"A Discussion on the Possibility of a Subaltern
Reading of Indian Muslim History"

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The Subaltern Studies emerged in 1982 as a critique of two contending schools of the modern Indian history, namely that of the Cambridge and of the nationalist-Marxist historians.[1] Both these schools, from a Subaltern perspective, constructed history of Indian nationalism as a story of achievement of a tiny elite group. Therefore, they "could not explain the contributions made by people on their own, that is, independent of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism". This necessitated the Subaltern Studies to inaugurate an "anti-elitist approach to history" in which "the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of history." Therefore, according to Vinay Lal, "Subaltern Studies, viewed as a collective enterprise, represents the most significant achievement of South Asian 'cultural studies'; it has effectively contested what were until recently the dominant interpretations of Indian history, and more generally it has provided a framework within which to contest the dominant modes of knowledge."[2]

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[1]Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002, 4-7.
[2]Lal, Vinay. "Subalterns, Rebels, and Outcastes: Explorations in Modern Indian History," in http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/lal/subalter.html

Subaltern Studies made remarkable contributions in highlighting anti-elitist construction of Indian national movement. Essays produced by Subalternists in the twelve volumes of Subaltern Studies series effectively brought to light various currents that ultimately made Indian nationalism possible and thus they made it untenable to construct the account of nationalism as a single metanarrative. However, it is unfortunate to note that the Subalternists' concentration was predominantly on "Hindu" movements of nationalism and they mostly analyzed "Hindu" religious categories and social structures such as caste system for historical inquiry. As a result, "Muslim" contributions to Indian and Pakistani nationalism were not adequately explored either by Subalternists or by other scholars of Indian Muslim history. Therefore, in spite of Subaltern intervention in national historiography, "Muslim" contribution to Indian national movement more or less went unacknowledged and Pakistani nationalist historical account remained as elite metanarrative. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to discuss the following issues. What is the meaning and significance of a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim history? Why Subalternists and other scholars failed to do a Subaltern reading of Muslim history of India? How is it possible to do a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim history?

What is a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim History?

        1.   Impact of Colonialism on Indian Muslims

Colonialism was much more than mere economic and political domination of the Europe.[3] It was a "civilizing mission" and an ideology based on an epistemology created by the Europeans to legitimize their domination and exploitation of the 'other'. This 'rationality' made them the 'enlightened one' who liberates the colonized from their 'ignorance' and

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[3] see Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

'oppression'. It brought with a well-articulated rationale to define, analyze, imagine, construct and regulate the Orient. Thus, colonialism was an anti-organic phenomenon, which stunned the organic growth of institutions and history of the colonized. The colonial discourse imposed European categories over the colonized people and destroyed their own understanding of self, history and epistemology.[4] They were made to learn that their past was stagnant and there was nothing to be emulated from their own heritage. Thus, colonial discourse calculated to disrupt the cultural priorities of subject societies and it resulted in constructing a new identity and history for the colonized one.[5]

European colonialism of the Muslim world resulted in the rupture of Muslim cultural ecology and disintegration of traditional institutions. Creation of Anglo-Muhammaden Law, as a 'modified' Shariah law, was one of the premises on which the British colonial state anchored its authority and legitimized its rule in colonial India.[6] The British codified the Shariah to wrest political power away from Muslims and to create a space for a modern state and colonial sovereignty. They forced the retirement of all *qadis*, Muslim judges, and changed the court language from Persian to English. British legal reforms brought *awqaf*, Muslim institution of endowments, which financially sustained law schools and other public endeavours, under their control, which ultimately resulted in decimation of Islamic Law and weakening and dismantling of Muslim public institutions from its cultural environment[7]. Given the crucial role of madrasa in the construction of authority, madrasa reform was another attempt that the British undertook in order to regulate and challenge socio-religious

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[4]Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 3-9
[5]Prakash, Gyan. "Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography" in *Social Text*. 31/32 (1992), 17
[6]see Kugle, Scott Alan. "Framed, Blamed and Renamed: The Recasting of Islamic Jurisprudence in Colonial South Asia" in *Modern Asia Studies* 35, 2 (2001): 257-313.
[7]See Hallaq, W.B. "Can the Shariʻa be Restored?" in *Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity*. eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Barbara Freyer Stowasser. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004.

authority of ulema. It was the European notions of religion and 'useful knowledge' that shaped the madrasa reform discourse of colonial India.[8]

Even though the British had an initial interest in Muslim history of India and had considered it almost synonymous with Indian history, with the rise of romanticism in the late 18th century they had shifted their interest to Hindu history.[9] British interest in the Hindu India had begun to develop with the work of James Fraser, Alexander Dow, Warren Hastings and William Jones. These Indologists' presented India as one of the most ancient and potential centres of human civilization. Therefore British historical pursuits of late 18th century focused solely on ancient India and they discovered some mythological, linguistic and cultural similarities between the ancient Graeco-Romans and Hindus and saw Europe's origin or childhood in India.[10] Thus, India of the Orientalist's knowledge emerged as Europe's other and it legitimized European domination of India. Considering Indian Muslims as a foreign imperial power, Indologists almost neglected the study of indo-Muslim civilization.[11] Thereafter, English writers, bureaucrats and missionaries conveniently presented a negative image of the Muslim rule to legitimize the British seizure of India from the remnants of the Mughal Empire. Nationalist historians and writers uncritically borrowed Indologists' statements on Hindu India and Muslim rule – despotic, foreign and imperial – as authoritative statements about India's past.[12] The Muslim rule in India was portrayed as responsible for the downhill of "golden age" of Hinduism. The British also regarded

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[8]See Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

[9]Bhatti, Muhammad Shafique. "British Historiography of India: A Study in the late Eighteenth Century Shift of Interest" in *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*. Vol. L, No. 3, 2002: 85-102.

[10]Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography" in *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 1990, 386.

[11]See Bhatti, 88-89

[12]Rashiduzzaman, M. "Islam, Muslim Identity and Nationalism in Bangladesh", in *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. XVIII, No.1, 1994, 45-46 and also Bhatti, 96

Muslims and Hindus as two fundamentally distinct religious communities and pitted them against each other in a new relationship as minority versus majority. Later, in Indian and Pakistani nationalist historical accounts, this British notion of communalism was further strengthened and was utilized in order to defend the partition of the Subcontinent into two nation-states.[13]

The decline of Mughal political power in India coincided with the ascendancy of the British. Even though British policies affected Indian Muslims in general, it was the former ruling class among the Muslims were the one who severely crippled by it. Rather negative attitude towards British policies made them reluctant to accept modern English education and they became unqualified for government jobs. At the same time, government jobs mostly went to the growing Hindu educated middle class who were willing to cooperate with the new rulers and accept western learning. Thus, between 1835 and 1870 the portion of Muslims to Hindus in government service was less than one-seventh.[14] Therefore, though the British rule affected every one in India, Muslims shouldered a greater part of the burden.

2. Muslim Responses to Colonialism and Muslim national imaginations

A careful reading of anti-British Muslim rebellion would show that Muslim responses to the colonial rule and its legitimizing discourse were far from being monolithic. There had been as many distinct responses as the number of Muslim communities scattered in various parts of India. However, most of these responses failed to get any recognition in Indian or Pakistani nationalist historical narratives. It is significant to note here that nationalist

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[13]see Pandey, Gyanendra. "Can a Muslim Be an Indian?" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Vol. 41, No.4, Oct. 1999: 608-629.

[14]Ahmad, Aziz. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857-1964*. London: Oxford University press, 1967, 24.

accounts were not created to include every anti-colonial rebellion rather to include only those rebellions, which are significant from a nationalist perspective. Nationalist narratives were created to justify causes behind the emergence of national movements and to write its history from an elitist perspective. Nevertheless, every non-elite anti-colonial rebellion is significant from a subaltern perspective because they contributed of their own to the making of anti-colonialism and subsequent national imaginations. Therefore, anti-colonial Muslim rebellions deserve scholarly attention.

However, anti-colonial Muslim rebellion need to be studied without making any reference to Indian or Pakistani national movements because creation of nation-states was not the sole objective of colonial Muslim discourses. Therefore, all Muslim rebellions and responses did not contributed to the making of either of the national movements. Responses of Muslim upper classes and former ruling classes were very different from that of ulama. Muslim upper classes adopted a policy of loyalty to British Raj in order to receive maximum benefit from colonizers. Therefore, they appropriated modern western notions of science and religion and proposed reinterpretations of Islam to fit these ideals.[15] Nevertheless, ulama were very critical of these responses of Muslim intelligentsia and were concerned of colonial attempt to secularize and control religious authority.[16] Their responses were largely shaped by their concern to safeguard their authority than by their attitude towards modernity and colonialism. Mappila Muslims of Kerala and Bengali peasant Muslims adopted an anti-British attitude and rebelled against colonial rule. Therefore, whatever the Muslim responses, they were very much shaped by their context and social status and nationalism was never the sole objective of these responses.

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[15]Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Amir Ali are the best examples for this.
[16]see Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change.*

It is generally believed that Pakistan was the only national imagination that Indian Muslims had during the colonial period. National historians of both India and Pakistan need to be blamed for portraying Muslim national imaginations only in terms of Pakistan movement. Indian nationalist school contrasted 'secular' based Indian national movement with 'communal' based Pakistan movement.[17] Pakistani historians presented their national movement as the sole movement of Muslims based on Islamic ideals. Both these narratives negated the possibility of any other national imaginations of Indian Muslims. However, historically Indian Muslims had more than one national imagination. It was Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan who first proposed that Muslims and Hindus are two different nations.[18] Later Iqbal argued for a North-West Indian Muslim state for those Muslims living in that region. Bengali Muslims thought of themselves as a distinct group of Muslims with distinct language and culture. However, their national imagination end up in Pakistani movement in the beginning, later it resulted in the formation of a new nation-state. Mappila Muslims of Kerala also had their own national imaginations. They proposed to have a separate Moplastan in Madras national assembly but later this proposal was withdrawn.[19] It is significant to note that though Pakistani nationalist historians regard Iqbal as the "spiritual father" of Pakistan state, Bengali or Mappila nationalist imaginations did not find any place in his proposal for a North-West Indian State.

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[17]See Jalal, Ayesha. "Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia," in http://www.tufts.edu/~ajalal01/Articles/communalism.pdf

[18]Alavi, Hamza. "Ethnicity, Muslim Society, and Pakistan Ideology," in *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan: The Application of Islamic Laws in a Modern State*. ed. Anita M Weiss. Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1986, 33.

[19]Miller, Roland Eric. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*. 2nd ed. London: Sangam Books, 1992, 162-166.

Though Indian Muslim responses were far from being monolithic, there is strong tendency among scholars of colonial Indian Muslim history to argue for one single agency for these responses. This observation itself will prove the reasons for the absence of a subaltern reading of colonial Muslim history. In Pakistan nationalist narratives, this agency was given to Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Iqbal and Jinnah. According Indian nationalist accounts, communal based politics of elite Muslim leaders finally brought Pakistan state. Two other scholarly views, which critique each other, need particular attention in this regard. On the one hand, for Farzana Sheikh Pakistan movement was the direct outcome of normative Islamic ideal; on the other hand, for Ayesha Jalal it was Congress's exclusion of Muslim politics and their unwillingness to share power with Muslims ultimately created Pakistan movement.[20] Any argument for a single agency for Muslim politics would certainly take away the agency of Muslim communities who made their unique responses to colonialism at various times in different regions in India. Again, any argument for a single agency for Muslim response also anticipates an inevitable outcome of such a response, which was partition of the Subcontinent and creation of two nation-states. Therefore, Jalal argues that a "teleological view of history would interpret the transformation of the discourse and politics of a minority religious community into a demand for nationhood as the logical culmination of the 'communal' tendencies among Indian Muslims"[21].

Significance of a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim History

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[20]Shaikh, Farzana. *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860-1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Compare with Ayesha Jalal.

[21]Jalal, Ayesha. "Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia," p. 10 and alsl her *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Pakistan nationalism played a major role in shaping the history writing of Muslims of Indian subcontinent. According to Irfan Habib, eminent historians and scholars of Pakistan, including I.H.Quraishi, projected Pakistan national movement "as a struggle for a separate nation right from A.D.712, when Muhammad ibn Qasim entered Sind as the head of an Arab army".[22] In these narratives problem is not only with the back projection of beginning of Pakistan movement to A.D. 712 but also with the complete exclusion of the history of non-Urdu speaking South Indian Muslims who did not contribute to the making of it. Nationalist narratives are not the only ones, which exclude the history of south Indian Muslims, rather majority of Indian Muslim history books, do the same. However, historically Islam came to Kerala and other coastal areas of South India as early as seventh or early eight centuries through Indian Ocean trade routes. Even then, the Mappila Muslims of Kerala remain more or less "unknown" to Indian Muslim historians[23]. Therefore, a subaltern reading of Indian Muslim history would bring to light the history of non-Urdu speaking Muslim communities of South and other parts of India.

Ayesha Jalal has convincingly argued that Indian nationalist historiography needs to be blamed for interpreting Muslim politics of colonial period as negative 'communal' politics. According to her, "communalism in the subcontinent has been more a function of interpretation than of the actual phenomenon in its manifold dimensions".[24] Nationalist historiography was eager to present India as a modern secular state and their preoccupation with 'secular' nationalism of Indian National Congress resulted in rejecting Muslim national aspirations as 'communal'. It was one's allegiance to Indian National Congress, she argues,

[22]Habib, Irfan. "History and Interpretation: Communalism and Problems of Historiography in India" in
    www.ercwilcom.net/indowindow/sad/article.php?child=16&article=8
[23]Miller, Roland Eric. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*. P. xv.
[24]Jalal, Ayesha. "Exploding Communalism, p.7.

determined whether a Muslim is 'communal' or 'secular'. Therefore, even though Abul Kalam Azad identified himself as a Muslim and argued for his Muslim brethren, since his allegiance was with the Congress he was never categorized as a 'communal' Muslim. Similarly, when Maulana Mohamed Ali was with the Congress he was a 'secular' Muslim but when he left the Congress he was blamed for his 'communal' Muslim identity.[25] Any one not belonging to the Congress and articulating a politics of 'Muslim interests' is stamped as a 'communalist'. In independent India, Muslims are generally regarded as a homogenous community and always blamed for their 'communal' identity. The conscious choice of Indian Muslims to remain in India, during partition of the country in 1947, did not make them "natural" Indians, like their fellow Hindus. Being born and raised in India was no longer sufficient for Muslims to demonstrate their Indianness. They had to prove that they were loyal to India and, hence, worthy of Indian citizenship.[26] They were often thought of as harboring pro-Pakistan sentiments and, therefore, stereotyped as a foreign element that weakens Indian State. Muslims are also accused of valuing their religion more than the Indian State and the Qur'an more than the Indian constitution. This 'enemy' image of Muslims often resulted in violent physical and verbal attacks against Muslims. More recently, the aggressiveness of Hindu fundamentalism dangerously manifested itself against Muslims in the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 and in the killing of hundreds of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002.

Jalal's work is extremely important from a subaltern perspective to deconstruct the nationalist metanarrative of communalism. However, she has confined herself to Urdu speaking Muslims of North India. In the further deconstruction process, which is urgently

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[25]Ibid., pp. 7-9
[26]See Pandey, Gyanendra. "Can a Muslim Be an Indian?".

needed in present socio-political context of India, voices of non-Urdu speaking Muslims need to be heard. A subaltern reading of Muslim history is essential in this regard. It would bring out the complexity of Indian as well as Pakistan national movements and problematize the nationalist tendency to put all Muslims in one category and label them as communalists. It will also show vibrancy of Muslim response to colonialism. A Subaltern reading of Muslim history will be very significant for the Subaltern reading of Indian history. In other words, it is not possible to have a subaltern reading of Indian history without a subaltern reading of Muslim history.

Discussion on the absence of a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim History

As we have seen, the Subaltern Studies emerged in 1982 as a collective enterprise and it has effectively contested what were until recently the dominant interpretations of Indian history. We have also noticed how metanarratives of Muslim nationalism have conveniently excluded narratives of the anti-colonial Muslim rebellions, especially of the non-Urdu speaking Muslims of south India. However, it is unfortunate that subaltern framework was not used either by Subalternists or by scholars of Indian Muslim history to deconstruct metanarratives of Muslim colonial history. Here I would like to make an effort to highlight some of the reasons why scholars failed to venture into a subaltern reading of Muslim history.

Even though Ayesha Jalal's work is extremely significant for a subaltern reading, her works are not written from a subaltern perspective. Her deconstruction of Indian nationalist narratives is not sufficient to give back agency to numerous Muslim communities of India. It is true that the Congress' "exclusionary" secular politics polarized Muslims under Pakistani banner, but it cannot explain those rebellions that were fought for various other reasons.

Her works remain as metanarratives centred on Sir Sayyid, Iqbal and Jinnah. Farzana Sheikh's work turns our attention to religious basis for Muslim politics in colonial India. Her work is significant because no one can deny the role of religious ideals in shaping Muslim politics. This is the reason why Muslim politics need to be studied distinctly different from other forms of colonial politics. However, no one may agree that it was religious ideals alone are responsible for anti-British Muslim rebellions and various Muslim responses to colonialism. There are non-religious reasons, as Jalal has argued, for the making of Pakistan national movement. Sheikh's attempt to interpret nationalism in terms of normative Islamic ideals will certainly take away agency of people. She also constructed a metanarrative around elite Muslim leaders and religious institutions. Any attempt to create metanarratives would certainly fail to read history from a subaltern perspective.

There are different reasons why Subalternists also did not apply the very theories they have developed for reading colonial history of Indian Muslims. After the retirement of Ranajit Guha, the founder of the Subaltern school, from the editorial team of Subaltern Studies series in 1988, Subaltern Studies actively engaged in post-colonial discourse, which was prevalent in US universities. It has "stepped out of Indian nationalism and moved into the cultural history of colonialism" and thus became a "postcolonial project in conversation with postcolonial studies in other parts of the world".[27] In this shift, Subaltern studies have given up economic and material questions for investigation of colonial representation of Indian society and culture. Consequently, economic questions have disappeared from Indian social historical analysis for the last 15 years.[28] Sumit Sarkar, one of the members of the Subaltern collective and its most significant proponent, and now one of the critics of Subaltern

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[27]Roy, Tirthankar. "Subaltern Studies: Questioning the Basics", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 8, 2002: 2223. and Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002, 18.
[28]Parthasarathi, Prasannan. "The State of Indian Social History", in *Journal of Social History*, 2003: 47-54.

Studies' obsession with post-colonial discourse, comments that the later Subalternists essentialized the totalizing power of the colonial state and "the colonized subjects were seen as capable of producing only "derivative discourses".[29]

Therefore, post-1988 Subaltern Studies has paid a total attention to British colonial discourse and failed to study discourses of Hindus, Muslims and other colonized subjects and to pay attention to local politics, economic history, and Hindu-Muslim dialogue. It is true that records of colonized discourse are not easily available like coloniser's discourses. In addition, when British discourses are available in English, discourse of the colonized are mostly available only in regional languages. Knowledge of Urdu is especially important to study Muslim discourse of colonial era. Nevertheless, there is no complete absence of records on Muslim discourse. Scholars of Indian Islam have studied them in detail and produced excellent works based on it. In order to study Muslim discourse, one also must be familiar with various dimensions of Islamic religious tradition. Therefore, if Subalternists need to study Muslim colonial discourse they should meet its demands, which are different from that of the British discourses.

Subalternists were also accused of normalizing Hinduism in their search for an alternative to modernity. According to Sarkar, Subalternists need to be accused for romanticizing the past because they believe that "pre-colonial communities knew nothing of power relations, certainly nothing of communal conflict, binary thinking" and they make British responsible for communalism and all other social evils. However, it is important to note here that there

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[29]Lal, Vinay. "Subaltern Studies and its Critics: Debates over Indian History" in *History and Theory*. 40 (Feb 2001), 139, and also Sarkar, Sumit. *Writing Social History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, 82-108.

is no place for Islamic ideals or Muslim history in their romanticised pre-colonial history. Thus, they more or less borrowed what Indologist thought about Hindu religious traditions and India's past. Therefore, from a Muslim perspective, Subalternists' understanding pre-colonial Indian history is not very different from that of the nationalist historians. Moreover, Subalternists had not attempted to reinterpret the nationalist portrayal of Muslim history of India.

Discussion on the possibility of a Subaltern reading of Indian Muslim History

As we have discussed earlier, the purpose of a Subaltern reading is to deconstruct metanarratives of nationalism in order to bring out the voices of those Muslims that were suppressed under elite voices. Even though elite leaders operated in particular contexts and their concerns were limited to particular Muslim communities, in nationalist metanarratives these leaders were taken out of their context and portrayed as national leaders. Their voices were portrayed as representative voices of every individual Muslims of the State. For example, in Pakistan historiography Sir Sayyid, Iqbal and Jinnah were decontextualized and were given a position that they did not enjoy in their own context. Therefore, for a Subaltern reading, elite leaders need to be decentred from the national narratives to their respective local contexts, which will bring out those voices that were suppressed under elite voices. For a Subaltern reading, it is also important to study regional anti-colonial Muslim rebellions in order to understand how they operated and how far they were indebted to elite national leaders. Therefore, in this section I would like to decentre two towering figures of Pakistan national movement, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Iqbal, to their local contexts.

In Pakistan nationalist narratives, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) has been hailed as the author of the 'two nation' theory but in Indian nationalist narratives, he was condemned for the same theory. In both these nationalistic narratives, Sir Sayyid was placed in a much elevated position than his critics, who were the ulema of Deoband madrasa. According to Hamza Alavi he represented the voice of emerging "*salariat*", the members of the colonial bureaucratized state, the new aristocracy, of the north-western Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. "His mission in life was to facilitate the transition of upper-class Uttar Pradesh Muslims into the colonial salariat."[30] He was a one of the members this aristocracy and served the British as a clerk in a lower court at Delhi. He was posted in Bijnor at the time of the First War of Independence (called Sepoy Mutiny) in 1857. In the post-1857 period, he was convinced that British rule was long to stay and Muslims need to be loyal with the British for political benefits. So he decided to wean Muslims from its policy of opposition to one of participation and British from its policy of suppression to one of paternalism.[31] Later he accepted the European intellectual and cultural superiority and in 1870 initiated a movement of religious and cultural modernism among the Muslims and in1875 established the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (now Aligarh Muslim University) to promote modern education. He interpreted Islamic theology and the Qur'an, his speculative system showed the influence of Unitarianism, and he tried to understand religious principles from an ethical perspective.[32] He promoted an anti- Indian National Congress stand because he "feared that independence and democracy would mean that Hindus would overwhelm the small numbers of upper-class Muslims who would then have no one to protect them. It is

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[30]alavi, 32-34
[31]Ahmad, Aziz. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, 33.
[32]Ibid., p. 41.

clear from this that his political horizons were defined by the boundaries of Uttar Pradesh, and that he did not extend the logic of his argument to Muslim majority provinces. His interpretation of liberalism was mediated by the colonial situation and his commitment to the interests of the upper classes of Uttar Pradesh."[33]

His sharpest critics were those Muslims, especially ulema of Dar al-'Ulum of Deoband, "who saw in his modernist intellectual stance a barely disguised attack on their preeminent status in society."[34] Even though Deobandi ulema also were urban based religious elite, they opposed any attempt to disintegrate their religious authority. Even though Sir Sayyid's position was seems to be relevant for his context by late 1880's more and more Muslims eschewed Sir Sayyid's policy of non-participation in the Congress and loyalty to the Raj.[35] However, in nationalist narratives, he portrayed as thinker and an activist, without seriously noting the positions of his opponents. More than that, nationalist narratives presuppose that every Muslim political movement during his time and subsequent periods were motivated by his writing. This view completely rejects those movements that operated far as Kerala among the Mappila Muslims without an reference to Sir Sayyid's view.

In nationalist narratives Iqbal (1877-1938) is portrayed as the "visionary" and Jinnah as the "technician" of the Pakistan State[36]. Iqbal received this honour because he was first one who proposed the idea of a Muslim state, albeit within India and restricted to the north-western Muslim-majority provinces, in December 1930 at the All-India Muslim League's annual

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[33]Alavi, Hamza. "Ethnicity, Muslim Society, and Pakistan Ideology, 34
[34]Jalal, Ayesha. "Exploding Communalism, 6.
[35]Ibid.,p. 7.
[36]See Rahman, Fazlur. "Iqbal, the Visionary; Jinnah, the Technician; and Pakistan, the Reality" in *Iqbal, Jinnah, and Pakistan: The Vision and the Reality*, ed. C.M. Naim. Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1979.

session. Iqbal was a poet, philosopher and political thinker of Punjabi origin and was deeply critical of the European territorial nationalism. He rejected the post-enlightenment understanding that the spiritual and the temporal are two distinct and temporal realities, which cannot be reconciled. He believed that there is no bifurcation between secular and sacred, matter and spirit and God and university. Based on this understanding he maintained that it is not possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal while reject it as a polity.[37] Islam should be a complete way of life encompassing both the secular and sacred domains of life. Iqbal's rejection of territorial nationalism was not simply because it was based on an understanding of dualism. More negatively nationalism divides the unity of humanity on territorial lines. He believed that Islamic conception of nationality is not based on the unity of language or country or economic interests rather based on the unity of religious experience on Sunnah.[38] Ideal of Islamic universalism made Iqbal to believe that upholders of nationalism in fact reject their basic religious faith. Iqbal advocated a federal system of government in India. He thought that India's natural diversity in climates, races, languages, creeds and social systems necessitates creation of autonomous states based on unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests.[39] He believed that any proposal for a unitary form of government would ultimately result in permanent Hindu dominance throughout India. Therefore, he proposed to create a consolidated North-West Indian state by amalgamating Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Balauchistan. He thought that the centralization of the Muslim majority territories would ultimately keep

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[37]Iqbal, Muhammad. "Presidential Address Delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad on the 29th December, 1930" in *Iqbal, Jinnah, and Pakistan: The Vision and Reality*. ed. C.M.Naim. Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1979, 193
[38]Jalal, Ayesha. *Self and Sovereignty,* 171-175
[39]Iqbal, Muhammad. "Presidential Address, 197.

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Islam as a cultural force, which will ensure for Muslims the "full and free development on line of [their] own culture and tradition."[40]

Iqbal is renowned as the "spiritual father" of Pakistan, even though he always rejected national unity based on territorial divisions. Thus nationalist portrayal of Iqbal contradicts his metaphysical critique of European nationalism. More than that Jalal has rightly pointed that Iqbal proposal for a North-West Indian State was "obviously in the interests of the majority provinces, particularly Punjab," and therefore it could not "excite an All-India Muslim League council dominated by Muslims from the minority provinces. So Iqbal's ideas were dismissed as mere poetics in established Muslim political circles."[41] Iqbal was particularly concerned of his fellow Muslims in Punjab, especially concerned of their economic inferiority.[42] So no one can reject that his proposal was an immediate result of his Pubjabi patriotism. Nevertheless, this contextual limitation of his proposal is not taken seriously in nationalist narratives.

Conclusion

Muslim responses to the colonial rule and its legitimizing discourse were far from being monolithic. However, most of these responses failed to get any recognition in Indian or Pakistani nationalist historical narratives because they were not considered significant from a nationalist perspective. Nevertheless, every non-elite anti-colonial rebellion is significant from a subaltern perspective because they contributed of their own to the making of anti-colonialism and subsequent national imaginations. Though this necessitates a subaltern

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[40]Ibid., p.195.
[41]Jalal, Ayesha. "Exploding Communalism p.11.
[42]Iqbal, Muhammad. "Presidential Address, 197.

reading of colonial history of Muslims, it was not ventured either by Subalternists or by scholars of Indian Muslim history. In order to do this, elite Muslim voices of Sir Sayyid, Iqbal and Jinnah should be decentred to their own contexts.

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