

Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity

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**Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan [COSS]
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In the monograph series the Council is publishing its first paper with the title “**Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity**” by well-known historian Dr. Ayesha Jalal presented to a session of the Council on 6th February, 2001. Dr. Jalal is presently a MacArthur Fellow and Professor of History at Tufts University. She obtained her doctorate in history from the University of Cambridge and has been fellow of several research centres and has taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Tufts University, Columbia University and Harvard University.

Her major publications include:

1. *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah: the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge 1985 and 1994).
2. *The State of Martial Rule: the Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge, 1990).
3. *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: a Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge 1995).
4. *Modern South Asia: History, Culture and Political Economy* with Sugata Bose, 1998.
5. *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850*, (London/New York, Delhi, and Lahore, 2000/2001).

Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity¹

Ayesha Jalal

Don't compare your nation with the nations of the West
Distinctive is the nation of the Prophet of Islam
Their solidarity depends on territorial nationality
Your solidarity rests on the strength of your religion
When faith slips away, where is the solidarity of the
community?
And when the community is no more, neither is the nation.²

This was how the great poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal posed the central problem of Muslim identity in his poem 'Mazhab' or 'Religion'. He was engaging with the vexed question of Muslim loyalty to India given their affiliation with the world wide community of Islam, or the *ummah*. That question had spawned an intricate web of narratives on the *qaum*, the loosely defined community-turned-nation, and the *watan* or the territorial homeland from the late 19th century. Instead of being mutually exclusive, territorial nationalism and Islamic universalism were the two main strands informing the discourse on Muslim identity after India's formal loss of sovereignty in 1857. Altaf Hussain Hali, one of the leading Muslim poets of the late nineteenth century, had spoken more as a patriot of Delhi than as a member of a religious community when he rued the destruction of his

¹ Paper presented at a meeting organised by Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan (COSS) on February 6, 2001 in Islamabad.

² Muhammad Iqbal, 'Mazhab' in *Bang-i-Dara, Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, Karachi:Al-Muslim Publishers,1994, p.202 [my translation from the Urdu].

beloved city by yet another set of invaders:

Sometimes Turanis looted our homes
At others Duranis stole our wealth
Sometimes Nadir slaughtered people indiscriminately
At others Mahmud made them slaves
Finally the game was won
By a refined nation of the West.³

From the varied Muslim response to the onset of colonialism and ‘modernity’ emerged one of the more important South Asian critiques of the European model of the nation-state.

In my recently published book, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community South Asian Islam since 1850*, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2001) I have sought to tease out and re-examine those facets in Muslim discourse and politics which apparently could not be accommodated within the broader framework of an all-India nationalism. These according to conventional arguments stem from the pervasiveness of communitarian idioms in Muslim self-projections of identity and history. On this view Muslim discourse, standing outside liberal democratic theory, could not palpably reconcile itself to a mainstream Indian nationalism fashioning itself on borrowed notions from the European model of the nation-state.

There is something curious about the proposition. After all, the very discourse and politics which supposedly rejected the idea of the

³ *Kabhi Turanioon ne ghar luta*
Kabhi Duranioon ne zar luta
Kabhi Nadar ne qatal-i-am kiya
Kabhi Mahmud ne ghulam kiya
Sab se akhir me lai gai bazi
Aik shaista qaum maghrib ki.

(Muzaffar Abbas, *Urdu Main Qaumi Shairi*, Maktabah-e-Aliyah, Lahore, 1978, p.134.)

modern nation-state ended up creating one after a bitter and hard fought process of negotiations. Moreover, the seeming obsession of Muslims with the community as opposed to the individual draws upon a particular reading of Islamic normative theory which cannot be taken as an adequate gauge for the actual practice of their politics. Apart from discrepancies between normative theory and political practice, the Muslims of South Asia have not been any less individualistic for projecting a communitarian vision of their religiously informed cultural differences. By outlining the context and the vision of their religiously informed cultural identity. By outlining the context and the concepts which moulded constructions of Muslim identity from the late nineteenth century, I have tried uncovering the elements of an alternative paradigm for South Asian history, one which instead of excluding and misunderstanding cultural differences might be amenable to accommodating them in more creative ways.

Muslim Conceptions of ‘Nation’ and ‘Nationalism’:

Until the turn of the 20th century the narratives on communitarian identity projected by the press and publications market emphasized religiously informed culture difference without elucidating a distinctively Indian Muslim conception of 'nation' and 'nationalism'.⁴ Greater clarity, if not a dramatic shift, in Muslim ideas on 'nation' and 'nationality' developed out of a critique of certain variants of western nationalism spearheaded by Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938). A Muslim, an Indian and a Punjabi of Kashmiri ancestry, Iqbal's own individuality and sense of community was shaped in equal measure by these multiple affiliations. Despite the overwhelming emphasis on the Islamic *ummah* in Iqbal's mature philosophy and poetry, the entire corpus of his work is marked by a celebration of individual freedom as much as of the Muslim community. In the poem '*Mazhab*' it was as an individual Muslim that Iqbal exhorted his fellow co-religionists

⁴ For a detailed account see Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850*, London/New York: Routledge; Delhi: Oxford University Press and Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2000-2001.

to recognize the importance of solidarity by upholding the tenets of their faith, not just as external rituals or superstitions, but as emotive norms which bound them to the community of the Holy Prophet of Islam. He deployed the word *millat* in the same sense as the 'nation' and distinguished it from the word *qaum*. Based on his study of the Quran, he noted that *millat* refers to religion, law and a programme while *qaum* signifies a group of people unguided by a prophetic law and a religion. He interpreted the *millat* as a religiously guided community of individuals while the *qaum* could include both the guided and the unguided. A *qaum* might have a *millat* or a particular way of life, but a *millat* of a *qaum* was inconceivable since the *millat* or *ummat* could encapsulate the nation; they could never be merged in them.

Significantly, Iqbal began his poetic career as a strong proponent of the idea of *wataniyat* or love of the territorial homeland. His *Tarana-i-Hindi* or the Indian anthem composed in 1904 is still one of the most popular patriotic narrations of the national ideal. In a number of poems written before his departure to Europe in 1905, Iqbal wrote feelingly about India and his own despondency over the rising incidence of strife between Hindus and Muslims. While in Britain Iqbal began reformulating his own views on *wataniyat* or territorial nationalism which along with western materialism struck him as a recipe for European disaster. Upon returning to India in 1908 Iqbal wrote a series of poems extolling the virtues of the Islamic conception of universal brotherhood and disparaging western nationalism as the source of narrow minded bigotry, hatred and conflict. In a poem called *Wataniyat* he declared that of all the new gods, the biggest was the nation; whoever donned the nation's apparel wore the shroud of religion. It is interesting to note that the other great poet-philosopher of India - Rabindranath Tagore - began voicing his disenchantment with territorial nationalism at about exactly the same moment in history. In 1905 at the onset of the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal, Tagore had celebrated the glories of the mother-nation. By 1908 his mood had turned sombre at the hubris of the new nationalism. What they saw of communitarian bigotry in Bengal and Punjab as well as European rivalries of a murderous sort turned both Tagore and Iqbal into powerful critics of the western model of the territorial nation-

state. Tagore's evocation of universal humanity was not devoid of a religious sensibility. Iqbal's more self-conscious adoption of the purely Islamic idiom was not an overture to an exclusivity which justified religious bigotry. It was symptomatic of a desire to distance himself from the epidemic of 'isms' which circumscribed his own sense of individuality. He critiqued western materialism as the handmaiden of exploitative capitalism, excessive rationalism as the source of spiritual decay and nationalism as the breeding ground of a novel kind of fanaticism. Looking to counter these aggressive trends, Iqbal turned to Islam as a political weapon with which to give full play to his poetic prowess. In the *Milli Tarana* or the anthem of the Muslim community, Iqbal invoked the ideal of Islamic universalism when he wrote:

China and Arabia are ours, India is ours
We are Muslim, the whole world is our homeland.⁵

Iqbal was not cutting loose from India so much as appropriating it along with the rest of the world. As he let slip in *Balad-i-Islamia*, if *qaumiyat* or nationalism in Islam were delimited by space, then its boundaries would transcend not just India but also Persia or Syria.

This was an ingenious way of offsetting the growing disenchantment among his politically conscious co-religionists at being excluded or marginalized in the narratives of Indian nationalism authored by some of their Hindu compatriots. As Mohamed Ali (1878-1931), another rising star on the Muslim horizon, put it in 1908 to the moderate Congress leader G. K. Gokhale, religious differences had not caused nearly as much bloodshed as territorial nationality. Pure territorialism appealed to the Hindu mind. The 'same intensity and fervour in their territorial patriotism' could not reasonably be expected of Muslims who for the past thirteen centuries had been "a nation without a country". For three days in the year the Congress talked of nothing but 'fraternity and love' among territorial patriots. This was a 'false and factitious unity' since 'many of the patriots [we]re as narrow and

⁵ Iqbal, *Bang-i-Dara* in *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, Karachi: Al Muslim Publishers, 1994, p.132.

selfish and as caste-ridden during the remaining 362 days as any Mosalmans whom they denounce as a fanatic'.⁶ Iqbal blamed this on the Hindu and Muslim predilection to imitate the west. Echoing the thoughts of the great Islamic universalist Jamaluddin Afghani, Iqbal reinvoked the idea of the *millat* in a language intended to exhilarate his languid and dejected co-religionists. Unencumbered by territory, race, caste, colour and nationality, the *millat* was the ideal community with antecedents going as far back as the Prophet of Islam. Yet Iqbal had no illusions about the capacity of Muslims to approximate the ideal community of Islam.

In two of his most forceful and controversial poems, the *Shikwa* and the *Jawab-i-Shikwa* composed in 1909 and 1913 respectively, Iqbal takes the normative Muslim belief in the absence of any intermediaries between the individual and God to an extreme. Throwing all caution to the winds he boldly questions Allah's sense of justice in rewarding the Faithful so poorly for their services in spreading the message of Islam throughout the world:

Before our time, a strange sight was the world you had made:
Some worshipped stone idols, others bowed to trees and prayed.
Do you know of anyone, Lord, who then took Your Name? I ask.
It was the muscle in the Muslim's arm that did your task.

Even so you accuse us of lack of faith on our part.
If we lacked faith, you did little to win our heart,
Your blessings are showered on homes of unbelievers, strangers all
Only to the poor Muslim, Your wrath like lightning falls...⁷

⁶ Mohamed Ali to G. K. Gokhale, 8 February 1908 in Shan Muhammad (ed.), *Unpublished Letters of the Ali Brothers*, Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1979, pp.9 and 11.

⁷ Muhammad Iqbal, *Shikwa and Jawab-i-Shikwa* (Complaint and Answer: Iqbal's Dialogue with Allah), translated by Khushwant Singh, (third edition), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp.31, 37, 40-1 and 44-5.)

Chasing his own mirages in the desert of Islamic dreams, Iqbal urged Allah to spread the rare commodity of love in India so those temple worshippers might convert to Islam.

The poem generated a commotion among educated Muslims and infuriated many Hindus, though no one denied its literary quality. Charged with bigotry and heresy, Iqbal wrote a laudatory poem on Ram and tried placating orthodox Muslim ulema incensed by his impudence with the *Jawab-i-Shikwa*. The substance of God's response was that Muslims themselves were to blame for their debased condition. They had abandoned the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Despite a common set of religious symbols, the Muslims were hopelessly divided:

You are Saiyyads as well as Mirzas, and you are Afghans -
You are all these, but tell me are you also Mussalmans?⁸

The Muslim community, as he had explained at Aligarh University, was unlike any other on account of its 'peculiar conception of nationality' which had nothing to do with the unity of language or country or of economic interest. Derived from 'a purely abstract idea' it was 'objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities' who identified with the *sunnah* or historical tradition associated with the Prophet of Islam. The subjective feeling of belonging to the community of the Prophet Muhammad gave Muslims a sense of nationality or *asabiyyat*. While creating a strong feeling for their own nationality, *asabiyyat* did 'not necessarily imply any feeling of hatred against other nationalities'. The Muslim community was structured by the religious ideal, though not by its 'theological centralisation' which would 'unnecessarily limit the liberty of the individual'.⁹

The core of Iqbal's message to the Muslims of India was individual self-affirmation, *khudi*, leading to purposeful collective action. In

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁹ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Muslim Community-A Sociological Study*, edited by Muzaffar Abbas, Maktabah-e-Aliyah, Lahore, 1983, pp.16-17.

contrast to its negative connotations in Persian as selfishness and egoism, Iqbal used *khudi* as self, personality in a purely positive sense. His philosophy exults in the idea of the dynamic individual in full possession of the creative personality interacting with and contributing to the life of the community. This was a natural progression for a people whose religion demanded submission to none other than Allah and identification with the *millat* or the supra-territorial community of the faithful bound by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Released of all material impediments, the individual and the community of Islam could through a process of perpetual spiritual renewal attain the heights ordained for them. Yet to make a difference Iqbal's invigorating thoughts had to first clear layers of cobwebs rooted in Muslim consciousness. These could prove far more obstinate than the barriers his philosophy had systematically tried breaking down.

In his presidential address to the All-India Muslim League in December 1930, he posed the rhetorical question of whether it was possible 'to retain Islam as an ethical idea and...reject it as a polity' in order to embrace the idea of 'national politics' in which religion played no part.¹⁰ As is evident in the poem '*Mazhab*' first published in 1924 in an anthology entitled *Bang-i-Dara*, or the sound of the moving caravan, Iqbal thought it a contradiction in terms for Indian Muslims to subscribe to a national polity by abandoning the principles of Islamic solidarity.

He lamented that the religious leaders of Muslim India deemed the Indian National Congress's ideal of territorial nationalism to be consistent with Islam: 'strange indeed are the vicissitudes of time. Formerly, the half-Westernised educated Muslims were under the spell of Europe; now the curse has descended upon religious leaders. It was not that the Islamic worldview rejected love of one's homeland or *watan*. But modern nationalism was not merely about territorial attachments; it was 'a principle of human society', 'a political

¹⁰ Iqbal's presidential address to the All-India Muslim League, Allahabad, December 1930 in Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan*, Karachi, 1970, vol.11, pp.156-7.

concept' based on the separation of religion and the state. It was this which clashed with Islam which 'for the first time, gave the message to mankind that religion was neither national nor racial, nor individual and private, but purely human and that its purpose was to unite and organise mankind despite all its natural distinctions'.¹¹

Without denying the modernist overtones in Iqbal's thought, this was not a conception of religion as a demarcator of difference. Rather it was a notion of religion as faith with the potential to erase national and racial differences in order to attain a universal human consciousness based on the multiplicity of existence in the unity of Divine creation. The distinction between religion as difference and religion as faith is an important one, not least on account of the legitimisation acquired by violent and murderous acts attributed to religious passions in late colonial and post-colonial South Asia. It was nationalism, according to Iqbal, which gave rise to the 'relativity of religions', the notion that religions were territorially specific and unsuited to the temperament of other nations. It was nationalism, therefore, and not religion which by compartmentalising people into different nations was the source of modern conflicts. The 'peculiar greatness' of the Prophet of Islam lay in destroying the 'invented distinctions and superiority complexes of the nations of the world', such as land, race or genealogy, without denying the fact of cultural differences or the manifold multiplicities of tribe, colour and languages which co-existed in the unity of the one and only God.¹²

A claim of Islam's distinctiveness and universality of purpose might seem contradictory, accustomed as we are to perceiving the world in terms of the binary opposition between religion and 'secular' politics. Yet the nub of Iqbal's critique of western enlightenment philosophy and, by extension, of Congress's ideal of a secular nationalism was the denial that 'all human life is spiritual'. The nature of any act, even if 'secular in its import' was 'determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it'. Whether an action was inspired by

¹¹ [Ibid.](#), pp.252-5.

¹² [Ibid.](#), p.262.

religion or irreligious political motives depended on positionally specific observations since the secular in itself was 'sacred in the roots of its being'. An act was temporal or profane if it was done in a 'spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life' and 'spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity.'¹³

Iqbal's philosophical reconstruction of Islam underscore the tensions between a view of Indian nationalism based on keeping religion out of politics and the normative Muslim conception of treating the spiritual and temporal domains in non-oppositional terms. It was precisely because religion as a demarcator of difference was insufficient to sustain Islam as an ethical ideal that Iqbal rejected the possibility of Muslims agreeing to privatise their religiously informed cultural identities in the interest of being considered politically as part of the Indian nation. In the last year of his life he severely castigated Maulana Husain Ahmed Madni - the pro-Congress leader of the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Hind - for suggesting that Indian Muslims should embrace the vision of an inclusionary Indian nationalism in which they would have complete freedom with regard to their personal law and religious practices. Madni had maintained that the *millat* was something higher than the nation, likening the relationship to the cosmic one between heaven and earth. Yet in Iqbal's opinion, the maulana had 'left no place for *millat* by preaching to the eight crore Muslims to lose their identity in the country, and therefore in the majority, and to make nation a heaven...ignor[ing] the fact that Islam will thereby be reduced to the status of the earth.'¹⁴

In Iqbal's lofty philosophical scheme, religion as a social demarcator of difference was an insufficient condition for the existence of the Muslim community in India. Islam demanded the fashioning of a purely human consciousness and could not suffer being turned into pure earth in an artful separation of the temporal and the spiritual, the religious and the secular. Often applied to explain or justify the

¹³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture and Iqbal Academy, 1989, pp.122-3.

¹⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, edited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani, Lahore, Iqbal Academy, 1977, p.256.

creation of Pakistan, Iqbal's ideas on Islam as a universal faith encompassing the temporal and the spiritual realms seriously demand a reassessment of the role of religion in the creation of a separate Muslim state in the subcontinent.

Between the Ideal and the Real: Muslim Identity and the Modern Nation-State

A partition of India along self-professedly religious lines has lent a teleological tendency to the processes of historical retrieval. Religion, neither adequately problematised nor carefully contextualized, has contributed to the perpetuation of a most awkward binary opposition between 'nationalism' and 'communalism' which in separating the temporal from the spiritual realms blurs the distinction between religion as social demarcator and religion as faith. It was mainly religion as social demarcator, and for some also concerns with religion as faith, not the dream of an Islamic theocracy which informed the All-India Muslim League's demand for a Pakistan in March 1940.

The embodiment of Muslim aspirations and the bastion of their political rights and distinctive culture, Pakistan ever since its creation has been struggling to reconcile the claims of its Islamic identity with ideas of statehood inherited from colonial rulers. In making the transition from colonialism, it proved easier to preserve the structures of the old state than to realign them with the dominant conceptions that had fired the Muslim nation's struggle for equality, solidarity and freedom.

The realisation of these goals, according to Pakistan's great visionary Muhammad Iqbal, constituted the primary ends of the state from an Islamic point of view. As I pointed out earlier, Iqbal rejected any duality between spiritual and temporal affairs. The separation of state and civil society in modern Europe was a product of the historical conflict between temporal and spiritual authority. In the absence of any sort of church 'such a thing could never happen in Islam' which

was 'from the very beginning a civil society, having received from the Quran a set of legal principles which...carried...great potentialities of expansion and development by interpretation'. Declaring the 'secular' to be 'sacred in the roots of its being', Iqbal asserted that the state in Islam was 'only an effort to realise the spiritual in human organisation'. It was in 'this sense alone that the State in Islam is a theocracy, not in the sense that it was headed by a representative of God on earth who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility'.¹⁵

Yet civil society in Pakistan, such as it exists, is a direct legacy of British colonial rule in India. The colonial state's decision to use religion as the basis for not only enumerating but also governing a complex society was a negation of the strategy of steering politics away from the domains of religion and culture. Census enumeration based on a privileging of the religious distinction militated against any neat separation between the temporal and spiritual domains. Demands for places in educational institutions, jobs in government and shares of elective representation all drew on statistics compiled by conscientious colonial census enumerators. Instead of being relegated to the private sphere where colonial intervention was strictly prohibited, the religiously informed cultural identities of Britain's Indians subjects were orchestrated diligently and innovatively in the public arena by social groups competing for government patronage or attention.

The wholly false separation of the 'public' and the 'private' as well as secular and religious space had large consequences for relations between the state and civil society in not only colonial India but also post-colonial Pakistan. If a civil society existed at all in British India, its space was badly squeezed between a colonial 'public' which denied citizenship rights and a communitarian 'private' restricted to the personal laws of religion. This is one reason why Iqbal's conception of the state, drawing upon Islamic rather than colonial ideals, has been dramatically at odds with the history of the post-colonial modern nation-state of Pakistan. More than five decades after

¹⁵ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp.122-3.

independence, Iqbal's equation of Islam and civil society not only remains unrealised but has been lost sight of in the litany of confusions surrounding conceptions of national identity and state sovereignty, religious and secular space as well as spiritual and temporal life.

The prolonged denial of the most elementary rights of citizenship in a post-colonial state proclaiming an Islamic identity demands a more nuanced appreciation of the contours and complexion of the arenas constituting 'civil society'. If as Iqbal argued the very idea of civil society as it developed in Europe based on a separation of spiritual and temporal authority was alien to the Muslim mind, is it at all appropriate to deploy the notion in a country whose *raison d'être* is Islam? Yet for all the talk about its religious ideology and the absence of any formal separation between the state and civil society, Pakistan has scarcely managed to modify old colonial structures to achieve some of the key ideational principles of Islam. The disjunction between the ideological pretensions of the state and its colonial structures on the one hand, and the not so Islamic basis of civil society in Pakistan on the other, is frequently attributed to the inadequate application of the principal tenets of the faith. On this view, Islam is not only wholly compatible with democracy but also its highest ethical manifestation. A thorough Islamization of state and civil society would automatically address the issue of democratic rights and remove all the moral ills afflicting the country.

It has been simpler, certainly less controversial, to reconcile Islamic values with democracy at the normative level than to fashion a political culture capable of translating ideals into reality. If the authoritarian bearing of the state has been a formidable obstacle, the nature of 'civil society' and its class and ideological composition has been an even greater impediment in the establishment of democracy in this country. A purely statist approach to the problem of democratic institutions in Pakistan would concentrate attention on reforming the administrative machinery which,

despite acute signs of wear and tear, has persisted with few modifications since the colonial period. But it is precisely the lingering colonial characteristics of 'civil society' in Pakistan that are posing some of the biggest stumbling blocks to instituting the ideational changes required to bring about a thorough democratisation of existing institutional structures. The most striking of these is the lack of a well articulated conception of the difference between public good and private interest without which the individual and collective aspects of rights and responsibilities in a civil society must necessarily remain poorly defined. With the 'public' sphere seen to be the domain of the state in the main, a civil society owing its origins and character to a period of colonial rule has been reduced to an arena where individuals act in their private interests without let or hindrance, regardless of whether or not they care to invoke the notion of the collective good.

The denial of the rights of citizenship during extended periods of authoritarian rule has greatly aggravated the problem stemming from the absence of any clear sense of the responsibilities of citizenship which can only flow from a well regulated 'public' which is part and parcel of civil society and not just that of the state. For all the recent hue and cry about public accountability, there are as yet no organised mechanisms within civil society capable of forcing the issue autonomously of state institutions. This more than any other aspect has severely constricted the space for the emergence of democratic institutions which can give expression to Islamic values, readily touted at the level of popular discourse, but as yet hopelessly unable to permit the citizenry, jointly and severally, to resist the ideational and structural moorings of an authoritarian post-colonial state or check the deepening polarisation, crime and violence spawning ever larger segments of civil society.

Turning Colonial Subjects into Citizens of a Muslim State:

In making the transition from colonial subjecthood to citizenship in a Muslim nation-state, Pakistanis have had to contend with a perplexing set of ideational and structural constraints. At the ideological level, Pakistan ever since its traumatic birth has had to confront the impossibility of reconciling the claims of Muslim nationhood with the actual winning of sovereign statehood. The claim that Indian Muslims constituted a distinctive and identifiable community was raised on behalf of the entire Muslim population of the subcontinent. This was consistent with the Islamic concept of nationality or *asabiyyat* which requires no unity of language, country or economic interest, only the subjective feeling of belonging to the world wide Muslim *ummah* structured by the religious ideal. Yet the territorial contours of the newly created homeland for India's Muslims ensured that there were as many Muslim non-citizens outside as there would be Muslim citizens within. The contradiction has never been fully addressed, far less resolved, and serves as the principal fault line underpinning Pakistan's quest for an identity which is Islamic as well as national. It could neither be wholly Islamic nor completely national since the imperatives of citizenship in a territorial nation-state cannot be squared with the supra-territorial notion of a Muslim *ummah*.

In order to be true to the Islamic conception of the polity, religious affiliations and not the boundaries of the nation-state had to be the main qualification distinguishing citizens from non-citizens. While proclaiming Islam as the sole basis of nationality, the architects of Pakistan had no qualms severing all ties with co-religionists in India whose geographical location denied them citizenship rights in a Muslim state created on the bedrock of a non-territorially defined Muslim nation or *ummah*. This despite the fact that these Muslim non-citizens are theoretically constitutive elements not only of the *ummah* but also of the pre-1947 'Muslim nation'. An unavoidable outcome of the establishment of a territorial nation-state, it has not been taken to its logical conclusion to extend equal rights of citizenship to non-Muslims in Pakistan. So a basic contractual principle of the modern nation-state, namely equal citizenship rights,

is denied on the grounds that this is contrary to a purely Islamic conception of government.

A constitutional lawyer by training, the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had correctly gauged the difficulties of reconciling the conception of a religious state with the need to confer equal citizenship rights in a modern nation-state. This was the backdrop to his famous speech of 11 August 1947 at the first meeting of the Pakistan constituent assembly. The insight of the founding father was not one which the ideologues of an Islamic Pakistan were minded to take on board. For them lip service to Islam seemed a perfect recipe to conceal and contain the multiple class, regional, linguistic and sectarian fractures of the body politic. But appeals to Islam, however watered down in practice, provided political space to those ready and willing to deploy religion to gain access to state power.

Undeterred by the illogicalities, some inherent and others emerging, in their vision of Pakistan's identity, the managers of the state have never resiled from the idioms of an inclusionary nationalism based on Islam. Adopting an Islamic idiom to win the allegiance of territories constituting the newly created nation-state might have proven to be an ace if not for the denial of democratic rights of citizenship for the better part of Pakistan's history. The state's deployment of Islam has not mitigated the sense of relative deprivation, disillusionment and desperation among a growing number of people. Regional and linguistic diversities have provided the highest common denominator of the multifaceted grievances of the people of Pakistan, denied as most of them have been of basic, much less equal, rights of citizenship.

This is the crux of the problem. Pakistan is currently precariously poised in both structural and ideological terms. Structurally the institutions of the state are virtually paralysed. What in the colonial era was an impersonalised state structure, albeit one amenable to personalised

manipulations has in the post-colonial period been turned increasingly into an institutionalised framework to serve the private ends of alternating ruling configurations. Independence from alien rule loosened the curbs on the personalization of power as an inherently bureaucratic and authoritarian state turned to establishing a semblance of legitimacy by widening its networks of social support. A state structure, which even in the colonial era fell well short of the ideal of exercising impersonalised sovereignty through rule bound institutions, was now more susceptible than ever to reflecting the dominant impulses of a civil society where 'public' concerns were shaped by a patriarchally defined private sphere.

In Pakistan, the process gathered momentum as a direct result of prolonged bouts of authoritarian rule. A weak political party system together with a press that until recently was bound and gagged and a dependent judiciary have been unable to check the personalization of a formally impersonalised state structure. The growing inefficacy of state institutions to regulate public space, deemed by a disempowered citizenry as lying outside the realm of their civic responsibilities, has hugely exacerbated the difficulties flowing from the ongoing personalization of power and authority in Pakistan. An all but collapsed administrative structure and the emergence of a parallel arms and drugs economy - a product of the support lent by General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime to the Afghan resistance against the Soviets - has made a mockery of the nation-state's capacity to protect the life and property of its citizens. Amazingly well armed elements in civil society either make nonsense of the elementary rules of civic behaviour or sabotage them in more and more shocking fashion. Personal self-promotion at public risk has today become the norm as more and more are settling scores through arbitrary and violent means.

With individuals taking the law into their own hands in a civil society that has yet to decolonize itself to force a realignment

of the 'public' and the 'private', ideas of statehood based on monolithic, indivisible and impersonalised sovereignty borrowed from the west have acquired even more of a hollow ring than before. There is undoubtedly an urgent need to revamp the judiciary and the police in Pakistan to allow for the emergence of democratic institutions in civil society and the strengthening of those associated with the state, parliament for instance. But structural solutions alone cannot redress the problem which is a product of the ideological contradiction in the self-projections and self-perceptions of the Pakistani state. The declaration in the early 1970s of one segment of the 'nation', namely the Ahmedis, as a minority stands out as a watershed in the ideological evolution of the Pakistani state. It has served to create a precedent for exclusion, exposing the Pakistani state's claim of inclusionary nationalism. Defining a Muslim from a non-Muslim was a particularly explosive device in a context where the state's Islamic posturing was already at odds with the basic principles of a nation-state. At a time when armed elements in civil society are giving expression to their individual and collective exasperation with the poor quality of life, allowing vocal groups not only to target and attack vulnerable minorities but also to demand the exclusion of those who form part of the Muslim collectivity - the Shias for instance - is a suicidal course for the nation-state to have embarked upon. Exclusionary nationalism, even if ingeniously packaged, is no substitute for the inclusionary nationalism based on equal citizenship rights which is the nation-state's main claim to legitimacy.

The time has come for the old and utterly false dichotomy between a secular colonial 'public' and a religiously defined communitarian 'private' to be identified and discarded. What is needed is a conception of civil society released from the prison of a colonially defined domestic or private sphere to allow citizens, individually and collectively, to reclaim public space relegated for all too long to an authoritarian state. If they are to make something of their Islamic values, of their *iman* or religion as personal faith Pakistanis,

individually and collectively, will have to rethink their ideas of statehood inherited from colonial masters so that they no longer stand in the way of their democratic aspirations. Only by rejecting the received wisdom of erstwhile colonial rulers and the misrepresentations of self-appointed votaries of an Islamic moral order for whom the expediency of religion as difference has come to replace the virtues of religion as faith can Pakistanis hope to reconstruct a religious world view that is compatible with their aspirations. This requires a view of Islam that is not restricted to personal law but inclusive of the entire field of the political, economic and social rights of citizenship.

Pakistanis have the 'state' if not quite the 'nation' of their collective imaginings, and there are ways of overcoming contradictions that cannot be resolved. Without sustained debate on citizenship rights, not just political but also social and economic, Pakistan cannot take the elementary steps towards forging a collective ethos as a nation-state. The challenge is a daunting one in a country where critical thinking has been banished for extended periods of time under military-bureaucratic rule. Yet it is one that will have to be grasped by the nettle if civil society in Pakistan is to reconfigure itself and lay the basis of future democratic institutions that cannot only check the authoritarianism rooted in the state structure but, more importantly, prove itself worthy of being defined as a modern nation-state. There would seem to be no better occasion than the onset of the 21st century to take honest stock of the sheer gravity of the situation and muster the courage and the conviction to begin rebuilding anew:

Wajood kiya hai? Faqat jauhar-e-khudi ki namood

Kar apni fiqar ke jauhar hai bai-namood tera.

(What is existence? Only self achievement made conspicuous.

Worry for yourself, as your achievement is inconspicuous.)

COSS Publications

1. COSS Bulletin No. 1, 2000.
2. COSS Bulletin No. 2, 2001.
3. S. H. Hashmi (ed.), *State of Social Sciences in Pakistan*, 2001.
4. Ayesha Jalal, *Religion as Difference, Religion as Faith: Paradoxes of Muslim Identity*, 2002.
5. COSS Bulletin No. 3, 2002 (under preparation).

The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan,

Dr. S. H. Hashmi (ed.), Islamabad, 2001.

Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan (COSS) that has been established to help promote social sciences in Pakistan has reprinted the book *The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan*, edited by Dr. S. H. Hashmi and published by Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad in 1989 to make it available to a larger number of social scientists. The book consists of 19 articles, 13 of them analyse major social science disciplines. The book is first comprehensive evaluation of social sciences in Pakistan. It retains its relevance and utility even after eleven years of its publication. The price of the book is Rs. 200 and for members Rs. 170. The book has also been placed at COSS website. It is available at National Book Foundation outlets in various cities. It can also be purchased directly from COSS office, H. No. 3, St. 18, F-7/2, Islamabad.

Science and Society

In response to the interest shown by several Pakistani scientists the Council of Social Sciences (COSS) has expanded its scope to study relations between science and society while keeping its main focus on social sciences. With its expanded scope COSS:

1. Plans to hold seminars on philosophy of sciences and social sciences and related subjects to understand the nexus between the two sciences.
2. Will encourage social scientists to identify the conditions that determine the development of natural sciences and policy measures that needs to be taken to promote them.
3. Will support research projects that help evaluate the impact of modern technology on the Pakistani society and culture subject to availability of funds.
4. Will stimulate interest among scientists and social scientists to find out how traditional and modern technical knowledge can reinforce their mutual positive contributions.

With its expanded scope several well-known scientists joined COSS. Pakistan Science Foundation has sanctioned an annual grant of Rs. 30,000 for five years to be spent on holding seminars and organising lectures on science and society and issue reports and publications.

Under its Science and Society section COSS undertook the following activities:

1. Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy delivered the first lecture in this series at Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi on 22 May, 2001 on “How to Nurture Scientific Culture in an Orthodox Society.”
2. It held a seminar on “The State of Science and Technology in Pakistan and Factors that Determine it” on June 9, 2001 in Islamabad in which several known scientists and social scientists participated.

Programme for 2002

1. Publication of proceedings of seminar on “The State of Science and Technology in Pakistan and factors that Determine it.”
2. Preparation of a Monograph on “A Brief History of Science in Pakistan.”
3. Lectures in selected universities on State of Science in Pakistan.

Introduction to Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan [COSS]

Registered on 3rd June, 2000, Council of Social Sciences, Pakistan (COSS) is a service oriented, non-profit and autonomous organisation of social scientists. It is committed to :

- Work towards evaluating and raising the standard of social sciences.
- Fostering interdisciplinary orientation in social sciences and strengthening their links with natural sciences.
- Building and strengthening a community of social scientists belonging to different disciplines and working in recognised universities, research institutes and civil society organisations by providing them a platform that promotes interaction amongst them.
- Foster scientific approach among the public through means such as discussions in the media and dissemination of non-technical versions of outstanding works of social scientists in national and regional languages.

By February 2002 COSS had 144 members. They include 25 life members, 118 regular members and one institutional member. Of them, 78 are located in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, 22 in Karachi, 17 in Lahore, 3 in Peshawar, one each in Multan, D. I. Khan, Jamshoro, Khairpur and Hyderabad and 19 abroad. Since its inception COSS has reprinted the book *The State of Social Sciences in Pakistan* and issued two bulletins. The bulletins carried reports on ongoing research projects and seminars and conferences held and listed publications and activities of social scientists. COSS is presently engaged in producing a new book on the state of social sciences covering the period 1985-2000.

For information about the objectives and work programme of COSS and how to become its member please visit COSS website: www.coss.sdnpk.org or send email on cossakistan@yahoo.com or write on the following postal address: H. No. 3, St. 18, F-7/2, Islamabad, Fax No. 92-051-2275803.

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