

Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining

Ayesha Jalal

Even before an anthropologist's tour de force² underlined the power of imagination as creation in narrative constructions of the 'nation', memory, myth and might had been triumphantly parading the realm of historical scholarship. The torch of objectivity did not have to go cold for the heat of subjectivity to captivate and command audiences through print and signs, visual or aural. It is simply that the commodification of the past by the marketplace and the expansive imaginings of power have combined to reduce the once revered craft of the historian to a battlefield where mired imaginings posture as interpretations in a contest in which there are no umpires, only partisans. So it is not necessary to claim objective ground when presumably no such domain exists or even to spin yarns about 'authenticity' and 'falsification'. But it is possible to make an analytical distinction between the past as invention and the past as inspiration without denying the role of creativity or power in either conception.

Just like works of art, not all styles of creativity are edifying. The subjectivity inherent in appreciation does not foreclose critical evaluation. At a time when the virus of national bigotry, religiously or territorially defined, is assuming epidemic proportions, it is worth rethinking the terms of a discourse which gratuitously celebrates collective imaginings that flourish by muzzling challenges from within and by threatening to crush, conquer or convert targeted others. The paradox posed by the politics of identity and difference cannot be addressed, much less redressed, without recognizing the potential of the creative principle in community construction to descend into the most unpalatable displays of national bigotry.

This is not to suggest that all collective imaginings are, in a manner of speaking, forms of bigotry. Yet insofar as identities are relational and historically contingent, their articulations rely on differentiating right from wrong, just from unjust and the good from the bad. Projecting the 'Us' as the positive self in creative imaginings entails slating 'Them' as the negative other. In contexts of competing and multiple identities, and there are hardly any free of contestation and diversity, the narrative of 'Us' in its myriad imaginings requires a parallel construct of an equally imagined 'Them'. While the past as inspiration might invoke images of a better future in response to a particular nexus of power, the past as invention in the pursuit of power rarely avoids the tendentious imaginings that breed bigotry. Proximity to political or state power, potential or actual, frequently drives creative imaginings to cut the corner into bigotry. The more ferocious the contest for power over representations of the 'Us' the more likely the strains of bigotry towards not only 'Them' but also the recalcitrant us within. Situating power in its dialectical relations with the creative component in imaginings can demonstrate how and when the self-definitions of collectivities slither onto the path of an implicit, if not always explicit, agenda of bigotry towards internal selves as well as external others.

Pakistan with its artificially demarcated frontiers and desperate quest for an officially

sanctioned Islamic identity lends itself remarkably well to an examination of the nexus between power and bigotry in creative imaginings of national identity. Proclaiming itself an 'Islamic state' created on the bedrock of a non-territorially defined Muslim nation or *ummah*, the architects of Pakistan embraced the idea of the nation-state without conceding space to territorial nationalism in their official ideology. Yet that has not resolved the problem of identity posed by the demographic fact of more Muslims in the subcontinent living outside the territory of the much vaunted homeland for India's Muslims. While the lack of convergence between Muslim identity and Muslim nationhood invited ingenuity in argument, the struggle for formal self-definition has been conducted in pitched battles between a vocal Islamic lobby and their so-called 'secular' and 'modernist' opponents. The dilemmas of imagining a coherent Pakistani nation have been compounded by regional and linguistic diversities which have resisted being melted down to fit the monolithic moulds of the state's Islamic identity.

With political geography cutting against the grain of the ideological protestations of the 'Islamic state', it has required an improbable array of conjuring tricks, and some somersaults on the tight rope of historical memory as well, to try and nationalize a past contested by 'enemies' within and without. Representations of 'Us' and 'Them' in Pakistani official discourse are instructive not in what they seek to falsify or authenticate but in the sheer blatancy of narrative styles employed to privilege or discredit particular interpretations of history. The task of this paper is two-fold: 1) to illustrate the ways in which the history of Pakistan has been conjured and disseminated by the state controlled educational system and 2) to highlight the failure of a forty-five year long officially inspired effort at recording history to create any sense of a coherent, much less, shared imagining of a 'national' community.

Imaginings Without State Power:

Recent historical research has underlined the extent to which the All-India Muslim League's demand for a Pakistan was unable to square the circle of the contradictory interests of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.² The demand was raised on behalf of all Indian Muslims who were deemed to be a 'nation'. Yet the creation of Pakistan effectively foreclosed the possibility of any neat equation between Muslim 'nationhood' and 'statehood' at a subcontinental level. This did not deter the architects of Pakistan's post facto national ideology from claiming the creation of the Muslim state as the logical culmination of the 'two nation' theory. But the selective uses made of history after the acquisition of state power differed in important respects from the creative imaginings that had sought to transform a minority community into a 'nation'. So it is important to consider how the Muslim case for nationhood that was more non-territorial than territorial in its imaginings came to be appropriated by a nation-state whose geographical limitations contravened the creative expansiveness of its ideological frontiers.

The genealogy of the 'two nation' idea is generally traced to Sayyid Ahmed Khan. For a man who at one time spoke of the Indian 'nation' in the singular, Sayyid Ahmed's conversion to the idea of the Muslim minority constituting a separate nation - irrespective of class, linguistic and sectarian differences - coincided with the introduction of a representative system based on the majoritarian precepts of Western liberal democracy. In much the same vein Mohammad

Iqbal's political vision of the future for Indian Muslims was more a pragmatic response than an exercise in pure imagination. Iqbal, however, did seem to suggest the existence of multiple nations in India but tailored his political ideal to fit the established parameters of colonial discourse. This discourse had in 1909 conceded separate electorates to Muslims, thus creating the political space without which invoking the 'nation' from the podium of the All-India Muslim League would have been an exercise in futility. Taking the constraints on creativity imposed by colonial policies and membership of a geographically disparate political community a step further, both the crusader and the poetic visionary of the Muslim 'nation' avoided all comment on India as a conglomerate of multi-religious and multi-national states.

No such restrictions operated for that most fertile of Muslim minds, Choudhary Rahmat Ali, the inventor of the word 'Pakistan', literally the land of the pure. Based in Cambridge and without any established standing in either elite Muslim circles or the colonial political system, Rahmat Ali made up for it by giving unbridled play to the creative power of imagination. Unlike Iqbal, Rahmat Ali conceived of a wholly sovereign and separate state of Pakistan. The scheme was dismissed out of hand by most Muslim politicians, some of whom described it as 'chimerical' and 'impracticable'. Despite Rahmat Ali's emphatic denials and characterization of its leader as the 'Quisling-i-Azam Jinnah',³ the Muslim League's demand for a Pakistan became unfairly linked with his grandiose idea of a Muslim state of the same name stretching all the way to the Ottoman domains. Historical memory despite its expansive thrusts into the past is often cruel to those whose creations it appropriates.

Sadly for Rahmat Ali, no one remembers his intriguing pamphlet **'India: the Continent of Dinia or the Country of Doom'**. First published in May 1945 it ran two additional editions. Rahmat Ali's main concern was to demolish the 'myth of Indianism' as nothing more than a treacherous attempt by caste Hindus and the British to enslave seven 'non-Indian nations' - Muslims, Dravidians, Akhoots (Depressed Castes), Christians, Sikhs, Buddhs and Parsis - and deny them sovereignty in the continent of 'Dinia', a construction he arrived at by transposing the central 'D' in India to first place so that it could literally mean the abode of religions.

Rahmat Ali's supra-communal 'Dinia Continental Movement' aimed at reversing the processes of Indianism and helping 'non-Indian' nations 'establish their sovereign[ity]'. The Muslim components of 'Dinia' included a 'Pakistan' consisting of the Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west, 'Bangistan' or 'Bang-i-Islamistan' (Bengal) and several innovatively named Muslim sovereign states. Although Rahmat Ali's rollicking imagination confined 'Hindoostan' to a shrunken space in northern India with a vengeance, it allowed for non-Muslim countries like 'Sikhia', 'Akhoostan', 'Dravidha' and such sovereign linguistic states as Andhra, Karnatar, Mahrashatar etc.,⁴

It is perhaps because the imaginings of power decree limits where the power of imagination knows none that Rahmat Ali's 'Pakistan' scheme has been his main claim to fame. Yet it took a pragmatist who had set his sights on tipping the scales of power to immortalize a man who might otherwise have fallen through the trap door of historical remembrance. For someone who liked to describe himself as a 'cold-blooded logician', Mohammad Ali Jinnah made no pretence of imagination or creativity. He left all that to his followers. Concerned only with giving practical shape to a welter of Muslim imaginings about how power was to be shared in an independent India, Jinnah surveyed the contours of the possible and staked a claim which landed

him with much less than what he had bargained for but it was something on which his disparate followers could try building the castles of their respective dreams.

If the ambiguities of the Muslim League's demand had irritated and baffled its opponents, the unambiguous language in which Jinnah spoke at the first meeting of the Pakistan constituent assembly on August 11, 1947 was to utterly confound the adherents of bygone Muslim imaginings. Having ostensibly attained the goal of a Muslim homeland on the basis of his advocacy of the 'two nation' theory, Jinnah unhaltingly called for a separation of state and religion as well as equal citizenship rights regardless of communal affiliations. Discerning the tensions inherent in Pakistan's geographical and ideological frontiers, the pragmatist in Jinnah tried placing a different accent on Muslim imaginings now that state power had been won. With freedom finally around the corner, Jinnah declared:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples,
you are free to go to your mosques or to any other
place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may
belong to any religion or caste or creed - that has
nothing to do with the business of the State.⁵

Although the speech was promptly suppressed by the official guardians of Pakistan's ideological frontiers, it has served as the magna carta for those who, in spite of being worsted in successive skirmishes, style themselves as the true inheritors of Jinnah's political legacy. But with the appropriation of Jinnah by all and sundry, neither the speech nor the legacy of which it is a part, has mattered very much in filling the deep crevices that constitute the contested narratives of Pakistani history. The confinement of geographical space, contested from within and besieged by a powerful enemy without, was not conducive to creative imaginings of which shared histories are made. So state power had to be called in to inject a new kind of 'creativity' into the enterprise of collective remembrance.

Investing the Nation-State with History:

A leading feminist poet of Pakistan was alluding to the state's search for a history when she spoke of the stifling ambience in a government bureau where waiting for the monthly payroll means the daily slaughter of conscience in the telling of official lies. When 'a sword taller than ourselves we claim as our inheritance', we must 'decorate our tongues with our ancestral colours'. So the language of officialdom is unspeakably blunt, but only in the sharpness of credibility it lacks:

Those living with rusted tongues in rusted times are the office babus:
"the accounts of the departed are all wrong
the accounts of the incomers all right"
Only rusted tongues could say that!
Now the ironmonger, who is the maker of the sword,

believes it is he who writes victory.⁶

When petty officials carry the brief of writing history as victory, the imaginings of power can discard the stray 'truths' of pure inspiration and pretend to monopolize the enterprise of creativity. A sort of selective amnesia descends which can be resisted and breached but never quite dissipated.

The unequal division of labor between state and civil society that has characterized the construction and dissemination of knowledge in general and the writing of Pakistani history in particular has thrived on deteriorating educational standards. Twisted this way and that, the educational system became hooked to officially concocted national soporifics very early on in the day. The rewriting of history from an Islamic point of view, however defined, was given the highest priority by the managers of the state and has since been refined to a bureaucratic art by national research societies and central or provincial textbook boards. A state controlled curriculum guarantees a captive market for the history textbooks. These are the official gospels teachers advise students to learn by rote if they want to make a decent showing in examinations, especially those leading to the matriculation, intermediate and bachelor's degrees. The gems of wisdom contained in textbooks rarely survive the writing of the exam. But with help from the state controlled media, the lessons learnt in school and college serve as the alphabet and the grammar that makes psyches literate in the idioms of national ideology.

To know the alphabet and grammar of the textbooks is to uncover the idioms employed to nationalize the Pakistani past. A comprehensive analysis of these idioms at all levels of the educational system is beyond the scope of this paper. So the spotlight is focused on the newly invented subject of 'Pakistan Studies' and what appear to be two of the more troubled themes in the writing of the textbooks, that of origin and sacrifice. Although consistent in presenting a generally jaundiced and jumbled view of the past, officially approved textbooks display an exasperating degree of confusion as to when and where to begin cataloguing Pakistani history. Much the same uncertainty surrounds the question of sacrifice for the cause of Pakistan in which some self-styled nationalists display their provincial and linguistic affiliations even as they attempt to advance the cause of the state's official ideology. So while there is no apparent disagreement on the ideological foundations of the state, the twin issues of historic origins and national sacrifice lends some variety to the official and associated imaginings that contribute to the writing of history textbooks. Diversity born of confused origins and contested sacrifices straitjacketed by a teleological approach is what places Pakistan's history textbooks amongst the best available sources for assessing the nexus between power and bigotry in creative imaginings of a national past.

Originary Myths:

Official historiography in Pakistan traces the origin of the idea, if not the country itself, to at least half a dozen different dates and places. There are authors whose expansive pan-Islamic imaginings detect the beginnings of Pakistan in the birth of Islam on the Arabian peninsula. Those more geographically focused on the subcontinent have their own pet ideas on the precise moment of Pakistan's birth. With the problem of origin informing the

narrative style, the range of assorted imaginings that serve as official discourse on the past are priceless examples of the narrative confusions flowing from tensions between the ideology of Muslim nationalism and the geographical limitations of the Pakistani nation-state. Authors chasing Pakistan's mirage in the Arabian desert bridge the temporal and spatial distance between the origins of Islam and Pakistan in an imaginative leap fired by an ideology of Muslim supremacy in the world and a geographical vision that is pan-Islamic in scope. One author traces the ideological inspirations of Pakistan to an imaginatively reclaimed pre-Islamic Muslim world: 'we know by reading the Quran and the Hadith that in the early past ages of Islam and the Muslims, Allah raised many Prophets and Muslims who brought victory to Islam and the Muslims'. The descendants of 'Prophet Yaqub (peace be upon him) were called "Bani Israel"' since Allah conferred the title of "Israel" meaning "Abdullah" or obedient man of Allah" upon him. 'The Prophets and the people of Bani Israel were all Muslims'.⁸

One of the more 'influential' books in the Pakistani studies curriculum errs on the side of caution, avoiding recourse to pre-Islamic or Islamic history and instead relying exclusively on Islamic doctrine. M. Ikram Rabbani and Monawwar Ali Sayyid's *An Introduction to Pakistan Studies*, in its fifth edition in the year 1992, is compulsory reading for first and second year college students studying for an F.A degree in history and aims at meeting the requirements of the syllabus prescribed by the University of Cambridge for Senior Cambridge and Secondary classes in Pakistan. The latest edition begins with a chapter on the establishment of Pakistan based on a concept of Islamic sovereignty. Allah alone is sovereign and the 'ruler of the Islamic State does not possess any authority of his own'. The coming of Islam to the Indian subcontinent was a 'blessing' since Hinduism was based on an 'unethical caste system'. Once the boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them' are drawn, the history of the subcontinent is transformed into a battle of the spiritual and the profane, of the righteous Muslim and the idolatrous Hindu. Rabbani and Sayyid then try squaring the circle of Pakistan's ideological and geographical origins with breathtaking logic. Islam was the 'crowning factor' in the establishment of Pakistan which is 'not a geographical entity but an ideology which reflects a unique civilization and culture'. It was a 'revolt' against insidious efforts to impose 'Hindu nationalism...on the Muslims and their culture'. All this leads to the conclusion - by now self evident - that Pakistan has to move towards becoming an Islamic state since that was the 'sole purpose of demanding a separate homeland for the Muslims'.⁹

Given the teleological approach, inconsistencies on the theme of origins still lead to an unequivocal endorsement of Pakistan's official ideology. A scrutiny of textbooks treating the theme of origins from a subcontinental rather than a pan-Islamic perspective to arrive at a common destination furnishes further insights into the myriad ways in which reconstructions of the past deploy the idioms of the Pakistani state's homogenizing agendas.

M.D. Zafar's *A Text Book of Pakistan Studies* is one of the more entertaining examples. For Zafar Pakistan 'came to be established for the first time when the Arabs under Mohammad bin Qasim occupied Sind and Multan'; by the thirteenth century 'Pakistan had spread to include the whole of Northern India and Bengal' and then under

the Khiljis 'Pakistan moved further south-ward to include a greater part of Central India and the Deccan'. Pakistan's habit of showing up after every second or third sentence makes this a truly remarkable publication. So for instance, after mentioning Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* and Sirhandi's resistance to it Zafar notes that 'the spirit of Pakistan asserted itself'. Under Aurangzeb the 'Pakistan spirit gathered in strength'; his death 'weakened the Pakistan spirit'. The pervasiveness of Pakistan established, this prized stalwart of the two nation idea proudly informs his captive, if not captivated, student readers that it was the Muslims who 'introduced historiography in the real sense of the term to the Sub-continent'.¹⁰

Despite a shared teleology of approach there is a ferocious controversy over basing Pakistan's origins in the subcontinent's pre-Islamic and ancient past. Even an acclaimed scholar like Jamil Jalibi questions the validity of a national history that seeks to claim Pakistan's pre-Islamic past in an attempt to compete with India's historic antiquity. The underplaying of Pakistan's more obvious Indo-Muslim heritage was based on a 'sentiment of hatred for India and things Indians'. It is a monumental error to advertise the 'archaeological remains within the geographical boundaries of our own country' and 'snap all our spiritual relations' with the centres of Muslim culture simply because they are 'no longer our property'. In doing so Pakistanis had negated the 'importance of spiritual experience and forgotten the fact that Harappa or Moenjodaro, even though within our geographical boundaries, does not have the same meaning for us as does the *Ka'aba* in spite of its being outside those boundaries'.¹¹ The laments of a scholar are echoed in a textbook in the Pakistani studies curriculum. Underlining his resistance to including a chapter on the country's archaeological heritage the author declares that 'being an ideological state' Pakistan has no 'spiritual link with any non-Islamic culute [sic] or civilization' since those 'roots only strike into Islam and Islamic culture'.¹²

Writers who wax eloquent on the country's ancient past do not see this as undermining Pakistan's ideological foundations. K.Ali's two volume history designed for B.A students is a good example. It traces the pre-history of the 'Indo-Pakistan' subcontinent to the paleolithic age and consistently refers to the post-1947 frontiers of Pakistan while discussing the Dravidians and the Aryans.¹³ At the end of his extended narrative, Ali emphatically endorses the official ideology. In a chapter entitled 'Why Pakistan', he declares that anyone searching for the answer has only to 'look up the pages of history of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent'.¹⁴ In Ali's view it is impossible to 'forget that the Muslims ruled over the Sub-continent for centuries'. After the suppression of the 1857 'Sepoy Mutiny' Muslims were hard hit and became the victims of a 'national sleeping sickness'. Muslims of 'birth and breed' took matters in hand. Sayyid Ahmed's exhortations to Muslims to remain aloof from the 'Congress was not a cause but a result of Hindu hostility'. By contrast is the attempt to discover differences between the two communities in the psychology of space. While 'the houses of the Muslims were more spacious, airy and open to light' that of the Hindus had 'small rooms, verandahs and less space open to sky [sic]' which 'shows the secret and exclusive attitude of Hindu mind [sic]'.¹⁵

For students who have had no contact with Hindus both statements, differences in

style notwithstanding, can easily fuel a form of inverted bigotry. The more so since they are given abundant 'evidence' to underline the invidiousness of Hindu majoritarianism. A Hindu Congress wedded to a policy of cultural genocide is a potent, perhaps the most potent, symbol justifying the Islamic foundations of Pakistan. The League's Lahore resolution of March 23, 1940 was orchestrated so that Muslims could lead their 'lives in accordance with the dictates of the Holy Quran and Sunnah'. So Pakistan can only be an 'Islamic State' because it was the protection of their religious and cultural practices that propelled India's Muslims to demand a separate homeland in the first place.¹⁶ With the spectre of Hindu genocide powering their narrative reconstructions of the past there is nothing to prevent authors like Ali declaring reactive bigotry as the main pillar of Pakistani nationalism.

Discrepancies in narrative styles are tolerated only so long as they do not overrun the two nation idea which is 'foundational' to the politics of Muslim, and by extension, Pakistani identity. This is made quite explicit by one of the more zealous members of the Pakistan studies literati. So 'colossal a development and so great a miracle of the present century' as the creation of Pakistan could have 'never taken place' if there had been 'no definite ideology working behind it'. Renegades such as Justice Mohammad Munir who argue that the 'term ideology was never used in the Pakistan movement days are absolutely wrong [sic]'. The two nation theory was 'the other name of Pakistan ideology'. There is simply no room for the opinion held by 'defeated, dejected and disgruntled people' that the term 'Pakistan ideology' was invented by a particular 'religio-political organization' - namely the Jamat-i-Islami.

What Pakistan needs is a thought police protecting the ideological frontiers against wayward 'others' within. The author proposes constitutional provisions against 'anti-Pakistan ideology tendencies and activities'. Such individuals should be prevented from 'taking part in [the] country's politics, government and higher public services'. Describing 'Pakistan studies' as the capping stone of 'our educational pyramid' the author regrets that neither students nor the teachers are taking it 'seriously. It was appalling that 'a considerable number of Pakistani intellectuals do not believe in our ideology'. Even the committed refused to 'wield powerful pens', especially in English. And this despite the fact that the 'whole case of Pakistan was won mostly through English'. Yet unfortunately, 'English in Pakistan is being treated like a discarded theory of chemistry'. With his own mutated English supporting this telling observation, the author lambasts scholars and historians, including 'some Pakistani writers', who are 'living in foreign countries such as England and America' and 'indulg[ing] in bitterly criticising Pakistan's ideological bases'.¹⁷

Sacrificial Contests:

Targeting internal 'others' is a favourite hobby-horse of the champions of Pakistan's ideology. Dipped in vitriol of a noxious kind, the narrative styles employed to muffle and discredit opponents within are potent examples of bigotry-turning-inward. The

theme of sacrifice, the other side of the imploding narrative on Pakistan's origins, brings this out in no uncertain fashion. According to the official view, prior to August 1947 Muslims made majestic sacrifices in the name of Islam and suffered more under British colonialism than any other religious community. This vindication of Muslim nationalism in the singular is rarely disputed. But no sooner is the crossing into the post-independence period completed that the official narrative of a monolithic Muslim nationalism explodes in moral outrage of varying measure against claims of sacrifice in the cause of Pakistan by anyone subscribing to an alternative viewpoint or the counter-narratives of regional heroics.

Bundling Muslims, Islam, the two nation theory and Pakistan into an inclusionary narrative of 'Us' is relatively easier to do in the historical proximity of 'Them'. But a negatively fashioned identity is a far cry from positive affiliation to a state ideology grounded on the denial of difference due to the common bond of religion. Every Pakistanis' 'first and foremost duty [was] to work for the unity and solidarity of the Muslim countries' and help in 'regaining "Khilafat" of the Muslims in the whole world' - 'O Allah! help the Muslim world to that sacred end. Amin'.¹⁸

Pakistan's 'struggle' to become a fully Islamic state is still deemed to be incomplete. The fault lies with misguided elements who talk of secularism, an anti-Islamic evil. Evidence of Jinnah's secular credentials is dismissed and the Quaid-i-Azam hijacked into a world where denuded of his Saville Row wardrobe he appears suitably, if not comfortably, attired in an *achkan* and *shalwar*. But Jinnah even in death is a hard task master for simple minded soldiers of Islam. Muhammad Dogar is delighted to cite a speech in which the Quaid-i-Azam, that most 'blessed' of mortals, declared Islam to be the basis of Pakistani nationalism. Not a man who understands the power of irony Dogar faithfully reproduces the rest of the speech in which Jinnah warned:

Make no mistake Pakistan is not a theocracy or anything like it. Islam demands from us the tolerance of other creeds and we welcome in closest association with us all those who of whatever creed, are themselves willing and ready to play their part as true and loyal citizens of Pakistan.

The importance of extending the truths of Pakistan's official history into the post-independence period has required a concerted and sustained onslaught against unIslamic 'secularists' within as well as outside the state apparatus. In this chamber of horrors, refurbished during General Zia-ul-Huq's regime, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto appears as Dogar's villain-in-chief. A chapter in Dogar's book entitled 'CRUEL REGIME OF BHUTTO' declares in its first paragraph that 'a worst dictatorship' of 'a staunch Communist' had 'married all values of Islam and Islamic traditions [sic]'. Bhutto, 'a drunkard, characterless and an un-Islami-minded man', was 'totally inclined towards the unnatural and anti-Islamic principles of Communism and Socialism'. The next chapter, appropriately dignified as 'ISLAMIC REGIME OF ZIA' proclaims with relief 'the blessed advent of the Martial Law regime of Pakistan under the blessed leadership of...General

Muhammad Zia-ul-Huq, an Islamic-minded man, came on the blessed day of July 6, 1977.¹⁹

Just how critical it is for the *Islam pasands* to win the battle against secularism needs underlining. Without the power to declare an ideological and spiritual hegemony, albeit one enforced by the coercive and crumbling pillars of the state edifice, it is impossible to win the war against those contesting the officially conjured national idioms. An exploration of the theme of sacrifice provides the key link between the wars on secularism and regionalism unleashed by the state's ideologues. The diversities of Pakistan's constitutive regional mosaics allow for a dazzling number of possibilities for astute political operators. Together with their own linguistic and religious minorities, these regionalisms with their multifaceted and rich cultural contours are a potent source of inspiration for those at the margins of power. In the hands of parties and politicians these are the time bombs that can blast the remnants of that emotion which fired the demand for a Muslim homeland.

Interestingly enough, the streaky and shrieky rusted metaphors of Pakistani officialdom met the first jolt from within the state structure when a commission headed by Justice Mohammad Munir reported its findings on the Punjab disturbances of 1953. In a campaign which laid the basis for the most galling religious intolerance in the mid-seventies and eighties, the heterodox Ahmediya community was targeted by a band of men who had opposed Jinnah and the League's movement for Pakistan in no uncertain terms. Their main demand was that the Ahmediyas should be declared non-Muslims since they violated a fundamental tenet of Islam by conferring the status of prophethood on their spiritual leader, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed. After exhaustive interviews, the commission discovered that no two religious divines could agree on the definition of a Muslim. Agreement on the rights of non-Muslims, variously referred to as *kuffar*, *zimmis* or *mu'ahids*, was even more difficult. According to a representative of the Jamat-i-Islami, non-Muslims could not have equal rights of citizenship in an Islamic state.²⁰ By the same token, no true Muslim could be a loyal citizen of a non-Muslim state. In the opinion of that most learned of Islamic scholars, Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi, there could be 'no objection even if the Muslims of India...[are] treated in that form of Government as *shudras* or *malishes* and Manu's laws...applied to them, depriving them of all share in the Government and the rights of a citizen'. After all, 'such a state of affairs already exists in India'.²¹

If Hindu India is the enemy without the proponents of regional autonomy alongside the ungodly secularists are the enemies within. The religious divines who had so strenuously opposed the creation of Pakistan were reincarnated in the official discourse of the eighties as the true heroes in the Muslim saga of suffering and sacrifice. It was the *ulema* who since the 19th century until the establishment of Pakistan sacrificed the most 'in the front of the battle for the creation of homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent [sic]'. They 'supported the cause of Pakistan whole-heartedly' and 'underwent many a hardship even while advocating the case of the Muslim League and the division of the Sub-continent'.²² The opposition to the idea of a Muslim homeland by many *ulema*, including Maulana Maudoodi, have been conveniently glossed over and the

sacrifice of 'others' discarded and devalued.

It was not just ideological purity but the emotive fact of geographical displacements for a life of dignity in a Muslim homeland which has fanned the hotly contested rival claims surrounding the theme of sacrifice in the cause of Pakistan. One of the earliest and still unresolved debates have evolved around the issue of Punjabi and *muhajir* sacrifice for Pakistan. The *muhajirs*, literally refugees, is a term which invokes some of the pan-Islamic claims of origins. But it is also a tale of profound grief and loss that resulted from being completely uprooted from their natural physical and cultural habitats. The pervasiveness of this emotion has suffused the claims of the Urdu-speakers who can point to a much longer history of sacrifice to preserve the cultural and religious identity of India's Muslims. Among those notable in a wide spectrum of articulators of *muhajir* sacrifices, is the entrancing political orator, Altaf Hussain, the leader of the Muhajir Qaumi Mahaz whose word has to be reckoned with if only for its forceful impact on the imaginations of one disaffected segment in the ocean of discontent and disillusionment that is Pakistan.

Altaf Hussain's rise as the leader of the *muhajirs* of Karachi and Hyderabad is a poignant example of how the official discourse has filtered into the urban politics of Pakistan. Asked for his self-definition and purpose and from where it had all come he summed it up in perfect Urdu: 'we are the same as you, we are Pakistani, we live in Pakistan, Pakistan is our *watan* [homeland], the gift of the sacrifices of our elders'. 'Don't you know', he declaims, 'that Hindustan's minority province Muslims sacrificed two million lives. We are the heirs of those two million Muslims'. With this dramatic overture, the rest makes for gripping reading:

The story of their looted homes and valuables, is our story. We have a right to Pakistan, and it is a right of blood, we gave blood for it. It is amazing that here we are being asked "who are you". If you need an introduction to us, sir, then we are the *muhajirs*. We are the founders of Pakistan, we have and will continue to sacrifice for it.²³

The claim of sacrifice as the basis of rights has been a powerful source of inspiration for the *muhajirs*, the most recently proclaimed 'nationality' in Pakistan. According to Altaf Hussain, the *muhajirs* were the only 'group without a province, and whose only association is with Pakistan'. The MQM is a reaction to the sub-nationalisms that have besieged the political arenas of Pakistan. If regionalism was the primary basis of identity, then 'for those who are neither Punjabi, nor Pathan, nor the old inhabitants of Sind, nor of Baluchistan, but gave up all for Pakistan to come here, who are they? where is their space? Where is their *muqam* [station]?'²⁴

These assertions by the spokesmen of a non-regionally based linguistic community are only one example of the way in which the theme of sacrifice assists internal counter-narratives of 'us' and 'them' in negotiating the fault lines of a geographically bound but ideologically limitless official conception of Pakistan. One of the most emotionally charged statements of Punjabi regional sacrifices for Pakistan is

contained in a book by Mohammad Hanif Ramay, who was governor of the province during the Bhutto era. Written in Urdu to the author's regret, *Punjab Ka Muqadama* or the case of the Punjab, blends nostalgia, imagination and history to produce a classic statement of sacrifice. A regional populist, Ramay's narrative abounds with love for the land of the five rivers, an aspect of identity singularly absent in the purely ideological reconstructions of the official discourse on Pakistani nationalism. Turning the attack on regionalism into a virtue, Ramay gives full play to territorial nationalism. If the Urdu-speaking *muhajirs* lost their homes, so too did the Punjabis living in the eastern districts of the undivided province: 'traveling miles on foot drenched in the shadows of death and deprivation when they reached the frontiers of Pak Punjab they kissed its soil and touched it with their eyes, thinking of it as Pakistani and not Punjabi soil'.

Rent in twain and devastated by their loss of a provincial identity, Punjabis developed a stronger and deeper affinity to Pakistan. Just as Heer's yearnings for Ranjha imperceptably merged her identity into that of her beloved, so by crying 'Pakistan, Pakistan, the Punjab itself became Pakistan'. So enthused were the Punjabis at the prospect of recovering their lost identity through Pakistan that they adopted the slogan 'speak Urdu, read Urdu, write Urdu'. How could Pakistan be an euphemism for 'greater Punjab' when Punjabis had given up their identity for Pakistan? What, after all, was hegemony without a culture and language; political and economic dominance without fundamental rights? How could 'a person who does not speak, read or write Punjabi be called "Punjabi"....'²⁵

Altaf Hussain and, somewhat more guardedly, Ramay at least play to the official galleries who dub 'anti-state' anyone contesting the neat equation of Muslims, Islam and Pakistan. But the counter-narratives of identity construction in the political arenas have resisted more often than adopted the official dictums of Pakistani history, nationalism and ideology. These in part explain the banal, brazen and brutish bigotry of officially controlled textbooks on Pakistani history. As one illustrious member of the enterprise puts it, the very purpose of 'Pakistan Studies...[is to] unveil...the sacrifices which the millions of Muslims of the subcontinent, gave for the accomplishment of Pakistan'.²⁶ As the enemies within, the utterances of the spokesmen of contestatory regional identities, though given no voice in the texts, provide the ammunition for the carpet bombing of young minds in Pakistani schools, colleges and universities. The theme of sacrifice retains its relevance in regional counter-narratives of 'us' and 'them', but takes on different nuances than the ones infusing Altaf Hussain and Ramay's creative imaginings. 'Sacrifice' for a Pakistani state dominated by the Punjabis, transfigured in this genre into 'them', is not nearly as important as sacrifices in the anti-colonial struggle or the rights of 'us', the submerged regional linguistic minorities.

The Pathan leader, Abdul Wali Khan, whose father Abdul Ghaffar Khan - also known as the 'Frontier Gandhi' and Bacha Khan - was a close ally of the Congress, openly contests the Muslim League's claim of sacrifice in the cause of freedom. 'Did the

Muslim League launch any movement, wage any struggle, render any sacrifice to qualify for that right?', Wali Khan asks rhetorically. Much less commit 'sacrifices in the cause of independence' the Muslim League played 'no role in liberating this land from British slavery'. The 'untold sacrifices' of the Khudai Khidmatgars [those in the service of God] were rejected simply because they had closed ranks with the Congress to oust the British colonialists. They were 'blamed for being the progeny of Hindus' but no sooner was independence won that Muslim Leaguers rushed hither and yon to appropriate the property of the Hindus as if it were their birth right. Wali Khan deems it unpardonable that minority province Muslim League leaders escaped to the 'safety', 'prosperity' and 'comfort of Pakistan', abandoning crores of poor Muslims who had 'made all the sacrifices' at their behest. And yet these selfish, irresponsible and acquisitive rulers of Pakistan claimed higher moral ground by exploiting Islam - 'they do not report history, they manufacture it'.²⁷

Apart from Wali Khan, the most indefatigable proponent of a submerged regionalism in post-independence Pakistan has been the octogenarian Sindhi politician G.M.Syed. In *Heenyar Pakistan khey tuttan khappey* (Now Pakistan should disintegrate), Syed openly advocates the break up of the country and the creation of an independent Sindhu Desh. Another book, *Sindhu Desh - a Nation in Chains* sets about proving the viability of the Sindhi state of Syed's dreams. Taking his imagination to new heights, this votary of regional identities has taken to calling for independent states of Baluchistan, Pakhtunistan and even a tiny Seriaki Desh. Pakistan's geographical frontiers are whittled down to half the size of the present province of the Punjab. A just reward for non-Punjabi regional and sub-regional sacrifices.

There are many variations on the theme of suffering and sacrifice within the geographical frontiers of Pakistan in regional counter-narratives of identity. Most of these implicitly or explicitly contest the ideological definitions of the state in asserting their regional interests. The buttressing of regionalism by secularism is anathema to the guardians of Pakistan's ideological and geographical frontiers. This convergence of internal enemies was particularly troublesome for a military ruler desperately seeking legitimacy by rallying the *Islam pasands* to worst ungodly secularists and regionalists in the battle for control in Pakistan.

At a time when the cards were stacked against regionalists, secularists and democrats alike, one bold journalist gave voice to the view that the phrase 'ideology of Pakistan' was never used by Jinnah and had been 'coined by his ideological adversary, Maulana Maudoodi'. He was commenting on a statement by a former governor of Baluchistan, Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo, who took the opportunity of his presence in the Punjab to carry the attack of regionalism to the very heart of the official conception of national identity. According to Bizenjo, not the most rebarbative of regionalists, 'you can't appropriate patriotism for yourself...if you consider Baluchis to be as much Pakistanis as you yourselves are'. Recalling Jinnah's notion of a Pakistani state with equal citizenship rights, irrespective of religion or any other distinction, he contested the official equation

of a Muslim 'nation' with a Pakistani 'nation'. In Bizenjo's opinion, the construct of a 'Muslim nation' was 'a non-issue' - 'hysterics, without arguments' in the service of those wielding power at the apex of the central state. Jinnah's use of the 'two nation' theory was far removed from the notion of an official ideology which, according to Bizenjo, was the principal hurdle in forging a truly collective ethos in a federated union of Pakistani provinces.²⁸

There is clearly a vast distance between the advocates of a Pakistani national ideology and those whose frame of reference is either secular or bounded by the territoriality of the region. So if the contradiction between the Pakistani state's ideological protestations and geographical limitations forms the basis of the imploding narrative of national origins, it provides the locus for the exploding counter-narratives of regional sufferings and sacrifices. Just how little these contestations have been allowed to filter into the official history textbooks can be seen by the summary manner in which regional distinctiveness is treated by authors proclaiming a collective Pakistani ethos. Consistent with the state's homogenizing agendas of proclaiming a national culture by fiat, the bigoted narrative styles of these textbooks reveal why the integrating idioms of an official Pakistani nationalism have fostered such a disintegrating social ethos.

One textbook minces no words while identifying the real enemies within. Regionalism is a 'very dangerous episode'. Such tendencies and 'isms of any shape or kind are diametrically opposed to our ideology'. Sind is the gateway of Islam and 'we must vehemently discard all alien tendencies creeping into that *sacred land of Islam*'. Efforts to advance 'regional dialects and lores' was an attack on the very foundations of Pakistan. The Urdu language was 'the cause of Pakistan ideology'. This was why 'neo-Punjabism' had to be 'discarded'. The author attributes the Punjabi language, and by implication, the notion of a distinctive Punjabi identity, to Ranjit Singh who was 'the greatest enemy of the Muslims and their culture'. 'How can we consider him our hero?', he asks his uninformed student audience. And Dullah Bhatti, the great hero of Punjabis who fought the armies of Akbar, is dismissed as the 'hero of his tribe' and 'not the hero of Islam'. Despite Akbar's 'religious vagaries', he still 'enjoyed a great status'. With 'status' as the main qualification for Islamic credentials it is no wonder that the vast majority of Punjabi-speakers, who like so many of their compatriots in other provinces are consigned to the margins of political and economic power, find the official discourse more alienating than exhilarating.²⁹

It is not simply a matter of disagreement on the 'heroes' of Pakistani history. The purpose is to 'educate' the future generations to reject anything in their regional cultures that fails to qualify as 'Islamic'. There was a time when the *mela chiraghan*, annual festival of lights in honour of the great Punjabi Sufi poet Madho Lal Hussain, saw the people of Lahore rubbing shoulders regardless of class or communal backgrounds. Still held on popular demand, it is now merely an occasion for the lower strata of the city's teaming millions to congregate and partake of the celebrations. The reason for the distancing of the middle and upper classes is not difficult to discern. Madho Lal might have been 'a good Punjabi poet' but he 'left the path of *sharia*' and 'no true Muslim can take pride in him'. This textbook proves Ramay's case in the very process of rejecting it.

Launching a frontal attack on Punjabi, the author asserts that while the poetry 'might be rich in wisdom...[the] Punjabi language is by no means a refined language....it has no rules and regulations....no grammar....it is rather a crude and rustic language [sic]'. So 'from every point of view' the 'whole "Punjabi case" is 'fundamentally a bad and totally a false case [sic]' with 'no solid foundations at all', a mere concoction of 'defeated, dejected and mischief-monger peoples [sic]'. Something 'positive' had to be done in 'snubbing such anti-Pakistan ideology elements'.³⁰

And indeed the customary celebrations of Urdu in all the Pakistan studies' textbooks are often declarations on the relative inferiority of regional languages and cultures. This is not altogether surprising since Urdu is an inevitable extension of that already loaded and untenable equation of Muslim, Islam and Pakistan ideology. Yet like the other idioms in the officially conjured grammar of nationalism, Urdu appears to have provided greater impetus to the counter-narratives of regional identity than to the construction of a Pakistani collective ethos. As a proponent of Urdu confessed some years ago, the problem lay not with the language so much as with its 'overzealous protagonists' who short-sightedly tried to 'force it as a symbol of Islamic solidarity and Pakistani patriotism'. Urdu was 'pitted against the regional languages, which were treated with a measure of contempt, if not openly dubbed as instruments of national disruption'. Not surprisingly, Urdu came to be regarded as a 'symbol of cultural snobbery and an instrument of domination in the hands of a minority'.³¹ Jamil Jalibi is another seasoned campaigner of Urdu as the only medium through which Pakistanis can direct their energies towards building a truly collective ethos. He likens the task of merging the counter-narratives of identity construction into 'a single personality' to the one facing Sisyphus who seemed 'doomed forever to roll uphill a heavy stone which rolled down repeatedly'. But when with 'weary feet' Sisyphus came down from the hill top he began to think and the 'thinking engender[ed]... a new consciousness' which made him 'stronger than the stone' and broke the monotony of fate. Pakistan needs freedom of expression and an intelligentsia willing to take up the challenge of critically rethinking how to go about constituting a collective ethos. The 'result of the test will be the beginning of either a new renaissance or never-ending slumber'.³²

Conclusion:

Renaissance or continued slumber? The choice is easier made than executed. All depends on just how willing and able Pakistanis in their serried ranks are to confront the conceptual conundrums emerging from a historical past which, whether creatively imagined or bitterly contested, cannot reconcile the claim of nationhood with the winning of statehood. They at least have the 'state' if not the 'nation' of their imaginings, and there are ways of overcoming contradictions that cannot be resolved. A result of the ideological posturing and geographical limitations of the Pakistani state, these contradictions are constructs of the rusted minds and rusted metaphors of officialdom. Without sustained debate on citizenship rights, accompanied by a reapportioning of responsibility for the

construction and dissemination of ideas and knowledge between state and civil society, 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. Sisyphus' successful reckoning with fate is an enlivening myth; critically and creatively broaching issues closely monitored by the swords writing victory is an enervating truth. At a time when the umpires have abandoned the field to partisans some criteria of critical evaluation will have to fly out of the trap doors of knowledge if there is to be any ethical justification for persisting with an unevenly poised battle between the creative power of imaginings and the 'creative' imaginations of power.

The embattled terrain of Pakistani historiography and its tortured reflections on the contending narratives of identity construction points to the dangers of viewing all knowledge of the past as mere interpretation, one no more valid than the other. Evidence culled from the official textbooks on Pakistani history is a testimony to the imperative of differentiating between the creative bigotry of power and the critical power that vests in creative imaginings. If all forms of creative imaginings are to enjoy the same stature, then there is nothing to prevent the politics of identity from engendering hatreds towards internal and external 'others'. A hierarchy of situated knowledge grounded in a philosophy of ethics may be the only option left for scholars doomed to contextual irrelevance by the conceptual relativities, subjectivities and insecurities of a post-modern world. Until then the brave voices of dissent will have only the self-confident security that comes of the creative in pure inspiration:

Punish me
 for I have written the significance of the dream
 in my own blood
 written a book ridden with an obsession
 Punish me
 for I have spent my life sanctifying the dream of the future
 spent it enduring the tribulations of the night
 Punish me
 for I have imparted knowledge and skills of the
 sword to the murderer
 and demonstrated the power of the pen to the mind
 Punish me
 for I have been the challenger of the crucifix of hatred
 I'm the glow of torches which burn against the wind
 Punish me
 for I have freed womanhood from the insanity of the deluded night
 Punish me
 for if I live you might lose face
 Punish me
 for if my sons raise their hands you may end your being

Punish me
 for I love the new life with every breath
 I shall live my life and shall doubly live beyond my life
 Punish me for then, the sentence of your punishment will end.³³

Author's note: This article was written for a conference sponsored by the American Social Science Research Council on Nationalizing the Past at Goa, India, May 1993. I also presented versions of it at New York University and King's College, Cambridge. I am grateful to participants at these meetings for their helpful comments.

¹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread Of Nationalism*, (London 1983).

²Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, (Cambridge 1985).

³Choudhary Rahmat Ali, *PAKISTAN: The Fatherland of the Pak Nation*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 1947), 344.

⁴ Choudhary Rahmat Ali, *INDIA: The Continent of DINIA or the Country of DOOM?*, 3rd ed. (Dinia Continental Movement, , May 1946). Also reprinted in his *PAKISTAN: The Fatherland of the Pak Nation*, 312-30.

⁵ *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Speeches as Governor General of Pakistan 1947-1948*, (Karachi, n.d), p.8.

⁶Kishwar Naheed, 'Nightmare' in *Beyond Belief Contemporary Feminist Urdu Poetry*, transl. by Rukhsana Ahmad, (Lahore 1990), 30-31. I have made certain amendments to the Ahmad translation which seem closer to the original Urdu.

⁷In this paper I examine a number of required readings for this curriculum during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Among some of the used textbooks I collected there was one in which an independent minded student had scribbled 'Hell Studies' - indication of the ongoing resistance to the tyranny of official history. This sentiment has been echoes recently by at least two Pakistani

historians, K.K.Aziz, *The Murder of History in Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1993) and Mubarik Ali, *In the Shadow of History* (Lahore, 1993). Unfortunately, both writers spend more time quibbling about 'facts' than calling into question the ideologically motivated distortions in official interpretations of history.

⁸Haji Wali Muhammad Dogar, *Pakistan Studies and Affairs*, (Lahore, 1993), 4.

⁹*Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁰ M.D.Zafar, *A Text Book of Pakistan Studies*, (Lahore 1988), 4-8, 21.

¹¹Jameel Jalibi, *Pakistan: the Identity of Culture*, (Karachi, 1984), 53-56.

¹³K.Ali, *A New History of Indo-Pakistan up to 1526*, 4th ed. (Lahore, n.d.); and *A New History of Indo-Pakistan since 1526*, rev. ed. (Lahore, n.d.).

¹⁴Ali, *A New History of Indo-Pakistan since 1526*, 256.

¹⁵*Star Pakistan Studies with Questions and Answers for Degree Classes*, Lahore (no date), 11.

¹⁶Ali, *A New History of Indo-Pakistan since 1526*, 270.

¹⁷Garewal, *Pakistan Way of Life and Culture*, 184-91.

¹⁸ Dogar, *Pakistan Studies and Affairs*, 68-69.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 124-29.

²⁰*Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted under Punjab Act II of 1954 to Enquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953*, known as *The Munir Report*, Lahore 1954, 213-14.

²¹*Ibid.*, 228.

²² Zafar, *A Text Book of Pakistan Studies*, 51-52.

²³'We have raised the heads of the poor'. Two extended interviews with Altaf Hussain. Muhajir Academy, Karachi 1988, [my translation from the Urdu].

²⁴*Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁵ Mohammad Hanif Ramay, *Punjab ka Muqadama*, fourth edition, Lahore 1988, [my translations from the Urdu].

²⁶ Rabbani, *A Comprehensive Book of Pakistan Studies*, 252.

²⁷ Abdul Wali Khan, *Facts Are Sacred*, Peshawar, no date, passim.

²⁸ *Viewpoint*, August 27, 1978, 7-8, 22; *ibid*, 3 September, 1978, 7, 26.

²⁹ Garewal, *Pakistan Way of Life and Culture*, p.192 [my emphasis].

³⁰ *Ibid*.

³¹ Zuhair Siddiqui, 'A Nation in Search of its Culture', *Viewpoint*, August 13, 1976, 11.

³² Jalibi, *Pakistan: The Identity of Culture*, 196-97.

³³ Kishwar Naheed, 'Talking to Myself' in *Beyond Belief*, trans. Rukhsana Ahmad, 34-35.

.

