

South Asia

Ayesha Jalal
Tufts University

- I. Introduction
 - II. The Historiographical Debate
 - III. The Historical Context
 - IV. From Community to Nation
 - V. Nationalism and its Critics
 - VI. The Demand for Pakistan and the Partition of India
 - VII. National Claims and Changing Imperatives of Statehood
-

Glossary

ashraf Literally 'respectable classes,' it is a term used for Muslim upper classes.

Bharatvarsha Land of Bharata, a legendary King; indigenous name for India.

charkha Spinning wheel.

khilafat Seat of temporal and spiritual authority in Islam.

purna swaraj Complete independence of the Indian state.

raj The former British rule of the Indian subcontinent.

satyagraha A quest for truth through mass political activity.

swadeshi Own country movement begun by decision to partition Bengal in 1905.

swaraj Self-rule.

ulema Muslim religious scholars

ummah Worldwide community of Islam

A challenge to Western colonialism reflecting the aspirations of a subjugated and diverse populace, nationalism as an idea and a historical force in South Asia has remained a fiercely contested terrain. The emergence of two separate nation-states, India and Pakistan, at the time of the British withdrawal in 1947 exacerbated old controversies, generating fresh debates on the nature of the rivalries and anti-imperial sentiments of the subcontinent's different social and religious communities. Colonialism's most decisive legacy, the partition of the Punjab and Bengal to carve out a sovereign Muslim homeland of Pakistan drastically reconfigured the political balance between center and region in the subcontinent. The separation of the Muslim-majority areas of the north west and north east from the mainly Hindu-majority parts of India

disrupted centuries old networks of social communication as well as cultural and material exchange.

1. Introduction

Prior to the British conquest, relations between regional peoples and the sovereign power had never been defined wholly by religion. A web of economic and social linkages had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crisis and collapse, to bind the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence. Despite a long history of creatively accommodating multiple levels of sovereignty, the renegotiation of the terms for sharing power in an independent India saw the privileging of a rigid and monolithic conception of territorial sovereignty based on a singular and homogenizing idea of the 'nation'. An insistence on the unity of the 'nation' and the corresponding refusal to countenance internal differences eventually paved the way for a partition of the subcontinent along ostensibly religious lines.

In grappling with the changing social and political dynamics shaping the nexus between religion and nation, as well as region and center, the newly independent nation-states of India and Pakistan (and after 1971 also Bangladesh) have made selective appropriations of history to project their official nationalisms. While independent India embraced the ideal of a secular and inclusionary nationalism, Pakistan has justified its creation by projecting a distinctive Islamic identity. The breakaway of the eastern wing, containing a majority of the country's Muslim population, and the establishment of Bangladesh exposed the fragility of the Islamic bond. In what remains of Pakistan, regional aspirations have continued to clash with national claims drawing exclusively upon religion. Notwithstanding Pakistan's formally federal political configuration, tensions between the center and the provinces have been accentuated by extended periods of military authoritarianism.

Unlike its arch rival, India has not suffered the ignominy of outright dismemberment. Yet the shifting dynamics of center and region have had a vital bearing on its democratic federalism. In the initial decades of independence the centralized structure of the Indian state partly tempered by a nationally based political party, the Indian National Congress, managed to counter the centrifugal pulls of a predominantly linguistic regionalism. But with the expanding sphere of democratic politics and the ensuing erosion of the Congress's organizational and electoral base, regional configurations of various permutations and combinations have been vying for national power. This has compounded the problem stemming from the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a centralized state.

Instead of assuming a neat equation between center, nation and religion, an understanding of the dialectic between region and religion calls into question many of the assumptions of South Asia's official post-colonial nationalisms. The claims and counter-claims of officially subsidized historians have freely invoked the partisan spirit to sustain the logic of their respective versions of nationalism. Emotionally scarred memories of the loss of loved ones as well as homes and livelihoods has confounded the problem of separating myth and sentiment from history in explaining why India was partitioned along mainly religious lines for the first time in its five millennia history. Yet the subcontinent's contested nationalisms have also been the subject of some fine historical research which in recent decades has shed new light on the interface between anti-colonialism, religion and region in the evolution of the national ideal in South Asia. A discussion of the main strands in the historiographical debate followed by a periodization and

assessment of key moments in the anti-colonial struggle helps flush out the main themes and intricacies of nationalism in the South Asian context.

II. The Historiographical Debate

Until recently the dominant trend in South Asian historiography was to focus on the activities of a handful of articulate urban educated Indians imbued with notions of liberalism and nationalism borrowed from the West. In this view the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 constituted an obvious point of departure from where to trace the development of nationalism, culminating in the winning of independence from the British. Such a linear approach to the study of nationalism has been acutely prone to the teleology of 1947. It has been used most energetically, though not exclusively, by the officially subsidized historians of both India and Pakistan to chart the mythic genealogies of the two nation-states that replaced British rule in the subcontinent. At its simplest the debate on nationalism between the votaries of the two newly independent states has been conducted under the rubric either of the 'two-nation' theory or British strategies of divide and rule.

Pakistani historians, for their part, have tried to argue that it was the Muslim sense of difference from their Hindu compatriots which led to the creation of a separate Muslim homeland. More embroidered, if not historically sophisticated, versions of this thesis of Muslim difference as the grounds for Muslim unity have maintained that Islam was incapable of assimilation, far less absorption, in a predominantly non-Muslim setting. The bulk of the historical evidence militates against conflating religiously informed cultural identities with any notion of a coherent Muslims politics. Like all the other communities of religion in colonial India, Muslims were split on doctrinal issues and divided by class, region as well as language. The opposing thesis subscribed to by Indian nationalist historians is equally untenable. Charging British colonialism for ripping asunder the historical and cultural unities of the subcontinent glosses over the problem of cultural difference or, worse still, relegates it to the category of religious 'communalism', the pejorative 'other' of Indian nationalism.

Modern nation-states with their homogenizing logic and language of equal rights of citizenship have been generally averse to assertions of religious difference by minority communities seeking preferential treatment. The issue was an especially loaded one in the Indian subcontinent where Muslims had ruled over a predominantly Hindu population for seven hundred years before the British stepped into the breach in the second half of the eighteenth century. Yet the history of India is not simply the story of the privileged and exceptional. If histories of pre-colonial India have been characterized by an overemphasis on kings and courts, colonial and nationalist historians seemed bent upon keeping the historical gaze fixed on a handful of English-educated elites. Given the oft criticized yet still functional periodization of Indian history by religion - so that the ancient era is defined as Hindu, the medieval as Muslim and the modern as colonial - such a narrowly focused line of enquiry has given a rather distorted picture of the relationship between sovereignty and overlapping identities at the social base. Unabashedly elitist in approach, it has together with the colonial and nationalist penchant for a communitarian mode of analysis cast South Asian historiography into a seemingly unchanging and essentialized mold. Naming entire periods of history by the religious affiliation of rulers makes no allowance for the multiple social identities of the ruled. The work of historians of

ancient India like Romila Thapar as well as medieval texts have made palpably clear that the categories 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' gained currency only after the establishment of British colonial rule. This is not to deny the fact of differences between communities of religion, but a warning against the tendency to read back latter day concepts into the past. Social identities in pre-colonial India were marked with far greater fluidity and variability to justify defining ancient India as Hindu or the medieval era as Muslim.

The reaction against the 'elitist' tendencies in colonialist and nationalist historiography was articulated most powerfully by Ranajit Guha in his 1983 study, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. One of the main aims of the collective which he founded was to rectify this elitist bias by restoring to the subordinate or, using Antonio Gramsci's terminology, 'subaltern' social groups their subjectivity in the making of history. The shift in focus has altered perceptions of nationalism in the subcontinent. Instead of being restricted to exchanges between a few Western educated Indians and the colonial rulers after the late nineteenth century, anti-colonial resistance is now seen to have been a more complex and variegated phenomenon traceable to the initial territorial encroachments of the English East India Company in the mid-18th century.

The new periodization of anti-colonial resistance has been less subject to contention and controversy than efforts to interpret and explain the diverse articulations of cultural identities in the South Asian subcontinent. Theorists of nationalism and historians of the colonized world for the most part have been ill at ease with the problem of cultural difference. Unable to avoid confronting this vital issue, South Asian historiography has developed unique analytical conventions. By far the most pervasive of these has been the binary opposition between a religiously informed 'communalism' and a secularly based 'nationalism'. Yet as Partha Chatterjee's 1986 depiction of Indian nationalism as a different but dominated or derivative discourse suggests, this dichotomy owed a great deal to a dominant historical paradigm evolved in the West. By contrast, South Asia's rich and varied historical experience sheds quite a different light on the issue of identity and sovereignty than the one available in Western historiography.

An evidently religiously based exclusivism in the region's twentieth century history has come to be defined by the overarching concept of 'communalism'. All the major schools of South Asian historiography have sought to tackle the 'communal problem' whatever their specific angle of vision. For instance C.A. Bayly, the most prominent Cambridge historian of South Asia, in his social history of intermediate social groups locates the pre-history of communalism in the merchant corporations and the declining service gentry of urban north India during the transition to colonialism. Even Ranajit Guha defined the central problematic in the historiography of colonial India as the failure of the nation to come to its own. Scholars of his subaltern collective have emphasized the resilience of age old communal consciousness in attempting to explain this failure and concerned themselves with the colonial construction of communalism. The subaltern school drifted towards a focus on culture and consciousness largely divorced from the material dimensions of politics and economics. Of late, partly under the influence of Western post-modernism, some 'subaltern' writers have shifted their attention from the monolithic wholes of nations and states to their fragmentary parts. But they are no less captivated than most other historians of South Asia by the telos of 1947 - the ostensibly religiously based partition of the subcontinent and the establishment of two centralized post-colonial nation-states.

The intervention of the subaltern school has nevertheless done much to raise the level of debate on anti-colonial resistance and nationalist consciousness. In addition to accounting for the diverse forms of anti-colonial resistance, its composition, scope as well as frequency, other historians of South Asia are finding evidence of regionally specific patriotisms predating the encounter with Western colonialism. In his *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*, a collection of essays published in 1999, C.A. Bayly has noted that local patriotisms and ideas about ethical government were important influences in the narratives of early Indian nationalism. Apart from opening up interesting new vistas for South Asian historiography, this qualifies Partha Chatterjee's contention that Indian nationalism was a derivative of colonial discourse. Without denying the indigenous roots of Indian nationalism, Chatterjee's purpose had been to show how even while asserting their own sense of cultural autonomy, Indian nationalists put the principle of colonial difference at a serious discount when it came to claiming self-determination and negotiating the terms of political independence.

In his subsequent study, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Chatterjee sought to further clarify his position about the derivative nature of Indian nationalism while questioning Benedict Anderson's assumptions about the modular nature of European nationalism. He does so by invoking a dichotomy between an autonomous inner spiritual domain and a dominated outer material sphere. Aimed at underscoring both Indian agency and subjectivity in the making of their nationalism, such a division between the spiritual and the temporal domains has been questioned by scholars of South Asia on conceptual as well as empirical grounds.

In claiming to be an inclusionary, accommodative, consensual and popular anti-colonial struggle unsullied by narrow-minded bigotry, the dominant discourse on Indian nationalism has dismissed the exclusive affinities of religion as 'communal'. Implying that religious affiliations are, if not necessarily bigoted, than certainly less worthy than identifications with the 'nation' poses some awkward problems. It is now being accepted that the cultural roots of Indian nationalism owed far more to religious ideals, reinterpreted and reconfigured in imaginative fashion, than had been previously acknowledged. According to Partha Chatterjee, who takes the cultural fragment represented by certain Bengali Hindu middle class intellectuals to illuminate the consciousness of the Indian nation, religion provided the spiritual stores for resisting and negotiating the inherent materiality of both western modernity and British rule. While giving more respectability to religious sentiments and symbols than they have tended to enjoy in the past, the distinction between an indigenous spiritual domain outside the more materially defined public sphere created by the colonial state ends up perpetuating a binary opposition. The dualism posited is between a 'secular nationalism' and religious 'communalism' on which so much of the ideological edifice of the post-colonial Indian nation-state has rested.

An investigation of the cultural roots of nationalism in South Asia has to account for the myriad contestations within an emerging anti-colonial struggle. The Indian National Congress was the preeminent nationalist organization in colonial India. Yet there was considerable disagreement even within its own ranks on the form and substance of the national ideal. The inclusionary and secular claims of the post-colonial Indian state cannot be confused with the actual history of the Indian nationalist movement. Mainstream Indian nationalism, associated in the main with men like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), was more successful in achieving a semblance of unity against the colonial presence than in transforming itself into an internally coherent and consensual movement representing the concerns of all Indians. When the problem of religious distinctions did not

vitiating attempts to dislodge the alien rulers, regional, class and ideological differences often made genuine agreement difficult, if not impossible. An umbrella organization containing conflicting interests and social groups, the Congress could attain political dominance only after compromising the 'nation's' claims to ideological and cultural hegemony.

Painstaking efforts by an array of nationalist leaders to dress down internal differences, especially those based on religious differences, could not keep the Congress immune from the influence of those taking pride in a Hindu cultural ethos. The tendency on the part of certain pro-Congress elements in the different regions to equate the 'nation' with the symbols of Hinduism spelt out the exclusionary aspect of this nationalism, provoking stronger reactions from its sceptics and critics. This was particularly true of India's Muslims, who although vastly outnumbered by the adherents of Hinduism, were also engaged in redefining their religiously informed cultural identity in the face of a modernity underwritten by the fact of British sovereignty. The colonial privileging of religious distinctions in census enumeration and, by extension, in apportioning places in educational institutions, jobs in government service and seats in the legislature, made it impossible for Indians to separate material goals from purely spiritual concerns. This had the unfortunate effect of thwarting many well meaning attempts at accommodating differences within a broad framework of Indian nationalism. So long as the dominant discourse among Indians was tainted by notions of religious majoritarianism and minoritarianism there could be no hard and fast separation between 'nationalism' and 'communalism'. The added implication that only 'nationalists' harbored anti-colonial sentiments only served to further alienate those summarily dismissed as religious 'communalists'.

Despite the stranglehold of terms like 'nationalism' and 'communalism' in South Asian historiography and political discourse, new historical research has revealed that anti-colonial sentiments tended to cut across the religious divisions of the subcontinent quite as often as falling prey to them. Without blaming South Asia's religious differences wholly to colonial social engineering, far more attention is being paid to the qualitative ways in which British conceptions of Indian society lent greater substance to categories like Hindu, Muslim and Sikh than was warranted by empirical realities in the different regions of the subcontinent. The time honored tendency to attribute the contested nationalisms of post-independence India and Pakistan to a great civilizational divide is being subjected to critical scrutiny. It is being recognized that assertions of cultural differences informed by religion as faith did not always overcome internal differentiations within the grand communities of religion. The image of essentialized religious communities locked in grim battle is giving way to more careful analyses of the subcontinent's regionally specific and conflicting politics of identity and contested sovereignties. Even as political unity eluded Indians, shared territorial belongings underlined the need for accommodations between religiously demarcated communities in the different regions. The better known narratives of national identity in South Asia have been deeply influenced by the regional location of their authors even as they engaged with notions of national as well as universal significance.

Attempts by theorists and historians of nationalism in South Asia to cap the various yearnings for national unity with the categories of 'national' and 'communal' has tended to blur the complex nuances of region, religion and rights underlying the nationalisms of both India and Pakistan. Yet neither state-sponsored official histories nor the frontiers of colonies and nation-states have been wholly successful in constraining popular psyches and historical imaginings in the colonial and the post-colonial world. In giving primacy to either territorial or religious

affiliations, the retrospectively constructed official nationalisms of India and Pakistan respectively have sought to ignore, if not altogether delegitimize, the multiple alternative strands of popular nationalism and communitarianism that lost out in the final battle for state power. Rescuing these voices from the margins and subjecting them to careful analysis is enabling historians to gain a better understanding of the compulsions and constraints which shaped the dominant narratives of nationalism in colonial and post-colonial South Asia.

III. The Historical Context

The vibrancy of regional cultures, languages and histories, not to mention politics, throughout the subcontinent's history disturb the confident claims of the most entrenched historical ideologies of centralized post-colonial states. Oscillations between centralism and regionalism on the one hand, and between all-India territorialism and religious communitarianism on the other have spanned the centuries of South Asian history. These twin dialectics had over the millennia helped foster as well as perpetuate a complex and shifting weave of multiple identities among the diverse peoples of the subcontinent. Before the advent of Western colonialism these multiple identities were accommodated, if never wholly assimilated, within loose political arrangements underpinned by a wide dispersal of sacral and temporal authority. Sovereign authority vested in a ceremonial center co-existed with and was reinforced by innumerable quasi-sovereign regional and local entities. In this indigenously evolved framework of layered sovereignties, the existence of a central sovereign authority was symbolically acknowledged, frequently challenged but only very rarely rejected.

A. Transition to Colonialism

Immediately prior to British colonial rule the South Asian subcontinent was a rich mosaic of contending local and regional sovereignties. The replacement of Mughal control over the peripheries by regionally based powers was a result of the strengthening of certain intermediate social groups like Hindu and Muslim revenue farmers, mainly Hindu and Jain merchants and bankers and a mostly Muslim service gentry. Merchants and bankers provided financial sustenance to the regional states of the eighteenth century, facilitating the layered dispersal of commercialized power but one which occurred within the context of the legitimate authority, though not the power, of the Mughal empire. The Mughal *shah-in-shah*, or the king of kings, continued to be the highest manifestation of sovereignty. Below the imperial level eighteenth century India saw an increasing devolution of real power to the lower levels of sovereignty. Resistance was intense and widespread throughout the one hundred years it took the English East India Company to subjugate India. It was only after subduing Tipu Sultan, the valiant and legendary patriot of Mysore; the chivalrous Marathas of western India who were potential claimants to the Mughal imperial mantle as well as the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh in the Punjab that the British were able to complete their conquest of India.

While resilient indigenous identities and institutions molded the colonial impact fundamental alterations took place in the structures of the state and the character of the political economy. Two of the novel institutional features of Company raj were a European style standing army and a centralized civilian bureaucracy. Outside its directly administered territories the Company entered into a series of treaty arrangements with a range of local Indian rulers, big and

small, who acknowledged British paramountcy in return for a restricted measure of sovereignty in their respective domains. It was to mask their political aggressiveness and economic intrusions that the Company's state retained some of the ceremonial trappings of pre-colonial state ideology. But in its search for legitimacy the early colonial state drew more heavily on and, by implication, reinforced the orthodox traditions of Hindu Brahmans and Muslim ulema rather than the more pervasive and syncretist, though largely uncoded, local cultural traditions. Notwithstanding a modicum of respect accorded to the Mughal emperor in the north Indian heartland and the early colonial state's sponsorship of neo-Brahminical traditions in the south, the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a growing trend towards centralized domination and the monopolization of sovereign rights by the colonial power. This trend owed not a little to the need to counter resistance put up by an array of elites and subaltern social classes, including rural magnates, peasants, tribals and urban artisans.

B. The 1857 Revolt and its Aftermath

The rebellion of 1857 was the most coordinated and concerted instance of resistance to the colonial presence. Starting off as a military revolt by sepoys of the English East India Company's Bengal Army, the uprising spread through northern and western Indian to include elements of the declining Mughal aristocracy, impoverished artisans, peasants, tribals as well as discontented rural elites. Yet the British were seriously threatened only in the northern and the central Indian heartlands. Though the causes of the revolt were manifold, the rebels shared the common objective of dislodging the alien rulers. Prominent leaders of the uprising made special appeals for Hindu-Muslim unity in order to more effectively turf out the hated *farangis* or foreigners. It is in this sense that the rebellion of 1857 was almost proto-nationalist in expression and is, consequently, dubbed the first war of independence by early historians of Indian nationalism.

Once the last vestige of Mughal sovereignty was extinguished in 1858 the newly established Crown raj took steps to further modernize the state apparatus. The British Indian army, heavily recruited from the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, was transformed into a domestic rod of order and an imperial fire brigade. As for the civil bureaucracy, the steel frame of colonial rule, a racially determined cut off point confined Indians to the subordinate positions. Subservient princes retained some formal quasi-sovereign rights over their domestic affairs and attended Delhi durbars in all their regalia. But their main function now was to serve as the major bulwarks of empire. In the directly administered provinces the colonial state at the height of its power not only exercised central authority but increasingly projected a monolithic concept of sovereignty.

Monolithic perceptions of sovereignty are coeval with the emergence of the modern state system in Europe. An external and internal ordering principle, sovereignty as we know it today had less to do with developments within each state than with the mutual recognition by states of one another's territorial inviolability. Prior to that sovereignty was not a universal attribute of all states. It was commonly vested in rulers, each claiming legitimacy by virtue of social and economic status or by reference to sacred symbols and elaborate rituals of royalty. Far from being absolute, assertions of divine right by rulers were the focal points of serious socio-economic and political contention. Only with the centralization and expansion of powers, the development of concepts of law based on the state's monopoly over the instruments of coercion,

and the establishment of new mechanisms of fiscal management and control did sovereignty come to acquire the impersonal connotations associated with modern government.

The shift from personal to impersonal sovereignty in the West - notwithstanding internal tensions in the formation of European ideals of homogenized nations - was generally paralleled by the extension of the principle of nationality and citizenship rights. Yet in many parts of the world, especially those under colonialism, the relationship between citizenship rights, nationalism and sovereignty was riven with contradictions and conflicts. Colonial subjugation and the denial of citizenship rights greatly exacerbated the dilemma in South Asia where there were many distinct linguistic and cultural identities and, consequently, a plurality of contenders for statehood. It was here that the eventual association of the dominant nationalist strand with monolithic state sovereignty instead of advancing notions of equal citizenship rights tended to strengthen communitarian affiliations and the sense of exclusivity on the part of linguistic, regional and religious groups.

The British managed to impose colonial control in India by conferring on its people subjecthood, not citizenship. So colonial India was not the most propitious soil for the development of ideas of citizenship transcending the community. The problem was compounded by the British policy since the turn of the century of alternatively granting a measure of regional autonomy and extending safeguards to religious minorities as a way of containing the forces of Indian nationalism and perpetuating their own rule. Yet it would be a mistake to exaggerate the colonial state's role in recasting Indian social identities which continued to be shaped by largely autonomous local cultural settings. For one, colonial initiatives were more successful in constructing political categories out of local affiliations, territorial or religious, than in shaping the mental world of their subject peoples. For another, identities were redefined not simply as a function of skilful social engineering by the colonial masters but also as part of a process of multifaceted resistance against alien rule.

III. From Community to Nation

The spatial and ideological boundaries of the selectively constructed national histories of both India and Pakistan have obscured rather more than they have revealed. While making much of its secular credentials, India's inclusionary nationalism is hard pressed to explain why the unity of the country was sacrificed at the altar of independence, presumably because of irreconcilable religious differences. In stressing its religious basis and distinctiveness from India, Pakistan has struggled to balance the expansive claims of its nationalism with the modest achievements of statehood. The 'nation' in its hyphenated relationship with the modern state has been decidedly restricted in its conception of identity and uncompromising in its assertions of territorial sovereignty. Keeping the claims of post-colonial nation-states within proper perspective requires revisiting the history of the making of the 'nation'. Without debunking national myths altogether, it is important to consider how and why they were constructed and the purposes which they have been made to serve. Once this is done the processes of inclusion and exclusion in any particular community-imagined-as-a-nation can be discerned and examined in all their facets of generosity as well as bigotry with due consideration to the temporal and spatial context. Instead of being hermetically sealed, the idea of the nation in history has always and everywhere been strikingly fluid and subject to renegotiation and redefinition.

Until 1857 there was no obvious invocation of the national idea in the form it has come to

assume in the post-colonial Indian state's secular nationalism and Pakistan's two nation theory. The idea of India or, more aptly, of Hind or Hindustan had an amorphous presence even in a period when references to one's *qaum*, only very loosely translatable as 'nation', and *watan*, or territorial homeland, did not evoke the notion of either a Muslim or an Indian nationalism. There was as yet no obvious tension in an affinity to one's city, a region, Hind and a religiously informed cultural identity. Before the encounter with colonialism, religiously informed cultural differences had found expression in literature as well as art and architecture. Yet even in their social and political performances, differences along lines of religion were negotiable and amenable to accommodations. Pre-colonial modes of social enquiry and representation did not perceive Hinduism and Islam as two irreconcilable faiths; religion was never a matter of political indifference for either Muslim or Hindu sovereigns.

The colonial state's stated policy of neutrality based on indifference towards religion was a product of convenience, not conviction. Needing to appropriate existing symbols of cultural legitimacy, religion could never be a matter of political indifference for the British. Intrinsic to the search for collaborators and the organization of social control, religion in the service of the colonial state's political purposes had qualitatively different consequences than those in the preceding centuries. British perceptions of Indian society as an aggregation of religious communities gave impetus to representations of identity in idioms emphasizing differences, not commonalities between those who among other things happened to be Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Christian and Parsi. Yet British social engineering on its own cannot explain the intensity of the process marking Indian attempts to deploy the categories of the colonial state to their own social and political advantage. Indian subjectivity, whether interpreted in its individual or communitarian colors, constituted an important dimension in the discourse on identity in the late nineteenth century.

Retrospectively labeled 'communalism' in an attempt to distinguish it from the lauded sentiment of 'nationalism', this was a subjectivity which drew upon religion as a signifier of cultural difference. If religion as faith was a matter of individual disposition, religion in the service of communitarian culture was as yet a stretch removed from its subsequent uses as political ideology. The erroneous conflation of the two in most nationalist reconstructions, Indian and Pakistani, has obfuscated the analytical distinction between identity as culture and identity as politics in the history of the subcontinent. The politically loaded term 'communalism' did not command the center stage of the public discourse on communitarian identities until after the formal grant in 1909 of separate electorates to Muslims at all levels of representation. With the restricted introduction of the electoral principle in the late nineteenth century, members of the educated and propertied elite belonging to all religious denominations had an interest in promoting the politicization of communitarian identities. Taking advantage of a rapidly growing press and publications market, those claiming to represent 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' interests projected their specifically class and regional concerns in terms of religious communitarianism. Yet the discourse of the elite was internally more divided than united. There was a fine discrepancy between the communitarian claims of the elite discourse, invoking as it does the larger religious community spilling over spatial limitations and the complex, and often ambiguous, dynamics at the social base.

Assertions of cultural differences did not translate easily into the politics of a coherent communitarian identity. The intermeshing of religion and culture with politics did not mean that all Indians were inherently bigoted, albeit in varying measure. Religiously informed cultural

identities emphasized a sense of difference without foreclosing the possibility of Indians sharing common sentiments and coming together when circumstances were suitable for united action. Disagreements on when unity outweighed all other considerations were not merely due to religious distinctions in Indian society. Hindus were pitted against Hindus no less than Muslims against Muslims on how and when to bury their internal differences and forge a common front against the raj. Individual preferences based on class and regional location, and not just membership in a religious community, influenced Indian responses in their various permutations and combinations. A term like 'communalism' is inadequate in conveying why a sizeable section of Indian Muslims from the ashraf, literally respectable, classes opted to stay away from the Congress founded in 1885.

Any alternative enquiry has to question the widely held notion of Muslim 'separatism' at a historical moment when the idea of an Indian nation was itself in the process of being forged, negotiated and contested. Turning the spotlight on the interplay between class, region and community brings out the subtleties in the territorial and extra-territorial allegiances of India's Muslims in both their restrictive and expansive dimensions. There were many competing narratives drawing on affiliations of linguistic and religious community that tried to contribute to the discourse on the Indian nation. Far from reflecting a neat Hindu-Muslim divide, the nationalist narratives authored by Hindus as well as Muslims of different regions and classes displayed considerable variety and evoked multiple visions of nationhood. Muslim voices sought location within that emerging discourse on the Indian nation while seeking to find accommodation for their sense of cultural difference. What has been branded 'separatism' can be viewed equally plausibly as a reaction to the exclusionary idioms adopted by that variant of the Indian national discourse which rose to a position of dominance.

The early narratives of a single Indian 'nation' were expressed most powerfully by the Bengali pen. Bankim Chattopadhyay, the Bengali Hindu novelist of the late nineteenth century, has been held up as an exemplar of modernist Indian nationalist thought at its moment of departure. Yet there was considerable variety in the responses of the Bengali Hindu middle-class intelligentsia to the twin challenges of Western colonialism and modernity. Despite his moorings in the Hindu tradition, Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali poet and philosopher, displayed more sensitivity towards cultural differences than Chattopadhyay. Influenced by rationalist and humanist strands in both India's pre-colonial and Europe's post-enlightenment intellectual traditions, Tagore was a proponent of internal, social regeneration and reform as a first step towards countering alien rule. If his poetry and philosophy held out the prospect of accommodating religiously informed cultural differences, the anti-Muslim sentiments expressed in some of Chattopadhyay's writings incurred the wrath of Bengali Muslims as well as their counterparts in the north western provinces and the Punjab. To the Muslim mind, the idea of the 'nation' with its Hindu overtones smacked of exclusion even when not obviously bordering on the offensive.

Religious differences in and of themselves may not have been an insurmountable obstacle in fashioning the ideal of a unitary nation. It was the ways in which religiously defined distinctions bore upon political and economic advancement within the colonial system which gave religion the handle it came to enjoy in British colonial India. While variously asserting their sense of religiously informed cultural identities - as for instance during the controversy over the use of the Persian or the Sanskrit derived Nagari script as the medium of instruction - the reactions of regional Muslim elites to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885

were informed in large measure by the twin issues of education and employment. The colonial state's uses of the religious distinction in the distribution of patronage meant that there could be no hard and fast separation between a materially defined colonial public and a spiritually autonomous Indian private sphere.

By the same measure, the dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' gives a wholly false impression of the political and ideological tendencies in colonial India. On an earlier view, Indian society in the late nineteenth century was split by debates between tradition bound revivalists and modernist reformers. Recent historical work has uncovered the interplay and overlap of various strands of reform and revival in the different regions. A stark distinction between tradition and modernity as well as Indian and European modernity obscures the contestations which marked efforts to forge an anti-colonial modernity. Claims of cultural exclusivity and difference did not prevent Indians, of whatever religious denomination, from selectively borrowing or willfully transgressing the boundary between "us" and "them".

Beginning with Raja Rammohun Roy and including such luminaries as Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose and Rabindranath Tagore, a succession of reformers in Bengal rejected the difference seeking distortions implicit in endeavors to keep 'our' modernity apart from 'theirs'. The Bengali model of negotiating with colonialism was by no means the only one. Leading intellectual figures in other regions also enunciated their positions on religion and nation without rejecting Western modernity altogether. Instead of reveling in their own modernities, Indian intellectuals in the different regions selectively appropriated and adapted the new currents coming from the metropolis and the world at large. The enormous variation in the responses to British colonialism and western modernity cannot be captured by facile distinctions between 'liberals' and 'traditionalists' or 'modernists' or 'anti-modernists'.

Sayyid Ahmed Khan, the leading spokesman of the north Indian Urdu-speaking ashraf classes in the late nineteenth century, spearheaded a reform movement within Indian Islam. In 1875 with British patronage he set up the Aligarh Anglo-Muhammadan Oriental College which attracted the sons of Muslim landlords of northern India. While stoutly opposing Muslim participation in the Indian National Congress, Sayyid Ahmed spent the better part of his energies exhorting his co-religionists against cultural exclusivism and the curse of religious bigotry. His criticisms of the Congress had less to do with the threats it posed to the religious identity of Muslims than with the cultural pretensions and different claims of the north Indian ashraf class. He saw the Congress as a creation of the more advanced Bengali "nation", not of Hindus as such. Just a year before the formation of the Congress, he had expressed his disdain for those who identified religion or community with the nation. Terms like Hindu and Muslim had a religious significance, all those living in India constituted one 'nation'. His call for Muslim non-participation in the early Congress has earned Sayyid Ahmad the reputation of a 'separatist', elucidating the political nature of the distinction between a 'communalist' and 'nationalist' in retrospectively constructed nationalist pasts.

Within his own community, Sayyid Ahmed was attacked for his rational approach to Islamic theology and law by ulema in religious seminaries at Deoband and Farangi Mahal in Lucknow. His ardent promotion of western knowledge and culture as well as loyalty to the raj incensed many Muslims deeply attached to their societal moorings and the ideal of a universal Muslim ummah. Criticism of the Aligarh school received a boost from the great preacher of Islamic universalism Jamaluddin al-Afghani who lived in the subcontinent between 1879 and 1882. In India al-Afghani tempered his adherence to the political principles of Islamic

universalism by calling for Hindu-Muslim unity against British imperialism. Sayyid Ahmad may have been the most prominent spokesman of a regionally based North Indian Muslim elite, but his leadership was disputed by the very Muslim ashraf classes on whose behalf he made his loudest appeals. By the late 1880s Britain's imperial policies in India and new colonial conquests in the Islamic world were leading more and more Muslims to eschew the policy of non-participation in the Congress. An increasing number of Muslims from the North West Provinces began attending the annual sessions of the Congress. In 1887, Badruddin Tyabji, a Bombay-based lawyer from the Bohra community, became the first Muslim president of the Congress. By 1895 the well known Islamic scholar Maulana Shibli Numani, who had initially associated himself with Sayyid Ahmed Khan, was publicly opposing the policy of Muslim non-participation in the Congress.

A. Turn of the Century Muslim Politics

By the turn of the century the idea of a distinct Indian Muslim interest that needed representing was proclaimed in petitions aimed at winning an audience with colonial authorities. The regional diversities in the circumstances of Muslims in the spheres of education and government employment scuttled many attempts to pitch claims on their behalf in all-India terms. Internal divisions within the community left open the possibility of at least some Muslims endorsing Congress's bid to speak on behalf of all Indians. Class and regional circumstance, rather than specifically religious considerations, were key factors in the making of such a choice. Competition for jobs in the colonial service kept many Muslims from making common cause with their Hindu compatriots in Bengal, the north western provinces and the Punjab. Muslims with jobs in government might nurture dreams of independence but could not actively participate in an organization which, although moderate in its aims and methods, was in principle pitted against the colonial state. The backbone of the Congress was provided by lawyers and traders, professions in which Muslims were relatively few and far between. Muslim landed classes, actively wooed by the British since the quelling of the revolt, were not minded to put the colonial state's collaborative networks to the test. Self preservation, if not self promotion, made many Muslims reluctant to hitch their wagons with a mainly Hindu dominated Congress. It was ultimately the equations between different communities in the regions which determined the extent, or lack, of Muslim support for Congress's version of anti-colonial nationalism.

B. The Early Indian National Congress and the Swadeshi Movement

By the 1890s the Congress's policy of moderation was under increasing attack from a new generation of nationalist leaders in Bengal and western India. This took form in Bal Gangadhar Tilak's revival of popular Hindu festivals after 1894 and the assassination of two British officials by the Chapekar brothers in 1897. Attempts to reverse modest nationalist gains during Curzon's viceroyalty gave a fillip to 'extremist' opinion within the Congress. The decision to partition Bengal in 1905 provoked the swadeshi (own country) movement. Although justified on grounds of administrative efficiency, the claim that the creation of a separate Muslim-majority province in eastern Bengal with Dhaka as its capital would restore the lost glories of the Mughal empire made plain the political designs of the colonial state. Curzon was supported by Muslim landlords like the Nawab of Dhaka, on whose estate the All-India Muslim League was born in December

1906. Two months earlier a deputation of Muslim landlords from northern India had called upon Curzon's successor Minto to plead for separate electorates for Muslims and representation in accordance with their social and political importance rather than their numbers.

The partition of Bengal infuriated most educated Bengalis, Hindus and Muslims, students and professionals. Bengal was the focal point of the *swadeshi* agitation, but there were reverberations in other parts of India once the Congress took up the cause. During the height of the agitation in 1905-8 moderate constitutionalists like Surendranath Banerji, and the Bombay Congressman Gopal Krishna Gokhale opted to band together with the 'extremists'. These included men like Aurobindo Ghose, Lala Lajpat Rai, Balwantrao Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal who advocated the boycott of British goods and institutions with recourse to violence if repression became unbearable. Even a believer in internal regeneration as a prelude to anti-colonial resistance like Rabindranath Tagore swore to undo the decision. The agitation got off to an enthusiastic start. But in the absence of a significant indigenous industry the strategy of boycott was a luxury few could afford. For the common Bengali peasant, *swadeshi* meant financial ruin and greater indebtedness to Hindu landlords and moneylenders. There were some outbreaks of violence in east Bengal in which Muslim peasants attacked Hindu landlords, moneylenders and traders. The cry 'Bande Mataram' or hail the motherland, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was used as the main nationalist slogan. Although not explicitly stated, the mother whom the author had in mind is Bangamata or Mother Bengal. What made it controversial and less universally acceptable was the equation of the mother country with the mother goddess in the last verse of the song inserted in 1882 into Bankim Chattopadhyay's novel *Ananda Math* which reeked of anti-Muslim bias.

In 1907 the Congress in Surat saw the extremists coming to blows with the moderate elements. Anticipating another set of constitutional reforms, the moderates had withdrawn their earlier support for boycott and *swaraj* (self-rule), preferring a steady reform of the existing structure of administration. Disappointed by the let down, some Bengali men and women took to the cult of the bomb, taking heart from acts of Irish daring against the British. Cast into prison, or sent into exile, the extremist leaders won a pyrrhic victory. In 1911 the British ditched their Muslim allies and annulled the partition of Bengal. This was a huge embarrassment for Muslim loyalists and created the opportunity for a takeover of the Muslim League by nationalist professionals in 1912-13.

The *swadeshi* era witnessed a major redefinition of nationalist aims and strategies. Yet it left contradictory legacies for the future course of relations between the Indian nation on the one hand and religious communities and linguistic regions on the other. The anti-colonialism of both Hindus and Muslims was influenced in this period by their religious sensibilities. But since the colonial state's scheme of enumeration had transformed one into the 'majority' and the other into the 'minority community', it became easier for Hindu religious symbolisms and communitarian interests to be subsumed within the emerging discourse on the Indian nation. Even Muslims willing to imbibe the Congress's conception of the Indian nation found it increasingly difficult to be accepted as both Muslim communitarians and Indian nationalists. If religiously based notions of majority and minority were already beginning to pose problems for a unified Indian nationalism, there seemed to be no contradiction between regionally based linguistic communities or 'nations' and a broader diffuse Indian 'nation'. India's two most celebrated poet-philosophers, Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, - writing in Bengali and Urdu respectively - had produced in 1904 and 1905 patriotic narrations of linguistic and territorial

nations of effervescent literary quality. But what they saw of the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal, communitarian bigotry in Punjab as well as European rivalries of a murderous sort turned both into powerful critics of the western model of the territorial nation-state.

V. Nationalism and its Critics, 1914-1945

A. World War I and Gandhian Mass Nationalism

The halfway mark of the World War I found the moderates mending fences with erstwhile extremists who had parted ways in 1907, and increasing cooperation between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League. In a major concession, the Congress accepted the principle of separate electorates for Muslims in the interests of forging a common front against the British. Mohammed Ali Jinnah masterminded the agreement known as the Lucknow Pact of 1916. In return for separate electorates, Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal were denied their regional majorities and weighted representation given to minority religious communities - a logical extension of Muslims in the Hindu-majority provinces getting representation in excess of their population proportions. The 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms incorporated the principle of separate electorates but ensured against the dominance of the reformed provincial councils by members of any single community. Even moderate Indian nationalists, who had been hoping for substantial concessions, were thoroughly disillusioned by the limited nature of the reforms. While broadening the basis of Indian political activity, the British retained the 1909 policy of balancing interests by creating separate categories for the Muslims, landlords and the depressed classes. But the 1919 reforms went a step further than the 1909 reforms by granting the principle of dyarchy, which placed responsibility for certain less sensitive subjects like local self-government in the hands of non-official Indian ministers. This was not a first step towards responsible government at the center but a concerted attempt at preserving British control at the center.

By the time the World War I ended the policy of constitutionalism had failed to deliver any substantial concessions for Indian nationalists while sporadic, isolated armed resistance had been crushed. It was at this vital conjuncture that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi emerged on the all-India stage with his philosophy of non-violent non-cooperation. With Indian society reeling under the economic consequences of the war, the time was ripe for a major reorientation of nationalist aims and objectives. The prospects of Muslim anti-colonialism making way for a united nationalist front seemed more promising than ever. Turkey's defeat and doubts about the future of the Ottoman Khilafat, the ultimate symbol of Islamic temporal and spiritual sovereignty, found the Muslims of India engaging in new definitions of identity. One of the most dynamic moments in the history of colonial India, it saw the dialectic of inclusionary nationalism and exclusionary communitarianisms interacting in novel ways, recasting ideas of the community and the 'nation' in both its restrictive and expansive dimensions.

If the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 were a disappointment, the Rowlatt Act turning wartime ordinances into peace-time legislations, allowing the British to detain Indians without trial, made a mockery of the constitutional reforms. Gandhi condemned the government's assumption of draconian powers and called for an all-India mass protest movement, relying on political networks like the Home Rule Leagues, an array of pro-*khilafat* Muslims and his own Satyagraha Sabha. The Congress was not in the picture since it did not

possess the organizational machinery for agitational politics of the sort Gandhi had in mind. Ironically the very facet of Muslim identity - extra-territorial loyalties to the *ummah* or the world wide community of Islam - which their detractors deemed to be the biggest obstacle to Muslims aligning with the Indian 'nation' offered the greatest impetus to Gandhian non-cooperation. As the anti-Rowlatt *satyagraha* (a quest for truth through mass political activity) merged with the *khilafat* movement, attacks on the symbols of British authority _ banks, post offices, the railway stations and town halls _ as well as assaults on British civilians were followed by brutal repression. There were rare displays of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh unity. The Punjab, reputed to be least nationalist-orientated of the British Indian provinces was placed under martial law and gave the *satyagraha* its best known martyrs. On 13 April 1919, a peaceful and unarmed crowd congregated at Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar was fired upon by General Dyer's men, leaving 379 dead and 1200 were injured.

Anguished by the violence, Gandhi made concerted efforts to better consolidate his hold over the anti-colonial movement. In 1920 he assumed the leadership of the Congress at Nagpur with the aid of pro-*khilafat* Muslims like the Mohamed Ali and his elder brother Shaukat Ali. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who had tried forging Hindu-Muslim unity on a different basis, censured Gandhi for mixing religion with politics. Influential Congressmen like Motilal Nehru from the United Provinces as well as C.R.Das, Bipin Chandra Pal and Rabindranath Tagore were equally sceptical. But with support from the *khilafatists*, Gandhi had his way. The Congress constitution was modified; its goal was to attain *swaraj* through all legitimate and peaceful means. Provincial Congresses were reorganized along linguistic lines and steps taken to transform Congress into a truly mass political party.. The years 1919 to 1922 were marked by widespread labor unrest and *kisan* (peasant) movements. Gandhi's promise of *swaraj* within a year aroused millenarian hopes in the remotest villages of India and his call for village reconstruction based on an economic revival through the *charkha* (the spinning wheel) and *khadi* (hand-woven cloth) was received with enthusiasm.

Under the direction of the Ali brothers, Muslim leaders stuck to the goal of using the *khilafat* agitation to bring their community firmly into the mainstream of Indian nationalism. Contrary to the fears of their detractors, the *khilafatists* hoped by juxtaposing Gandhi's chosen symbols - the *charkha* and *khadi* - with the Islamic crescent and the Turkish *fez* to reconcile, not aggravate, Hindu-Muslim differences. The *khilafatists* were fighting for a permanent place in the constellation of nationalist forces based on conceptions of identity and sovereignty that were uniquely their own. If the bond with God released them from the fetters of an unsympathetic government, then that primary association could also provide the pretext for breaking with Gandhi and the Congress if their 'religious rights' were not safeguarded. In making tactical uses of Islamic idioms, an improbable coalition of Muslim propagandists appear to have been aiming strategically at the whole question of rights for a group claiming not only a distinctive identity but also propounding a conception of sovereignty which lay outside the narrowly defined notion of Western nationalism that was coming to dominate the Congress. If a common religious identity was the one irrefutable feature of the Muslim minority accepted by the colonial masters and the Hindu 'majority' as legitimate, then it could also serve as the mainspring for claiming the right to seek location within a refashioned discourse on the Indian nation.

Yet the nation that was in the making, as Gandhi realized all too well, had far too many conflicting threads to permit an easy accommodation of all internal differences. He had always emphasized issues cutting across India's manifold class, caste and religious divisions. Unless

harnessed and controlled, popular forces could play havoc with the goal of *swaraj*. Non-violence was an imperative if the Congress was to achieve its objective without losing its hold on the anti-colonial movement. But while there can be no underestimating his tremendous prestige - one that earned him the title of Mahatma and veneration as a veritable messiah- the populist forces enjoyed far more autonomy of action than Gandhi was willing to countenance. In 1922 the policy of boycott had peaked and there were plans to escalate the movement with a campaign for the non-payment of revenue. But on February 22, 1922, Gandhi unilaterally called off the non-cooperation movement after receiving news that twenty two policemen had been killed in a police station set alight by angry peasants at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district of the U.P. on February 5, 1922.

By the time Gandhi suspended non-cooperation, cracks in Hindu-Muslim unity had widened into open breaches. Diehard *khilafatists* and their allies in the nationalist camp continued to see in the lingering shadows of anti-imperialist sentiments the lost tracks to substantive Indian unity. Yet in their efforts to rustle up popular support, the *khilafat* and non-cooperation movements had legitimized the political articulation of religiously informed cultural identities. Short of appropriating these to negotiate an alternative form of Indian nationalism, one which went beyond the morass of majoritarian and minoritarian narratives to project a vision of equal citizenship rights irrespective of cultural difference, the architects of a united Hindu-Muslim 'nation' were unwittingly strengthening the hands of their opponents. Even before the Turkish National Assembly hammered the last nail into the coffin of the *khilafat* movement, the clashing politics of regionalism had tilted the balance against those looking for all-India solutions, dimming the prospects of an accommodation between Islamic universalism and Indian nationalism. Gandhi's compromise forced a split within the Congress between no-changers and those like C.R.Das and Motilal Nehru who favored contesting elections to the provincial councils and subverting the reforms from within. Hindu-Muslim unity was replaced by tension, conflict and violence on an unprecedented scale. The worst affected provinces were the U.P. and Punjab where the anti-imperialist struggle was replaced with Hindu social movements of *shuddhi* (purification) and *sangathan* (organization) and their Muslim counterparts named *tabligh* (preaching) and *tanzim* (organization). As Congress president at Cocanada in December 1923 Mohamed Ali called for an accommodation of religious differences through the creation of a 'federation of faiths' rather than just a 'unity of opposition'. In Bengal, C.R.Das came to an agreement with Muslim leaders known as the Bengal pact based on a 50:50 principle in the allocation of future government posts and jobs. This was based on a vision of a 'composite' nationalism and a federal structure for India. Congress's rejection at Cocanada of Das's Bengal Pact put paid to any immediate hopes of an amicable resolution of Hindu-Muslim differences at the all-India level. The political pendulum had shifted towards regions which had Muslim majorities, especially the Punjab and Bengal where the inversion of the all-India majority-minority equation gave a different twist to the ongoing struggle between nationalism and imperialism.

B. Region, Religion and Nation

Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal were the two leading intellectuals of Bengal and the Punjab respectively. Their contemporaneous poetry and philosophy are vital sources in any study of nationalist thought in the subcontinent. Both were critics of the modern territorial nation-state.

In his 1917 collection of lectures on nationalism given in Japan and the United States of America, Tagore offered a biting critique of what he considered to be the dehumanizing effects of the modern industrialized nation-state. Evoking the killing fields of Europe during World War I, he warned his compatriots against the hubris of aggressive nationalism.

Muhammad Iqbal in the Punjab shared many of the same ideas as his Bengali peer but offered a finer insight into the roots of conflict based on religiously informed cultural differences. Nationalism, according to him, made religion relative rather than universal by assuming that religion was territorially specific and unsuited to the temperament of other nations. It was nationalism, therefore, and not religion which by compartmentalizing people into different nations was the source of modern conflicts. Tagore's critique of the aggressive nationalisms of modern nation-states along with his promotion of universalism was not devoid of a religious sensibility. Iqbal envisaged Islam as a universal religion which was neither national and racial, nor individual and private, but purely human. Religion as social demarcator, as both men knew from personal experience, was a mere label, not an accurate reflection of the religiosity of the individual believer, far less of the community or the 'nation'. Both men affirmed the inextricable overlap between temporal and spiritual life. All human life is spiritual, Iqbal argued. There was no such thing as a profane world.

In their different ways, Tagore and Iqbal had pinpointed the dangers of letting religion as social demarcator appropriate the meaning and scope of religion. The British decision to cap the welter of social identities constituting the colorful mosaic of India with the overarching category of religion had monumental consequences, particularly in regions like Bengal and the Punjab where the politics of cultural differences required imaginative accommodations. Census enumeration based on a privileging of the religious distinction foreclosed the possibility of separating the material and the spiritual domains. Demands for places in educational institutions, jobs in government and shares of representation invariably drew on statistics compiled by colonial census enumerators. More a demarcator of social difference than a matter of faith, religion in late colonial India had manifestations that were more profane than sacred.

The separation of religion and politics was expounded most powerfully by Congress nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru who believed that India's internal differences could be settled effectively only after the struggle against imperialism had been won. He was enthusiastically supported by pro-Congress Muslims, for instance Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Ali brothers, who had played a pivotal role in aligning the *khilafat* movement with Gandhian non-cooperation. With the collapse of the anti-colonial agitation of the early 1920s, the question of keeping religion out of politics assumed very different connotations at the regional and the all-India levels. As region interacted with an emerging conception of the nation, variously appropriated by the votaries of the majoritarian community, those reduced to minority status by virtue of their religious affiliation had reasonable grounds for apprehension. Emphatic assertions of an inclusionary nationalism based on the separation of the spiritual from the material, the religious from the political and the emotional from the rational seemed to marginalize the problem of cultural difference rather than give it the centrality it had come to occupy in the discourse and politics of communitarianism. If fragments of the majority community could pose their demand for regional rights in the language of religiously informed cultural differences, then the members of a 'national' minority could hardly be expected to do otherwise.

Even if the issue of cultural difference could be settled through negotiations on the quantum of state intervention in religion, there was no guaranteeing that Hindu-majority rule

would not try and efface the marks of the Islamic impact on the subcontinent. Imbued with the wonder of a union of the mother Goddess with the territorial homeland, Hindu India's vision of Bharatvarsha clashed with the individual and collective Muslim belief in the absolute sovereignty of a universal God. In 1924 Lala Lajpat Rai, a leading nationalist from the Punjab and a virulent opponent of separate electorates, warned Punjabi Muslims that separation may have to be the price for majority rule premised on religion. Championing the regional rights of Punjabi Hindus, he took comfort in the fact of a Hindu majority at the all-India center guaranteeing their national rights. Religion was the premise of both the regional and national rights of the Hindu community in the Punjab. And yet Lajpat Rai was opposed to mixing religion with politics. His recipe for settling the problem of difference through division was anathema to many Punjabi Muslims. But they were equally averse to the ideas of men like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Mohamed Ali, who held that the only religious requirement of the Muslims was to ensure that independence did not undermine their religious rights. If Azad and Mohamed Ali conceded the possibility of Muslim citizenship in a non-Muslim state, Muhammad Iqbal transformed the very parameters of the debate by rejecting the European born idea of the separation of the spiritual and material domains.

Iqbal's philosophical reconstructions of Islamic thought made plain the gaping chasm 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. In his presidential address to the All-India Muslim League in December 1930, he posed the rhetorical question of whether Islam could survive as an ethical ideal by rejecting it as a polity in order to embrace the idea of national politics in which religion played no part. As his call for a Muslim state in the north west of India indicates, Iqbal thought it a contradiction in terms for Indian Muslims to subscribe to a national polity by abandoning the principles of Islamic solidarity. It was precisely because religion as a demarcator of difference was insufficient to sustain Islam as an ethical ideal that he rejected the possibility of Muslims agreeing to privatize their religiously informed cultural identities in the interest of being considered politically as part of the Indian nation.

Yet Iqbal did not declare Indian Muslims a 'nation' when he called for a state based on the territorial amalgamation of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan. The Muslim state which he had in mind was to remain part of a larger all-India whole. Islam as a living cultural force in India demanded its centralization in a specific territory. This was, he explained, not actuated by narrow minded communalism or feelings of ill-will towards other communities but the only plausible solution to the problem of cultural difference. There was no room in the homogenizing claims of inclusionary nationalism for incorporating the assertion of cultural difference based on an imbrication of religious faith and political need.

Despite internal divisions various groupings in India were unwilling to evolve a common national ethos if this meant the extinction of their cultural distinctiveness. The more so if they were denied their rightful share in the exercise of power once independence had been attained. Whatever the claims of Congress's inclusionary nationalism, there was a veritable absence of any inter-communitarian trust and scarcely any checks against nurturing hopes of dominating one another. In contesting their part in relation to the whole of India, Muslims quite as much as other religious groupings were asserting rights to territories based on religiously informed cultural identities. But they were still contesting the Congress's right to indivisible sovereignty, not rejecting any sort of identification with India.

C. Radical Nationalism and Gandhian Civil Disobedience of the Early 1930s

If the regionally based concerns of Muslims were a potential obstacle to Congress's claims at the all-India level, differences along ideological lines presented a more immediate problem for the Gandhian old guard. By the late 1920s the Mahatma and his more conservative associates were under pressure from radicals and socialists both within and outside the Congress to formally commit themselves to *purna swaraj* or complete independence instead of their stated policy of dominion status in the British commonwealth. The radical elements drew support from militant urban educated students and youth movements as well as industrial workers disenchanted with the politics of caution and compromise. Revolutionary terrorism was back in ascendance in Bengal. There were echoes as far afield as the Punjab where Bhagat Singh captured popular imaginations by assassinating a British police officer and throwing a bomb into the central assembly. Unwilling to countenance violence, Gandhi was equally apprehensive of the growing strength of radical forces within the nationalist movement. In December 1929, at the insistence of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, he finally endorsed the resolution demanding *purna swaraj* at the Congress's Lahore session.

With Indian society and economy suffering the effects of a world wide depression, neither Gandhi's tactical manoeuvres nor his decision to start a civil disobedience campaign in March 1930 could stem the increasing radicalization of the nationalist movement. Throughout the early 1930s there were instances of revolutionary violence in Bengal as well as other parts of India. Gandhian civil disobedience meshed awkwardly with individual acts of violence only in the formal sense. Even as the Mahatma sought to distance the Congress from the forces of radical anti-colonialism, his peasant followers in many regions often worked hand and glove with those espousing the doctrine of revolutionary terrorism. Afraid of radical elements hijacking the agitation in certain regions, Gandhi in March 1931 came to an agreement with the viceroy. Known as the Gandhi-Irwin pact, it committed the British to an all-India federation, Indian responsibility at the center and safeguards for minorities in return for the suspension of civil disobedience. Amidst widespread indignation at his refusal to press the British to commute the death sentence passed on Bhagat Singh and his associates, Gandhi left for London to attend the second round table conference (Congress had boycotted the first) where India's future constitutional framework was under discussion. Upon returning to India without any concrete concessions, he called for the resumption of civil disobedience. While hurling many more agitators into colonial jails than in the first phase, the British had by 1934 broken the back of the resistance.

D. Center-Region, Community-Nation and the Government of India Act of 1935

This set the stage for the final round of constitutional reforms. The Government of India Act of 1935 aimed at keeping the center firmly in British hands for the remaining years of the raj. While holding out the promise of an all India federation in the distant future, the colonial rulers widened the franchise to thirty-five million and gave the provinces a large measure of autonomy. Unlike the 1919 reforms which kept key provincial departments in British hands, Indians were to be associated with decision making in all departments of provincial government. But full responsibility at the center was something for the future; the executive was not responsible to the legislature and the all-India center could curb provincial powers. The constitutional reforms were

roundly criticized by the Congress leadership - especially Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chander Bose - as well as Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who was at the helm of a resuscitated All-India Muslim League. From the nationalist point of view, the absence of an immediate advance towards responsible government at the center was a serious defect. There was scope here for a Congress and Muslim League agreement. But it was undermined by the continuation of separate electorates for Muslims and their insistence on a guaranteed share of power at the all-India level and regional dominance in the Punjab and Bengal where they had bare majorities.

To further confound the problem, the interests of Muslims in provinces where they were in a majority were different from regions where they were in a minority. Under the 1935 Act Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal were given separate electorates and even with weighted representation for non-Muslims had more seats in the provincial legislature than any other community. Together with the newly created Muslim-majority province of Sind, which was separated from Bombay presidency, and the North West Frontier Province, Punjabi and Bengali Muslims could look forward to dominating the ministries set up under the new reforms. But with dyarchy scrapped and full provincial autonomy granted, Muslims in the minority provinces could no longer rely on British officials to offset the voting power of their Hindu counterparts. Until now Muslims in the minority provinces had successfully deployed arguments about the numerical majorities of their co-religionists in the Punjab and Bengal to secure weighted representation for themselves. The coming of the new reforms threatened to leave them high and dry in the regions where they were heavily outnumbered without the prospect of calling in the center to redress their provincial disadvantages.

The revival of the All-India Muslim League in 1934 under Jinnah was an attempt by Muslims in the minority provinces to modify the terms of the new constitutional arrangement. As in the past, this required support from Muslims in the majority provinces. Prior to the first elections under the Government of India Act of 1935, Jinnah tried to strike a deal with the Congress at the all-India level and wooed the Muslim leadership in the majority provinces. His failure to achieve both objectives was highlighted by the election results of 1937. Despite separate electorates, the All-India Muslim League secured a mere 4.4% of the total Muslim vote cast. It was completely rejected by Muslims in the majority areas of north-western India. A last minute accommodation with a group of Muslim politicians in Bengal gave the League a toehold in the province. Although it did better in Muslim-minority provinces like the U.P., the Congress with an outright majority had no need to form a coalition government. Snubbed by the Congress with whom he shared a common objective of acquiring power at the all-India center, Jinnah and the League had been rebuffed by the very regions on whose behalf Muhammad Iqbal had made his claims in 1930.

The lack of congruence between Muslim identity and regionally specific political interests made it difficult for the followers of Islam to organize themselves under the banner of an all-India party before the last decade of colonial rule in India. The British policy of provincializing politics and compartmentalizing Muslims into separate electoral categories made it exceedingly difficult to successfully register claims on behalf of either the 'community' or the 'nation'. It was the interface of region and religion - not the presumed unities of religious communities and nations - which informed the politics of contested nationalisms in the concluding moments of colonialism in South Asia. The "community" of the individual was a more variegated and creative experience than has been suggested by the forced homogeneities of a religiously defined category in census enumeration. Individuals belonging to different

communities responded differently as they tried finding answers to questions of identity, sovereignty and citizenship in the final decade of the British raj in India.

Within the Congress itself the tussle between the Gandhian right wing and left leaning elements represented by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose gathered momentum during the second half of the nineteen thirties. Committed to a radical socialist transformation of the economy once independence had been achieved, both Nehru and Bose resented the Gandhian old guard's willingness to compromise with the British by leaving the key issue of an all-India federation to the volition of princely rulers. It was only with great difficulty that the Congress agreed to contest the first elections under the 1935 Act. Although the Congress did remarkably well at the polls - forming ministries in eight of British India's eleven provinces - the clash between the conservatives and radicals came to a head in 1939 with the defeat of Gandhi's nominee for president by Subhas Chandra Bose. Although the Gandhian old guard managed to overturn the democratic verdict - forcing Bose's resignation and debarring him as well as his brother Sarat Chandra Bose from holding office in the organization for six years on charges of indiscipline - the tears within the nationalist movement had come out fully to the fore.

E. The International War Crisis and Anticolonial Nationalism

The outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 altered the context of politics in India. Viceroy Linlithgow's unilateral decision to declare India a belligerent in the war against Germany without bothering to consult the Congress leadership deeply offended the nationalists, threatening to further expose the Gandhian old guard to criticism from socialists and radicals. Once it became clear that the British had no intention of making any concessions for the duration of the war, far less concede the nationalist demand for immediate independence. Congress had no choice but to call upon its ministries to resign. Furious at the Congress's refusal in the U.P. to give ministerial berths to Muslim Leaguers, Jinnah seized the moment and called for a 'Day of Deliverance'. He accused the Congress high command of dictatorial, indeed fascistic, tendencies but made it a point to emphasize that the target of the League's propaganda was the Congress and not the Hindu community. The scheduled caste leader, B.R.Ambedkar, endorsed the League's stand. Wary of stirring internal dissensions, Gandhi hesitated before calling for another mass agitation, opting for the safer tactic of directing a select group of his followers to make anti-war speeches and court arrest in their individual capacity.

But the more militant elements within the nationalist movement were not prepared to sit back until Gandhi was ready to give the go ahead for a frontal assault on the colonial state. To preempt any such eventuality, the British moved to arrest the more radical elements, including Subhas Chandra Bose, in 1940. Japan's entry into the war in December 1941 and its military successes in South East Asia in early 1942, encouraged even the Gandhian right wing to make bolder demands. Fearful of Congress nationalists allying with the Japanese, the British Prime Minister Churchill reluctantly sent Sir Stafford Cripps as an emissary to India in March 1942 for another round of negotiations. Cripps failed to meet the Congress's terms for joining the viceroy's executive council. The offer to provinces rather than religious communities to opt out of the Indian union was also rejected by Jinnah and the Muslim League. In April 1942 Gandhi drafted a resolution exhorting the British to quit India. A diluted version of the resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in August 1942 and adopted by the Congress.

The 'Quit India' movement was the largest anti-colonial agitation since the revolt of

1857. With Gandhi along with the top Congress leaders in jail, it was led and directed by relatively unknown nationalist leaders, receiving enthusiastic support from students as well as labor before fanning into the rural areas to escape the brutal British crackdown in key urban centers. Peasants joined the movement with alacrity, completely paralysing the colonial administration in many districts of Bihar, eastern U.P. western Bengal, Orissa and parts of Bombay province. Yet the main Muslim-majority provinces remained largely unscathed by the movement, hinting at the success of the British in mixing outright repression with skillful manipulation of India's internal political differences. World War II saw the largest deployment of British troops on Indian soil and an unbending resolve on the part of colonial authorities to firmly crush a largely unarmed, if determined, resistance movement. An organized armed resistance led by Subhas Chandra Bose did threaten the British on India's north-eastern frontiers. Bose had escaped from India in January 1941, hoping to raise an army against the British from among the Indian prisoners of war held by the Germans. Once Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union foreclosed the prospect of an attack on India's north-western border, Bose travelled by submarine from Europe to Asia in early 1943 to raise the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) from Indian prisoners of war who had surrendered to Japanese forces in Singapore as well as Indian civilians resident in South East Asia. Although Bose's Indian National Army was defeated in north-eastern India and Burma, it not only shook the central pillar of British imperialism, namely the loyalty of the British Indian Army, but succeeded in bridging the religious divide by recruiting a disproportionate number of Muslims and Sikhs to fight alongside Hindus and setting up a women's regiment. Evidence of Bose's success in giving a fresh vigor to the forces of anti-colonialism was the coming together of all Indian communities in late 1945-46 to protest the conviction of three officers of his army, a Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, by the British on charges of treason. Yet with neither the Congress nor the Muslim League showing signs of wanting to narrow their political differences, the unity proved to be short-lived in the face of the all important question of how power was to be shared among the communities inhabiting the various regions of India following the British withdrawal.

VI. The Demand for Pakistan and the Partition of India

Conceding territorial sovereignty to a heterogeneous community turned homogenous 'nation' was a more vexed issue than has been generally acknowledged by those charting the course to separate statehood by India's Muslims. In putting forward a claim to nationhood in at the All-India Muslim League's Lahore session in March 1940, Indian Muslims were decidedly revolting against minoritarianism, caricatured as 'religious communalism'. As Mohammed Ali Jinnah confessed in his presidential address, the idea of being a minority had been around for so long that people took it for granted. But it was time to unsettle the notion since the term 'nationalist' had become the hobbyhorse of conjurers in politics.

The historiographical debate has deliberated on the issue of Muslim 'nationhood' rather more than on the ambiguities surrounding the demand for Muslim 'statehood'. This has to do with that other telos which presumes the orchestration of separate nationhood as an inevitable overture to exclusive statehood. Recent revisionist historiography on partition has noted the uneasy fit between an assertion of Muslim 'nationhood' and the uncertainties and indeterminacies of politics in the late colonial era that led to the attainment of sovereign 'statehood'. While the insistence on national status for Indian Muslims became a non-negotiable issue after 1940, the

demand for a wholly separate and sovereign state of 'Pakistan' remained open to negotiation as late as the summer of 1946. The claim that Muslims constituted a 'nation' was perfectly compatible with a federal or confederal state structure covering the whole of India. With 'nations' straddling states, the boundaries between states had to be permeable and flexible. This is why Jinnah and the League remained implacably opposed to the division of the Punjab and Bengal along religious lines. It was the veritable absence of an all-India Muslim 'communalism' which had given rise to the claim for Muslim 'nationhood'. This did not translate into a secessionist demand for a Muslim nation-state, but was intended as the building block for a confederal arrangement with the Hindu-majority provinces, or Hindustan, at the subcontinental level.

In the event the strategy went awry, resulting in the exclusion from India of the leader and the party which had staked a claim on behalf of all Indian Muslims. Communally compartmentalized electorates had helped transform the case of Muslim distinctiveness into an assertion of 'nationhood' at the level of all-India political discourse. But the emphasis on provincial and local arenas of politics pitted Muslim regional interests against those raised on behalf of a subcontinental 'community' or 'nation'. The resort to Islam was a mobilizational technique to generate momentum for a political movement seeking a substantial share of power for Muslims in an independent India. But the Muslim League was not alone in seeking recourse to religion. There were other Muslim political groupings like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind and the Majlis-i-Ahrar who made even more emphatic uses of Islam even while allying with an avowedly secular Congress to oppose Jinnah and the Muslim League.

At the end of the day the singular nationalism of the Indian National Congress got the better of both the Muslim claim to 'nationhood' and the majoritarian provincialism of Muslims in the north-western and eastern extremities of the subcontinent. The Congress leadership keen on grasping the centralized apparatus of the colonial state was prepared neither to share power with the Muslim League at the all-India level nor accommodate Muslim majoritarian provincialism within a loose federal or confederal structure. It was ready instead to wield the partitioner's axe - in concert with the Hindu Mahasabha supported by most Punjabi and Bengali Hindus - to exclude both the League and the Muslim-majority areas from the horizons of the secular Indian nation-state. Cast against its will into the role of a seceding state, Pakistan was left to begin its independent career with an ideology of Muslim 'nationhood' which could not plausibly be squared with the mutilated and moth-eaten territorial contours of its truncated statehood.

V. National Claims and Changing Imperatives of Statehood

Frontiers of modern nation-states have rarely matched the complex contours of the multiple identities of their citizens. Demanding exclusive loyalty as the price of inclusion, the nation-state's definition of citizenship has hardened the lines of difference, rendering impermeable the otherwise historically shifting and overlapping boundaries of identities at the social base. Nowhere have the nation-state's rules of citizenship generated more confusion and chaos than in a subcontinent dissected by the arbitrary lines of 1947. One of the most striking lessons to emerge from the history of South Asia's contested nationalisms is how the quest for a homeland to call one's own can lead to distortions and dislocations whenever and wherever there exists a lack of congruence between identity and territory. The demographic fact of as many Muslims in India as in either Pakistan or Bangladesh five decades after the establishment of a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent is only the most glaring illustration of this point.

A historical study of demands for sovereign national status in South Asia makes clear that the territorial aspect of communitarian claims to sovereignty and nationhood was more nuanced than has been recognized. Demands for sovereign national status by religious or linguistic communities have generally not precluded the possibility of negotiating terms on which to associate with higher layers of sovereignty and share power within larger multi-national states. It was the failure to work out the terms of an agreement to share power at the central and the regional levels between the representatives of 'Indian' and 'Muslim' national aspirations which led to the painful amputation of British India's two main Muslim-majority provinces, Punjab and Bengal. Splitting up key regions like the Punjab and Bengal by religious denominations brought massive social dislocations and horrific violence, giving an even sharper emotional edge to the subcontinent's long and complex history of contested nationalisms.

Those who achieved the mantle of state power in post-colonial South Asia had the structural and ideological means of coercion to discipline and punish anyone wavering on the issue of singular allegiance to the twin monoliths of state and 'nation'. The transition from colonial subjugation to post-colonial freedom witnessed considerable structural continuity despite an apparent ideological discontinuity. With ideal of the 'nation' providing legitimation, the violence embedded in the structures of the colonial state now turned against citizens whose right to partake of independence had to be a derivative of the officially sponsored discourse on identity. In what was a brutal irony of the coming of independence, former colonial subjects earned the trappings of citizenship by further constraining their freedom to nurture historically evolved multiple identities. Liberation from the colonial yoke did not involve dismantling the structures of unitary state power. The very instruments of colonial tyranny that had so fired the nationalist ire became the lightning rods of the post-colonial order. The anti-colonial thrust of nationalist legitimizing ideologies notwithstanding, an alien concept of monolithic sovereignty was quickly adapted to delimit the acceptable parameters of political allegiance.

The closing decades of the twentieth century have seen the central authority of nation-states in South Asia besieged by regional and linguistic dissidence, religious and sectarian strife, class and caste conflicts and a bewildering permutation and combination of all of these. Feelings of denial and deprivation have been provoking potent and violent reactions against the inclusionary ideologies of nationalism deployed to legitimize post-colonial state structures and political economies. Increasingly cast in the molds of exclusionary communitarian or caste and class based identities, these expressions of disaffection have been steadily undermining the capacities of South Asian states to act coherently or effectively. Particularly true of Pakistan and Bangladesh where democratic political processes have been suspended for extended periods under military rule, this has been no less salient in the formally democratic polity of India.

An examination of the concept and history of communitarianism in the South Asian milieu reveals that the roots of the contemporary epidemic of 'ethnicity', sectarianism or communalism lie in the aborted nationalist project of extending equal rights of citizenship. As it evolved in the West, the idea of citizenship in the modern nation-state was based on an implicit rejection of the politics of difference. Discomfort with difference is a function of the inclusionary nationalism and, its concomitant, equal citizenship which are among the defining features of modern nation-states. The history of both India's inclusionary secular nationalism and Pakistan's exclusionary religious communitarianism suggests that equal rights of citizenship can easily become an euphemism for privileging majorities against minorities. The post-colonial Indian state has expressed its inclusionary idioms in terms of a binary opposition between secular

nationalism and religious communalism. To be secular and nationalist, every citizen of India in principle has to publicly disclaim too close an association with any religious or a cultural community. Not to do so entails earning the pejorative label of 'communalism'. Such a conception of nationalism erases the problem of difference by projecting a singular narrative construction of Indian identity.

Pakistan's religiously based communitarian nationalism has had an even less promising history of extending extend basic, far less democratic, rights of citizenship. Extended periods of military rule in Pakistan have deprived its citizens - and not just the religious minorities - many of their fundamental rights. Yet as the example of neighboring India indicates, the mere granting of democratic citizenship or individual political rights in formal arenas cannot of themselves redress gross social and economic inequities. Equal citizenship can be a normative goal for post-independence South Asia only if the struggle for individual rights and equal citizenship is closely enmeshed with the defense of the rights of women, children, minorities and all other historically disadvantaged communities as well as regions.

The paradox of two opposing nationalisms emphatically denying the problem of difference only to recreate and exclude them from their respective versions of inclusionary citizenship can be grasped only by forsaking the dichotomies between 'secular' and 'religious' as well as 'nationalism' and 'communalism'. Just as the first set of opposites can be found blending into the thought of a single individual, the second binary pair shares a common conception of majoritarianism and minoritarianism in the privileging of religious distinction. The majoritarian premises of Indian and Pakistani 'nationalism' derive equally from the colonial project of religious enumeration. While Indian nationalism asserts its inclusionary idioms in the secular garb and Pakistani nationalism in an inclusionary religious mode, neither avoids the pernicious process of exclusion resulting from the implicit denial of difference. It is the singular and homogenizing agendas of both nation-states which have wittingly or unwittingly created the space for religious bigots seeking political power to target vulnerable minorities. Calling bigotry 'communalism' is to implicate in the actions of the few the inactivity of the many.

The inherent limitations of communitarian modes of interpretation are borne out by political trends in both contemporary India and Pakistan. If the regional dynamics in India's electoral democracy are working against stable national governments at the centre, the transition from overt military authoritarianism in Pakistan is still in its incipient stages to permit a major reconstitution of relations between center and region. Yet India's electoral democracy, in thriving as conflict, is playing a more effective historical role in laying bare the structural and ideational dilemmas confronting the nation-state than in military dominated, but politically and economically brittle, Pakistan. The growing role of regional parties in the making or unmaking of shaky coalition governments is hinting at a dynamic new equation between centre and region in India. At the ideational level, it is offering a serious challenge to the spurious distinction between 'secularism' and 'communalism' on which so much of the nationalist rhetoric of the post-colonial state in India has rested. Structurally it is already reconfiguring relations between the all-India centre and the regional units, hinting at an incipient form of democratic and cooperative federalism.

The very idea of a 'nationalist politics' has undergone radical transformation in the past half century. With the shrinking of the Congress's regional social bases of support, no single political combination has been able to establish its claim to be 'national' in the literal sense of the word. The electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which led the short-lived

government of 1998-99, was restricted to a handful of states in northern and western India. It was the support of regional parties which gave it the numbers in parliament to register its 'national' credentials. The irony of many diehard 'secular' parties aligning with the allegedly 'communalist' BJP challenges the premises of a national ideology resting on a stark division between the secular and the religious. By the same token, the fragmentation of Pakistan's overwhelmingly Muslim polity by sectarian, regional and class differences underscores the inadequacies of Islam as the only factor binding its people. The volatile politics of centre and region in both India and Pakistan are pointing imperiously to the need for major structural changes at the constitutional as well as electoral levels.

It is precisely because the nation-states of subcontinental South Asia as they are presently constituted have been unable to square their assertions of monolithic sovereignty with the expectations of equal citizenship rights that religious, sectarian and regional groups are seizing the initiative to promote a deadly politics of difference. Exclusionary communitarianism, however ingeniously packaged, is no substitute for the inclusionary nationalism that has been the sole legitimizing factor of the modern nation-state's claims to monolithic sovereignty. Historically, multiple and shifting social identities in South Asia have found their most comfortable expression in political arrangements based on loosely layered sovereignties. So long as it continues to be couched in the language of putative majorities and minorities, inclusionary intentions will engender exclusionary results. The subcontinent's historical legacy of loosely layered sovereignties and the prospect of imaginatively fashioning innovative political frameworks capable of reflecting not only the multiple identities of its people but also their unfulfilled socio-economic aspirations holds out a glimmer of hope.

Clinging to the official dogmas of their contested nationalisms in the face of changing historical dynamics may not be the most politic course to adopt now that both India and Pakistan have acquired nuclear capacity. As they stand poised to enter the next millennium, the two recently nuclearized states have a unique opportunity to reassess their national claims and the changing imperatives of statehood, domestic, regional and international. Since independence India and Pakistan have fought three wars: the first two over the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and one in 1971 leading to the establishment of Bangladesh. The unresolved dispute over Kashmir, which has a Muslim-majority population, has kept the two regional rivals at daggers' drawn. With both the Indian and the Pakistani states turning the binary opposites of secular nationalism and religious communalism into ideologies of legitimacy, the issue of Kashmir has been a delicate one to tackle politically. If ultra nationalist opinion in Pakistan, particularly in the dominant province of the Punjab, considers the Muslim state incomplete without the incorporation of Kashmir, India has staked its secular credentials in a determined bid to hold on to this Muslim-majority region. Since the beginnings of a popular insurgency in Kashmir in late 1989, relations between the two neighbours have fluctuated between dangerous sabre rattling and lethal nuclear missile testing. Yet given the newfound capacity for mutually assured destruction, India and Pakistan appear to have precious little choice but to rethink their respective national ideologies in the hope of working out the terms of accommodation in the region. Changes at the level of ideas and rare displays of individual and collective will alone can result in the kinds of political arrangements the South Asian subcontinent needs to bridge the precipice of its differences into possible new commonalities and unities in the 21st century.

Bibliography

- Bayly, C.A. (1988). *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bayly, C.A. (1999). *Origins of Nationality in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal (Eds.) (1997). *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal (1997-8). *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*. London and Delhi: Routledge and Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Judith M. (1972). *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-22*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha (1986). *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha (1993). *The Nation and its Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jalal, Ayesha (1985 and 1994). *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jalal, Ayesha (2000). *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since c.1850s*. London and Delhi: Routledge and Oxford University Press.
- Hasan, Mushirul (1979). *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916-1928*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Hasan, Mushirul (Ed.) (1993). *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization, Themes in Indian History*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Guha, Ranajit and Spivak, G., (Eds.) (1988). *Selected Subaltern Studies*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Guha, Ranajit (1983). *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Low, D.A. (Ed.) (1977). *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*. London: Arnold_Heinemann.
- Sarkar, Sumit (1983). *Modern India, 1885-1947*. Delhi: Macmillan.