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**Discourse on Nationalism:
Political Ideologies of Two Muslim Intellectuals, Maulana Hussain
Ahmad Madani and Allama Muhammad Iqbal**

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Abstract

The chief purpose of this paper is to understand and compare the political ideologies of two key thinkers and leaders of twentieth century Muslim India on the question of nationalism. These thinkers are Dr Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938) and *Maulana* Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957). Firstly, concept of nationalism has been explored in the political writings and statements of these thinkers. Secondly, debate between Muhammad Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani over their conceptions of “nation” has been discussed. Thirdly these theories of nationalism have been compared in the historical context as well as in the overall conceptual framework of these thinkers. Finally, the study has been concluded by discussing what the contemporary Muslim world can learn from the intellectual heritage of Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani.

Keywords: Nationalism, Muslim Nationalism, South Asia, Iqbal, Hussain Ahmad Madani, South Asian Muslims, Muslim *Ummah*, *Millet*, Muslim India

Introduction

No two categories have been so heatedly debated in an account of modern man and modern society, be it literary, religious or political, other than ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism.’ Definitions of nationhood and theories of nationalism are widely contested.¹ Bureaucratic establishments of states, political parties, revolutionaries,

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¹Important books on Nations and Nationalism include Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso: New York, 2006):

and freelance intellectuals construct the meaning of 'nation' that best suits their political agendas. Problems relating to defining 'nation' have been explored by many scholars.² Back in the twentieth century Muslim India produced multiple formulations of nationalism. This article seeks to explain how two principal ideologues of twentieth century Muslim India constructed their ideologies related to nationalism. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938) and *Maulana* Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957) were the most prominent intellectuals and political leaders deeply concerned about the future of Indian Muslims. Their theories of nationalism have been explored by linking them to their wider socio-political and religious outlook.

Iqbal's concept of nationalism is part of his overall discourse on Western civilization. According to Iqbal, popular Western political ideologies should not be accepted by Muslims, no matter how progressive and humanistic they appear, for these political ideologies are rooted in the fundamentally profane and secular spirit of the modern Western civilization. West has gone through a specific experience after reformation. These ideologies are the product of specific time, place, and historical circumstances. The genesis and evolution of these ideas should be carefully studied by Muslims. Muslim civilization, on the other hand, has its own unique ideals and vision. Muslims should therefore construct their own concepts in order to understand themselves and the nature of their mission in history. They cannot truly understand themselves through the categories developed in the West. Blindly accepting these categories will distort the self-image of Muslims and this will be continuation of slavery and colonialism.

https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/SOC757/um/61816961/Benedict_Anderson_Imagine_d_Communities.pdf;

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1983), http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/LojkoMiklos/Ernest_Gellner_Nations_and_Nationalism_1983.pdf;

Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991); and Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

²John Hutchinson Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

In order to develop his thesis on nationalism, Iqbal drew on various western thinkers, including Sir Arthur Keith³ and Lord Acton⁴ (1834-1902)⁵. Sir Arthur Keith centers the notion of nationalism in racial and tribal identities and, therefore, division of mankind into nation states according to him, was against the *Zeitgeist*. Lord Acton was a harsh critic of the nationalism ideologies and institution of nation-state. He simply declared nationalism as the pursuit of insane⁶ According to him, modern state is totalitarian and, therefore, oppressive. Secondly, he regarded nationalism as incompatible to Catholicism and modern nation-state, as it is bound to subjugate religion. Iqbal was fully aware of European history and development of political modernity. There are two fundamental assumptions of political modernity. Firstly, political modernity assumes a political space which is independent of religious and private space. Secondly, 'nation' is defined as a basic political unit. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), for example, observes that presence of diverse and heterogeneous national groups can hinder in the development of free institutions in a polity.⁷ According to Max Weber, this 'political space' lacks in traditional Muslim societies and that explains, why capitalism and modern political institutions failed in developing in the Muslim world.⁸ Iqbal was skeptic of highly centralized and totalizing nature of modern nation-state. Nationalism and modern nation-state thus can never be compatible with the spirit of Islam which has a unique vision about the destiny of Man, Iqbal claimed. It is interesting to note that famous Hindu philosopher and poet, Rabindranath Tagore⁹ was also against

³Sir Arthur Keith (1867-1955) was famous Scottish physical anthropologist, "who specialized in the study of fossil humans. His major works include, *Antiquity of Man, Concerning Man's Origin and A New theory of Human Evolution.*" *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

⁴Lord Acton (1834-1902) was famous English historian and statesman, who remained professor of History at Cambridge university. He is best known for the remark, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

⁵Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁶Timothy Lang, "Lord Acton and "the Insanity of Nationality," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63 (1), (January 2002): 129-149.

⁷John Sturat Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government* (Wildside Press, 2007).

⁸Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1978).

⁹Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was famous Indian philosopher and poet from Bengal who was awarded Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 for his long poem *Gitanjali*.

adoption of Western political institutions and ideologies, like nationalism, for the East.¹⁰

According to Iqbal nationalism in Europe was the result of the reformation movement led by Martin Luther¹¹. Catholic Church, despite of being corrupt was providing a common moral force to the entire Europe. Although not consciously intended, one of the consequences of Lutheran movement was the loss of the common moral force which transformed into a central religious authority. Multiple churches appeared in place of Catholic Church and this phenomenon provided Europe with exact conditions for the rise of various rival nationalities. Enlightenment thinkers, like Rousseau and Voltaire, further diluted the moral force of religion by attacking the institution and the dogma of the Church. This was the historical and intellectual backdrop of the rise of nationalism in Europe.

That is the reason Iqbal's concept of freedom from the British is not just limited to the end of British rule in India. He is more concerned about intellectual slavery in the form of continuation of Western ideologies and political institutions. In his presidential address in All India Muslim Conference in 1932, he categorically stated, "The present struggle in India is sometimes described as India's revolt against the West. I do not think it is a revolt against the West; for the people of India are demanding the very institutions which the West stands for."¹²

According to Iqbal, Islam as a moral force cannot be reduced to private sphere of individuals only, as it is also the cornerstone of modern nation-state system. Nationalism would eventually lead to atheism and thus the common thread amongst the citizens of modern nation-state will be their 'irreligiousness.'¹³ Iqbal also emphasized on the works or writings of Hegel (1770-1831), a famous German philosopher, who highlighted the spiritual character of nations.¹⁴ Thus, Iqbal thinks that only religion and faith can provide secure foundations to a social order. Nationalism weakens this foundation which is a loss for social organism and humanity. He rather thinks that this is exactly the principal mission of Islam to break the idols of race, color and nationality.

¹⁰Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi, 1994).

¹¹Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1989).

¹²Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1995).

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1989).

Islam, according to Iqbal, presents a unique relationship between individual and society. The formulation of the relationship between the individual and society is one of the central questions for any social order. Iqbal sought to explain this relationship in his two famous mystical poems *Asrār e Khudi*¹⁵ and *Rumūz e Bekhudi*.¹⁶ In *Asrār e Khudi*, stages and conditions for the development of *Khudi* (higher Self) in an individual have been discussed, while in *Rumūz e Bekhudi* he emphasized on the potential of this higher Self (*Khudi*) which could only be actualized when an individual becomes a member of the society. Thus, it is through a human group, community or society that an individual nourishes or enlightens his soul. But this is possible only when social order itself is based on spiritual ideals. Iqbal considers *ummah* as a spiritual community that helps in the transformation and development of this Self.

This is known that there was a paradigm shift in Iqbal's discourse on nationalism. Before 1908, we can trace the elements of composite Indian nationalism in the poetry of Iqbal. His poems like *Hindustani Bachon Ka Qaumi Geet* [The National Anthem for the Indian Children] and *Naya Shawala* [A New Altar] indicate contradictory early views of Iqbal on nationalism. But later, Iqbal revisited his views after a thorough study and in depth analysis of the philosophical outlook and the historical movements which paved the way for nationalism in Europe. Iqbal declared nationalism as an enemy of Islam in the latter stages of his life. He through his poetry and prose said that humanity cannot unite by first dividing it into rival nations and then creating a league of nations. That is why he was critical of League of Nations.¹⁷ In his poem "*Makkah and Geneva*" he says:

“In the present age in which the company of nations is common,
Hidden from sight is the unity of Adam;
Differentiation is the aim of Western governance,
The purpose of Islam is only the community of Adam.
Mecca has sent this message to the men of Geneva:

¹⁵*Asrār-e-Khudi* is the first philosophical long Persian poem of Iqbal published in 1915. It has been translated by Reynold A. Nicholson as *Secrets of the Self* (Cosimo Classics, 1920)

<http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/asrar/translation/01secretsoftheself.pdf>

¹⁶*Rumūz-e-Bekhudi* is the second philosophical long Persian poem of Iqbal published in 1918. It has been translated by A.J. Arberry as *The Mysteries of Selflessness*.
<http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/ramuz/translation/01mystries.pdf>

¹⁷League of Nations was an international organization created after First World War (1914-1918) to resolve international disputes. Its headquarters were in Geneva, Switzerland.

The association of nations or the association of Adam?”¹⁸

Iqbal also placed nationhood in Islamic paradigm rather than in territory, language, or culture¹⁹. He clearly observes: “It is not the unity of language, or country or identity or economic interest that constitutes the basic principle of our nationality. It is because we believe in a certain view of the universe, and participate in the same historical tradition that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam.”²⁰

Iqbal differentiates between patriotism and nationalism. While patriotism can be a natural sentiment towards one’s motherland, nationalism is a modern political ideology emerging from atheistic and imperialistic worldview. In his address in the annual session of All India Muslim Conference in 1932, Iqbal clearly stated: “Politics have their roots in the spiritual life of man....Patriotism is a perfectly natural virtue and has a place in the moral life of man.”²¹ He declared “*Wataniyat*” as an idol carved by Western imperialism and wanted to replace this *Wataniyat* with the love of *Watan* in a Prophetic tradition.²² In the Prophetic parlance *watan* is completely different to the political meaning of the word *watan*.²³

Iqbal’s discourse on nationalism is distinct not only from modernists but also from many traditional *ulama*, who were active in the political struggle against the British rule.²⁴ Modernists, like Chiragh Ali (1844-1895) and Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), were ready to fully embrace Western political paradigm. These

¹⁸Quoted in Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 146.

¹⁹Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1995).

²⁰Iqbal, *The Muslim Community*, 16-17. Basically this was a lecture delivered by Iqbal at Aligarh in 1911. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan translated it into Urdu by the name of *Millat-e-Baiza par aik Imrani Nazar*.

²¹This presidential address of Iqbal is available at website of International Iqbal Society. Accessed on 20th August 2019. Available at <http://www.iqbal.com.pk/allama-iqbal-prose-works/maqalat-e-iqbal/991-prose-works/speeches-writings-and-statements-of-allama-iqbal/2745-presidential-address-1932-allama-iqbal-all-india-muslim-conference>

²²The *Hadith* that love of homeland is part of the faith. *Muhadditheen* have declared this fabricated.

²³*Irshad-e-Nubuwwat main watan aur hi kutch hay*
Guftar-e-Siasat main watan aur hi kutch hay

²⁴Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

scholars took pains to prove that the spirit of Islam was fully compatible with the political ideals and structures of the modern West.²⁵ Deobandi *ulama*'s discourse on nationalism, however, is rooted fundamentally in their political struggle against the colonial rule. They were more pragmatic in their approach towards the political realities of the Muslim India. *Maulana* Hussain Ahmad Madani, arguably, is the most important figure in these *ulama*. Different public debates or discourses between Muhammad Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani over the meaning and interpretation of nationalism have been explored by scholars and researchers.

Some serious difficulties have arisen in understanding Iqbal because of 'nationalization' of Iqbal as a national philosopher and national poet. State narratives have oversimplified the complexity and profundity of Iqbal's political vision. This is also true in case of literary criticism on Iqbal's works.²⁶ Renowned Pakistani historian K. K. Aziz has taken pains to explain that Iqbal's famous Allahabad address does not mean creation of a separate homeland for Indian Muslims.²⁷ He said, it is important to note here that Iqbal is not against Hindu-Muslim unity or alliance for a greater cause, but he emphasizes that such unity or alliance should not be understood as a composite Indian nation. Muslims can and should cooperate with Hindus but this cooperation is like the alliance of Muslims with the Jews of Madina through *Mithaq-e-Madina*.²⁸ Muslims are a, language or race. Iqbal's concept of nationalism is fundamentally non-territorial. Any effort to link Iqbal's theory of nationalism with the creation of a separate homeland for Muslims is thus nation and thus nationhood goes beyond territory self-contradictory. Iqbal does not seek a territory for Muslim nation. He wants to awaken the consciousness of Muslims that they should know their historic role in the unfolding of human history. His theory is a critique of idea of nation-state. Humanity divided amongst rival nations is a disaster for mankind. The force, according to Iqbal, that can unite mankind is *Tawheed*, as unity of God leads to unity of mankind. Iqbal's theory, in fact, is too grand and universal to be reduced to just a call for a separate homeland of Pakistan. Iqbal himself seems aware of

²⁵Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2012).

²⁶Safdar Rasheed, *Shair, Shariyat aur Fiction: Shamsur Rehman Farooqi ki Tanqeed ka Mutalia* (Lahore: Majlise-e-Taraqi-e-Adan, 2019).

²⁷K. K. Aziz, *The Making of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-E-Meel Publications, 2002).

²⁸Syed Nazir Niazi, *Iqbal Kay Huzoor* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2012).

this misinterpretation of his ideas. In a letter to Edward John Thompson²⁹ Iqbal writes in 1934³⁰

“You call me (a) protagonist of the scheme called “Pakistan”. Now Pakistan is not my scheme. The one that I suggested in my address is the creation of a Muslim province i.e. a province having an overwhelming population of Muslims in the North West of India. This new province will be, according to my scheme, a part of the proposed Indian Federation. Pakistan scheme proposes a separate federation of Muslim provinces directly related to England as a separate dominion.”

However still many scholars, including S. Q. Fatimi³¹, Manzooruddin Ahmad³² and A. H. Dani,³³ argue that Iqbal moved from Islamic universalism to Pakistani nationalism.

*Maulana Madani*³⁴ was a pupil of *Shaykh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood-ul-Hasan* (1851-1920)³⁵ and it was under his influence that he joined the political struggle against the British. *Maulana Mahmood-ul-Hasan* was the first student of Dar-ul-uloom Deoband³⁶ and he was quite aware and sensitive to the true spirit of this *madarsa*. According to him, the real purpose of Deoband was not just academic in nature, rather it was political. British had not only captured India from

²⁹Edward John Thompson (1886-1946) was a British scholar and historian. He was a friend of Iqbal, Nehru, and Tagore. He was father of famous historian E. P. Thompson.

³⁰Hasan Ahmad, *Iqbal, His Political Ideas at Crossroads: A Commentary on Unpublished Letters to Professor Thompson, with Photographic Reproductions of the Original Letters* (Aligarh: Printwell Publications, 1979).

³¹Professor S. Qudratullah Fatimi, “Islamic Universalism and Territorial nationalism in Iqbal’s Thought,” *Iqbal Review* (1976): 70-103:
<http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct76/3.htm>

³²Dr. Manzooruddin Ahmad, “Iqbal’s Theory of Muslim Community and Islamic Universalism,” *Iqbal Review*, (October 1982): 165-199.

³³Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Founding Fathers of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2014).

³⁴For the biographic details of *Maūlana Madani* see Barbara Metcalf, *Husain Ahmad Madani: The Jihād for Islam India’s Freedom* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).

³⁵For the biography of *Maūlana Mahmood-ul-Hasan* see *Hayat-e-Shaykh-ul-Hind* by Syed Muhammad Mian, and *Tadhkara Shaykh-ul-Hind* by *Maulana Aziz-ur-Rehman Bijnori*

³⁶For the history of Deoband see Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900, 2nd Ed.* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Muslim rulers, they had colonized and fragmented other parts of Muslim world, including North Africa and Ottoman Empire. War against the British is therefore the most important Jihad of the time according to Deobandi *Ulama*.³⁷

This anti-British attitude of *ulama* can be traced back to the famous *fatwa* of Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824), the eldest son of Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762)³⁸ Shah Abdul Aziz declared India as *Dar-ul-Harb* (abode of war) in 1803.³⁹ *Tehreek-e-Mujahideen* of Syed Ahmad Shaheed (1786-1831)⁴⁰ and Shah Ismail Shaheed (1779-1831) was also primarily against the British influence. Later, *Ulama* also participated in the 1857 War of Independence at the fronts of Shamli and Thana Bhawan. *Maulana* Imdadullah (1814-1896) migrated to Makkah after the failure of this war. These *ulama* with anti-British orientation and gravely concerned about the future of Muslims, later founded *Dar-ul-ulum* Deoband in 1867. Thus, anti-British element was always an important element of Deobandi worldview.⁴¹ The purpose was to sow the seeds of struggle for freedom in the Muslim youth, along with their education and character building on traditional Islamic lines. Thus, *Shaykh-ul-Hind* made a comprehensive plan to oust the colonial masters.

There were two dimensions of this plan. Firstly, there had to be a revolt against the British from within and secondly, Afghanistan and Turkey would have to attack from the outside. This plan was later labeled as *Tehrik-e-Reshmi Rumāl*

³⁷Farhat Tabassum, *Deoband Ulema's Movement for the Freedom of India* (New Delhi: Jami'at Ulama-i-Hind, 2006)-.

³⁸Mushirulhaq, *Shah Abdul Aziz, His Life and Time* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1995).

³⁹Multiple interpretations of this *fatwa* exist however. Political *ulama*, like Syed Muhammad Mian, emphasize the political implications of this *fatwa*. Ayesha Jalal (Jalal 2010) concludes that the *fatwa* was basically to guide Muslim population regarding their dealings in matters of *riba* (interest). Barbara Metcalf (Metcalf 1982) suggests that the *fatwa* was intended to indicate the role of *ulama* to guide Muslim masses in the changed circumstances. Marc Gaborieau (quoted in *A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?* by Chandra Mallampalli) also observes that this *fatwa* was not a call for Jihād.

⁴⁰See *Saiyid Ahmad Shahid: His Life and Mission* by Mohiuddin Ahmad and the volume 6 of *Tarikh-e-Da'wat o Azeemat* by Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, and *Syed Ahmad Shaheed* by Ghulam Rasul Mehr (urdu)

⁴¹Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 186—1900* (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

(Movement of Silk Letters).⁴² The plan couldn't succeed due to several factors and *Maulana* Mahmood-ul-Hasan and *Maulana* Madani were arrested and imprisoned at Malta in 1916. At Malta they got an opportunity to interact and discuss ideas with freedom fighters and revolutionaries from other areas.⁴³ Internment provided them a good opportunity to study, talk and think.⁴⁴ After their release in 1920, these leaders founded their political struggle on the principles of non-violence and participation in the mainstream nationalist politics. *Shaykh-ul-Hind* supported Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement. After the death of *Shaykh-ul-Hind* in November 1920, *Maulana* Madani became his successor. *Maulana* Madani remained president of *Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind*⁴⁵ from 1920 till his death in 1957.⁴⁶

Barbara Metcalf⁴⁷ describes *Maulana* Hussain Ahmad Madani as an "argumentative Indian," a term she borrows from Amartya Sen.⁴⁸ Metcalf exposes the artificiality and superficiality of the categories of *Muallah* and *Modern*. *Mullah* is assumed to be the opposite of *Modern*. *Mullah* is imagined as irrational,

⁴²For the details of this important chapter of history see *Naqsh-e-Hayat* by Maūlana Hussain Ahmad Madani, *Tahreek-e-Shaykh-ul-Hind* by Syed Muhammad Mian. The later work has been translated into English by Muhammadullah Qasmi as *Silken Letters Movement* published by *Shaykh-ul-hind* Academy, Deoband and can be accessed at <http://www.darululoomdeoband.com/urdu/books/tmp/1388990860%20Silk%20Letter%20Movement.pdf>

⁴³There are two important sources for these *ulama*'s imprisonment at Malta. One is *Aseer-e-Malta* by Maūlana Hussain Ahmad Madani and the other is *Aseeran-e-Malta* by Syed Muhammad Mian. The later work has been translated into English by Mohammad Anwar Hussein and Hassan Imam as *Prisoners of Malta*, published by *Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind*.

⁴⁴Hussain Ahmed Madani, *Aseer-e-Malta* (Deoband: Rashid Company, n.d.)

⁴⁵For the details see *Jamiatul Ulama Kia Hay?* by Syed Muhammad Mian (New Delhi: Jamiatul Ulama-e-Hind)

⁴⁶Barbara D. Metcalf, "Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and the Jamii'at Ulama-i-Hind," In *Muslims against the Muslim League*, editors, Megan Eaton Robb Ali Usman Qasmi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 35-64. <https://chagharzai.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/ali-usman-qasmi-megan-eaton-robb-muslims-against-the-muslim-league--critiques-of-the-idea-of-pakistan-cambridgeuniversity-press-20171.pdf>

⁴⁷Barbara D. Metcalf, Barbara. "An Argumentative Indian," In *Islamic Legitimacy in a Plural Asia*, by Anthony Reid and Michael Gilsean, 81-97 (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁴⁸Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity* (London: Penguin, 2005).

conservative and intolerant, while modern is labeled as rational, progressive and tolerant. She said, “His religious and political thought demonstrates the profound strand of what might be called contextually based reasoning that can be seen as typical of the traditionalist *ulama* in contrast to the blind conservatism often attributed to them.”⁴⁹ According to Yohannan Friedmann⁵⁰ and Aijaz Ahmad⁵¹ it is a great paradox of Muslim India that traditional religious *ulama* supported composite Indian nationalism, while modernists trained in Aligarh, Cambridge and Lincoln’s Inn supported Muslim separatism.

According to *Maūlana* Madani, homeland is generally accepted as the basis of national identity and all the religious communities living in a particular area are regarded as a *Qaūm* or nation. As far as India is concerned, all its difficulties, according to *Maūlana* Madani, primarily arise from its political slavery. Therefore, resistance against this political slavery is the real task faced by all Indians whether Muslims or Hindus. Both the communities are part of composite Indian nation. It is only through composite Indian nationalism that British can be defeated. According to *Maūlana* Madani, *Mithāq-e-Madina* (Convent of Madina) provides the foundation for alliance and cooperation with non-Muslims in the struggle against British imperialism.⁵²

While in prison, *Maūlana* Madani wrote his biography *Naqsh-e-Hayat*. More than his personal account, the book explains how India has suffered under the British rule. Truly patriotic to his soil, *Maūlana* Madani also composed a booklet *Hamara Hindustan aur us kay Faza’il* [Our India and her Qualities] describing the significance and virtues of India and discussing that Muslims have a legitimate

⁴⁹Barbara D. Metcalf, “An Argumentative Indian,” In *Islamic Legitimacy in a Plural Asia*, by Anthony Reid and Michael Gilsenan, 81-97 (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁵⁰Yohannan Friedmann, “The Attitude of the Jami’at ‘Ulama Hind to the Indian National Movement and the Establishment of Pakistan,” In *The Ulama in Modern History, Asian and African Studies* (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1971).

⁵¹Aijaz Ahmad, “Azad’s Careers: Roads Taken and Not Taken,” In *Geneologies of the Present: Ideology and Politics in Contemporary South Asia* (London: Verso, 2000).

⁵²Barbara D. Metcalf, “Maūlana Hussain Ahmad Madani and the Jamii’at Ulama-i-Hind,” In *Muslims against the Muslim League*, editors, Megan Eaton Robb Ali Usman Qasmi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 35-64. <https://chagharzai.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/ali-usman-qasmi-megan-eaton-robb-muslims-against-the-muslim-league-critiques-of-the-idea-of-pakistan-cambridgeuniversity-press-20171.pdf>.

claim on Indian soil and they are the original inhabitants of the land, thus refuting the extremist Hindus of *Hindutva*,⁵³ who declared Muslims as foreigners.⁵⁴

Thus the struggle against British imperialism was, in *Maulana Madani*'s view, a sacred struggle or a Jihad, an act of worship for Muslims and Muslims; hence they must co-operate with non-Muslims in this struggle. He also believed that any separatism in this regard would only benefit the British rulers. This was also the reason of his skepticism towards the political struggles of All India Muslim League.⁵⁵ Along with politics of anti-colonialism, *Maulana Madani* was also aware of the particular problems of Muslims of India and he himself used to travel to distant poor regions of Muslim Bengal for the social and spiritual uplift of Muslims. According to Barbara Metcalf, "He taught not only religious practice, narrowly defined, but also discipline and organization for protection, dispute resolution, and participation in political processions and protests."⁵⁶

In January 8, 1938 in a political meeting in Delhi, *Maulana Madani* gave a statement that nations are defined by territory.⁵⁷ In the next day Urdu newspapers declared that *Maulana Madani* related the concept of 'Millet' with land.⁵⁸ Iqbal, while not in good physical health, was shocked and instead of clarifying the point from *Maulana Madani*, composed vitriolic poetry in Persian. Perhaps he never felt the need to consult *Maulana Madani*, as he was always opposed to the politics of "nationalist *ulama*" which was also visible in his informal conversation recorded

⁵³Hindutva: Who is a Hindu by V. D. Savarkar. Accessed August 17, 2019. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/hindutva-vinayak-damodar-savarkar-pdf>

⁵⁴Hussain Ahmad Madni, *Hamara Hindustan aur us kay Faza'il* (New Delhi: Jami'at Ulama-i-Hind, n.d.)

⁵⁵However, in the elections of 1937, *Maūlana Madani* cooperated with Muslim League with the promise from Muhammad Ali Jinnah that Muslim League would soon break with the feudal class. This promise was not fulfilled according to *Maulana Madani* and he broke away from Muslim League. See *Maktubāt-e-Shaykhul Islam* compiled by Najmuddin Islahi

⁵⁶Barbara D. Metcalf, "Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and the Jamii'at Ulama-i-Hind," In *Muslims against the Muslim League*, editors, Megan Eaton Robb Ali Usman Qasmi, 41.

⁵⁷"*Qaumain Autan say banti hain.*"

⁵⁸Barbara Metcalf and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan* (Princeton 2018) comment that this was a misreporting of newspapers and Iqbal picked a misreported statement. *Maūlana Madani* never said that "Millet" or a religious community was defined by territory, he used the word "*Qaum*." But we should also note that this is actually the argument of *Maūlana Madani*. Iqbal does not accept this distinction between '*qaum*' and '*millet*.' We should accept that these are two different discourses on nationalism.

by Syed Nazir Niazi during his last years.⁵⁹ It means that Iqbal was clearly and profoundly in disagreement with *Maulana* Madani and it was not just an incidental episode which created the disagreement.

The incident just gave a spark to the already established views both of *Maulana* Madani and Iqbal. It is also misleading to view this disagreement between Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani in the light of opposition between demand for a separate homeland for Muslims and an undivided India. Iqbal's idealistic theory does not accept 'territory' or 'land' as an element in the formation of nation. If he accepts 'separate land' for Muslims, then his theory becomes self-contradictory. That is why 'Pakistani nationalism' would be as dangerous for mankind, according to Iqbal, as Indian nationalism or any other nationalism. In his theory, he is against all territorial nationalisms and seeks to anchor nationalism in the higher principles of Islam. These higher principles, according to Iqbal, are *Tauheed* and *Risalat*.

An important point is that Iqbal was not triggered to formulate his theory of nationalism on the basis of hatred shared towards Hindus.⁶⁰ His concept of 'Muslim Nation' is positive, in the sense that it is based on the higher moral and spiritual principles, and not on inter-communal prejudices and hatred prevalent during his times. Iqbal was seeing a world of global brotherhood based on these higher principles that is why he was against 'territory' as a basis for nation and he challenged the ideas of *Maulana* Madani. He had chosen Indian Muslim community only as a starting point for his new world. When a European critic criticized Iqbal of the gap between universalism of his vision of humanity and the particular application of this only on Muslim community of India, Iqbal replied:

“the humanitarian ideal is always universal in poetry and philosophy but if you work it out in actual life you must start with a society exclusive in the sense of having a creed and well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limits by example and persuasion. Such a society in my belief is Islam...All men and not Muslims alone are meant for the Kingdom of God on earth, provided they say goodbye to their idols of race and nationality and treat one another as personalities...”⁶¹

⁵⁹Syed Nazir Niazi, *Iqbal Kay Huzoor* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2012).

⁶⁰Rajmohan Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000).

⁶¹Muhammad Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, Edited by S. A. Vahid (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1964).

Although as a Universalist, Iqbal's practical focus was on Muslim community of India and not on brotherhood of Islam⁶². Three months before his death, during his interview to All India Radio: "Only one unity is dependable, and that unity is the brotherhood of man, which is above race, nationality, color or language.....so long as men do not demonstrate by their actions that they believe that the whole world is the family of God.....the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity will never materialize."⁶³

Annemarie Schimmel called Iqbal's discourse as "supra-nationalism of Islam"⁶⁴ The last article written by Iqbal was also a defense of this supra-nationalism of Islam against *Maulana* Madani's views on nationalism⁶⁵.

Iqbal's vitriolic verses against *Maulana* Madani created a controversy. *Maulana* Madani composed his ideas and presented them in *Muttahida Qaumiyat Aur Islam*,⁶⁶ *Maulana* Madani in his work differentiated between 'millet' and 'qaum.' While 'millet' is based on religion, 'qaum' is based on language, culture and territory. According to *Maulana* Madani, there is no contradiction between these two identities. In his work, *Maulana* makes a semantic analysis of the terms 'millet,' 'qaum,' and 'ummah' citing Arab lexicographers of different periods and also analyses Quranic usage of these words. *Maulana* Madani's tone in this treatise is sober, serious, and rational.

This controversy between the two eminent scholars is also an evidence of selflessness and anti-colonialism of *Maulana* Madani. He simply ignored all the emotional accusations against him and clearly and forcefully explained his point

⁶²Rajmohan Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000).

⁶³Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study Into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963).

⁶⁴Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study Into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*.

⁶⁵Actually the article is not from the pen of Iqbal. Iqbal was on his death bed and was not in a position even to dictate the article. It was written by Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain and then was read to Iqbal and some other people according to Syed Nazir Niazi. Amjad Ali Shakir has analyzed this article in his essay *Muttahida Qaumiyat and Dou Qoumi Nazriya* which is part of the new edition of *Maūlana* Madani's work *Muttahida Qaumiyat Aur Islam* (2006 Lahore).

⁶⁶The book has been rendered into English in 2005 by the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. Translation is by Anwer Hussain and Hasan Imam and Introduction is by Barbara Metcalf. This introduction has been translated into Urdu by Amjad Ali Shakir.

of view. Allama Rasheed Talut,⁶⁷ a traditional Muslim scholar from Multan and an admirer of both Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani, wrote to Iqbal and *Maulana* Madani and quite successfully tried to resolve the controversy. Through this correspondence, it became clear that *Maulana* Madani only described the norm of his times, when nations were defined as *watan* and not by race or religion. Some brief excerpts from this correspondence clarify *Maūlana* Madani's position:

“Inhabitants of England, despite being Catholics, Protestants and Jews, are considered as one nation. Same is true of America and France.”⁶⁸

“I have never said that ‘*millet*’ is based on ‘*watan*’. This is strange that Iqbal is declaring that *qaum* and *millet* are same.”⁶⁹

“I have been outside India for seventeen years. They consider all of us as ‘Indians’”⁷⁰

“Only composite nationalism can unite different elements and religious communities of India in its struggle against British imperialism. This composite nationalism has always been a thorn in the heart of the British government.”⁷¹

On February 20, 1938, Iqbal wrote to Allama Rasheed:

“Maulvi sahib has said that these days, nations are defined by *Autaān* (homelands). If by saying this he is expressing a fact prevalent in these times, then no one can have any objection because this ideology of Western politics is popular in Asia. However, if his purpose is that Indian Muslims should accept this ideology, then there is a room for discussion, because before adopting any ideology, one should confirm whether it is according to Islam or against it.”⁷²

Maūlana Madani replies to Allama Rasheed Talūt:

⁶⁷Allama Talūt (1906-1963) whose full name was Abdur Rasheed Naseem was a scholar, researcher, and poet, graduated from Dar-ul-ulum Deoband. Died on March 30, 1963, he is buried in Multan. He is remembered as a mediator between Allama Iqbal and *Maūlana* Madani.

⁶⁸Letter of *Maulana* Madani to Allama Talūt, part of *Maktubat-e-Shaykhul Islam* (*Majlis Yadgar-e-Shaykhul Islam* Karachi: 1994), Maktub 42, Vol-3, 128.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 130.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 131.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 139.

“When I was saying that these days, nations are based on *Autān*, I was referring to the norm and mentality of the times. It is a news, not an advice. I was saying that all the inhabitants of India are seen as Indians in the outside world. Whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, or Jews, they all are treated alike. They all are considered slaves...I have only advised that we all should work for the freedom of India...and I consider this struggle as obligatory, and one must participate in this struggle according to one’s capacity. As far as unity of Muslim countries regardless of race, color and territory is concerned, this is in our nature. I was imprisoned in Malta because of this. This is astonishing that *qaum* and *millet* have been declared as one.”⁷³

After this Iqbal took back his objection to *Maūlana* Madani and gave a statement which was published in daily *Ehsan* on March 28, 1938.

“I have not advised Muslims to accept the territorial nationalism”
(*Maūlana* Madani)⁷⁴

“After this clarification, I have no right to raise an objection to him
(*Maūlana* Madani).” (Iqbal)⁷⁵

Iqbal, in this last statement said, “In deference to *Maūlana* Madani, I am not behind his devoted followers.”⁷⁶ And by this statement Iqbal terminated the debate with *Maūlana* Madani.

Unfortunately, Iqbal passed away after a few days. His unpublished poetry was compiled and published as *Armaghān-e-Hijāz* posthumously. The compilers, being part of the bitter political divide of late 1930s included that vitriolic verse against *Maūlana* Madani in *Armaghān-e-Hijāz* without any clarification in the light of the last statement of Iqbal. After Lahore Resolution in 1940, the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims became stronger. Iqbal’s subtle political theory was used as a philosophy behind the creation of Pakistan. Insult of *Maūlana* Madani and other ‘nationalist’ *ulama* became part of the campaign for Pakistan and Iqbal’s verse and initial remarks were widely used and the last statement of Iqbal was simply ignored.

These excerpts clarify that *Maūlana* Madani is not advising Indian Muslims to be absorbed and assimilated into one Indian nation and lose their collective existence, reducing the stature of religion as a mere private matter. Iqbal was

⁷³Ibid., 135.

⁷⁴Ibid., 140.

⁷⁵Ibid., 140.

⁷⁶Ibid., 141.

influenced by ultra-nationalism at the time he was criticizing territorial nationalism. *Maūlana* Madani's discourse was based on his sincere and pragmatic analysis of India's political situation. Muslims should cooperate with non-Muslims in this political struggle on the basis *Mithāq-e-Madina* (Convent of Madina)⁷⁷ in which Muslims and Jews made an alliance in Madina under Prophet of Islam. This is interesting to note that Iqbal himself, in the days when he was responding to *Maulana* Madani's statement, suggested that *Mithāq-e-Madina* can be a legitimate foundation for the political alliance of Hindus and Muslims of India.⁷⁸

Iqbal's concerns are primarily theoretical; *Maūlana* Madani's concerns are fundamentally practical. Disillusioned by western political theory, Iqbal was trying to build a political theory of Islam as a theoretician. This theory building is definitely needed in order to develop an Islamic response to modernity. But then there are immediate issues and problems of the *ummah* which demand an appropriate response but within the limitations of the structures imposed by particular time and space. It is easy to challenge the political modernity in an article in a newspaper or in a verse, but in order to actualize these ideas, one has to participate in the political drama going on outside. Iqbal and *Maūlana* Madani's roles in history are perhaps slightly different. One is primarily a man of contemplation; the other is fundamentally a man of action. Perhaps they both are needed, as life is action as well as contemplation.

It is also interesting to note that after the creation of Pakistan, territory and *watan* became the foundation of Pakistani nationalism. According to Sharif al Mujahid, an important historian, the two-nation theory had lost its relevance after the creation of Pakistan because the two nations transformed themselves into Indian and Pakistani nations⁷⁹. Ironically this supports *Maūlana* Madani's theory of nationalism. This kind of territorial nationalism, in which religion is reduced to private matter, is difficult to be reconciled with Iqbal's discourse.

A careful analysis of Iqbal's verse, writings, letters and statements suggests that Iqbal was thinking of another world for the sons of Adam. His political theory and critique of modern nation-state is part of his vision of an alternate world. To actualize this vision, he had high hopes of Muslim community in India. Indian

⁷⁷For the details and significance of *Mithāq-e-Madina* see Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World* (Habib and Company, Hyderabad: 1983).

⁷⁸Syed Nazir Niazi, *Iqbal Kay Huzoor* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2012).

⁷⁹“Two Nation Theory” accessed on August 19, 2019. Available at https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/Two-nation_theory.html

Muslim community is to become a beginning point of his universal brotherhood which, according to Iqbal, can only be achieved through Islam. But perhaps his philosophical idealism and poetic imagination did not allow him to view the limitations of Indian Muslims and political realities of his times. *Maulana* Madani, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of *ulama* that from the times of Syed Ahmad Shaheed (1786-1831) remained active and deeply involved in the struggle against the exploitation of Indian Muslims. His works highlight that he was quite clearly aware of the political realities of his times. Finally, they both understood and appreciated each other.

In order to develop Islamic political theory, we need to understand the political struggle of *Ulama* in the Muslim world as well as the ideas of luminaries like Iqbal and it is not difficult to synthesize the ideas of Allama Iqbal and *Maūlana* Madani, if understood in their proper context. The question of nationalism should be reviewed in all its detail, depth and seriousness without becoming a victim of narrow-minded polemical debates. Going beyond the state narratives and digging deep into the political discourses is perhaps the need of the hour. From Iqbal we can learn his critique of modern nation-state and its centralizing and homogenizing apparatus which stifles individual soul. Contemporary Muslim political theory states that 'Islamic State' is a self-contradictory notion and hence impossible.⁸⁰

Modern state project having absolute claim over power and devoid of all morality is incongruous to morally grounded *Shari'ah* based governance. *Maūlana* Madani and Iqbal both appreciated this point and they never advocated the creation of an absolute 'Islamic State'. From *Maulana* Madani we can learn the ethical and Islamic basis of struggle against exploitation and colonialism and Islamic principles to cooperate with non-Muslims for the broader peace and fraternity of mankind. The destination of both our thinkers is same and that is a human society guided by higher and universal ethical principles rooted in the metaphysics of Islam. They differed only in their first step. According to *Maūlana* Madani the first step was the freedom of India for which composite nationalism was necessary. According to Iqbal the first step was the creation of a community of Muslims in the Muslim majority land, i.e. a Muslim India within India. But was Iqbal's community ready for this project? The fact is that Muslims in Pakistan are mainly motivated by materialism and have become westernized culturally. Muslim youth in Pakistan have no understanding about the writings and work of *Maūlana* Madani and Iqbal, despite of memorizing some verses and poetry, it seems that they have

⁸⁰Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

never truly understood the message of Iqbal. There is need that our universities, transcending the popular and state narratives, begin a profound study of our intellectual heritage.

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