors acting as a hindrance. A recent survey conducted by the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad, also bears out the fact that it is social milieu, more than anything else, that encourages or discourages children for education. According to this survey the drop-out rate among the slum-dweller Harijans is 56.98 per cent, 61.90 per cent among Adivasis and 45.83 per cent for other communities at the primary level. In all, the percentage of children of slum-dwellers reaching upto secondary education level is just 23.74 percent, upto higher secondary only 16.26 per cent and college education merely 2.86 per cent and technical education even less than one percent.<sup>2</sup>

Imtiaz Ahmad very rightly points out, "There is growing evidence in the literature on education that the large majority of people perceive education in clearly mercenary terms. They see it largely as a means of entry into a job, prestige and social mobility. Whenever their aspirations are oriented to white-collar occupations for whom some education is an essential prerequisite, they always make the requisite investment of time, energy and resources to secure the required level of education. Whenever they have no definite aspirations, but can afford to pay for it, they take to education in the vague hope that it may enable them to become something or enable them to earn some social prestige."<sup>3</sup>

Thus it is clear that education is not perceived

as desirable per se but only as a means to an end. To the lowest strata of our society education does not seem to serve their functional need and hence is shunned. Imtiaz Ahmad touches the core of the truth when he points out that:

The central argument of this paper has been that the explanations quite often advanced to account for the educational backwardness among Muslims in contemporary India are wrong as they rest on certain common assumptions whose validity is open to question. The two principal assumptions underlying them relate to the conception of the Muslims as an aggregate and the belief that as an activity education is desirable and should be equally appealing to all social strata who should be keen to take advantage of educational opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

Imtiaz Ahmad further perceptibly points out: ...that education is likely to be exploited by those social strata that are oriented to employment in the professions and government service and that this social strata amongst the Muslims has not only been historically quite small but was further reduced in size following partition when a good number of its members went over to Pakistan in order to cash on the employment opportunities that opened up there in the wake of that country's establishment. Therefore, the educational backwardness among the Muslims is due not so much to their religious fanaticism or their acute minority complex, but rather because of the small size of the social strata whose members can be expected to go in for education as a normal activity.<sup>5</sup>

Thus it could be seen that the Indian Muslims being economically more backward, comparatively speaking, are also educationally lagging behind as compared to other communities. Apart from

the rural areas where most of the Muslims are now landless or poor peasants with little chance of taking advantage of the new agricultural technology, there are urban poor living in the most deplorable conditions. It can be safely assumed - of course there are no statistical data available to that effect - that as against the national average, greater percentage of Muslims live below poverty line. In the urban areas the poor constitute around 80 percent of Muslim population. These are mostly artisans, petty traders, hawkers, mechanics, coolies, rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, tongawallas, fishermen, beedi workers, butchers, masons, weavers, dyers, iron smiths, brass, bangle and glass workers, carders and so on. In such economic conditions no one expects a real political or economic interests of the Muslims to be represented by any political party like the Muslims League or Jamiat-ul-'Ulama, Majlis-e-Mushawarat or Tamir-e-Millat.

These political parties are as yet feudal in outlook and cater to a tiny upper class sentiments. Firstly, the Muslim leaders belonging to these parties and groups are so much pre-occupied with issues like Muslim personal law, or religious identity of Muslims that they just cannot think of formidable economic problems facing the Muslims. Secondly, these leaders find it very easy to climb up the leadership hierarchy by overemphasising highly emotional issues. Most of them are demagogues rather than sincere leaders with a vision of the future. They are totally misfit to lead and too opportunist to work sincerely for the Muslims.

Quite a few Muslims are aware of the opportunist character of the Muslim leadership. Thus commenting on the Milli convention in October 1977, Sultan Shahin wrote in the Indian Express:

Prominent Muslim politicians, scholars and

divines from all parties of the country gathered in the capital recently to discuss the problems of Muslims. The convention can be taken as representative of the entire Muslim leadership of this country. The collective wisdom of the Muslim leadership resulted in the passage of seven resolutions. As many as six of them, incredible though it may sound, were related in one way or the other to Muslim Personal Law.<sup>6</sup>

Shahin then goes on to ask:

Why this abnormal obsession with Muslim Personal Law? This is particularly surprising in view of the fact that at the moment there is no move either by the Government or by any section of the people to force any change in the Personal Law? Their concern for the Personal Law which has rightly or wrongly become a symbol of their religious identity is quite understandable. But their obsession with it to the exclusion of all other problems is inexplicable. Obviously the leadership is hopelessly out of step with the real challenges facing the Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

This hopelessly back-looking leadership not only refuses to do anything for eradicating various social evils prevalent among the Muslims, it vehemently opposes anyone who does so. Shahin again puts the issue in sharp focus when he says:

What are the Muslim leaders doing to eradicate these evils? Nothing. Then what right have they to ask the Government not to interfere in to what are called 'internal matters' of the community? Why this ballyhoo on the reported appointment of the Tarkunde (Nathwani) Commission to look into the affairs of the Dawoodi Bohra Community? There are strong reasons to believe, at least suspect, that all is not well with the Bohras. Some



members of the Bohra community have alleged time and again the worst type of exploitation of the community by its chief. The people and their representative government have a right to know if these allegations have any substance. Does the Dawoodi Bohra Community or for that matter the Muslims constitute a nation within the Indian nation whose 'internal matters' do not smack of a belief in the same old, discredited two nation theory?

But such is the character of the Muslim leadership in India today that neither they exert themselves to bring about much needed reforms in various ageold practices and certain provisions of Muslim Personal Law which are abused by many Muslim husbands in a male-dominated society nor do they permit anyother agency to do so. Any suggestion to that effect, however sincere, immediately causes them to lodge shrill protest dubbing it blatant interference with religious affairs of the minority community. The Muslim Personal Law Board was constituted not only to oppose any such interference on the part of the Government but also to institute certain changes in it with a view to stop the common abuses. However, it has no such achievement on its part. It has done nothing except organising protests. I was told by one of the members of the Personal Law Board that the much needed changes cannot be made as no two 'ulama agree on any formulation. Interpretations of the Shariat law vary so widely among different sects of Islam that no such concensus is possible. The Muslim leaders know it full well that in most of the Muslim countries many changes have been made in the operative part of the Shari'ah in keeping with the demands of our time.

A liberal Indian Muslim Dr. Mohamed Ali argues, "The truth is that few bother to find

out what exactly the so-called Shariat laws are. The Muslim masses in any case do not know that the present Shariat laws in India are largely of British manufacture. Even if they are considered divine, look at Omar, the second caliph, who had no hesitation in changing certain Quranic injunctions (with reference to chopping off the hands and division of war booties). These laws, especially the Islamic criminal laws, have to be changed to suit changing times; and a live religion like Islam must welcome it."<sup>9</sup> As against this the traditional Muslim leaders and 'ulama vehemently oppose any change or reformulation on the grounds that these laws are divinely ordained and hence cannot be touched by any human agency. Maulana Syed Ali Naqi maintains:

Our basic postulate, as confirmed by Quran and Sunnah and endorsed by reason, is that the author of the Shariah-Law is God Himself. Even the Prophet peace be on him, is not law giver, he is merely the agency communicating the Divine Law to man.<sup>10</sup>

Maulana Sandelvi says:

There are some who go on harping the hackneyed argument that times have vastly changed. They claim that conditions today are far different from that they were 1300 years ago and hence these Islamic laws will have to be changed or scrapped altogether. But in fact this is a weak argument.<sup>11</sup>

He further continues:

Islamic Shariah is a set of eternal and timeless rules, such that can take in its stride all possible changes and meet all possible situations as and when they arise. It has taken due care of human needs and difficulties and even laid down a systematic mechanism for the same.<sup>12</sup>

Thus it can be seen that the traditional Muslim

leadership is not prepared to accept any change even by way of ijtihad (reinterpretation) which is a recognised mode of reformulation in Islam. This leadership, almost to the exclusion of all the fundamental problems of Indian Muslims, has been playing up some highly emotional issues like the Muslim Personal Law, minority character of Aligarh Muslim University and Urdu. In a letter to the editor a reader indignantly remarked:

The convention was not a 'Milli' or a Muslim convention, because it had no mass base. No questionnaire was ever formulated and circulated among the Muslim population of India to probe into the nature and gravity of problems facing the community; and the invitation issued to the participants made it clear that only invitees could participate in it. The resolutions and deliberations were pre-arranged. The participants believed that only those who could think had a right to lead, and the only thinking class of the Muslim society consisted of persons with a feudal background and laying claim to medieval scholasticism. They were the 'Ashraf Tabqa' (nobility) in contradistinction with the 'Razil tabqa' (the plebians). The absence of the representatives of All India Muslim Conference (an organisation of Muslim weavers and artisans) from the convention was clear proof that it was not, in any way, a representative assembly.

Continuing further Anwar Ali points out:

....the Muslims of India are not a homogeneous community. It is a mass of heterogeneous groups of persons who have different economic, social, political and educational interests. The social milieu of Indian Muslims is caste-based, though apparently well-knit and with common faith running as a unifying thread. The bulk of Indian Muslims are the so-called

low castes. About 80 percent are Momin Ansars (weavers), Mansurs (carders), Roghangars (dyers), Qureshis and Lohars etc., working as artisans and craftsmen, contributing to the national wealth. ....How many resolutions did they pass for the social, educational and economic uplift of these depressed classes? What avenues, means and methods did they devise to bring succour to the needy handloom weavers and artisans of Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and eastern UP who are on the verge of starvation.<sup>13</sup>

The Muslim leadership in India is guilty of callously neglecting the real problems of the Muslim masses. They have simply used highly emotional issues which appeal to the urban middle-class Muslims to establish their leadership. According to one estimate based on a sample survey, more than 70 per cent of Indian Muslims live below the poverty line. A large number of Muslims in urban areas are good artisans. They are, in fact, among the best in India. The carpet weavers of Kashmir and Bhadoi, the handloom workers of Maunath Bhanjan, Malegaon and Bhivandi, the sari weavers and zardozi of Varanasi, the banglemakers and glass workers of Ferozabad and Shilohabad, the leather workers of Kanpur and Agra, the chikan workers of Lucknow, the brass makers of Moradabad and the locksmith of Aligarh have been keeping alive and enriching the best traditions of Indian artisans. They mostly work on starvation wages and are exploited by either financiers or middlemen. The so-called Muslim leaders have hardly ever bothered to organise these starving artisans into co-operatives. Moradabad town which was rocked by violent communal riots in mid-August two years ago has large number of brass ware artisans more than 80 percent of whom are Muslim. The total output of brassware industry is more than Rs.100

crores per year.<sup>14</sup> Though a vast majority of the artisans are Muslims most of whom live on starvation wages, eighty percent of the wholesalers and exporters are Hindus and only top ten are Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Yet the Muslim leadership has hardly bothered to hard work to organise the artisans in cooperatives and secure concessional loans from the Government. It was Bahuguna, the then Chief Minister of UP who in 1974 formed a co-operative venture in the public sector the Brassware Corporation.<sup>16</sup> This created promising prospects that the artisans would receive due remuneration for their skilled labour.

If more such co-operatives had been formed and if government had been persuaded to make Cheaper and preferential credit available to these co-operatives, the artisans could have benefited immensely. But instead of taking up such concrete problems pertaining to the vast masses of Muslims, these leaders, in keeping with the tradition established by the Muslim League which represented the upper class and feudal interests, raise cultural or religious issues which provide emotional satisfaction to a tiny minority of middle-class urban Muslims who are most vocal.

The case of Urdu journalism is a shade worse. These papers indulge in hyperbole when it comes to issues like Muslim personal law, status of Urdu, character of Aligarh Muslim University and so on. To some extent their over-reaction in a situation as it obtains in India is understandable. The middle classes belonging to minorities are known to over-react when what they consider as identity symbols are under real or imaginary threat. But obsession with them to the exclusion of what would be most beneficial materially to their lesser-fortunate brothers is certainly not a sign of health either. One hardly finds serious and analytical articles in Urdu dailes

and other news and views magazines. The most interesting case in point is of Bhutto's hanging in Pakistan. The Urdu dailies over-reacted to this event and, what was worse, this over-reaction too was out of all proportions. Some weeklies even brought out special numbers and supplements and even described Bhutto as Shahid-e-Azam (the Great Martyr).<sup>17</sup> It was in vain to look for any serious analytical piece or investigative reporting as to why Gen. Zia-ul-Haq sentenced Bhutto to death. Also, these papers are so obsessed with the emotional problems of the middle-class Muslims that they hardly take a look at the plight of the poor Muslim masses. These papers in my opinion serve as the opium for the Muslims. The Urdu papers have neglected their duty to cultivate a serious and informed opinion among the Muslims.

In focussing the economic plight of the Muslims, both the Muslim leadership as well as the Urdu papers, have betrayed their middle-class orientation. Mostly they complain about the lack of proportional representation of Muslims in the government services. The complaint, no doubt, is genuine. Various statistical data convincingly demonstrate this. According to Dr. Moin Shakir, "The Muslim representation in the civil services, army, private and public undertakings is abysmally low and continuously on decline. They are discriminated against in other walks of life as well."<sup>18</sup> For this situation partly prejudice against Muslims and sense of distrust is responsible and partly the woeful lack of education among the Muslims. Dr. K. D. Sharma in his book<sup>19</sup> discusses the causes of the educational backwardness among the Muslims in and around Delhi. According to Rasheeduddin Khan, the Muslim educational situation is quite "dismal" - out of a total of 3604 Degree Colleges in the country only 54 are managed by the Muslims, and the Muslims



account for just 3.5 per cent of all seats available in the technical institutions in the country.<sup>20</sup>

We have already discussed the causes of Muslim backwardness among the Muslims.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the lack of functional need the opportunist and obscurantist Muslim leadership is also partly responsible for this lack of education among the Muslims. This leadership is more interested in running madarasa in which it has acquired vested interest. The Muslim awkaf fund, according to one estimate runs into nearly Rs. 1500 million. Though not a staggering amount it certainly can finance in a modest way a nationwide project for modern education for Muslims. This sum today is being spent either on running madarasas or celebrating death anniversaries of saints and similar other things. A suggestion was once made by Dr. Khusro that polytechniques be attached to these madarasas so as to train poor Muslim boys in various crafts so as to enable them to earn their living later on. In the long run these polytechniques could become self-sufficient. However, no Muslim leader took this suggestion seriously.

After the oil revolution in West Asia, some of the Arab countries are donating money to various institutions of Muslims. Unfortunately again these donations are utilised only for building mosques or establishing purely religious educational institutions. These funds, certainly not scanty, if not quite sufficient, can be utilised to run modern educational institutions for Muslims. However, there does not appear to be such possibility in near future. Not only this but the opportunist Muslim leadership opposes other agencies who wish to spread modern education among Muslims. The example of Muslim Education Society of South India is before us. This society has done admirable work in spreading education among the Muslims. However, the Muslim League,

after initial cooperation sought to take it under its own control and when failed to do so it launched a campaign of character assassination against the office bearers of the Society. This should be a good example of how political leadership, in view of its own vested interests, tries to oppose any constructive work which can benefit Muslims. It is for the Muslim intelligentsia to draw proper lessons from such betrayal by the Muslims League of a worthy cause of education.

The same opportunism the Muslim leadership has shown in bargaining with other political parties. The Muslim political parties and groups (or even individuals like the Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi), strike political alliances with the Congress or any other ruling group. Neglecting the real problems facing the Muslim masses (artisans, peasantry, etc.) they strike bargain on the same issues like the Muslim personal law, Aligarh Muslim University or the status of Urdu. The Shahi Imam, an individual who has been given importance out of all proportion by the Janata Party first and later by the Indira Congress, has added to this list the demand for reservation of jobs for Muslims in the services. These opportunistic alliances instead of doing any good to the community benefit the leaders themselves as the ruling parties offer them sinecures. None of these leaders has set any example of sacrifice of the lures of office for the good of the community. Of course one can say that it is a general malady in the country so why single out the Muslim leaders alone. But certainly the leaders of a disadvantaged group have to show far more sense of uprightness and alacrity. The present Muslim leadership lacks both character as well as vision. Mentally too they are too poorly equipped to successfully lead the community.

The case of Aligarh University is another

example of the opportunist character of these Muslim leaders. As already pointed out above they have hardly done anything to promote modern education among Muslims. On the contrary they can be justifiably accused of having hindered it. But when it comes to the character of Aligarh university they tend to become almost hysterical about retaining its 'minority character'. They have converted it into one of the most important problems of Indian Muslims. No one knows what they mean by the minority character of AMU. No one has cared to define it clearly.

"Any discussion of this sensitive issue", says V. V. John, "could best begin with an acknowledgement that Aligarh Muslim University is more than a university; it is a symbol of Muslim aspirations and ideals. But it would be helpful to ascertain what particular objectives or programmes Muslims had set their hearts on, which were thwarted through the changes made in the law of the University in 1951, 1965 and 1972."22 Prof. John further says, "To questions put by the Minorities Commission on this matter to public men and academics, there has been no answer. One answer was provided by a student: He said that Muslim students have not been able to get into the professional courses in adequate number, on account of their comparative low grades in the qualifying examinations."23 Commenting on this Prof. John says, "If this is all that 'the minority character' is sought to correct, a clear policy of preferential treatment for a community inadequately represented in the professionals could be adopted through simpler expedients than legislation and constitutional amendments."24

on the University affairs than anything else. They are not interested what Prof. John calls in the resolve to "cherish and develop Aligarh as an institution of modern higher education

particularly for the Muslims of India, and to invest it with the autonomy befitting a modern university."<sup>25</sup> The Muslim political leaders have converted the Muslim University into a hotbed of their politics instead of promoting it as a model of higher education as suggested by V. V. John. The Aligarh issue has been blown into all India proportions whereas the fact is that hardly more than 10 percent students are drawn from outside UP on its rolls. In fact most of the students come either from Aligarh itself or from a few districts around it. Muslims who can hardly avail of the educational institutions nearer home, cannot afford to send their children to far away Aligarh. And yet the 'minority character' has assumed so much importance in the Muslim politics in India thanks to the behaviour of our Muslim leaders. Any Muslim proud of his Indo-Islamic cultural heritage would like to see Aligarh Muslim University prosper as an institution of higher learning and run by competent academic and administrators vested with full autonomy. In order to achieve this objective it should certainly remain away from the political opportunism of Muslim leadership. It would only spoil its atmosphere.

Another unfortunate dimension of the problem of Muslim leadership is its north Indian character. The Muslims are spread all over India but the north India Muslims have acquired much more weightage, for historical reasons of course, in providing leadership than their population would warrant. The Muslims of other regions from western, central and southern India do not command proportionate weightage in the leadership group. This is also one of the reasons why the problems with which the north Indian Muslims are pre-occupied get so much focus. Urdu (no doubt it has not got the deserved place in north India, especially in UP and Bihar as

the Gujral Committee Report<sup>26</sup> clearly proves, if any proof is needed) happens to be not only the language of north Indian Muslims but also the vehicle of their culture and a symbol of their identity. More than a crore of people in UP alone have registered their tongue as Urdu and yet it does not get the justice it ought to have got. The north Indian Muslim leadership naturally, therefore, considers the problem of Urdu as one of the key-problems and even Muslims of other regions whose mother-tongue is not Urdu view this demand sympathetically aware as they are of injustice done to it. Thus this problem acquires an all India dimension.

Urdu, it must be noted, symbolises secular and composite culture of India. Muhammad Hasan, a noted critic of Urdu writes, "No important poet sang of partition and even after the partition, Urdu writers were free from communal virus and resolutely fought communalism even in the midst of riots and stood for secularism and national integration."<sup>27</sup> However, for reasons stated above, despite this secular heritage, Urdu has come to be associated with the cultural aspirations of Muslims although it is wrong to project it as such on an all India basis. Balraj Puri says:

Though region, culture and language generally form an integral whole, the case of Urdu is somewhat special. Notwithstanding its secular and composite heritage, it has admittedly become a symbol of Muslim aspirations. But its role in providing a common linguistic identity to all Muslims is severely limited. It cannot replace, for instance, Kashmiri, Bengali, Malayalam or Tamil, without culturally impoverishing Muslims belonging to the respective regions and distorting their integral personality.<sup>28</sup>

Further on Puri goes on to make a highly relevant

In reality, it is the Urdu-speaking Muslim community which is most rootless and alienated and which is suffering from a crisis of identity most acutely. One reason is that it lacks a regional identity. Secondly it lives in the heartland of Indian nationalism which, on account of its conceptual inadequacy and imprecision, does not satisfy the urges of all communities alike. This explains why the idea of a separate homeland had its staunchest and largest support in this area.<sup>29</sup>

One has to take all these dimensions of the problem to understand it in all its complexity. The Pakistani Muslims too faced this dilemma after the partition and Bengalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Baluchis etc., started asserting their separate identity and the Urdu speaking Muslims of UP found themselves rootless with no region of their own and preferred to call themselves as Pak-Indians and even voiced the demand to establish Urdu Pardesh in West Pakistan. Indian Muslims from different regions may support the demand for Urdu being given its rightful place but they would not bargain in the process their distinct regional and cultural identity. There would always remain tensions between their personality as a religious minority and their regional cultural identity. Their religious identity would assert itself more aggressively if they feel persecuted as a minority and their regional identity would get sharpened if this sense of persecution gets diminished.

It is for these reasons that the regional problems of Muslims are pushed into background. Due to prevailing sense of persecution as a religious minority among Muslims throughout India, any problem, although of north Indian character like that of Aligarh Muslim University, if invested with religious dimension, acquires an all India complex. The regional problems



of Indian Muslims would emerge in sharper relief only if they feel secure as a religious minority. In other words their regional identity would be subdued if they feel less secure. Out of the three major problems often projected by the North Indian Muslim leadership only Muslim personal law can be said to be of all India character; the remaining two i.e. the problem of Urdu and Aligarh Muslim University are of regional character. And yet, for the reasons stated above, they have acquired an all India character among the Muslims.

There are quite a few business communities among the Muslims of western India. But for their petty bourgeois character they could have provided a more dynamic and future-oriented leadership as compared to the feudal and conservative leadership of the north. However, these business communities, with the expansion of trade and industries, may succeed in enlarging their business enterprises and hence may become more assertive in future. This possibility, one must admit as a realist, is still very remote. One does not even see emergence of this trend.

It must also be born in mind that some of the former low-caste communities among the Muslims like the Ansars (weavers), Quraish (butchers and dealers in sheep and goats etc.), as well as those artisans who have shown entrepreneurial spirit are benefitting from the economic development and have acquired perceptible degree of prosperity in last few years. But, and it is important to note, these are highly traditional communities among Muslims and their increased prosperity serves to strengthen, rather than weaken the hold of primordial traditions. They spend more on building mosques, madrasas and mausoleums or similar other religious activities. This is the contradiction of industrialization within the capitalist frame-work in a backward

country. The Jains and the Vaishnavite Banias - both Hindu trading communities - also are quite traditional communities despite their age-old prosperity. The Muslim traditionalism, if it gets strengthened with the new-found prosperity, should not surprise us.

West Indian and South Indian Muslims are far more integrated with regional culture than the Muslims of the North. Similarly the Muslims of rural areas (throughout India) are far more integrated with the local culture than the Muslims of urban areas. In fact among Hindus as well as Muslims there is greater sense of separate identity in urban areas. Communalism is essentially an urban phenomenon. Religion in rural areas is practiced as superstition and rituals. It is only in urban areas that religion begins to play political role and acquires connotations of what can be termed as 'false consciousness. It is mainly on account of socio-economic factors. In other words communalism is product of transformation of socio-economic causation into religious one. W. C. Smith puts it more aptly when he says that communalism though based upon religious differences, and a communalist believes that it has a religious basis, but it has no religious solution.<sup>30</sup>

In a developing and backward country like India (and specially when it also happens to be a victim of population explosion) there are always few jobs and many more seekers after them. The increased caste violence today is also basically due to resentment by the upper castes against the reservations in the government jobs for the scheduled castes and tribes. Muslims too are among the poorest and much less educationally equipped to compete equitably for the much sought-after government jobs. Intense competition for these jobs aggravates caste and communal feelings. Like Harijans and tribal

Muslims too are becoming more and more conscious of their rather unenviable plight and hence some Muslim leaders have started demanding reservation of jobs for Muslims too.

The Muslim leadership, as already pointed out, has always exploited emotional issues to gain easy popularity rather than work hard for their socio-economic uplift. No doubt in the competition for jobs Muslims are severely handicapped but a demand for reservation of jobs for them will create more problems. Imtiaz Ahmad says:

Unlike the scheduled castes, the Muslims in India are not a stigmatized community. Even though they have been historically characterized by caste Hindus as mlecchas, an expression with obvious derogatory meaning, and have been an object of much social prejudice after the creation of Pakistan for which they are often held responsible, the social prejudice against them has been much less severe than would be true of the scheduled castes. For instance, the term mlecchas was applied to them as an abstract collective. For instance, the term mlecchas was applied to them as an abstract collective category with only marginal behavioural implications.<sup>31</sup>

Imtiaz also points out another dimension of this problem which is important to note:

The Muslims present a striking contrast to the Scheduled Castes in this respect too. For one thing, unlike the latter, who are economically a much more homogeneous community, the Muslims are, internally, an economically differentiated community. Thus there exist among them not only a sizeable aristocratic elite but also peasants, traders and merchants, artisans and menials, members of the middle class and a section of the feudal parasites which has come to constitute the Muslim poor. Secondly, the economic develop-

ment and social change taking place in Indian society during the last two to three decades have affected the economic prospects of each of these strata quite differently.<sup>32</sup>

The less than proportionate representation of Muslims in various services is a fact no one can deny but the solution, at least in the case of the Muslims, does not lie in reservation. This would ensure jobs for only the better educated and comparatively well-placed Muslims thus creating a specially privileged class of Muslims. Moreover, any such move would be strongly resented by non-Muslims, especially the upper-caste Hindus who are already sore over the reservation of jobs for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It is not difficult to see that it can result in escalation of communal violence. Thus those Muslim leaders who are demanding reservation of jobs for the Muslims are playing with the fire and would do no good to the poor and suffering Muslims. They would be better advised to dedicate themselves to the uplift of the poor Muslims by working for organising the poor artisans on class lines along with other artisans and workers belonging to other communities thus bringing economic rewards to the poorest among the Muslims. The salvation of the Muslim masses after all lies in strengthening the socialist and democratic forces in the country. Reservation of jobs would lead to polarisation along the communal lines and would amount to seeking a religious solution to essentially a socio-economic problem. But such polarization proves to be short-lived as the break of Pakistan has very well demonstrated. But would the Muslim leadership understand and would emerge out of its sectarian interests?

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